

Government Expenditure on Defense and Battle-Related Deaths

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Abstract: *This study investigates the correlation between government expenditure on defense and battle-related deaths in Nigeria, analyzing data from 2000 to 2022. Despite significant defense spending, Nigeria continues to experience high levels of insecurity, with incidents of violence, kidnappings, and terrorist activities persisting across the country. Utilizing a correlational model, the research explores the connection between defense spending and conflict fatalities, revealing a strong positive correlation between these variables. The findings suggest that while increased defense budgets aim to address security issues, they have not resulted in the anticipated reduction in battle-related deaths, potentially due to resource misallocation, corruption, and a focus on militarized approaches rather than addressing the root causes of conflict. Additionally, external factors, such as regional instability and the proliferation of arms, may exacerbate insecurity despite increased spending. These results underscore the need for a comprehensive strategy that balances defense spending with socioeconomic investments to address underlying factors driving insecurity. The study recommends shifting some resources toward conflict prevention, community policing, and initiatives that promote social cohesion, aiming to achieve a sustainable reduction in violence.*

Keywords: Government expenditure, defense spending, battle-related deaths, Nigeria, insecurity, conflict prevention, socio-economic investment, regional instability, sustainable development goals.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's defense spending is one of the largest allocations in the national budget, demonstrating the government's prioritization of security amid rising threats from internal insurgency and cross-border instability. The defense budget encompasses personnel salaries, weapon acquisition, and regional peacekeeping initiatives, with significant growth over the years in response to security challenges such as Boko Haram, banditry, and other armed groups (Adebakin & Raimi, 2012;

United Nations, 2023). Despite these substantial investments, the anticipated reduction in violence and battle-related deaths remains unachieved. Instead, continued displacement and conflict highlight concerns about the effectiveness of these expenditures, suggesting inefficiencies that may stem from resource mismanagement, corruption, or misaligned strategic focus (Okoye, 2019; Bonmwa & Ishmael, 2017).

Evidence suggests that higher defense budgets can sometimes escalate conflicts rather than resolve them, particularly if funds are directed toward militarized responses instead of comprehensive peace-building strategies. Studies emphasize that Nigeria's strategic position in West Africa—bordering conflict-prone regions like the Sahel, compounds the complexities of maintaining internal security. This dynamic situation necessitates a combination of military defenses and diplomatic efforts to address the root causes of conflict and support sustainable peace (Chijioke & Amadi, 2020). Assessing whether defense spending directly reduces battle-related fatalities or whether alternative approaches might be more effective is essential in the Nigerian context, given the potential for militarized policies to overlook key socioeconomic factors that contribute to violence.

The persistent violence and high fatality rates despite increased defense budgets reveal fundamental challenges within Nigeria's defense strategy. Research points out that defense expenditures predominantly aimed at combatting insurgency may fall short without concurrent investment in socioeconomic initiatives that address the underlying grievances driving these conflicts. Prolonged cycles of violence suggest that a defense strategy overly reliant on militarization could inadvertently reinforce rather than resolve security issues, underscoring the need for a balanced approach to national security (Ugochukwu & Oruta, 2021; Abdurrahman et al., 2023). This study, therefore, examines the relationship between Nigeria's defense expenditure and battle-related deaths to evaluate whether current spending strategies contribute effectively to national security or if a shift toward integrative security solutions would better serve peace and stability goals (Montenegro & Vijay, 2019).

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Government Expenditure on Defense

Government spending on defense in Nigeria has steadily increased, consistently receiving higher allocations than sectors such as education, health, agriculture, and communication since the post-colonial era (Adebakin & Raimi, 2012; Okeke et al., 2021). This prioritization stems not only from security concerns but also from certain administrations using defense budgets as a tool to secure dominance, with cases of funds diverted for personal gain. Despite substantial defense allocations, Nigeria continues to struggle with rising insecurity, often linked to the misappropriation of defense funds originally intended for citizen protection (Okoye, 2019; Bonmwa & Ishmael, 2017). The disparity between high defense spending and worsening security suggests that excessive

allocations to defense, without effective oversight, may contribute to insecurity by diverting resources from essential sectors capable of addressing the root causes of unrest.

A re-evaluation of Nigeria's defense spending priorities is essential, especially given the ongoing imbalance in allocations compared to other critical sectors such as education, healthcare, agriculture, and infrastructure (Ugochukwu & Oruta, 2021). Additionally, Nigeria's substantial involvement in foreign peacekeeping missions incurs high costs, raising questions about whether these expenditures align with Nigeria's economic and security interests. Nigeria's role as the "Giant of Africa" has often led to early and extensive involvement in peacekeeping missions, but a more selective approach that weighs the costs and benefits could better serve national priorities (Chijioke & Amadi, 2020).

Investing in community policing initiatives tailored to local security needs could be more effective in addressing Nigeria's internal security issues. Community-based security approaches encourage local engagement, reduce internal aggression, and diminish secessionist pressures (Adebakin & Raimi, 2012). Additionally, improved allocation and strict oversight of defense funds are essential to ensure resources are directed toward procuring modern, adequate equipment for the military, as emphasized in studies recommending resource optimization for conflict prevention (Montenegro & Vijay, 2019). Such measures would ensure that defense spending achieves its intended purpose, helping to minimize conflict-related deaths and prevent displacement due to violence. Effective management is vital to prevent embezzlement and misappropriation, ensuring the focus of defense spending remains on maintaining peace and protecting lives in Nigeria.

Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of 17 global objectives established by the United Nations in 2015, aimed at addressing critical issues around poverty, inequality, environmental degradation, peace, and justice by the year 2030. These goals are intended to guide member nations, including Nigeria, towards achieving improvements in "People, Planet, and Prosperity." For instance, SDG 1 targets the eradication of poverty, with objectives to halve the population living in poverty, ensure access to resources, and strengthen social protection systems. SDG 2 focuses on ending hunger by improving food security, promoting sustainable agriculture, and enhancing nutrition, all of which have been further underscored by recent global crises exacerbating food shortages.

In health, education, and gender equality, the SDGs emphasize accessibility and inclusivity. SDG 3 aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being, addressing issues like maternal health, child mortality, and universal health coverage. Goal 4 advocates for equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities, ensuring that both boys and girls can access education, a foundation for reducing future inequality. Goal 5 targets gender equality, seeking to empower

women and girls by ending all forms of discrimination and violence, including harmful practices like child marriage and gender-based violence.

The SDGs also prioritize environmental sustainability and responsible resource management. SDG 6 is dedicated to providing universal access to clean water and sanitation, essential for health and well-being. Similarly, Goal 7 focuses on affordable and sustainable energy, essential for development, especially as around 800 million people still lack electricity. Goals related to sustainable cities, responsible consumption, and climate action (SDGs 11, 12, and 13) address urbanization challenges, advocate for sustainable practices, and emphasize climate resilience through actions to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and improve energy efficiency.

Lastly, SDG 16 emphasizes the importance of peace, justice, and strong institutions, underscoring the need for governance structures that uphold justice, transparency, and inclusion. This goal calls for efforts to reduce violence, provide access to justice, and build accountable institutions. Goal 17 highlights the need for partnerships, calling on nations to work together and strengthen international cooperation for achieving the SDGs. The SDGs collectively offer a roadmap for sustainable development, guiding countries toward a shared vision of prosperity, social inclusivity, and environmental sustainability by 2030.

Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions (SDG 16)

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) number 16 aims to promote just, peaceful, and inclusive societies while ensuring access to justice and creating effective, accountable institutions at all levels. This goal underscores that all individuals, regardless of ethnicity, faith, or sexual orientation, should live free from violence and fear, underscoring the foundational need for security and equality in all societies. Achieving Goal 16 is essential for sustainable development, as the absence of peace impedes growth, social harmony, and resource development (UN SDG Report, 2023).

However, achieving SDG 16 faces considerable setbacks due to ongoing and escalating conflicts globally. In 2022, there was a more than 50% surge in conflict-related civilian deaths, a grim milestone attributed largely to the Russia-Ukraine war, which disrupted global security efforts. High levels of armed violence, insecurity, and crime, including sexual violence and exploitation, continue to hinder sustainable development and exacerbate poverty in many regions. This reality emphasizes that without robust actions to protect vulnerable populations, such as reducing illicit arms flows and combating corruption, SDG 16 remains out of reach (UN Data on Our World in Data, 2023).

In addressing these issues, coordinated efforts among governments, civil society, and local communities are essential to create lasting peace and tackle insecurity. Promoting the rule of law and respecting human rights are central to this process, as these actions encourage transparency, combat illicit practices, and ensure inclusive participation. Goal 16 also aligns with broader human

rights frameworks by advocating for societal structures that respect privacy, expression, and access to information—principles necessary to safeguard individual rights and establish stable, peaceful communities (Sustainable Development Goals Report, 2023).

Peace remains a fundamental requirement for social and economic development, as conflict and instability undermine societal progress and lead to losses in lives and resources. Without equal access to justice, the rights of marginalized populations are often left unprotected, reinforcing cycles of resentment and unrest. The growing displacement of people—108.4 million worldwide at the end of 2022—further reveals the impact of these unresolved issues, highlighting a pressing need to strengthen institutions that deliver justice and address the root causes of violence and insecurity (UN Data on Our World in Data, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

The **Keynesian Theory**, developed by John Maynard Keynes, underscores the importance of government intervention to stabilize economies, particularly through increased public spending during periods of economic decline or social unrest (Romer, 1986; Ghali, 1998). Keynesian economics argues that heightened government expenditure stimulates aggregate demand, which in turn fosters economic growth. Applying this theory to government expenditure on internal security, investments in security agencies and public safety infrastructure can stimulate the economy by ensuring a stable environment for businesses and protecting citizens. In this way, internal security spending not only aims to reduce violence and safeguard lives but also supports the Keynesian view that government spending is a crucial driver of sustained economic growth (Bhartia, 2002; Mitchell, 2005).

The **Wiseman-Peacock Hypothesis** provides further insight, suggesting that public expenditure grows in response to crises, with sudden increases creating a “displacement effect” as government spending moves to a higher baseline. According to Wiseman and Peacock, major social or economic disruptions lead to a public demand for greater government action, which is then reflected in increased spending (Bhartia, 2002). This framework aligns with Nigeria’s internal security spending patterns, where government expenditures have risen sharply in response to specific security threats, such as insurgencies and kidnapping crises, stabilizing at a higher level as the population grows accustomed to the increased budget for security (Mitchell, 2005).

The **Concentration Effect** within the Wiseman-Peacock Hypothesis highlights the tendency for central government activities to expand more rapidly than local initiatives, especially during economic growth phases or heightened security needs. In Nigeria, the federal government’s substantial investment in security agencies like the National Security Agency and the Nigerian Police Force reflects this effect, as these national bodies have a broader mandate to address security issues that local governments are often unable to tackle effectively due to resource limitations. Thus, the concentration effect underscores the essential role of federal spending on internal

security in countering national threats, with the central government assuming an increasing share of responsibilities in response to rising security challenges.

Empirical Review

Empirical studies on government expenditure reveal diverse findings regarding the relationship between spending on security, defense, and economic growth. Mohanty et al. (2020) explored this relationship in India, examining data from 1970 to 2016 with an Autoregressive Distributed Lag model and Toda-Yamamoto Granger causality approach. The study found that defense expenditure positively impacts economic growth, especially capital defense spending, which significantly influences India's economic development. The study suggests prioritizing capital defense spending to support economic growth, as causality analysis reveals bidirectional causation between defense expenditure and growth, and unidirectional causation from capital defense to economic growth.

In Nigeria, Okeke et al. (2021) analyzed the effect of defense and internal security spending on economic growth from 1994 to 2020 using Vector Autoregressive Estimates. Contrary to Mohanty et al., Okeke and colleagues found an insignificant impact of recurrent defense and internal security spending on economic indicators like RGDP and HDI. They recommend careful and strategic investment in security spending, arguing that improved accountability could enhance sustainable development gains. Similarly, Abu and Marvelous (2020) employed an Error Correction Model and Ordinary Least Squares to investigate security spending's effect on Nigeria's economic growth (1986-2018). They observed significant short-term positive effects of security spending on economic growth, especially for recurrent defense spending, but noted that long-term influences were statistically insignificant except for recurrent defense expenditures.

Other studies have examined the effects of government expenditure components on economic and social metrics beyond direct economic growth. For instance, Ozigbu (2018) and Oriavwote and Ukawe (2018) found significant impacts of public debt and government health and education spending on poverty reduction in Nigeria. While Ozigbu found a positive relationship between external debt and poverty incidence, Oriavwote and Ukawe noted a positive but low-elasticity impact of health and education expenditure on per capita income. They observed bi-causality between education spending and income but no significant causation between other expenditure components. Similarly, studies by Shakavworia (2018) and Orimolade and Olusola (2019) have shown mixed results on the effects of government expenditures, such as health and general administration, on economic and social indicators, underscoring the importance of tailored expenditure policies to maximize impact.

Research on the broader economic effects of security and defense spending often finds that capital investments contribute more substantially than recurrent expenditures to long-term growth. For example, Mbah et al. (2021) analyzed internal security spending in Nigeria and discovered a

positive short-term correlation with economic growth, though negative in the long run. Their study highlights the complexity of security expenditures' economic impacts and aligns with Waweru's (2021) findings in East Africa, where public capital expenditure significantly influenced regional economic growth. These studies collectively emphasize that while security spending can foster growth, strategic allocation between capital and recurrent spending is essential for sustainable economic and social improvements.

This study addresses a crucial gap in the literature on government defense expenditure by examining the relationship between defense spending and battle-related deaths, particularly within the context of Nigeria's unique security challenges. Existing studies, such as those by Mohanty et al. (2020) and Okeke et al. (2021), primarily focus on the economic impacts of defense expenditure, revealing contrasting results across regions. Mohanty et al. found a positive effect of defense spending on economic growth in India, while Okeke et al. found that Nigeria's defense and internal security spending had an insignificant impact on economic indicators like RGDP and HDI. These studies, however, focus largely on economic outcomes, without delving into the critical relationship between defense spending and the actual reduction of violence and battle-related deaths.

Furthermore, studies by Abu and Marvelous (2020) and Mbah et al. (2021) highlight that defense spending can have positive short-term economic effects but may yield negative impacts in the long run, particularly if recurrent expenditures dominate. While these studies underscore the economic complexities of defense budgets, they do not directly address whether increased defense spending effectively mitigates insecurity or reduces fatalities due to conflict.

This study fills this gap by shifting the focus from economic growth impacts to the direct security outcomes of defense spending in Nigeria, specifically battle-related deaths. It investigates whether Nigeria's significant defense allocations correlate with reductions in violence, considering factors like misallocation and corruption, which may undermine defense effectiveness. By emphasizing security outcomes, this study contributes a novel perspective to the literature, suggesting that merely increasing defense budgets is insufficient without addressing efficiency and resource allocation. Thus, it provides insights for policymakers aiming to achieve peace and stability, offering evidence on the necessity of balancing defense spending with transparent, strategic investments in security initiatives that target root causes of conflict.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs an ex-post facto research design, relying on historical data to examine the effects of government spending on defense in Nigeria across various sectors from 2000 to 2022. The chosen period aligns with the launch of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), facilitating analysis of spending impacts relative to these

global initiatives. Data for the study were sourced from the Central Bank of Nigeria's Statistical Bulletin, the National Bureau of Statistics, United Nations datasets, and the World Bank's World Development Indicators. The study uses annual government expenditure figures and records of conflict-related deaths and displacements, providing a comprehensive view of government spending impacts over the two-decade period.

Model Specification

A Correlational Model was employed to evaluate the relationship between government expenditure on defense and Number of deaths by conflicts and violence in Nigeria.

The model is specified as follows:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{\sum(x_i - \bar{x})(y_i - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\sum(x_i - \bar{x})^2 \sum(y_i - \bar{y})^2}}$$

Where:

r_{xy} = is the correlation coefficient of the linear relationship between the variables x and y

x_i is the value of the x-variables in the sample

\bar{x} is the mean of the values of the x-variables

y_i is the values of the y-variables in the sample

\bar{y} is the mean of the values of the y-variables in the sample

Y represents other variables taken separately in each case.

DATA ANALYSIS

The normality of the distribution of the data series is shown by the coefficients of Skewness, Kurtosis, and the probability values of the Jaque-Bera test for normality.

Table 4.2.1: Descriptive Statistic

	LOGBRD	DEXP	EEXP	ADMEXP
Mean	2.771596	2.248080	2.324246	2.569231
Median	2.607455	2.435048	2.512137	2.680495
Maximum	3.666237	2.841266	2.846942	2.996619
Minimum	1.832509	1.637513	1.600784	1.829014
Std. Dev.	0.542967	0.419310	0.380479	0.350336
Skewness	-0.019560	-0.082886	-0.308983	-0.843005
Kurtosis	1.742724	1.457583	1.807926	2.591478
Jarque-Bera	1.516344	2.306259	1.727801	2.884122
Probability	0.468522	0.315647	0.421515	0.236440
Observations	23	23	23	23

Source: Authors Computation, 2024 (Eviews-10)

Table 4.2.1 presents descriptive statistics for six variables: LOGBRD (log of battle-related deaths), ISEXP (internal security expenditure), DEXP (defense expenditure), EEXP (education expenditure), HEXP (health expenditure), and ADMEXP (administrative expenditure):

LOGBRD (Log of Battle-Related Deaths): The Skewness for LOGBRD is close to zero (-0.0196), indicating a nearly symmetrical distribution. The positive kurtosis (1.74) suggests that the distribution has heavier tails and a sharper peak than a normal distribution. The Jarque-Bera statistic (1.52) and its associated p-value (0.468) indicate that there is no significant departure from normality in the distribution of LOGBRD.

DEXP (Defense Expenditure): The negative Skewness (-0.0829) suggests a slight left skew, although close to symmetrical. The positive kurtosis (1.46) indicates that the distribution has heavier tails and a sharper peak than a normal distribution. The Jarque-Bera statistic (2.31) and its associated p-value (0.316) indicate that there is no significant departure from normality in the distribution of DEXP.

Table 4.2.2: Unit Root Test Results

Variable	ADF Unit Root Test			
	t-Statistic at Levels	P-value	t-Statistic at 1 st Difference	P-value
BRD	0.3614	0.7798	-2.5821	0.0126
DEXP	1.5086	0.9630	-5.6131	0.0000
EEXP	1.9348	0.9840	-4.9955	0.0000
ADMEXP	1.7413	0.9764	-4.8274	0.0000

Source: Authors Computation, 2024 (Eviews-10)

Table 4.2.2 presents the results of the Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) unit root test for each variable, both at levels and after taking the first difference:

Battle-Related Deaths (BRD): At levels, the ADF test statistic is 0.3614 with a p-value of 0.7798, indicating that battle-related deaths are non-stationary. After taking the first difference, the ADF test statistic becomes -2.5821 with a p-value of 0.0126, which is statistically significant at the 5% level. This suggests that the first difference of battle-related deaths is stationary.

Defense Expenditure (DEXP): At levels, the ADF test statistic is 1.5086 with a p-value of 0.9630, indicating that defense expenditure is non-stationary. After differencing, the ADF test statistic becomes -5.6131 with a p-value of 0.0000, indicating that the first difference of defense expenditure is stationary.

Table 4.2.3: Panel Regression Analysis (Dependent Variable: BRD)

Variable	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-Stat	p-Value
DEXP	-0.049438	0.535760	-0.092277	0.9276
EEXP	0.280962	0.914844	0.307115	0.7625
ADMEXP	-0.810966	0.554898	-1.461469	0.1621
C	0.950968	0.742195	1.281292	0.2173

$R^2 = 0.82$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.76$, F-Stat = 15.08696, Prob(F-stat) = 0.000010 DW = 0.99

Source: Authors Computation, 2024 (Eviews-10)

Table 4.2.3 presents the results of a panel regression analysis with battle-related deaths (BRD) as the dependent variable and DEXP (Defense Expenditure) is the independent variables. The coefficient for DEXP is negative (-0.0494), indicating that higher defense expenditure is associated with a decrease in battle-related deaths, but this effect is not statistically significant ($p = 0.9276$). Therefore, there is no strong evidence to suggest that defense expenditure influences battle-related deaths in Nigeria according to this analysis. While the direction of the effect suggests a potential reduction in violence with increased defense spending, the lack of significance indicates uncertainty in this effect.

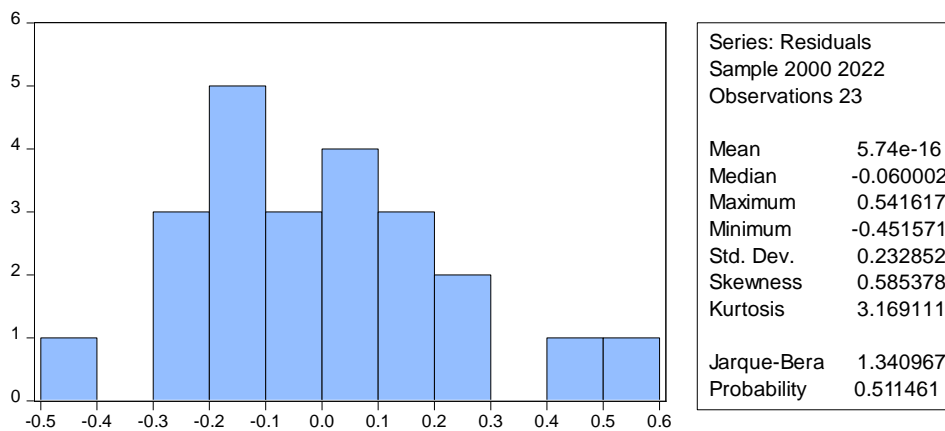


Figure 1: Jarque- Bera Test of Normality

Source: Authors Computation, 2024 (Eviews-10)

The acceptance of the hypothesis of non-normality is depicted in figure 1. This is because the p-value of the Jarque-Bera statistics is above the 5% level of significance. Based on the probability value in the figure, which is 0.511461, it can be inferred that the residuals follow a normal distribution.

Table 4.2.7: Spearman Rank-Order Covariance Analysis Result

	DEXP/BRD	EEXP/BRD	ADMEXP /BRD
Correlation	0.805336	0.813241	0.724308
t-Statistic	6.225366	6.404136	4.814086
P-Values	0.0000	0.0000	0.0001
Observation	32	32	32

Source: E-views 10.0 Software, 2024

Table presents the results of Spearman Rank-Order Covariance Analysis, which is a non-parametric method used to assess the strength and direction of association between two variables. The correlation coefficient between defense expenditure and battle-related deaths is 0.805336, also indicating a strong positive association. The t-statistic of 6.225366 and the p-value of 0.0000 further confirm the significance of this correlation. This implies that higher levels of defense spending are strongly correlated with increased occurrences of battle-related deaths in Nigeria.

TEST OF HYPOTHESES

Statement of Decision Criteria

Decision Rule: If the correlation coefficient (r) exceeds 0.7, the null hypothesis is rejected implying a strong relationship. Conversely, if the correlation coefficient is less than or equal to 0.7, the null hypothesis is accepted. This implies that the variables share no relationship. If the P-value falls below the 0.05 threshold, it signifies robust evidence to reject the null hypothesis, thus allowing the conclusion that the coefficient is statistically significant and distinct from zero. Conversely, when the P-value exceeds 0.05, the evidence is considered insufficient to reject the null hypothesis, leading to the acceptance of H_0 .

H_0 : Government expenditures on defence have no relationship with battle related deaths in Nigeria.

H₁: Government expenditures on defence have a strong relationship with battle related deaths in Nigeria.

Decision: The analysis indicates a correlation coefficient of 0.805336 between government expenditures on defense and battle-related deaths in Nigeria, surpassing the threshold of 0.7. Furthermore, the associated p-value of 0.0000 signifies high statistical significance. Consequently, we reject the null hypothesis, providing robust evidence of a strong relationship between government expenditures on defense and battle-related deaths in Nigeria. This suggests that higher levels of investment in defense initiatives by the government are strongly associated with increased occurrences of battle-related deaths within the country.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The strong positive correlation observed between government expenditures on defense and battle-related deaths in Nigeria may be attributed to several underlying factors. Firstly, higher defense spending often correlates with increased militarization and conflict escalation. Governments may allocate substantial resources to bolster their military capabilities, including personnel, weaponry, and infrastructure, in response to perceived security threats or internal conflicts. Consequently, heightened military presence and operations may inadvertently contribute to an escalation of hostilities, leading to more frequent and intense battles, and ultimately, higher casualties.

Additionally, the nature of defense expenditures itself can influence conflict dynamics and exacerbate violence. Investments in advanced weaponry, surveillance technologies, and military infrastructure may embolden governments to pursue aggressive security strategies, including preemptive strikes, counterinsurgency operations, and territorial expansion. Such tactics can provoke retaliatory actions from opposing forces, fueling a cycle of violence and perpetuating conflict. Moreover, defense spending often prioritizes offensive capabilities over diplomatic or peace-building efforts, further entrenching confrontational approaches to resolving disputes.

Furthermore, the correlation between defense expenditures and battle-related deaths may reflect broader systemic issues within Nigeria's security apparatus. Inefficient resource allocation, corruption, and institutional weaknesses within the defense sector can undermine the effectiveness of military operations and exacerbate vulnerabilities to insurgent groups or external threats. Limited transparency and accountability in defense spending may also facilitate wastage, mismanagement, and diversion of funds, compromising the military's ability to address security challenges effectively.

Moreover, the correlation between defense spending and battle-related deaths may be influenced by external factors, including regional instability, transnational terrorism, and arms proliferation. Nigeria's geopolitical context, characterized by porous borders, ethnic tensions, and the presence of militant groups such as Boko Haram and armed bandits, poses complex security challenges that necessitate substantial defense expenditures. However, the spill-over effects of conflicts in neighboring countries, illicit arms trafficking, and foreign interventions can exacerbate insecurity and drive-up casualties within Nigeria's borders.

Prior studies primarily focus on the relationship between government spending and economic growth, employing various econometric techniques such as ARDL models, OLS regression, Johansen co integration, and Granger causality tests. The consensus among these studies suggests a mixed impact of different categories of government expenditures on economic growth in Nigeria. For instance, Abdulraman et al. (2023) and Abdulraham Shaibu Mohammed (2023) find a positive and significant association between government capital expenditure and economic growth, whereas Ogochukwu & Oruta (2021) report a negative impact of capital expenditure on social services on economic growth. Similarly, Aladejan et al. (2021) highlight the positive relationship between government spending on education, transport, and communication with economic growth, but they note a negative association between defense spending and GDP.

In contrast, the correlation analysis focusing on government expenditures on defense and battle-related deaths in Nigeria reveals a strong positive relationship between these variables. Despite the

contrasting findings on the economic growth aspect, both sets of results underscore the importance of government expenditures on defense in shaping socio-economic outcomes in Nigeria. While the empirical review table examines the impact of defense spending on economic growth, the correlation analysis sheds light on the unintended consequences of heightened defense investments, namely, increased battle-related deaths.

The discrepancies between the two sets of findings may stem from differences in the methodologies employed, the variables included in the analysis, and the specific contexts under study. The prior studies primarily focus on the macroeconomic impact of government spending across various sectors, whereas the correlation analysis zooms in on a specific aspect of security expenditure and its implications for conflict dynamics.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the correlation between government expenditure on defense and the frequency of battle-related fatalities in Nigeria. Despite substantial spending in sectors aimed at bolstering security, Nigeria has continued to face significant insecurity issues. Tragic incidents, such as the mass killing of Christians in Plateau State on December 25, 2023, exemplify the ongoing threats citizens encounter daily. The rise of Boko Haram in 2010 has exacerbated fear among Nigerians, leading to heightened concerns over kidnappings, murders, abductions, and political violence. These persistent insecurities suggest that defense and security-related expenditures have not effectively mitigated violence across the nation, raising critical questions about the efficiency of government spending in ensuring national security and public safety.

The findings reveal a significant and troubling correlation between government expenditures—particularly on internal security, defense, education, health, and administration—and the frequency of battle-related deaths. The observed associations suggest that while the government allocates funds to various sectors to address security issues, these allocations alone may not be sufficient to curb violence. Instead, the findings imply that the root causes of conflict, including socioeconomic

factors, must be addressed alongside security spending to achieve more sustainable peace. This insight holds critical implications for policymakers, security professionals, and peacebuilding stakeholders, indicating that a re-evaluation of Nigeria's security spending is necessary to develop a more comprehensive approach that addresses both immediate security needs and underlying issues fueling violence.

In conclusion, while defense spending is a critical component of Nigeria's national budget, it must be balanced with investments in socioeconomic development to effectively address the factors driving insecurity. It is recommended that the Nigerian government foster collaborative engagement between the military, civilian authorities, and local communities to ensure more transparent, accountable security policies. This collaboration can support conflict prevention mechanisms and promote reconciliation efforts that address grievances before they escalate. Additionally, re-allocating a portion of defense funds to development programs in education, healthcare, and economic opportunities could reduce vulnerabilities, support social cohesion, and provide pathways toward lasting peace and stability in Nigeria.

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