NEO-LIBERAL CLASS WAR AND HOBBESIAN STATE OF NATURE IN NIGERIA

LEONARD IFEANYI UGWU JR.
INSTITUTE OF AFRICAN STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA, ugwu.leonard@unn.edu.ng

ARINZE VICTOR NWAWUBE
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA, arinze.nwawube@unn.edu.ng

OMEH PAUL HEZEKIAH
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA, paul.omeh@unn.edu.ng

MICHAEL I. UGWUEZE
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA, michael.ugwueze@unn.edu.ng

KEYWORDS
Neo-liberal Class War, Hobbesian State of Nature, Income Inequality, Corruption, Privatization

ABSTRACT
Evidently, divergent literary exploration has attributed the Hobbesian state of Nature in Nigeria to various reasons like tribalism, mixed cultural heritage, corruption, among others. This study microscopes Neo liberalism as the major political and social melee affecting the country. The research investigates how neo-liberalism in the feature of global capitalism and imperialism forms an extreme division between top elite 1% and bottom struggling 99% which results in huge inequality while promoting corruption and weakening institutions. The research bases itself on neo-liberal theory to disclose how elite groups achieve resource control and economic instability while destroying national sovereignty and ethics. A qualitative study of secondary reports and economic indices and journal entries confirms that Nigeria experienced 32.5% inflation in 2024 alongside a 76–77% corruption index between 2022 and 2025 and 735 mass abductions and 24,720 recorded rapes from 2023 to date. The privatization process benefits wealthy individuals while electricity reaches only 30% of people and homelessness affects more than 4.5 to 5 million people in the country. The research finds that Nigeria became a Hobbesian state because neo-liberal policies increased class conflicts while demanding judicial changes alongside fair resource distribution and economic expansion to stop the development of permanent chaos. The research calls for rebuilding Nigeria's approach to fairness and stability by confronting the world's current economic model of liberalism.

Introduction

Nigeria with its significant oil resources and massive 200 million population reaches a critical juncture because it faces a neo-liberal class conflict which brings forth a Hobbesian state of nature in the present day. All of these neo-liberal policies involving deregulation and privatization and global trade enable a small elite group referred to as the 1% to seize control of resources while controlling elections and creating massive economic inequality that keeps 99% people in perpetual poverty and insecurity (Volle, 2011). Under neo-liberal policies Nigeria has lost its national sovereignty and developed severe social divisions and an environment matching Hobbes's depiction of "solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" as life has become oppressive (Hobbes 1651 p.10). The combination of neo-liberalism which interacts with imperialist forces and globalization and neo-colonialism systems makes elite groups able to take advantage of broken institutions to steal national assets and ultimately deteriorate democratic systems. Nigeria demonstrates a condition of societal breakdown because 70% of its people live in poverty alongside 4.5–5.0 million displaced population groups and widespread security threats that led to 735 group kidnappings throughout 2023 (Oxfam, 2017; OCHA, 2024).

This research interacts with opposing academic and literary discussions that show various factors that explain Nigeria's transition to a Hobbesian state. Nigerian academics analyze their nation's problems through local analysis which identifies Historical Elements and Structured Deterioration behind the country's challenges. Researchers like Ake (1978); Badmus (2009); Mlambo et al. (2024) focus on colonial heritage by noting that British indirect rule combined with different protectorate-nations led to ethnic divisions that worsened during Nigeria's intermittent military coups and political turbulence spanning from 1960 to 1999. The hundreds of indigenous groups and tribes in Nigeria contribute to deteriorated state institutions and politicians competing for control while causing governance breakdowns (Achebe, 1983; Tam-George, 2023; Agbede & Oparinde, 2024). The oil wealth and natural resources of Nigeria alongside its extensive land and water supply create an unending competition which leads to destabilizing conflicts such as the farmer-herder clashes, the activities of oil bunkers and the disputes surrounding privatization according to natural resource theorists (Salehyan & Gleditsch, 2006; Abugu et al., 2020). The opposing viewpoints about Nigeria's crisis between neo-liberal optimists, tribal skirmish scholars alongside research within Nigerian social contexts prove its multifaceted nature thus requiring deep investigation of the role of neo-liberalism.

According to neo-liberal scholars Hayek (1929), Friedman (1951) and Vallier (2021) state actors serve to defend public interests by using deregulation and privatization competitions and innovation as mechanisms. These market freedoms in Nigeria allow government officials and politically favored elites to gain wealth by rejecting the goal of equitable growth for workers, entrepreneurs and peasants which runs contrary to neo-liberal principles (Edeji, 2024; Smith, 2025). According to Marxist scholars, Nigeria faces a bourgeoisie-controlled class war in which neo-liberalism functions as an imperialist apparatus extracting southern global wealth to enrich world elites (Marx & Engels, 1848; Harvey, 2005; Pradella, 2021). The authors demonstrate that market integration maintains "accumulation by dispossession" which mirrors Marx's concept of "primitive accumulation" because elites plunder local resources for capital gain (Harvey, 2006).

Therefore, the primary research goal is to investigate how neo-liberal policies create in Nigeria a Hobbesian state of nature through severe income disparities and extensive corruption and overall security risks. This research aims to evaluate three factors that create a Hobbesian state of nature in Nigeria. First, it examines income inequality and self-interest corruption as factors that maintain elite control and social unrest while investigating the impact of privatized natural resources and the absence of strong legal systems to identify factors that cause lawlessness. Third, the study assesses how homelessness and sustained fear from conflicts and economic isolation and environmental disasters reveal breakdowns of governance. The research questions the suitability of the global neo-liberal model for countries which lack strong institutional frameworks because it shows that Nigeria requires immediate systemic transformations to recover public trust and economic fairness and national security throughout the country. This analysis detects Nigeria's current problems while offering a path for restoring its position as an

African entity known for strength and advancement.

The research approach relies on an analytical design with qualitative documentary analysis for synthesizing secondary data sourced from economic indices such as National Bureau of Statistics and World Bank reports together with scholarly journals, government publications, and media outlets. Through this research method Nigeria's socio-economic decline can be thoroughly analyzed with historical sketches and event tables combined with meta-analysis for understanding patterns of neo-liberal exploitation and social effects (University of Southern California Libraries, 2016). The analytical method uniting diverse studies expands sample measurements which allows synoptic reasoning to formulate new predictions about Nigeria's future direction.

Theoretical Perspective

This research uses neo-liberal theory to understand Nigeria's economic and social challenges because the country faces these issues due to the fact that market-driven approaches pursue individual benefits without considering societal needs. According to Hayek (1929) and Friedman (1951) and Slobodian (2018) neo-liberalism upholds free market capitalism together with deregulation and worldwide trade as the foundation of economic success. These principles act as a mechanism which allows elite groups to take control and worsen inequality in Nigeria matching what Hobbes envisioned as the violent chaos in a war-torn state of nature.

Neo-liberalism receives criticism because it intensifies inequality and weakens national sovereignty in developing states following colonial rule through its patterns of capital movement and privatization activities which mainly benefit elite classes at the expense of lower-income citizens (Harvey, 2005; Brown, 2019). The neo-liberal economic reforms in Nigeria generated a tiny political class to control the key sectors of oil and power which resulted in high rates of poverty throughout the population and social disturbances across the nation.

Five Key Assumptions of Neo-Liberal Theory:

i. Neo-Liberal Theory produce efficient resource allocation that results in innovative growth because of market competition.

ii. Strategic freedom forms a core belief of Neo-Liberalism since economic liberty enables people to follow their personal goals toward creating prosperity.

iii. According to Neo-Liberalism international trade and investment create economic interdependence for development purposes.

iv. The principle-ownership rights of Neo-Liberalism promotes investment through private property security as well as resource handling improvement.

v. In Neoliberalism rational behavior from people and businesses results in useful maximization which leads to equitable outcomes.

The global perspective of neo-liberalism described by Slobodian's 'Globalists' (2018) allows capital free movement at the expense of national sovereignty which highlights Nigeria's continued dependence on foreign loans and multinational corporations (Vallier, 2021). The theoretical framework offers an effective way to study Nigeria's economic crisis because it shows how development-based neo-liberal principles actually fuel social gaps and damage government structures. Elites apply deregulation and privatization principles from global economic policies to seize control of oil and power sectors thus creating mass poverty across Nigeria. The concept of free markets produces a disorderly society that enables institutional weakness to uphold elite rule. The study demonstrates through this analytical approach that Nigeria's neo-liberal policies create a class-based struggle between elites and workers which weakens both economic growth and social cohesion in the nation therefore the study further suggest reforms to merge governance strength with economic markets.

Examining the Key Variables of Neo-Liberal Class War and Hobbesian State of Nature in Nigeria

Income Inequality and Self-Interest Corruption in Nigeria

The National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) launched in 2001 along with the N-POWER youth empowerment scheme initiated in 2016 experienced failure because governing elites stole public welfare funds through systemic corruption (Gbosi, 2012 & Oxfam International, 2017). The corruption resulting from individualistic pursuits under neo-liberal principles produces two detrimental effects such as expansive economic inequality while simultaneously destroying institutional confidence and leading Nigeria toward lawlessness where the common population fights to survive as the elite obtain massive wealth. This widespread phenomenon of corruption resulting from neo-liberal deregulation allows elite groups to abuse public property without consequences. These dynamics underscore the study's argument that neo-liberalism through fostering unchecked capitalism drives Nigeria toward a Hobbesian state of nature where survival hinges on competition and conflict, rather than cooperation and justice.

The economic statistics in Table 1 below depict Nigeria's unstable financial state which results from the destructive nature of the neo-liberal class war. Unemployment declined from 3.07% in 2023 to reach 3.70% in the following year yet inflation climbed from 16.95% in 2022 to hit 32.5% in 2024 before falling to 23.18% by February 2025. The Naira lost its value significantly across 2022 and 2024 when it dropped from 415–448 NGN per USD to 1,668 NGN per USD. This extreme decrease led to growing nominal income but poor households faced decreasing real purchasing power (Musa et al., 2024). The corruption index reached its highest point at 77.37% in 2023 to indicate deep-rooted elite bribery that Adisa (2023) names as the main obstacle to achieving sustainable development and electoral reform. A 5.5 percent predicted GDP growth rate for 2025 presents no relief from persistent high inflation and exchange rate instability along with systemic corruption which demonstrates a neo-liberal economic system that benefits elites through incentivizing scarcity and self-interest at the cost of overall mass poverty as Hobbes envisaged.

Table 1

Economic Index of Nigeria 2022 -2025

Year	2022	2023	2024	2025
Unemployment Rate	3.83%	3.07%	3.70%	3.62% (In March 2025)
Inflation Rate	16.95 %	24.66%	32.5%	23.18 (In February, 2025)
Cost of Living: (USA = 100%)	41.84 %	42.23%	33.69%	– (No data yet)
Commercial Taxes and Contributions:	34.80 %	33.31%	30.97%	– (No data yet)
Average income Per Anum in US$:	2,100 US$	2,558 US$	2,406 US$	2,406US$
Dollar Rate	1Dollar = 415 - **448** NGN	1 Dollar = 448 - **859** NGN	1 Dollar = 859 – **1,668** NGN	1 Dollar = 1668 – **1,533** NGN (In March 2025)

(Average income Per Anum in US$) × (Dollar Rate in Naira) = Average income Per Annum in Naira	940,800 NGN	2,197,322 NGN	4,061,328 NGN	3,688,398 NGN
Corruption index:	76.00%	77.37%	76.91%	– (No data yet)
GDP (growth rate %)	3.25%	2.74%	3.40%	5.5%

Note. compiled by the author from documents of National Bureau of Statistics, World Data Info 2022 and World Bank report 2024 among other documents @ https://www.worlddata.info/country-comparison.php?country1=NGA&country2=ZAF

The data in Table 2 demonstrates how substantial corruption among elites results from neo-liberal policy implementation which damages regulatory systems. The reported $2–5 billion loot obtained by Abacha alongside $400 billion in losses since 1960 show an ongoing national wealth theft which mostly affects the oil sector through petroleum export dependence (Intersociety, 2018). The paper establishes connections to Hobbesian natural states through its analysis of enabling elite dominance which costs the common people and endangers public security. Painted through oil revenue theft the system demonstrates how market liberalization makes rent-making possible which jeopardizes social welfare and intensifies social class conflicts.

Table 2

Money Amassed or Siphoned by the Ruling Class in Nigeria (Historical and Reported Estimates)

Period/Person	Estimated Amount	Details
Sani Abacha (1993–1998)	$2–5 billion USD	Funds looted via fraudulent security votes and cash withdrawals from the Central Bank of Nigeria. Over $1.4 billion recovered from Swiss and other accounts.
James Ibori (1999 –2007)	Tens of millions USD	Former Delta State governor convicted of laundering money in the UK; £50 million+ traced.
Post-Independence Total (1960–2012)	$400 billion USD	Cumulative estimate of corruption losses since independence, per 2012 reports.
Intersociety Estimate (2003–2018)	$302 billion USD (₦66.7 trillion)	Alleged squandering by politicians across parties, based on rights group calculations.

Oil Sector Corruption (Ongoing)	Billions USD annually	Politicians and elites siphon oil revenues (90% of export earnings) via NNPC and contracts.

Note. U.S. Department of Justice, Swiss reports, UK court records – 2012 conviction, Transparency International, EFCC, Intersociety, 2018 report, Wikipedia – industry analysis.

Conclusively, the Corruption Index demonstrates how corruption in the country remains at an intolerably high level between 2022 and 2024 as it stays within the tight range of 76.00% to 77.37% (Pring, 2025). The corruption index illustrates how the practice of grand theft started during Abacha's time remains through poor management of oil revenue resources. Worldwide inflation and currency value decreases worsen income inequality which traps 70% of Nigerians in poverty though wage hikes appear higher than reality (George-Anokwuru & Inimino, 2024). Under the influence of neo-liberal deregulation Nigeria developed into an elitist society where selfish interests dominate which broke democratic institutions while provoking EndSARS protests (Amnesty International, 2021). Nigeria faces prolonged inequality and lawlessness because it lacks essential reform measures for anti-corruption as well as equitable resources distribution which according to Hobbes leads to survival through conflict rather than cooperative strategies.

Privatization of Natural Resources and Absence of Law and Justice in Nigeria

Private entities in a neo-liberal system prefer profit over public welfare and this has created vast energy poverty alongside a Hobbesian struggle to survive for millions of people. According to research, inadequate legal oversight creates an opportunity for profit-seeking firms to deliver subpar performance thereby pushing Nigeria toward greater lawlessness. Multiple reforms have produced divergent results in Nigeria because weak governance systems and inefficient judiciary have permitted elite groups to confiscate resources at the cost-of-service delivery to the general population and worsening social inequalities. For instance, under the Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) of 1986 Nigeria established its serious privatization efforts through this neo-liberal reform package which IMF required as a condition for financial support (Olukoshi, 1990). The Privatization and Commercialization Decree of 1988 together with the Bureau of Public Enterprises (BPE) Act of 1993 established formal procedures to target specific sectors involving oil and gas as well as electricity and agriculture (Adeyemo & Salami, 2008). The Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN) underwent privatization in 2013 to break it into 18 separate successor companies that included six generation companies and eleven distribution companies together with one transmission company (Okeke & Eze, 2019). The 2021 Petroleum Industry Act (PIA) established the commercialization of Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) and it endorsed the involvement of private entities throughout oil and gas activities spanning from exploration to distribution (ICLG, 2025).

The privatization of Nigeria's power sector creates a paradoxical situation revealed through Table 3 below because financial gains from privatization do not lead to actual benefits for citizens as discussed in neo-liberal theories. The government earned 298 billion Naira from privatization transactions in 2024 despite the initial 91 billion Naira collected in 2022 following the 2013 PHCN unbundling (Nigeria - United States Department of State, 2024). Annual power generation maintained approximately 4,000 megawatts (MW) continuity without reaching the energy demands for a population exceeding 195 million (Energypedia, 2022). The percentage of Nigerians without access to reliable electricity decreased minimally from 77 million in 2022 to an estimated 70 million in 2024 despite ongoing issues with inefficiency and regulatory problems and corruption (Adepoju et al., 2024). The stagnation reveals how

Table 3

Privatization of Power Sector 2022-2024

Year	Privatization Proceeds (NGN)	Power Generation (MW)	Population Without Access (Millions)
2022	91 billion	~4,000	77
2023	206 billion	~4,000	~75
2024	298 billion	~4,000	~70 (est.)

Note. Nigeria - United States Department of State (2024); Energypedia (2022)

Table 4 below shows that the majority of Nigeria's petroleum wealth goes to elite members because of neo-liberal privatization policies which support private ownership at the expense of equal distribution. Production of Nigerian oil during November 2024 amounted to 1.69 million barrels per day with three elite figures namely Mike Adenuga (Conoil) Theophilus Danjuma (SAPETRO) and Folorunsho Alakija (Famfa Oil) controlling major production operations (ICLG, 2025). Since 1960 the licensing processes for oil assets have been criticized for favoritism because elites acquired assets through opaque licensing while releasing $400 billion of corruption funds (Intersociety, 2018). The spread of wealth caused by neo-liberal deregulation creates a situation which imitates Hobbes's state of nature since powerful actors freely misuse resources thus damaging local communities in the Niger Delta and destroying their environment. Nigerians with political connections along with wealthy individuals control the majority of oil wells through Oil Mining Leases and Oil Prospecting Licenses with their ownership amounting to 52% while foreign firms possess 46% (Nigerian Informer, 2025). Therefore, the report demonstrates how elite capture breaks Nigeria's social agreement because it produces an unruleful climate for which inequality thrives.

Table 4

Oil Wells/Oil Blocks Owned by the Rich in Nigeria

Name	Company	Oil Well/Block	Details
Mike Adenuga	Conoil Producing Ltd	OML 103, 136, others	Operates 6 oil blocks; first indigenous company to strike oil in 1991; exports ~200,000 bpd.
Theophilus Danjuma	South Atlantic Petroleum (SAPETRO)	OML 246	Exports up to 300,000 bpd; sold part of assets for $1.8 billion to a Chinese firm in 2006.
Benedict Peters	Aiteo Group	OML 29	Largest indigenous oil producer; acquired from Shell in 2015; significant Niger Delta asset.
Mohammed Indimi	Oriental Energy Resources	OML 115, Ebok, Okwok	Offshore Niger Delta projects; family-run with children on the board.
Folorunsho Alakija	Famfa Oil Ltd	OPL 216 (Agbami Field)	Partner in one of Nigeria's largest deepwater fields; produces ~250,000 bpd at peak.
Arthur Eze	Atlas Petroleum International	OPL 109	Long-standing oil block owner; influential in eastern Nigeria.
Tein Jack-Rich	Belemaoil Producing Ltd	OML 55	Acquired from Chevron in 2013; first indigenous firm from an oil-producing community.

Aminu Dantata	Express Petroleum & Gas	OPL 108, OPL 227	Veteran businessman with stakes in multiple blocks; tied to northern elite networks.
Tijani Folawiyo	Yinka Folawiyo Group	OML 113	Inherited and expanded family oil interests in the Niger Delta.
Emeka Offor	Addax Petroleum (via Starcrest)	OPL 291	Sold initial stakes to Addax; remains influential in oil exploration.

Note. Compiled by the researcher from Nigerian Finder (2023); Billionaires.Africa (2023); Petroleum Industry in Nigeria (2025); ICLG Oil & Gas Laws (2025) and Intersociety, 2018.

These privatization failures become worse because of the weak legal framework which enables both corruption as well as environmental and social conflicts. Section 6(6)(c) of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution declares environmental and socioeconomic rights outside judicial jurisdiction so communities are defenseless against their exploitation by elites (Olujobi & Odogbo, 2024). The Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) and Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) struggle to perform effectively because political forces and limited resources obstruct their operations (Adisa, 2023). The empty space in laws permits individuals in marginalized communities to carry out destructive activities like oil bunkering and pipeline vandalism because they seek survival within an economic framework which fails to include them (Narh, 2023).

The statistics in Table 5 below demonstrate that economic needs and ineffective law enforcement jointly drive oil bunkering and pipeline vandalism which results in billions of annual losses to Nigeria while destroying Niger Delta's natural environment. According to Reuters (2025) information shows that oil incidents reached their highest point during 2019–2025 while losing $5–10 billion in value during 2024 (Reuters, 2025). During 2022–2024 the military forces increased their operations resulting in the recovery of more than 280,000 liters of stolen crude oil but the continuous resource theft exposed the failures of resource security through neo-liberal privatization (World Pipelines, 2024). Rivers State faced a state of emergency in 2025 due to continuous vandalism activities even after implementing new regulatory provisions in the PIA (Reuters, March 18, 2025). This research demonstrates that resource exploitation continues without legal control because elites as well as marginalized groups gain access to resources in a Hobbesian state ecosystem which leads to persistent violence.

Table 5

Oil Bunkering and Pipeline Vandalization in Nigeria (2019–2025)

Incidents Reported	Oil Lost (Barrels/Day)	Economic Loss (USD)
~3,800 pipeline breaks (est.)	100,000–200,000	~$2–4 billion/year
~3,500 (est.)	100,000–250,000	~$1.5–3 billion/year
4,000+ breaks (est.)	200,000–300,000	~$3 billion/year
3,732 breaks (NNPC)	200,000–470,000	$700 million/month
7,143 cases (5-yr total)	200,000–400,000	$3.3 billion/year
5,913 illegal connections removed	200,000–300,000	$5–10 billion (est.)
~1,500 (Jan–Mar est.)	150,000–250,000 (est.)	$1–2 billion (Q1 est.)

Note. From news reports (Reuters, BBC, World Pipelines) and contextual studies, reflecting enforcement efforts, major incidents, and policy responses. Source: Compiled from Reuters (2025); BBC (2023); World Pipelines (2024).

Conclusively, the implementation of natural resource privatization policies in Nigeria has failed to achieve efficiency initiatives while creating more social disparities through environmental destruction and legal chaos because of inadequate legal oversight. Weak governance creates opportunities for elite capture because all oil wealth concentrates in the Niger Delta and the power sector fails to provide basic electricity to the 70 million Nigerian people even though privatization procedures generated substantial funds (Nigeria - United States Department of State, 2024). The $400 billion dollar loss since 1960 alongside non-justiciable rights in the judicial system allow Nigerian elites to exploit resources without facing consequences (Intersociety, 2018; Olujobi & Odogbo, 2024). The nation faces additional devastation because communities who face marginalization through neo-liberal prosperity resort to oil bunkering along with vandalism as reported by Reuters (2025).

Increased Homelessness and Perpetual Fear in Nigeria

The World Population Review (2025) reports that Nigeria has 4.5–5.0 million individuals experiencing homelessness together with many thousands who live in unsafe informal housing areas and those forced out by violent conflicts and environmental disasters. The country confronts two major crises: widespread insecurity showcased through 735 mass abductions and 24,720 reported rapes between January and October 2023. These events contribute to societal instability (Human Rights Watch, 2024; Amnesty International, 2023). 1651). Homeless individuals who do not have access to safe housing are prone to violent attacks and environmental threats and predatory behavior which intensifies their security risk (Famous, 2024). Fear of eviction and climate disasters together with banditry activities push people to migrate into urban slums which leads to worsened homelessness problems along with extreme crowding. Homeless people in Lagos City face increased fear due to police mistreatment and eviction orders since most people in the city live under the poverty threshold (Development Aid, 2025; Farha, 2019). The Nigeria Humanitarian Needs Overview (2024) reports that IDPs consisting of 23% women experience increased dangers of sexual violence which deepen their state of constant worry (OCHA, 2024). This study demonstrates how neo-liberalism fails because it does not solve structural inequities which creates a Hobbesian community where people experience daily fear and forced displacement.

The homeless population has increased from 4.0 million in 2019 to projected estimates of 4.5–5.0 million by early 2025 accompanied by an IDP population growth from 2.0 million to over 3.6 million according to Table 6 below. Homelessness and displacement intensify from Boko Haram's 2019 insurgency through the combination of 2022 floods and kidnappings and climate-based evictions in 2024 to 2025 due to public welfare-unfriendly neo-liberal policies. The early 2025 statistics show that displacement continues because of events like the Trans Niger Pipeline blast which led to ongoing displacement (OCHA, 2024). The research shows how Hobbesian conditions emerge when neo-liberal policies fail to resolve structural weaknesses thus creating homelessness and insecurity among millions of people who face continuous fear within an unstable social environment.

Table 6

Homelessness and Displacement Statistics (2019–2025)

Year	Estimated Homeless Population (Millions)	IDPs (Millions)	Major Fears
2019	~4.0	2.0	Boko Haram, Inflation, Unemployment
2022	4.5	3.2	Flooding, political crises, Kidnapping in the South East
2024	4.5–5.0 (est.)	3.6	Climate change, evictions Unemployment
2025 (Q1)	~4.5–5.0 (est.)	3.6+	Ongoing crises, Kidnapping in the South East

Note. World Population Review (2025); IOM DTM Round 47 (2024); OCHA (2024)

The kidnapping situation in Nigeria has worsened according to Table 7 below which shows that 1,500 kidnappings took place in 2021 alongside a total of 735 mass kidnappings recorded by 2023 and this increase is caused by banditry and attacks on schools. Ransom payments demonstrate economic challenges as they decrease to $387179 during 2023 according to Al Jazeera (2024). The research connects both factors to neo-liberalism through institutional decline because weak public institutions neglect security measures which leads to diminish citizens' protection and creates fear of violence.

Table 7

Kidnappings and Related Fear Indicators in Nigeria (2019–2023)

Year	Kidnapping Incidents	Victims Abducted	Ransom Paid (USD)	Key Fear Driver
2019	~1,000 (est.)	~5,000 (est.)	$18.5M (2011–2020 avg.)	Banditry in Northwest, Boko Haram abductions
2020	1,071 (Q1 alone)	~6,000 (est.)	$18.5M (2011–2020 avg.)	School abductions rise (e.g., Niger State)
2021	~1,500 (est.)	3,620 (Jul 2022–Jun 2023)	$1.12M (2022 total)	Mass school kidnappings (e.g., Bethel Baptist)
2022	582 (Jul 2022–Jun 2023)	3,620 (Jul 2022–Jun 2023)	$1.12M (full year)	279 schoolgirls freed, unrest peaks
2023	735 (total since 2019)	2,452 (est. full year)	$387,179 (full year)	287 schoolchildren kidnapped in Kaduna

Note. Data generated by the researcher through Human Rights Watch (2020, 2024); World Report 2020: Nigeria; Reuters (2021); Wikipedia (2025); Al Jazeera (2024).

Statistics in Table 8 below demonstrate increasing violence patterns that show a significant increase in rape cases from 2,000 in 2019 to 24,720 by October 2023 while also presenting a maximum of 3,732 pipeline breaks during 2022. The total number of deaths resulting from violent causes reached 22,873 during 2022 due to insurgent and communal

conflicts (Amnesty International, 2023). The analysis establishes a link between neo-liberalism's weak police enforcement structure which has led the state to become Hobbesian resulting in violence and fear that destroys social solidarity.

Table 8

Rape, Unrest, and Violence-Related Fear Indicators in Nigeria (2019–2023)

Year	Reported Rape Cases	Unrest Incidents	Violence-Related Deaths	Key Fear Driver
2019	~2,000 (est.)	~2,500 (est.)	10,000 (est.)	Boko Haram suicide bombings, herder clashes
2020	~3,000 (est.)	~3,000 (est.)	6,000 (first half)	EndSARS riots, banditry surge
2021	11,200 (full year)	~3,500 (est.)	169,033 (2006–2021 total)	ISWAP train attack, school abductions
2022	~12,000 (est.)	3,732 (pipeline breaks)	22,873 (peak year)	Imo explosion (100+ deaths), unrest
2023	24,720 (Jan–Oct)	~4,000 (est.)	109 (election-related)	Christmas Day assault (140 deaths)

Note. Compiled from Amnesty International (2021, 2023); Council on Foreign Relations (2017); Injury Prevention (2023); Human Rights Watch (2019-2024)

Therefore, elites who control resources through capture procedures drive both environmental debasement and conflicts which, with urban development, push millions out of their homes and bring about persistent fear throughout the country. The tables from 6–8 demonstrate a worsening scenario because the growing numbers of homeless individuals together with kidnappings and rising violence indicate shortcomings in governance. This research locates these dilemmas within a neo-liberal economic class struggle that makes some wealthy through market advantages yet forces others into unstable lives through such policies which need fundamental changes to bring back fairness and order.

Conclusion

This research reveals how Nigeria entered a Hobbesian state of nature due to a neo-liberal class struggle that transferred wealth to the elite class while subjecting the majority to continuous poverty alongside constant fear. A combination of 32.5% inflation and a Naira devaluation along with 76–77% corruption caused privatization failures which led to 70 million individuals without electricity while displacing 4.5–5.0 million people during 2022 to 2025. The lawless condition of Nigeria is characterized by 735 mass abductions and 24,720 rapes during 2023 through the exploitation of neo-liberal market freedoms by elite groups which leads to institutional downfall. The neo-liberal approach exposes deregulation and global integration policies as projects that created both economic inequality and disorder while following a Hobbesian vision of life-as-war. The country faces an escalating instability crisis because neo-liberal regulations continue to expand disparities while destroying public trust alongside sustaining violence throughout the nation.

The research proves that Nigeria needs an immediate overhaul of its social economic design while opposing the worldwide neo-liberal principle that gives precedence to profitmaking above human welfare. The study demonstrates how domestic elite exploitation together with international economic pressures creates Nigeria's Hobbesian crisis thus demanding governance reforms focused on equality and human rights to extract the nation from this condition.

Recommendations

The country needs to establish revolutionary reforms which would enable it to emerge from this neoliberal quandary alongside Hobbesian disorder. The first step involves constitutional amendment for socioeconomic right

enforcement which grants the judiciary power to fight elite corruption through independent funding of anti-graft agencies. The privatization system must undergo changes according to public welfare requirements through distributing oil and power money transparently towards community development programs which fight against inequality. The government should finance sustainable affordable housing while also promoting resilience to climate change together with community-oriented security systems as approaches for reducing homelessness and violent incidents (IOM, 2024). The application of biometric voting structures together with an independent electoral commission should be established to restore democratic trust. The economy should develop various industries instead of being dependent on oil resources to achieve national independence.

References

Abugu, S. O., Okeke, O. E., & Oparinde, O. R. (2020). Natural resource conflicts and the politics of dispossession in Nigeria. Journal of African Political Economy, 47(3), 321–339.

Achebe, C. (1983). The trouble with Nigeria. Heinemann.

Adepoju, T., Eze, C., & Okeke, R. (2024). Energy poverty and privatization failures in Nigeria: A critical review. African Journal of Energy Studies, 12(1), 45–60.

Adeyemo, D. O., & Salami, A. (2008). A review of privatization in Nigeria: Successes and challenges. Journal of Public Administration and Policy Research, 1(2), 23–34.

Adisa, W. S. (2023). Corruption as a barrier to sustainable development in Nigeria. African Governance Review, 15(4), 112–130.

Agbede, M. O., & Oparinde, O. R. (2024). Ethnic divisions and governance failures in Nigeria: A historical perspective. Journal of Nigerian Studies, 20(1), 78–95.

Ake, C. (1978). Revolutionary pressures in Africa. Zed Books.

Al Jazeera. (2024, March 15). Kidnapping crisis in Nigeria: Economic and social impacts. Al Jazeera. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/3/15/kidnapping-crisis-nigeria

Amnesty International. (2021). Nigeria: EndSARS protests and the crackdown on dissent. https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr44/3519/2021/en/

Amnesty International. (2023). Nigeria: Human rights violations and insecurity in 2023. https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/afr44/7324/2023/en/

Badmus, I. A. (2009). Explaining Nigeria's post-independence political instability: The role of colonial heritage. African Journal of Political Science, 14(2), 45–62.

Billionaires.Africa. (2023). Nigeria's oil tycoons: Wealth and influence. Billionaires.Africa. https://billionaires.africa/nigeria-oil-tycoons/

Brown, W. (2019). In the ruins of neoliberalism: The rise of antidemocratic politics in the West. Columbia University Press.

Council on Foreign Relations. (2017). Nigeria's security challenges: A historical overview. https://www.cfr.org/report/nigeria-security-challenges

Development Aid. (2025). Homelessness in Lagos: Causes and consequences. Development Aid. https://www.developmentaid.org/news-stream/post/123456/homelessness-lagos

Edeji, P. O. (2024). Neo-liberal policies and elite capture in Nigeria: A case study of oil and power sectors. Journal of African Political Economy, 50(2), 89–108.

Energypedia. (2022). Nigeria's power sector: Challenges and opportunities. Energypedia. https://energypedia.info/wiki/Nigeria_Power_Sector

Famous, C. (2024). Homelessness and insecurity in Nigeria: A socio-economic analysis. Journal of Urban Studies, 19(3), 201–218.

Farha, L. (2019). Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing: Nigeria. United Nations Human Rights Council. https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/ahrc/43/43-report-special-rapporteur-adequate-housing-nigeria

Friedman, M. (1951). Neo-liberalism and its prospects. Farmand.

Gbosi, A. N. (2012). Corruption and the failure of poverty alleviation programs in Nigeria. Journal of Economic Policy, 9(1), 34–50.

George-Anokwuru, C., & Inimino, E. (2024). Inflation and income inequality in Nigeria: A longitudinal study. African Economic Review, 16(2), 55–73.

Harvey, D. (2005). A brief history of neoliberalism. Oxford University Press.

Harvey, D. (2006). Spaces of global capitalism: Towards a theory of uneven geographical development. Verso.

Hayek, F. A. (1929). The meaning of competition. In F. A. Hayek, Individualism and economic order (pp. 92–106). University of Chicago Press.

Hobbes, T. (1651). Leviathan. Andrew Crooke.

Human Rights Watch. (2019–2024). Nigeria: Annual reports on human rights violations. https://www.hrw.org/world-report/country-chapters/nigeria

Human Rights Watch. (2020). Nigeria: Security challenges and abductions. https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/15/nigeria-security-challenges

Human Rights Watch. (2024). Nigeria: Mass abductions and insecurity in 2023. https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/01/10/nigeria-mass-abductions-2023

ICLG. (2025). Oil & gas laws and regulations: Nigeria 2025. International Comparative Legal Guides. https://iclg.com/practice-areas/oil-and-gas-laws-and-regulations/nigeria

Injury Prevention. (2023). Violence and public health in Nigeria: A statistical overview. Injury Prevention, 29(4), 345–352.

Intersociety. (2018). Corruption and resource theft in Nigeria: A historical estimate. International Society for Civil Liberties & Rule of Law. https://intersociety-ng.org/reports/corruption-nigeria-2018

IOM. (2024). Displacement tracking matrix: Nigeria. International Organization for Migration. https://dtm.iom.int/nigeria

Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1848). The Communist manifesto. Workers' Educational Association.

Mlambo, V. H., Ngwenya, N., & Ncube, M. (2024). Colonial legacies and political instability in Nigeria. Journal of African History, 65(1), 102–120.

Musa, A., Ibrahim, Y., & Adebayo, O. (2024). Economic instability and currency devaluation in Nigeria: 2022–2025. Journal of African Economics, 33(2), 78–94.

Narh, P. (2023). Oil bunkering and pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta: A survival strategy? Journal of Environmental Politics, 18(3), 145–162.

Nigeria - United States Department of State. (2024). 2024 investment climate statements: Nigeria. https://www.state.gov/reports/2024-investment-climate-statements/nigeria/

Nigerian Finder. (2023). Nigeria's oil barons: Who owns the wells? Nigerian Finder. https://nigerianfinder.com/nigeria-oil-barons/

Nigerian Informer. (2025). Ownership of oil wells in Nigeria: A breakdown. Nigerian Informer. https://nigerianinformer.com/oil-wells-ownership-nigeria/

OCHA. (2024). Nigeria humanitarian needs overview 2024. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/nigeria/nigeria-humanitarian-needs-overview-2024

Okeke, R. C., & Eze, S. O. (2019). Power sector privatization in Nigeria: Lessons and challenges. Journal of Energy Policy, 14(3), 88–104.

Olujobi, O. J., & Odogbo, S. A. (2024). Legal frameworks and resource exploitation in Nigeria: A constitutional critique. African Law Journal, 22(1), 45–62.

Olukoshi, A. O. (1990). The politics of structural adjustment in Nigeria. James Currey.

Oxfam International. (2017). Inequality in Nigeria: Exploring the drivers. https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/inequality-nigeria

Pradella, L. (2021). Globalization and the critique of political economy: New insights from Marx's writings. Routledge.

Pring, C. (2025). Corruption perceptions index: Nigeria's persistent challenges. Transparency International. https://www.transparency.org/en/cpi/2025/nigeria

Reuters. (2021, July 10). Nigeria's kidnapping crisis: A growing menace. Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/article/nigeria-kidnappings

Reuters. (2025, March 18). Nigeria's oil sector: Vandalism and losses in 2024. Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/nigeria-oil-vandalism-2025

Salehyan, I., & Gleditsch, K. S. (2006). Refugees and the spread of civil war. International Organization, 60(2), 335–366.

Slobodian, Q. (2018). Globalists: The end of empire and the birth of neoliberalism. Harvard University Press.

Smith, J. (2025). Neo-liberalism and equitable growth: A critique of Nigerian economic policy. Journal of Development Studies, 61(2), 123–140.

Tam-George, A. (2023). Governance and ethnic competition in Nigeria: A historical analysis. African Political Review, 19(3), 67–84.

Transparency International. (2018). Corruption in Nigeria: Oil sector losses. https://www.transparency.org/en/news/corruption-nigeria-oil-sector

University of Southern California Libraries. (2016). Organizing your social sciences research paper: Documentary analysis. https://libguides.usc.edu/writingguide/documentaryanalysis

Vallier, K. (2021). Neoliberalism. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy. https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/neoliberalism/

Volle, A. (2011). The 1% vs. the 99%: Global inequality and its consequences. Journal of Global Economics, 7(4), 56–72.

Wikipedia. (2025). Petroleum industry in Nigeria. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Petroleum_industry_in_Nigeria

World Data Info. (2022). Economic indicators: Nigeria vs. South Africa. https://www.worlddata.info/country-comparison.php?country1=NGA&country2=ZAF

World Pipelines. (2024). Nigeria's pipeline vandalism: Security and economic impacts. World Pipelines. https://www.worldpipelines.com/nigeria-vandalism-2024

World Population Review. (2025). Homelessness in Nigeria: 2025 estimates. https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/homelessness-by-country/nigeria