

**INSECURITY AND THE LIVELIHOOD OF WOMEN IN SANKERA AXIS OF BENUE STATE,
NIGERIA**

LYNDA ERDOO BEEGA
Public Complaint Commission, Makurdi, Benue State
lyndakaash@gmail.com

&

MARY, ERDOO UYA (PhD)
Department of Sociology,
Benue State University, Makurdi
Uyamary1@gmail.com
+2347030875276

Abstract

Insecurity is the state of being unsafe or insecure or a state of mind characterized by self-doubt and vulnerability. Some of the security challenges facing Nigeria are food, finance, transport, health care, personal and national security issues. We also witness political and tribal/ethnic crises, political assassinations and kidnapping/abduction in different parts of the country. There are cases of armed robbery here and there, human trafficking, conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and farmers. Every Sector of the economy is disrupted in one way or the other by the continued insecurity in the country. Efforts by the government are other concerned bodies to reduce insecurity have not yielded positive results. The study examined insecurity and the livelihood of women in Sankera Axis of Benue State, Nigeria. This study adopted a cross sectional study design. The study was conducted in Benue State whereby the major areas across the political zones in the state were selected. A total number of 380 respondents participated in the study. It was revealed in the study that there was a high rate of insecurity in Sankera. The causes of insecurity in the area are youth restiveness, unfairness, weak security system, loss of socio-cultural and communal value system, youth unemployment, the culture of get rich-quick based on greed, proliferation of small arms. It was revealed that the phenomenon of insecurity in Sankera typifies what is known as resource violence in contemporary development literature. This situation has been complicated by the rising incidence of livelihood insecurity among the farming and herding communities as a result of the dwindling ecological fortunes of the region. It was recommended among others that various social, religious and traditional institutions in the state should encourage their members or subject on attitudinal change and the possibility of leaving in peace with others. This can be achieved through proper education, value re-orientation and enlightenment.

Introduction

One of the major challenges affecting the livelihood of women today is insecurity. Women contribute greatly to the development of rural areas. However, their activities are badly affected by the high rate of insecurity. Nigeria is facing security crisis because of inadequate, misplaced and misguided security agenda. Every country exists to give security to all human all human beings living in the county. In fact, the increasing rate of insecurity in Nigeria is becoming worrisome and scary by the day. It becomes even more worrying that the Nigerian government appears handicapped in curbing this existential threat of insecurity in Nigeria. Presently, Nigeria appears to be grappling with security problems cutting across its six regional regions with the North-East, North Central, and South-South regions being the hottest, hotter and hot zones respectively (Nwozor, 2013). Insecurity is the state of being unsafe or insecure or a state of mind characterized by self-doubt and vulnerability (Chinedu, 2012).

Some of the security challenges facing Nigeria are food, finance, transport, health care, personal and national security issues. We also witness political and tribal/ethnic crises, political assassinations and

kidnapping/abduction in different parts of the country. There are cases of armed robbery here and there, human trafficking, environmental degradation and separatist agitations of the Niger Delta, desertification challenge in some parts of the Northern Nigeria, erosion problems in the Southern Eastern, Nigeria. Annual floods in urban centres in Nigeria, to mention but a few (Akinsowon, 2021).

The conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and farmers came into existence as a result of encroachment of farmlands by the Fulani herders (Ajibefun, 2017). Every Sector of the economy is disrupted in one way or the other by the continued violence and insecurity in the country (Akinsowon, 2021). According to Dauda (2019) the gains in the agricultural sector of the economy, especially in the area of food production, may suffer a serious setback as a result of the negative effect of the activities on farmers in area where Fulani herdsmen crises is pervasive. Socio-economic life in those states is usually grounded to a halt as people could not freely go about their farming and socio-economic activities for fear of being killed.

Olukunle (2018) stressed that crisis is an event that lead to an unstable and dangerous situation affecting an individual, group, community, or whole society. Crisis also refers to an unexpected unplanned situation or rather threat that suddenly dawns upon an area out of nowhere. It means an event that threatens the stability of a society or country. Titilope (2016) opined that crises is any event that may lead to an individual, group, community, or whole society. It is deemed to be negative changes in the security, economic, political, societal, or environmental affairs, especially when they occur abruptly, with little or no warning. The effects of insecurity is that it leads to limited availability of resources, which in turn push people living in such areas to leave in order to have access to resources (Agboola, 2020).

Recently, in Benue State and Sankera axis, farmers and herdsmen crisis have been associated with the conflict of land resource use which displaced a lot of people away from the residential places of living, killing and lot of people and caused destruction of lives and property. The scenario has caused shortage of food and have denied the Benue of its normal slogan which is known as “the food basket of the Nation”

In Sankera, there is high level of insecurity, occasioned by frequent clashes between herdsmen and farmers, it has resulted in the destruction of lives and farmlands and has become a major threat to efforts to boost food production. In recent times, Sankera has become a crisis prone area due to the incessant attacks on farming communities in the area. This has created a state of insecurity leading to women to run away from their ancestral homes. This has affected the livelihood of women in the area. There are reported cases where farmers are shot or slaughtered in their farms while working (Sahara Reporters, July 26, 2022). This has created a general state and atmosphere of insecurity which consciously keeps women away from their thereby creating a vulnerable state for the loss of their livelihood activities to be incurred.

Although, the Benue State House of Assembly in 2017 made a law to prohibit open grazing, this has not contained the herdsmen's attacks. Recently, farmers have deserted their ancestral lands and are camped in internally displaced homes where they organize to go their farms in groups. This arrangement has not fare even better as people are being killed on the daily basis. Fear is instilled in the people greatly that going to the farm alone is taking a risk that can lost your life. The state of insecurity has made most of the women to abandon their activities.

Statement of the problem

Throughout the world, insecurity has been a challenged that has affected the general well being of the people. Women who are the most vulnerable sex in the society play significant roles towards the development of the society. However, they are affected the violence. Women farmers are provide food and other agricultural activities especially in the developing countries like Nigeria. Most of food provided in Nigeria is pioneered by women, yet as a result of constant and or persistent violence; their livelihood is affected thereby leading to shortage of food and agricultural produce in the society.

In Nigeria, insecurity occurs at different epochs, with a lot of lives and property destroyed and has significant effect on women farmers. In Benue state alone, there is no farming season that is devoid of destruction, even at the family levels especially over land. The question is that, why are these insecurities so persistence? what are the causes of the insecurity ? and how has it affect the livelihood of women in the areas? This has become a point of concern among scholars and researchers.

Objectives

The general objectives of the study was an assessment of insecurity and the livelihood of women in Sankera axis of Benue State. The specific objectives of the study were to:

- i. Assess the rate of insecurity in Sankera axis of Benue State
- ii. Assess the causes of insecurity in Sankera axis of Benue State
- iii. Examine the effects of insecurity and the livelihood of women in Sankera axis of Benue State.

Methodology

This study adopted a cross sectional study design. The study was conducted in Sankera Area of Benue State. The selected areas were Ukum and Logo Local Government Areas. Data for the study was collected using questionnaire and was analysed quantitatively.

Results

Socio-Demographic Variables of Respondents

The findings of this study revealed that respondents for this study were sample from diverse socio-demographic variables. Data on Table 1 below showed that the respondents were females.

In the age bracket, data above indicated 150 (39.0%) from both the age ranges of 18-30, and the age ranges 31-64, was 184 (48.0%) respectively. The age range of 65 and above were 50 (13.0%). The age range of 30-60 is therefore most represented in the study, this is important for the study because it is the most knowledgeable age bracket.

Data above indicated that secondary education level was most represented with 132(36.4%), following closely is the primary school category with 100 (26.0%), next on the hierarchy is higher school category with 124(28.6%). On marital status, 100(26.0%) respondents were single, 154(40.1%) were married while, the others category have 33.9% out of the total 384 respondents, this is important for the study because since the majority are married, they are likely to provide more responsible and experienced information. The religious distribution of respondents has 200 (52%) Christians, 184(48.0%) were traditional worshippers. This is summarized in the table below:

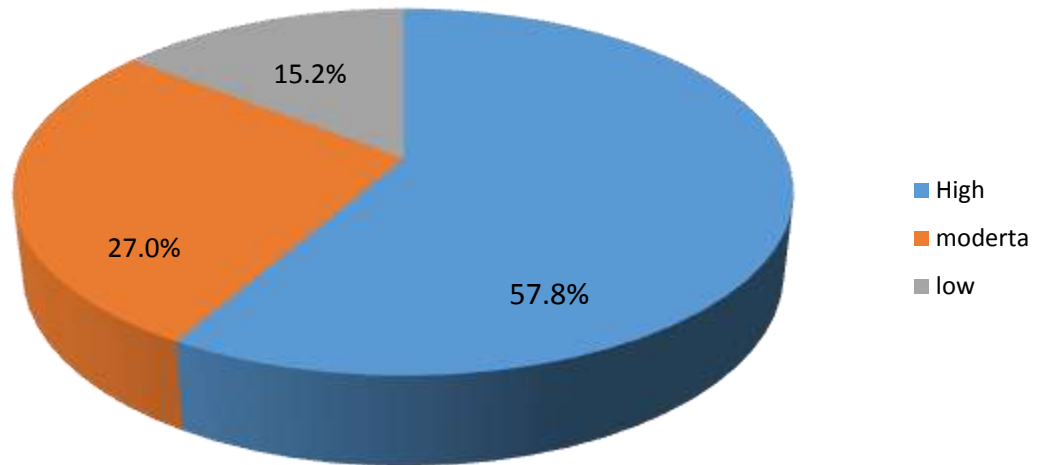
Table 1: Socio-Demographic Attributes of Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage	
		(n=384)	(%=100)
A Sex			
Female	384		100
B Age			
18-30	150		39.0
31-64	184		48.0
65 and above	50		13.0
C Level of Education			
Primary	144		28.6
Secondary	140		36.4
Tertiary	100		26.0
D Marital Status			
Single	100		26.0
Married	154		40.1
Others	130		33.9
E Religion Affiliation			
Christian	200		52.0
Traditional	184		48.0

Source: (Field Survey, 2023)

It was revealed in the study that due to the issues that surround the insecurity situation, in the area. And it was seen to be very high as presented below:

Fig.1: the rate of insecurity in Sankera

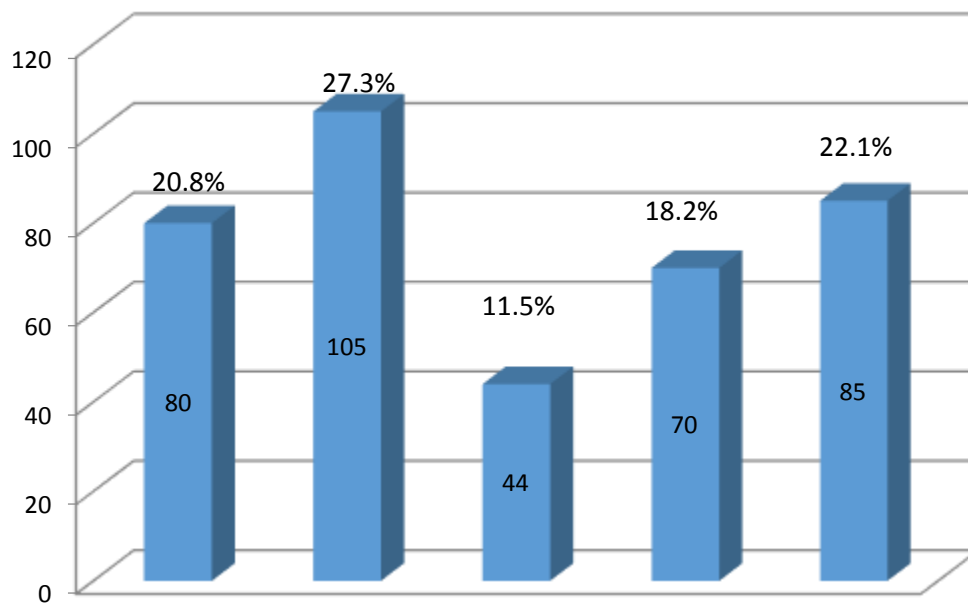


Source: (Field Survey, 2023)

The major causes of insecurity in Sankera axis

This section of the study examines the causes of insecurity in Sankera. The findings are revealed that, 80 (20.8%) respondents are of the opinion that it youth restiveness that caused insecurity, while to 105(27.3%), it is the trespassing of on farm land, to 44(11.5%) it was caused by political factors, and to (70) 18.2% respondents, reported that socio-cultural factors caused insecurity in the area, to 85(22.1%) respondents, were of the view that insecurity was caused by greed. The findings here are summarized in the figure 2 below:

Fig. 2: The major causes of insecurity in Sankera Axis



Source: (Field Survey, 2023)

According to, Achumba; Ighomereho & Akpor-Robaro (2013) states the causes of security challenges in Nigeria to include: lack of institutional capacity resulting in government failure, pervasive material inequalities and unfairness, ethno-religious conflicts, conflict of perceptions between the public and government, weak security system, loss of socio-cultural and communal value system. To Eme, Nwachukwu & Olise (2017) the causes of security threats in Nigeria. These include, youth unemployment, the culture of get rich-quick based on greed, proliferation of small arms and light weapons as well as inadequate policing of our borders and maritime environment. Effiong (2019) says Nigeria is faced with acute poverty, unemployment saga as well as poor remuneration for workers. This is capable of causing insecurity in Nigeria.

The effects of insecurity on the livelihood of women in Sankera

Livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (stores, resources, claims and access) and activities required for a means of living; a livelihood is sustainable which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihood at the local and global levels and in the short and long term.

The findings showed that insecurity have diverging effects on the lives of women. 105 (27.3%), the reported that it results to killings of both women and men, young and old, which affect the livelihood activities of women in the sense that, women depend on one another in other to do their livelihood activities, so, when there are killings, it affects them. Imagine the situation whereby by the relations of women are killed during, it can affect their entire activities. Communal violence continues to pose serious problems for women, as well retard efforts at nation building irrespective of individual occupations.

Also, 95 (24.7%) respondents admitted that burning of houses was the effect of insecurity. Housing is essential to the well-being and development of human endeavour. As a complex asset, it provides links to livelihoods, health, education, security and social and family stability. It also acts as a social centre for family and friends, a source of pride and cultural identity, and a resource of both political and economic importance.

In related findings, to 80 (20.8%) respondents conflict manifests in the killings of livestock. Also, the research carried out by Bimpe (2008) in Ekiti state showed clearly that communal violence results to

destruction of animal and other valid assets. Inference therefore can be cohesively drawn that during violence, tend to loot other people’s livestock, either killed or alive.

Another effect as revealed by 60 (15.6%), was the destruction of farms that the conflict manifest. Direct losses of farmland, waste of land based mineral resources, during and after conflict, inability to conserve landed properties with cultural or historical values, inaccessibility to urban land for meaningful socio-economic or physical development programmes among others was caused by communal violence. Tuladhar (2004) conceived that land belongs to a vast family of which many are dead, few are living and countless are yet to be born. Similarly, to 44 (11.4%) respondents, it results to restriction of movement. The aftermath of the insecurity was so great that people have to move from one activity to the other to overcome the difficult period. The findings were summarized in the table below:

Table 2: The effects of insecurity on the livelihood of women in Sankera

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Killing of people	105	27.3
Burning of houses	95	24.7
Killing of livestock	80	20.8
Destruction of farms	60	15.6
Restriction of movement	44	11.4
Total	384	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

From the findings it was concluded that livelihood activities which and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base’. Livelihood strategies are composed of activities that generate the means of household survival and are the planned activities that men and women undertake to build their livelihoods. Livelihood outcomes are the achievements of livelihood strategies, such as more income, increased wellbeing, and reduce vulnerability, improved food security and a more sustainable use of natural resources. It is sustainable when it has the capacity to meet the immediate needs of the people while its ability to meet future needs is not jeopardized.

Communal violence are not without devastating effects on food production among women. Accordingly, 70 (91.2%) respondents indicated that insecurity results to loss of food crops, 54 (14%) respondents reported that it resulted to loss of food items, 53 (13.8%) reported that, it affected food adequacy, 55 (14.3%) respondents reported that it lead to food unaffordability, 33 (8.5%) respondents reported that it indicate that the crisis leads to hunger and starvation, 45 (11.7%), it ignites the destruction of food crops, while to 44 (11.4%), the communal violence leads to people living in fear of possible attack and counter attacks and finally, 30 (7.8%) respondent were of the position that the communal violence leads to lack of man power for food production since people flee away from the original dwelling place to be clustered in areas that are considered relatively beyond immediate attacks.

Large proportion of the women population in Sankera engaged in subsistence farming for food, and during communal violence, it makes it difficult for them to raise enough money to cater for their needs especially the rehabilitation of their homes, payment of school fees, health care etc contribute towards communal efforts. The crisis itself has retarded and impeded development activities in the area. Field information on output of farmers during the crisis years and past crisis years reviewed that farm yield dropped during the crisis periods and kept dwindling after the crisis, because all efforts made to increase food production during and after the crisis were greatly affected by the crisis.

Instead available resources were channeled into rehabilitation and resettlement exercise than investment in agriculture and other business. Moreso, the scarcity of input like fertilizer, herbicides, farm machineries and improved seedling which naturally results from and during the period of any crisis could also have been responsible for this crisis. Naturally, results from and during the period of any crisis could also have been responsible for this decline.

Table 3: The effects of insecurity on the food production of women in Sankera

Consequences	Frequency	Percentage
Loss of food crops	70	18.2
Loss of food items	54	14.0
Inadequacy of food	53	13.8
Unaffordability of food	55	14.3
Hunger and starvation	33	8.5
Destruction of food crops	45	11.7
Living in fear	44	11.4
Lack of man power	30	7.8

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Women participate actively in agricultural development. It has been observed that communal violence is not with trickle effects on agricultural productivity.

Table 4: Effect of insecurity on Agricultural Productivity of women in Sankera

Effects	Frequency	Percentage
Low production	166	43.2
Increase in the prices of seedlings	114	37.5
Untimely cultivation of crops	104	27.1
Total	384	100

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Indicating how this violent affects women agricultural activities, the findings showed that, it impacts negatively on agricultural productivity. 166(43.2%) respondents were of the view that it leads to low agricultural production. while 114(37.5%) respondents were of the indication that it leads to the inflation in the prices of seedlings and lastly, 104 (27.1%) respondents were of the suggestion that it leads to untimely cultivation of crops. Rural women are actively involved in farming activities. They constitute about 60-80% of the labour used for farming activities like planting, weeding, transportation, processing, marketing and storage of products. This shows that women contribute in agricultural development of their nations.

This implies that, due to communal conflicts, there has been increase in transportation costs which makes people not been able to transport their produce to market for sale. It also increases prices of produce which makes people not been able to have enough food for consumption to meet their dietary needs. Products/goods are supplied in small quantity to markets as well as disruption of agricultural extension activities/work. Conflicts tend to affect food security by creating food shortages, which disrupt both upstream input markets and downstream output markets, thus deterring food production, commercialization and stock management. Depending on the location of the fights in a country, crops cannot be planted, weeded or harvested, decreasing dramatically the levels of agricultural production.

In conflict situations, food producing regions experience seizing or destroying of food stocks, livestock and other assets, interrupting marketed supplies of food not only in these regions but also in neighboring regions. These predatory activities diminish food availability and food access directly, because both militias and regular armies in the field tend to subsist by extorting the unarmed populations for food and any other productive resources. Any food that the militias and armies cannot use immediately in the contested areas will be destroyed to prevent their adversaries from accessing it. Bearing these risks in mind, the farming populations tend to flee, decline or stop farming. Agriculture may be reduced to subsistence and survival production by farmers who manage to stay, because there is no incentive to invest deeply in production

Conclusion

The phenomenon of insecurity in Sankera typifies what is known as resource violence in contemporary development literature. This situation has been complicated by the rising incidence of livelihood insecurity among the farming and herding communities as a result of the dwindling ecological fortunes of the region. This scenario has led to desperate, violent struggles for access to and control of scarce ecological space and resources, a situation that has engendered dire humanitarian, social, socio-economic and economic consequences.

Recommendations

Based on all that was discovered in this work, the following recommendations were made.

1. Various social, religious and traditional institutions in the state should encourage their members or subject on attitudinal change and the possibility of leaving in peace with others. This can be achieved through proper education, value re-orientation and enlightenment.
2. There should be people oriented peace building meeting. Regrettably youth and women of the two groups were not well involved in the peacebuilding meetings. Therefore they should be involved in peacebuilding initiative. This is because they are the ones that orchestrated the violence confrontation and must be part and parcel of the decision making.
3. A police station should be established in the two affected area to help address the security breaches. This will go a long way in preventing attack against any group in the area.

References

- Achumba, I.C., Ighomereho, O.S. & Akpor-Robaro, M.O.M. (2013). Security challenges in Nigeria and the implications for business activities and sustainable development
- Agboola, T. G. (2020). The implication of the Fulani herdsmen crisis on National integration and national development in Nigeria. *International Journal of Arts and Social Sciences Education (IJASSE) 5(1) 40-46*
- Ajibefun, M. B. (2018). Social and economic effects of the menace of Fulani herdsmen crisis in Nigeria. *Journal of Educational and Social research*. Retrieved from <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/> on June 27, 2020.
- Akinsowon, F.I. (2021). Root Causes Of Security Challenges In Nigeria And Solutions. *International Journal of Innovative Social Sciences & Humanities Research 9(4):174-180, Oct.-Dec., 2021*
- Chinedu, A. (2012). Economic Implications of Insecurity in Nigeria. Lagos: Anthill Publishers. p32.
- Dauda, S. M. (2019). Impact of government intervention on various crises in Nigeria. *Societal issues, 8(1)102-109*.
- Effiong, C. (2019). Persistent insecurity in Nigeria: Need for respect for human life. Catholic Laity Council of Nigeria. Abuja. P.20-24.
- Eme, O.I., Nwachukwu, T.S. & Olise, C.N. (2017). Security threats in Nigeria: A thematic exposition. *International Journal of Philosophy and Social-Psychological Sciences 3(1), 21-39*.
- Nwozor, A. (2013). National Security, Religious Anarchism and the Politics of Amnesty in Nigeria. *Covenant Journal of Politics and International Affairs, 1(1) (Maiden Edition)*.
- Olukunle, A. D. (2018). Evaluation of causes and solution to ethnic conflicts in North-central, Nigeria. *International Journal of Social Sciences, 18(2) 207-215*.
- Titilope, B. S. (2018). Critical evaluation of herders' crisis against farmers in Nigeria. *Imagine issues in society, 12(3) 87-96*.