

## **Influence of Security Challenges on Data Gathering in Social Sciences Research in Nigeria**

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doi: <https://doi.org/10.37745/ijirmmcs.15/vol9n25768>

Published: September 17 2023

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**Citation:** Igben H.G.O. and Okpodu B.O. (2023) Influence of Security Challenges on Data Gathering in Social Sciences Research in Nigeria, *International Journal of International Relations, Media and Mass Communication Studies*, Vol.9, No.2, pp.57-68

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**ABSTRACT:** *This paper examined how insecurity has negatively affected the data collection process in Nigeria with its overall negative implications for socio-economic development. It established that insecurity has raised both local and international concerns. Locally, socioeconomic interaction has remained under siege as a direct consequence of unabated incidents of insurgencies, kidnappings and robberies that have continued to intercept and disrupt major socio-economic growth-oriented processes. Internationally, images of insecurity in Nigeria as portrayed in the various media have continued to discourage foreign investors and other forms of inflow of foreign investment opportunities. Findings established that the process and quality of data collection have been largely affected as a result of insecurity which makes it difficult for committed researchers to access relevant sites and physical locations to secure reliable and valid data that would have supported objective research results and conclusions in the social sciences. The paper recommends that synergy among the various arms of the local security agents and commitment of the government towards the elimination of corruption in the war against insecurity will assist in enthroning the right research environment for the collection of reliable and valid data that can inspire growth-oriented socio-economic policy.*

**KEYWORDS:** Security, insecurity, research outcome, cybercrime, herdsmen, kidnapping, data collection, social sciences

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The significance of the symbiotic relationship between security and information collection cannot be underestimated. The nexus between the environment and the economy plays a vital role in achieving sustainable development (Pearce & Barbier, 2000). Nigeria, often referred to as the

"giant of Africa," has experienced an alarming surge in insecurity, including activities by Fulani herdsmen, Boko Haram insurgencies, armed robberies, kidnappings, political and religious crises, murders, destruction of oil facilities by Niger Delta militants, child abduction, and trafficking. These criminal acts perpetrated by various groups have resulted in the diversion of significant resources that could have been utilized towards the protection of lives and properties. The nation is facing a dire situation characterized by a decline in economic, political, social, and religious affairs, which is indicative of pervasive insecurity.

Moreover, industrialization efforts, socio-cultural harmony, and sustainable development are under imminent threat due to the prevailing insecurity. As a consequence, Nigeria has received low rankings in terms of security, as reflected in the Global Peace Index of 2012. The alarming rate of insecurity has necessitated the allocation of substantial resources and the diversion of government funds that would have been utilized for growth-oriented economic developmental projects, to war against insurgency and Boko Haram menace. The urgency to address the security challenges has become paramount to restore stability, foster economic growth, and ensure sustainable development in Nigeria.

The implication is that Nigeria symbolizes an unsafe place of abode and, to conduct objective research. Consequently, this phenomenon has made Nigeria to be included among one of the terrorist countries of the world. Investors, foreigners, expatriates and even indigenes of Nigeria are scared about commenting on, investing in and committing their hard-earned resources to lucrative businesses in Nigeria. Insecurity, therefore, refers to the state of fear, anxiety, restlessness, and uncertainty, stemming from the lackadaisical attitude of disgruntled and greedy politicians, militants and Boko Haram Sects (Ndubuisi-Okolo & Anigbuogu, 2019).

Nigeria, due to its rich cultural diversity, and economic potential, contributes significantly to the field of social sciences. However, Nigeria is also faced with numerous security challenges that have had far-reaching consequences on various aspects of the nation's development, including data gathering in the social sciences (Adeleke, 2013).

Over the years, Nigeria has grappled with security threats such as insurgency, terrorism, inter and intra-ethnic conflicts, communal violence, cybercrimes, and organized crime (Abdullahi, 2019, Okoro, 2018). These challenges have not only resulted in the loss of lives and property but have also had profound implications for research and data collection in the social sciences (Okoro, 2018). Okoro (2018) gave a detailed insecurity situation in the northern part of Nigeria when he noted that herdsmen have seized entire communities, kidnapped senior statesmen, burned down churches, killed church priests and other believers, killed policemen, raped, robbed and committed terrible crimes. The government has done little to stop the situation which is a serious threat to national security and national development.

One of the fundamental pillars of the social sciences is the collection of reliable and valid data to support evidence-based research and policymaking. According to Egbetokun, Olofinyehun, Sanni, Ayo-Lawal, Oluwatope and Yusuff (2022), data gathering serves as the foundation for understanding social phenomena, analyzing trends, and formulating effective strategies to address societal issues. However, the prevailing security challenges in Nigeria have posed significant obstacles to the data collection process, hindering the progress and quality of social science research.

Egbetokun, et al. (2022) noted that researchers in the social sciences face numerous hurdles, arising from a tempestuous climate when attempting to collect data in insecure environments. These challenges include limited access to research sites due to safety concerns, threats to personal security and well-being, difficulty in obtaining informed consent from participants, the risk of data loss or damage, and the overall disruption of research activities (Gierszewski, 2017). Consequently, the security challenges have compromised research findings' reliability, validity, and generalizability, undermining the credibility and impact of social science research in Nigeria.

The impact of security challenges on data gathering extends beyond the immediate difficulties that researchers face. It affects the overall research ecosystem, including research institutions, academic departments, funding agencies, and policymakers. The inability to collect accurate and comprehensive data inhibits the development of evidence-based policies and hinders the formulation of effective strategies to address social issues (Eaker, 2016). It also limits the availability of data for comparative studies, international collaborations, and the advancement of knowledge in the social sciences.

It is crucial to address the influence of security challenges on data gathering in the social sciences to ensure the validity and reliability of research outcomes in Nigeria. By understanding the nature and extent of these challenges, researchers, policymakers, and stakeholders can work together to develop strategies that mitigate the impact of insecurity on data collection processes. Such strategies may include adapting research methodologies, establishing secure data storage systems, fostering collaboration and knowledge sharing among researchers, and advocating for improved security measures in research environments (Ibrahim & Obaje, 2020; Onapajo & Adegbeye, 2021).

The security challenges in Nigeria have significantly affected the data-gathering process in the social sciences (Abdullahi & Anazodo, 2018). The limitations imposed by insecurity have hindered the collection of reliable and valid data, compromising the quality and credibility of social science research. Understanding the depth of these challenges and exploring potential solutions is essential to ensure that social science research in Nigeria remains robust, reliable, and impactful. By addressing the influence of security challenges on data gathering, researchers and policymakers can contribute to evidence-based decision-making, effective policy formulation, and the overall development of the nation.

The influence of security challenges on data gathering in the social sciences in Nigeria presents a significant problem for researchers and scholars, this extends beyond the immediate limitations researchers face. It affects the overall advancement of the social sciences discipline in Nigeria, leading to a scarcity of data, weak theoretical frameworks, and limited empirical evidence (Adeleke, 2017). This hampers the progress of the social sciences as a field of study and impedes Nigeria's development. Despite the significance of the issue, there is a limited body of research specifically addressing the influence of security challenges on data gathering in the social sciences in Nigeria. Existing studies often focus on specific incidents or regions, lacking a holistic understanding of the broader implications for data collection and research practices.

This study explores the influence of security challenges on data gathering in the social sciences in Nigeria, with a focus on identifying the specific challenges researchers face, establishing the consequences for data quality and reliability, exploring strategies to mitigate the impact of security challenges, and highlighting the implications for research, policy formulation, and societal development.

**The objective of the paper is to:**

1. Identify the security challenges social science researchers face in Nigeria
2. Establish how these security challenges impede the process of data gathering in the social sciences
3. Determine the consequence of compromised data gathering on the quality of research outcomes
4. Establish what strategies can be adopted to mitigate the impact of security challenges on data collection in the social sciences.

This paper on the influence of security challenges on data gathering in the social sciences in Nigeria holds several significant implications. Firstly, it addresses a critical problem researchers and scholars face in the country. By exploring the specific challenges encountered in data collection due to security issues, the paper sheds light on an under-researched area, filling a gap in knowledge and understanding.

Secondly, the findings have broader implications for the field of social sciences in Nigeria. The scarcity of data, weak theoretical frameworks, and limited empirical evidence resulting from security challenges hinder the progress and development of the discipline. By recognizing these implications, the paper emphasizes the urgent need to address the issue and find effective strategies to overcome security challenges, ensuring the availability of reliable and comprehensive data for research purposes.

Furthermore, the paper highlights the significance of data gathering in informing evidence-based policymaking and decision-making processes. Social science research plays a crucial role in

informing policies, programmes, and interventions aimed at addressing societal issues and promoting development. By understanding and mitigating the impact of security challenges on data collection, policymakers and practitioners can make better-informed decisions and develop more effective strategies to address socio-economic, and political challenges in Nigeria.

### *Literature review*

In Nigeria, the issue of security challenges has had significant implications for data gathering in the social sciences. The country has experienced a range of security issues, including insurgencies, conflicts, and criminal activities. These challenges have directly affected the ability of researchers and scholars to collect reliable data for their studies and have introduced various obstacles in the research process.

One key impact of security challenges on data gathering is the limited access to research sites. Insecurity often leads to the restriction of movement in certain areas, making it difficult for researchers to reach communities and interact with research participants. In some cases, entire regions may become inaccessible due to conflicts or high crime rates, making it virtually impossible to conduct on-the-ground research (Pearce & Barbier, 2000).

Moreover, the presence of security threats can create a climate of fear and mistrust among the population, which can impede data collection efforts. Individuals may be reluctant to participate in research activities or share sensitive information due to concerns about their safety or potential repercussions. This hesitancy to engage with researchers can result in gaps in data and a skewed representation of the population in social science studies.

Additionally, the security challenges in Nigeria can disrupt the continuity and consistency of data-gathering processes. Research projects often require longitudinal studies or repeated visits to collect data over time. However, frequent security incidents can disrupt these plans, forcing researchers to suspend or alter their data collection strategies. This inconsistency in data collection can impact the validity and reliability of research findings.

Furthermore, the presence of security challenges can directly alter the research infrastructure. Research institutions may suffer from damage or destruction during conflicts or acts of violence. This can lead to the loss of valuable resources, equipment, and data archives, further hindering data-gathering efforts in the social sciences.

To address these challenges, researchers and institutions must adopt innovative approaches to data gathering in insecure environments. This may involve leveraging technology and remote data collection methods, such as online surveys or phone interviews, to overcome physical limitations. Collaboration and partnerships with local organizations and communities can also enhance access to data and foster trust among research participants.

The influence of security challenges on data gathering in the social sciences in Nigeria is a significant concern. The limitations imposed by insecurity, including restricted access, fear among the population, disruption of research processes, and damage to research infrastructure, pose considerable obstacles to obtaining reliable and comprehensive data. Researchers, institutions, and policymakers need to recognize these challenges and work collaboratively to develop strategies that ensure the integrity and validity of social science research in insecure environments.

### *Nigeria and Security Challenge*

The country has witnessed political and tribal/ethnic conflicts, political assassinations, and kidnapping/abduction incidents in different regions. Additionally, there are cases of armed robbery, human trafficking, environmental degradation, and separatist movements such as the Niger Delta agitation. Other issues include desertification in some parts of Northern Nigeria, erosion problems in the Southern Eastern region, and annual urban floods. The security concerns extend beyond militarization or national security alone.

The conflict between Fulani herdsmen and farmers has emerged as a significant security problem. The encroachment of farmlands by Fulani herders has led to clashes, resulting in loss of lives, destruction of properties and farmlands, and displacement of communities (Ajibefun, 2017). The root causes of this crisis include economic factors and religious differences. Herdsmen claim that their cows are killed due to religious reasons, while farmers perceive the herders as a threat to their crops (Ajibefun, 2017).

The Fulani herdsmen's killings and conflicts with farmers have had severe socio-economic implications and have disrupted intergroup relationships. The situation is considered to be the second most significant insecurity issue after the Boko Haram insurgency (Okoro, 2018). The herdsmen's use of sophisticated weapons poses a grave danger to national security, as security personnel, including the police, have struggled to counter their boldness and firepower (Olakiitan, 2016). The displacement of farmers has also resulted in a drastic reduction in agricultural production in Nigeria (Chukwuma, 2016).

The Fulani herdsmen crisis has had adverse effects on the Nigerian economy as a whole. Various sectors have been disrupted by the ongoing violence and insecurity, particularly affecting food production (Dauda, 2019). The consequences of this crisis are comparable to those of Boko Haram, as they both have a significant negative impact on the economy (Abdullahi, 2019).

Crisis and violence in a multi-ethnic, cultural, and religious community like Nigeria are inevitable, but they lead to various forms of retardation and underdevelopment, destroying lives, farmland, and property. These crises have had devastating effects on intergroup relationships in the country (Olukunle, 2018).

Environmental factors also contribute to conflicts, including degradation, scarcity of resources, and demands. Inadequate availability of natural resources, such as water, arable lands, and oil, leads to environmental scarcity, which pushes people to migrate in search of resources (Agboola, 2020). Desertification and environmental changes in Nigeria's far north have impacted agriculture and livelihoods, forcing pastoralists and others to migrate south (Agboola, 2020). The herders' attacks on farming communities have generated political, economic, and religious conspiracy theories. Some perceive the attacks as part of a Fulani plot to displace indigenous populations and seize their lands. Among Christian communities, the attacks are seen as a form of religious conflict, while Biafra separatist groups in the southeast view them as a northern conspiracy to impose Islam and dominate the south. These allegations, though lacking solid evidence, exacerbate interfaith distrust and undermine national unity (Richards, 2019).

#### *Possible Causes of Security Challenges in Nigeria*

The causes of security threats in Nigeria are many; Catholic Laity Connial of Nigeria (CLCN, 2019) however, identifies the following as root causes of insecurity:

(1) Breakdown of cherished cultural values. Cultural values link the community with their ancestors and with God. The value of the sacredness of life helps to show all attitude contrary to the promotion of human life while the value of communication stands against all attitudes that tends to promote excessive individualism and despotism. Both values help create a humane community where other values, antidotes to moral crises, are cultivated.

(2) Injustices and faulty justice system. The consequence is that the rule of law has become the rule of men. Most of the laws are archaic and moribund. Some are prescriptions made by superiors for binding on inferiors. This supports the existence of some “untouchables”, cabals who are above the laws of this land. They can neither be arrested nor prosecuted. The worship of the untouchables of the land is a juxtaposition that reveals an aspect of security challenges in Nigeria. Such an example is the refusal of the former Head of State, General Ibrahim Babangida who repeatedly defied summons to appear before the Justice Oputa panel to answer allegations of human rights abuses. Big shots in the country have been linked with the sponsorship of Boko Haram insurgency and herdsman killings in Nigeria where thousands of lives have been lost and thousands displaced, yet the untouchable are still parading the streets unscratched. James Ibori was innocent at home but guilty abroad, Nigeria law is meant for only the poor (Sat. Punch 04/04/2021).

(3) Religious intolerance and ethnic conflict. Effiong (2019) also identifies the following factors religious intolerance and ethnic conflicts.

- Devotion of one's religion.
- Value conflict.
- Psychological jealousy.
- Unregulated competition.
- Alibi of other conflicts
- Growing pains

These aforementioned points have independently or collectively been causal elements influencing action throughout the history of security challenges emanating from religious intolerance. It could be overzealousness to one's religion, competition for scarce goods, or attitude to certain individuals of a religious belief that could provoke psychological jealousy which in turn leads to some kind of violence. It could be linked to ostensibly cultural differences that spill over into political conflict, reducing ends to economics.

(4) Poverty/unemployment/low wages: Effiong (2019) states that Nigeria faces severe poverty, unemployment and low wages of workers. Retired civil servants in the country also complain of an inadequate pension system and lack of social planning. Unemployed young people seek solace in devil's workshops, committing crimes and creating security problems, while low-paid workers resort to official corruption and low productivity. Pensioners resort to complaints and attacks on the government.

(5) Unrestricted flow of deadly weapons. This is the proliferation of light weapons. Some politicians who have procured weapons to protect unemployed youths and succeed in campaigns and elections have not recovered the weapons from the youths. They now use these weapons to form cult groups and commit armed robberies and kidnappings for ransom. As a result, violent crime is increasing in our country, creating security problems.

(6) Greed and selfishness. Like Thomas Hobbes's state of nature, people seek only the satisfaction of their interests. There are no rules of conduct beyond personal gain and satisfaction. But in pursuit of personal gain, people have argued, argued and debated over several aspects of the country's security agenda.

(7) Ignorance of God and God's commands: Man's pursuit of the desires of his nature causes him to deviate from the standards of the Spirit. They are two enemies (Galatians 5 vs 16-26). The anxiety that threatens human nature manifests itself in immoral, unclean, and lewd actions (Is 65:1-8). These are worrisome signs for a country that is moving toward a state of emergency, chaos, or dangerous collapse. (8) Greed and selfishness. Like Thomas Hobbes' state of nature, people simply seek gratification for their gain. There is no rule of action other than self-interest and its satisfaction. But in the pursuit of personal development, men conflict, argue and fight with each other over the country's security challenges. (9) Neglect of God and His commands: In pursuing the desires of human nature, man has deviated from the standards of the spirit. They are two enemies (Galatians 5 vs. 16-26). Insecurity is imminent because human nature manifests itself through immoral, dirty, and indecent actions (Isaiah 1:20). 65 vs. 1-8). These are worrying signs for a country moving dangerously toward a state of emergency, chaos or disaster.

Nigeria in recent times has witnessed an unprecedented level of threat to security. This has made national security to be a major issue in Nigeria. Eme, Nwachukwu & Olise (2017) identify the following as part of the causes of security threats in Nigeria. These include youth unemployment, the culture of get-rich-quick based on greed, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons as well and inadequate policing of our borders and maritime environment. Also, Achumba; Ighomereho & Akpor-Robaro (2013) states the causes of security challenges in Nigeria include: a lack of institutional capacity resulting in government failure, pervasive material inequalities and

unfairness, ethnoreligious conflicts, conflict of perceptions between the public and government, weak security system, loss of socio-cultural and communal value system. He further mentioned these as immediate and proximate factors which caused security threats in Nigeria: Porous borders, rural/urban drift, social irresponsibility of companies, unemployment/ poverty, terrorism and insecurity of the business environment.

### **Mitigating the impact of security challenges on data collection in the social sciences**

One crucial strategy to mitigate the impact of security challenges on data collection in the social sciences is streamlining the roles of security and law enforcement agencies (Saleh, 2021). This can be achieved by amending the acts establishing relevant agencies, such as the NPF, FRSC, and NSCDC, to delineate their specific responsibilities and eliminate overlapping functions. By enhancing efficiency and reducing duplication, the coordination of these agencies in addressing security threats can be significantly improved (Saleh, 2021).

Developing strategic media initiatives is another effective strategy. This involves purposeful communication to counter the negative exploitation of social media platforms by extremist groups. The government can establish defence websites, radio stations, and satellite TV stations to disseminate accurate information, counter-propaganda, and raise public awareness (Hallahan et al, 2007). By denying these groups a voice and targeting their secret supporters, tolerance for their activities can be hindered.

Eliminating corruption and promoting justice is crucial in mitigating security challenges (Onimajesin 2013). Corruption breeds political instability, social unrest, and crime, hindering progress and development. It is necessary to implement measures that promote transparency, accountability, and ethical values (Onimajesin 2013). Nepotism and a culture of impunity must be eradicated to restore trust and integrity.

Addressing unemployment is also vital in mitigating security challenges. Joblessness contributes to personal hardship, crime, and social unrest. The government should support the private sector in creating employment opportunities, and providing constant electricity supply to boost productivity (Oluwarotimi, 2021) By reducing unemployment rates, individuals' livelihoods are improved, leading to social stability (Saleh, 2021).

Proper equipment and training for security agencies are essential to enhance their effectiveness. Regular training, especially in areas such as human rights, weapon handling, and information technology, should be provided. Reorganizing security agencies and strengthening neighbourhood watch programmes can also contribute to crime prevention. Additionally, encouraging the public to be actively involved in security information sharing is crucial.

The promotion of good governance is a fundamental strategy to address security challenges. According to Oluwarotimi (2012), good governance is the panacea for the insecurity challenge in Nigeria. She states that the war against insecurity would be won only by raising the standard of governance that is, cultivating the culture of good governance where the government is responsible and accountable to the people. Effective governance ensures accountability, transparency, and responsiveness to the needs of the people. Leadership development and the implementation of well-conceived economic policies and human development programmes are key elements of good governance. Corporate organizations can also play a role in ensuring good governance and contributing to the well-being of society (Saleh, 2021).

By implementing these strategies, researchers can mitigate the impact of security challenges on data collection in the social sciences. It is important to prioritize the safety and well-being of researchers and participants while ensuring the integrity and quality of the data collected.

## **CONCLUSION**

The influence of security challenges on data gathering in the social sciences in Nigeria is a significant problem that hampers the progress of the discipline and impedes the development of the country. This paper argues that until the various security challenges researchers are faced with are addressed with all seriousness and sincerity, data quality and reliability, and the implications for research, policy formulation, and societal development will continue to be of great concern.

### **Recommendations:**

1. To mitigate the impact of security challenges, it is essential to streamline the roles of security and law enforcement agencies. The concerted efforts of all associated security agencies will be required to streamline the roles and responsibilities of security and law enforcement agencies involved in data-gathering processes. This can be achieved through amendments to relevant establishment acts to delineate specific roles and enhance efficiency. By clarifying overlapping functions and promoting coordination among agencies such as the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC), and Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC), data collection efforts can be improved
2. Strategic media initiatives should be developed to counter the negative exploitation of social media by groups like Boko Haram. By strategically using communication to deny propaganda teams a voice and raise public awareness of their illegitimate claims, the influence and appeal of such groups can diminish, enhance the data collection environment, improve the reliability of research outcomes, and contribute to the advancement of the social sciences in Nigeria.

3. Collaboration among policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders should be encouraged to create a synergy that can work to overcome the influence of security challenges on data gathering in the social sciences and promote a more secure and prosperous Nigeria.
4. Furthermore, the study recommends the elimination of corruption and entrenchment of justice in Nigeria. This includes tackling nepotism, impunity, and unethical values that contribute to insecurity. By promoting good governance and creating employment opportunities for unemployed youth, social and economic conditions can improve, thereby reducing security challenges and facilitating better data collection.

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