

**ILLITERACY AND UNEMPLOYMENT: TWO SIDES OF A COIN IN THREATS TO
NIGERIA'S NATIONAL SECURITY.**

BY

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ABSTRACT

This paper underscores the importance of education and employment as valuable indices of development and attainment of peace and security in every society. For growth and development to take place, the inhabitants of an environment must be enlightened, employed and properly secured. The study reviews extant literature which examines the role of growth and development

in the sustenance of a society; it also evaluates the concept of security and development. The paper further indicates that a strong negative correlation exists between security and the indicators of underdevelopment such as unemployment, illiteracy, poverty and inequality via social and political exclusion. There is panoramic evaluation of insecurity in the nation, some variables of insecurity and underdevelopment were examined and panacea to the myriads of the problem was proffered. A modern state is one that can secure and enlighten its citizenry; this will promote patriotism and sustainable development that will take care of the nation's future.

Keywords: Security, sustainable development, illiteracy, unemployment, entrepreneurship, economic growth, citizenry, patriotism.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has had great challenges in ensuring internal peace and security for some times now. The height of this was recorded when the country was besieged since 2007 by various destructive forces wanting to give it a status of a failed state. Niger – Delta Militancy, Armed robbery in the west, kidnapping in the east, Boko Haram insurgency in the Northern states etc. have had their own share of the doom stories and are gradually bringing the nation to a comatose state. Kastina (2012) notes that the current state of insecurity in the country manifests itself in deep-rooted and structurally entrenched crisis of development that brings about the incidence of poverty, illiteracy, inequality and unemployment. For instance, Watts (2009) observes that a total of \$700 billion oil revenues have accrued to the Nigeria government since independence. Unfortunately, this has not impacted positively on the lives of Nigerians. According to him, 85 per cent of oil revenues earned overtime is shared among the political elites, who constitutes only one per cent of the population, with the possibility that 40% or more of the national wealth accumulated over time might have been stolen by the ruling elites, technocrats and policy bureaucrats. The mismanagement of the nation's wealth explained above justifies the paradoxical situation of Nigeria as a country experiencing economic growth with no sustainable economic development. These have led to frustration, alienation and social discontent that spark up violence and insecurity at slightest provocation.

There is no gainsaying the fact that education and employment are key factors for development and security to take place. To drive away ignorance, prevent citizens from being influenced negatively, fight poverty and prevent idleness, enlightenment of the people and job creation are critical factors. Amount budgeted for the nation's security has always been on the increase. The National Assembly has continued to appropriate huge funds for defence and internal security with little left for welfare programmes, social services and capital projects like education, health, housing, construction etc. For example, in 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011 fiscal year, sum total of expenditures earmarked for internal security and defence sub-headings in the approved budget were #292.7 billion, #276.5 billion, #422.9 billion and #563.2 billion respectively (CBN, 2011).

While this may not be bad in its entirety as an essential precondition for healthy investment environment, the importance of education and employment as essential indices of security and development cannot be over-stressed. Amaghionyeodiwe and Osinubi (2004) note that poverty is a product of illiteracy. Bakare (2011) attests to this view by positing that the poor are basically the uneducated who are unable to find a stable job, obtain adequate income, own property or maintain healthy living conditions and satisfy their basic needs. Thus, the poor are often illiterate with poor health and have a short life span.

The objective of this study therefore, is to review extant literature and present a position underscoring unemployment and illiteracy as critical underdevelopment indicators which enhance threats to national security in Nigeria.

The research questions to be addressed are as follow:-

- What is the state of national security in Nigeria?
- Are illiteracy and unemployment contributory factors to the state of insecurity in the nation?
- Are there adequate education facilities in all the parts of Nigeria that will address the rate of illiteracy and insecurity in the nation?
- What is the state of youth unemployment in Nigeria?
- Will unemployment and illiteracy serve as threats to national security and development in Nigeria?

2.0 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT

For the purpose of this study, the concept of security and development will be explained using the relative deprivation theory which was first propounded by Dollar et al (1939) and was adopted by Nwagboso (2012) in his study. The theory was propounded to link socio-political and economic inequalities in the society to rebellions and insurrections. As individual and group-based theory of aggression, the relative deprivation theory argues that when expectation outstrips achievement regardless of the absolute levels of economic consumption or the provision of political rights, frustration sets in. Thus the collective frustration turns to anger and violence (Nwagboso, 2012). Kastina (2012) also aligns himself with this view when he explains the concept of security as entailing the capacity of a state to defend itself not only from external threats with all the necessary means at its disposal, but also from internal threats through overall socio-economic well being of its citizenry. By application, security includes the ability of the state to predict the likely implication of any particular condition on its citizens and thus, creates the necessary socio-economic conditions that guarantee fair amount predictability on the behaviour of its citizens.

The historical antecedence of conflicts, agitation and frequent rise of individuals and groups against the Nigeria government can therefore be explained using the relative deprivation theory. The failure of government in Nigeria to address critical developmental challenges such as poor

state of infrastructure, inequality, poor health status and most importantly, high rate of illiteracy which prevents people from understanding the daily acts of government, as well as unemployment can be said to be responsible for the internal insurrection by the armed militia groups against the state. Table 1 below shows comparatively the budgetary provision for the various sectors of the economy. A glance at the table shows that between 2000 and 2011, defence and internal security took the largest chunk of the federal government recurrent expenditure when summed up as against the real sectors of the economy such as agriculture, construction, etc. which impact directly on the well being of Nigerians. Even though statistics on budgetary provision presented in Table 1 is that of recurrent expenditure, the trend is not likely to be significantly different for the capital expenditure allocations. This stance follows from past experiences as related to budgetary allocations to sectors of the Nigeria economy.

Table 1: Federal Government Recurrent Expenditure (N Million)

Year	Defence	Internal security	Education	Agricultural	Health	Construction
2000	43,402.32	25,154.64	57,956.64	6,335.80	15,218.08	4,991.09
2001	47,069.24	38,853.05	39,882.60	7,064.55	24,522.27	7,202.04
2002	69,133.82	63,236.60	80,530.88	9,993.55	40,621.42	7,452.14
2003	51,064.29	68,379.71	64,782.15	7,537.35	33,267.98	16,951.30
2004	76,321.36	97,796.10	76,524.65	11,256.15	34,197.14	14,897.01
2005	71,670.04	81,948.08	82,795.06	16,325.60	55,661.63	17,914.96
2006	84,200.00	118,000.00	87,294.56	17,212.81	62,300.00	20,100.00
2007	72,100.00	181,300.00	107,529.39	21,202.73	81,900.00	71,300.00
2008	68,700.0	95,800.00	164,000.00	65,400.00	98,200.00	94,500.00
2009	54,840.00	221,650.00	137,156.60	22,435.20	90,200.00	80,630.00
2010	198,700.00	224,200.00	170,800.00	25,200.00	99,100.00	138,050.00
2011	283,200.00	280,000.00	335,800.00	41,200.00	231,800.00	195,900.00

Sources: Federal Republic of Nigeria Official Gazettes, Central Bank of Nigeria (2000 – 2011)

Relative deprivation theory also implies that no meaningful economic and sustainable growth and development can take place in Nigeria if internal insurrection by the various armed groups in whatever names they called, is allowed to continue unabated. This partly is because no foreign investment can take place as no country will live to have a trading partner that is unable to secure the lives and property of their citizens first before their own citizens are allowed to move into such territories.

3.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The linkages among education, national security, unemployment and sustainable development in an economy have been discussed in many studies. Authors like Nwagboso (2012), Audu (2011), Dembo and Mustapha (2012), Kastina (2012), Adusei (2012), Bakare (2011) have made notable contributions to acknowledge in this area.

Kastina (2012) defines security as a state of reduced or contained threats and tension in which the stability of a state is not in an imminent danger of disruption from within and without. Stability here is viewed as the order, regularity and pattern, which characterized the state's condition over an extended period. Nwagboso (2012) sees security as an essential concept which is commonly associated with the alleviation of threats to cherished values, especially the survival of individuals, groups or objects in the near future. Thus, security involves the ability to pursue cherished political and social ambitions (Williams, 2008; Nwagboso, 2012). This is imperative for the stabilization of a state's internal security not only for safeguarding the lives of citizens, but also to achieve the desired economic growth and development in the country.

According to Audu (2011), education and orientation is the key in overcoming ignorance; it is essential in a democracy society that people should acquire such basic education which will enable them to understand the daily acts of government. He notes that illiteracy is specifically high in the Northern part of Nigeria which explains partly the tendency of many to resort to religious violence over the slightest provocation which logically might not have had anything to do with religion in the first place. Illiteracy creates a lack of understanding among individuals or groups in a society which Audu (2011) sees as a potential weapon in the hands of dubious leaders and elites in fermenting discord in the society.

For comparison purpose and to also show that there is a correlation between literacy and peace, 2003 World almanac survey put the literacy rate of non-African countries like Australia, Denmark and Finland at 100% each while African countries such as Somalia, Eritrea and Guinea each had theirs put at 24, 20 and 30% respectively (Audu, 2011). The interesting thing is that while these non-African countries seem to be at peace today, the African countries of which Nigeria is one are still embroiled in internal conflicts. Dembo and Mustapha (2012) while corroborating the above fact also observe that if every citizen is accorded the opportunity of undergoing formal education, ignorance and all forms of excessive and barbaric behaviours will be wiped out from the society. If a citizen will be given the privilege (i.e. sponsorship of attaining school) then, his/her actions and response to civic duties would change for the better.

Aigbakhon (2008) opines that poverty and unemployment reinforce each other. According to him, lack of gainful employment opportunities for members of the society gives rise to poverty and that in Nigeria, unemployment is one of the most enduring social problems. This lends credence to the popular saying that "an idle hand is the devil's workshop." Kastina (2012) in his concluding remarks on "Nigeria's security challenges and the crisis of development" argues that

as long as the issue of national security is treated separately from the issue of national development in which challenges of poverty, inequality, unemployment, illiteracy etc. are not tackled proactively the problem of security will persist and will continue to plague the country.

Unemployment rate measures the number of people actively looking for a job as a percentage of the labour force. NBS (2012) reports that unemployment rate in Nigeria increased from 21.10 percent in 2010 to 23.90 percent in 2011. A survey has also shown a steady increase in the rate of unemployment from 19.7 percent in 2009 to 21.10 percent in 2010 and to 23.90 percent in 2011 (Nwachukwu, 2012). The survey further shows that the rate is higher in the rural areas with 25.6 percent than in the urban areas with the unemployment rate of 17.1 percent. This explains the reason why there is an unchecked movement of youths from the rural areas to the urban centre in search of jobs that are not in existence. The survey also indicates the distribution of unemployment rate by age groups. The unemployment rate for 0 -14 years is 39.6 percent; 15 – 64 years (the economically active group) has an unemployment rate of 56.3 percent while 65 years and above has a rate of 42 percent (Nwachukwu, 2012). Report also shows the number of Nigerians that are currently unemployed as 20.3 million (This day online, 2012). The implication of all of these analyzes is that no country can enjoy peace and progress when its youths are kept idle, angry and unfulfilled. High rate of unemployment as declared officially is a recipe for social unrest and disaster.

As an evidence to show that unemployment and insecurity scenario is not an exclusive preserve of the Nigeria state but that of all African countries, Adusei (2012), while analyzing the unemployment situation as threats to Ghana stability observes that Ghana is slowly becoming a high crime state. This is due to the fact that the unemployed, excluded, marginalized and the poverty stricken members in Ghana have resulted to violence and crime as the only means through which they can make a living. The crimes perpetrated according to Adusei (2012) include internet scam, fraud, drug and human trafficking, burglary and armed robbery.

With the greater proportion of the population in Nigeria falling between the ages of 21 – 40 years (representing the most productive segment of its population), Nigeria can be described as a youthful country. Hence, Dembo and Mustapha (2012) opine the engagement of these youths either by means of employment or empowerment. This is because in their opinion, the poor and the hungry are not only anxious but also vulnerable and can be used to perpetrate evils with a token. They therefore posits that if there is no lawful means of survival people will be forced by circumstances (not minding the circumstances) to survive.

4.0 VARIABLES OF INSECURITY AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT: UNEMPLOYMENT AND ILLITERACY AT A GLANCE.

Some variables combine to challenge the security and development status of the Nigeria state. These variables are inimical to the growth, progress and development of any nation. They include poverty, inequality, unemployment, illiteracy, voicelessness, infrastructural decay, bad

governance, etc. The aforementioned variables have led to the proliferation of different militia groups that posed serious security threats to the country. Different crises have erupted as a result of the existence of these militia groups. They range from the Niger – delta crisis in the south – south region of the country; kidnapping in the south – east; the Jos crisis; ‘book haram’ crisis in the north – east and the north – western states of the federation; armed robbery; get-rich-quick syndrome; drug trafficking; oil pipeline vandalism and so on.

➤ Unemployment

The rate of unemployment in Nigeria today is quite alarming and disastrous. An unengaged and a readily available hand can easily be approached for perpetration of evils with a token. This category of people is vulnerable and to them crime is often a means of survival. Unemployment in any political entity refers to the number of people, skilled and unskilled, without work. The labour force in Nigeria today is skewed in such a way that employment opportunities are literally non-existent. Mostly hit by this situation is the most productive segment of its population, those between the ages of 21-40. Consequently, the fact that Nigeria through its leadership is unable to positively transform its huge resources, create favourable conditions for entrepreneurship, small and medium scale industries that can absorb this huge labour force to thrive, creates a serious situation in which the people become disillusioned with the Nigerian state and its capability to promote their welfare.

➤ Illiteracy

Education is a veritable tool that can be used to wipe ignorance and empower the citizens of any country. To eradicate poverty and enhance sustainable development, the development of education in Nigeria cannot be whisked away. Since a healthy and well-educated people make an economy more productive, capacity building through investment in human capital, particularly education will enhance economic growth, alleviate poverty and protect the Nigerian economy from further distortions (Bakare, 2011). It has been established that education not only help to supply the essential human capacity which is a necessary condition for sustained economic growth but also a key to poverty reduction and vehicle for promoting equity, self-esteem, self-respect, fairness and social justice which if lacking may ignite fire of discord, frustration, anger and violence. All of these will constitute a threat to national security. It is worthy of mention that Nigeria in its over fifty years of existence and nationhood has never hit the minimum standard of 26.0 percent of annual budget prescribed by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, UNESCO as educational expenditure. It has hovered around 4 percent in 1991, 8.7 percent in 2000 and 7 percent in 2001 (Olaniyi and Adam, 2002; Adenuga, 2002).

The visible and resultant effect of this is lack of adequate educational facilities in most parts of the country, especially in the northern states. School children are seen receiving lectures under the tree and/or in dilapidated classrooms. The quality of lecture that can be delivered and taken in this kind of situation is better imagined; no wonder Nigeria degrees are no longer given due

recognition by overseas universities. Perhaps, inadequate educational facilities in the north explain one of the reasons for the insurrection of “Boko Haram”. The contradiction and confusion however is the meaning of the phrase “Boko Haram” which has been said to mean opposition to western education, western culture and modern science (Duma, 2010; Olugbode, 2010; Nwagboso, 2012). One then wonders if lack of educational facilities in the northern region is really the problem or it has political undertone. Perhaps, this calls for further research into what actually is the agitation and bone of contention of the northerners. Whatever is the case, education and orientation is the key in overcoming ignorance and preventing national insecurity

5.0 PANACEA FOR INSECURITY AND UNDERDEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

The following are suggested as panacea for underdevelopment and spate of insecurity that has ravaged Nigeria as a country:

- Government at all levels should address the problem of unemployment. The teeming skilled jobless Nigerian youths should be engaged or empowered to prevent them from engaging in social vices.
- The issue of national security should be tackled alongside that of national development. Poverty, inequality, social and political exclusion, illiteracy etc. should be tackled head-on by the government at all levels to solve the problem of national security. Rural poverty should be addressed through the revamping and commercialization of agriculture; provision of power, good feeder roads and resuscitation of vibrant commodity marketing boards.
- Government should address the problem of illiteracy by emphasizing acquisition of skills to wipe out ignorance and for enhancement of economic empowerment. Education for “Almajiris” in the north should be intensified; more opportunities for girl-child education especially, in the north should be created. There should be provision of educational facilities and teaching aids especially at the primary and post-primary levels to enhance quality of education.
- The issue of insecurity must be addressed politically by the political class at all levels of the government and also at party levels. Fairness, equality, social and political justice as well as equity must always prevail to solve insecurity that is politically motivated.

6.0 CONCLUSION

The study has shown that the best way to solve security challenges in a developing country like Nigeria is to first of all tackle the challenges of development which include illiteracy, lack of skills, unemployment, inequality, injustice, infrastructure decay etc. Relative deprivation theory propounded by Dollard et al (1939) and which was extensively explored in this study attested to this fact. From the study, security can be said to be synonymous with national development because they reinforce each other. The paper argues that treating them as separate entities is not only counter-productive, but also fraught with danger. There is therefore the need for

government to take necessary steps geared towards reducing the rate of illiteracy and embark on measures that will economically empower majority of the masses especially, the youths

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