



# Insecurity and its implication for sustainable development in Nigeria: The role of religion



## Authors:

Peace N. Ngwoke<sup>1,2</sup> 

Gladys N. Akabike<sup>1,2</sup> 

## Affiliations:


<sup>1</sup>Department of Religion and Cultural Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, Nigeria

<sup>2</sup>Department of Religion Studies, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria, Pretoria, South Africa

## Corresponding author:

Peace Ngwoke,  
peace.ngwoke@unn.edu.ng

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Nigeria's high rate of insecurity has reached a stage where people's safety is no longer guaranteed. This article examines the extent to which the current high rate of insecurity in Nigeria has affected sustainable development in the country. The increasing insecurity situation is now in a state where kidnapping has become the norm, and destruction of lives and property has become a daily reoccurrence, affecting all efforts to achieve sustainable development in Nigeria. This article aims to reflect on some of the recent cases of insecurity in Nigeria to ascertain the major implication of these insecurities on education, religion and the economy, and seeks ways to curb the insecurity menace in Nigeria. It is also indicated that religion has been used to incite the perpetrator's action as various terrorist groups misinterpret the religious texts to justify their actions. The article concludes by arguing that religion can provide the needed coherence and social control needed to fight insecurity in Nigeria jointly, and once the difference in diversity is handled through cohesion and the social control function of religion, all stakeholders will be able to unite and fight insecurity off from the society. It therefore recommends that religious leaders should form the minds of Nigerians with the true contextual meaning of the religious text used to instigate insecurity.

**Contribution:** This article highlighted the major implications of insecurity on education, poverty and the economy, which have greatly affected development in Nigeria. The article brings to light a theological reflection of the role religion can play in providing the coherence and social control needed to jointly fight insecurity in Nigeria. This work would greatly benefit religious bodies, government, civil society and students.

**Keywords:** development; insecurity; politics; religion; violence; Nigeria.

## Introduction

Insecurity is one of the social ills that threaten humanity's existence, create fear within its environment and limit its free movement. Obi (2015:12) describes insecurity as 'a chronic threat to human's life, territories, states, religious beliefs, property and institutions among others'. His description portrays insecurity as a phenomenon threatening humans' existence and affecting their environment. This situation has led to several insecurity cases that have claimed many people's lives and destroyed people's businesses and property. Nche et al.'s (2019) research revealed from the words of a participant in their work that the people in their area sleep with one eye open because of the daily reoccurrences of insecurity such as kidnapping and armed robbery cases. The daily reoccurrence of insecurity in Nigeria has spread to all parts and strata of the country, leaving Nigerians with no place to run to for safety.

This daily reoccurrence of insecurity in various forms such as kidnapping, armed robbery and banditry, among others, is witnessed at people's homes, schools, churches, business places, marketplaces, the police stations where people usually run for safety and even the government house. In one of the recent cases of insecurity, armed men alleged to be robbers broke into the homes of two key advisers to President Muhammadu Buhari in the perimeter of the presidential villa (Agbakwuru 2021). This incident of robbers' invasion impelled Ibrahim Gambari, the chief of staff to the Nigerian president, and Abubakar Maikano, an admin officer, to flee from their residences in the presidential villa. This shows that no place is safe from insecurity attacks in Nigeria.

The insecurity challenge in Nigeria in the past 3 years has assumed more threatening dimensions with the current increasing state where kidnapping has become the order of the day. At the same time, the lives of innocent citizens, foreigners and even members of the nation's security personnel are destroyed daily. According to the report released by Skill-Based Morgen (SBM) Intelligence,

10366 people in Nigeria lost their lives to insecurity in 2021 (Daka et al. 2022). This report shows a worsening state of insecurity in Nigeria when compared with the statistics of the death rate of 2000 lives from insecurity in 2018, as recorded by the Global Terrorism Index (2019). Their report further shows that Nigeria rose from 36th to 3rd place in the terrorism index during the period 2002–2018. The insecurity situation has also led to the destruction of individual and government-owned property, as citizens' businesses and government institutions are burnt down daily.

Some of the causes of insecurity seem to be motivated by religion, as religious intolerant terrorist groups such as Boko Haram go about burning down churches and kidnapping Christians from their places of worship. In some cases, the kidnapped Christians are killed. This is evident in the case of Reverend Lawan Andimi, the chairman of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN), in Michika Local Government Area, Adamawa State. He was abducted by the Boko Haram terrorist group and was later killed by the group (Odunsi 2020). Also, a more notable incident was the killing of over 50 worshippers at St Francis Xavier Catholic Church, Owa-Luwa Street in Owo Ondo State on Pentecost Sunday (Johnson 2022). Thus, Christians live in fear, as their security is no longer guaranteed, especially when they assemble in their worship places. In recent times, schoolchildren have become the target of kidnapers with their motive of fighting Western education. This is seen in the recent upsurge of the kidnapping of schoolchildren from their schools. A report by the Incentive-Based Programme (IBP) of Policy House International reveals that between December 2020 and March 2021, over 800 schoolchildren have been kidnapped (Falaju 2021). These ravaging insecurity attacks, the kidnapping of schoolchildren and the attacking of religious institutions are more pronounced, particularly in the Northern parts of Nigeria. This recent rise of insecurity among schoolchildren has caused parents and children of school age within the affected areas to lose interest in education. It has also resulted in the closure of boarding schools in some states in Nigeria (Akor, Abubakar & Ogunode 2021). With the recent rise of insecurity in school, one would agree that the Nigerian education system will be deeply affected, as the access and quality of education is currently under grave threat by the perpetrators of insecurity in Nigeria.

Also, government property and institutions are not left out, as perpetrators of insecurity in recent times have focused their attack on government institutions and property in various parts of the country. In one of the recent insecurity cases on government property, unknown gunmen attacked the B Division of the Nigeria Police Divisional Station in Akwa, Anambra State, after which they proceeded to the office of the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) in Akwa, Anambra, and were shooting in the air as they drove (News Agency of Nigeria 2021). Also, in one of the recent cases of insecurity in Nigeria, unknown gunmen attacked a police station in Iwollo Oghe, Ezeagu local

government area of the state, killing four policemen and burning down the police station (Adonu 2021). A report from Kaduna State Governor, Nasir Ahmad El-Rufai, shows that in the year 2021, 1192 persons lost their lives to banditry and other forms of crime, while 891 were injured and 3348 were kidnapped in Kaduna State alone (Channels Television 2022a). This report implies that an average of nine persons were kidnapped daily in Kaduna State.

The Nigerian government has made several efforts to curb the rising insecurity rate by changing the security chiefs and equipping them with more sophisticated arms and other security weapons. Despite these efforts by the Nigerian government, insecurity still thrives in Nigeria. As a result, multiple ways and techniques have been studied in the research literature by different writers to stop this insecurity. Most authors agree that political instability, religious manipulation, poverty, corruption, bad governance, high rate of unemployment, ethnic and religious divisions, favouritism, nepotism, marginalisation and tribalism in resource sharing and appointment to public office are key factors that contribute to the rise of insecurity in Nigeria (Alegbeleye 2014; Canci & Odukoya 2016; Livneh 2011; Momoh & Mai-lafia 2020; Onah, Diara & Uroko 2017; Osunyikanmi & Sapele 2019; Salawu 2010). Literature also shows that each state should provide adequate and efficient security that can react quickly to any escalation of crimes, integration of geospatial technology into security surveillance and operation, effective intelligence gathering and reconciliation, which are the key factors to bringing the aggrieved parties and groups to common terms and making them join forces with the government in achieving the common goal of the country to curb the challenges of insecurity (Akingbade et al. 2022; Akingbade, Olabamiji & Ajala 2021; Iyekekpolo 2020; Oghuvbu 2021; Osunyikanmi & Sapele 2019; Shalangwa & Iwuamadi 2021). However, the literature on the effective use of religion as an influencing and social control mechanism remains scanty.

Therefore, this article examines some of the recent cases of insecurity in Nigeria and analyses some of the major implications of this insecurity on education, religion, poverty, economy and infrastructural development in Nigeria. The article also explores the positive roles religion can play in curbing the present insecurity situation and suggests possible solutions on how religion as an influencer and social control mechanism can effectively curb the insecurity menace in Nigeria.

## Recent cases of insecurity in Nigeria

The cases of insecurity in recent times are numerous and manifest in various forms. Thus, this article will classify them into four groups: cases of insecurity aimed at schools and schoolchildren, cases of insecurity aimed at religious institutions, cases of insecurity aimed at individuals and government-owned property and cases of insecurity aimed at security institutions and personnel.

## Cases of insecurity that are targeted at schools and schoolchildren

The present insecurity situation in Nigeria has taken a more threatening state as perpetrators have channelled their targets to schoolchildren in recent times. The situation has reached the level that kidnapping of schoolchildren has turned into a daily routine. The cases of insecurity that are targeted at schoolchildren are too numerous to outline and analyse in one study. Thus, this text will highlight some of the major cases of insecurity that are targeted at schools and schoolchildren. Some cases of insecurity that are targeted at schoolchildren are shown in Table 1.

## Insecurity on lives and property of citizens and government-owned property

The recent growth rate of insecurity in Nigeria, which is targeted for lives and property, has turned many states in the Northern and Southern parts of Nigeria into a war zone. Most of these crimes are perpetrated by Boko Haram, Fulani herdsmen, bandits and unknown gunmen. Within the south-eastern part of Nigeria, attacks by unidentified gunmen have become a daily occurrence, leading to the abandonment of commercial and agricultural endeavours and the loss of lives and property (Austin-Egole et al. 2022).

Within Nigeria's 18 Northern states, about 60000 people have been killed in the last 10 years (between 2011 and 2021) because of insecurity (Elebeke 2022). According to the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), between the years 2011 and 2021, about 1863 people lost their lives in the five Southern states because of insecurity (Elebeke 2022). Some cases of insecurity that are targeted at the lives and property of citizens and government-owned property are shown in Table 2.

## Cases of insecurity targeted at security institutions and personnel

A core indication of the worsening insecurity in Nigeria is the attack on security institutions. Recently, Nigeria's security institutions have been under attack and reprisal attack by different agents of insecurity such as terrorist groups and unknown gunmen burning police stations, killing police officers, freeing prison inmates and emptying armouries from the police stations. Some cases of insecurity that are targeted at security institutions and their personnel are shown in Table 3.

## Cases of insecurity targeted at religious personnel and institutions

The present level of insecurity targeted at religious personnel and institutions is becoming a daily reoccurrence.

**TABLE 1:** Some cases of insecurity that are targeted at schools and schoolchildren.

S/N	Incident of insecurity	Perpetrator(s)	Date	Source(s)
1	Abduction of 344 students from Government Science Secondary School Kankara in Katsina State	Boko Haram	11 December 2020	Ajayi, Bello and Yakubu (2020)
2	Abduction of 80 students of Islamiya Schools in Mahuta, Katsina State	Bandits	20 December 2020	Vanguard News (2020)
3	Abduction of 42 persons, out of which are 27 students, from Government Science College, Kagara, in Rafi local government area of Niger State	Bandits	17 February 2021	Mosadomi (2021a)
4	Abduction of over 300 students of Government Girls Secondary School, Jangebe, Zamfara State	Bandits	26 February 2021	Vanguard News (2021a)
5	Abduction of more than 200 students of the Federal College of Forestry Mechanisation, Kaduna	Bandits	11 March 2021	Agbakwuru and Hassanwuyo (2021)
6	Abduction of 102 students from Federal Government College, Birnin Yauri, Kebbi State	Bandits	19 June 2021	Aliyu (2021)

**TABLE 2:** Cases of insecurity in lives and property.

S/N	Incident of insecurity	Perpetrator(s)	Date	Source(s)
1	27 people were killed and 17 houses burnt as unknown gunmen invaded Ohagelede, Umuezeoka, Ebbiaji and Ebbeta, all in Ezza or Effium and part of Ebonyi local government areas of Ebonyi State	Unknown gunmen	10 April 2022	Ujumadu, Okutu and Nwaiwu (2022)
2	Attack on the Abuja-Kaduna train, killing eight persons, injuring 41 persons and kidnapping 168 persons	Boko Haram in collaboration with some bandits	28 March 2022	Omonobi, Nwabughio and Hassan (2022a)
3	Attack on citizens in Kaura local government area, killing 34 persons	Unidentified assailants	20 March 2022	Hassan (2022)
4	Attack on a village in Zamfara State, where over 2000 cattle and other domestic animals were stolen and over 140 persons killed	Bandit kingpin	09 January 2022	Hassan-Wuyo (2022a)
5	Terrorists invaded two local government areas in Niger State, killing no fewer than 44 villagers, while many were abducted	Terrorist	05 February 2022	Mosadomi (2022)

**TABLE 3:** Cases of insecurity attacks on security personnel and institutions.

S/N	Incident of insecurity	Perpetrator(s)	Date	Source(s)
1	Attack on a military base at Polewire in Birnin-Gwari, Kaduna State, killing 17 soldiers and injuring 40 others, after a fierce gun battle between both parties	Boko Haram	04 April 2022	Omonobi Umoru and Hassan (2022b)
2	Attack on local security guards (local vigilante) in border communities of Niger and Kebbi states, killing about 65 security guards	Bandits	06 March 2022	Mosadomi and Aliyu (2022)
3	Gunmen killed and beheaded two soldiers in Imo State	Gunmen	30 April 2022	Thisday Newspapers (2022)
4	Gunmen shot three police officers dead at Enugu police checkpoint, Enugu State	Gunmen	10 February 2022	Channels Television (2022b)
5	Twelve soldiers and 20 civilians were killed by nonstate actors last week	Gunmen	15 May 2022	Ayitogo (2022)

**TABLE 4:** Cases of insecurity targeted at religious personnel and institutions.

S/N	Incident of insecurity	Perpetrator(s)	Date	Source(s)
1	Attack on church on Pentecost Sunday, shooting and killing over 50 worshippers at St Francis Xavier Catholic Church, Owa-Luwa Street in Owo Ondo State	Four gunmen	05 June 2022	Johnson (2022)
2	Attack on Baptist church at Kajuru local government area, Kaduna State, killing three worshippers and abducting no fewer than 36	Terrorists	19 June 2022	Hassan-Wuyo (2022b)
3	The killing of a young Christian lady, Deborah Samuel, a second-year student of Shehu Shagari College of Education, Sokoto, following an allegation that she had blasphemed Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam	Religious extremists	12 May 2022	Agbakwuru (2022)
4	Attack on mosque, killing 17 worshippers, injuring many and abducting 18 people in Maza-Kula village in Mashegu local government area of Niger State	Armed bandits	26 October 2021	Mosadomi (2021b)
5	Abduction of a religious leader, late Rev. Dauda Bature, and killing him after collecting ransom. He was the priest in charge of the Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA) Nariya, in the Igabi local government area of the state	Bandits	08 November 2021	Hassan-Wuyo (2021)

People are killed because of their religious affiliation, while religious buildings are burnt down. There are cases of insecurity of innocent citizens who are killed in their churches while they are having their religious gatherings. There are also cases of people who are killed for refusing to denounce their religion and join another religion. There are cases of people killed by extremists from another religion because of what they say, which is against the freedom of speech in Nigeria's constitution. This section will highlight some of the major cases of insecurity that are targeted at religious personnel and institutions in Nigeria. Some cases of insecurity that are targeted at religious personnel and institutions are shown in Table 4.

## The implication of insecurity for sustainable development in Nigeria

The issue of insecurity in Nigeria has continued to worsen despite many efforts put in place by the government of the day. There is an increase in violence, terrorism, kidnapping and the like in the country today. Many sects are raising the frequency of their violent activities in various parts of the country. Initially, there were a series of bombings and suicide attacks, but today, there are shooting and killings, abductions, assassinations, kidnappings, armed robberies, arson, banditry and so on. These take place all over Nigeria and almost daily. These are heart-breaking stories that are eroding the root of the Nigerian community. Fear of kidnapers, bandits, armed robbers, assassins, thugs, Boko Haram, herders, Islamic State – West Africa Province (ISWAP), religious fundamentalists and the like prevents many people from sleeping with their eyes closed.

The level of insecurity in Nigeria is exacerbated by several factors with many effects, which cannot be overemphasised as it has affected every segment of the country. Insecurity in Nigeria is a phenomenon that has subjected every Nigerian to a state of fear and anxiety. The vulnerability of the present situation in Nigeria calls for deep concern from many Nigerians as no one is immune from it. Many lives and property are wasted daily because of the high rate of insecurity. There are too many implications of the insecurity situation in Nigeria to list and analyse in one study. As a result, this article focuses on some of the main effects of insecurity in Nigeria.

## Implications for education

Recently, there have been outright insecurity attacks on the school system and students. The recent, increasingly frequent abductions of schoolchildren is costing Nigeria and its education much as schools are shut down because of the fear of losing more children to the insurgent groups. According to Nwosu et al. (2019), the kidnapping of Chibok girls, Kankara, Greenfield and a host of others are examples of the effects of insecurity on education. The security of children in their various schools is no longer guaranteed as they risk being kidnapped or killed by the ravaging insecurity situation. The recent upsurge in abductions of schoolchildren has led to the shutdown of schools within the affected region (Vanguard News 2021b). As a result of the continued kidnapping of schoolchildren from their schools by agents of insecurity in Nigeria, many schools have been shut down, mostly in the Northern part of Nigeria. According to Ogunode and Kolo (2021):

Nigeria had shut down over 4000 public primary schools across the state, and over 4000 public secondary schools were among the closed down schools and over 300 000–400 000 thousand students and pupils are at home. (p. 4)

This has led to a decline in school enrolment and attendance within the affected regions. According to Anaba (2022), more than 1500 schoolchildren have been abducted in Northern Nigeria since the Chibok attack on 14 April 2014.

It has been observed that an increasing wave of insecurity adversely affects the education sector, because many children have dropped out or stopped going to school for fear of being killed or kidnapped. Supporting this assertion, the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF 2021a), in a statement by its representative in Nigeria, Peter Hawkins, said that because of insecurity and the abduction of schoolchildren, at least 1 million schoolchildren will drop out of school as more than 37 million Nigerian children start the new school year for fear of being killed or abducted.

As a consequence of the closure of schools and decline in school enrolment, thousands of students and pupils who are out of school are easily employed or recruited by the insurgent group. United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (2021b) reveals that thousands of children are recruited and used; some are abducted, threatened,

coerced or manipulated through religion by the insurgent group. Thus, the insurgent group are gradually expanding their forces and destroying Nigeria's education. A report from Human Rights Watch (2016) shows that Boko Haram, one of the insurgent groups, is massively recruiting students and out-of-school youths, and some of the people are manipulated with religion to reject Western education. The effect of insecurity in Nigeria is destroying education and the society at large, as the closure of schools is leading to a brain drain and affecting the upbringing of the youth, who are expected to become the leaders of the nation in the future.

One of the obvious consequences of the conflicts in education is that the curriculum designed to graduate students in a stipulated number of years faces the challenge of being disrupted, hence leading to situations where students may spend more years in a 4-year programme. (Ngwoke & Ituma 2020:5)

From the assertion of Ngwoke and Ituma (2020), one would agree that the effects of insecurity have contributed to the extended period required for education in Nigeria.

Also, one cannot exclude the consequences of death, as some of the schoolchildren or students were killed at the hands of the kidnappers. According to Ogunode, Ahaotu and Obi-Ezenekwe's (2021) research, the nation's high level of insecurity has resulted in several deaths of teachers, school officials and pupils. Insecurity has also contributed to a rise in child marriage and pregnancies of school-age girls. A report from Amnesty International (2021) reveals that the shutdown of schools across Northern Nigeria because of the insecurity attacks on schools led to the rise in reported cases of child marriages and early pregnancies of school-age girls. Because Boko Haram and insurgent groups redefined abductions in the country, schools and students have become targets. Adekoya (2021) specifically notes that following the government's ineffective response to the offenders, kidnapping innocent students and other vulnerable residents for ransom has developed into a lucrative industry. This ugly trend is most prevalent in the Northern part of Nigeria, where the majority of children, mostly from poor homes, are made to abandon education for the safety of their lives. Unfortunately, some of these children who are not in school are being recruited by unscrupulous members of the society to unleash mayhem in the country.

For education to be relevant and succeed in contemporary Nigerian society, insecurity must be taken seriously by the government of the day. Terrorism and kidnapping are intelligence-driven. If government must tackle them and other forms of menace head-on, the government at all levels must raise the national intelligence to fight this menace. The quality of the labour force and human capital required to power a sustainable economy will be at longer-term risk if these persistent attacks are not proactively addressed. Inadequate education on its own is the root cause of insecurity. In some cases, school buildings and several pieces of equipment were damaged in the face of the

ravaging insecurity. From the analysis above, one would agree that insecurity in Nigeria has grave consequences on education, as it has raked the future of many young Nigerians with scars of psychological trauma, loss of dear ones and denial of quality education. It has also contributed to the reason why the number of out-of-school children in Nigeria is high.

## Implications for religion

The present insecurity situation in Nigeria has directly or indirectly promoted distrust between Christians and Muslims in the country. Jegede (2019) avers that the various cases of insecurity in Nigeria breed distrust, suspicion and discrimination, especially between the adherents of Islam and Christianity in Nigeria. Unfortunately, many cases of insecurity are carried out by Islamic terrorists, and their targets are mostly at church. One of the most recent cases is the current trend of Islamic terrorists attacking, shooting and killing over 50 people who were worshipping God inside the church (Johnson 2022). They also go to the extent of destroying and burning churches. The intensification of attacks by Islamic terrorists has created fears and has led to the deterioration of Christian-Muslim relations (Kpughe 2017). Thus, this situation has deepened the religious divide that exists in the country. Casper (2020) argues that:

What Boko Haram seeks and always has sought is to drive a wedge between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria. By targeting Christians, they seek to promulgate the falsehood that the democratically elected Nigerian government does not care to protect them. By targeting Muslims, they seek to promulgate the falsehood that the terrorists themselves follow truthfully Islamic teachings, and those they target do not. (p. 5)

In an empirical analysis done by Okolie and Osayande (2019), titled 'Secularism and national development in Nigeria's fourth republic: An empirical study', a descriptive approach was used, and 900 respondents who were leaders in the Christian, Muslim, traditional, civil society and youth movements participated in the poll.

The insecurity situation in Nigeria makes Nigeria the world's most violent place for Christians for the second consecutive year as statistics from the research of World Watch List reveal that more Christians were murdered for their faith in Nigeria than in any other country (Dustin 2022). He further reveals that Nigeria accounted for nearly 80% of Christian deaths worldwide, with more than 4650 Christians killed in 2021 alone (Dustin 2022:1). Supporting this claim, the Catholic News Agency (2021) avers that within the first 200 days of 2021, 3462 Christians were killed in Nigeria. Statistics from Aineah (2022) reveal that the research of the Human Rights Foundation indicates that 5191 Christians were killed in 2021 in Nigeria. With this rate of insecurity, so many churches are gradually going into extinction and their places of worship becoming ghost towns because people have developed cold feet when it comes to going to church for worship because of the fear of being killed (Ezeugonna et al. 2022).

## Implication on poverty

The country's condition has had a significant impact on efforts to enhance citizens' quality of life because poverty, unemployment and malnutrition still exist in every corner of the nation (Ikechi-Ekpendu, Audu & Ekpendu 2016). A country is classified as developed when it can provide quality of life for its citizenry. Nigeria has been battling development problems despite abundant material and natural resources in its possession. With the global economic meltdown occasioned by climate change and the herders and bandits' disruption of the agriculture sector in Nigeria, one can have a clearer picture of the ripple effect of insecurity on the economy. Also, Adekoya (2021) notes that because of the instability caused by insecurity and violent confrontations between herders and farmers, food prices have increased. Many people who depended on farming are now jobless because of the menace of the bandits and herdsmen, thereby creating room for poverty.

Moreover, many farmers, especially from the Northern region, are driven away from their lands and settled in the internally displaced person (IDP) camps across various areas affected by the farmer-herder conflicts. In collaboration with the above thought, Babagana et al.'s (2019) work reveals that because of the insecurity, farmers do not farm for the whole year because of the fear of being attacked and killed in the face of ravaging insecurity in their community. Due to these insecurity incidents, farmers would experience low yields and thus, low revenue. The same also goes for the businessmen, daily job seekers and other people in their different carrier paths, who for fear of being attacked or killed will not step out to attend their business activities. Brodeur (2018), in his empirical investigation of the consequences of insecurity on employment, businesses and earnings, reveals that insecurity causes business disruption and reduces the number of jobs and total earnings in a targeted country. This will also affect the financial income of these classes of people, thereby pushing more people to poverty and increasing the poverty rate of the nation.

In some cases, armed bandits demand money upfront before granting farmers access to farmlands during the planting season, only to demand more money from them during the harvest season. This has caused a shortage and an increase in the price of some food products (Adekoya 2021). Also, an insecure environment will result in job loss, thereby creating poverty. Adekoya (2021) further said that criminals have been successful in preventing farmers from visiting their farms. For Nigerians, it is now challenging to find enough food to eat.

As a result of the above scenario, the poverty level has risen in Nigeria, forcing many people to be jobless with no other means of livelihood available to fall back on. Poverty is a potent weapon against development in any nation of the world, including Nigeria. No nation can develop with the majority of its citizenry living in abject poverty. It is pertinent

to know that poverty can indirectly breed insecurity, because when life is meaningless to some people because of joblessness and no means of livelihood, the available option is crime. Poverty is a social menace in Nigeria and constitutes a threat to national security. Also, poor people, especially the youth, could be manipulated to undermine national stability and cause violent disorder in the country at any point in time (Akwaru et al. 2013:8). Zubairu (2020:4) concurred with the above thesis, insisting that unemployment causes poverty and extreme poverty leads to crime, which gives rise to insecurity.

The Nigerian government must realise that the country's high level of insecurity calls for a proactive economic strategy and a plethora of chances to involve its citizens in worthwhile endeavours that will enable them to harbour dreams of a better tomorrow.

## Implications for the economy

The cost of conducting business in the nation and the disposable incomes of many Nigerians are suffering because of the government's incapacity to provide effective and efficient security for life and property. The economy of Nigeria is being impacted by the actions of Boko Haram, bandits, kidnappers and other armed organisations. Together, these social ills pose a threat to the safety of the lives and property of both Nigerians and foreigners who reside in or attempt to do business in the nation (Ezeajughu 2021).

There has also been a widespread disruption of economic activities with negative effects on production. Many businesses have been destroyed as a result of insecurity. Adekoya (2021) notes that the high-risk business climate brought on by insecurity and the appalling state of essential infrastructure is one of the main issues preventing foreign investment in the economy. The extent of the nation's instability, which makes it unsafe for business owners and farmers to do their business, has discouraged investors from the economy. The investment inflow continues to be hampered by insecurity and governance challenges. No one can invest where they cannot recoup the intensive capital invested in the business. These businesses could have provided many job opportunities for the teeming populace of the country and also generated revenue for the government.

The hardest hit by insecurity is agriculture, which is the sustenance of life. The farmers are prevented in some regions from going to their farmlands because of farmer-herder crisis as well as communal clashes. The result is the nonavailability of raw materials to the manufacturers, who now depend entirely on imports, thereby increasing the demand for scarce foreign exchange for production. Those who made efforts cannot get to the manufacturers or distribute their products in many regions of the country. Yusuf in Adekoya (2021) avers that even when the food is produced by the farmers, the insecurity situation prevents farmers from accessing markets, which results in the inability to distribute goods across the country.

Analysing the effect of insecurity on the economy of Nigeria, Onime (2018) notes that insecurity affects economic growth by drying out investment, increasing unemployment and reducing government revenue, among others. Insecurity can stall economic activities and disrupt governmental activities and programmes in the country. It will dissuade investors from investing in the country, thereby preventing the creation of job opportunities that would have offered the population jobs. Yusuf and Mohd (2022) outline 10 economic consequences of growing insecurity in Nigeria. These include foreign direct investment, gross fixed capital formation, public debt, inflation rate, insecurity, government security spending, per capita income, government expenditure on health, government expenditure on education and government internal revenue. With insecurity affecting various economic sectors in Nigeria, any effort by the government administration to grow the economy would most likely fail if insecurity is not dealt with. In the event of insecurity, the economic life of a nation is at stake, because the people's economic activities would be curtailed. Yusuf and Mohd (2022), in their research, show that insecurity has adverse effects on economic growth in Nigeria. For them, the growing insecurity makes the country increasingly unattractive to foreign investors. The alarming rate of insecurity in Nigeria has reduced corporate activity, made the economy less appealing to foreign investors and had a detrimental influence on economic growth and development. No investor, whether foreign or local, would like to invest in an insecure place because of the fear of loss of investment to insecurity, as well as the fear of being killed.

## Implications for development of the society

The level of development of a country is affected by many factors, one of which is insecurity. When insecurity is exacerbated in a society, it will affect education, businesses and the economy, which will in turn affect the entire development of the society. Infrastructure is the basic facilities, services and installations needed for the functioning of a community or society. Supporting this assertion, Ozturk (2001) posits that:

[T]he educational provisions within any given country represent one of the main determinants of the composition and growth of that country's output and exports and constitute an important ingredient in a system's capacity to borrow foreign technology effectively. (p. 41)

It is an underlying base or foundation, especially for any society to thrive. With the ravaging insecurity currently affecting infrastructural development and consuming much money channelled to the fight against insecurity in Nigeria, the nation's development will continue to decline. As a result of insecurity, the lack of fundamental development infrastructures such as electricity has hindered the industrialisation of the country and the creation of employment possibilities, which has stymied other efforts to

propel the economic revival of the world's seventh-most populated country (Pepple 2021).

However, the available infrastructures provided by the government are targeted by bandits, militia groups and others. Since the beginning of insecurity in Nigeria, many government facilities such as pipelines, security facilities and recently rails have been bombed by the bandits. Painfully as it is, the money that could have been used to provide infrastructure in the country has to be expended on security, yet the problem remains the same.

## The positive role of religion in nation-building

The positive role of religion in nation-building cannot be overemphasised, irrespective of the attitude of its adherents. Unfortunately, Nigeria has turned into a tool in the hands of its leaders to spread antagonistic ethnic and religious divides rather than uniting the country towards national prosperity (Iwuoha 2014). Religion, as the case may be, represents a significant element of ethnicity and an important source of identity which informs the basis of group discrimination and grievances in any particular nation. Based on the above observation, there is a very significant likelihood that the majority religious group will develop prejudice and promote discrimination against minority religious groups. It is, however, observed that where there is a perceived threat to the survival of religion, religious institutions can therefore become viable tools for the recruitment and mobilisation of dissidents for both protest and rebellion. This is more worrisome when such religions support using physical force when issues concerning their core values and interests are under threat.

Thus, many people have dragged religion into politics by using religion to cause violence and destruction of lives and property in the country to achieve political power. Ngwoke and Ituma (2020) in their study show that religion is used to promote violence in Nigeria. They showed some cases of violence, including the Maitatsine crisis, which is a religious crisis that broke out in the Northern part of Nigeria in 1980 and lasted until 1985, claiming over 10 000 lives. Religion possesses a strong influence and social force in the politics of the state, given its capacity for effective political mobilisation. It is a source of concern and worry because of the aftermath, which is the destruction of lives and property. This is very unfortunate, making religion lose its relevance.

Not with standing the negative impact of religion on the Nigerian society (Ngwoke & Ituma 2020), religion is the only tool that, if used properly, would bring the ultimate peace that will guarantee long-lasting sustainable development in Nigeria (Mousa 2020). From their research, they show that true or genuine religion is by its very nature good, essentially loving and peaceful and promoting social cohesion. Contrarily, counterfeit or false religion indulges in violence and encourages destructive behaviours. Responses from

their research maintain that all religions are peaceful and that it is certain extremist people who misuse or misinterpret religion to create barriers and hate among people.

Mousa's (2020) empirical study shows the possibility of building social cohesion between the Christian and Muslim faithful in a religiously diverse society where the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) invaded the Iraqi city of Mosul, killing most Christians (who were a minority religion) and displacing 100 000 Christians. In his research, he investigated intergroup social cohesion as opposed to intragroup cohesion. Christians and Muslims were assigned to compete in soccer and were mixed together to form a football team. Thus, Christians and Muslims were teammates and they attended mixed dinner events as a team, living together in harmony for 6 months. His research also shows that they continued living in harmony even after parting for 6 months. Harris and Young (2009), in their empirical study on developing community and social cohesion through grassroots bridge-building activities, show that social cohesion aimed to foster more interpersonal interactions among various ethnic, religious and nationality groups. In their empirical study with 127 respondents from the Birmingham, Oldham and Tower Hamlets areas of England, 95% of all the bridge-building activities which involved Christians and Muslims were intended to promote mutual understanding, social contact and/or social cohesion. The analysis of their study shows that social cohesion policies foster peaceful societies in which people of diverse religious backgrounds interact with mutual respect. From time immemorial, religion continues to play a significant role in society and the human experience, influencing how people view their homes. Positively, religion stands as a reliable institution, providing stepping stones to sustainable development. Adeyemo (2002) re-echoed the views of Durkheim, Karl Marx and Max Weber on the place of religion in social structures like politics and economics. Because it can influence societal views, he claimed that religion interacts with other forces in society. Encouraging a sense of belonging in group endeavours, it contributes to social cohesion.

Therefore, all individuals in Nigeria must seek ways to imbibe the spirit of love and value for fellow humans, improve human life and promote the existing cosmic and social order in society, which only religion can guarantee. Furthermore, development involves sustaining and fostering peace among individuals and communities at all times, regardless of tribe, ethnic diversity or religious affiliation. Any religion that does not promote peace and love remains hostile to sustainable development. One of the ways in which religion can help in national development is by securing the nation's peace. Furthermore, this is done by appealing to the people's conscience through ethical teachings. Agha (2003) echoes this thought rightly when he avers that conscience is a 'faculty of the human mind responsible for different capabilities or abilities which the human being attempts to exhibit'. Humans' conscience will tell them what is right and wrong. It is the religion that will be appealing to the

conscience of the members to live at peace with one another. In an atmosphere of peace, people can move freely and do business without fear of being kidnapped or having their business destroyed. In all honesty, religion is a promoter of growth as it directs people towards discipline, hard work, honesty and avoidance of evil activities. When people live in an environment free of rancour, there must certainly be development. Uche (2011) argues that religion functions as a political criterion for evaluation in addition to elevating values to the position of supreme importance. Additionally, by focusing on shared values, religion has a way of easing the tensions brought on by individuals who are pursuing selfish goals. Religion sensitises humans' hearts by instilling in them moral rectitude and appealing to live in harmony with their fellow beings.

Apart from the preaching which various religions offer to their adherents, religion has been of immense value by providing tangible things in the form of education to society. Going back to the days of the missionaries, the church in Africa has centred its development strategy on education and healthcare (Ogbonnaya 2011). In the face of the government's weak ability to provide basic amenities for its citizens, religion (especially Christianity) has made development its priority by touching people's lives in many ways. Religious groups have played a primary role in national growth by providing schools, hospitals and microloans in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, as well as inculcating morals through teaching in religious and political assemblies for national growth (Ikechi-Ekpendu et al. 2016). Also, African Traditional Religion has in its way contributed to the sustainable development of Nigerian society. According to Ogbonnaya (2011), it offers a sense of security and the promise of help from the ancestors, which Africans believe acts as a barrier against bad spirits like witches and wizards who might obstruct communal and individual growth. He concludes by saying that many Nigerians turn to their traditional religious-cultural beliefs in times of sorrow and difficulties and when confronted with life's miseries.

Religion provides a worldview and a way of seeing and interacting with the world. It helps people access and analyse the situation around them and serves as the bedrock of moral living in building the nation. Without religion, there would be no development because religion inculcates virtues in humans that help them to live peacefully in society. Supporting this assertion, Smith, Nixon and Pearce (2018) point out that true and genuine religion promotes love and peaceful living, but people use religion negatively to instigate violence. This is evident in the killing of an innocent Christian girl, Deborah Samuel, on 12 May 2022 by some Muslim group of persons. However, the act was condemned by many Islamic leaders, emphasising that the Islamic religion does not support such an act (Gumi 2022; Nseyen 2022; Raji 2022). Furthermore, religion inculcates moral standards of conduct which guide its believers to behave in a manner that is generally accepted as right or good in society. According to



Agha (2010), no society can live without morals as humans need morality, which comprises guidelines about life that are generally approved in society and produce the greatest possible good in a situation. Religion has a place in the overall development of people's lives and the social cohesiveness of society. From the above assertion, one would agree that religion promotes social cohesion as it guides people to live in love, honesty and peace. This is why Ngwoke (2021) argues that the influence of religion on people and society will change people's ideology of life. Because religion provides social cohesion and social control to maintain solidarity in society, it will enhance the avenue for friendliness and neighbourliness among people living in the same locality. It will bridge the gap in ethnic and religious diversity and cement it with love and mutual understanding, which helps sustain society's development.

## Recommendation

A country's level of development is the government's ability to handle its internal and external security. When several factors undermine the internal security of a country, there will be no meaningful development. Insecurity in Nigeria is a phenomenon that has subjected every Nigerian to fear and anxiety and resulted in the loss of lives and property. The vulnerability of the present situation in Nigeria calls for deep concern to Nigerians as no one is exempted from its effects. This issue can no longer be ignored, as it has affected every sphere of the country. Therefore, the government should consider the following recommendations in tackling insecurity in the country:

1. The security issue will be prioritised by employing an effective intelligence-driven mechanism to help tackle insecurity in Nigeria. Terrorism, banditry, kidnapping and other forms of crime in Nigeria are intelligence-driven. If government wishes to tackle them and other forms of menace head-on, the government at all levels must raise the national intelligence to fight this menace. For instance, the government in collaboration with schools in the country should invest in security infrastructure to make schools less vulnerable to all kinds of attacks from bandits or kidnappers. Inadequate education on its own is the root cause of insecurity. If these incessant attacks are not proactively dealt with, they will portend a longer-term danger to the quality of the labour force and human capital needed to drive a sustainable economy. There must be active surveillance systems to ward off any attack in schools or elsewhere in the country.
2. Insincerity on the part of the government is one of the reasons why insecurity is still on the rise. The government at various levels has not been sincere in the fight to end insecurity in Nigeria. A selective approach to tackling insecurity cannot work because crime is everywhere. Therefore, the government should be serious and sincere in tackling insecurity without fear or favour.
3. The lack of implementation of various laws promulgated against crimes in the country is the reason why criminal

offences have been abetted. The government must put those laws into effect without favouritism when the need arises if meaningful development is to be realised in Nigeria.

4. The role of religion in tackling insecurity in Nigeria cannot be overemphasised. Religious values or principles are the panacea to resolve this impasse called insecurity if people of all religions in Nigeria should abide or adhere to them. Religious institutions should lay more emphasis on the teachings of religious values and principles such as love, justice, peace, forgiveness and so on seriously in their community. They should also influence these values within their communities by living out these values and encouraging their adherents to exhibit the same in their communities.
5. A lack of political will is also one of the reasons insecurity is on the rise. Nigerians should vote for a leader who is competent and fit to run the affairs of this country.
6. In collaboration with schools in the country, the government should invest in security infrastructure to make schools less vulnerable to attacks from bandits or kidnappers. There should be active surveillance systems implemented to ward off any attack.

## Conclusion

Insecurity is unhealthy to any society and even worse when it is affecting key sectors and wasting many lives. With the ravaging insecurity in Nigeria, no place or human being is safe from the threat of daily insecurity attacks. The education sector of the nation is currently under an insecurity attack, the lives of many people are wasted and countless people's businesses and properties are destroyed. The present insecurity situation in Nigeria is unhealthy for the nation as it poses a big threat to its existence. It is evident from the article's findings that religion is used to justify perpetrators' actions as perpetrators are made to believe that they are fighting for God and will be rewarded by God for their actions. Therefore, religion is also needed to foster the solidarity and social coherence required to fight insecurity in Nigeria. As religion provides social cohesion and social control to maintain solidarity in society, it will enhance the avenue for friendliness and neighbourliness among people living in the same locality. It will bridge the ethnic and religious diversity gap and cement it with love and mutual understanding, which will help to bring all stakeholders together. Once the difference of diversity is handled through cohesion and social control, all stakeholders will be able to unite and fight insecurity in society.

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## Authors' contributions

P.N.N. conceptualised the ideas in the study and contributed to the formal analysis of the results. Both P.N.N. and G.N.A. wrote and revised the original draft.

## Ethical considerations

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