

## Prevalence of Insecurity and Coping Measures among Households in Rivers State

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### Abstract

This paper investigated insecurity and survival measures of households in Rivers State. Two research questions and one null hypothesis guided the study. The study employed descriptive survey design. The population for the study included all members in the households in the study area. The total population of the study was 437,833 in the eight selected Local Government Areas. The study used Yaro Yamane method to determine the sample size of 480. By cluster sampling, the 480 household members consisting of 120 fathers, 120 mothers and 240 adult children were selected. A questionnaire was used for data collection. Mean scores were used to answer research questions one and two. The statistical tool of ANOVA was used to answer the null hypothesis. From the findings, the demographic data revealed that financial insecurity was 44.8%, environmental/physical insecurity was 24.4%, food insecurity was 22.7% and social insecurity was 6.0%. The survival measures mostly identified were empowering members, providing modular refinery, and investing in legal businesses or trade. The study recommends that Government and NGOs should empower family members with entrepreneurial skills, and proper financial management practices should be imbibed by family members through prudent spending, thrift saving, and wise investment amongst others. This would provide life skills for family members' survival.

**Keywords:** Insecurity, household, survival measures, family living, Rivers State

### Introduction

Insecurity is a state of disequilibrium in society that impacts the safety and protection of individuals. Ekpo (2022) defines it as a state of fear, vulnerability to attacks, danger, emotional and psychological trauma, and death. Notably, insecurity is of different dimensions: food

insecurity, arising when food supply is disrupted (due to unavailability and or inaccessibility); environmental insecurity which occurs when there are threats to the natural environment such as pollution from oil spills, and poor waste disposal among others, affecting family members.

Financial insecurity emanates from

economic hardship necessitated by unemployment, poor salaries and wages, inadequate circulation of currency (hoarding of Naira notes), and high interest rates among others. Physical insecurity in some parts of Nigeria occurs through the activities of groups such as Niger Delta militancy, Boko Haram, bandits, and herdsmen among others. Specifically in River state, conflicts often escalate during oil exploration activities (kpofire) undertaken by the youths, an activity often resisted by law enforcement agencies. Again, during elections, Rivers State had always been a hotspot for violence (Chukwu, 2023; Obeme-Ndukwe, 2023). These issues exacerbate family economic challenges. Ekpo (2022) stated that causes of insecurity are staggering poverty, youth unemployment, weak judiciary system, poor leadership, poor government policies, illiteracy, lack of trust, political structural arrangement, clashes due to diversity (culture, tradition, and religion), fear of domination or marginalization and so on. Some examples of insecurity are ethnic-religious conflicts, political-based violence, human trafficking, drug trafficking, a new trend of kidnapping, the periodic outbreak of deadly diseases, armed robbery, arson, unwanted killing, and destruction of oil facilities among others. Sustainable development can only be attained when there is meaningful security.

Many Nigerian households are plagued with economic downturn due to so many factors such as the non-living wage of government workers, unemployment, poverty and impoverishment, economic and social lockdown in some parts of the country,

lack of basic needs and amenities, among others. According to Ofurum and Agwu (2011), food insecurity exists due to physical and economic inaccessibility to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet the dietary needs of the poor and vulnerable people in society. They noted that there is an overwhelmingly large proportion of Nigerians who are food insecure. Recently, Ubanagu (2023) noted that Nigeria is ranked among the poorest countries in the world because 71 million Nigerians are extremely poor. Similarly, the National Bureau of Statistics (2024) reported that 63% of people (133 million people) have multidimensional poverty which ranges from 27% to 91%. These poverty ratings are occurring despite the large volumes of crude oil exploration. This is further compounded and bedeviled with banditry, youth restiveness, kidnapping, gender-based violence, unemployment, lack of financial capital, and escalating inflation. These insecurities in society have affected household economic well-being hence sustainable development becomes a mirage. Householders are all the people living together in a house that are socio-economically connected.

The Nigerian economy dwindles daily due to insecurity and corruption in the political class. Governance in Nigeria is weaponizing poverty so that the people could easily be placated with meagre palliative and relief materials and hence discourage them from protesting against bad governance. According to James (2017), there is a high rate of environmental degradation due to gas flaring and oil spills on land and sea, and other activities associated with oil exploration in Rivers State. This is causing

contamination in the buildings as soot is everywhere, heat in the environment, high concentration of acid rain, greenhouse effect, and all these threaten human health in the state. These situations have impacted household economic wellbeing as well as the extended family sustainability.

Family refers to a group of people who are related by blood, marriage or martial ties. According to Anyakoha (2015) a family is made up of a group of persons united by ties of blood, marriage or adoption and characterized by common residence and economic cooperation. To this effect, Nnubia and Azubuike (2017) highlighted some functions deem important such as providing nurturance, support for its members, economic unit in production of goods and services, promoting cooperation in responsibilities (income earners, homemakers, and housekeepers and chores agents), agent of socialization and so on. According to Idika-Umeh (2018), families in Nigeria have experienced various economic hardships as a result of the economic recession due to the collapse of the world oil market. However, insecurity has worsened the economic hardship experienced by families. Farmers cannot farm because of criminal herdsmen; fishermen cannot fish because of kpofire pollution and pirates; traders are restricted because of lockdowns. These issues have affected the well-being and lifestyle of family members.

Due to hardship in the country, there is a food crisis because recently, some criminal-minded people such as sea pirates attack food trucks, local trading boats, and warehouses to meet their food needs without considering the victims.

The insecurity in Nigeria has defied experts' solutions and strategies. According to Suleiman-Ibrahim (2024), security could be enshrined when more women are enrolled in the Police Academy. She advocated women's involvement because they understand the challenges of families and communities better. Therefore, there should be enough women in the police force for effective policing of the society. Women are the mothers and are better placed to know where their children are in the various communities that impact society. She further stated that technology-led community policing could help immensely in curbing insecurity in Nigeria.

Notably, insecurity is of different dimensions: food insecurity, arising when food supply is disrupted (unavailability and or inaccessibility); environmental insecurity which occurs when there are threats to the natural environment such as pollution, oil spills, and poor waste disposal, and physical insecurities such as incessant kidnapping, arm robbery, sea piracy among others, affecting family members. Financial insecurity emanates from economic hardship necessitated by unemployment, poor salaries and wages, inadequate circulation of currency (hoarding of Naira notes), and high interest rates among others.

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agencies. Again, during elections, Rivers State had always been a hotspot for violence (Chukwu, 2023; Obeme- Ndukwe, 2023). These issues exacerbate family economic challenges. Of course, Ekpo (2022) stated that causes of insecurity are staggering poverty, youth unemployment, weak judiciary system, poor leadership, poor government policies, illiteracy, lack of trust, political structural arrangement, clashes due to diversity (culture, tradition, and religion), fear of domination or marginalization and so on. Some examples of insecurity are ethnic-religious conflicts, political-based violence, human trafficking, drug trafficking, new trends of kidnapping, periodic outbreaks of deadly diseases, armed robbery, arson, unwanted killing, and destruction of oil facilities among others. Sustainable development can only be attained when there is meaningful security.

The concept of development is usually assessed based on the nation's Gross National Product (GNP) or Gross Domestic Product (GDP), both involving consumption and investment, in monetary terms, in a given year. Development is linked to the activities of family members who engage in the production and consumption of goods and services, as the more they produce and consume, the more the economy is buoyant (Lilly, 2015). Luke, 2013 as cited by Iheukwumere (2022) defines development as the elimination of poverty, inequality, and unemployment. Iheukwumere (2022) further stated that sustainability is associated with satisfying the economic needs of a nation without compromising the ability of future generations to fulfill their own needs.

Similarly, Obunadike and Ughamadu (2014) noted that there is need to improve the quality of life for all individuals while balancing the different and often conflicting challenges faced by families in the society. According to Iyigin (2015) as cited in Iheukwumere (2022), sustainability involves three dimensions which are social sustainability, economic sustainability and environmental sustainability. These dimensions can be ensured when the families can carry out their normal economic activities to achieve meaningful economic growth in all sectors of the nation's economy (Adesina, 2022; Ebiri, 2022). However, due to high levels of insecurity in both upland and riverine areas, many families in Rivers State are unable to engage in such economic activities, hence emphasizing the need to ascertain the implications of insecurity in household survival measures for basic lifestyle sustainability in Rivers State.

Rivers State holds enormous economic prospect for households due to oil exploration and production, yet insecurity due to criminal issues in various forms have impacted on sustainable family living. Repeatedly, subsequent government have promised to address the issues of insecurity, yet household still bear the brunt of it as highlighted by Chukwu (2023) and Obeme-Ndukwe (2023). Households feel real pain due to insecurity in Nigeria, especially in Rivers State which is an oil exploration and production environment. This peculiar endowment of the state has attracted untold hardship to households. Beyond oil exploration and production activities, householders are farmers, fishermen/women, traders, civil servants,

though very few are working in corporate firms. The members of the household have the capacity to create a sustainable economic life. However, there are impediments due to multifaceted insecurities namely food insecurity, environmental cum social insecurity, and financial insecurity. These are further compounded by factors such as demographic and psychographic factors, and socio-cultural factors which impede development. Security of economic wellbeing of households in Rivers State is needed urgently to ensure sustainability. This need propels the motivation for this research.

### Research Questions

The study answered the following research questions.

1. What are the insecurities experienced by households in Rivers State?
2. What are the ways to improve survival measures in the various localities of Rivers State?

### Hypothesis

One null hypothesis was formulated and tested for the study as thus:

Ho1: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of fathers, mothers and children on insecurities experienced by households in the state.

### Methodology

**Design of the Study:** The study applied descriptive survey design by seeking the opinion of members of households in Rivers State.

**Population of the Study:** The population of the study comprised all the households in the twenty-three local government areas (LGAs) in Rivers State.

**Sample and Sampling Techniques:** The sample size comprised 480 respondents in 15 households in River State. The sample was selected in multiple stages. In the first stage, eight LGAs were purposefully selected. There are Akuku-Toru, Asari-Toru, Abua-Odual, Ahoada East, Ahoada West, Degema, Bonny, and Ogba/Egbema/Ndoni LGA. These LGAs were selected because they were the most affected by insecurity in the state. The population of households in these selected LGAs was 437,833 (Brinkhoff, 2022). The second stage involved sample size determination using the Yaro Yamane method. This gave a calculated sample size of 480 respondents. In the next stage, using the LGAs as the clusters, one community (the LGA headquarters) was purposively selected from each LGA giving a total of eight communities. In the fourth stage, using the LGAs as the clusters, one community (the LGA headquarters) was purposively selected from each LGA giving a total of eight communities. The fifth stage involved a convenient selection of 15 households from each LGA headquarters. These households were selected from areas that were easily accessible to the researchers. In the last stage, the 480 respondents were evenly distributed across the eight LGAs giving 60 respondents per LGA. A proportionate sampling method was then used to select 15 fathers, 15 mothers and 30 adult children from each of the selected communities.

**Instrument for Data Collection:** A structured instrument tagged Insecurity of Households in Rivers State Questionnaire (IHRSQ) was used for data collection. The instrument had two section, section A was for demographic

data and section B addressed types of insecurity issues and survival measures adopted by the respondents. This was rated on four points - Strongly Agree- 4 point, Agree- 3 point, Disagree- 2 point, and Strongly Disagree- 1 point.

**Validation and Reliability Test:** The questionnaire was validated by three experts in Human and Family Development at Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Port Harcourt, Rivers State. The reliability was tested with Cronbach Alpha Method and the coefficient of 0.72 was obtained and considered acceptable.

**Method of Data Collection:** Four hundred and eighty copies of the instrument were hand distributed with the help of eight trained research assistants. The assistants were undergraduate students who were indigenes of the eight LGAs. Data collection took place during the Christmas break of 2023. This was to facilitate reaching the target population. The lead researcher received the retrieved questionnaire forms between January 8 - 10, 2024 from the research assistants. Out of the 480 questionnaire forms distributed, 450 were retrieved representing 93.8% retrieval rate.

**Method of Data Analysis:** Descriptive statistics of means and standard deviations were used to answer research question one and research question two.

The criterion for the research question acceptance is mean score of 2.50. The null hypothesis was tested using ANOVA at 0.05 level of significance.

## Results

### Insecurities experienced by households in Rivers State

The respondents indicated various levels of insecurity across different dimensions with financial insecurity being the most prevalent at 44.4%, followed by environmental insecurity at 24.4%, food insecurity at 22.7%, and social insecurity at 6.0%.

Table 1 shows the mean responses on insecurities experienced by households on food insecurity items, environmental/social insecurity items, and financial insecurity items. The respondents reported that they experienced food insecurity such as high cost of food (2.85) and poor farm yield (2.86). The aspects of financial insecurity they faced were high cost of point of sale (POS) charges (3.32), poor wages (3.30), and investment scams (2.69). Regarding environmental/social insecurities, the respondents experienced a high unemployment rate (3.07), oil spills (2.87), and armed robbery/sea piracy (2.69). The grand mean is 2.79 which is above the criteria mean of 2.50. The standard deviation ranged from 0.61 to 0.87.

**Table 1: Mean responses on forms of insecurities experienced by households**

| Insecurities experienced               | Mean | Standard Deviation | Decision |
|--|------|--------------------|----------|
| <b>Food Insecurity</b>                 |      |                    |          |
| 1. High cost of food                   | 2.85 | 0.70               | Agree    |
| 2. Poor farm yield                     | 2.86 | 0.75               | Agree    |
| 3. Depletion of seafood                | 2.72 | 0.61               | Agree    |
| 4. Hunger/malnutrition                 | 2.77 | 0.65               | Agree    |
| <b>Environmental/Social Insecurity</b> |      |                    |          |

|                             |             |             |              |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1. High unemployment rate   | 3.07        | 0.71        | Agree        |
| 2. Kpofire/Oil spills       | 2.87        | 0.81        | Agree        |
| 3. Militancy                | 2.40        | 0.76        | Disagree     |
| 4. Kidnapping               | 2.24        | 0.73        | Disagree     |
| 5. Arm robbery/Sea piracy   | 2.69        | 0.82        | Agree        |
| 6. Yahoo-yahoo/Ritualism    | 2.38        | 0.72        | Disagree     |
| <b>Financial Insecurity</b> |             |             |              |
| 1. Cash hoarding by banks   | 2.15        | 0.87        | Agree        |
| 2. High charge of POS       | 3.25        | 0.73        | Agree        |
| 3. Account hacking          | 2.64        | 0.77        | Agree        |
| 4. Poor living wage         | 3.30        | 0.81        | Agree        |
| 5. Investment scams         | 2.69        | 0.75        | Agree        |
| <b>Grand mean</b>           | <b>2.79</b> | <b>0.95</b> | <b>Agree</b> |

### Ways to promote survival measures of insecurity in Rivers State

Table 2 reveals the mean responses on ways to promote survival measures of insecurity in the various locality. These survival measures include employing the teeming youths (3.29), empowering the

youths with saleable skills (3.39), empowering members of the households (3.50), and providing modular refineries (3.50). The respondents did not believe that avoiding spurious online businesses was a measure to improve survival.

**Table 2: Mean responses on ways to improve survival measures in Rivers State**

| Survival measures                 | Mean | Standard deviation | Decision |
|-----------------------------------|------|--------------------|----------|
| Employ teeming youth              | 3.29 | 0.62               | Agree    |
| Empower youths with skills        | 3.39 | 0.67               | Agree    |
| Empower members of households     | 3.50 | 0.93               | Agree    |
| Provide modular refinery          | 3.50 | 0.66               | Agree    |
| Good income plan for householders | 3.16 | 0.51               | Agree    |
| Invest in right business/trade    | 3.50 | 0.59               | Agree    |
| Avoid spurious online business    | 2.30 | 0.71               | Disagree |
| Grand mean                        | 3.23 | 0.67               | Agree    |

### Null Hypothesis

Table 3 shows the result of hypothesis testing. A one-way ANOVA was performed to compare the mean responses of fathers, mothers, and adult children on ways to improve household survival measures.

This test revealed that there was no significant difference in the mean score of the mothers (mean 3.16 ± SD 0.64), fathers (mean 3.26 ± SD 0.86), and the adult children (mean 3.20±SD 0.81);  $F = 0.96$   $p > 0.05$ . The null hypothesis was, therefore, not rejected.

**Table 3: Mean comparison of the responses of fathers, mothers and children on ways of improving survival measures**

| Sources of Variation | Df        | Sum of Square | Mean of Square | P - value | Remark                 |
|----------------------|-----------|---------------|----------------|-----------|------------------------|
| Between groups       | 7         | 0.16          | 0.0229         | 0.096     | <b>Not Significant</b> |
| Within groups        | 56        | 13.361        | 0.2389         |           |                        |
| <b>Total</b>         | <b>63</b> | <b>13.521</b> |                |           |                        |

Df: Degree of freedom

### Discussion of Findings

The finding of the study reveals type of insecurity and survival measures of households in Rivers State. The findings showed that most of the householders suffered food insecurity, environmental insecurity and financial insecurity. On the aspect of food insecurity, the respondents experienced high cost of food, poor farm yield, depleted sea food, and hunger/malnutrition. This agrees with James (2017) who asserted that there is high level of environment degradation and pollution in Niger Delta Region. On environmental/social insecurity, they experienced a high unemployment rate, kpofire/oil spills, and armed robbery/sea piracy. The financial insecurity they faced included cash hoarding by banks, high charges of POS, account hacking, poor living wages, and investment scams. These might contribute to the high poverty rate observed by Ubanagu (2023) who noted that 71 million Nigerians are extremely poor. The Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics (2024) further reported that 63% of persons are having multidimensional poverty. Ekpo (2022) similarly observed some types of insecurity namely fear of domination or marginalization, kidnapping, armed robbery, and destruction of oil facilities among others in Nigeria. However, Ekpo

(2022) noted that insecurity has different dimensions such as food, environmental and financial insecurity. Insecurity such as kidnapping, armed robbery, oil spills, economic hardship due to poor salary/wages, and inadequate currency in circulation, disrupt family stability and economic activities.

Further findings on the ways households could survive insecurity include employing teeming youths, empowering youths with skills, empowering members of households, providing modular refinery, civic enlightenment for householders, good income plans for householders, and investing wisely in the right business. These measures would enable the youths to be gainfully employed and engage in the legal aspect of crude oil refining business. Also, household members, especially women would be enabled for economic activity and wealth creation. The respondents did not believe that avoiding spurious online business could protect against insecurity. This finding concurs with Ebiri's (2022) and Adesina's (2022) assertion that these measures of survival have far-reaching implications and can ensure that families carry out their normal economic activities to achieve meaningful economic development. Since all the surviving measures bring about sustainable living, Obunadike and

Ughamadu (2014) stated that there is a need to improve the quality of life for all. This would have implications for security in proper financial management, food availability and accessibility civic responsibility, and healthy and sustainable lifestyle of household members. The finding of the hypothesis shows that householders, that is, mothers, fathers, and children, did not differ in their opinions on coping measures to buffer insecurity. This implies that all the members of the household unanimously believe that the measures highlighted in this study are effective for coping with insecurity.

### **Conclusion**

Insecurity dimensions in households such as food insecurity, environmental/ social insecurity and financial insecurity are prevalent in Rivers State. Insecurity could disrupt the normal economic activities of households because of fear of attacks on the farm, sea, or business places. Financially, there are situations of cash hoarding by banks, high POS charges due to inefficient bank services, poor living wages, account hacking, and investment scams are chronic security issues that affect householders in Rivers State. These have brought discontent and despair to householders thereby requiring measures to ameliorate the effects. Various measures such as youth empowerment, providing modular refineries, and enlightenment campaigns could help households cope with insecurity. It would be paramount for the government and stakeholders to enshrine these survival measures that should bring succor to household members for survival. Empowerment of household members especially the youths is paramount to forestall insecurity in Rivers State.

### **Recommendations**

From the findings of the study, it is hereby recommended as follows:

1. Employers of labour should employ the teeming unemployed youths in Rivers State. Government and corporate bodies should employ men and women with requisite skills and certificates for sustainable development. This would go a long way to minimize criminality in the society.
2. Government and NGOs should empower family members with entrepreneurial skills. Also, household skills and trades should be harnessed by giving them soft loans and grants. The social media is a modern veritable tool of empowerment, so members of household should use them to showcase their skills and family business.
3. The Federal Government, who is the major beneficiary of oil and gas in the state, should build modular refinery to help the kpopfire youths. This would help the youths positively in sustainable productivity without getting burnt to death always, and also minimize environmental pollution.
4. Government should encourage civic enlightenment and education to promote citizen responsibilities to basic social issues of empowerment and patriotism.
5. Householders (income earners and homemakers) as the ultimate decision makers for the family should always have alternative income plans. There must be plan B in tackling economic challenges of the family.
6. Proper financial management practices should be imbibed by family members through prudent spending, habit of budgeting, thrift saving, wise investment, and avoiding excessive borrowing lifestyle among others.

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