



Research Paper

Rivers State's Economic Paradox: Unlocking the Dimensions of Insecurity for Development

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ABSTRACT

The paper examined the dimensions of insecurity and economic development in Rivers State from 2000 to 2015. Utilizing historical research approach and relative deprivation theory, the paper adopted secondary data, drawn from various published and unpublished sources such as reports, monographs, journals, newspapers, and magazines, to enrich its account. The findings revealed that the dimensions of insecurity in the state within the period under review were piracy, kidnapping, armed robbery, and cultism. The paper recommended prioritizing socioeconomic empowerment initiatives, given that youth unemployment and underdevelopment were identified as root causes of insecurity. It also emphasized the importance of community development programs and access to quality petroleum products, especially in coastal areas.

Keywords: Development, Dimensions, Economic development, Economic paradox, Insecurity, Unlocking

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I. INTRODUCTION

There exists a discrepancy between the substantial revenue generated from crude oil and the lack of corresponding infrastructural and economic development. For example, available data suggests that the Average Monthly Revenue (AMR) of Rivers State from January to July 2015 was N18.93 billion with which it was its highest ranking state in that regard.¹ Nevertheless, poverty, unemployment, and overall economic hardship persist in the state. Despite the abundance of natural resources, the state lags behind economically and industrially, leading to significant implications for unemployment. Tangible signs of the state's failing economy include de-industrialization, deteriorating infrastructure, and diminishing foreign investments. Until 1998, the renowned Trans-Amadi Industrial Layout served as the epicenter of industrial activities in the state. At that time, both state-owned and foreign enterprises dominated the manufacturing sector and provided employment opportunities for numerous individuals.

Presently, the Trans-Amadi Industrial Layout is but a mere shadow of its former self, with the majority of its companies either succumbing to collapse or opting to relocate. Michelin, a prominent French multinational tire manufacturing corporation, set the precedent by departing in 1998, amidst the escalating armed militancy within the state. For example, the National Bureau of Statistics in a 2020 Report noted that with 43.7%, Rivers State emerged as the third state in the federation with the highest rate of unemployment.² This predicament holds grave repercussions for the approximately 4.5 million youths, constituting a significant portion of the 7 million strong population of Rivers State, in terms of their social advancement and transition into responsible adulthood.

¹ BudgIT, State of the States, BudgIT policy document. <https://yourbudgit.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/State-of-States-Policy-Document.pdf>

² National Bureau of Statistics, 2020.

https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng/pdfuploads/Q2_2020_Unemployment_Report.pdf

The most recent substantial wave of employment occurred in 2003, when roughly 10,000 educators were enlisted into secondary schools, with the youth demographic predominantly benefiting from this initiative. However, since that time, no comparable employment opportunities have arisen. The burgeoning youth population, devoid of commensurate socio-economic prospects, places the state in a precarious position, susceptible to outbreaks of youth unrest and violence.

The Presidential Amnesty Programme, launched in June 2009, was established as a temporary strategy to reduce, pacify, and mitigate the militant insurgency that had disrupted the oil-rich Niger Delta, with Rivers State at its epicenter in the preceding decade. It was also intended to achieve broader socio-economic and stabilization goals. However, instead of achieving these objectives, it has inadvertently led to an increase in criminal activities and insecurity. This has resulted in the institutionalization of a conflict-based economy, where violent actions are incentivized through economic, social, and political benefits, thus perpetuating a 'cycle of violence'. Essentially, the government, political elite, and multinational corporations' consistent engagement with violent individuals through amnesty agreements and lucrative contracts has encouraged new participants, many of whom were previously peaceful youths, to engage in violent activities for financial gain. Consequently, this cycle of violence has contributed to the rise in violent crimes such as piracy, kidnapping, armed robbery, as well as competition for illegal trade sectors like oil theft, drug trafficking, and arms smuggling, in addition to ongoing power struggles among various cult factions and armed groups in Rivers State and the wider Niger Delta region.

The issue at hand in this paper is exemplified by the challenges faced by Rivers State in effectively utilizing its resources to foster job creation, enhance healthcare and education standards, ensure food security, and promote human safety. Regrettably, the state has failed to achieve economic progress, instead experiencing a situation where human and natural resources are underutilized, insecurity persists, and economic growth remains stagnant. Based on the above, the paper posed this question, thus: What are the forms of insecurity had on economic activities in Rivers State?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The paper also employs the theory of relative deprivation. The origin of the concept of relative deprivation is commonly credited to American sociologist Robert K. Merton. Through his research on American soldiers during World War II, Merton discovered that soldiers in the Military Police expressed significantly lower satisfaction with their prospects for advancement compared to regular GIs. In presenting one of the initial formal definitions of relative deprivation, British statesman and sociologist Walter Runciman outlined four essential conditions:

- i) A person does not have something.
- ii) That person knows other people who have the thing.
- iii) That person wants to have the thing.
- iv) That person believes they have a reasonable chance of getting the thing. ³

Runciman also delineated between "egoistic" and "fraternalistic" forms of relative deprivation. In the context of Runciman's theory, egoistic relative deprivation stems from an individual's perception of unfair treatment in comparison to others within their social sphere. For instance, an employee who believes they deserved a promotion that was given to a colleague may experience egoistic relative deprivation. On the other hand, fraternalistic relative deprivation is frequently linked to large-scale social movements such as the Civil Rights Movement.⁴

According to social theorists and political scientists, relative deprivation theory posits that individuals who perceive a lack of essential resources or opportunities in their society, such as wealth, rights, political participation, or social status, are inclined to mobilize or align themselves with social movements that strive to address these perceived deficiencies. For instance, relative deprivation theory has been identified as a contributing factor to the U.S. Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s, which arose from the Black American community's pursuit of social and legal parity with their white counterparts. Similarly, many individuals within the LGBTQ+ community engaged in the same-sex marriage movement with the goal of attaining legal recognition for their marriages equivalent to that enjoyed by heterosexual couples.

In certain instances, relative deprivation is identified as a catalyst for social unrest such as riots, looting, terrorism, and civil conflicts. Social movements and the resulting disorderly behaviors can often be linked to the grievances of individuals who perceive a lack of access to resources that they believe they are

³ R. K. Merton, *Modern Cartography*, Vol.3 1998, pp.249-269.

⁴ W. G. Runciman, *Egoistic Relative Deprivation* <<https://www.thoughtco.com/relative-deprivation>> accessed 3rd October 2023.

entitled to. Another prevalent form of relative deprivation is the sensation of jealousy experienced by individuals in the middle class when they observe affluent individuals on television driving luxury vehicles and wearing designer clothing. As per Runciman, fraternal deprivation also impacts voting patterns, particularly in relation to the appeal of extremist right-wing political candidates or movements.

An alternative perspective on relative deprivation was formulated by Ted Robert Gurr, an esteemed American author and political science professor. In his seminal work "Why Men Rebel" published in 1970, Gurr elucidates the correlation between relative deprivation and political violence. Gurr delves into the likelihood of the frustration-aggression mechanism being activated by feelings of relative deprivation, positing it as a fundamental driver of human propensity towards violence. While the manifestation of such frustration in violence is not a foregone conclusion, Gurr argues that prolonged exposure to relative deprivation heightens the probability of individuals or groups transitioning from frustration to anger, ultimately culminating in acts of violence.

Therefore, insecurity in Rivers State manifests as conflict, turmoil, and chaos instigated by dissatisfied individuals who perceive themselves as lacking in their essential needs and desires. The majority of the populace in Rivers State believes they are entitled to a significant portion of the crude oil wealth, yet they experience poverty, unemployment, high mortality rates, and various other socio-economic challenges. These inadequacies evoke emotions of frustration, suffering, and hostility towards both the government and multinational corporations. As a result, they resort to protests and uprisings to voice their discontent, leading to activities such as armed robbery, sea piracy, kidnapping, political violence, and militancy.

CONCEPTUALIZING INSECURITY

The notion of insecurity is a familiar one in societies, dating back to even the most ancient civilizations. In order to provide a comprehensive definition of insecurity, it is imperative to first examine the essence of security. The social contract, in which individuals willingly relinquish their rights to the governing body responsible for ensuring the well-being of all, is essential for establishing security. Nwanegbo and Odigbo assert that since the conclusion of the cold war, there has been a shift in the conceptualization of security from a narrow, state-centric approach to a more holistic perspective that emphasizes the importance of individuals. Human security, which encompasses aspects of national security, human rights, and national development, has become a key metric for understanding the concept of security.⁵ Central to this discourse is an endeavor to enhance and broaden the notion of security beyond the realm of nation-states to encompass societies and individuals, as well as transitioning from military to non-military concerns.

According to McGrew, national security hinges on two essential pillars: first, the preservation and protection of the socioeconomic framework against internal and external threats; and second, the promotion of a desired global framework that minimizes risks to core values and interests, as well as internal stability.⁶ Security encompasses the comprehensive protection of a territory through the presence of armed forces, ensuring the sovereignty of the state is upheld by a democratic and patriotic government, which is further safeguarded by a combination of military and police forces as well as the citizens themselves. It also involves not only shielding the population from external threats, but also from the detrimental impacts of internal disturbances such as unemployment, hunger, disease, lack of education, homelessness, environmental deterioration, pollution, and socio-economic disparities. Dike and Omede⁷ further elaborated on the aforementioned viewpoint by asserting that Nigeria's security framework should adopt a comprehensive approach that prioritizes the well-being of its citizens as the main recipients of all security and developmental initiatives provided by the government.⁸

According to Nwanegbo and Odigbo, ensuring the security of Nigeria will require enhancing the Federal Republic of Nigeria's capabilities to further its goals of managing internal and external threats, combating criminal activities, eradicating corruption, promoting authentic development and progress, and enhancing the well-being and standard of living of all its citizens.⁹ The opposite of security is insecurity, which can be viewed as the absence of security, as previously discussed. Insecurity is commonly described as

⁵ C. J. Nwanegbo & J. Odigbo, Security and National Development in Nigeria: The Threat of Boko Haram. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol. 3, no.4, 2013, pp. 285-291

⁶ T. McGrew, Security and Order. In M. Smith, S. Smith & B. White (eds.), *British Foreign Policy: Tradition, Change and Transformation*, London, Allen and Unwin Ltd Newspaper, 1988, pp. 6

⁷ Dike and Omede

⁸ P. Dike, Nigeria and the Quest for an Enduring Security Mechanism. Paper on National Security at the Royal United Service Institute, London, March 26. 2010.

⁹ Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2013.

uncertainty, peril, jeopardy, lack of safety, lack of confidence, state of uncertainty, insufficiently protected, lack of shield and being at risk, instability, among others. According to Achumba et al, the aforementioned common descriptors indicate a situation where there is susceptibility to harm, loss of life, property, or livelihood. In their view, insecurity represents a state of unawareness, a lack of authority, and the incapacity to take defensive measures against threats or dangers that pose a risk to an individual or group, leaving them vulnerable.¹⁰

The notion of insecurity is a prevalent and intricate concept that has sparked debates among intellectuals. Various scholars hold varying perspectives on insecurity, with some linking it to its impact on the well-being and survival of individuals. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines human security as encompassing persistent threats such as famine, illness, and oppression.¹¹ The condition of dread or unease arising from a real or perceived absence of safety or insufficient freedom from harm is defined as insecurity.¹² From a different perspective, Eme and Anyadike suggested that insecurity entails being vulnerable to danger, at risk, or experiencing anxiety. An individual or entity is considered secure when they are not vulnerable to any type of danger or risk of physical or moral harm, accidents, theft, or deterioration.¹³

Insecurity is perceived as a pervasive danger to human existence, territories, states, religious doctrines, properties, and institutions, among other aspects. It is important to acknowledge, however, that there is no universally accepted definition of insecurity due to the various perspectives from which it is approached. Analysts have delved into diverse origins of insecurity. Cameron and McCormick have identified several sources of insecurity, such as: emotional reactions to abrupt external threats from within; enduring external circumstances that pose a continuous threat; internal threats; and challenges to deeply held beliefs, particularly religious beliefs.¹⁴ Achumba, Ighomeroho, and Akpor-Robaro delineated two primary origins of insecurity: distal factors and immediate/proximate factors. The distal factors consist of deficient institutional capacity leading to governmental breakdown, widespread material disparities and injustices, ethno-religious discord, discrepancies in viewpoints between the populace and the government, fragile security infrastructure, and erosion of socio-cultural and communal norms. Conversely, the immediate and proximate factors encompass permeable borders, rural-to-urban migration, corporate social irresponsibility, joblessness/poverty, and terrorism.¹⁵

Insecurity is a mounting concern in Nigeria, emerging as a pervasive issue that plagues all residents of the country. It is increasingly evident that the government is unable to adequately ensure the safety of individuals and their possessions. The various state security entities, such as the police, state security agencies, military, immigration, and prison service, have all demonstrated a dismal performance in fulfilling their obligations. The complexity of insecurity in Nigeria is such that it defies precise categorization of its manifestations. The nature of insecurity in Nigeria that:

At various junctures in history, these disparate factions have held the Nigerian nation hostage. During each of these epochs, the factions prevailed, rendering the nation's security forces incapable of subduing them or quashing their lawless behavior with superior force. The government consistently brokered settlements with these entities. The recurring pattern indicates that with each concession made to these unruly factions, the government's authority waned, leading to the emergence of new groups resorting to violent tactics to coerce concessions from the government. Reflecting the characteristics of a nation dependent on a rent-based economy, the government habitually pursued peace through financial transactions, resulting in a state of uneasy calm reminiscent of the current situation in the Niger Delta. Here, former militants have transitioned into prominent government contractors, makeshift crude oil processors in remote regions, or purveyors of abduction, despite the continuation of an amnesty program that incurs significant annual costs for the government.¹⁶

¹⁰ I. C. Achumba, I. Ighomeroho & M.O. Akpor-Robaro, Security, Challenges in Nigeria and the Implication for Business Activities And Sustainable Development. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, vol.4, no. 2, 2013

¹¹ Martin, Babovic, Obradovic, Slandarenic, Rokvic, Stekic, 2009, p.12.

¹² D. Beland, *The Political Construction Of Collective Insecurity: From Moral Panic To Blame Avoidance And Organized Irresponsibility*. Center for European Studies: Working Paper Series, 2013, p 126

¹³ O. I. Eme & Anyadike, Security challenges and security votes in Nigeria, 2008-2013. *Kuwait Chapter of Arabian Journal of Business and Management Review*, vol.2, no.8, 2013, p.34.

¹⁴ W. B. Cameron & T. McCormick, Concepts of Security and Insecurity. *American Journal of Sociology*, vol.59, no.6, 1954, pp.556-564

¹⁵ Achumba, Ighomeroho & Akpor-Robaro. 2013, p.43

¹⁶ Z. Agomuo, Security Challenges Pose Risk to Nigeria's Emerging Economy. Retrieved April 28, 2013, from <http://businessdayonline.com>

Fear of uncertainty often deters entrepreneurs and corporate leaders from transferring their business operations from one location to another.¹⁷ This is a significant factor leading manufacturing companies to relocate from the Northeast region of Nigeria to other countries, as a result of the heightened insecurity caused by the Boko Haram Insurgency.¹⁸ According to Achumba, Ighomereho, and Akpor-Robaro, insecurity refers to the absence of adequate protection or safety, signifying a state of unpredictability and vulnerability.¹⁹ These scholars posit that insecurity encompasses danger, risk, uncertainty, inadequacy of protection, and absence of security.²⁰

The article explores the issue of insecurity from two primary perspectives: Initially, insecurity is defined as the state of being vulnerable or exposed to peril or the potential for peril. Under such circumstances, the risk of harm due to insufficient protections against danger is heightened. Secondly, insecurity is characterized as the condition of being in jeopardy or experiencing unease. This vulnerability may arise from inadequate efforts to address insecurity by governmental entities or particular factions. This situation often emerges when law enforcement officials are lacking in education, training, compensation, and motivation. It can also manifest when individuals lack essential resources for sustenance. Similarly, Beland perceives insecurity as a state of apprehension or unease arising from a lack of security. Moreover, insecurity is utilized to describe a precarious situation that is vulnerable to harm in specific contexts.²¹

This denotes that insecurity is the condition of being exposed to peril or jeopardy. In such circumstances, individuals' sense of security may be characterized by feelings of uncertainty and vulnerability, leading them to perceive themselves as potential targets for harm. Historically, particularly during the Cold War era between the United States of America and the former Soviet Union, academic discourse on insecurity primarily focused on conventional strategies, which are state-centric.²² Therefore, the issue of insecurity was predominantly viewed as a conflict between nations, with the acquisition of weapons and ammunition aimed at safeguarding the state against external threats.²³ The issue of insecurity post-war has transitioned from an international focus to a more domestic one, as the rise of rebel factions presents substantial obstacles, especially in less developed regions. The onset of non-violent disputes in the most impoverished nations globally has prompted academics to regard insecurity as a severe menace to human survival.²⁴

Abraham Maslow characterizes an insecure individual as someone who views the world as a menacing wilderness, perceiving most individuals as dangerous and self-centered. They experience feelings of rejection, isolation, anxiety, and hostility, leading to an overall pessimistic and unhappy demeanor. This person often displays signs of tension, conflict, introversion, and struggles with guilt and low self-esteem. Insecurity can give rise to shyness, paranoia, and social withdrawal, or conversely, it may manifest in compensatory behaviors such as criminal activities, arrogance, aggression, or bullying in certain cases. In recent times, Nigeria has been grappling with a range of security challenges, including a surge in armed robbery, kidnapping, and insurgency by the Niger Delta militants, as well as ethnic conflicts and more recently, the activities of the Boko Haram sect. Numerous Nigerians and foreign residents in the country have lost their lives due to various violent crimes, while properties worth millions of naira have been destroyed as a result of insecurity in the nation.

Essentially, no individual or region can be deemed completely secure within the nation. While individuals in the southern regions grapple with abductions and other violent offenses, citizens in the North live in constant fear, uncertain of when and where the next wave of explosions will occur. The nation's security dilemma took on a terrorist aspect following the bombing near Eagle Square in Abuja on 1 October 2010, during the country's 50th independence commemoration. Subsequently, a series of bomb incidents have taken place in

¹⁷ A. Adegbami, insecurity: A threat to human existence and economic development in Nigeria. *Public policy and administration research*, vol.13, no.6, 2013, p.34.

¹⁸ K. A. Ajodo-Adebanjo & N. Okorie, Corruption and the challenges of insecurity in Nigeria: Political economy implication. *Global Journal of Human-Social Sciences*, vol.14, no.5, 2014, pp.10-16.

¹⁹ Achumba, Ighomereho & Akpor-Robaro. 2013, p.40

²⁰ Ibid, p.98-100

²¹ E. W. Udoh, Insecurity in Nigeria: Political, religious and cultural implications. *Journal of Philosophy, Culture and Religion: An International Peer-reviewed Journal*, no.5, 2005, pp.1-7.

²² D. Pierce, America in the Post War Period. *Inquiry Journal*, vol.1, no.10, 2009, pp.1-2.

²³ A. Ajodo-Adebanjo & U. O. Walter, Poverty and the challenge of insecurity to development. *European Scientific Journal*, vol.10, no.14, 2014, pp.361-72.

²⁴ A. H. Saliu, S. Luqman & A. A. Abdullahi, Environmental Degradation, Rising Poverty and Conflict: Towards an Explanation of the Niger Delta Crisis, *Journal of Sustainable Development in Africa*, vol.9, no.4, 2007, p34.

various areas including Suleja in Niger state, Jos, Kaduna, Maiduguri, Bauchi, and Kano. Additionally, the nation has experienced numerous ethnic and religious conflicts that seem to be escalating to an unbearable extent. These conflicts and criminal activities, both individually and collectively, contribute to insecurity and disrupt peace, ultimately impacting legitimate social and economic endeavors in the country.²⁵

II. METHODOLOGY

The article employed a historical research methodology to acquire data. Historical research entails the gathering and analysis of information pertaining to past events or concepts in order to comprehend their influence on contemporary events and concepts. This investigation relied on secondary sources for data collection. Subsequently, the data were analyzed through content analysis techniques.

DIMENSIONS OF INSECURITY IN RIVERS STATE FROM 2000 - 2015

The following are the various dimensions of insecurity in Rivers State, from 2000 - 2015, they are:

Piracy

The International Maritime Bureau (IMB) recognizes piracy as defined in Article 101 of the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and Armed Robbery as defined by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) in its 26th Assembly, Resolution A.1025 (26) "Code of Practice for the Investigation of Crimes of Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships." The resolution defines Piracy as any unlawful act of violence, detention, or depredation committed for personal gain by the crew or passengers of a private vessel or aircraft, directed on the high seas against another vessel or aircraft, or against individuals or property on board such vessel.²⁶ Rivers State is characterized by its abundance of rivers, including the prominent Nun River, Andoni River, Bonny River, and Orashi River, among others, with the state bordered to the south by the Atlantic Ocean. This geographical aspect has fostered a strong aquatic culture, encompassing a wide range of activities from onshore oil exploration to artisanal fishing. Our investigation uncovered sea piracy as a significant security challenge in Rivers State, causing disruptions to economic operations of both individuals and large corporations operating in the maritime domain during our research period. This discovery aligns with the research of Don-Baridam and Onyuku, highlighting the detrimental impact of sea piracy on the maritime industry's development in Rivers State.²⁷ It is worthy to establish that any form of illegal action, which poses a threat to;

- i. Companies that operated in the Seas and various rivers of Rivers State,
- ii. Individuals whose businesses or source of livelihood involved operations in the Seas and various rivers of Rivers State, and
- iii. Properties, facilities, and equipment used in carrying out operations in the Seas and various rivers of Rivers State,

Within this framework, piracy is perceived as a serious issue. In the context of Rivers State, piracy encompasses activities such as kidnappings on the seas and rivers, which have adverse effects on businesses. Additionally, piracy involves the theft of equipment and assets utilized in various operations, such as fishing boats. Another type of piracy observed in our research is the extortion of individuals involved in aquafarming on a significant scale.

A paper carried out in Harris Town, Degema, revealed that individuals involved in criminal activities engage in maritime piracy by capturing the crews of coastal and deep-sea vessels to obtain funds for procuring sophisticated weaponry for counterattacks against opposing factions that have taken over oil bunkering sites.²⁸ Numerous enterprises that previously flourished in the Riverine regions of the state struggled to maintain their operations due to the rampant incidents of piracy. Entrepreneurs were frequently abducted by maritime pirates, resulting in loss of life and the hijacking of valuable assets belonging to business owners. During the course of our investigation, an interview with a key informant further substantiated our assertion, shedding light on the prevalence of maritime piracy as a significant security threat in Rivers State from 2000 to 2015. The following are excerpts from the respondent's account:

²⁵ M. B. Abdulkadir, *Measuring Police Effectiveness in Nigeria: An Evaluation of Input and Output in Crime and Policing in Nigeria; Challenges and Options*. CLEEN Foundation: Lagos, 2004, pp.111-15

²⁶ ICC International Maritime Bureau (2022). Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships Report: First Quarter 2022. *Report for the period*. P.3 Retrieved from [ccs.org/reports/Q1%202022%20IMB%20Piracy%20Report.pdf](https://www.icb-ccs.org/reports/Q1%202022%20IMB%20Piracy%20Report.pdf).

²⁷ L. Don-Baridam & S.K.Onyuku, Sea Piracy and Maritime Assets Development in Nigerian Port Authority, Rivers State, Nigeria. *RSU Journal of Strategic and Internet Business Vol 6, Special Issue*. Department of Management, faculty of Management Sciences Rivers State University. Pp. 1984-1993, 2021.

²⁸ Tonyeokoli T. 2023.

Prior to the year 2000, I possessed an array of fishing equipment, including various sizes of nets, hooks, baskets, and a variety of wooden and fiber boats for my fishing endeavors. Between 2000 and early 2003, following the military transition to the current democratic regime, operations continued to run smoothly in comparison to the period spanning from then until 2015. I owned fiber speedboats equipped with 25 horsepower Yamaha outboard engines specifically designed for fishing excursions. To ensure the efficiency of these operations, I hired a team of 12 fishing personnel, with each fiber speedboat being manned by a crew of two individuals. These teams embarked on fishing expeditions into the depths of the ocean and consistently returned with bountiful catches. In the Oyorokoto community and throughout all Andoni communities, fishing has served as the primary means of sustenance, generating substantial revenue from the sale and distribution of these fish to neighboring communities such as the Ogonis, the Annangs in Akwa Ibom, Ekwenga Community, and other prominent markets along the Sauks, Kaa Market, Bodo City Markets, and Kono Market, all located within the Ogoni Rivers Bank region.

At present, I find myself in a situation where I have unfortunately lost all six of my high-speed fiber speedboats due to the actions of sea pirates. These individuals were previously employed in my fishing business but were lured into participating in political activities following the onset of democracy. It is customary to support one's preferred political candidates through campaigning, as a means of enhancing our political landscape. However, the situation took a turn when these individuals were equipped with weapons and engaged in physical altercations with rival political groups, leading to the involvement of various cult factions such as the Deegbam, Deeywelll, Greenlanders, Deck Marine, and White Angels in political activities. Following the inauguration of new political leaders, these individuals were left neglected and subsequently turned to criminal activities, including sea piracy, illegal oil pipeline vandalism, robbery, armed robbery, kidnapping, and even engaging in ritualistic killings for monetary gain. I have suffered the loss of all my fiber speedboats and outboard engines to sea piracy, with my fishing equipment confiscated. Additionally, I have been kidnapped on two separate occasions, with ransoms paid for my release. Unfortunately, this plight is not unique to me, as other business owners in Andoni Communities have experienced similar challenges.²⁹

The aforementioned evidence supports the conclusion that sea piracy represents a significant security threat in Rivers State during the specified timeframe, significantly impeding economic activities and hindering overall economic progress in the region.

Kidnapping

Abduction is another aspect of insecurity that was uncovered in our research. Abduction is described as the action of seizing and detaining an individual by a known or unknown individual against their will. The term abduction is derived from the combination of the slang words "kids" or "child" and "nap," meaning to steal. Historically, abduction primarily referred to the theft of children. However, in contemporary usage, the term is also applied to situations where adults are captured and detained for ransom purposes. Our research indicates that abduction rates were notably high between 2000 and 2015 and were prevalent in various regions to varying extents. The analysis conducted by Chibor on abduction in Ogbaland revealed that the incidence of abduction escalated dramatically in Ogbaland in 2015 following the general elections, with a syndicate of abductors essentially taking control of the state.³⁰ Additionally, his research elucidates that the phenomenon of abductions in Ogbaland originated with the targeting of unsuspecting travelers en route to Port Harcourt and Owerri, eventually evolving to include the abduction of prominent figures such as oil workers and politicians from the comfort of their residences. As detailed in his narrative;

During the initial phase, the issue was not overtly apparent and did not pose a significant concern due to its infrequent occurrence. It manifested sporadically, with individuals continuing their daily activities under the assumption that this societal problem would diminish over time, much like other social issues have in the past. An instance resembling a kidnappers' hideout was discovered in Obor Town when a group of women ventured into the fields and stumbled upon a peculiar structure nestled within the dense foliage. Upon returning home, they promptly notified the villagers of their discovery. Subsequently, members of the community development committee proceeded to the Omoku Police Division to lodge a report. A police unit was dispatched to Obor, accompanied by both law enforcement officials and concerned villagers, to investigate the location of

²⁹ Etete, G.2023

³⁰ M.C. Chibor, *An Ethical Response to the Challenge of Kidnapping in Ogba Land, Rivers State, Nigeria*. University of North Carolina, Greensboro, NC, USA. 2022.

the suspicious building within the forest. A confrontation ensued between the kidnapers and the authorities, resulting in the death of one perpetrator while the remaining individuals managed to evade capture.³¹

The aforementioned pertains to Ogbaland; however, through an inductive methodology, one can infer that kidnapping constituted a manifestation of insecurity in Rivers State from 2000 to 2015.

As per a reliable source, Donu Kogbara, a seasoned journalist who commenced her career at The Times of London and subsequently contributed to the BBC and The Economist, was forcefully taken from her abode in Port Harcourt, the capital of Rivers State, on August 30, 2015.³² In 2015, the pervasive issue of kidnapping emerged as a significant worry for the residents of Rivers State, encompassing both the government and security agencies. Not a single day goes by without a reported kidnapping case in the state. The data on kidnapping incidents revealed that between January and October 2015, a staggering total of five hundred and eighty-five individuals fell victim to kidnapers in Rivers State.³³ Abduction evolved into a lucrative means of generating substantial wealth effortlessly and without difficulty for those responsible.

During the course of this paper, numerous interviews were carried out, and the majority of respondents from various local administrations in Rivers State did not hesitate to identify kidnapping as a primary driver of instability in the region. A stakeholder from Etche, in providing his account, stated, "I have been abducted on two occasions, and ransoms were demanded and paid."³⁴ In the Egbeda community of Ikwerre Local Government Area, another interviewee engaged in palm oil milling recounted his harrowing experiences with insecurity. He lamented, "...my two palm oil milling facilities were looted, my machinery was pilfered, I was abducted and a ransom was extorted, my extensive palm oil fruit plantations were being exploited daily with no regard for quality control."³⁵ Based on the aforementioned factors, it is reasonable to conclude that abduction constitutes a security threat in Rivers State during the timeframe under investigation.

III. Armed Robbery

In further investigations pertaining to the issue of insecurity in Rivers State, armed robbery emerged as another social malady that plagued the population during the period under examination. Victims from various regions of the state expressed profound distress as they recounted their diverse encounters with armed robbers. Numerous business proprietors fell victim to individuals whom they had previously mentored as apprentices, highlighting the prevalence of armed robbery. Throughout the duration of the paper, armed robbery posed a significant threat to individuals across all sectors, including Banks, the Oil Sector, fishing, and other related industries such as agriculture. Numerous documented incidents of armed robbery in Rivers State, along with a multitude of proponents of this issue, serve as testament to its widespread impact. Moreover, the paper relies on firsthand information gathered through interviews as a solid foundation for asserting this claim.

On December 13, 2015, the Rivers State Police Command apprehended two infamous armed bandits who admitted to participating in a string of armed robberies and abductions in Port Harcourt and its surrounding areas.³⁶ Another report on February 22, 2015, unveiled that the Rivers State Police command neutralized 11 alleged armed robbers and five suspected kidnapers in altercations across different regions of the state over the past three weeks. Additionally, the authorities disclosed the apprehension of forty-five individuals believed to be involved in armed robbery, seventy-four suspected members of cult groups, and eight alleged associates of a kidnapping syndicate. Moreover, law enforcement successfully retrieved 26 vehicles and a significant cache of arms and ammunition during this time frame.³⁷ In the paper conducted by Kpae and Adishi, it was highlighted that while the presence of armed robbery in Port Harcourt is not a recent phenomenon, its frequency has been steadily rising in recent years, posing a significant cause for concern. Their research, which centered on the timeframe spanning from 2000 to 2010, supports the assertion that armed robbery represents a notable security

³¹ M.C. Chibor, An Ethical Response to the Challenge of Kidnapping in Ogba Land, Rivers State, Nigeria. 2022

³² Kidnapped in Port Harcourt, Veteran Journalist Narrates Her 14-Days Encounter in Captivity. *A news paper article by TheCable (2016)*. Retrieved from <https://www.thecable.ng/kidnapped-port-harcourt-veteran-journalist-narrates-14-day-encounter-captivity>.

³³ Between Jan-Oct 2015: 585 Persons Kidnapped in Rivers...Names of Victims Inside. *A news paper article by The News Writers (2015)*. Retrieved from <https://www.thenewswriterng.com/2015/10/22/between-jan-oct-2015-585-persons-kidnapped-in-rivers-names-of-victims-inside/>. 2023.

³⁴ Etete, G. 2023.

³⁵ Amadi, W. 2023.

³⁶ A. Victor, Police Arrests Notorious Armed Robbers in Port Harcourt. *Daily Post News*. Retrieved from <https://dailypost.ng/2015/12/13/police-arrests-notorious-armed-robbers-in-port-harcourt/>. 2015

³⁷ Lolade (2015) Judgement Day! Police Kill 11 Suspected Robbers in Rivers State.

threat in Rivers State. Furthermore, they noted that insufficient steps have been taken to address this pressing issue.³⁸ There have been numerous incidents of theft, encompassing both armed and unarmed instances, which has become a prevalent concern in Rivers State. According to a report by UNDP, based on data from governmental sources, the police documented 840 cases of theft between 2001 and 2009. Further corroboration of these findings is provided by an analysis of data from the Office of the Deputy Commissioner of Police, State CID. An examination of the yearly fluctuations in the frequency of these incidents reveals an escalation in theft cases in 2001 and 2002 coinciding with the proliferation of mobile communication. The peak occurrences of armed theft were noted in 2004 and 2005, followed by a subsequent decrease until 2008.³⁹

In Ndele, the narrative remains consistent - once a tranquil community housing a branch of the former Rivers State College of Education (now Ignatius Ajuru University of Education), it has now transformed into a hub for illicit oil refiners and cult members. During the course of this investigation, John Ugomalu, a prominent poultry farmer, shared his harrowing encounters with armed robbery. When asked about his firsthand encounters with armed robbery between 2000 and 2015, he provided the following response:

I am a poultry farmer who has been facing significant losses since 2010 due to the continuous theft of my birds by a group of angry cult members. They now view me as their primary source of income and regularly come to my farm to steal birds without any opposition, insisting that I pay them to avoid further theft. Reluctantly, I complied with their demands in order to sustain my business. In response to these challenges, I have relocated with my family to Choba, where I am currently engaged in low-paying jobs. The community has been overrun by gang members who, previously engaged in legitimate businesses, have been lured into a lavish and unsustainable lifestyle by corrupt politicians. As a result, they have become dependent on illegal activities to sustain their newfound wealth, unable to return to honest work.⁴⁰

Throughout the course of this paper, numerous interviews were conducted with various stakeholders who provided insights on the issue of insecurity in Rivers State. Among the different forms of insecurity discussed, armed robbery was frequently mentioned. Therefore, this work asserts that armed robbery constituted a significant aspect of insecurity in Rivers State between 2000 and 2015.

Cultism

Incidents of cultism have significantly increased throughout the entirety of the Niger Delta region. However, this issue is particularly prominent in Rivers State. The research indicates that cult-related violence manifested in various forms such as criminal, militant, communal, and political, depending on the circumstances. There are a handful of documented cases of cultism within the scope of our paper, alongside recent accounts on the matter. For example, in 2015, there was a notable clash between rival cult factions "Deywell" and "Deebam" in the northern Local Government Area (LGA) of Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni, resulting in the deaths of up to 16 individuals in July.⁴¹ An altercation was documented between antagonistic factions known as the "Greenlanders" and "Icelanders" in the southern Local Government Area (LGA) of Degema. Additionally, instances of political coercion by the Icelanders and Greenlanders occurred between January and April in the central LGA of Port Harcourt, the southeastern LGA of Andoni, and other locations.⁴² Asari Toru witnessed a surge in cult-related violence in 2015, which encompassed acts such as robbery, the accumulation of weapons, and engagement in political thuggery during the elections. In Degema, a conflict arose between the Greenlanders and Icelanders factions regarding oil bunkering, resulting in a tragic fatality. Additionally, a cult member was reportedly assaulted during a political disagreement. The data indicates that Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni exhibited the highest incidence of cult violence in 2015, with a total of 68 fatalities recorded since the beginning of the year. Following closely behind, Eleme experienced the second highest number of cult-related deaths, primarily due to clashes involving the Deebam and Deywell cult groups.⁴³ In April, two individuals perished in

³⁸ K. Gbenemene & A. Eric, *The Unemployed and Armed Robbery in Port Harcourt City, (2000-2010)*. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Management Research*. Vol. 3 No.1. 2017

³⁹ K. Gbenemene & A. Eric, *Mobile Communication, Unemployment and Armed Robbery in Port Harcourt: An Empirical Analysis*. 2017

⁴⁰ John, U. 2023.

⁴¹ UNOCHA (2015) *Rise in Cult Violence and Insecurity in Rivers State*. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/rise-cult-violence-and-insecurity-rivers-state>

⁴² UNOCHA (2015) *Rise in Cult Violence and Insecurity in Rivers State*. Retrieved from <https://reliefweb.int/report/nigeria/rise-cult-violence-and-insecurity-rivers-state>

⁴³ PIND, NDPI, The Fund for Peace (2015), *Rise in Cult Violence and Insecurity in Rivers State. Briefing: November 2015*. Retrieved from <https://lawsdocbox.com/Politics/126600251-Rise-in-cult-violence-and-insecurity-in-rivers-state.html>

a skirmish believed to have involved the Deebam and Deywell factions. Subsequently, in July, a staggering fifteen individuals were reportedly slain as cult members indiscriminately opened fire in a marketplace.⁴⁴ In January, the feud between the Deebam and Deywell factions escalated in the Local Government Area following the deaths of three cult members in a confrontation, resulting in heightened communal unrest in the region.⁴⁵ In July, there was a clash between the Dewell and Axelander cult factions in Ikwerre, resulting in the tragic loss of three lives.

In January, a confrontation between two rival cult groups occurred in Obio/Akpor, resulting in no reported fatalities. A Heat Map illustrating areas of reported cult-related incidents from 2009 to 2015 in Rivers State highlights Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni and Okrika Port Harcourt as significant locations. Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni emerged as the most violent Local Government Area in Rivers State this year, with a staggering death toll of 68 attributed to cult activities.

In May, the police engaged in a gun battle with cultists, resulting in the death of more than 20 individuals. Subsequently, in July, a clash between the Deywell and Deebam cult groups led to the demise of 18 individuals. This violence persisted in September, when another clash between rival cult groups resulted in the death of an additional 17 individuals. In February, during a political campaign rally, cultists and armed gangs attacked party supporters, resulting in the tragic loss of a police officer and the stabbing of a member of the news media.⁴⁶ In July, a clash between two communities resulted in the tragic loss of five lives, in an incident believed to be linked to cult activities. Additionally, there were conflicts reported regarding the control of an oil bunkering camp and disputes over revenue from banana dealers. The prevalence of cultism in Rivers State and its significant impact on the state are evident in an excerpt from a report by The Guardian news.

In relation to the Agbonchia killings, Philip Okparaji, the Chairman of Eleme Local Government Area, informed The Guardian that on the evening of July 11, 2015, three armed individuals on a motorcycle forcefully entered a location where commercial motorcyclists were cleaning their vehicles. Subsequent to the chaos, the aftermath revealed the unfortunate demise of five individuals. The Chairman attributed this tragic event to the ongoing conflict between two infamous factions - the Deywell and Deygbam groups.⁴⁷

Undoubtedly, there is ample evidence linking cultism to a manifestation of insecurity in Rivers State. This connection has been extensively explored and documented in various scholarly works. Taking this into account, and bolstered by the information obtained from interviews, it can be concluded that the residents of Rivers State experienced a significant prevalence of this social problem between 2000 and 2015. During our interview, Chibuike articulated the following perspective:

I was in the process of completing my apprenticeship as a welder when I was unable to finish due to unrest in the community caused by conflicts between rival cult groups. Despite not initially intending to join any group, I found myself compelled to become a member of the Green Lander cult in order to protect myself from potential attacks by the opposing Ice-Landers. This decision led me to abandon my welding apprenticeship.

The prevalence of cultism in Rivers State has been further underscored, as young individuals are coerced into joining various cult groups. Consequently, they are impeded from pursuing lawful and lucrative occupations, instead existing in constant trepidation of assaults from rival factions. This compels them to fully immerse themselves in cult-related activities with fellow members for protection, thereby exacerbating unrest in society. These are merely a few manifestations of the insecurity experienced by the residents of Rivers State during the paper period. While stakeholders did mention other forms of insecurity, their primary focus was on those aforementioned. Nonetheless, additional forms of insecurity in Rivers State include Inter and Intra-Communal Conflicts, Political Violence, Human Trafficking, Illegal Bunkering, Organ Harvesting for rituals, Pipeline Vandalism, and Militancy, among others.

⁴⁴ PIND, NDPI, The Fund for Peace (2015), Rise in Cult Violence and Insecurity in Rivers State. *Briefing: November 2015*. Retrieved from <https://lawsdocbox.com/Politics/126600251-Rise-in-cult-violence-and-insecurity-in-rivers-state.html>

⁴⁵ PIND, NDPI, The Fund for Peace (2015), Rise in Cult Violence and Insecurity in Rivers State. *Briefing: November 2015*. Retrieved from <https://lawsdocbox.com/Politics/126600251-Rise-in-cult-violence-and-insecurity-in-rivers-state.html>

⁴⁶ PIND, NDPI, The Fund for Peace (2015), Rise in Cult Violence and Insecurity in Rivers State. *Briefing: November 2015*. Retrieved from <https://lawsdocbox.com/Politics/126600251-Rise-in-cult-violence-and-insecurity-in-rivers-state.html>

⁴⁷ K. Ebiri, Curbing the Menace of Cultism in Rivers. *Lead Story, TheGuardian*. Retrieved From <https://guardian.ng/lead-story/curbing-the-menace-of-cultism-in-rivers/>. 2015

IV. CONCLUSION

The paradox of economic development and insecurity in Rivers State is a result of the state's complex history, including issues of colonial legacy, political instability, and resource exploitation. The state's economic growth has been hindered by the lack of effective governance, corruption, and mismanagement of resources. Furthermore, the rise of criminal activities such as oil theft, kidnapping, and armed robbery has further exacerbated the situation. This paper has demonstrated that despite the state's vast economic potential, insecurity has emerged as a significant constraint to sustainable development. The findings of this paper highlight the need for a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach to address the root causes of insecurity in Rivers State.

The paper's findings have significant implications for policy makers, entrepreneurs, and citizens of Rivers State. It highlights the need for a more inclusive and equitable approach to economic development that addresses the social and economic needs of all stakeholders. The paper also underscores the importance of effective governance and institutional reforms to address the root causes of insecurity.

In conclusion, unlocking the dimensions of insecurity for development in Rivers State requires a holistic approach that addresses the economic, social, and political dimensions of the problem. This can be achieved through a combination of policy reforms, institutional strengthening, and community engagement.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this paper, the following recommendations are made:

- 1. Strengthen Institutional Capacity:** The government should prioritize institutional strengthening by investing in human capacity development, infrastructure, and technology. This will enable institutions to effectively respond to emerging threats and provide a more conducive environment for economic development.
- 2. Promote Inclusive Economic Development:** The government should adopt an inclusive economic development strategy that prioritizes the social and economic needs of all stakeholders. This can be achieved through initiatives such as job creation programs, entrepreneurship support, and social protection schemes.
- 3. Enhance Community Engagement:** The government should engage with local communities through participatory approaches to address their concerns and build trust. This can be achieved through community-led initiatives, public-private partnerships, and collaborative governance.
- 4. Develop a Comprehensive Security Strategy:** The government should develop a comprehensive security strategy that addresses the root causes of insecurity in Rivers State. This can be achieved through a multi-agency approach that involves law enforcement agencies, community leaders, and civil society organizations.

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