An Ethical Evaluation of the Effects of Insecurity in Abua, Rivers State

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Abstract

The paper "An Ethical Evaluation of the Effects of Insecurity in Abua" examined how the effect of insecurity has adversely change the life of the people of Abua and the surrounding. It discovered that insecurity does not pay good to anyone. No one benefited, even the perpetrators suffered more than the victims. The study employed a descriptive survey and narrative guide in soliciting information on the subject matter. Virtue or character ethics theory formed the theoretical basis for this study. The study investigated the causes and effects of insecurity in Abua, and discovered that cultism, ritual killings, kidnapping, militancy, armed robbery, stealing communal dashes, banditry, oil bunkering and so on are the causes of insecurity in Abua and Rivers State. The study revealed that the perpetrators of insecurity are ethically wrong, no matter the motive behind their actions. Therefore, recommends that government encourage moral education in the school system in Abua, Rivers State, besides, equipping security agents to fight insecurity, create jobs for the youth, provide basic amenities etc and moral or ethical values, join forces with security agencies to combat insecurity in Abua.

Keywords: Ethical, evaluation and insecurity

Introduction

One of the societal issues all over the world is the problem of insecurity. The rate of insecurity is alarming in Nigeria, Rivers State and particularly Abua/Odual Local Government Area. Insecurity has cause a lot of suffering and terrible setback to Abua in Rivers State and to the larger society. It has subjected people to an unprecedented degree of hostility. Many people have lost their lives and properties, church building and houses burnt, government infrastructures vandalize and many people are traumatized. Insecurity is characterized with violence. It is the absence of safety, danger, hazard, uncertainty, lack of protection and safety.

Insecurity in Abua have cause a negative impact on all aspects of Abua's life including food production because people are afraid to go to farm. Abua was one of the areas in Rivers State bubbling with life and vitality and rich culture and love for human life, a peaceful, loving and law abiding area. Abua was a place known for religious tolerance where ceremonies –like the Eyaal Abuan-an annual festival celebrated at the beginning of the farming season, male/female circumcision ceremony etc, were held without quarrelling. Abua people were known for respect for authority and elders: Today, elders are no longer respected. Rather respect is based on one's financial position and political influence in the society. Abua was also known for regard of the Sacredness of Human Life: Before 2000 there was the emphasis on the sanctity of human life. The issue of taking the life of another was unheard of, not to mention a fellow kinsman. Murder, suicide, abortion and all that threatens human life and existence were contrary to the vital principles that bind the Abua society and were abomination and taboo.

Abua were hard working people committed to their jobs and occupations. Unfortunately, the problem of insecurity has mortgaged this culture of respect, hard work, friendliness and receptiveness to strangers. Life no longer means anything to people. The human value and morality have been affected by not only western culture but by the problem of insecurity. Due to insecurity many people from Abua are now like refuges in neighbouring states, making the area and businesses to suffer a major setback. The paper is evaluating the gains and loss of insecurity, in Abua, Rivers State. The rest of the paper took the following subheadings, conception of some terms, causes of insecurity in Abua; evaluation

of gains and losses of insecurity and conclusion. The work is descriptive in nature and a good narrative of events, which give a comprehensive survey of the work.

Conceptual Framework

Ethical: The word 'Ethical' is from the word 'Ethics' which means the philosophy of morals; the standard of the character set up by any race or nation. It is a set of principles relating to right and wrong conduct or behaviour guiding, a specific culture or society. The word ethical is an adjective, relating to the accepted principles of right and wrong, especially those of some organization or profession, (Kunhiyop, 2008). It is how a person or a group of people evaluates the right and wrong behaviour of a specific situations and comes to a decision of what to do, the process of justifying an action based on moral standards, evaluating the rightness or wrongness of an action. It is what is morally acceptable when it comes to actions that affects others.

Evaluation: The word evaluation is the process of assessing the value, worth, or quality of something. It means to access in other to ascertain the value of something (Anyandokun, 2005).

Insecurity: Insecurity is now a global challenge that both the developed and the underdeveloped countries are batting with. The concept of insecurity derived from the concept of security. Security is defined as the "state of being free danger or injury (Akanji 2015). Insecurity therefore is the existence of conditions in which people in a society cannot go about their normal daily activities without any threats to their lives or properties. There is no where in the world that people are totally secured. In the western world, with the level of scientific advancement – CCTV cameras, satellites, technological machines etc people are insecured. Insecurity is a state of being subjected to fear, threat, danger, molestation, intimidation, harassment etc. In Nigeria just like the entire African continent, insecurity has eaten deep into the fabric of her existence. Human beings are killed like animals, communities are vandalized or set on fire and properties worth millions of naira are destroyed.

Insecurity is the state of being subject to danger or injury. The anxiety that is experienced when one feels vulnerable and insecure. According to Achumba et al (2013) insecurity is lack of safety or the existence of danger, hazard, uncertainty, lack of trust, doubtful, inadequately guarded or protected, lack of stability, disturbed, lack of protection and unsafe.. People today are threatened in the schools, business places or in the work places Effiom and Edinyang (2013) opined that insecurity is the condition of being threatened or injured. It denotes the absence of protection from danger or other bad situations. It is the prevalence of threats to human wellbeing as a result of physical and psychological abuses inflicted upon non-combatant individuals, including children, the aged and women etc.

Virtue or Character Ethics Theory

Virtue ethics theory focuses on the character. According to Kunhiyop (2008) the starting point for virtue ethics is the development of good character traits. A person is good if he or she has virtues and lacks vices. Virtue theory is about the character of the individual who does the action. This theory is based on the willingness of a person to change from a vicious character to a virtuous one. Cerden (2008) in his view stated that a virtue is an acquired human quality, the possession and exercise of which tends to enable people to achieve those good things which are internal to practices and the look of which effectively prevent people from wrongdoing. Kunhiyop (2008) opined that the cardinal virtues were traditionally defined as wisdom, courage, temperance, piety and justice, and these are seen as the source of all other virtues. The vices included cowardice, insincerity, injustice and vanity.

It is ideal to note that for peace to prevail and people to be secured in an area, certain virtues such as patriotism, obedience, and honesty should characterize an individual's life. Besides, people especially adults living in Abua have a role to play in the character formation of children. For positive change of character to take place in the life of the perpetrators of evil, collaborating efforts must be made to expose the individuals to the dangers, they may encounter. The dangers encouraged by certain indices.

Abua and Causes of Insecurity

(a) Abua People

Abua is situated on the peninsula formed by the Orashi and the Sambreiro rivers. To the East Abua is bounded by the Sambreiro River, West by the Orashi River, North by the Ekpeye villages of Odiabidi, Obele and Ochiba in Ahoada-East Local Government Area of Rivers State and South by the Kalabari group of Ijaw speaking peoples. Its headquarters is located in Ayama/Abua Central. It has an area of 704 km^2 and a population of 406,200 at the 2022 census. Abua consists of four clans. Each has its own ruler and a minimum of seven villages under it. The origin of Abua Ethnic nationality shows that Abua, Odual, Ogbia who were brothers, migrated from Benin (present day Edo State) because of hostilities and settled in their present positions in the Niger Delta. This counts for the similarities of language by these communities. (Oyo, 2022).

Oye (2022), states that Abua is one of the upland area of Rivers State which constitute the food basket of the state. Abua is blessed with a fertile landmass for the cultivation of crops in commercial quantity. A greater number of the adult's population is engaged in farming, fishing and production of oil palm at a very large scale for the state government farms (RISON PALM Ltd). Abua is equally blessed with mineral resources such as crude oil and gas discovered at Egbolom, Aminigboko, Omaraka and Otari communities (Oyo, 2022).

The nature of insecurity in Abua is commonly characterized by high rates of crime such as armed robbery, kidnapping, ritual killing, raping, stealing inter-communal clashes and cult related violence. These issues have been a recurring problem in Abua/Odual Local Government Area and have led to a sense of fear and insecurity among the people of Abua.

The problem of insecurity in Abua has led to increase in suffering, sickness, and health challenges etc. It has led to poverty increase, closure of business and small scale business in Abua. Emeodu (2019) observed that people cannot go about their farming activities as they are peasants, and also trading that helps them to survive. One of the major causes of insecurity in Abua is cultism. Different cult groups known as the Greenlanders, Icelanders, Igwa boys, Bantata etc are in operational in Abua causing mayhem and seeking for supremacy (Emeodu, 2019). Cult

supremacy is also economical in nature as politicians usually paid and used cult groups during elections. In Abua people are made to live in fear during elections. As people can be kidnaped, threatened or even killed by cult groups.

Ezirim (2018) opined that the rise in the oil theft and artisanal refining has further compounded the insecurity problem in the state. In Abua, there are many oil bunkering. Although bunkering is an illegal business, many people are involved. Top military operators, government officials, politicians and business men and women etc, because it produce quick money for the actors at the expense of public interest (Ezirim, 2018) Most of the frustrated, angry youth in the oil bunkering in Abua are among those 'who claim that they cannot steal what belongs to them" (Naanen, 2019).

Vanguard News of 27th August 2022 states that damage inflicted by oil bunkers in Rivers, Delta, Bayelsa and other states who illegitimately refine crude oil in the Niger-Delta region is a child's play compared to the havoc the connected carted that owns giant vessels and equipment weak on the economy.

(b) Causes of Insecurity in Abua

There is a dramatic increase in violence, kidnapping and the like in Abua today. Lawless groups are raising ugly heads in every part of Abua. In this section of the work, the researcher tend to examine the causes of security in Abua.

i. **Poverty**: This is a state of deprivation which includes lack of food, shelter, clothing and other necessities of life. A poor man needs money to survive and keep life moving. A person living in poverty can easily be a security risk from various points of view. Such a person can effortlessly be employed to carryout acts of violence against people he or she does not even known, if it would make him or her have money to take care of basic necessities. A poor person is a hungry person. In Abua land today, there is a high level of poverty in the land despite how the area is blessed with natural resources and its land fertile still, many people are living in abject poverty. Abua is dominated by farmers and fishermen, but some youth don't want to do anything. Hence, they easily steal from others in order to meet their own needs. It is no wonder then the Lord's prayer includes

giving of daily bread, Scarcity, shortage, lack and deficiency can lead to insecurity and Abua is loaded with people of this category. When poverty pervades the land, danger is near and those who have anything at all are in danger of losing what they have.

ii. **Ignorance**: Another cause of insecurity in Abua is ignorance. Ignorance can come from lack of education or lack of exposure or indoctrination. The presence of ignorant people is a major tool for perpetrating evil. Most people who threaten the security of the society lack education, both secular and sacred. They can easily be swayed by their manipulators who use them to destabilize the peace of their acclaimed adversaries. This is especially true in the area of religious violence. People who have been brainwashed can kill, maim and be destructive. Where ignorance thrives, insecurity becomes prominent.

iii. **Idleness:** This is the state of redundancy which manifests as jobless. While it is true that there is massive unemployment in Rivers State, it does not justify the idleness that has engaged our societies. It is true that government employment is quite scarce, but there is no justification for the enormity of idleness that is confronting the state. Many Abua youths feel tool proud to earn their living through what they consider demeaning. Hence, a male graduate cannot work as a driver or cook until things change and a female graduate feels too proud to sell akara and moin moin to make ends meet. And yet these idlers want to put on the best shoes, golden wrist watches and ride the best cars. How else can they have money to do all these except through stealing and looking for cheap money? Redundancy is therefore a cause of insecurity which must be greatly discouraged.

iv. **Unemployment:** Joblessness or unemployment is one of the root causes of insecurity in Abua. The rise in crime wave in Rivers State since the 2000s was a result of unemployment, economic decline, and social inequality, the overwhelming unemployment rate in Rivers State and Abua is capable of causing panic. The issue is obvious when it comes to Rivers youths. Many youths join thuggery or kidnapping as an avenue to generate money which they will use to establish themselves in society. The idle minds became the

devil's workshop. These people who are mostly youth are easily recruited into militant groups and trained to rob, kill, smuggle, high jack to mention but a few.

v. **Corruption:** Corruption could be seen as any form of behaviour that generates private self-servicing gains, which are not sanctioned by law, or the preventing norms of the society (Ninsin, 2000). In identifying various forms in which corruption can be manifested, Olopona (2013) opined that, "They are nepotism, bribery with its variant, misadministration/management, and the use of contrived security threat to the state or the large society to obtain approval for the personal enrichment of public officers. Unfortunately, corruption has already become a part of life in the society. Corruption is endemic in all governments and it is not peculiar to any continent, region or ethnic group. Oye (2022) opined that corruption cut across faiths, religious denominations and political systems. The corruption index for Nigeria is very high.

Most of the crime in Rivers State and Abua in particular are blamed on corruption in the society. Corruption is Rivers State, from all estimation, has almost completely lost its meaning. Apart from pervading almost every sector of the society. Even those steeped in corruption claim to be fighting corruption. The truth is that when people are unemployed and unable to afford regular meals for themselves and their children, they cannot but be tempted to steal from those who themselves are looting the money in their custody. This widens insecurity.

vi. **Cult Rivals:** One of the major cause of insecurity in Abua/Odual Local Government Area is cultism, the menace of cultism has been on the increase in Abua. Cultism has spread to all the Local Government Areas of the state. The rising and activities of gangsterism is frightening in Abua. The cult groups have their roots in Port Harcourt and other local government areas like Ahoada West, Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni (Onelga), Khana and Gokana, Andoni, Akuku Toru, Emohua and Abua/Odual as their strongholds. The cult group in Abua started as 'Igwa boys' to 'Bantata

and grew to Deybam and Deywell, Icelanders and Grenlanders. These groups usually clash' especially during elections. Inter-cult clashes, cult killings, cult invasion of local communities has become a part of social life in Abua and the state. And in most cases innocent lives are lost in the process. The government (Federal, State and Local) appeared not to see the atrocities been committed by these cultists.

vii. **Politics:** The Dictionary defines 'politics' as the activities involved in getting and using power in public life, and being able to influence decisions that affect a country or society. This is that which relates to the state, government, the body politics, public administration, policy-making in a nation. It is organized or ordered with respect to government (Collins 2005).

The way politics is being practiced in Rivers State creates room for insecurity. Sometimes politicians are out for the express purpose of eliminating their opponents in order to gain political advantage. The tussle for power and struggle for governmental position has been the bane in the political system and has diffused in the states.

A common feature of violence in Abua is correlation between activities by cult groups, militants and political thugs, cult violence appears to intensify during election periods, as many cult groups, depend on the goodwill and patronage of politicians, who either employ them as informal security or use them to intimidate or potentially kill their opponents in order to influence the outcomes of elections.

Many of the cult groups are either community-based or built around certain individuals, including ex-militant leaders and politicians, who serve as rallying points for members. Cult groups are recruited by politicians to perpetrate election violence.

During campaigns for elections, politicians provide arms to the youths and cultists. This is what cultists used to intimidates their opponent. After the election, the politician will not retrieve the arms from cultists or thugs. These cultists or thugs will make use of these guns and other dangerous weapons to inflict harm and violence in the community where they inhabit. The perception of politics has made election a do or die affair, which has resulted in violent conflict between those who are vying for political offices. These clashes have occurred among inter and intra political parties (Hazain and Hormer, 2007). The desperation for power and political supremacy has made the political system, particular in Abua a dirty game as many called it.

So politics is a major source of insecurity and when the polity is heated up, dangers loom at the corner (Akanji, 2015).

viii. **Kidnapping:** This is another visible sign of insecurity in Rivers State, in fact, kidnapping is today a serious global issue being fought in parts of the world. In Nigeria, America, Mexico and other parts of the world, kidnapping is being daily experienced (Akanji, 2015). Kidnapping is 'abducting and holding anybody captive, typically to obtain ransom'. The perpetrators of this crime do not spare anyone in this new wave of crime that seems to have supplanted armed robbery and other non-contact crimes. As a result of kidnapping, people now live in fear of falling victims to these criminals. Since this act began in Abua, aged, children male and female have been kidnapped for ransom. There are times when the purpose of kidnapping is beyond seeking monetary ransom. At times it is political to force a candidate of another political party to step down. Kidnapping has become a major cause of insecurity in Rivers State and Abua. Men, women, house-helps, gatemen and even security agents are sometimes involved. In December, 2023 Emughen Abua experienced an unforgettable incident of kidnap of three (3) company white men and killing of four (4) security officers. This caused a total desertion of the area because a mass arrest was launched from the reinforced limitary force.

Many people who were in the bush could not return to the community. And many died in the bush while a few others manage to escape to their neighbouring communities.

ix. **Oil bunkering:** Abua being one of the Local Government Area in the Niger Delta region where oil is produced, suffers from the activities of illegal oil bunkering. This activity is promoted by the spate of insecurity in the area. This is backup with criminals who are always along the water-ways and are ready to combat with the uniformed men-whether police, army etc. unfortunately, innocent people have been killed. This therefore makes the rivers, creeks etc to be unsafe.Oil bunkering has spurred on a high level of insecurity in Abua. Armed cartels are behind illegal refineries in the creeks of Abua. The proceeds from the illegal refineries are aiding the importation of illegal arms. Oil bunkering has made Abua in Rivers State to be filled with uniformed men. On the roads of Abua, security men are everywhere collecting money from people on the way under the pretest of bunkering. Many lives have been wasted in confrontations between security men and those engaged in oil bunkering.

x. **Communal Crisis:** Communal crisis is one of threat to peace and security in Abua. According to Ezekiel (personal interview), communal conflicts are on the increase in Abua, particularly in the communities where there are companies. Most community crisis is from land diputes, because the owners of the land where a company is has some benefits in the form of community development funds and promises of labour and security contracts etc. The companies normally negotiate such contracts and benefits with community representatives who are mostly chiefs and Community Development Committee (CDC) members. As a result, some interested candidates resorted to using cultists and thugs to intimidate their opponents. This was the case in Aminigboko (Emughan), Amalem (Central) etc. The companies sometimes fueled the crisis in the community to enable them not to spend huge amount in developing the community but rather they will be settling some groups.

Evaluation of gains and losses of Insecurity in Abua

Having discussed the possible causes of insecurity, it is important to look at the effect of insecurity in Abua. Who gained and lost in the insecurity? Those perpetrators of insecurity in Abua never live in peace and their victims are in pains. Many people have missed opportunities in Abua because of the problem of insecurity in the area. Some of the obvious effects of insecurity in Abua are environmental effect, psychological trauma, economic effect, developmental effect, depopulation, lack of trust, fear, etc. Evaluating the followings would enable one see the effects on the people.

(a) Environmental effect: For a society to be peaceful, it must take place in a setting with variable but certain features such as space, culture, people and infrastructural facilities that makes it unique but similar to environments where people live. Sustainable environment thrives in a healthy environment for people. Generally, nothing goes well in an insecure environment and particularly, environment that is characterized by insecurity would not only threaten effective activities but also by affecting the behavior and interaction of people liable of exacerbating other factors such as the destruction of available facilities etc.

(b) Psychological effect: Generally insecurity and tension often caused emotional, psychological, and mental imbalance. According to Abraham Maslow's theory, after the fulfilment of man's needs for survival, psychological needs such as the desire for peace, the need for a secure and safe life among others is the next most basic category of needs. For example, one will not think of how to effectively impact, learn, or achieve something in a situation where feelings of danger, fears of impending doom or threats to life, and anxiety dominates his or her mind.

Insecurity in Abua has caused psychological trauma among the affected population. Psychologically, insecurity affects the people directly or indirectly through the experience. However, research has proved that psychological effects take their effects on individuals, and society, though it does not affect everyone to an equal degree. According to Agbara, (personal interview 2023) the rate with which insecurity is scaring away both local and

foreign investors poses great dangers for Abua's survival as a people, he states that the effects of insecurity spreads fear that hinders direct economic investment in the area.

(c) Economical effect: Mostly, persistent or serious insecurities and violence often affect people's source of livelihood. This is evident in Abua communities and other local governments where social vices such as armed robbery, kidnapping, banditry, and cult clashes, have caused great destruction, exploitation of economic resources and limitation of economic activities. In some places where there is political violence and politically induced tensions, the need for survival has forced many people to migrate from where they can make earns meet to where they can feel safe first. As a result, it has weaken/crippled the financial strength of most people thereby impoverishing those who should pay for the cost of living and making life luxury, too expensive for some people to afford.

Many businessmen and women have relocated or run away. Many investors who would have loved to invest in the area have resolved not to take the risk of spending a lot of money as they are likely to be killed or visited by these bad boys in the area. These are companies business enterprises that would have helped in the area of unemployment if established in Abua. But because of the insecurity they have moved to other areas.

(d) Developmental effect: Due to insecurity in Abua, there has been no meaningful development in the local government area. The government and the companies even individuals are skeptical about investing in Abua. Because of this problem of insecurity, most of the companies projects have stopped, and the contractors are scared away from Abua, the fear of been kidnapped or even killed is always a concern. In Abua, what one sees is abandoned projects here and there with grasses covering the sites. The Obhom road and the bridge under construction have been abandoned the Emoh-Elok Okpeduen road is abandoned most of the modern primary schools and health centres' contracts awarded in 2013 by Hon Rotimi Amaechi ex-governor of Rivers State have been abandoned. And these

uncompleted buildings have become a hiding places for either kidnappers or armed robbers and also a spot for raping of innocent girls.

(e) Depopulation Effect: Many indigenes and setters in Emughan axis of Abua have relocated. Even in Abua central, many people who never planned of leaving their homes have left and have settled in Ahoada, Elele, Choba, and even some parts of Imbiama because of insecurity. Most business men and women are now in Port Harcourt and Yenegoa (Beyelsa) looking for menial jobs in these areas they have relocated just for survival and to meet up family expectations. Abua land that once had people from different parts of the world, for business, investment etc is now experiencing depopulation.

Conclusion

Insecurity is one of the most direct and serious threat and problem facing Abua land. This unfortunate monster called insecurity which has caused physical destruction of property and losses, deaths untold suffering to humanity, economic loss, unplanned relocations, and the general challenges to social order and polity in society, cannot be underscored. The effect of insecurity on church is not only manifold and threatening, but dynamic in nature. It is important to understand that insecurity within Abua environment, have grievous implications on peoples' life. Having the understanding of the negative effect of insecurity in Abua is more than the mere assumption that simplified and limits it to loss of lives and destruction of facilities will be helpful in guiding us to know who to engage and what to do in the process of remedying the problems.

The problem of insecurity has hindered development in Abua/Odual Local Government Area. It is discovered that young men are the main perpetrators of insecurity in Abua, and because they are armed, people like the elites, the traditional institution in Abua are afraid of them. However, the insecurity did not favour them, rather they live in isolation and hardship without hope of survival, talkless of meaningful future. The menace of insecurity in Abua is an issue of concern to all and sundry. There should be a new orientation and changed attitudes from the citizens traditional practices for a better and more peaceful society. Governments on their part should brace up with the task of securing and protecting the lives and properties of its citizens in Abua and also bring the

sponsors and perpetrators causing violence to speedy justice. This will serve as a deterrent to further escalation of all forms of insecurity in Abua. Any society that wants to curb the menace of insecurity must be proactive in equipping the security agents. When law enforcement agencies are equipped and actively involved, the incidence of crime usually lessens. Unfortunately, it seems the security agents are not capable of handling the problem of insecurity in the land because agents of insecurities (the cultists, armed rubbers, kidnappers etc) use strong and more sophisticated weapons than the ones the police in Abua have. There is the need for the government to equip a special military squad to fight insecurity in Rivers State and Abua in particular. Therefore this paper recommends employing legal and political means to compel the government and its agencies to bring to book those who deploy violence illegitimately to achieve their evil ends. There must be insistence to prosecute and punish offenders, to serve as a deterrent to others, those who choose to perpetrate evil and fear on others should know that their actions have consequences and they must be made to face the consequence of their deeds. The government should create more job opportunities for the youth, this will make them abstain from committing all such crimes, and include moral education in the curriculum of school in the state. It is hope that these suggestions and recommendation would ameliorate the effect of insecurity in Abua.

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