

HUMAN SECURITY AND TERRORISM IN SOUTH-SOUTH NIGERIA**Eze Promise Vivian**

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Abstract

This study examined Human Security and Terrorism in South-South Nigeria. The study was guided by three research questions, which focused on the major forms and dimensions of human insecurity associated with terrorism, the factors contributing to terrorism and related violent insecurity, and the effectiveness of government and community-based measures in addressing terrorism and improving human security in the region. The study adopted a qualitative documentary research design and relied entirely on secondary sources of data, including peer-reviewed journal articles, books, government publications, reports of international organizations, and other relevant scholarly and documentary materials. The data were analyzed thematically in line with the research questions, while the study was anchored on Galtung's Structural Violence Theory. The findings revealed that terrorism and related violent insecurity constitute significant threats to human security in South-South Nigeria. The major dimensions affected include personal, economic, food, health, environmental, community and political security. The study further found that poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, resource-related grievances, perceived political marginalization, weak governance, organized criminal activities and limited socioeconomic opportunities contribute to the broader environment of violent insecurity. The findings also showed that government security operations, development interventions, disarmament and reintegration programmes, and community-based initiatives have achieved some positive outcomes but remain only partially effective in addressing the underlying causes and consequences of insecurity. The study concludes that terrorism in South-South Nigeria is not merely a conventional security problem but a multidimensional human-security challenge requiring both immediate protection and long-term preventive interventions. The study recommends an integrated human-security approach that combines effective security operations with youth empowerment, employment creation, environmental protection, good governance, community participation and sustainable peacebuilding.

Keywords

*Human Security,
Terrorism,
Violent Insecurity,
Structural Violence,
Peacebuilding,
South-South Nigeria.*

1. Introduction

Security has traditionally been understood from the perspective of the state, with emphasis placed on the protection of national territory, sovereignty, political institutions and citizens against external aggression and internal threats. Within this traditional conception, the state is regarded as the primary referent object of security, while military capacity and law-enforcement institutions constitute the major instruments for maintaining security. However, the changing nature of conflict and insecurity across the world has increasingly challenged this state-centred understanding. Contemporary threats often affect individuals and communities directly through violence, poverty, displacement, environmental degradation, unemployment, disease, food insecurity and political exclusion. Consequently, the concept of human security has emerged as an alternative framework for understanding security from the perspective of the safety and well-being of people.

The modern human security approach was prominently articulated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its Human Development Report 1994. The report shifted the focus of security from territories to people and from military capabilities to human development. Human security therefore emphasizes

the protection of individuals from serious and widespread threats to their lives, livelihoods and dignity (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 1994). The approach recognizes that people can experience insecurity even when the state itself is not facing conventional military attack. Thus, security involves more than protecting national borders; it includes creating conditions in which individuals can live safely, access basic necessities and participate meaningfully in social and political life.

The UNDP (1994) conceptualized human security around seven major dimensions: economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security and political security. These dimensions demonstrate the multidimensional character of human security. Economic insecurity may arise from unemployment, poverty and loss of livelihoods; food insecurity may result from inadequate access to food; health insecurity may be associated with disease and inadequate healthcare; environmental insecurity may result from pollution and ecological degradation; while personal security concerns protection from physical violence and other threats. Community and political security, on the other hand, involve protection of cultural identity, social relationships, political participation and fundamental rights. The relevance of human security has become particularly evident in societies experiencing terrorism and other forms of violent conflict. Terrorism represents a serious threat to human security because its consequences extend beyond the immediate victims of violent incidents. Terrorist violence can produce fear, displacement, destruction of property, disruption of economic activities, interruption of education and healthcare, and weakening of social relationships. Iorliam et al. (2021), in their examination of terrorism in Nigeria, observe that terrorist activities have affected peace, development and economic activities and have implications for investment and national development. Their analysis of terrorist incidents in Nigeria demonstrates the broader consequences of terrorism for society beyond the immediate occurrence of individual attacks.

Nigeria has experienced different forms of terrorism and violent insecurity over the past several decades. Terrorism has been particularly associated with extremist insurgencies in the North-East, especially Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP). However, Nigeria's security environment is more complex than terrorism alone. Different regions of the country experience distinct combinations of kidnapping, communal violence, organized criminality, separatist-related violence, militancy, resource conflicts and other forms of insecurity. This distinction is important because not every violent or criminal act constitutes terrorism. Nevertheless, these forms of violence may have similar implications for human security by threatening people's lives, livelihoods, freedom of movement and access to basic services. Within this broader Nigerian security environment, the South-South geopolitical zone occupies an important position. The zone comprises Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers States. The region is strategically significant because it contains a substantial proportion of Nigeria's oil and gas resources and includes the Niger Delta, which has historically been central to the country's petroleum economy. Despite its economic importance, however, sections of the region have experienced persistent socioeconomic, environmental and security challenges. These include poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, resource conflicts, militancy, kidnapping, piracy, oil theft and communal tensions.

The relationship between human insecurity and violence is particularly evident in the Niger Delta. For many years, oil-producing communities have raised concerns about environmental pollution, inadequate development, loss of traditional livelihoods and perceived exclusion from the benefits generated by petroleum resources. Ajala (2016) argues that the human security situation in the Niger Delta was closely connected to the emergence of violent conflicts involving communities, militant groups, government and multinational oil corporations. In particular, environmental pollution affected access to traditional livelihoods and contributed to conditions associated with conflict and militancy. Environmental insecurity constitutes an important component of human security in South-South Nigeria because many rural communities depend upon land, rivers, creeks, forests and other natural resources for their livelihoods. Farming and fishing, for example, remain important sources of food and income for many communities. Environmental degradation can therefore have consequences extending beyond ecological damage. When pollution or other environmental problems reduce agricultural and fishing productivity, households may experience declining income and food insecurity. These conditions can contribute to social dissatisfaction and vulnerability.

The history of militancy in the Niger Delta further demonstrates the connection between human security and violent conflict. Before the 2009 amnesty programme, the region experienced widespread confrontation involving militant groups, government security forces, oil companies and local communities. Ajala (2016) associates the emergence of violence with poor human security conditions and grievances arising from environmental degradation, resource governance and livelihood disruption. The amnesty programme subsequently contributed to a reduction in large-scale militant violence, although it did not eliminate the underlying socioeconomic and environmental challenges facing many communities. The distinction between militancy and terrorism is particularly important in studying South-South Nigeria. Militancy in the Niger Delta

has historically been associated with political, socioeconomic and resource-related grievances, whereas terrorism generally involves the deliberate use or threat of violence to generate fear and advance political, ideological or other objectives. Therefore, the existence of militant activity in the Niger Delta should not automatically be interpreted as evidence of terrorism. Instead, the two phenomena should be examined according to their motivations, organizational characteristics, targets and methods. At the same time, both can undermine human security by exposing populations to violence and insecurity.

Studies of security in the South-South region have identified kidnapping, piracy and the Niger Delta crisis among the major security challenges affecting the zone. Asanebi et al. (2021), for example, identify kidnapping, sea piracy and the Niger Delta crisis among the security problems experienced in the South-South geopolitical zone. These threats have implications for personal and economic security because they can restrict freedom of movement, disrupt businesses, increase insecurity in waterways and communities, and create fear among residents. Kidnapping is particularly significant from a human security perspective because it directly threatens personal security and can affect families and communities economically and socially. Fear of abduction may influence people's movement, occupation, business activities and participation in community life. In areas where insecurity persists, residents may avoid certain locations or economic activities, while businesses may face additional costs associated with security. Thus, violent insecurity can undermine both personal security and economic security simultaneously. Terrorism and other forms of violent insecurity may also affect community security. Communities are sustained by social relationships, shared institutions, cultural practices and collective identities. Persistent violence can weaken these relationships by creating mistrust, displacement and fear. Where communities experience repeated attacks or threats, residents may relocate, traditional economic activities may decline and community institutions may become less effective. In this respect, human security provides a useful framework for examining not only the direct physical consequences of violence but also its broader effects on social cohesion.

Political security is another important dimension of the problem. Human security requires people to enjoy fundamental rights and participate in political processes without fear of violence or coercion. Where violent insecurity persists, citizens may become less willing to participate in community or political activities. At the same time, perceived government inability to provide adequate protection can weaken public confidence in state institutions. This creates a difficult relationship between security and governance because effective security requires public cooperation, while public cooperation depends partly on citizens' confidence in government institutions. Economic security is similarly affected by terrorism and related forms of insecurity. Violent conflict can disrupt markets, transportation, investment, employment and local businesses. Iorliam et al. (2021) note that terrorism has had negative implications for Nigeria's economic growth and foreign investment.

In the South-South, where the economy is strongly connected to petroleum activities, agriculture, fishing, transportation and commerce, insecurity can have consequences across multiple sectors. The disruption of economic activity can subsequently worsen unemployment and poverty, potentially creating further conditions of human insecurity. The environmental dimension of human security is particularly important in South-South Nigeria. The Niger Delta's extensive network of rivers, creeks, wetlands and coastal environments supports numerous communities. However, environmental degradation associated with oil-related activities has historically generated concerns about pollution and loss of livelihoods. Ajala (2016) demonstrates the connection between environmental conditions, resource governance and conflict in the Niger Delta. Consequently, environmental protection should be regarded not merely as an ecological concern but as an important component of security and conflict prevention.

Another important issue is the relationship between poverty, unemployment and vulnerability to violent activities. Poverty does not automatically cause terrorism or criminality, and it would be inappropriate to assume that economically disadvantaged individuals will necessarily engage in violence. However, socioeconomic exclusion, lack of opportunities, perceived injustice and weak social institutions can create conditions in which violent groups may find recruitment, support or tolerance. Human security therefore encourages attention to development and social protection alongside conventional security measures. The South-South region also illustrates the interconnected nature of security threats. Environmental degradation can affect livelihoods; declining livelihoods can contribute to poverty; poverty and unemployment can increase vulnerability; insecurity can discourage investment; and declining economic opportunities can further deepen social problems. In this sense, human insecurity is often produced by several interconnected factors rather than a single threat. The human security framework is therefore useful because it encourages researchers and policymakers to examine these relationships holistically rather than treating terrorism exclusively as a military or law-enforcement problem.

Contemporary developments in Nigeria further demonstrate the importance of distinguishing between different

forms of violent insecurity while recognizing their shared human consequences. Terrorism remains a major national security concern, but kidnapping, organized criminality, communal violence, militancy and resource-related conflicts also affect people's everyday security. Consequently, the South-South region should be examined within the broader national security environment while recognizing its distinctive historical, environmental and socioeconomic characteristics.

2. Statement of the Problem

Security remains one of the fundamental responsibilities of the state because the protection of human life, property, livelihoods and fundamental rights is essential for sustainable development. Traditionally, security has been conceptualized primarily in terms of the protection of the state, its territorial integrity and political institutions. However, contemporary security threats have demonstrated that the security of the state does not necessarily translate into the security of individuals and communities. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) therefore introduced a broader human security perspective that places people at the centre of security analysis. Human security is concerned with the protection of individuals from serious threats to their survival, livelihood and dignity and encompasses economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political dimensions (UNDP, 1994). The UNDP's assessment of Nigeria similarly emphasizes that human development and human security are closely interconnected, with insecurity representing risks and threats that can undermine people's opportunities and well-being (UNDP, 2016). Despite the importance of human security, Nigeria continues to experience diverse forms of insecurity that threaten the safety and welfare of its population. Terrorism has become one of the most significant security challenges confronting the country. Research indicates that terrorist activities in Nigeria have generated substantial consequences for peace, economic development and investment (Iorliam et al., 2021).

The consequences of terrorism extend beyond deaths and physical destruction to include fear, displacement, disruption of livelihoods, deterioration of social relationships and reduced confidence in government institutions. Thus, terrorism constitutes not merely a conventional national-security problem but also a significant human-security problem. Although terrorism in Nigeria has historically been associated particularly with the North-East, the security environment of the country cannot be understood exclusively from the perspective of one geopolitical region. Different parts of Nigeria have experienced different combinations of terrorism, kidnapping, militancy, communal violence, piracy, organized criminality and resource-related conflicts. Research examining national security in the North-East and South-South identified kidnapping, sea piracy and the Niger Delta crisis among the major security challenges affecting the South-South geopolitical zone (Asanebi et al., 2021). This raises an important problem concerning the extent to which these different forms of insecurity interact with and undermine human security in the region.

The South-South geopolitical zone, comprising Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers States, occupies a particularly strategic position in Nigeria because of its natural resources, waterways, oil and gas infrastructure, commercial activities and coastal environment. However, the region has historically experienced significant security and development challenges. The Niger Delta, which constitutes an important part of the South-South, has experienced environmental degradation, poverty, unemployment, inadequate infrastructure, resource-related grievances and violent conflict. Ajala (2016) found that poor human-security conditions in the Niger Delta were closely associated with conflicts involving communities, government, multinational oil corporations and militant groups. In particular, pollution and the resulting disruption of traditional livelihoods contributed to conditions associated with violent conflict.

A major problem, therefore, is that the economic importance of the South-South region has not necessarily translated into comprehensive human security for all its inhabitants. The region's natural-resource wealth exists alongside significant socioeconomic and environmental vulnerabilities. Communities dependent on farming, fishing and other natural-resource-based activities can be particularly affected when environmental degradation undermines their livelihoods. The resulting economic insecurity may contribute to dissatisfaction, social tension and vulnerability to violent mobilization. Recent research continues to identify the relationship between oil exploitation, poverty, marginalization, environmental degradation, militancy and security challenges in the Niger Delta (Esiere, 2026). Another major problem is the historical and continuing challenge of militancy in the Niger Delta. Before the 2009 amnesty programme, the region witnessed widespread violent conflict involving militant organizations, government security agencies, oil companies and local communities. Although the amnesty programme reduced the intensity of large-scale militant activities, it did not completely remove the socioeconomic and environmental conditions associated with insecurity. Ajala (2016) argues that the amnesty programme produced mixed results because several underlying human-security issues remained unresolved. Similarly, research on militant terrorism in the Delta region has identified underdevelopment, poverty, marginalization, environmental pollution, limited educational opportunities and problems associated with implementation of the amnesty programme among factors associated with militancy (Brisibe, 2018). There is

also a conceptual problem in the way violent insecurity in the South-South is sometimes described. Terrorism, militancy, kidnapping, piracy, communal conflict and oil-related criminality are not necessarily the same phenomenon. Treating all violent activities as terrorism can obscure important differences in their causes, objectives, organization and consequences. Sampson's (2009) examination of Niger Delta militancy specifically highlights the difficulty involved in applying the concept of terrorism to militant activities in the region. Therefore, there is a need for careful investigation of terrorism as a distinct phenomenon while also examining its relationship with the broader insecurity environment of South-South Nigeria.

The problem becomes more important when terrorism and related violence are examined from a human-security perspective. Violent insecurity can threaten personal security by exposing individuals to violence and fear; economic security by disrupting businesses, employment and livelihoods; food security by restricting access to farms, fishing grounds and markets; and health security by disrupting access to healthcare and creating conditions that increase vulnerability. It can also undermine community security through displacement and weakened social cohesion and political security through reduced trust in government institutions and restrictions on civic participation. The multidimensional nature of human security means that the effects of terrorism cannot be adequately assessed merely by counting attacks or casualties. Furthermore, insecurity can produce a cycle in which violence and underdevelopment reinforce one another. Terrorism and other violent activities may discourage investment and economic activity, while poverty, unemployment and inadequate development can increase people's vulnerability to insecurity. The resulting deterioration in livelihoods may further weaken community resilience. The UNDP (2022) emphasizes that contemporary human-security threats are increasingly interconnected and that insecurity can persist when responses focus on individual threats without addressing the wider conditions that make people vulnerable.

A further problem concerns the adequacy of existing responses to insecurity. Conventional responses tend to emphasize policing, military operations, surveillance, arrests and other security measures. Such measures may be necessary for protecting communities from immediate threats, but a purely security-oriented approach may not adequately address the socioeconomic, environmental and governance conditions that contribute to long-term insecurity. The Niger Delta experience demonstrates that security interventions may have limited sustainability when underlying grievances concerning livelihoods, environmental degradation, marginalization and development remain unresolved (Ajala, 2016). There is also concern about the impact of insecurity on public confidence in government and security institutions. Where individuals repeatedly experience violence, kidnapping, economic disruption or environmental insecurity, they may perceive formal institutions as incapable of protecting their lives and livelihoods. Such perceptions can weaken cooperation between communities and government security institutions and may encourage dependence on informal mechanisms of protection. The erosion of trust is itself a human-security concern because effective security depends partly on cooperation between citizens, communities and state institutions.

Consequently, the central problem of this study is that terrorism and related forms of violent insecurity continue to pose potential threats to the multidimensional human security of people in South-South Nigeria, while the relationship between terrorism, socioeconomic vulnerability, environmental insecurity, livelihoods, community safety and institutional responses remains insufficiently understood within a regional human-security framework. Existing studies have examined terrorism in Nigeria generally, while other studies have focused on militancy, oil conflicts or national security in the Niger Delta. However, there remains a need for an integrated examination that places human security at the centre of the analysis and specifically considers how terrorism and associated insecurity affect the lives and well-being of people in the South-South geopolitical zone. The problem is therefore not simply whether terrorist or violent incidents occur in South-South Nigeria. Rather, it concerns what these threats mean for the everyday security and well-being of the population. It raises questions about whether individuals feel safe in their communities, whether their livelihoods are protected, whether economic and environmental conditions increase vulnerability to violence, whether existing government interventions adequately protect human security, and whether communities possess sufficient resilience to withstand insecurity.

It is against this background that the study seeks to examine Human Security and Terrorism in South-South Nigeria. The study is expected to provide a broader understanding of the relationship between violent insecurity and human well-being and to contribute to policy discussions on approaches that combine appropriate security measures with socioeconomic development, environmental protection, effective governance, community participation and sustainable peacebuilding.

Based on the statement of the problem, the study was guided by the following research questions:

What are the major forms and dimensions of human insecurity associated with terrorism in South-South Nigeria?

What are the major factors contributing to terrorism and related violent insecurity in South-South Nigeria?
How effective are the existing government and community-based measures in addressing terrorism and improving human security in South-South Nigeria?

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of the study is to examine the relationship between human security and terrorism in South-South Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to:

Examine the major forms and dimensions of human insecurity associated with terrorism in South-South Nigeria.
Identify and examine the major factors contributing to terrorism and related violent insecurity in South-South Nigeria.

Assess the effectiveness of existing government and community-based measures in addressing terrorism and improving human security in South-South Nigeria.

Scope of the Study

The study focuses on Human Security and Terrorism in South-South Nigeria, focusing on the six states of Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo and Rivers. It examines the dimensions of human security affected by terrorism, factors associated with terrorism and violent insecurity, and the effectiveness of government and community-based measures for improving human security. The study is therefore situated at the intersection of security studies, sociology, peace and conflict studies, and human development, with the human person and community placed at the centre of the analysis.

3. Review of Related Literature

Concept of Human Security

Human security is a people-centred approach to understanding security that emphasizes the protection of individuals and communities from serious threats to their survival, livelihoods and dignity. Unlike the traditional conception of security, which largely focuses on protecting the state, its territory and sovereignty from external or internal aggression, human security places the individual at the centre of security analysis. The concept gained international prominence following the publication of the Human Development Report 1994 by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1994). The report argued that security should be understood in terms of the security of people rather than simply the security of nations. (hdr.undp.org)

The concept of human security emerged partly as a response to the limitations of the traditional state-centric understanding of security. Traditionally, national security was primarily associated with military strength, territorial integrity, national sovereignty and protection against external aggression. However, the end of the Cold War and the emergence of new forms of conflict drew attention to threats that could affect individuals without necessarily constituting conventional military attacks against states. These threats include poverty, hunger, disease, environmental degradation, political repression, organized violence, terrorism, displacement and unemployment (UNDP, 1994).

The UNDP (1994) defines human security broadly around the idea of freedom from fear and freedom from want. This means that people should be protected from physical violence and serious threats while also having access to the basic conditions necessary for a decent and dignified life. Human security therefore links security with human development. A society cannot be considered genuinely secure if its people are exposed to violence, extreme poverty, hunger, disease or environmental destruction. Human security has subsequently developed beyond its original formulation. The United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security (2016) emphasizes that human security is concerned with protecting and empowering people and communities facing complex and interconnected threats. The approach therefore recognizes that contemporary threats rarely occur independently. Poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, conflict and political instability may reinforce one another and produce conditions of persistent insecurity. (un.org)

Dimensions of Human Security

The UNDP (1994) identifies seven major dimensions of human security. These dimensions provide a comprehensive framework for examining the security and well-being of individuals.

Economic Security

Economic security refers to people's ability to maintain a reliable source of income and livelihood. It includes protection against unemployment, extreme poverty and sudden loss of income. Individuals who lack stable employment or livelihood opportunities may experience significant insecurity because they may be unable to meet basic needs such as food, housing, education and healthcare. In the context of South-South Nigeria, economic insecurity may be associated with unemployment, poverty, disruption of businesses and destruction of livelihoods arising from violent conflict and other security challenges.

Food Security

Food security concerns people's continuous access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food. The UNDP (1994) recognizes hunger and inadequate access to food as significant threats to human security. Conflict and terrorism can threaten food security by preventing farmers from accessing agricultural land, disrupting markets and transportation, damaging food-producing infrastructure and displacing communities. In rural communities, insecurity can therefore have direct consequences for agricultural production and household welfare.

Health Security

Health security involves protection from diseases and access to adequate healthcare. It includes protection from infectious diseases, inadequate medical services, malnutrition and other health-related threats. Violent conflict can undermine health security by destroying health facilities, displacing healthcare workers, restricting access to medical services and increasing vulnerability among affected populations. Thus, health security is an important component of human security because individuals cannot enjoy meaningful security when their health and access to essential healthcare are seriously compromised.

Environmental Security

Environmental security concerns protection from environmental degradation and threats to the natural environment on which human survival depends. Environmental pollution, climate-related hazards, deforestation, water contamination and loss of biodiversity can threaten people's health and livelihoods. This dimension is particularly relevant to South-South Nigeria, especially the Niger Delta, where environmental degradation associated with oil exploration has affected land, water resources and traditional livelihoods. Aduloju and Okwechime (2016) argue that environmental and socioeconomic challenges associated with oil exploitation constitute important human-security concerns in the Niger Delta.

Personal Security

Personal security refers to protection from physical violence and threats to individual safety. It encompasses protection from terrorism, kidnapping, armed robbery, communal violence, domestic violence, political violence and other forms of physical harm. This dimension is especially relevant to the present study because terrorism represents a direct threat to personal security. Terrorist attacks can create fear, cause deaths and injuries, destroy property and restrict people's freedom of movement.

Community Security

Community security involves the protection of individuals' cultural identity, social relationships and participation in community life. Human beings derive a sense of security from belonging to families, communities, ethnic groups and other social organizations. Violent conflict can weaken community security through displacement, destruction of social institutions, intergroup tension and disruption of traditional relationships. In South-South Nigeria, persistent insecurity can affect relationships between communities, government institutions, oil companies and security agencies.

Political Security

Political security involves protection of people's fundamental rights and freedoms and their ability to participate in political and social processes. It includes protection from political repression, arbitrary treatment, discrimination and violations of human rights. Terrorism and counter-terrorism measures can both have implications for political security when they affect freedom of movement, civic participation or other fundamental rights. Effective human security therefore requires that security measures themselves respect human rights and the rule of law.

Human Security and Freedom from Fear

One of the central components of human security is freedom from fear. This emphasizes protection from physical violence, armed conflict, terrorism, kidnapping and other threats to personal safety. Terrorism is particularly relevant because it can generate fear among populations beyond those directly affected by attacks. The objective of terrorist violence may include creating widespread fear and insecurity, making terrorism both a physical and psychological threat. For the South-South region, freedom from fear is important because communities have experienced different forms of violent insecurity, including militancy, kidnapping, piracy, communal conflicts and criminal violence. Although these phenomena should not automatically be classified as terrorism, they can have comparable effects on human security by creating fear and disrupting people's everyday activities.

Human Security and Freedom from Want

The second major principle is freedom from want, which emphasizes protection from severe deprivation and ensuring access to basic necessities. Human security therefore recognizes that violence is not the only source of insecurity. Poverty, hunger, unemployment, inadequate healthcare and poor living conditions can also

undermine people's security (UNDP, 1994). This perspective is particularly relevant to developing societies where socioeconomic deprivation can coexist with natural-resource wealth. In the Niger Delta, for instance, oil-producing communities may experience environmental degradation and livelihood challenges despite the economic importance of petroleum resources. Aduloju and Okwechime (2016) argue that poverty, unemployment, food insecurity and environmental problems are among the human-security concerns associated with the Niger Delta.

Human Security and Human Development

Human security and human development are closely related but are not identical concepts. Human development focuses broadly on expanding people's choices, capabilities and opportunities, whereas human security focuses on protecting individuals from serious and pervasive threats to those opportunities and capabilities. According to the UNDP (1994), development without security can be undermined by violence and instability, while security without development may fail to address the conditions that make people vulnerable. A society may therefore experience economic growth while its population remains insecure if people continue to face violence, environmental destruction, hunger or political repression.

Concept of Terrorism

Terrorism is a complex and contested concept that has attracted considerable attention in the fields of sociology, political science, criminology, international relations, peace and conflict studies, and security studies. The concept is difficult to define universally because states, international organizations and scholars have sometimes emphasized different elements, including the nature of violence, the identity of victims, the motives of perpetrators, the intended psychological effect, and the political or ideological objectives pursued. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) notes that there is still no single comprehensive definition of terrorism contained in a universal United Nations treaty, although international conventions and Security Council resolutions provide important elements for understanding and criminalizing terrorist conduct.

In general terms, terrorism refers to the deliberate use or threat of violence, or other serious criminal acts, intended to create fear, intimidate a population, or compel a government or organization to act or refrain from acting in a particular way. A major distinguishing characteristic is that the immediate physical act may be intended to produce a broader psychological or political effect. Thus, terrorism is not simply violence; it is violence or the threat of violence employed for a particular purpose and designed to influence a wider audience. The United Nations Security Council, through Resolution 1566 (2004), described terrorist acts in terms of criminal acts, including those against civilians, intended to cause death or serious bodily injury or to take hostages, with the purpose of provoking a state of terror, intimidating a population, or compelling a government or international organization to undertake or refrain from undertaking an action. UNODC identifies this resolution as an important international reference point for understanding terrorism. The United Nations also recognizes terrorism as a major threat to international peace and security. It emphasizes that terrorist violence can undermine peace, justice, human dignity and social stability.

Terrorism is commonly understood as a form of political violence because terrorist acts are frequently connected to attempts to influence political authority, government policy or social arrangements. Terrorist organizations or individuals may seek political, ideological, religious, ethnic, separatist or other objectives. The violence is therefore intended not merely to cause immediate physical harm but also to communicate a message or generate pressure. From a sociological perspective, terrorism can be understood as a form of collective violence in which perpetrators attempt to alter relationships between groups, institutions and authorities through fear and coercion. The targets may include government institutions, security personnel, public places, infrastructure or civilians. The selection of targets often reflects the broader objective of generating psychological and political effects.

Terrorism has become an important national security concern in Nigeria, particularly because of the activities of Boko Haram and Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP), especially in the North-East. Research by Iorliam et al. (2021) found that terrorism has had significant consequences for peace, economic activities, development and investment in Nigeria. Their study examined terrorist incidents in Nigeria over several decades and demonstrated the extensive nature of the problem. Nigeria's experience also demonstrates that terrorism should be understood within a broader security environment involving different forms of violence and criminality. These may include kidnapping, communal violence, militancy, separatist-related violence and organized criminal activity. However, these phenomena should not automatically be classified as terrorism because their motivations, structures and objectives can differ.

Terrorism and Fear

Fear is one of the central characteristics of terrorism. Unlike ordinary acts of violence whose consequences may be restricted primarily to the direct victims, terrorism seeks to produce effects beyond the immediate victims. The wider population may become fearful of travelling, attending public gatherings, conducting businesses or

participating in normal social activities. Consequently, terrorism can produce what may be described as a psychological environment of insecurity. Even when terrorist incidents are geographically limited their effects can spread through news reports, social media and community networks. The resulting fear can affect social cohesion, economic activities and people's confidence in government institutions.

Terrorism and Ideology

Ideology is another important concept in understanding terrorism. Terrorist activities may be associated with different ideological orientations, including political extremism, religious extremism, ethno-nationalism or separatism. However, ideology alone does not adequately explain terrorism. Social, political, economic and organizational factors may also influence the emergence and persistence of terrorist movements. It is therefore important not to associate terrorism exclusively with any particular religion, ethnicity or political group. Terrorism is a method of using violence or threats for particular objectives, and it has occurred in different historical, geographical and ideological.

Terrorism and Insurgency

Terrorism and insurgency are related but distinct concepts. Insurgency generally involves organized efforts to challenge or weaken an established government or authority, often through sustained political and armed struggle. Terrorism, by contrast, emphasizes the deliberate creation of fear through violence or threats to achieve political, ideological or other objectives. An insurgent organization may use terrorist tactics, but not every insurgency should automatically be described as terrorism. Similarly, an act of terrorism does not necessarily constitute a full-scale insurgency. This distinction is important for academic research because the two concepts have different analytical meanings and may require different approaches to understanding their causes and consequences.

Human Security and Terrorism

Human security and terrorism are closely related concepts because terrorism represents a direct and multidimensional threat to the security and well-being of individuals and communities. While traditional security approaches tend to emphasize the protection of the state, its territory and institutions, human security shifts attention to the protection of people from serious threats to their survival, livelihoods and dignity. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1994) was particularly influential in advancing this people-centred conception of security, emphasizing that security should be understood in terms of people rather than territories and development rather than arms.

Human security provides a useful framework for understanding the consequences of terrorism because terrorism affects several dimensions of security simultaneously. At the most immediate level, terrorism threatens personal security through violence and fear. However, its effects may extend to economic, food, health, community, environmental and political security. For example, a terrorist attack can result in deaths and injuries, destroy businesses and infrastructure, displace households, interrupt education and healthcare, reduce investment and weaken community relationships. Consequently, the impact of terrorism should not be measured only by the number of attacks or casualties. Its broader consequences for people's livelihoods, dignity and social well-being should also be examined. The UNDP (2022) further emphasizes that contemporary human-security threats are increasingly interconnected. It argues that threats such as conflict, economic insecurity, health crises, environmental pressures and social instability can interact and produce complex patterns of insecurity. This perspective is particularly relevant to Nigeria, where terrorism and other forms of violent insecurity frequently intersect with poverty, unemployment, displacement and weak socioeconomic conditions. (hdr.undp.org)

The most direct relationship between the two concepts is that terrorism constitutes a major threat to human security. Terrorist violence can threaten people's lives, physical safety, property, livelihoods and freedom of movement. The United Nations recognizes terrorism as a major threat to international peace and security and notes that it can undermine human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy and human dignity. From a human-security perspective, therefore, terrorism should not be assessed only by the number of attacks or casualties. Its broader consequences for individuals, families and communities must also be considered. A terrorist incident may produce fear and displacement, interrupt economic activities, disrupt education and healthcare, and weaken community relationships.

Ajala (2016) argues that human security in the Niger Delta is closely connected to resource governance, community structures and conflict. Environmental degradation and disruption of livelihoods can contribute to grievances and conflict, demonstrating the importance of examining security from the perspective of affected communities rather than focusing exclusively on state institutions. Human security therefore provides a broader perspective for understanding terrorism and other violent threats in the South-South region. Rather than concentrating solely on military operations and the protection of government infrastructure, it asks whether ordinary people are safe, whether they can maintain their livelihoods, whether they have access to food and

healthcare, whether their environment is protected and whether they can participate freely in community and political activities.

4. Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the Structural Violence Theory. The Structural Violence Theory was developed by Norwegian sociologist and peace scholar Johan Galtung. Galtung introduced the concept prominently in his influential article *Violence, Peace, and Peace Research*, published in 1969. The theory challenges the narrow understanding of violence as only direct physical harm. Galtung (1969) argued that violence can also be embedded in social structures that systematically prevent individuals or groups from achieving their full potential. Structural violence therefore refers to situations in which social, political and economic arrangements produce unequal access to resources, opportunities, rights and basic needs. Unlike direct violence, structural violence may not have an immediately identifiable perpetrator. It can be reflected in persistent poverty, inequality, discrimination, political exclusion, unemployment, inadequate healthcare, poor educational opportunities and unequal distribution of resources (Galtung, 1969).

Galtung's approach is particularly important to peace and conflict studies because it expands the meaning of peace. The absence of direct physical violence alone does not necessarily constitute genuine peace. A society may experience relatively little open violence while structural inequalities continue to deprive some groups of opportunities and basic necessities. Galtung consequently distinguished between negative peace, understood broadly as the absence or reduction of direct violence, and positive peace, which involves addressing the underlying structures and relationships that produce injustice and insecurity.

The theory is based on several important assumptions. First, violence is broader than physical violence. Violence can occur when social structures prevent people from meeting basic needs or realizing their capabilities. Second, inequality can produce insecurity. Where access to economic opportunities, political participation, education, healthcare or natural resources is highly unequal, affected groups may experience persistent insecurity. Third, direct and structural violence can be interconnected. Structural conditions can create grievances and tensions that contribute to direct conflict, while direct violence can subsequently deepen existing inequalities. Fourth, peace requires more than the cessation of attacks. Sustainable peace requires addressing the underlying conditions that generate exclusion, deprivation and grievances. Finally, human needs are central to peace and security. Where fundamental needs remain systematically unmet, the possibility of conflict and instability may increase.

The theory has a strong connection with the concept of human security. Human security focuses on protecting people from serious threats to their survival, livelihoods and dignity, including economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community and political insecurity (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 1994). Structural violence helps explain why people may remain insecure even when there is no active armed conflict. For example, persistent unemployment may produce economic insecurity; inadequate healthcare may produce health insecurity; environmental degradation may threaten livelihoods; and political exclusion may undermine political security.

The theory provides an important explanation for examining terrorism because it encourages researchers to look beyond the immediate violent act and investigate the underlying social conditions surrounding conflict. Terrorism itself constitutes direct violence because it involves deliberate acts or threats intended to cause fear and achieve particular objectives. However, structural violence theory asks an additional question: What social, political and economic conditions exist within the environment in which violent movements emerge or gain support? This does not mean that poverty or inequality automatically causes terrorism. Such a conclusion would be too simplistic. Rather, structural violence theory suggests that persistent exclusion, deprivation, perceived injustice and lack of opportunities may contribute to grievances and vulnerabilities that violent actors can exploit.

Research on terrorism in Nigeria demonstrates that terrorist activities have generated significant consequences for economic development, investment and social stability (Iorliam et al., 2021). The theory therefore provides a useful basis for examining terrorism as both a form of direct violence and a phenomenon that may interact with broader structural conditions.

Structural Violence Theory is relevant to the present study in several ways.

First, it provides an explanation for the relationship between human insecurity and violent conflict. It helps the researcher examine how socioeconomic and political conditions can affect people's vulnerability to insecurity. Second, it enables the researcher to examine terrorism within its broader social context rather than treating terrorist incidents as isolated events. Third, the theory complements the human-security approach by explaining how deprivation and inequality can undermine people's survival, livelihoods and dignity. Fourth, it helps explain

why the absence of terrorist attacks alone may not constitute genuine security. Communities may remain insecure because of poverty, environmental degradation, unemployment or political exclusion. Fifth, the theory supports a preventive approach to peacebuilding. Addressing structural inequalities and unmet human needs can contribute to more sustainable peace.

The theory therefore supports the argument that sustainable security in South-South Nigeria requires not only protection from direct violence but also the promotion of positive peace through equitable development, environmental protection, good governance, social inclusion and the satisfaction of fundamental human needs.

Review of Empirical Studies

Nnam, Ugwuoke, Njemanze, and Akwara (2020) empirically examined the effects of Boko Haram terrorism on human security in Nigeria. The study was designed to contribute to the relatively limited empirical literature linking terrorism directly to human security. The researchers adopted an ex post facto research design and relied primarily on secondary information obtained from newspapers and magazines. The data were subjected to content analysis. Their findings showed that the intensity of Boko Haram terrorism and the anxiety generated by terrorist activities produced social and moral panic and had serious consequences for several aspects of human security. In particular, terrorism negatively affected education, food security, economic activities, national cohesion, and human rights. The researchers consequently concluded that terrorism constitutes a serious threat to human security across several dimensions. They recommended strengthening social capital, participatory politics, community policing, and trust between security institutions and the public.

Illo, Akanmu, and Osman (2023) investigated the impact of Boko Haram insurgency on human security and the Nigerian economy. The researchers adopted a qualitative approach and collected data through in-depth interviews. Their findings revealed that terrorist activities resulted in substantial loss of lives and property, food shortages and an increase in the population of internally displaced persons. The study further established that education was seriously affected and that the activities of terrorism contributed to the collapse of small businesses and increasing poverty. The researchers concluded that terrorism has adverse effects on important components of human security, particularly health, education, food and nutrition, small businesses, human rights and individual liberty.

Dami (2021) examined the impact of terrorism, banditry and kidnapping on human security in Nigeria. The study employed a documentary research method, drawing on existing literature and documentary evidence to examine the country's changing security environment. The study found that terrorism, banditry and kidnapping had negatively affected human security, particularly through attacks on civilians, loss of lives, fear and disruption of normal social activities. The researcher argued that the increasing prevalence of violent insecurity represents a serious challenge to the protection of lives and property and consequently to the human-security responsibilities of the Nigerian state.

Akwan (2023) conducted a study specifically relevant to the geographical focus of the present research by investigating the role of information professionals in curbing terrorism and violence in Nigerian society. The study selected 20 high-ranking information professionals from four South-South states: Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River and Rivers States. It employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Statistical information obtained from the Global Conflict Tracker was used to examine trends in attacks between 2005 and 2020, while semi-structured interviews were conducted with respondents to obtain information concerning their roles and the challenges confronting their efforts to curb terrorism and violence.

5. Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to investigate human security and terrorism in South-South Nigeria. The study was carried out within the six South-South states. The study adopted the secondary method of data collection. The analysis was based entirely on secondary sources of data, including peer-reviewed journal articles, books, reports of international organizations, Nigerian government publications, and other credible documentary sources. The analysis was organized according to the three research questions of the study. This methodology provides a systematic framework for examining the dimensions of human security affected by terrorism, the factors associated with terrorism, and the effectiveness of government and community-based responses in South-South Nigeria.

6. Analysis and Discussion of Findings

The findings are presented thematically and interpreted within the framework of human security and Structural Violence Theory.

Research Question One

What are the major forms and dimensions of human insecurity associated with terrorism in South-South Nigeria?

The secondary evidence indicates that terrorism and related violent insecurity affect human security in South-South Nigeria. Although the South-South region has a different security profile from the North-East, where Boko Haram and ISWAP have been particularly prominent, the region has experienced terrorism-related concerns alongside militancy, kidnapping, piracy, communal violence, oil-related criminality and other forms of organized violence. Consequently, human insecurity in the region cannot be reduced to physical attacks alone. The first major finding is that terrorism and related violent insecurity affect multiple dimensions of human security simultaneously. This finding agrees with Nnam et al. (2020), who demonstrated that terrorism in Nigeria affects education, food security, economic activities, national cohesion and human rights. It also corresponds with Illo et al. (2023), who identified effects on food, health, education, businesses, human rights and individual liberty. This finding supports the Human Security framework because the framework emphasizes that security cannot be reduced to protection from physical violence. A person who is physically safe but unable to access food, healthcare, employment or a safe environment may still be considered insecure.

Research Question Two

What are the major factors contributing to terrorism and related violent insecurity in South-South Nigeria?

The secondary evidence suggests that terrorism and violent insecurity in South-South Nigeria cannot be attributed to a single factor. Rather, they are associated with the interaction of socioeconomic, political, environmental, institutional and security-related factors.

The second major finding is that terrorism and related violent insecurity are associated with multiple socioeconomic, political, environmental and institutional conditions. This finding supports Galtung's Structural Violence Theory, which argues that violence can be embedded in social structures that prevent people from satisfying their basic needs (Galtung, 1969). The finding is particularly relevant to South-South Nigeria, where environmental degradation, resource-related grievances, poverty, unemployment and perceptions of marginalization have historically contributed to conflict. However, the findings do not support a simplistic argument that poverty or environmental degradation directly causes terrorism. Rather, these conditions constitute part of a wider environment of vulnerability and grievances.

Research Question Three

How effective are the existing government and community-based measures in addressing terrorism and improving human security in South-South Nigeria?

The secondary evidence suggests that government and community-based measures have produced some positive outcomes but remain only partially effective. Their effectiveness is constrained by the complexity of insecurity, institutional weaknesses, socioeconomic problems and the persistence of underlying grievances.

The third major finding is that government and community-based measures have produced some positive outcomes but have not completely resolved terrorism and broader human insecurity. This finding indicates that security operations are necessary but insufficient. A sustainable approach requires integration of security measures with economic development, environmental protection, youth empowerment, community participation, human-rights protection and good governance. This is consistent with the human-security approach, which emphasizes both protection and empowerment. Security should therefore involve not only preventing violence but also creating conditions in which people can live secure and dignified lives.

7. Conclusion

The study examined Human Security and Terrorism in South-South Nigeria, with particular attention to the major forms and dimensions of human insecurity associated with terrorism, the factors contributing to terrorism and related violent insecurity, and the effectiveness of government and community-based measures in addressing terrorism and improving human security in the region. Based on the analysis of secondary data, the study concludes that terrorism and related violent insecurity constitute significant threats to the security and well-being of individuals and communities in South-South Nigeria.

The first major conclusion is that terrorism has multidimensional consequences for human security. The findings revealed that terrorism and related violent insecurity do not affect only personal safety or the physical survival of individuals. They also have implications for economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, community security and political security. Violence can result in loss of lives and property, displacement, disruption of economic activities, restricted movement, food insecurity, reduced access to healthcare, psychological distress and weakening of social cohesion. This confirms the human-security perspective that security should be understood beyond the traditional protection of the state to include the protection of individuals and communities from serious threats to their survival, livelihoods and dignity.

The study further concludes that the causes of terrorism and related violent insecurity in South-South Nigeria

are complex and multidimensional. The findings identified poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, resource-related grievances, perceived political marginalization, weak governance, organized criminal activities and limited opportunities for young people as important contextual factors. These factors interact with one another and may create conditions of vulnerability and grievances. However, the study does not conclude that poverty, unemployment or environmental degradation automatically cause terrorism. Rather, they constitute structural and socioeconomic conditions that can contribute to insecurity and may be exploited by violent actors. The study also concludes that existing government security measures have achieved some level of success but have not completely addressed the problem. Security operations, intelligence gathering, policing, military interventions, disarmament, rehabilitation and reintegration initiatives have contributed to containing some forms of violent insecurity. However, their effectiveness has been limited where they are not accompanied by sustained socioeconomic development, environmental protection, effective governance and community participation. The findings therefore suggest that a predominantly coercive approach cannot provide a comprehensive or sustainable solution to terrorism and human insecurity.

Furthermore, the study concludes that community-based approaches are important components of sustainable security. Traditional institutions, community leaders, civil-society organizations, religious organizations and other local actors can contribute to early warning, information sharing, mediation, conflict prevention and social cohesion. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of these mechanisms depends on adequate support, coordination and trust between communities and formal security institutions.

The study therefore concludes that sustainable peace and human security in South-South Nigeria will require a multidimensional and people-centred approach involving effective security institutions, good governance, environmental protection, equitable development, employment and youth empowerment, community participation, respect for human rights, conflict prevention and peacebuilding. Such an approach is more consistent with the concept of positive peace because it seeks not merely to suppress direct violence but also to address the underlying conditions that allow insecurity and conflict to persist. In essence, lasting human security in South-South Nigeria cannot be achieved through military and policing measures alone. It requires the simultaneous strengthening of institutions, improvement of livelihoods, protection of the environment, promotion of social inclusion and meaningful participation of communities in security and development processes. This integrated approach offers a more sustainable pathway for reducing terrorism and related violent insecurity while improving the survival, livelihoods and dignity of people in the region.

8. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations are proposed:

The government should move beyond an exclusively military or law-enforcement approach to terrorism and adopt an integrated human-security strategy that combines security operations with socioeconomic development, environmental protection, good governance and human-rights protection. The findings showed that terrorism and related violent insecurity affect personal, economic, food, health, environmental, community and political security. Therefore, security agencies should work closely with development agencies, state governments, traditional institutions and civil-society organizations to address the multiple dimensions of insecurity.

The government should expand employment creation, vocational training, entrepreneurship, education and sustainable livelihood programmes, particularly in communities experiencing high levels of poverty, unemployment and insecurity. The findings established that socioeconomic deprivation, limited opportunities and perceived marginalization can contribute to vulnerability and grievances. Youth empowerment programmes should therefore be properly funded, transparently implemented and targeted toward communities most affected by insecurity. In the Niger Delta, development initiatives should also include environmental restoration, support for farming and fishing communities, and alternative livelihood opportunities where environmental degradation has affected traditional economic activities.

Government should establish stronger and more institutionalized community-based security and peacebuilding mechanisms involving traditional rulers, community development associations, youth organizations, women's groups, religious organizations, civil-society organizations and other legitimate local stakeholders. The findings showed that community-based mechanisms can contribute to early warning, information sharing, mediation, conflict prevention and the rebuilding of trust between communities and security agencies. Government should therefore establish mechanisms through which communities can safely communicate emerging security threats to appropriate authorities without fear of retaliation.

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