



## EDUCATION, RELIGION AND VALUE SYSTEM: IMPLICATION FOR NATIONAL SECURITY



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### **Abstract**

*The growing insecurity in Nigeria has reached a critical level, necessitating the involvement of all sectors, including education, in finding viable solutions. If education is truly a tool for addressing societal challenges, then tackling the issue of national security through educational means should be achievable. The increasing fear among citizens, distrust of neighbours, and frequent outbursts of violence over minor issues highlight the urgent need to revive core values through both religious and educational frameworks. In light of this, the paper explores the interconnected roles of education, religion, and value systems in relation to national security. It begins with a conceptual analysis of key terms such as education and national security, religion and national security, and value systems and national security. The paper identifies several root causes of insecurity, including the breakdown of moral values, high unemployment rates, religious extremism, the pursuit of quick wealth, and widespread mistrust. Additionally, the paper outlines the consequences of insecurity in Nigeria, which include the loss of lives and properties, reduced investment, a decline in academic advancement, and a general atmosphere of fear and instability. The conclusion drawn is that education, religion, and value systems are deeply intertwined and collectively influence national security. To address internal threats and promote long-term peace and stability, it is crucial to strengthen education, encourage religious tolerance, and uphold shared societal values. The paper concludes with practical recommendations for overcoming the security challenges facing Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Value system, Education, Religion, Security, Violence.

### **Introduction**

Insecurity is a feeling of uncertainty, lack of confidence, or anxiety about oneself, a situation, or one's relationships with others. It can manifest emotionally, socially, professionally, politically, or even physically in a person, community of persons or a nation. Insecurity in a nation refers to a condition where the safety, stability, and well-being of a country and its citizens are threatened. Insecurity remains a major challenge that continues to shake the very foundation of Nigeria, posing a serious threat to the nation's unity and stability. The persistent rise of this menace has prompted calls for intervention from various stakeholders, including state governors, traditional rulers, religious leaders, and concerned citizens, urging the government at all levels (federal, state and local governments) to take decisive action. Despite these appeals, the rate of insecurity keeps escalating, with devastating consequences for the lives and properties of ordinary Nigerians. Countless lives have been lost, and properties destroyed, yet the government's repeated assurance that it is "on top of the situation" has become a hollow and politically convenient statement, often used to divert public attention. Rather than curbing the menace, the situation appears to be worsening. Each day, Nigeria faces increasing insecurity, with more individuals turning to criminal activities, driven by high expectations and desperation. This has led to a surge in violent crime, often carried out with growing sophistication and brutality.

The persistent insecurity crisis in Nigeria has given rise to additional problems to the fore such as kidnapping, attacks by herdsmen, and cattle rustling, among others. A widespread decline in moral values is evident across different sectors of society, reflected in the increasing number of citizens



involved in acts that threaten national unity and stability. Alarming, many young people once seen as the hope for Nigeria's future are now actively participating in destructive behaviors, including violence and property destruction that undermine the nation's long-term prospects. Interviews with several youths reveal motivations for engaging in criminal activities, including unemployment, manipulation by corrupt politicians, and the greed of certain religious leaders. Regardless of the specific triggers, a common driving force appears to be the intense desire for wealth and a luxurious lifestyle. This pursuit has led many young people down a path of crime, exacerbating the already fragile security situation and further eroding long-standing societal values. Some youths appear to have forsaken moral principles entirely in exchange for financial gain. Unfortunately, religious figures are also implicated, as materialism increasingly dominates human behavior. A particularly troubling example is the reported arrest of a Methodist Church reverend in Ado-Ekiti by the police for allegedly staging his own kidnapping and having accomplices demand ₦3 million from his congregation (Vanguard News, 2019). Such incidents highlight the urgent need for a national reflection and a revival of core values as a strategic response to both insecurity and the obsessive pursuit of wealth plaguing the country through education, religion and value system.

Education, religion, and value systems are influential pillars shaping the societies worldwide. This paper explores the interconnectedness of these elements and their significant implications for national security in Nigeria. As education molds individuals' minds, religious beliefs guide their moral compass, and value systems dictate societal norms, understanding their intersection is crucial for fostering stability and security. In Nigeria, the intersection of education, religion, and value systems holds significant implications for national security due to the country's diverse socio-cultural landscape and historical dynamics. In light of the interconnectedness between education, religion, and value systems, there exists a pressing need to understand the specific dynamics and their combined implications for national security. However, despite recognition of their importance, comprehensive analyses addressing the nuanced interactions and their direct influence on security outcomes, particularly within Nigerian context remain limited. Consequently, there is a gap in scholarly understanding regarding how educational, religious, and value-based influences intersect to shape societal attitudes, behaviours, and vulnerabilities, ultimately influencing the security landscape. Here are how these factors relate to Nigeria's case:

### **Education and National Security:**

Education is the structured process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, beliefs, and habits. It plays a central role in shaping individuals, communities, and nations. It is the totality of preparing individuals to function effectively in the society. It is through education that the society values are preserved, maintained and transmitted from generation to generation. According to Nelson Mandela, education remains the most important and powerful weapon which can be used to change the world. Esomonu and Ikeanumba (2021) posited that education is the systematic socialization of the younger generation by which they later learn religious and moral beliefs/values, feelings of nationalism and collective opinion of all kinds. Education in itself without value is worthless. Education is therefore considered as testing laboratory of human values. In this case, education is said to have both intrinsic and extrinsic values. Any form of education that is devoid of right or correct values, right morals and sound religious teaching in some to produce 'education sinners' that are suitably recruited as miscreants, ethnic militias, kidnappers among others (Alonge & Adanikin, 2024).

Security refers to the safeguarding of individuals and communities against potential risks that could lead to severe deprivation, harm, or death. It involves the implementation of rules, maintenance of order, and fair enforcement of protective measures to prevent unforeseen challenges. Security encompasses protection from all types of harm—whether physical, environmental, or psychological. Some scholars argue that security is not merely the absence of threats, but rather the capacity to respond swiftly and effectively to such threats. According to Alonge and Adanikin (2024), security is compromised when there is direct violence (both physical and psychological), structural violence

(systems or policies that cause suffering or death), or cultural violence (norms and practices that perpetuate discrimination, injustice, and human suffering). Omode (2023) describes security as a dynamic state, characterized by a country's ability to respond to challenges that threaten its core interests and values. Similarly, the Yugoslavian delegate to the 1986 United Nations Symposium defined national security as the condition in which fundamental national values are free from threats, individuals live without fear or uncertainty, and the nation remains safe from aggression, domination, or violations of its sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence, and right to self-determination. In their analysis, Achumba, Ighomleraho, and Akpo-Robero (2023) view security as the outcome of strategies and systems established to defend people, property, and information from hostile actions or influences. They emphasize that security is present when citizens can carry out their daily lives without fear for their safety or property. It encompasses all efforts aimed at shielding individuals, groups, businesses, and the nation from acts of sabotage and violence.

The term insecurity holds varied meanings depending on individual perspectives. It can imply a lack of safety, the presence of danger or threat, uncertainty, vulnerability, or an absence of protection (Ewetan & Urhie, 2024). According to Achumba, et al., (2023), insecurity can be understood from two main angles. First, it refers to a condition where individuals are exposed to threats or potential harm. Second, it describes a state of vulnerability accompanied by anxiety as a vague, uneasy feeling that arises in anticipation of misfortune. Ewetan (2024) emphasizes that insecurity not only involves uncertainty about future events but also the vulnerability of individuals to danger when it arises. The researcher argues that insecurity represents a disruption of peace and stability whether caused by historical grievances, religious tensions, ethnic or regional divisions, civil unrest, socio-economic challenges, or political instability, that often results in recurring conflict and widespread destruction of lives and property. These definitions reflect the current realities in Nigeria, where the prevalence of insecurity is seen as a consequence of the repeated failure of governments at different levels to address the issue effectively. According to Jonathan (2019), this failure has escalated the situation to an unprecedented and critical level. Obasanjo (2019) further noted that the security situation deteriorated rapidly under former President Buhari's administration, suggesting that the government's approach or lack thereof may have worsened tensions. There is a growing perception, based on observations, that the actions and inactions of the previous administration seemed to favor certain ethnic groups, particularly the Fulani, leading some to view the security crisis as a form of ethnic cleansing.

Educational institutions in Nigeria are instrumental in shaping the beliefs, attitudes, and worldviews of citizens. The way curriculum content is designed and the methods used in teaching can significantly influence whether students develop values such as tolerance, critical thinking, and civic engagement or, alternatively, attitudes of extremism, intolerance, and radicalization (Oyeweso, 2019). Research has shown that empowering young people and fostering resilience through quality education equips them with the necessary skills, knowledge, and opportunities to contribute meaningfully to the country's socio-economic progress. Oyeweso (2019) further noted that a well-informed and educated population is more likely to participate constructively in society and play a role in national development, while also helping to build resistance against security challenges, particularly in the Northern and Eastern regions of Nigeria. However, Nigeria's education sector faces numerous obstacles, including poor infrastructure, gaps in curriculum relevance, and unequal access especially in conflict-prone areas like the Northeast and broadly across the Northern region, which is widely regarded as being educationally disadvantaged. It has also been observed that inadequate access to quality education leaves many young people vulnerable to manipulation and recruitment by extremist organizations such as Boko Haram, which prey on their frustrations and provide ideological indoctrination as a substitute for formal education.

### **Religion and National Security**

Religion is a structured system of beliefs, practices, and moral principles centered around the reverence of a supreme being or multiple deities. It commonly includes shared doctrines, rituals, symbols, and ethical teachings that influence the worldview and conduct of its adherents (Adigwe &

Akudolu, 2024). Ideally, religion should foster unity between humans and the divine, as well as among people themselves. Unfortunately, the opposite seems to be unfolding in contemporary times. In support of the above, Adigwe and Akudolu (2024) argued that religion, which is traditionally seen as a moral compass and a means of promoting peace and unity, has increasingly become entangled in Nigeria's insecurity challenges. Instead of serving as a stabilizing force, some religious institutions and leaders have contributed, either directly or indirectly, to the erosion of societal values. Religion holds a central place in Nigerian society, profoundly shaping people's lives (Egbefo, 2016). For many, it provides spiritual direction, insight, and personal growth through scripture, religious texts, and prayer. While the Nigerian Constitution defines the country as a secular state, ensuring freedom of religious practice, this freedom is contingent upon respecting the rights of others.

Nigeria is home to three major religions Christianity, Islam, and Traditional religion which have coexisted for generations. Historically, Nigerians lived in relative harmony without significant fear of religious or ethnic domination. However, in recent years, tensions have escalated, especially amid growing fears of attempts to "Islamize" the country a situation that has raised alarm among various groups. These concerns intensified with the violent activities of Fulani herdsmen, whose attacks on people from different religious and ethnic backgrounds became more widespread and unpredictable during the administration of former President Muhammadu Buhari. Religion remains a powerful element of personal and collective identity. While religious diversity has the potential to enrich society, it can also lead to friction and conflict when manipulated by extremist elements that use it to justify violence and promote hatred.

Nigeria is a nation marked by deep ethnic and religious diversity, with the North predominantly Muslim and the South largely Christian. This religious divide has occasionally fueled tensions and conflicts. Religious crises are not new to the country; they have been a persistent concern since shortly after independence (Falola, 2018; Mohammed, 2016). During the administration of former President Muhammadu Buhari, many observers perceived his actions as suggestive of an agenda to Islamize the nation. This perception gained traction particularly through the federal government's aggressive promotion of the Rural Grazing Area (RUGA) settlement scheme. For many, the forceful implementation of this initiative signaled a deeper, possibly hidden religious motive. The RUGA controversy, coupled with violent incidents that appeared to target specific ethnic and religious groups especially in states like Benue, Borno, Jos and some parts of the southeast fueled widespread fear and suspicion. These events contributed to growing mistrust and division between the two dominant religious communities in Nigeria, eroding the sense of national unity. In the present day, extremist groups such as Boko Haram have taken advantage of these religious divides, using them as a justification for violence. Their actions have further strained interfaith relations and significantly intensified national security threats (Adesoji, 2020; Nwolise, 2014; Mohammed, 2016).

### **Value System and National Security**

Values refer to the principles or standards that individuals or societies consider significant or insignificant. They help shape people's preferences and guide the decisions they make in life (Ogunyemi, 2024). Values represent collective beliefs about what is deemed good, desirable, and acceptable within a community. They embody a combination of knowledge, attitudes, and skills that support the development of moral character and strengthen a sense of communal identity. Essentially, values influence behavior, lifestyle choices, and societal attitudes. In the Nigerian context, traditional value systems are increasingly being challenged by foreign and adopted values. Nigeria's value orientation is shaped by cultural heritage, religious beliefs, and socio-economic conditions, all of which influence public attitudes toward governance, justice, and social unity. Alemika and Chukwuma (2016) argue that systemic issues such as corruption, inequality, and impunity have eroded public trust in institutions and have fueled resentment among citizens. These grievances create a fertile ground for insecurity and social unrest. A notable irony in Nigerian leadership is that while citizens are urged to remain patient and make sacrifices for the nation's progress, political leaders often continue to enjoy

luxurious lifestyles without making similar sacrifices. This disconnect only deepens public distrust and could provoke further dissatisfaction, potentially leading to instability and conflict.

The rising level of insecurity in Nigeria has had a profound impact on the nation's traditional value systems, particularly those related to social relationships. Historically, Nigerians especially in the Southeast deeply valued communal living, where individuals looked out for one another and embraced the spirit of being their "brother's keeper." However, the current state of the country tells a different story. Today, people live in constant fear even of their neighbours and the once-cherished value of communal harmony has been significantly eroded. In addition, the value placed on hard work has been replaced by a culture of laziness and shortcuts. Many Nigerians no longer believe in earning wealth through diligence and effort. Instead, there is a growing acceptance of the Igbo saying "*obere oru, nnukwu ego*" (little work, big money), which reflects a mindset that favours quick wealth over honest labour. This shift in attitude has led many to engage in criminal activities such as ritual killings, cybercrime (yahoo plus or internet fraud), and kidnapping for ransom, all in pursuit of fast money.

These trends have further fueled insecurity, making it difficult for people to trust one another. Shocking and disturbing acts—such as husbands killing wives for money rituals, parents selling their children, and boyfriends murdering girlfriends for financial gain are becoming alarmingly frequent. Even sacred spaces are no longer immune, with reports of unimaginable atrocities occurring on religious altars, symbolizing the moral decay in society. The sanctity of human life appears to have lost its value, as killings occur with little or no remorse. This growing disregard for human life continues to feed the climate of fear and general insecurity across the country.

### **Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria**

Several factors have been identified as contributing to the alarming rise in insecurity across Nigeria. While blame is often passed among the youth, government, and parents, this paper focuses on examining the underlying causes of insecurity in the country. One major factor is the high rate of unemployment, which has reached a deeply concerning level. This situation can be largely attributed to leaders who lack moral integrity, as funds intended for job creation and public welfare are frequently diverted or misused. These leaders often fall short in values such as honesty, transparency, and accountability (Alonge & Adanikin, 2024). Another critical cause is the influence of religious extremism and widespread distrust within the society. The values of tolerance and respect for differing religious beliefs have significantly deteriorated. This has created fertile ground for religious fanatics and fundamentalists, who propagate hatred and violence against those of other faiths. In the name of religious devotion, these extremists often resort to the destruction of lives and property, further worsening the security crisis in the country (Mohammed, 2016).

The extravagant lifestyles of certain individuals particularly politicians have fueled an unhealthy obsession with wealth among Nigerian youths. According to Akinola (2022), the virtue of prudence has been overshadowed by a culture of materialism and lavish living. This overwhelming desire for quick riches has led many young people to engage in heinous activities such as ritual killings, cybercrime (commonly referred to as "yahoo plus"), and kidnapping. As a result, the value of human life has significantly diminished. Killings and acts of violence are becoming disturbingly routine, with perpetrators showing little to no remorse for their victims. Compounding the situation, reckless statements by political leaders and government inaction have also played a role in exacerbating the country's insecurity. One notable example is the Federal Government's refusal to comply with court rulings, particularly in the case of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN), also known as the Shiites. The continued detention of their leader contributed to unrest, culminating in the July 22, 2019 incident in Abuja, during which an Assistant Commissioner of Police and a Channels TV journalist lost their lives, and property worth millions of naira was destroyed. This event highlights how government disregard for the rule of law can escalate tensions and deepen security challenges in the country.

## **Consequences of Insecurity in Nigeria**

The Nigerian government's passive approach to addressing security challenges has caused significant damage across the country. Countless lives have been lost, properties worth millions of naira destroyed, and many citizens have been displaced, now living in Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps. One of the most serious implications of insecurity is its negative effect on the economy, particularly through the loss of investments and capital flight. Both local and foreign investors are discouraged from investing in environments plagued by insecurity, leading to economic decline. The worsening security situation has made Nigeria a less attractive destination for investment, contributing to capital flight—one of the potential factors that led to the economic recession a few years ago (Omonobi & Erunke, 2019). Another devastating consequence of insecurity is the widespread fear of the unknown, which has turned road travel into a terrifying experience. Nigerians who need to embark on road journeys often resort to prayers and fasting, not for protection from accidents, but to avoid falling victim to kidnappers and terrorists. Key routes like the Iwaraja/Efon road (Osun/Ekiti States), Ikere/Akure road, Benin/Ore road, and Abuja/Kaduna highway and some highways in the southeast are now considered high-risk areas due to frequent herdsmen attacks and kidnappings. Many travelers journey with great anxiety, uncertain of what lies ahead.

A particularly tragic incident was the killing of Dr. Chike Akunyili, husband of former NAFDAC Director-General Late Dr. Mrs. Dora Akunyili whose sudden death occurred on the September, 28, 2021 under shocking and violent circumstances, Mrs. Olakunri, daughter of Afenifere leader Pa Reuben Fasoranti, on July 12, 2019, in Kajola, Ore (Ondo State) by suspected herdsmen. This event further intensified fears and insecurity, especially in the Southwest region. More recently, on January 29, 2024, two monarchs in Ekiti State Oba Olatunde Olusola (Onimojo of Imojo) and Oba Babatunde Ogunsakin (Elesun of Esun Ekiti) were murdered by herdsmen while returning from a local government security meeting. On that same day, students from Apostolic Faith School in Emure Ekiti, along with a teacher and driver, were abducted from their school bus. Although the abductees were eventually released after a ransom was paid, the driver was killed before their release (Akpan, 2024). These alarming incidents highlight the deteriorating state of security in Nigeria and the urgent need for more effective government intervention.

## **The Way forward**

The following suggestions are made as light to pave way for the way forward:

1. Revitalizing the nation's value system requires deliberate efforts in human resource development, strategic planning, comprehensive training, and ideological reorientation. It also involves instilling positive values in young individuals from an early age and serving as role models worthy of emulation. Fostering cultural diversity while upholding fundamental national values can enhance social unity and strengthen the nation's ability to resist external threats. Additionally, implementing inclusive policies that promote social integration can help curb marginalization and alienation, ultimately reducing the appeal of extremism and radical ideologies. A vision for a new Nigeria should be pursued; one in which a Northerner feels at home in the East, an Easterner shares meals with someone from the North, and a Westerner dines and builds relationships freely with citizens from any other region (Adesina, 2021).
2. Enhancing access to quality education, particularly in underprivileged and marginalized communities, is essential in addressing insecurity. In addition, religious education within churches and mosques can significantly contribute to reducing violence. Religious leaders such as pastors and imams should make it a responsibility to enlighten their followers about the sacredness of life and the divine consequences of taking innocent lives. Promoting interfaith dialogue and mutual understanding is also key to reducing religion-based violence. Both the government and civil society organizations have vital roles to play in facilitating such interactions and upholding religious freedom. These efforts are instrumental in countering radical ideologies and fostering social unity.



3. The government and non-governmental organizations can help address insecurity by creating widespread employment opportunities, particularly through the provision of refundable loans to both educated and uneducated youths. This support would empower young people to establish and manage their own businesses, keeping them productively engaged and reducing the likelihood of idleness or desperation that often leads to involvement in criminal activities in the pursuit of money.
4. Providing quality education equips young people with the skills, knowledge, and opportunities necessary for socio-economic progress. An educated population is more inclined to contribute positively to society, thereby supporting national development and enhancing resilience against threats like extremism and radicalization. To strengthen this, there should be increased awareness and education on managing security challenges across all levels of the education system from primary to tertiary institutions.
5. The government should make efforts to revive forest guard operations, strengthen local vigilante groups, and revisit the establishment of state police. This includes recruiting capable and competent youths, providing them with regular training in areas such as forest protection, security management, and gaining a deep understanding of their local environment. Such measures would help ensure that criminal elements have no safe havens to operate within.
6. On the global front, Nigeria should actively promote international cooperation and diplomacy to effectively address transnational security threats. Considering the interconnected nature of modern security challenges, collaboration with other nations in areas such as education, religious tolerance, and ethical governance is crucial. Additionally, there should be strict surveillance and enforcement at national borders, both land and maritime, with increased presence and support for security agencies to prevent unauthorized entry by stranded immigrants from neighboring countries.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, tackling the interconnection between education, religion, and value systems as key components that re-engineer sustainable national development, shape social structures and influence national security is essential for ensuring peace and stability in Nigeria. Recognizing how these elements influence one another and adopting inclusive, value-driven strategies is vital for building societal resilience, reducing conflict, and enhancing national security in today's increasingly complex world. A holistic approach that emphasizes inclusive growth, national unity, re-engineering sustainable national development, and transparent governance is crucial to addressing the root causes of insecurity. To achieve a better Nigeria, collective efforts are required to dismantle the barriers of suspicion and eliminate the divisions that fuel internal conflict. Nigerians must let go of fear, embrace one another in unity, and foster a nation where sustainable national development is re-engineered, people are valued not by their place of origin, state of birth, or religion, but by the inherent dignity they possess as fellow citizens of a united Nigeria.

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