



SECURITY CHALLENGES ON DATA COLLECTION AND GATHERING IN SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH IN NIGERIA: MITIGATING ITS IMPACT

Onwuakpaoke Ogenna Chris¹ and Jerry-Nduka Ogechi Eunice²

¹Department of Public Administration, Federal Polytechnic Oko, Anambra State, Nigeria

²Department of Social Science, Federal Polytechnic Oko, Anambra State, Nigeria

Corresponding Email: ogechris49@gmail.com

Abstract

Undoubtedly, Nigeria's security architecture has been marred by various challenges, particularly insecurity. These activities range from insurgency, kidnapping, armed robbery, and conflicts between herders and farmers. This paper examined how insecurity has adversely affected the processes of data collection and gathering in Nigeria, together with its overall negative implications for socioeconomic development. Through an in-depth examination of secondary sources of data, including books, journal articles, and online materials, the study sheds light on critical issues affecting data collection while adopting the Revisionist Theory of National Security as its theoretical framework. This framework was used to holistically and comprehensively analyse the prevailing security challenges and their far-reaching impact on data collection and gathering in social science research. Locally, socioeconomic interactions have remained under siege as direct consequences of insurgency, armed robbery, kidnapping, and other violent crimes. Internationally, Nigeria's image has been negatively portrayed through various media reports on insecurity, thereby discouraging foreign investors and reducing foreign direct investment into the country. The findings established that the process and quality of data collection have been significantly affected by insecurity, making it difficult for committed researchers to access relevant research sites and physically reach locations where firsthand and reliable data can be obtained. Consequently, this situation undermines the credibility of research findings and weakens evidence-based conclusions in the social sciences. The study emphasizes the need for the Nigerian Government to adopt a non-politicized approach to addressing the country's persistent security challenges. It also recommends stronger collaboration among the various security agencies while demonstrating greater commitment to eliminating corruption in the fight against insecurity. Such measures will go a long way in creating a conducive research environment where valid and reliable data can be collected to support sound socioeconomic policies and national development.

Keywords: *Security, Insecurity, Data Collection, Insurgency, Social Science.*

1.1 Introduction

The term **security** holds diverse interpretations across various contexts. It may be perceived as safeguarding individuals and society against danger, violence, fear, and deprivation that could jeopardize holistic development. Security entails the absence of fear and deprivation (Baldwin, 2017).

The strategic importance of Nigeria stems from its abundant human and material resources, thereby establishing the country as one of Africa's major powers. However, this prominent position has not shielded Nigeria from numerous security threats, as distinct challenges have emerged across



different regions of the country. At this juncture, it is pertinent to state that the significance of the symbiotic relationship between security and information collection cannot be overemphasized.

The alarming surge in insecurity—including the activities of Fulani herdsmen, Boko Haram insurgents, armed robbers, kidnappers, and other criminal groups—has spread across virtually all the geopolitical zones of the giant of Africa. Consequently, Nigeria has become increasingly engulfed in insecurity and is currently facing a dire situation characterized by declining economic, social, political, and religious stability. These conditions clearly indicate the pervasive nature of insecurity within the country.

Nigeria, owing to its rich cultural diversity and enormous economic potential, contributes significantly to the advancement of social science research. However, the country is presently confronted with an avalanche of security challenges that have far-reaching consequences for several aspects of national development, including data gathering and research activities in the social sciences (Adeleke, 2013).

These security challenges have not only resulted in the loss of lives and property but have also created profound implications for research and data collection. Okoro (2018) described the insecurity situation in Northern Nigeria by noting that armed herdsmen had taken over entire communities, kidnapped prominent citizens, burnt churches, murdered priests and worshippers, killed security personnel, committed rape, robbery, and several other heinous crimes. The government has done little to stem the tide of these violent activities, thereby posing a serious threat to national security and sustainable development.

One of the fundamental pillars of social science research is the collection of reliable and valid data to support evidence-based research and policymaking. According to Egbetokun et al. (2022), data gathering serves as the foundation for understanding social phenomena, analysing trends, and formulating effective strategies to address societal problems. However, the prevailing security challenges in Nigeria have posed significant obstacles to the data collection process, thereby hindering the progress and quality of social science research.

Researchers in the social sciences face numerous hurdles arising from an increasingly unstable security environment. These challenges include limited access to research sites due to safety concerns, threats to researchers' personal security and well-being, difficulties in obtaining informed consent from participants, the risk of data loss or destruction, and frequent disruption of research activities (Gierszewski, 2017). Consequently, these security challenges compromise the reliability, validity, and generalizability of research findings, thereby undermining the credibility and impact of social science research in Nigeria.

The security situation has therefore significantly affected data gathering processes in the social sciences (Abdullahi & Anazodo, 2018). The limitations imposed by insecurity have hindered the collection of valid and reliable data, thereby compromising the credibility of research outcomes. Understanding the depth of these challenges and identifying practical solutions are essential to ensuring that social science research in Nigeria remains robust, credible, and capable of contributing meaningfully to national development.

By addressing the influence of security challenges on data gathering, researchers and policymakers can contribute meaningfully to evidence-based decision-making, effective policy formulation, and the overall socioeconomic development of the nation.

The study explores the influence of security challenges on data gathering in the social sciences in Nigeria. Specifically, it focuses on identifying the challenges encountered by researchers, examining the consequences of insecurity on data credibility and validity, and proposing practical strategies for mitigating its impact on research activities.



Objectives of the Paper

The objectives of this paper are to:

1. Identify the security challenges faced by social science researchers in Nigeria.
2. Examine how these security challenges affect the process of data collection and the validity of research findings in the social science domain.
3. Highlight practical strategies for mitigating the impact of security challenges on data collection and research activities.

1.2 Research Methodology

The study employed the secondary method of data collection. Relevant information was obtained from books, scholarly journals, newspapers, official reports, and credible internet sources to examine the specific challenges encountered in data collection as a result of insecurity in Nigeria.

The paper explores an under-researched area by synthesizing existing literature and documented evidence on the relationship between insecurity and social science research.

1.3 Literature Review

Nigeria's security architecture has profound implications for data collection and gathering in the social sciences and other academic disciplines. Researchers often experience limited access to relevant research sites because of persistent security threats.

Additionally, security challenges can directly affect research infrastructure. Research institutions, libraries, archives, and field stations may suffer physical damage during violent conflicts, leading to the destruction of valuable records and research materials.

To address these challenges, researchers should adopt innovative approaches such as online surveys, telephone interviews, virtual focus groups, digital questionnaires, and collaboration with trusted local organizations.

Researchers should also develop comprehensive risk assessment plans and adopt flexible research designs capable of accommodating disruptions caused by insecurity.

1.4 Discussion of Findings

Nigeria continues to experience political, ethnic, religious, and communal conflicts. These include Boko Haram insurgency, Fulani herders–farmers clashes, kidnapping, armed robbery, banditry, ritual killings, and the activities of unknown gunmen.

The conflict between Fulani herders and farmers has resulted in widespread destruction of farmlands, displacement of communities, and loss of lives. Poverty, unemployment, corruption, and inequality have equally contributed to increasing insecurity by making many youths vulnerable to criminal activities.

These security challenges have significantly affected social science research by restricting access to research sites, discouraging respondents from participating in studies, disrupting fieldwork, and reducing the reliability and validity of research findings.

1.5 Mitigating the Impact

The following measures are recommended:

- Promotion of good governance.
- Strengthening the justice system.



- Addressing poverty and unemployment.
- Improving the capacity of security agencies.
- Strategic media and public awareness campaigns.
- Adoption of modern technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), drones, GPS, GIS, biometric identification systems, and digital surveillance for intelligence gathering.

Conclusion

The influence of security challenges on data collection and gathering in the social sciences in Nigeria constitutes a critical issue that continues to hinder national development. Persistent insecurity has limited researchers' ability to obtain reliable primary data, thereby affecting evidence-based policymaking.

The study concludes that addressing insecurity through good governance, effective security management, judicial reforms, youth empowerment, technological innovation, and stronger institutional collaboration will create an enabling environment for quality research and sustainable national development.

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