UNPACKING THE NEXUS BETWEEN STRUCTURAL INJUSTICE AND INSECURITY IN NIGERIA'S FOURTH REPUBLIC.

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Article Info	Abstract
Keyword: conflict, democracy, elite, injustice, insecurity. **DOI** 10.5281/zenodo.13757180	The paper examined insecurity emanating from structural injustice and power relations that unethically harm specific groups and jeopardize socioeconomic cum political development in Nigeria. At the demise of military rule in 1999, citizens were wrapped up in democratic dividends predicated on the rule of law, which determines the actions and inactions of the power elite. However, these expectations were far-fetched as the power elite exploited and oppressed the hiopolloi beyond reduction. Consequently, this unfairness has resulted in protracted conflicts in various parts of the country. The expected public good is now a mirage and horrendous to citizens. The non-state actors operating in various parts of the country continuously contended the monopoly of the legitimate use of violence with the Nigerian state. The study adopted the relative deprivation theory and the Theory of Justice as its theoretical construct. The paper relied on a secondary data-gathering technique. The study revealed that structural injustice is to maintain a class structure inherited from the colonist, ethnic chauvinism competition, and corruption, among others. The paper recommends amongst others, effective national dialogue in the country.

Introduction

The amalgamation of various independent societies in West Africa into a single political entity, Nigeria, in 1914, was driven by resource constraints, including limited personnel and funds. The British colonial administration relied on indigenous elites in Anglophone countries due to a shortage of manpower to govern the colonies. The Sir Hugh Clifford Constitution of 1922 established a bourgeois democratic system that disenfranchised the majority of citizens, limiting voting power to educated elites who met specific conditions. However, the masses were mobilized to protest against colonial rule, with promises of a better life from the elite class. Ogele (2021, p.25) revealed that "at the transfer of power from the imperialist to educated elites in Nigeria, the masses who participated actively in the nationalist struggle were no longer needed."

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The entrenched power dynamics in post-colonial Nigeria perpetuated systemic injustices, leading to widespread marginalization and socio-economic disparities (Ogundiya, 2020). The ruling elite maintained their grip on power through institutionalized corruption, further exacerbating the wealth gap between the rich and the poor (Adebanwi, 2022). This has resulted in a culture of desperation, where violent means are employed to challenge the status quo (Nwosu, 2022).The power play between the ruling elite and out-of-power groups has hindered socio-economic progress in the country (Adeyemi, 2022). The use of power has often been exploitative, perpetuating historical and structural injustices (Powers and Faden, 2019). Thomason (2015, p.76) posits that:

Structural injustice occurs when institutions and systems work in such a way to disadvantage large groups of people while allowing others to benefit…People can be disadvantaged by structural injustice in several ways: they might lack access to basic goods, they might be denied economic opportunities, or they may be ostracized from social life.

The concept of structural power is particularly relevant in this context. It refers to the institutionalized and internalized systems of motivation that perpetuate dominance and deprivation (Hayward, 2018). However, more recent scholarship has highlighted the need to update our understanding of structural power in the context of contemporary Nigeria (Akinola, 2023). In Nigeria, the government's actions and inactions have exacerbated the socioeconomic disparities between citizens and state managers, leading to consequences such as citizen insubordination and non-state actors contesting the monopoly on legitimate violence (Adebanwi, 2022). The unfair power dynamics are interconnected and interdependent, forming a complex web of cause and effect. These dynamics represent profound structural injustices involving multiple institutions and agents with varying levels of culpability. The relationship between privilege and domination in Nigeria's power structures has been called into question, highlighting the need to examine the motivations and justifications for social movements resisting these injustices (Ogundiya, 2020).

Nigeria's Fourth Republic has witnessed a steady deterioration in security, with daily reports of kidnapping, banditry, robbery, and murder, among other crimes (Adeyemi, 2022). The unethical conduct of state agents has further exacerbated the situation, perpetuating structural injustices, including extrajudicial killings. For instance, the suppression and extrajudicial killing of Boko Haram members and their leader, Ustaz Mohammad Yusuf, in 2009, contributed to the escalation of violence in North-East Nigeria. Inwalomhe (2022) revealed that over 35,000 people have lost their lives in northern Nigeria since 2009, when Boko Haram launched its insurgency. The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect (2023) posit that Boko Haram's tactics include killings, suicide bombings, abductions, torture, rape, forced marriages, and recruitment of child soldiers, as well as attacks on government infrastructure, traditional and religious leaders, and civilians.

The perpetuation of abuses across time affects not only surviving victims but also historically marginalized groups and the descendants of those who have endured historical injustices. Those who have accumulated power through historical abuses bear the greatest responsibility for addressing these structural injustices and are often the most resistant to change. While Crenshaw's (1989) intersectional framework can be applied to analyze the multiple forms of oppression in individual interactions and power dynamics, it is essential to consider the Nigerian context, where power exercises and abuses are deeply entrenched. A more nuanced understanding of these dynamics is necessary to address the complex structural injustices in Nigeria (Ogundiya, 2020).

In Nigeria, power dynamics can manifest as both oppressive forces and empowering agents, with the potential to either dominate or enfranchise individuals and groups. This nuanced understanding of power is supported by scholars who argue that power can be exercised in ways that are both dominant and emancipatory (Lukes, 2021).

Building on this idea, Crenshaw's (1989) intersectional framework can be applied to understand how power operates in complex ways, resulting in multiple forms of domination that intersect and overlap, causing distinct forms of harm to marginalized individuals and communities.

The dominant institution perpetuates structural violence, which systematically discriminates against marginalized groups, limiting their access to resources and opportunities. This violence is embedded in societal systems, hindering the full development of individuals based on their ethno-territorial identity. Members of marginalized groups are excluded from public office, civil service, and security forces, being perceived as enemies of the state. Tokenistic representation in political institutions and society may be offered to minority groups, masking the lack of genuine inclusion (Akinola, 2023). For instance, the power elite's conspiracy to prevent the South-East region from producing Nigeria's executive president since the 1970 civil war has contributed to protracted conflict and structural decay in the region.

The call for rotational presidency in Nigeria has sparked both violent and non-violent movements, leading to prolonged civil unrest and violence in the South East region. This agitation stems from perceived structural injustices, which "renders individuals and social groups vulnerable to domination or oppression," (McKeown, 2021, p. 2) fueling resentment and discontent. The paper examine the complex interplay between power dynamics, institutionalized corruption, and socio-economic disparities in Nigeria's Fourth Republic.

Conceptual Review

Structural Injustice

Structural injustice in this paper is viewed from the perspective of institutionalized domination and oppression of members of ruling elites of dominant ethnic extraction in plural societies. Society is structured in a manner that those who occupy public positions, probably from the majority ethnic leave others in perpetual agony or denial by their actions and inaction. Dominant groups have always gained from long histories and habits of inattention to such forms of injustice and often respond with denial, defensiveness, and resentment when enlisted (Beausoleil, 2019). Young (2011) revealed that structural injustice takes place whilst social techniques place massive agencies of men and women beneath systematic danger of domination or deprivation of the approach to broaden and workout their Capacities, at the identical time that those tactics permit others to dominate or to have an extensive variety of possibilities for growing and workout abilities to be had to them. The entirety of situations that create structural injustice, that is, situations where countless individuals contribute to the situation through their everyday actions, but no specific individual's action is identified as causing the harm. Those in positions of relative advantage are the ones who rarely pay attention to such issues. For instance, at present, the democratic experiment in Nigeria since 1999 whether in the name of inclusion, zoning or social justice, has been unable to consider the southeast for an electoral position such as presidential office irrespective of this degree of deprivation, marginalized, organized disenfranchised, or otherwise disadvantaged, yet those who benefit from the institution consider it to be normal. Young further argued that when the blame game of the liability model is applied incorrectly to issues of structural injustice, there is defensiveness and resentment that develops (Young, 2011). One of the reasons for the insecurity in the South – East Nigeria has been marginalization. Young argued that "we inevitably reify structural processes by viewing them as natural and unchangeable" (Young, 2011, p.133). Consequently, engagement with individuals who have a less obvious relationship to structural injustice is necessary for meaningful redress of structural injustice.

Insecurity

The concept of insecurity can be viewed from the concept of security. Ibidapo-Obe (2008) defined security as a situation that has arisen due to the establishment of measures to safeguard individuals, information, and property from hostile individuals, influences, and actions. The existence of conditions that allow people in a society to go about their daily activities without any threats to their lives or properties. It is committed to taking all measures to safeguard the citizens and resources of individuals, groups, businesses, and the nation from sabotage or violent incidents (Ogunleye, Adewale, Alese and Ogunde, 2011). Nevertheless, Achumba, Ighomereho, and Akpor-Robaro (2013, p.80) described security as:

Stability and continuity of livelihood (stable and steady income), predictability of daily life (knowing what to expect), protection from crime (feeling safe), and freedom from psychological harm (safety or protection from emotional stress which results from the assurance or knowing that one is wanted, accepted, loved and protected in one's community or neighborhood and by people around. It focuses on the emotional and psychological sense of belonging to a social group which can offer one protection).

Given the above, the concept of insecurity can be seen as the opposite of security. Insecurity is anything that poses a danger or threat to human existence. Insecurity is a complex concept, hence has been given different interpretations in various it affects individuals or groups of individuals. Insecurity affects every facet of human endeavor. Achumba, Ighomereho, and Akpor-Robaro (2013) argued that there are common indicators of insecurity, which include want of safety; uncertainty; danger; lack of stability; want of confidence, troubled; inadequately guarded or protected; lack of protection; and unsafe, among others. Nevertheless, the end of insecurity is creating a state of vulnerability to harm and destruction of lives, properties and livelihoods. Therefore, Beland (2005) maintained that insecurity creates fear or anxiety that is caused by a concrete or alleged lack of protection. The definition reflects that physical insecurity is considered as the most visible form of insecurity. Adebanjoko and Ugwuoke (2014) argued insecurity is the state of being subject to terror, threats, risks, molestation, bullying, and harassment, among other things.

Theoretical underpinning

Relative Deprivation Theory

The paper adopted relative deprivation theory as its theoretical underpinning. Relative deprivation was developed by Robert K. Merton in 1945 during the Second World War. Merton understudied the American Soldiers and observed that the military police were relatively unsatisfied with their opportunities in terms of promotion and others. However, years later, Ted Robert Gurr, a political scientist, in his book titled Why Men Rebel published in 1970 explained the connection between relative deprivation and political violence. Gurr studied the probability that the frustration-aggression mechanism, generated by feelings of relative deprivation, is the elementary source of the human capacity for violence. While such frustration does not always result in violence, Gurr (1970, p.4) contends that "the longer individuals or groups are subjected to relative deprivation the more likely it is that their fair frustration will lead to anger and ultimately violence." Linking the theory to the paper is predicated on the fact that the protracted insecurity experienced in various parts of the country emanates relative deprivation from unemployment, social exclusiveness, extra-judicial killing, and political violence, among others.

Theory of Justice

The moral theory of Justice was propounded by John Rawls in 1971. Rawls propounded the moral theory of Justice provided an alternative to utilitarianism and also addressed the challenges of distributive justice. The moral theory of Justice is predicated on equity and fairness in the distribution of public good for the betterment of an ordered society. Rawl argued that the peace of any community is conditioned and structured by a shared public notion of justice. The fair choice model involves individuals choosing mutually acceptable principles of justice, equity, and liberty in their social interactions. According to Rawls (1971), the theory advocates for a

democratic political system that prioritizes fairness, equality, and individual rights, as first articulated by early social contract theorists. Furthermore, Rawls (1971) buttressed that the theory of justice is predicated on the fact that individuals have equal rights to basic liberties and opportunities, and in its practical application, the concept of an egalitarian society and specific political arrangements play a significant role in the understanding of social democracies and social justice frameworks is derived from it. Linking the theory to the paper is predicated on the fact that the protracted insecurity experienced in various parts of the country emanates from a lack of justice on public goods such as unemployment, social exclusiveness, extra-judicial killing, and political violence, among others.

Methodology

The paper relied on secondary data-gathering techniques. The paper made use of available literature from the library, the internet, books, published works such as textbooks, journals, magazines, newspapers, monographs, articles, and other documentary information found useful on the subject of this paper.

Selected structural injustices in Nigeria

Political corruption and exclusion

The legacy of colonial rule has contributed to political exclusion in Nigeria, with the Clifford Constitution establishing elective principles that restricted many Nigerians from contesting elections. The eligibility criteria set by the constitution disenfranchised numerous citizens, particularly in Lagos and Calabar. This exclusionary trend has been perpetuated by the Nigerian political class, who have exploited loopholes to disenfranchise citizens. The requirement of substantial funds to purchase electoral forms has further entrenched this exclusion, undermining internal democracy. Okonkwo (2023) supports this assertion, arguing that the high cost of electoral forms has become a significant barrier to political participation.

The culture of moneybag politics has pervaded Nigeria's electoral landscape, where electoral positions are often determined by the highest bidder. However, the roots of political corruption can be traced back to the colonial era. The Electoral College System of voting, adopted during that period, laid the groundwork for corruption and money politics (Ogele (2021). The sheer amount of money involved in campaign financing and electoral activities is alarming, with vote buying and compromised electoral management bodies undermining the integrity of elections. Empirical evidence suggests that Nigerian elections have historically been marred by manipulation, violence, and human rights abuses, threatening internal security and democratic stability. The 1964 general election, Nigeria's first, was marked by electoral violence and civil disturbances, setting a troubling precedent (Ogele, 2020). Unfortunately, Nigeria's Fourth Republic has continued this trend of violent phenomena.

The underrepresentation of women in political appointments and electoral positions remains a pressing concern in Nigeria. The country's political landscape is characterized by a masculinity bias, with men dominating various political positions. Efforts to address gender-related disparities have been met with resistance, as evidenced by the rejection of five bills aimed at promoting gender equality in Nigeria's National Assembly in 2022. This setback highlights the need for sustained advocacy and policy reforms to create an enabling environment for women's political participation. The Conversation (2023) revealed that:

The bills sought to advance women's rights on several fronts. These included: providing special seats for women at the National Assembly; allocating 35% of political position appointments to women; creating 111 additional seats in the National Assembly and the state constituent assemblies; and a commitment to women having at least 10% of ministerial appointments.

According to the 2006 Population Census, women comprise approximately 49% of Nigeria's total population (NPC, 2006). However, their representation in the parliament is disproportionately low, lagging behind countries like Rwanda and South Africa, where women hold 61.3% and 26.5% of parliamentary seats, respectively (The

Conversation, 2023). Historically, Nigerian women have played pivotal roles in the country's political independence struggle and resistance against oppressive forces, including military regimes. Despite this, their voices and perspectives remain underrepresented in the country's legislative bodies.

Unemployment

Unemployment is a critical aspect of structural injustice in Nigeria, with far-reaching consequences. While some argue that job creation is not the government's responsibility (Punch, 2023), it is widely acknowledged that the government should provide an enabling environment for the private sector to thrive. Paradoxically, the government has spent substantial resources combating insecurity stemming from unemployment, rather than addressing its root causes. Youths from disadvantaged backgrounds face significant barriers in accessing skilled vocational jobs after graduation (Igbuzor, 2021). The unemployment rate in Nigeria remains alarmingly high. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2020),

The unemployment rate during the reference period, Q2, 2020 was 27.1%, up from the 23.1% recorded in Q3, 2018. The underemployment rate increased from 20.1% in Q3, 2018 to 28.6%. For the period under review, Q2, 2020, the unemployment rate among young people (15-34years) was 34.9%, up from 29.7%, while the rate of underemployment for the same age group rose to 28.2% from 25.7% in Q3, 2018. These rates were the highest when compared to other age groupings. p.5

Similarly, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2022&2023) also indicates that:

Unemployment stood at 5.3% in Q4 2022 and 4.1% in Q1 2023. This aligns with the rates in other developing countries where work, even if only for a few hours and in low-productivity jobs, is essential to make ends meet, particularly in the absence of any social protection for the unemployed. 22.3% of the working-age population was out of the labor force in Q4 2022, while it was 20.1% in Q1, 2023. The rate of informal employment among the employed Nigerians was 93.5% in Q4 2022 and 92.6% in Q1 2023. p.v

A review of Nigeria's economic trends reveals that despite economic growth, poverty rates have persistently increased, from 54.7% in 2004 to 60.9% in 2010. By 2011, approximately 100 million Nigerians lived in abject poverty, with 12.6 million considered fairly poor. Young people, particularly in northern Nigeria, have been disproportionately affected (Vanguard, 2013). Research conducted in Borno and Kaduna States identified unemployment and poverty as key factors driving youth recruitment for religious-based violence (Igbuzor, 2021). The Nigerian government's policies, including the Structural Adjustment Programme of the 1980s, have contributed to soaring unemployment rates. Corruption, mismanagement of public funds, and harsh economic policies have hindered economic growth, investment, and employment opportunities, leading to security challenges. The growing youth population and lack of employment opportunities have fueled cult activities and insecurity in various parts of the country (Onuoha, 2014).

Environmental Injustice

The persistence of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta region is attributed to the federal government's lack of political will to end gas flaring. The absence of fiscal federalism has exacerbated poverty in the region, contributing to the emergence of Niger Delta militants. Gas flaring and anthropogenic activities have further increased poverty, pollution, and adverse impacts on aquatic life, crops, and drinking water. Despite a 1984 deadline to end gas flaring, oil companies have continued the practice (Ogele, 2022). A study by BudgIT's Extractives team in 2017 found that gas flaring has severe health impacts on children in Niger Delta communities, including lung damage and blood disorders (Igbuzor, 2021). The neglect and deprivation of petrodollar benefits have fueled conflict between the Niger Delta inhabitants and oil companies, backed by the federal government. The region's conflict transformation remains fragile, with ongoing crises and threats.

Injustices in the Southern East region

The South East region has experienced varying degrees of breakdown in law and order, with a notable absence of federal presence and neglect in providing security to protect lives and properties (Adeyemi, 2022). In response, the local population has resorted to self-help measures to combat rising crime rates. For example, in the industrial town of Aba, investors established a vigilante group, the 'Bakassi Boys', to counter organized criminal networks that terrorized residents and visitors. While the group achieved significant successes in curbing criminal activity, its methods also led to increased political violence and human rights violations. Similar self-help measures have been adopted in other towns in the region, highlighting the need for effective governance and security provision. Though the 'Bakassi Boys' recorded incredible successes in checkmating the crook company and further adopted a comparable systems in different towns in the vicinity leading to an increase political violence and rights violations (Igbuzor, 2011).

The socio-political and economic downturn in the region has led to widespread disillusionment among the populace. However, the post-civil war context of marginalization and balkanization of the Igbo has fostered a tendency to attribute the region's woes to external factors (Adeyemi, 2022). Many scholars and pundits have criticized the federal government and specific Nigerian leaders for implementing policies detrimental to the region's economic growth and for neglecting requisite infrastructure development. This perspective is exemplified in the Fundamental Rights Class Action suit filed by Olisa Agbakoba, former NBA president, against the Federal Government at the Federal High Court, Enugu (Ogundiya, 2020). The plaintiff alleged that the federal government's actions, including poor road maintenance, non-development of oil and gas resources, abandonment of the Enugu colliery, and lack of sea ports, have negatively impacted investment in the region.

The petition also alleged discriminatory practices against the South-East region in successive national events and federal political appointments, demanding compensation of 1 trillion naira. Evidence suggests that the region has been marginalized in terms of allocation of resources from the Nigerian patrimony (Adeyemi, 2022). For example, the South-East has the lowest kilometre of federal roads among all geopolitical zones. Furthermore, the region relies heavily on private initiatives for service delivery in the social sector, with the highest number of private health facilities and the lowest number of government-owned health facilities (Ogundiya, 2020). This disparity underscores the need for addressing the region's marginalization.

An analysis of public investment in security across Nigeria's geopolitical zones reveals that the South-East region receives significantly less funding than others (Adeyemi, 2022). The region has the lowest number of police personnel and prison capacity, hindering the effectiveness of security agencies in responding to crime reports (Nwosu, 2022). This lack of investment in public security has contributed to the region's vulnerability to kidnapping and other crimes, with the Federal Government often intervening only after public outcry, as seen in the case of the Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ) officials' kidnapping (Ogundiya, 2020). The region's poor security infrastructure is a symptom of its marginalization in Nigerian politics, with the South-East having the least representation in federal executive posts (Igbuzor, 2021). This perceived marginalization has fueled advocacy for Igbo presidency and external attributions for the region's challenges (Eze, 2022). The current insecurity in the region is attributed to these factors.

Conclusion

This study investigates how structural injustice and power dynamics perpetuate harm against specific groups, hindering Nigeria's socio-economic and political progress. The legacy of colonial rule, particularly Sir Clifford's Constitution, established electoral principles that excluded many Nigerians from political participation. Over time, money has become a tool for political exclusion and injustice, wielded by power elites. This electoral

disparity has contributed to widespread insecurity. Other area structural injustices that increased insecurity in the country includes the growing rate of unemployment emanating from government actions and inactions, especially the Structural Adjustment Programme policy of the federal government and the emergence of Boko Haram in the North Eastern region; environmental injustices in the Niger Delta region that are have not addressed, and the injustices in the Southern East region that not address for decades. Given the above, these challenges have rendered certain social groups vulnerable to dominant minority that led to resentment and discontent among the citizens.

Recommendation

1.   The implementation of the Justice Owais Electoral Report of 2007 would reduce the degree of electoral injustices in Nigeria.

2.   The domestication of international conventions discriminating women from participation in politics, education and employment should be encouraged. Hence, gender policies must be implemented and monitored.

3.   The government should create an enabling environment for job creation, equal opportunity for every citizen irrespective of tribe, sex and religion should be encouraged.

4.   The federal government should address the environmental injustices by ending gas flare in the Niger Delta region. Subsequently, fiscal federalism should implemented as practiced in Nigeria's First Republic.

5.   The federal government addresses neglect against the people of southeast Nigeria. These include social infrastructure, equal political representation, and the creation of another state, among others, which would reduce the degree of secessionist agitation.

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