

Governance and Food Insecurity in Nigeria: The Nexus
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Abstract:

The Nigeria's persistent food insecurity paradox despite its vast agricultural potentials, underscores the debilitating effects of bad governance. This study employs the theory of primitive capitalist accumulation to examine the relationship between governance failures and food insecurity in Nigeria. Relying on secondary data from reputable sources, including academic journals, reports from international organizations, and government documents, this research reveals how Nigeria's governance landscape perpetuates food insecurity. The analysis highlights how primitive accumulation manifested through land grabbing, displacement of smallholder farmers, and exploitation of agricultural resources, exacerbates food insecurity. Furthermore, the study identifies corruption, patronage politics, and weak institutional frameworks as key governance failures undermining Nigeria's food security. The findings suggest that addressing food insecurity in Nigeria requires transformative governance reforms that prioritize the interests of smallholder farmers, promote equitable land distribution, and ensure transparency and accountability in agricultural policies.

Keywords: Food insecurity, Bad governance, Primitive capitalist accumulation, Corruption, Insecurity

Introduction

Nigeria is Africa's most populous country, faces serious difficulties in realizing food security for the citizenry. Food insecurity lingers, despite the country's ample natural resources and endowments for agricultural productivity. Governance refers to the systems, processes and institutions through which societies manage their affairs, make decisions and allocate resources to the citizens in the polity. The key dimensions of governance encompass accountability, transparency, rule of law effectiveness, equity and responsiveness. Governance plays crucial role in addressing food insecurity as unsound policies, institutions and leadership can exacerbate the malady. Food insecurity is a significant challenge in Nigeria, and it is adversely affecting 40% of the Country's population (FAO, 2020).

Furthermore, food insecurity is a brainchild of bad governance and corruption, dependence on imported food, limited access to credit and markets for farmers, conflict and insecurity, climate change, inadequate agricultural infrastructure among others. Hence, good governance is instrumental in addressing food insecurity in Nigeria this is because; effective policies, transparency and accountability are inseparable ingredients of good governance which cumulatively ensure food security. This paper therefore, focuses on the nexus between governance and food insecurity in Nigeria, showcasing the interplay and its devastating consequences on the socio-economic life of the country.

Theoretical Underpinning

This work employs Primitive Capitalist Accumulation as its theoretical base. Karl Max (1818 - 1883) opines that capitalist accumulation as a historical process that gave birth to precondition of capitalist development. In the capitalist mode of production, there exist social relations in which a section of population with no other means of livelihood but their labour power to be sold in a labour market and their accumulation of capital. As a basic condition of capitalist development, capital is accumulated through merciless exploitation of labour power of this category of people and expropriation of resources. Based on this perspective, primitive capital accumulation comprises transformation of surplus value created by exploitation of labour and expropriation of resources into capital for the development of capitalism.

Deducing from Max perceptions, Asobie (2012) observes that as a period of transition in history from the era of non-capitalist mode of production to capitalism of a particular society, there was a certain period where the main interest of the ruling class is the generation of capital. "Where the ruling class composes of an alliance of the comprador and the petty bourgeoisie ", extract surplus value by means of exploitation of labour to yield capital, then, "capital formation takes the form of primitive accumulation. Primitive accumulation is a process that leads to extraction of surplus value by means of exploitation of labour to generate more capital for investment by the governing class. Where society is positioned in primitive capital appropriation, that society may witnesses' gross violation of rule of law, societal norms, disparity of income and too much gap between the people and the ruling class.

It can be drawn from the above that ineffective governance which breeds corruption is increasingly a form of primitive capitalist accumulation, but in this regard, it comprises exploitation and plundering of state resources by the governing class together with channeling the resources towards generating capital for self-centered enrichment. By assuming the political position and control of state apparatus, the power to allocate resources to chosen individuals and groups is secured. Possessing the authority to allocate resources and carryout public activities through divergent decision-making, provide the ruling class the room for siphoning public resources blatantly. Hence, corruption is now a multidimensional shackle in Nigeria, provides lucrative returns on investment with political fortune and becomes almost inseparable part of governance in Nigeria which incessantly breeds food insecurity nationwide (Asobie, 2012).

It will not be easy for one to appraise the rise of corrupt activities in Nigeria without grasping why the political office holders engage in corrupt acts. Corruption among public office holders in Nigeria is a complex issue with multiple factors contributing to its persistence. One of the leading reasons is the desire for luxurious living and the greed that comes with it (Iredia, 2010). Many public officials are driven by a passion for wealth and material possessions, which leads them to engage in corrupt practices to achieve their goals. Another significant factor is the weakness of governmental enforcement mechanisms. When institutions responsible for checking corruption are weak or ineffective, it creates an environment where corrupt practices can thrive (Igbinovia, 2003). This lack of accountability enables public officials to engage in corrupt activities with impunity.

Poor standard of living is also a contributing factor to corruption among public office holders in Nigeria. When officials are not adequately compensated or lack access to basic necessities, they may be more tempted to engage in corrupt practices to supplement their income (Ogundiya,

2017). This highlights the need for adequate compensation and benefits for public officials to reduce the temptation of corruption. The modalities of corruption in Nigeria's civil service are also worth noting. Corruption can occur through direct requests, indirect requests, unsolicited requests, or third-party requests (Adebayo, 2015). Understanding these modalities is essential to developing effective strategies to prevent and combat corruption.

The Nexus of Governance and Food Insecurity in Nigeria

Nigeria is the most populous country in Africa with over 200 million people that amount to about 25 per cent of the entire population of sub-Saharan Africa. Nigeria gradually crept into bad governance. Governance plays a role in food insecurity in Nigeria, exaggerating the challenges bedeviling the country. The ineffective governance breeds insecurity which in turn affects food production and distribution, creating a wide gap between domestic demand and supply (Adubi A.O., 2021). Nigeria continues to grapple with food insecurity despite its vast agricultural potential (Ogundipe, 2013). Governance challenges, economic factors, and environmental issues all contribute to this complex problem. Effective governance is critical in addressing food insecurity.

One major governance challenge is the ineffective implementation of agricultural policies. Nigeria's agricultural policies are often poorly implemented, leading to inefficiencies in food production and distribution (Akinyoade et al., 2017). For instance, the government's policy to ban rice importation to boost local production has been hampered by inadequate infrastructure and lack of support for local farmers (Olomola, 2018). As a result, rice remains a staple food that is largely imported, contributing to food insecurity. Another governance challenge is the lack of a robust regulatory framework. Weak regulatory frameworks hinder the development of the agricultural sector, exacerbating food insecurity (Adeyeye, 2019). For example, the lack of effective regulations on the use of pesticides and fertilizers has led to environmental degradation and health risks for farmers and consumers (Babatunde, 2020). Strengthening regulatory frameworks is essential to ensure sustainable agricultural practices and improve food security.

Furthermore, Inadequate funding for agricultural projects and programs is another significant governance challenge. Insufficient funding limits Nigeria's ability to address food insecurity (Ogundipe, 2013). For instance, the government's Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) aimed to boost agricultural production and reduce food imports. However, inadequate funding hindered the program's success, and food insecurity persists (Adebayo, 2018). In addition, climate change is also a critical issue that affects Nigeria's agricultural productivity, leading to crop losses and food shortages (Okoro, 2020). Rising temperatures, changing rainfall patterns, and increased frequency of extreme weather events all impact agricultural production. For example, the 2012 floods in Nigeria destroyed crops and livestock, leading to food shortages and increased poverty (Adebayo, 2018).

Again, conflict and insecurity in some regions also hinder agricultural activities and food distribution. The Boko Haram insurgency in northeastern Nigeria has displaced millions of people, destroyed agricultural infrastructure, and disrupted food supplies (Ogundipe, 2013). As a result, food insecurity is widespread in the region, with many people relying on humanitarian assistance to survive. Moreover, poverty is a significant economic factor contributing to food insecurity in Nigeria. With a poverty rate of over 40%, many Nigerians cannot afford nutritious food (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). The high cost of food, combined with low incomes,

makes it difficult for people to access adequate food, leading to malnutrition and related health problems.

Economic downturns also exacerbate food insecurity in Nigeria. The 2016 recession triggered by a decline in oil prices, worsened food insecurity in the country (Adebayo, 2018). As the economy contracted, food prices increased, making it even more difficult for people to access nutritious food. Trade barriers also limit Nigeria's access to international markets, reducing food availability and increasing prices (Ogundipe, 2013). For example, the European Union's ban on Nigerian bean exports due to high pesticide residues has reduced Nigeria's ability to export food products, exacerbating food insecurity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, governance challenges, economic factors, and environmental issues all contribute to food insecurity in Nigeria. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes effective policy implementation, robust regulatory frameworks, adequate funding, and climate-resilient agricultural practices. By tackling these issues, Nigeria can improve food security, reduce poverty, and promote sustainable agricultural development.

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