GOVERNANCE AND INSECURITY IN NIGERIA: AN INTERROGATION, (1999–2024)

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Abstract

This study critically interrogates the intricate relationship between governance and insecurity in Nigeria from 1999 to 2024, a period marked by democratic transitions and persistent security challenges. Despite the return to civilian rule in 1999 and successive administrations' commitment to democratic governance, Nigeria has witnessed a dramatic escalation in insecurity, including insurgency, banditry, kidnapping, herder-farmer conflicts, and secessionist agitations. Using a qualitative-descriptive methodology and drawing insights from secondary data sources such as policy documents, media reports, and scholarly literature, the study examines how weak institutions, poor service delivery, widespread corruption, political exclusion, and leadership failures have contributed to the state's inability to effectively address insecurity. The findings reveal that insecurity in Nigeria is not merely a function of violent extremism or criminality but is deeply rooted in structural and governance deficits that erode citizens' trust and widen the gap between the state and society. It also establishes a correlation between poor governance practices such as elite capture of state resources, ethno-religious politicization, and neglect of youth empowerment and the rise in violent resistance and criminal networks. The paper recommends holistic and inclusive governance reforms, strengthening of democratic institutions, community policing, and proactive engagement with marginalized groups as key strategies to address insecurity. By linking governance failures with the prevalence of insecurity, the study contributes to literature on peacebuilding and state resilience in transitional democracies, and provides practical lessons for policymakers, development practitioners, and scholars concerned with Nigeria's democratic consolidation and national security.

Keywords: Governance, security, society, peace and Nigeria

1.0 Introduction

Nigeria, the most populous nation in Africa and one of its largest economies, continues to confront ongoing and growing security issues that jeopardise its national unity and developmental progress. Insecurity in Nigeria has manifested in varied and multifaceted forms, encompassing terrorism, banditry, herder-farmer conflicts, communal fights, political violence, and kidnapping for ransom (Akinola, 2023; Okolie-Osemene, 2021). Notwithstanding constitutional assurances of state protection and democratic benefits, the Nigerian state has failed to effectively mitigate these dangers, a predicament many scholars ascribe to entrenched governance problems (Adebayo & Oloruntoba, 2024; Onapajo, 2022).

Governance, defined by the capacity, performance, and legitimacy of institutions, is crucial for the state's provision of security, enforcement of the rule of law, and delivery of critical services (Grindle, 2017). In Nigeria, widespread corruption, insufficient institutional accountability, political favouritism, ineffective leadership, and poor policy execution have severely diminished public confidence in government systems (Omitola & Ajayi, 2023; Ezeani, 2021). Thus, insecurity is not simply a symptom but a result of governance failure, especially in areas with limited state presence or where governmental institutions are viewed as exploitative.

Recent literature increasingly recognises the connections between insecurity and governance failure; however, most analyses tend to regard insecurity as a discrete phenomenon, often contextualising it within terrorism studies, regional geopolitics, or ethno-religious conflicts (Mohammed & Musa, 2022; International Crisis Group, 2023). A comprehensive paradigm that perceives insecurity in Nigeria as a reflection of systemic governance inadequacies, including institutional inadequacy and elite mismanagement, remains little examined. This study addresses the gap by employing a governance-focused perspective to examine Nigeria's security situation, thus enhancing a cohesive and policy-relevant corpus of knowledge.

Moreover, several studies concentrate exclusively on Boko Haram or regional insurgencies, failing to sufficiently address how state fragility, political marginalisation, and socioeconomic disparities sustain cycles of violence (Abdulrauf & Azeez, 2023). This study adopts a comprehensive perspective by linking routine governance problems, including inadequate service delivery, inefficiencies in the security sector, and exclusionary politics, to the overarching framework of

insecurity in Nigeria. This approach seeks to provide new perspectives on the structural factors contributing to Nigeria's insecurity, thereby elevating the discussion from just reactive counter-terrorism measures to proactive governance reforms.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The research challenge is that, despite extensive security policies, multibillion-naira defence expenditures, and international collaborations to address insecurity, Nigeria continues to be one of the most perilous nations in Sub-Saharan Africa (Global Terrorism Index, 2024). The worrying aspect is not only the ongoing instability but also its evident resilience against traditional security measures. The inadequacy of these solutions reveals a more profound governance issue that remains inadequately addressed in both policy and scholarly domains. The primary issue is the absence of a cohesive governance strategy addressing insecurity. Governments prioritise military solutions but often overlook the impact of weak institutions, exclusionary governance, corruption, and inadequate political leadership in exacerbating anger and violence (Akinola, 2023; Omitola & Ajayi, 2023).

The literature extensively examines specific security threats like terrorism, insurgency, and banditry; however, these analyses frequently neglect to explore how governance failures characterized by inadequate policy coordination, uneven development, and diminished civic trust facilitate the proliferation of such threats (Onapajo, 2022; Ezeani, 2021). Furthermore, existing scholarly and policy frameworks insufficiently examine how individuals' feelings of illegitimacy, unfairness, and state desertion influence their propensity to contest or withdraw from formal authority. This signifies a significant deficiency in governance and security research, especially concerning Nigeria's vulnerable democratic institutions. Consequently, the study aims to interrogate insecurity as a consequence rather than merely a cause of Nigeria's deficient governance frameworks.

3.0 Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the paper is to X-raying Nigeria’s Governance Failure through the Prism of Insecurity, since 1999.

1. To examine the linkages between governance failures and the persistence of insecurity in Nigeria from 1999 to 2024.
2. To analyze the structural and institutional weaknesses in Nigeria's governance framework that have contributed to the proliferation of insecurity.
3. To provide policy-relevant recommendations on how governance reforms can serve as a sustainable solution to Nigeria's multifaceted security challenges.

4.0 Conceptual and Literature Review

Governance has been characterised in diverse ways in modern literature, with a focus transitioning from conventional state-centric concepts to more intricate frameworks that encompass institutions, procedures, and legitimacy. Fukuyama (2013) characterises governance as the capacity of a government to formulate and implement regulations, as well as to provide services, irrespective of its democratic status. This approach is operationally orientated, distinguishing governance from political systems or ideologies, and emphasising capacity and performance. Nonetheless, it has been criticised for inadequately addressing the normative aspects of governance, including inclusion, equity, and accountability. Although Fukuyama underscores the importance of state strength, he overlooks how deficient legitimacy and public trust might compromise the capacity to provide services effectively.

Grindle (2017) provides a broader perspective by defining governance as the technical administration of institutions alongside the political mechanisms that dictate the exercise of power and decision-making processes. She emphasises the importance of public responsibility, engagement, and openness, asserting that government must encompass not only efficiency but also fairness. This viewpoint enhances conceptual comprehension by recognising the political economy that underlies government, but it may become overly utopian in fragile or postcolonial regimes where these principles are structurally limited.

Kaufmann and Kraay (2020) delineate governance using the World Bank Governance Indicators across six dimensions: voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption. This operational framework is extensively utilised in empirical research; yet, it faces criticism for its excessive quantitative nature and dependence on perception-based indices

that may fail to reflect contextual realities. It excels in assessing cross-national trends but may neglect informal governance techniques common in countries such as Nigeria.

Rotberg (2019) associates governance with state legitimacy and the provision of public goods, contending that effective governance is realised when the state provides vital services such as security, education, and healthcare. His contribution is notable for its obvious correlation between governance quality and the rise of insecurity, particularly relevant to the Nigerian context. Nonetheless, Rotberg's theory often depicts a linear correlation between state delivery and stability, which can, in reality, be influenced by additional factors such as ethnicity, external intervention, or elite division.

Chukwuma and Ibrahim (2023) delineate governance in Nigeria as a contentious domain where official institutions are frequently undermined by informal networks, elite collusions, and rent-seeking activities. They contend that the failure of government in Nigeria is primarily due to intentional institutional sabotage by vested interests rather than a lack of structures. This approach presents governance as a system purposefully orchestrated to maintain elite power, rather than merely a collection of failures. Security, frequently considered a fundamental duty of the state, also provokes diverse views. Baldwin (2005) contends that security is an ambiguous concept contingent upon "security for whom, from what, by what means, and at what cost?" This perspective necessitates a multifaceted comprehension, recognising the contentious nature of security priorities. Nonetheless, its ambiguity may impede accurate operationalisation in empirical research.

Booth (2007) advocates for the "human security" paradigm, positing that security should encompass not only military threats but also economic, environmental, and political welfare. This transformative approach redirects attention to individual and communal safety. Nevertheless, its expansive scope may undermine state accountability by overloading the concept of security with excessive expectations, complicating the assignment of responsibility. Nte (2022), in a study focused on Nigeria, characterises security as the existence of peace, stability, and development within a political entity, supported by efficient policing and judicial systems. This pragmatic perspective closely aligns with the context of the current study; however, it does not adequately incorporate the ways in which institutional deficiencies or governance failures can undermine these mechanisms and foster insecurity.

Ibrahim and Bamidele (2021) assert that in fragile democracies such as Nigeria, security must be evaluated based on the efficacy of state institutions, particularly their capacity to establish legitimacy and administer justice. Their framework is significant for linking security to governance metrics; however, it often neglects the influence of non-state actors that also affect security dynamics in ungoverned areas. Alemika (2023) presents a sociological perspective, highlighting that security encompasses not only physical safety but also perceived justice, equity, and institutional trust. He emphasises the connection between societal grievances and the rise of threats, a viewpoint crucial for comprehending the motivations underlying violent extremism. This frames insecurity as both a manifestation and a catalyst of ineffective governance. Insecurity is acknowledged as the deterioration of safety, stability, and societal order. According to Onapajo (2022), insecurity in Nigeria is a systemic issue stemming from persistent state failure, inadequate law enforcement, and political marginalisation. This definition highlights the institutional origins of the problem but may downplay the impact of globalisation and transnational crime.

Ezirim and Onuoha (2020) perceive insecurity as a reflection of state inadequacy, especially when state monopolies on violence are contested by non-state entities like terrorists, militants, or bandits. This perspective corresponds with traditional Weberian concepts of statehood but presupposes that insecurity is predominantly external to the state, despite the fact that, in numerous instances, state actors are complicit. Chinwokwu (2021) characterises insecurity in Nigeria from a criminological perspective, emphasising the prevalence of kidnapping, armed robbery, and banditry as consequences of poverty and political manipulation. Although informative, this definition is predominantly descriptive and lacks a thorough engagement with governance frameworks.

Osaghae and Suberu (2021) adopt a structural perspective, correlating insecurity with state fragility, resource mismanagement, and identity-driven conflicts. Their research is essential for elucidating the regional dynamics of insecurity in Nigeria, yet it may necessitate greater incorporation of quotidian governance experiences for comprehensive elucidation. Abdulrauf and Azeez (2023) characterise insecurity as the aggregate consequence of governance deficits, pervasive corruption, and socio-economic marginalisation. Their work is

essential for this study as it reconceptualises insecurity as a product of governance rather than a discrete crisis. Nonetheless, their emphasis is predominantly on Northern Nigeria, resulting in a deficiency in a holistic national assessment.

This study characterises governance as the institutional capability and political resolve of both state and non-state entities to formulate and implement rules that are legitimate, inclusive, and orientated towards development. It delineates security as the comprehensive safeguarding of life, property, dignity, and institutions, upheld by accountable governance. Consequently, insecurity is not simply a failure of law and order but a state engendered by ongoing governance deficiencies, particularly when institutional trust diminishes, public service delivery falters, and leadership becomes detached from the populace. This viewpoint diverges from previous analyses by not perceiving insecurity merely as a manifestation of social challenges or military inadequacies, but as a direct consequence of dysfunctional and elite-centric governance at both federal and subnational tiers in Nigeria.

4.1. Theoretical Foundations of Governance and Insecurity

The theoretical nexus between governance and insecurity has significantly evolved, influenced by discourses from political science, development studies, and international relations. Foundational theories such as State Fragility Theory assert that insecurity emerges when the state lacks the institutional capacity to assert its authority, provide services, or maintain legitimacy (Rotberg, 2019). This perspective is particularly prevalent in post-colonial African states characterised by institutional decay and elite capture. However, this theory frequently simplifies state failure to a mere technical capacity deficit, neglecting the impact of intentional governance subversion or elite-driven chaos, which is evident in Nigeria's context.

The Governance Theory is closely related, highlighting the significance of legitimacy, rule of law, accountability, and institutional coherence in enhancing state performance and public safety (Grindle, 2017). In this context, insecurity is perceived not solely as a deficiency in military capability, but as a collapse of the social contract. Although this theory is comprehensive, it often generalises Western governance standards that may not be applicable to the informal political economies of fragile states such as Nigeria. Moreover, Galtung's (1969/1990) concept of Structural Violence provides crucial insights by characterising insecurity as a consequence of

deeply rooted inequality, injustice, and exclusion. This viewpoint is vital for comprehending Nigeria's context, where the marginalisation of the North-East and the environmental degradation of the South-South incite violent resistance.

Nonetheless, the theory of structural violence is deficient in addressing the influence of non-state actors or regional geopolitics. This study introduces the Governance-Induced Insecurity Paradigm (GIIP), a framework that conceptualises insecurity as a consequence of both inadequate state capacity and elite-manipulated governance vacuums. In Nigeria, political elites frequently exploit insecurity to fortify their power, stifle dissent, or distract from accountability, rendering it a calculated governance outcome rather than an incidental failure. This perspective contests traditional theories that depict insecurity as unintentional or reactive.

4.2. Empirical Investigations on Nigeria's Security Crisis

The empirical landscape of Nigeria's security crisis is extensive yet disjointed. Numerous studies concentrate on specific threats, including the Boko Haram insurgency (Onapajo, 2022), banditry in the Northwest (Akinola, 2023), and IPOB agitation in the Southeast (Ezeani, 2021). These investigations offer detailed data on the development, causes, and consequences of these threats, frequently associating them with poverty, inadequate policing, porous borders, and ideological radicalisation. While these analyses are invaluable, they often lack a cohesive framework that integrates disparate threats with overarching governance failures. Abdulrauf and Azeez (2023) contend that violent extremism in Northern Nigeria flourishes in regions where governance is either nonexistent or complicit in marginalisation. Likewise, Ibrahim and Bamidele (2021) demonstrate that security deficiencies are associated with diminishing institutional legitimacy and social exclusion.

However, these studies seldom examine the intentional policy choices and elite actions that perpetuate these circumstances. Other scholars, including Okolie-Osemene (2021), employ a human security perspective, contending that pervasive insecurity, exemplified by kidnapping, police brutality, and communal violence, signifies the state's failure to meet fundamental responsibilities. Although the human security framework expands the analytical scope, it potentially depoliticises the crisis by failing to directly address the elite's manipulation of security narratives.

This paper distinguishes itself from existing research by asserting that Nigeria's insecurity is not merely a consequence of governance failure but rather a tool of elite governance. The chronic underfunding of intelligence services, the politicisation of the military, and the regional safeguarding of criminal elements are not aberrations but deliberate strategies. In contrast to prior studies, this research conceptualises security failure as integral to Nigeria's governance framework rather than as an external issue. This reorientation is not merely semantic but analytical, transforming the crisis from a matter of capacity to one of intent.

4.3. Examination of Governance Reforms and Institutional Reactions

Since 1999, Nigeria has enacted various governance reforms aimed at enhancing institutional efficacy and security results. These encompass the Police Reform Acts (2006 and 2020), National Security Strategy documents (2014 and 2019), the establishment of the EFCC and ICPC, and constitutional discussions regarding devolution and restructuring. At first glance, these reforms indicate a government cognisant of its structural deficiencies. Nevertheless, academic evaluations indicate that the majority of these initiatives are either superficial or hindered by non-implementation (Omitola & Ajayi, 2023).

The 2020 Police Act pledged community policing and adherence to human rights, yet it has not resulted in institutional transformation. The #EndSARS protests of that year revealed a significant trust deficit between the populace and law enforcement. Adebayo and Oloruntoba (2024) assert that Nigeria's reform framework is hindered by elite opposition, inadequate accountability systems, and a deficient culture of monitoring and evaluation. Governance reform initiatives within the security sector are frequently dictated by external donors and models, lacking congruence with local contexts. The National Security Strategy (2019) recognises cybercrime, terrorism, and organised crime as significant threats; however, implementation is inconsistent across federal units.

Furthermore, reforms often overlook the impact of political interference, particularly concerning the appointment and deployment of security leaders, which compromises neutrality and professionalism. This paper posits that governance reforms in Nigeria are frequently securitised without corresponding democratisation, aiming to enhance state control

while neglecting state accountability. By prioritising state-centric reforms over citizen-focused governance, these initiatives often intensify insecurity. This critique advocates for a novel reform paradigm that democratises power, localises security management, and penalises elite complicity in insecurity.

4.4. Recognised Deficiencies in Existing Scholarship

Despite the extensive literature, significant gaps remain in the concurrent study of governance and insecurity. Firstly, there is a propensity to isolate insecurity into discrete threats, neglecting their systemic origins. Secondly, numerous analyses presume that insecurity is a technical issue resolvable through military enhancements or increased policing, thereby overlooking the political dimensions of insecurity. Third, limited research examines how governance failure arises not only from incapacity but also from intentional elite strategies. This neglect depoliticises the discourse, exonerating those who profit from the existing order. Furthermore, empirical studies frequently depend on state-centric data (such as military reports or government white papers), which are often biassed or incomplete (Chukwuma & Ibrahim, 2023). Scholarship seldom investigates how citizen disengagement, stemming from prolonged neglect, brutality, and impunity, contributes to cycles of insecurity. Although social movements such as #EndSARS have garnered some attention, their wider ramifications for state legitimacy and governance structures remain insufficiently analysed.

This paper tackles existing deficiencies by introducing a governance-insecurity dialectic that is both empirical and political. It reconceptualises insecurity as a tool within Nigeria's elite-controlled governance framework rather than as an isolated aberration. It advocates for a re-theorization of governance reforms not merely as bureaucratic modifications but as a decolonial and democratic reconstruction of the Nigerian state. In this manner, it challenges traditional policy recommendations and introduces a renewed sense of urgency and clarity into the governance-security relationship.

6.0 Theoretical Framework

Governance Theory originated in the late 20th century as a reaction to the constraints of conventional, state-centered views of public administration and political power. It transformed the exercise of power, authority, and decision-making in intricate, diverse cultures. Governance Theory

fundamentally alters the analytical perspective from government, defined as a collection of institutions, to governance, characterised as a process that encompasses various actors and networks, both state and non-state, shifting the focus from hierarchy to interaction, negotiation, and policy networks. Key advocates of Governance Theory encompass Gerry Stoker, Rhodes, Pierre & Peters, Francis Fukuyama, and Merilee Grindle, among others. Rhodes (1996) characterised governance as self-organising, inter-organizational networks marked by interdependence, resource exchange, and negotiated order. He underscored that contemporary states no longer exercise governance independently but rather through intricate collaborations with corporate entities, civil society, and international partners. Pierre and Peters (2000) contend that governance embodies a process in which various actors collaborate to attain shared objectives, frequently beyond the formal structures of government.

Grindle (2017) expands the theory by positing that governance encompasses both technical aspects (policy implementation, efficiency, institutional performance) and political dimensions (legitimacy, representation, participation). She asserts that "good governance" encompasses accountability, openness, adherence to the rule of law, and responsiveness to the demands of citizens. Fukuyama (2013) emphasises state capacity, asserting that governance encompasses not only democratic institutions but also the state's efficacy in providing public goods.

Several assumptions underpin these contributions: The state is not the exclusive participant in public decision-making. • The efficacy of governance is contingent upon institutional quality and stakeholder interaction. • Inadequate governance results in reduced legitimacy and compromised state authority. • Security, justice, and development are interrelated and reliant on governance performance. Nigeria is a quintessential case study for Governance Theory, especially in elucidating how governance failure exacerbates insecurity. Since 1999, the nation has faced numerous security issues, including the Boko Haram insurgency, banditry, farmer-herder clashes, IPOB agitation, and pervasive kidnapping. This study posits that these dangers, frequently examined as separate security issues, are intrinsically linked to governance failures marked by elite capture, a feeble state presence, exclusionary politics, and institutional non-performance (Adebayo & Oloruntoba, 2024).

Governance Theory is essential for analysing how governance deficiencies, rather than solely military inadequacies or economic poverty, foster a climate conducive to insecurity. The inadequacy of justice and essential services in Northern Nigeria has facilitated the ascendance of Boko Haram (Onapajo, 2022), whilst corruption and the lack of legitimate law enforcement have empowered bandits in the Northwest (Akinola, 2023). From a Governance Theory standpoint, insecurity is not merely a disruption of order; it is the inevitable outcome of governance frameworks that exclude, marginalise, or disregard communities.

Furthermore, Governance Theory elucidates the disjointed security responses in Nigeria, where federal, state, and community entities frequently operate at cross-purposes, devoid of cooperation or mutual confidence. This corresponds with Rhodes' (1996) definition of governance as characterised by dispersed authority and intricate interdependencies. Nigeria's security sector is hindered by both overextended formal institutions and underutilised informal governance mechanisms, such as traditional rulers and vigilante groups, which may function as collaborators in a more inclusive government framework.

6.1 Advantages of Governance Theory

1. Multidimensional: Governance Theory encompasses both institutional efficacy and political legitimacy, rendering it appropriate for the analysis of intricate issues such as insecurity.
2. Network Orientation: It recognises the significance of non-state players, which is essential in Nigeria, where traditional, religious, and local entities impact governance and security issues.
3. Diagnostic Tool: It elucidates the correlation between the lack of effective governance indicators namely accountability, transparency, and service delivery and elevated degrees of insecurity.
4. Flexibility: It is applicable to both centralised and decentralised systems, rendering it effective for analysing federal states such as Nigeria, which exhibit varied subnational governance patterns.

6.2 Limitations of Governance Theory

1. Conceptual Ambiguity: The term "governance" possesses multiple interpretations among researchers, complicating the operationalisation of the theory (Weiss, 2000).

2. Normative Overload: The advocacy for "good governance" frequently embodies Western liberal principles, which may not align with local conditions (Chukwuma & Ibrahim, 2023).
3. Insufficient Focus on Power and Conflict: Governance Theory occasionally minimises the significance of power imbalances, elite manipulation, and political violence, which are pivotal to insecurity in Nigeria.
4. Insufficient Theorisation of Security: Although beneficial for institutional analysis, the theory is deficient in a comprehensive framework of security, frequently necessitating augmentation from conflict or security studies.

Notwithstanding these constraints, this study contends that Governance Theory continues to serve as a potent conceptual framework when augmented with local contextual knowledge. Integrating empirical data and political economics research can alleviate the theory's deficiencies.

6.3 Appropriateness of Governance Theory for Examining This Subject

The primary argument of this paper is that insecurity in Nigeria results from governance issues rather than being solely a security problem, necessitating a theoretical framework that connects institutional failure, legitimacy crises, and stakeholder fragmentation. Governance

Theory serves this purpose by enabling us to enquire not just "Why does insecurity exist?" but also "What governance structures have facilitated it?" It specifically facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the elite-driven dynamics of insecurity, wherein politicians mobilise ethnic or regional militias. The disjunction between federal and state governance frameworks in security coordination. The lack of inclusive governance, which marginalises youth and vulnerable communities, rendering them vulnerable to radicalisation. This study employs Governance Theory, transcending conventional counterterrorism frameworks and political instability models. It delineates a governance-security dialectic, in which insecurity serves as both a consequence and a tool of ineffective governance.

6.4 Promoting an Innovative Perspective in Election Administration Scholarship

Insecurity and governance problems significantly impact election administration, a fact frequently overlooked in both governance and electoral research. This study introduces a new area of investigation: the ways in which electoral administration

is compromised not only by logistical shortcomings but also by the overarching insecurity stemming from inadequate governance.

Election delays, voter indifference, ballot theft, and intimidation flourish in regions with inadequate government. The Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) frequently functions in perilous and unsafe environments, when state security agencies are either ineffectual or complicit. This necessitates a recontextualization of election administration as not solely technical but integrated within a governance framework. government Theory, in the context of elections, prompts an analysis of how the quality of government influences electoral credibility and citizen engagement. The role of elite collusion in exacerbating insecurity and electoral manipulation, hence hindering democratic consolidation. The impact of fragile local government frameworks on election security, logistics, and public trust.

This study presents the Governance-Security-Election Nexus, urging future electoral research to integrate governance analysis as an essential aspect of credible elections, thereby advancing the field of election administration scholarship from proceduralism to structural and institutional analysis.

7.0 Methodology

The choice to utilise secondary data in the study "X-raying Nigeria's Governance Failure through the Prism of Insecurity, since 1999" is methodologically valid and strategically consistent with the research aims. This choice is based on the characteristics of the research challenge, the extent of the investigation, and the practical limitations of data availability. Presented herein are comprehensive rationales for the utilisation of secondary data: The study encompasses two decades of Nigeria's democratic experience, including successive governments, various waves of insecurity (e.g., Boko Haram, banditry, IPOB, oil militancy), and many governance changes. Capturing this historical scope through primary data collection would be impractical due to constraints of time, expense, and access. Secondary data, such as reports, policy documents, government white papers, scholarly publications, and security assessments, enable the researcher to methodically analyse trends of governance and vulnerability over time (Bryman, 2016).

The research addresses insecurity, a politically sensitive and frequently perilous issue in Nigeria. Engaging in primary fieldwork that includes interviews with security personnel,

insurgents, or victims of violence in war areas may provide significant ethical and security hazards. Secondary data offer a more secure and ethical option by utilising pre-existing documented experiences and analysis (Atkinson & Delamont, 2010).

The research seeks to assess governance failure by policy results, institutional reactions, and elite conduct. These domains possess unusually abundant and authoritative documentary and archival sources. Evaluating the effects of the 2020 Police Reform Act or the 2014 National Conference recommendations necessitates an examination of existing documents and assessments, rather than solely relying on personal perceptions. The utilisation of secondary data facilitates the triangulation of several sources, including official records, academic literature, and media archives, so augmenting the validity and trustworthiness of the conclusions (Heaton, 2004). This reveals contradictions, power dynamics, or policy failures that a singular data source may conceal.

The research is predominantly theoretical, aiming to elucidate insecurity using governance theory. Consequently, it depends on established theoretical and empirical research to formulate and evaluate its assertions. Secondary data are optimal for such research as they provide the extensive evidence required to examine, substantiate, or contest theoretical assumptions.

The extensive scope of the research and its scholarly character need the utilisation of secondary data for effective resource management. This corresponds with standard methodologies in political science and governance research, where longitudinal institutional and policy analysis frequently depends on document-based investigation (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The utilisation of secondary data in this study is not only a methodological convenience; it is a strategic and epistemologically sound option. It allows the researcher to examine governance and insecurity in Nigeria over an extended duration utilising credible, varied, and morally responsible sources. The paper adheres to best practices in governance and security literature, aiming to provide a significant theoretical and policy contribution.

8.0. Governance and Insecurity in Nigeria: A Sectoral Review (1999–2024)

8.1. Civilian Governments and Security Sector Reform: Since Nigeria's reestablishment of civilian governance in 1999, successive administrations have pledged, in principle, to security sector reform (SSR); nevertheless, the results have been inconsistent and predominantly ineffectual. During the administrations of Presidents Obasanjo, Yar'Adua, Jonathan, Buhari, and currently Tinubu, reform initiatives have encompassed military modernisation, community policing, counterinsurgency methods, and anti-terrorism legislation. Nonetheless, the essence of these reforms remained militarised rather than centred on governance.

Researchers such as Akinola (2023) contend that the majority of SSR projects are led by elites rather than being citizen-focused, and they lack institutional independence. Instead of altering the internal dynamics of the security sector, changes have frequently reinforced presidential authority while diminishing accountability. The 2020 Police Reform Act, established following the #EndSARS protests, pledged community policing and accountability measures; however, its execution has been hindered by insufficient funding, lack of political commitment, and opposition from established security structures (Adebayo & Oloruntoba, 2024).

This article asserts that Nigeria's Security Sector changes (SSRs) have been superficial rather than transformative, chiefly due to their lack of foundation in broader democratic changes. Security is regarded as an objective in isolation, detached from justice, progress, and inclusivity. This paper asserts that security sector reform (SSR) cannot succeed without concurrent governance change, namely in the areas of civil-military interactions, decentralisation, and the implementation of human rights. This research characterises SSR failure not as a technical malfunction but as a wilful governance dysfunction sustained by political elites, in contrast to other studies.

8.2. Institutional Malfunctions and Corruption: The insecurity in Nigeria cannot be properly understood without examining the overarching background of institutional deterioration and systemic corruption. The Nigerian Police Force (NPF), the judiciary, and internal security agencies have persistently received low rankings on global governance and corruption indexes (Transparency International, 2023). These institutions are not just useless but frequently involved in insecurity shielding criminal networks, obstructing investigations, or participating in extortion.

Chukwuma and Ibrahim (2023) assert that corruption serves as both a symptom and a catalyst of insecurity. For example, security budgets are frequently exaggerated under "special intervention funds," without transparency. Procurement problems in the military have resulted in the failure of essential counterinsurgency operations, particularly in the Northeast. Furthermore, judicial ineptitude fosters widespread impunity, emboldening criminals and warlords. This paper contends that institutional corruption has undermined the Nigerian state's capacity to exercise lawful authority. Instead of serving as impartial guardians of security, institutions have transformed into instruments of political coercion and elite appropriation. This research identifies corruption as a governing rationale rather than an anomaly, in contrast to prior work that emphasises reform recommendations. It contends that institutional failure is deliberately constructed to preserve elite dominance over security resources and narratives.

8.3. Regional Case Analyses (North-East, North-West, South-East): A sectoral review must address Nigeria's regional differences to comprehend the varied manifestations of government failure across zones: North-East (e.g., Borno, Yobe): The Boko Haram insurgency, which intensified in 2009, is the most frequently referenced instance of insecurity in this region. This research highlights the governance vacuum that facilitated Boko Haram's emergence, in contrast to experts like as Onapajo (2022), who associate it with poverty, radicalisation, and Salafi-jihadist influence. Prolonged governmental neglect, inadequate infrastructure, and a culture of impunity for political violence fostered an environment conducive to insurrection. State-led military campaigns have attained minimal success due to their inability to resolve legitimacy problems rooted in grievances.

North-West (e.g., Zamfara, Katsina): In this region, banditry, cattle rustling, and abduction have become predominant issues. Akinola (2023) illustrates how corruption in local governance and a deteriorating legal system have empowered armed groups. The North-West is characterised by the amalgamation of economic criminality and ethnic militia violence, resulting in the transformation of rural areas into lawless regions. This paper describes a scenario in which the lack of governance engenders "sovereign voids," unregulated areas where non-state entities adopt quasi-state functions.

The rise of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and the Eastern Security Network (ESN) in the South-East (e.g.,

Imo, Abia) indicates a distinct form of government failure and secessionist discontent stemming from historical and structural marginalisation. Since 2020, the militarisation of the region has resulted in heightened violence, human rights violations, and growing alienation. The majority of experts interpret this as either ethno-nationalism or an excessive response by the state. This study asserts a dual governance failure: the federal government's incapacity to foster an inclusive polity and the state governments' failure to develop civilian legitimacy.

In conclusion, these case studies demonstrate that insecurity is not uniform; it is regionally distinct and associated with certain governance deficiencies. This paper's novelty resides in delineating the geography of governance failure and illustrating how state absence (Northeast), state collaboration (Northwest), and state repression (Southeast) each engender distinct forms of insecurity.

8.4. Government Responses and Public Perception: The Nigerian government's approach to insecurity has predominantly adhered to a military-focused and reactive framework. The Joint Task Forces, Operation Lafiya Dole, and the newer "Forest Guards" programs illustrate a focus on coercion rather than prevention, frequently neglecting the fundamental governance deficiencies. This policy has not succeeded in gaining the support of the populace, as indicated by increasing distrust in security agencies (Alemika, 2023).

Public perception, as evidenced by Afrobarometer and NOI Polls, indicates a diminishing confidence in the government's capacity to safeguard its inhabitants. More than 70% of Nigerians perceive the government as having failed in its security responsibilities (Afrobarometer, 2022). Researchers such as Ezeani (2021) contend that perceptions of injustice and selective enforcement contribute to insurgency and resistance, particularly among the youth.

This study posits that governmental solutions are not merely insufficient but also delegitimising. When individuals view security initiatives as politicised, ethnically prejudiced, or inefficient, it exacerbates insecurity by eroding trust, cooperation, and civic participation. The state's failure is both operational and discursive; it cannot effectively present itself as a legitimate defender. Moreover, the lack of engagement with local governance stakeholders (e.g., traditional leaders, civil society) results in predominantly externally imposed responses that face local opposition. This article asserts that restoring security necessitates the reconstruction of legitimacy, which

must commence with a novel social contract based on inclusive governance rather than military augmentation.

The sectoral review indicates that Nigeria's insecurity is not solely a matter of violence, but rather a consequence of disordered governance characterised by militarised reforms lacking civilian involvement, corrupt institutions devoid of credibility, regionally specific grievances overlooked by the state, and responses that alienate instead of unify. This study asserts that insecurity ought to be reconceptualised as a governance condition manifesting differently across locations, necessitating structural governance transformation rather than mere tactical solutions. This introduces a novel perspective to the literature by promoting a governance-insecurity framework as a mechanism for assessment and transformation.

9.0 Analysis and Discussion

The ongoing insecurity in Nigeria since the reestablishment of democracy in 1999 is fundamentally rooted in the framework of government failure. This paper asserts that insecurity is not merely a collapse of law and order, but a structural manifestation of governance deficiencies, consistent with the principles of Governance Theory. Governance, as defined by Rhodes (1996) and further developed by Grindle (2017), encompasses the mechanisms and institutions through which public authority is enacted, decisions are rendered, and accountability is maintained. In instances where this framework fails, as observed in Nigeria, government failure emerges as a catalyst for insecurity rather than merely a correlational factor.

The connections between governance failures and insecurity are apparent in Nigeria's failure to establish territorial authority, provide essential services, or uphold the rule of law. This study contends that poverty, youth unemployment, and religious extremism, as noted in prior research (e.g., Onapajo, 2022; Akinola, 2023), are not primary causes of insecurity but rather consequences of enduring governance failures. For example, whereas Onapajo (2022) attributes the emergence of Boko Haram chiefly to ideological radicalism and counterinsurgency failures, this study identifies the lack of inclusive governance, elite-driven marginalisation, and neglect of social infrastructure in the North-East as the fundamental catalysts. Akinola (2023) perceives banditry in the North-West primarily as a consequence of inadequate state capacity; this study expands on that perspective by demonstrating how intentional elite cooperation, unaccountable security forces, and

corruption within local governance frameworks have institutionalised violence as a means of economic survival.

According to Governance Theory, notably as articulated by Pierre and Peters (2000), insecurity arises when governance networks involving both state and non-state actors become fragmented, uncoordinated, or predatory. Nigeria's federal system cultivates concurrent centres of power that frequently operate at cross-purposes, particularly in the security domain, where federal authorities consistently supersede or disregard subnational entities. The 2014 and 2019 National Security Strategies have mostly gone unexecuted due to political meddling, centralisation of security authority, and absence of local legitimacy. Prior studies have characterised this as a technological deficiency (Ibrahim & Bamidele, 2021), however this research reconceptualises it as a systemic failure of political governance, wherein accountability systems are fundamentally compromised by vested interests.

The deficiencies in Nigeria's governance system are manifested in a dysfunctional court, a compromised legislature, and an overstretched executive branch. Anti-corruption authorities such as the EFCC and ICPC have been intermittently politicised, while law enforcement entities experience diminished morale, insufficient training, and pervasive corruption (Transparency International, 2023). Chukwuma and Ibrahim (2023) identify these deficiencies, although their approach predominantly perceives reform as an issue of capacity improvement. This paper contends that government in Nigeria is not failing solely owing to insufficient capacity, but rather because elite actors derive advantages from this failure. Therefore, any study that fails to address this political reality is inadequate.

Policy proposals should transcend traditional "capacity-building" to focus on the democratisation of governance frameworks, the decentralisation of security systems, and the enhancement of transparency in public resource management. Reforms must incorporate citizen engagement, local accountability mechanisms, and multi-tiered stakeholder collaboration, as proposed by Grindle (2017). This study presents a governance-centered policy framework, contending that sustainable security relies not alone on a more robust state but on a governance system that is legitimate, inclusive, and participatory, in contrast to studies advocating militarised solutions or superficial security sector reforms.

This viewpoint promotes a novel scholarly approach that regards insecurity not as an isolated issue but as an outcome contingent upon governance—resulting from the calibre of political institutions, legitimacy of authority, and government responsiveness. Thus, it enhances both the theoretical development of Governance Theory within African contexts and the empirical comprehension of Nigeria's security issues over the last twenty-five years.

10. Policy Recommendations

This study proposes the following recommendations to tackle the ongoing insecurity in Nigeria using a governance-focused strategy: Initially, strategic governance improvements should emphasise transparency, responsiveness, and decentralisation. National and subnational governments ought to institutionalise participatory budgeting, anti-corruption measures, and open governance practices to restore public trust and legitimacy. Secondly, fortifying democratic institutions namely the judiciary, legislature, and anti-corruption agencies is essential for reversing institutional deterioration. These entities must be autonomous, adequately funded, and insulated from political influence to guarantee checks and balances and maintain the rule of law. Nigeria necessitates an inclusive and accountable security framework that incorporates civilian control, local intelligence, and professional training. Security services must be restructured to equitably serve all areas and people, rather than functioning as tools for elite safeguarding or political oppression.

Finally, community-oriented conflict prevention techniques must to be integrated into national security strategies. Traditional institutions, religious leaders, women, and youth organisations ought to be enabled to mediate conflicts, identify early warning signs, and advance local peacebuilding initiatives. These ideas, based on governance theory, assert that permanent peace in Nigeria depends on rectifying the governance failings that exacerbate insecurity.

11. Conclusion

This study rigorously analysed the connections between governance failure and the ongoing insecurity in Nigeria from 1999 to 2024. The principal findings indicate that insecurity in Nigeria is not merely a consequence of poverty, radicalisation, or inadequate military response, but

fundamentally a manifestation of profound governance failures marked by institutional deterioration, elite appropriation, corruption, exclusionary politics, and the decline of state legitimacy. The study illustrates, from the perspective of government Theory, that insecurity flourishes in contexts characterised by non-participatory, unaccountable, and unresponsive government institutions. The regional expressions of insecurity such as Boko Haram in the North-East, banditry in the North-West, and separatist movements in the South-East are linked to the government quality and characteristics in each area.

The study enhances current literature by reconceptualising insecurity as a consequence contingent upon governance, rather than solely a failure of security or development. This reframing redirects the policy emphasis from militarised responses to structural improvements in governance, institutional accountability, and inclusive political frameworks. This study introduces a governance-security nexus model that enhances our comprehension of insecurity in Nigeria and broadens the use of Governance Theory in African contexts.

Future research ought to investigate the micro-level dynamics of governance failures and local security arrangements, specifically how informal institutions such as traditional authorities, vigilante groups, and civil society can be incorporated into a novel framework for inclusive governance and sustainable security. Comparative analyses of African democracies may yield valuable insights into how governance changes can alleviate insecurity in weak or transitional nations.

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