Missiological Response to Challenges of Insecurity in Nigeria

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Abstract

Insecurity is a universal concern because of its increasing setback in developing nations. Africa suffers a lot from the adverse effects of insecurity on the globe. Likewise, Nigeria, the most populous black nation in the world, has, over the last ten to twelve years, experienced various insecurity challenges. Kidnapping, Fulani herders' attacks, and armed robbery, among others, have led to the destruction of lives and properties and fear and panic among the indigenous and settlers (dwellers). Several methods of solving this menace of insecurity have proven over the years to be insufficient as insecurity remains on the increase in some regions of the country; there is a need to respond to the insecurity problems through the activities of the Church (Christian missions). This report provides a concise missiological response to the insecurity challenges in contemporary Nigeria. This combination of conventional and spiritual methodology in resolving insecurity problems is a vital step to be taken by stakeholders in fighting it. Spiritual input of the Church, such as prayer, Bible studies, and creating public awareness, are parts of strategies for missiological response to the challenges of insecurity. Therefore, through the descriptive research method, the writer will elucidate the current trend of insecurity in Nigeria, its causes, and the missiological response to insecurity and draw a logical conclusion.

Keywords: Missiological Challenges, Insecurity, Christian missions, and Nigeria

Introduction

Insecurity is a global phenomenon that has cut the attention of many agencies and bodies for urgent solutions. Globalization has made the effects of international and domestic insecurity activities a focus because every nation of the world is interrelated, and its effects on one nation will be felt by the other nations directly or indirectly. African society, known for its communal coexistence, cherishes peaceful living. Insecurity causes grievous damage to people's worldviews. African countries are experiencing new dimensions of insecurity that are sometimes political, economic, and religiously motivated.

In the past few years, Nigeria experienced the insurgencies of Fulani herders, *Boko Haram*, armed robbery, banditry, and kidnapping that have made life difficult for the general public. Perpetrators hide under the umbrella of unemployment, poverty, hunger, and a host of other reasons[2]. The Nigerian government has been responding over the years by developing various security measures to curb the causes of insecurity. For instance, schemes and services such as N-power were designed to empower the youths with the necessary skills and opportunities to overcome unemployment[3]. Other local, state, and federal government programs are primarily put in place to reduce insecurity in the country.

There is some measure of success in the national security efforts of upgrading their facilities and recruiting more personnel. However, the present situation demands more than using physical ammunition alone. However, other disciplines

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[2] Francis Idowu Akinsowon, "Root Causes Of Security Challenges In Nigeria And Solutions" *International Journal of Innovative Social Sciences & Humanities Research* Vol. 9 No. 4 (2021):174

[3] N-Power - NASIMShttps://nasims.gov.ng › programs › Npower (accessed 20th October, 2022)

have researched providing strategic solutions to the challenges of insecurity in the nation. Many such disciplines have proven not to have achieved the intended goal of curbing insecurity because there is evidence of continuous cases of insecurity in the nation. This article responds to Nigeria's insecurity issues using missiological approaches that combine anthropological and theological disciplines. It views the current trends and causes of insecurity in Nigeria and proposes some Christian missions' responses to them.

Current Trend of Insecurity in Nigeria

The security challenges of Nigeria are majorly internal than external. The internal ones include armed robbery, sea piracy, kidnapping, hostage-taking, ethnic crisis, religious insurgencies, and electoral violence[4]. There is diversity in the rate of occurrence of each current trend of insecurity. Each geopolitical zone of the nation varies in its security challenges. Some vices are common in some particular regions or states of the country. Insecurity has dramatically affected the development process of the nation.

Troubles, gruesome murders, robberies by violence, rape, cultism, ritual killings, bribery, official corruption, obtaining goods/money by pretences, high people kidnapping and abductions, and child stealing are typical in the urban centre of the country. David Oluwadiya Ashaolu reported the situations of the southern half and northern half of the country as follows:

> Violent crime affecting foreigners is a severe problem, especially in Lagos and the country's southern half. Visitors and resident Americans report widespread armed muggings, assaults,

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[4] Isaac Olawale Albert, "Nigeria's Security Challenges in Historical Perspective", *Security Challenges and Management in Modern Nigeria*, (UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018): 4

burglaries, carjackings, and extortion, often involving violence. Carjackings, roadblock robberies, and armed break-ins often occur, with victims sometimes shot by assailants for no apparent reason. Reports of armed robberies in broad daylight on rural roads in the country's northern half appear to be increasing. Law enforcement authorities usually respond to crimes slowly, if at all, and provide little or no investigative support to victims.[5]

The report indicates that no place is entirely secure in the nation. In rural areas, there are continued cla**shes between herders and farmers. Continues violent disputes have existed between** farmers and nomadic animal herders in Nigeria for many years. The spread of the Sahara Desert and climate change has increased the disagreements over the usage of farmland, water, and grazing routes. Due to the limited farmlands and water, herders move further south, looking for pasture[6]. The movement has led to the death of thousands because of limited resources.

Religious and political violence associated with a bomb blast and the use of other sophisticated offensive weapons to destroy lives and properties are more common in the northern region than in the country's western region. Since the inception of the crisis, Nigeria's international partners have mentioned that Boko Haram cannot be defeated on battlefield strategies alone. They have pinpointed the need for a multidimensional response that can handle the different types of insecurity in the region; these include chronic, corrupt governance, weaknesses in

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[5] David Oluwadiya Ashaolu, *Solving Security Challenges in Nigeria Through Intelligence* Gathering and Surveillance 2012),6 at: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2275986

[6] *Gbolahan Samuel Moronfolu, Insecurity Challenges in Nigeria: Way Out Of Seeming Despondency https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2022/04/18/insecurity-challenges-in-nigeria-way-out-of-seeming-despondency/(Accessed 25th October, 2022)*

service delivery, and environmental degradation[7]. Many other terrorist activities have been noticeable in the nation, which shows that the activities of Boko Haram are still ongoing.

One of the current insecurity trends that threaten families in Nigeria is the reoccurring kidnapping of school children from their classrooms and boarding houses.

> About 2,000 students have been kidnapped from their schools since December 2020. A few abductees were only released after thousands of dollars were paid as ransom. Some of the criminals are commonly referred to as "bandits." These criminals kidnap civilians, raid villages, and burn structures, including churches. Attacks by criminals have forced thousands of individuals to abandon their dwellings and seek shelter in other parts of the country[8].

Nigerians are living in fear, and no state is safe in the country. Churches have been attacked during worship services. People are going missing without knowing there were about. The government has tried to solve the issue of insecurity, and there is only a slight improvement[9]. It is essential to know that the reasons for insecurity are complicated and that it takes more than military strategies and engagements to tackle them.

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[7] Saskia Brechenmacher, *Stabilizing Northeast Nigeria After Boko Haram* (Massachusetts Avenue: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2019), 1

[8]*Gbolahan Samuel Moronfolu, Insecurity Challenges in Nigeria: Way Out Of Seeming Despondency https://www.thisdaylive.com/index.php/2022/04/18/insecurity-challenges-in-nigeria-way-out-of-seeming-despondency/(Accessed 25th October, 2022)*

[9] Babagana Monguno, *National Security Strategy*, https://ctc.gov.ng/wp-content/uploads/2020 /03/ONSA-UPDATED.pdf (accessed 23rd October, 2022)

Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

Various things lead to national insecurity. The causes are complex, as some of them are interrelated. Below are thirteen cogent causes of insecurity in Nigeria.

Poverty: Poverty is the lack of capability to function effectively in society. It results in increased hunger, an unfortunate health system, crime, corruption, stealing, and kidnap. Such is the ironic experience of a nation endowed with diverse natural resources and a human population. Nigeria's malnutrition level ranks 103 out of 121 countries in the world.[10] The average income per capita does not give an accurate picture due to Nigeria's high-income inequality.

Inequality: Inequality implies a concentration of distribution, whether one is considering income, consumption, or some other welfare indicators or attributes. The income inequality between the people in rural and urban areas in Nigeria is remarkably high, as those who live in the rural areas base all their income on agriculture which is today not a thriving sector in Nigeria as oil has taken over the economy[11]. They do not invest their money to acquire skills as people in urban areas would, making them more vulnerable to social and economic problems such as violence and corruption.

Unemployment: Unemployment is a significant factor contributing to insecurity in Nigeria. There is a strong correlation between joblessness and insecurity. As a common adage has it, "an idle man is the devil's workshop." The political leaders can easily have their ways by giving a token to the youth to kill and destroy property. When people are unemployed, their

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[10] Bertram Nwannekanma and Waliat Musa, "Nigeria's Hunger level "serious, ranks 103 out of 121 countries", www.guardian.org (posted on17th October, 2022) (Accessed 25th October, 2022)

[11] Chimobi Ucha, "Poverty in Nigeria: Some Dimensions and Contributing Factors" *Global Majority E-Journal* Vol. 1, No. 1 (2010): 61

source of livelihood depletes over time[12]. The cost of living becomes high, and the standard of living goes down. Due to unemployment, some people start to engage in shady practices to have a reasonable standard of living. Some unemployed youths quickly engage in various crimes of stealing, kidnapping, and fraud.

Corruption: In Nigeria, corruption is rampant. It is a pandemic in most government sectors. Corruption has possessed many Nigerian leaders, who are obsessed with it because it runs through their veins. In Nigeria, "corruption happens in many forms, and it has contributed immensely to the insecurity and misery of a large segment of the Nigerian population."[13] Lack of trust is widespread among citizens because anything can go wrong. The corrupt practices of the people have made some individuals believe that everyone in the secular or sacred sectors is corrupted in one way or the other. For instance, many people are in prison because of the offense of others while the real offenders have gone free.

Non-Diversification of the Economy: While Nigeria's insecurity has been identified to be caused by many factors, Nigeria's non-diversification of the economy can be seen as a significant factor: In Nigeria, those in power have practically ignored other sources of income, and today, Nigeria depends heavily on exporting oil. People in the region where there is oil feel the government is exploiting them[14] and those in another part of the country feel abandoned by the same government. The results are the vandalization of oil pipelines in an environment where they can be found. In regions with no oil, the people view the government as irresponsible to their welfare,

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[12] Ibid, 61

[13] Ismail Hussein Amzat, "The Effect Of Poverty On Education In Nigeria: Obstacles And Solutions" *Oida International Journal Of Sustainable Development* Vol: 01, No. 04, (2010):60

[14] Roseline U. Okeke, Government Ethics and The Management of Environmental Conflict in Ogoniland, Religion and Governance in Nigeria, Jacob K Ayantayo, Oyinloye A Dada, and Helen A.Labeodan (editors) (Ibada: Department of Religious Studies, 2021), 76

and they have to take it from the few with money and properties by fraud.

Laziness: Laziness is a common disease that is virtually suffered by many Nigerians today, especially those from wealthy households. Everyone wants to be comfortable, but not all are ready to work toward it[15]; this often leads to greed, where people will do whatever they can to get their family wealth. Also, some people view others as more privileged, and they have to take all they can from them by force. The "get rich now" syndrome has affected many Nigerian youths, and they find it difficult to wait to make genuine wealth patiently.

Poor Education System: Education can play a significant role in reducing insecurity. According to the World Bank, education is central to development[16]. It promotes economic growth, national productivity, and innovation and values democracy and social cohesion. In Nigeria, the uneducated population accounts for most of the people involved in street violence. Some of the people well exposed to the higher education systems cannot solve practical problems that can be relevant to the nation. The educational system that will be productive must inculcate practical and applicable knowledge and morals.

COVID-19: Along with its direct cost to human lives, COVID-19 has resulted in a global economic problem whose shock waves continue to spread, putting more lives at risk. Without an adequate global joint response, the significant effects of the pandemic and its armed conflict, economic fallout, and climate change will continue to affect humanity negatively.[17] There is increased insecurity after the pandemic. The economic effects of the pandemic have made some citizens lose some finances and struggle to recover at all costs.

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[15] Ibid, 46

[16] Okeke,, 46

[17] World bank group, *International Bank for Reconstruction and Development* (Washington DC: The World Bank, 2020), 1

Poor Parenting: All the people causing insecurity in the nation are from one family or the other. Many a time, it is a lack of proper home training that result in diverse insecurity vices. When parents are involved in such practices that disturb the peace of a nation, it will be difficult to stop the youths[18]. The parents need to play their roles as teachers and guides to make them good examples for a better nation.

Religion: Christianity is known as a religion of peace, and so also is Islam[19]. However, there has been a severe crisis between these two major religions of the country.[20] Significant tension occurred when the issue of Sharia was raised when the country was drafting a new constitution. It occurred in preparation for a return to civil rule in 1977[21]. On several occasions, several violent killings have called for international interventions in the northern region. For instance, thousands of people have been affected by the activities of the terrorist group called Boko Haram in northeastern part of Nigeria. These religious extremists are known to recruit youths for their activities. Many houses, churches, and properties have been destroyed.

Politics: the country's political system since independence has led to the shedding of blood. Many lives were claimed as the politician used their influence and took advantage of the

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[18] Oke S. Odunayo, Conflict Resolution Through Integrity, Integrity: Instructive Lessons in Leadership, Samson Aderinto Adedokun and Isaac Deji Ayegboyin (Editors) (Ibadan: Baptist Press, 2018), 270

[19] Paulinus Ikechukwu Odozor, MoralityTruly Christian, Truly African(Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2014), 191

[20] Wilson E. Ehianu, Religious Crises in Nigeria and their Implications for Good Governance and Development, Religion and Governance in Nigeria, Jacob K Ayantayo, Oyinloye A Dada, and Helen A.Labeodan (editors) (Ibada: Department of Religious Studies, 2021), 219

[21] J. A. Onimhawo and P.O.O. Ottuh, An Exploration of Inter-Religions Relations in Nigeria: The Christian-Muslim Experience, Issues in Religious Studies and Philosophy, Celestina O. Isiramen (eduitor) (Ibadan: Enjoy Press, 2010), 97

masses by making them fight each other. The violence and killing in many states are traceable to some political influences.

Ethnicity: Nigeria as a nation is a fusion of several nation-states with different ethnic identities. Many ethnic groups had maintained loose contact with one another prior to their union into a nation in 1914.[22] The regions already had their unique administration styles, and it was difficult for them to be united. Therefore tension results from the amalgamation.

Missiological Response to Insecurity

The Nigerian Church has a definite responsibility to respond and promote national security. Insecurity should not continue unabated in the nation. Christian missions are to influence the nation. Christian missions, which are the Church's activities to evangelize people inside and outside the four walls of the Church, responses can be viewed from two perspectives either to bring about immediate solutions or to develop a strategic plan for future results. These include;

Proclamation of the Gospel

The leaders and the masses who become agents of insecurity because of social-economic reasons are primarily influenced by their sinful nature. They need a spiritual transformation that comes through the gospel's effect. Evangelization touches on the core cause of insecurity. Genuine transformation may start or end with soul conversion because it is the priority. Christ paid the price on Calvary to set all humanity free from all sin, fears, and powers of darkness, but this unfathomable gift can only be obtained through personal faith in Him[23]. The Church

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[22] Isreal Adelani Akanji, Towards a Theology of Conflict Solution: Understanding Religious Conflict In Contemporary Nigerian Society, (Abuja: Elis Associates, 2021), 353

[23] Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1993), 27

needs to reach out with the gospel to all people before they will become agents of insecurity.

Discipleship

Discipleship is the process of bringing believers to maturity. There is little that children can achieve until they are mature. The Christians in Nigeria are predominantly infants in faith that cannot achieve much for national transformation. Some Christians are even known to be involved in atrocities that lead to national insecurity[24]. The Church must disciple its members to be impactful on the nation. Christ is the world's light, and the more Christians are transformed into His image, the more they shine and secure the nation.

Empowerment

One of the main functions of the Christian missions is to empower the converts to the level that they can become their agents of change[25]. The church missionary arm can organize training in economic issues. Ignorance itself is a significant hindrance to self-improvement. Poverty is a significant factor that leads many to engage in activities that lead to national insecurity. If many people know what to do, they will do them and improve their lots without considering other unhealthy engagements. It should be preferred to doling out charity to the poor. An adage says, "If you gift a man a fish, you feed him a day; but if you train him how to catch fish, you feed him for a lifetime" Churches and Christian organizations can set up banks where poor people can take loans for investments with little or no interest.[26] The Church can form a committee

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[24] Forster A. Dion and Oostenbrink, W. Johann "Where is the church on Monday? Awakening the church to the theology and practice of ministry and mission in the marketplace", *In die Skriflig* Vol. 49No. 3(2015):4

[25] Akinyemi O. Alawode, "Preface", Mission *of Yahweh: A festschrift in Honour or Rev. Dr. Remi Awopegba*, (Ibadan: Baptist Press, 2021), xi

[26] Adewunmiju, Peter Olutayo, A Biblical Approach and Response to Poverty, *American Journal of Biblical Theology*,

monitored by the church pastor or missions pastor to render financial assistance to people with a practicable small-scale business idea but lacks capital.

Education

By the salt metaphor, Jesus says Christians can influence and keep society from deteriorating socially and culturally[27]. Christians need to have a perspective that they have something to give to assist the world. Knowledge is a key to liberating people from fear of insecurity.[28]The churches need to formally and informally educate the public to be literate and develop security skills, such as alertness, verbal and non-verbal communication, and fitness. The Church can organize seminars and conferences that will be aired through radio, television, and other social media in languages the locals can comprehend. The Church can also build mission schools at all levels, nursery, primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions, with the primary motive of transforming the nation.

Leadership Development

Nigeria needs visionary leaders that are people of integrity. The Church must encourage mature members who want to be involved in politics or any leadership position in the nation. Christians should be encouraged to take up leadership positions at all levels of society[29]. The Church can have special prayers for such individuals during the worship service to

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https://www.biblicaltheology.com/Research adewunmijuPO01.pdf (Accessed 25th October, 2022)

[27] Tim Keller, "Cities and Salt: Counter-Cultures for the Common Good", *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement*: A Reader, 4 th Edition (Pasadena: William Carey Library, 2013), 611

[28] David Oyedepo, *winning the war against poverty*, (Canaan Land: Dominion Publishing House, 2006), 99

[29] Dion. and Johann. 4

demonstrate their recognition. Transparency and justice must reign in the nation if insecurity is to be reduced.

Counselling and Awareness of Personal Responsibility

Developing a counselling strategy for people living in insecurity demands special skills and training. The counsellor needs to demonstrate empathy, compassion, and unconditional positive regard, ask questions about the things they do not understand and listen to the responses to those questions[30]. The counsellors must be able to use specifically person-centred and relational approaches and, at the same time, recognize client strengths and empowerment.[31] To be competent in poverty counselling, the counsellor must be an excellent advocate. Counsellors can advocate with or on their client's behalf by assisting them with problem-solving and finding resources, increasing client access, and challenging poverty stereotypes.[32]

The counsellor should be able to give clients biblical principles on security management. The Church should be sensitive to the security challenges of its environment. The Church should alert the members to any ongoing security challenge in the community. Also, the Church can organize seminars and invite security personnel to discuss acceptable security skills under national laws and regulations.

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[30]Louisa L. Foss-Kelly, Margaret M. Generali, Victoria E. Kress, "Stepping across the poverty line and Counseling Individuals Living in Poverty". *Counseling Strategies for Empowering People Living in Poverty: The I-CARE Model,* vol 45, issues 3, (2017): 201

[31] Madeline Clark, Clark Ausloos, Colleen Delaney, Linda Waters, Lena Salpietro, and Hannah Tippett, "Best Practices for Counseling Clients Experiencing Poverty: A Grounded Theory", *Journal of Counseling & Development,* Volume 98 (2020):291

[32]Clark, Delaney, Waters, Salpietro, and Tippett, 98

Philanthropic

The Church must be interested in or concerned for national security and demonstrate philanthropic gestures to transform it. It must criticize prophetically the unjust social-economic structures that lead to insecurity (Amos 5:24)[33]. They must take aside the general public and call on rulers to fulfil their God-given role of caring for the citizens. The Church should have a plan for people affected by insecurity who cannot afford education, healthcare, and foodstuff. The Church's demonstration of giving should not devalue the people but encourage them by making it private and compassionate.

Promotion of Justices and Peace

The Church is to be a voice for the voiceless. Some individuals are benefiting from the insecurity condition of the nation. From this point of view, insecurity is the by-product of oppression and exploitation[34]. Any program confronting national insecurity that does not entail a plan to confront the root causes of poverty, injustice, and oppression may be an investment in futility.

Prayer and spiritual Warfare

Spiritual warfare is the fight against the forces of darkness or evil (Eph 5), and prayer is the communication with God[35], which is one of the forms to engage in it (Joshua 1:3, 11, 15, Matthew 4:11, Mk 3: 27, 1 Pt. 5:8-9). Prayer is a call to war and a call to rest.[36]The Church, throughout the ages, has found itself

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[33] Olutayo, 15

[34] Amaluche Greg. Nnamani – "The Dialectics of Poverty and Oppression - From an African and Theological Perspective", *BETH, Vol* 12, No. 3 (2000): 28

[35] *Lesson Four, What is prayer*? https://aplaceforyou.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Lesson-4-What-is-Prayer.pdf (accessed 23rg October, 2022)

[36] Elizabeth Alives, *Becoming a Prayer Warrior: A Guide to Effective and Powerful Prayer* (Benin City: Joint Heirs, Publications, 1998), 16

involved in a spiritual struggle against sin, evil, and injustice, both at an individual level and concerning the structures and forces in human society[37].

Family institution affects the nation. The expression of a nation is primarily the expression of the families. Parents are to train their children in fear of God. Such children can influence their friends in society rather than the other way around.[38] The people causing insecurity in the nation are the products of families that have failed the nation.

Conclusion

Insecurity is a significant problem in contemporary society. The trends of insecurity in the country are alarming. It affects both the rich and the poor. The issues of kidnapping, violence, fraud, and stealing, among others, have made people live in fear. The unique roles of the Church through its missions are possible responses to the challenges of insecurity in the nation. Christian missions address the causes of national insecurity and provide strategic means to prevent it. The Christian missions' response that will be effective will transform both the Nigerian Christians and the society at large. Leadership, individuals, family, and societal transformation are needed for national transformation, and the gospel of Christ is the anchor. Christians that will bring about the end of insecurity must not be agents of insecurity.

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[37] Erwin van der Meer, "Strategic Level Spiritual Warfare and Mission in Africa" *Evangelical Review of Theology*, Vol 34, no. 2, (2010): 155

[38] Samuel A. Bankole, The Christian's Companion on Family Matters, (Abeokuta: kinsman Publishing House, 2020),4

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