

Human Insecurity and Security Governance amid Conflict and Crisis in Nigeria

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Abstract

Human insecurity continues to pose a serious challenge in Nigeria as violent conflicts and public health crises threaten lives, property, livelihoods, and social stability. Although security agencies have a fundamental responsibility to protect citizens and maintain public order, persistent criminal activities and recurring social conflicts reveal significant weaknesses in the existing security governance system. This study examines how violent conflicts and pandemic crises influence human insecurity in Nigeria and evaluates the effectiveness of security agencies in responding to these threats. The study applies a hybrid research method that combines doctrinal legal analysis with empirical research. The empirical investigation involved 414 respondents randomly selected from states across Nigeria's six geopolitical zones. The study analyzes the collected data through descriptive and analytical methods and examines the relevant legal and institutional frameworks governing public security. The findings show that violent conflicts and pandemic crises create social and economic conditions that increase vulnerability to crime and deepen human insecurity. The study also finds that limited institutional capacity, inadequate coordination, insufficient technological resources, and weak responses to underlying social, economic, political, and public health problems restrict the ability of security agencies to prevent crime effectively. The study concludes that Nigeria must strengthen security governance through an integrated approach that addresses the causes of violent conflict and public health vulnerability. Stronger institutional coordination, adequate resources, modern crime prevention technology, and responsive social policies can improve the capacity of security agencies to protect citizens and reduce human insecurity during periods of crisis.

Keywords: Conflicts; Crisis; Governance; Nigeria;



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Introduction

A society needs a legal system to secure the stability of society, to protect the individual, to preserve public order and to resolve disputes, and to counter threats to collective security. Law does not simply create standards of acceptable conduct but grants rights to institutions and procedures to

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defend life, property, dignity and social welfare.¹ Effective law enforcement is therefore an integral part of human security, in that people cannot enjoy their rights and engage in social and economic life when confronted with ongoing dangers from violence, criminality and institutional instability. The relationship between law enforcement and human security is particularly important in times of crisis, when normal governance structures are under extraordinary stress and communities are more vulnerable to criminal activity, social conflict, economic hardship and institutional disruption.²

Human security gives a more holistic conception of security than the traditional idea of security that is largely focused on the protection of state sovereignty, territorial integrity and political institutions. A human center approach places people and communities at the center of security governance and acknowledges that insecurity can stem from crime, violence, poverty, health crisis, economic disruption, social exclusion and institutional failure.³ This view implies that the state protected its citizens not merely from direct physical violence but from conditions that place them at substantial risk of harm to their lives and welfare. Security institutions are doing a bigger public job than keeping public order. They must combat crime, safeguard vulnerable groups, respond to emergencies, investigate unlawful activity and guarantee that those who take advantage of periods of instability are held to account in law.⁴

This task is made all the more difficult when multiple types of disaster arise at the same time. Violent conflicts may affect community relations, cause population displacement, disrupt economic activity and provide chances for the activities of criminal gangs. Public health emergencies can have diverse but equally devastating impacts including limit of travel, reduction in revenue, disruption of public services and extreme demands placed on government institutions.⁵ When such factors intersect it might create a complicated security environment, one in which normal law enforcement techniques are not enough. Thus, the capacity of the state to guaranty security during such moments is not only a matter of the number of

¹ Paul Aidonojie and others, 'Beyond Culture: Balancing Culture and Gender Equality on the Legality of Polygamy in the Case of Women's Pro Bono Initiative v Attorney General in Uganda', *African Journal of Law and Justice System*, 5.1 (2026), 175–93 <https://doi.org/10.31920/2753-3123/2026/v5n1a10>

² Paul Atagamen Aidonojie, Siti Nurhasanah, and others, 'Legal and Ethical Regulation on Childcare Digital Health System in Nigeria and Uganda: Issues and Challenges', *Trunojoyo Law Review*, 8.1 (2026), 27–58 <https://doi.org/10.21107/tlr.v8i1.32980>

³ Ansori Ansori and others, 'Understanding The Politics of International Law: A Case Study of The Israel-Palestine Conflict', *Lampung Journal of International Law*, 8.1 (2026), 13–34 <https://doi.org/10.25041/lajil.v8i1.5118>

⁴ Praditha Dewa Gede Edi and others, 'The Future of Bali's Kerauhan Tradition: Legal Pluralism, Reforms, and Conflict Adjudication Challenges', *Journal of Sustainable Development and Regulatory Issues (JSDERI)*, 4.1 (2026), 118–37 <https://doi.org/10.53955/jsderi.v4i1.149>

⁵ Godswill Owoche Antai and Paul Atagamen Aidonojie, 'Legal Mechanisms for Combating Transnational Corruption and Enhancing Economic Resilience in Selected West African Countries', *Journal of Sustainable Development Law and Policy (The)*, 17.3 (2026), 223–50 <https://doi.org/10.4314/jsdlp.v17i3.9>

security personnel or the harshness of criminal sanctions, but also of institutional coordination, public trust, technological capacity, preventive governance and the ability to deal with the structural causes of insecurity.⁶

These issues are particularly relevant for many African states because security institutions are often constrained by significant structural and operational limitations. Law enforcement may be hampered by limited resources, poor institutional coordination, lack of technology competence, weak accountability systems and challenges in criminal investigation. Economic inequality, unemployment, political conflicts, communal disputes and rivalry for natural resources can also compound insecurity. These current flaws may be more obvious in times of social conflict and public emergency, when security institutions are under the obligation to respond simultaneously to public disorder, criminality, the humanitarian necessities and demands for the protection of basic rights. In this sense, human insecurity cannot be viewed as the product of individual criminal action only. It also shows the ability of governing institutions to predict threats, avoid escalation, protect the impacted communities and rebuild public confidence.⁷

The case of Nigeria highlights the intricate link between crises, security governance and human insecurity. The country has seen various forms of instability, including terrorism, kidnapping, armed robbery, community violence, farmer-herder conflicts, sexual violence, cybercrime and property destruction. These threats are of varied nature and geographical patterns but they exert together enormous strain on law enforcement institutions and impact the ability of individuals to live and conduct their activities safely. The continuance of these difficulties poses a serious legal and institutional dilemma about the capacity of existing security systems to safeguard individuals in the face of destabilizing social and political conditions.⁸ The events of 2020 are a particularly crucial context for asking this topic. The COVID 19 pandemic caused a public health emergency that was unparalleled by nature, which disrupted economic activity, employment, movement, education, public administration and community life. Measures to restrict transmission modified patterns of social interaction and added obligations to public authorities. Economic hardship and limits on migration further enhanced the vulnerability of people who depended on informal economic activity and daily revenue. The security institutions thus had the difficult task of supporting the efforts of the public health authorities, while at the same

⁶ Paul Atagamen Aidonjio, George Mulingi Mugabe, and others, 'Protection of Patients' Constitutional Rights in Telemedicine Practice Based on Sharia Principles', *Jurnal Hukum Islam*, 23.2 (2025), 501–40 <https://doi.org/10.28918/jhi.v23i2.05>

⁷ M. Iqbal and others, 'Maqashid Sharia Approaches in Pension Fund Programs: Bank Muamalat Indonesia and Taspen Comparison', *Asy-Syari'ah*, 27.2 (2025), 212–38 <https://doi.org/10.15575/as.v27i2.45295>

⁸ Erma Rusdiana and others, 'The Potential for Corporate Corruption in Mining Licensing Policies for Religious Organizations in Indonesia', *Lex Scientia Law Review*, 9.2 (2025), 1587–1636 <https://doi.org/10.15294/lslr.v9i2.21551>

time continuing to combat crime, preserve public order and safeguard individual rights.⁹

At the same time, the EndSARS protests brought public concerns about policing, accountability and the conduct of security personnel into the national conversation. The protests revealed greater unhappiness with elements of law enforcement and raised several issues about the connection between security organizations and the communities they serve. The security situation was further compounded by the violence and devastation linked with the conflict. Arson, assaults on public and private property, looting and other criminal activities revealed how quickly a phase of social mobilization might escalate into a wider security crisis when institutional capacity, public trust and social stability eroded. The intersection of public health emergency, social unrest, economic pressure and criminal activities provided a particular setting for assessing the efficiency of security governance in Nigeria.¹⁰ The legal question is not whether crimes were committed in those times. A more fundamental question is the competence and obligation of security authorities to anticipate dangers, protect civilians, investigate criminal acts and enforce accountability, while protecting legal rights. Security governance is inadequate when institutions respond exclusively to violence or enforcement tactics fail to address factors that cause insecurity to exist. A successful security system must contain the elements of prevention, investigation, intelligence, community participation, institutional responsibility and legitimate enforcement. It must also distinguish between lawful exercise of fundamental rights and illegal action, so that measures designed to ensure security do not inadvertently damage public confidence or individual rights.¹¹

The existing study provides major insights into numerous facets of insecurity in Nigeria. One line of research focuses on violent conflict, identifying terrorism, community disputes, political instability, economic distress, competition over resources, and conflicts between farmers and herders as causes of continuous insecurity. Such studies have contributed a lot to the knowledge of the structural and social roots of violence. A second cluster of research looks at policing and law enforcement, and highlights institutional problems, lack of resources, corruption, low professional capability, bad community connections, and insufficient accountability as

⁹ Paul Atagamen Aidonojie, Kingsley Eghonghon Ukhurebor, and others, 'Retraction Notice to "Bioenergy Revamping and Complimenting the Global Environmental Legal Framework on the Reduction of Waste Materials: A Facile Review" [Heliyon 9 (2023) E12860]', *Heliyon*, 11.15 (2025), e43988 <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2025.e43988>

¹⁰ Paul Atagamen Aidonojie, Esther Chetachukwu Aidonojie, and others, 'From Innovation to Pandora's Box: Examining the Laws on Public Health Threats Emanating from Cloud Seeding', *Khazanah Hukum*, 7.3 (2025), 417-33 <https://doi.org/10.15575/kh.v7i3.45356>

¹¹ Ketut Sukewati Lanang Putra Perbawa, Paul Atagamen Aidonojie and Benjamin Okorie Ajah, 'Disability and Electoral Justice for Inclusive Participation', *Journal of Sustainable Development and Regulatory Issues (JSDERI)*, 3.2 (2025), 221-46 <https://doi.org/10.53955/jsderi.v3i2.93>

obstacles to successful crime prevention. This scholarship shows that institutional performance is a major determinant of the state's ability to preserve public security. A separate literature investigates the social, legal, economic and public health impacts of the COVID 19 epidemic. The studies show how movement limitations, unemployment, diminished economic activity, demand on health services and changes in social behavior enhanced susceptibility in different parts of society. Other studies have examined the EndSARS protests from the standpoint of police reform, human rights, youth mobilization, official response, and political accountability. These contributions have enriched academic understanding of both crises and have provided useful proposals on institutional reform, social protection, public health governance and police accountability.

The extant literature remains fragmented in some key areas. The literature on violent conflict often deals with the origins and consequences of particular forms of violence without relating them to the wider concept of human security within the framework of simultaneous national crises. While pandemic research frequently stresses health policy and socioeconomic impacts, less emphasis is paid to the connection between public health disturbance and the ability of security agencies to avoid emergent criminal threats. Research on policing typically concentrates on misconduct, institutional change, or operational efficacy, but rarely addresses the functioning of security forces under the simultaneous stresses of violent conflict and public emergency on the judicial system.¹² Consequently, the previous study does not adequately take into account the combination of violent conflict, pandemic conditions, criminal activity, and institutional capacity to create human insecurity. A significant drawback is the methodological isolation of legal analysis from the experiences of those affected by insecurity. Although normative studies can highlight legal obligations, institutional requirements and gaps in regulatory regimes, they cannot fully capture how individuals view the conduct of security institutions in moments of crisis. Empirical research may document perceptions of insecurity but fail to adequately investigate the legal and structural duties that shape the ways in which public authorities should react. The split constrains present studies in the assessment of the formal architecture and actual effectiveness of security governance.¹³

The study seeks to bridge these gaps by combining doctrinal legal analysis with empirical evidence from respondents throughout the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. The scientific contribution of this work is the joint analysis

¹² Paul Atagamen Aidonojie, Hassan Ismaila, and others, 'Examining Human Rights Abuses on Religious, Cultural, and Political Intolerance in Nigeria', *Journal of Sustainable Development and Regulatory Issues (JSDERI)*, 3.1 (2025), 78–94 <https://doi.org/10.53955/jsderi.v3i1.55>

¹³ Paul Atagamen Aidonojie, Nosakhare Okuonghae, and others, 'Legal and Socio-Economic Challenges of E-Commerce in Uganda: Balancing Growth and Regulation', *Trunojoyo Law Review*, 7.1 (2025), 1–32 <https://doi.org/10.21107/tr.v7i1.27704>

of the consequences of violent conflict and pandemic catastrophe on human insecurity, and not treating these events as isolated security challenges. The study further advances beyond the traditional crime control approach by examining the security services from a more holistic human security perspective. This allows the research to explore whether security institutions have the legal, institutional, operational and technological capacity to safeguard civilians when multiple types of crisis intersect. Connecting legislative requirements with public experiences of insecurity, the study provides a more holistic framework for assessing the strengths and weaknesses of Nigeria's security governance.¹⁴

This inquiry is urgent in light of the ongoing implications of insecurity for constitutional governance, economic development, social stability and public faith in state institutions. Ongoing violence and inadequate crime responses can erode the legitimacy of law enforcement organizations and generate views of impunity. At the same time, security actions that do not take into consideration accountability and individual rights can increase public suspicion and create new causes of conflict. Nigeria therefore needs a security governance architecture that can prevent crime, respond to emergencies and guarantee fundamental rights while addressing the societal factors conducive to insecurity. Knowledge of the constraints exhibited in times of violent conflict and public health crisis provides a crucial foundation for constructing such a model.¹⁵

The fundamental research challenge is to what extent violent conflicts and pandemic crises are aggravating human insecurity in Nigeria and whether the existing security institutions have the requisite institutional capacity to respond effectively to the risks they engender. Specifically, the study explores how these crises influence patterns of insecurity, determines the institutional and operational elements that hamper the efficiency of law enforcement, and evaluates the part played by security services in safeguarding individuals during times of increased vulnerability. Consequently, the study seeks to investigate the linkage between violent conflict, pandemic crisis and human insecurity in Nigeria, assess the efficacy of security agencies in countering the two challenges and formulate an integrated security governance model that would improve crime prevention, inter-agency cooperation, technological capacity, accountability and citizens' protection during crisis periods.

¹⁴ Mukhlis Mukhlis and others, 'Legal and Regulatory Issues Concerning the Concept of Cloud Seeding in Climate Change Mitigation', *Indonesian Journal of Environmental Law and Sustainable Development*, 4.1 (2025), 123-52 <https://doi.org/10.15294/ijel.v4i1.21627>

¹⁵ Antai Godswill Owoche and others, 'The Crisis in Red Sea Region: Legal and Socio-Economic Impact on International Commerce', *Al-Risalah: Forum Kajian Hukum Dan Sosial Kemasyarakatan*, 24.2 (2024), 17-35 <https://doi.org/10.30631/alrisalah.v24i2.1597>

Methodology

The two methods of survey resource data collection, qualitative and quantitative have been adopted in this study. The important doctrinal component is to analyze the legal theory associated with the enforcement of laws, human security, and the role of the Nigerian police to provide security. It also provides a study of crime levels during periods of violent social conflict, such as epidemics or pandemics in Nigeria. The methodology that was used is descriptive and analytically quantitative to collect objective, statistical, mathematics, and numerical information for analysis. This form of information was derived from an online questionnaire survey with respondents from various states in Nigeria.¹⁶ The non-doctrinal method would assist in the collection and analysis of data gathered from the questionnaires, thereby allowing general conclusions to be drawn concerning the rates of crime, types of crimes threatening human security in Nigeria, and whether these correlate with violent conflicts or epidemics/pandemics. The final area to be discussed are the better ways in which improving the access of law enforcement authorities to human security within Nigeria may be achieved.

Results and Discussion

The Establishment and Functions of the Nigeria Police in Law Enforcement

Every society develops rules, norms, and legal standards that regulate individual conduct and maintain relationships among members of the community. The state transforms many of these standards into binding legal rules and establishes institutions responsible for ensuring compliance. Law therefore performs several interconnected functions. It maintains public order, protects individuals from harmful conduct, regulates the exercise of public authority, resolves disputes, and establishes consequences for conduct that threatens social stability. These functions demonstrate that an effective legal system contributes directly to human security because the protection of life, property, dignity, and personal freedom depends substantially on the capacity of the state to prevent and respond to unlawful conduct.¹⁷

The government carries a fundamental responsibility to establish an effective law enforcement system capable of protecting individuals against threats to their security. This responsibility requires the state to regulate not only the conduct of private individuals but also the exercise of governmental authority. Effective enforcement therefore operates within a legal framework

¹⁶ Osikemekha Anthony Anani and others, 'Current Methods in the Management and Disposal of Plastic Wastes During COVID-19 Pandemic', in *Plastic and the COVID-19 Pandemic* (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2025), pp. 27–43 https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-74769-4_3

¹⁷ Paul Atagamen Aidonojie, Osikemekha Anthony Anani, and others, 'Regulations, Initiatives, and Legislation Regarding the Management of Plastic Waste', in *Plastic and the COVID-19 Pandemic* (Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland, 2025), pp. 229–46 https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-74769-4_14

that imposes obligations, establishes institutional powers, limits arbitrary conduct, and provides mechanisms for accountability. Criminal law performs a particularly important function within this framework because it identifies conduct that society considers sufficiently harmful to justify formal prohibition and punishment. The penal technique theory provides a useful conceptual basis for explaining how criminal law performs this regulatory and protective function.¹⁸

Penal technique theory views criminal law as an instrument of social control through which the state establishes prohibited conduct and determines the legal consequences of violating those prohibitions. The theory assumes that an organized society requires clear standards that distinguish lawful conduct from behavior that threatens individuals or the wider community. Criminal law consequently identifies prohibited acts, determines the elements necessary to establish criminal responsibility, provides procedures for determining guilt, and prescribes appropriate sanctions when a competent court establishes criminal liability. Through these mechanisms, the penal system seeks to discourage conduct that threatens public order and human security. The theory does not regard punishment as an isolated response to wrongdoing. Instead, it places criminal prohibition, investigation, adjudication, punishment, and correction within an interconnected institutional process. The state must first define conduct that constitutes a criminal offense with sufficient clarity to enable individuals to understand the limits of lawful behavior. It must then establish appropriate sanctions that reflect the seriousness of the prohibited conduct and the interests that criminal law seeks to protect. These sanctions may perform several functions, including deterrence, accountability, incapacitation, rehabilitation, and protection of the wider community.¹⁹

Penal technique theory also recognizes that legal prohibitions cannot achieve their intended purpose without institutions capable of implementing them. Effective criminal justice therefore requires properly organized institutions with clearly defined responsibilities. Police institutions detect criminal activity, receive complaints, conduct investigations, collect evidence, and apprehend suspected offenders according to law. Prosecutorial institutions assess evidence and initiate criminal proceedings where sufficient legal grounds exist. Courts independently determine criminal responsibility through procedures that protect the rights of all parties and ensure a fair adjudicative process. Correctional institutions implement lawful

¹⁸ Nurus Zaman and others, 'QUESTIONING THE CONSTITUTIONAL COURT DECISION REGARDING AGE LIMIT OF PRESIDENTIAL AND VICE-PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES', *PETITA: JURNAL KAJIAN ILMU HUKUM DAN SYARIAH*, 9.2 (2024), 540–60 <https://doi.org/10.22373/petita.v9i2.299>

¹⁹ Franklin Nakpodia and others, 'Digital Technologies, Social Entrepreneurship and Resilience during Crisis in Developing Countries: Evidence from Nigeria', *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 30.23 (2023), 342–68 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEER-01-2023-0012>

sentences and support rehabilitation and reintegration where appropriate. Other public institutions may provide welfare services, victim assistance, legal support, and preventive interventions. The effectiveness of penal techniques consequently depends on coordination among these institutions rather than on the performance of a single security agency.²⁰

Within this institutional structure, penal technique theory serves several important functions. It prohibits conduct that threatens public safety and social order and communicates the boundaries of legally acceptable behavior. It establishes proportionate legal consequences for individuals who violate criminal prohibitions. It authorizes competent law enforcement institutions to detect, investigate, and respond to suspected criminal conduct. It also discourages individuals from resorting to private retaliation or informal punishment by providing formal procedures through which the state investigates allegations and determines criminal responsibility. Finally, it establishes correctional mechanisms that implement judicial decisions while promoting punishment, rehabilitation, and social protection.²¹

The criminal justice process provides the practical mechanism through which these functions operate. When an alleged crime occurs, the relevant authorities receive information or a formal complaint and determine whether the circumstances require investigation. Law enforcement officers investigate the incident, collect relevant evidence, interview witnesses, and identify potential suspects. Where the available evidence provides lawful grounds for further action, the authorities may arrest or otherwise process a suspect according to applicable procedural safeguards. Prosecutors subsequently evaluate the evidence and determine whether the case should proceed before a competent court.²² The court then examines the evidence and determines criminal responsibility through a fair judicial process. When the prosecution proves guilt beyond reasonable doubt, the court may impose a legally authorized and proportionate sentence.²³ This process ensures that the state responds to criminal conduct through established legal institutions rather than arbitrary punishment or private retaliation. The requirement of due process remains fundamental throughout this process. Penal technique theory cannot promote human security if law enforcement institutions exercise their authority without legal limitations. Security does not justify

²⁰ Alicia Dotson and others, 'Mapping the Margins: A Spatial Vulnerability Index of Women's Peace and Security in Nigeria', *Applied Geography*, 188 (2026), 103915 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apgeog.2026.103915>

²¹ Paul Spiegel and others, 'Johns Hopkins Center for Humanitarian Health-Lancet Commission on Health, Conflict, and Forced Displacement: Health in a World of Crises and Impunity', *The Lancet*, 407.10543 (2026), 2065-2140 [https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(26\)00564-7](https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(26)00564-7)

²² Bala Isa Harri and others, 'Psychosocial Realities and Displacement-Related Factors Shaping Mental Health among Internally Displaced Persons in North Central Nigeria', *Mental Health & Prevention*, 43 (2026), 200546 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mhp.2026.200546>

²³ Olusola Joshua Olujobi and Oshobugie Suleiman Irumekhai, 'Strategies and Regulatory Measures for Combatting Illicit Mining Operations in Nigeria: A Comprehensive Legal Perspective', *Resources Policy*, 88 (2024), 104459 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resourpol.2023.104459>

arbitrary arrest, unlawful detention, excessive force, or punishment without judicial determination. An effective penal system must protect society from criminal conduct while simultaneously protecting suspects, defendants, victims, and other members of the public from abuses of governmental power. Human security therefore depends on both effective enforcement and lawful enforcement. The state weakens the legitimacy of the criminal justice system when it pursues security through practices that disregard fundamental legal safeguards.²⁴

Penal techniques also contribute to crime prevention through deterrence. Clear criminal prohibitions and credible enforcement can influence individual behavior by demonstrating that unlawful conduct produces legal consequences. However, deterrence depends on more than the severity of punishment. Individuals must perceive a reasonable likelihood that authorities can detect criminal conduct, conduct effective investigations, establish responsibility, and enforce judicial decisions. A legal system that prescribes severe sanctions but lacks effective investigative and prosecutorial capacity may provide only limited deterrent value. The effectiveness of penal techniques therefore depends on institutional competence, consistency of enforcement, procedural fairness, and public confidence in the criminal justice system.²⁵

The theory also provides an important alternative to self-help and informal retaliation. When individuals lack confidence in formal institutions, they may attempt to resolve criminal allegations through private violence, collective punishment, or other forms of unlawful action. Such practices can intensify conflict and generate further insecurity. Accessible and credible criminal justice institutions reduce this risk by providing lawful mechanisms for reporting offenses, investigating allegations, determining responsibility, and imposing appropriate sanctions. In this sense, penal techniques protect human security not only by responding to the original crime but also by preventing secondary violence that may arise from uncontrolled retaliation. The relationship between penal technique theory and human security becomes particularly important during periods of violent conflict and public emergency. Such conditions may increase criminal opportunities while simultaneously weakening the capacity of public institutions to respond. Violence may disrupt ordinary policing, while economic hardship and social instability may intensify existing sources of criminality. Public health emergencies may also place additional pressure on law enforcement institutions and require them to perform responsibilities beyond

²⁴ Lawrence Okoronkwo Udensi and others, 'Socio-Economic and One Health Impacts of Pollution-Induced Land Dispossession in the Niger-Delta Region, Nigeria', *Next Sustainability*, 7 (2026), 100237 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nxsust.2025.100237>

²⁵ Adetutu Deborah Aina-Pelemo and Olusola Joshua Olujobi, 'Empowering Choice: Navigating Women's Rights on Abortion under Nigerian Law', *Social Sciences & Humanities Open*, 13 (2026), 102719 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaho.2026.102719>

conventional crime control. Under these circumstances, the effectiveness of the penal system depends on institutional preparedness, professional competence, adequate resources, technological capacity, public cooperation, and coordination among criminal justice institutions.²⁶

The Nigerian context demonstrates the relevance of this theoretical perspective. Effective human security requires more than the existence of criminal laws and formal security institutions. It requires a criminal justice system capable of translating legal prohibitions into consistent, lawful, and effective enforcement. Weak investigation, delayed prosecution, inadequate institutional coordination, insufficient resources, limited technological capacity, and declining public confidence can create a gap between formal criminal law and practical security outcomes. This gap becomes especially significant during periods of violent conflict or national crisis because criminal actors may exploit institutional weaknesses and social instability.²⁷

The Role of the Nigeria Police Force in Law Enforcement and Human Security

The police constitute one of the principal institutions through which the state maintains public order, prevents criminal activity, enforces the law, and protects individuals and property. As part of the executive structure of government, the police exercise considerable responsibility for translating legal rules into practical measures that preserve security within society. Their direct interaction with citizens also makes them one of the most visible manifestations of state authority. Public perceptions of government effectiveness therefore often depend on the ability of the police to prevent crime, respond to security threats, investigate unlawful conduct, and exercise their authority within the limits established by law.²⁸

The development of modern policing reflects the broader need of states to establish permanent institutions responsible for maintaining social order. Nigeria adopted a centralized policing structure that places primary responsibility for policing at the federal level. This institutional arrangement seeks to establish uniform standards of law enforcement and maintain a coordinated national approach to security administration. The constitutional structure recognizes a single national police force under the leadership of the Inspector General of Police and establishes institutional mechanisms responsible for its administration and supervision. The statutory framework

²⁶ Daye Kwon and others, 'Addressing Conflict and Weather Shocks in Agrifood Value Chains: Policy Preferences of Nigerian Maize Wholesalers', *Food Policy*, 139 (2026), 103046 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.foodpol.2026.103046>

²⁷ Uchenna Efobi, Oluwabunmi Adejumo and Jiyoung Kim, 'Climate Change and the Farmer-Pastoralist's Violent Conflict: Experimental Evidence from Nigeria', *Ecological Economics*, 228 (2025), 108449 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2024.108449>

²⁸ Ayodele A Faiyetole and Winner O Abiodun, 'Conflict Corridor Modeling of Herder-Farmer Clashes in Nigeria: Climate Change and Land Use Dynamics in Nomadic Pastoral Zones', *Rangeland Ecology & Management*, 106 (2026), 93-107 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rama.2026.01.005>

further reinforces this constitutional foundation by defining the legal existence, authority, responsibilities, and operational functions of the police. The centralized structure provides the Nigeria Police Force with a significant position within the national security system. It enables the Federal Government to coordinate policing across different regions and seeks to maintain consistency in the enforcement of criminal law. However, centralization also raises questions concerning institutional responsiveness, accountability, resource distribution, and the capacity of a national institution to respond effectively to security problems that differ considerably across communities. These concerns become particularly important when local security threats require immediate responses, detailed knowledge of community conditions, and sustained cooperation between citizens and law enforcement authorities. The effectiveness of policing therefore depends not merely on the formal existence of centralized authority but also on the institutional capacity to translate that authority into effective protection at the community level.²⁹

One of the primary responsibilities of the Nigeria Police Force concerns the prevention and detection of crime and the preservation of public order. The law authorizes the police to prevent criminal activity, detect offenses, protect life and property, maintain public order, apprehend suspected offenders, and enforce applicable laws. These responsibilities establish crime prevention as a central element of policing rather than treating the police exclusively as an institution that responds after criminal conduct has occurred. Effective policing consequently requires preventive measures capable of identifying emerging security threats and reducing opportunities for criminal activity. Crime prevention performs a particularly important function within the concept of human security. The protection of citizens requires security institutions to anticipate threats before those threats result in serious harm. Police authorities must therefore develop the institutional capacity to gather information, identify patterns of criminal behavior, respond to complaints, conduct lawful surveillance where authorized, maintain community engagement, and deploy resources according to security risks. An effective preventive system can reduce the social and economic consequences of crime while strengthening public confidence in law enforcement institutions.³⁰

The responsibility to maintain public order complements the preventive function of policing. Public order does not simply require the absence of

²⁹ Sallek Yaks Musa, 'Banditry and Modern Slavery: (In)Security Dynamics in Nigeria', *Journal of Economic Criminology*, 10 (2025), 100194
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeconc.2025.100194>

³⁰ Tobias Tseer, Agape Kanyiri Damwah and Robert Yakubu Adjuik, 'Farmer-Herder Conflicts in Nigeria: Examining the Role of Identity Politics, Women's Agency and Impacts on Local Food Production', *World Development Perspectives*, 42 (2026), 100775
<https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wdp.2026.100775>

visible violence. It requires conditions in which individuals can exercise their rights, conduct economic activities, participate in community life, and resolve disagreements without fear of criminal violence. Police institutions contribute to these conditions by responding to conduct that threatens public safety and by preventing disputes from developing into wider forms of violence. However, the exercise of this authority must remain consistent with legal safeguards because maintaining public order cannot justify arbitrary restrictions on individual rights. The distinction between criminal and civil matters also defines the proper limits of police authority. The principal responsibilities of the police concern criminal investigation, crime prevention, public order, and the protection of life and property. Police officers should therefore avoid using criminal enforcement mechanisms to intervene improperly in disputes that remain purely civil in character. This limitation protects individuals from the misuse of coercive state authority and ensures that parties resolve civil disputes through appropriate legal mechanisms. Clear institutional boundaries consequently strengthen both the legitimacy of policing and public confidence in the administration of justice.³¹

Criminal investigation represents another fundamental responsibility of the police. When authorities receive information concerning an alleged offense, police officers must determine the relevant facts, collect evidence, identify witnesses, examine the circumstances surrounding the incident, and establish whether sufficient grounds exist for further legal action. The quality of an investigation substantially influences the effectiveness of the entire criminal justice process. Weak investigations may prevent prosecutors from establishing criminal responsibility, while professional and evidence-based investigations can strengthen accountability and increase the likelihood that courts receive reliable evidence. The authority to arrest suspected offenders forms part of this investigative and enforcement responsibility. Police officers may exercise arrest powers when the circumstances satisfy the requirements established by law. However, arrest constitutes a significant exercise of state power because it directly restricts personal liberty. Police authorities must therefore exercise this power according to legal procedures and respect the rights of individuals throughout the criminal process. Effective policing requires both the capacity to apprehend individuals reasonably suspected of criminal conduct and the institutional discipline necessary to prevent arbitrary or unlawful arrest.³²

The role of the police also extends to criminal prosecution within the boundaries established by law. Police officers may participate in prosecuting

³¹ Efe Jeffery Isukuru and others, 'Nigeria's Water Crisis: Abundant Water, Polluted Reality', *Cleaner Water*, 2 (2024), 100026 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.clwat.2024.100026>

³² Saul Estrin, Tomasz Mickiewicz and Tolu Olarewaju, 'The Cousin Marriage Tradition and Performance of Businesses during the Economic Crises in Nigeria', *World Development*, 188 (2025), 106910 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2024.106910>

criminal matters before competent courts where the applicable legal framework authorizes them to do so. This prosecutorial function connects police investigation with the judicial process and contributes to the enforcement of criminal law. Nevertheless, the exercise of prosecutorial authority operates within the broader constitutional structure of criminal justice and remains subject to the powers assigned to prosecutorial authorities. Effective criminal prosecution therefore requires institutional coordination and professional competence rather than unrestricted police authority. The relationship among prevention, investigation, arrest, and prosecution demonstrates that police effectiveness cannot be measured solely by the number of arrests made or criminal cases initiated. Effective law enforcement requires a continuous process that begins with preventing criminal activity and extends to lawful investigation, evidence collection, prosecution, adjudication, and the enforcement of judicial decisions. Failure at any stage may weaken the entire criminal justice process. For example, an arrest without adequate investigation may not result in successful prosecution, while a strong criminal prohibition produces limited security benefits when authorities lack the resources or competence necessary to identify offenders and collect reliable evidence.³³

Human security provides an important framework for evaluating these police functions. Traditional approaches to security often emphasize the protection of state institutions and territorial stability, whereas human security places individuals and communities at the center of protection. From this perspective, police institutions must protect citizens against threats to life, physical safety, property, dignity, and social welfare. Their responsibilities consequently extend beyond responding to individual offenses and include creating an environment in which people can live without persistent fear of violence and criminal victimization. This responsibility becomes more demanding during periods of violent social conflict and public emergencies. Such situations may increase criminal opportunities, weaken community relationships, disrupt economic activities, and place additional pressure on security institutions. Police authorities must respond simultaneously to ordinary criminal activity and extraordinary security threats while preserving public order and protecting fundamental rights. The ability to perform these functions depends on institutional preparedness, adequate personnel, professional training, technological resources, intelligence capacity, community cooperation, and effective coordination with other institutions within the criminal justice system.³⁴

³³ Olusola Joshua Olujobi and Nathaniel Tolulope Ape, 'Reforming Legal Frameworks for Combating Gas Flaring in Nigeria: A Comparative Legal Analysis and Sustainable Solutions', *Resources Policy*, 109 (2025), 105721 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resourpol.2025.105721>

³⁴ Seun Bamidele, 'Climate Change, Resource Conflicts, and Rural Women's Empowerment in Nigeria amid Democratic Erosion: A Feminist Political Economy Perspective', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 115 (2026), 103270 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2025.103270>

Nigeria continues to experience security challenges despite the extensive legal powers and institutional responsibilities assigned to the police. Violent communal conflicts, kidnapping, armed robbery, terrorism, sexual violence, destruction of property, cybercrime, and other forms of criminality continue to affect human security in different parts of the country. The persistence of these problems creates an important distinction between formal legal authority and actual institutional effectiveness. The existence of extensive police powers does not automatically produce effective law enforcement when institutional limitations restrict the capacity to prevent, investigate, and respond to criminal conduct. The effectiveness of police institutions should therefore be assessed according to their practical ability to protect citizens rather than merely according to their formal legal mandate. Adequate legal authority remains necessary, but institutional capacity determines whether the police can exercise that authority effectively. Personnel competence, investigative capability, technological resources, public cooperation, institutional accountability, and coordination with prosecutorial and judicial institutions directly influence law enforcement outcomes. Weaknesses in these areas can create enforcement gaps that criminal actors may exploit, particularly during periods of social instability.³⁵

The prosecution of criminal offenses further illustrates the importance of institutional coordination. The source material identifies police prosecutorial authority while also recognizing the broader constitutional authority of the Attorney General and the legal limitations governing prosecution. These overlapping responsibilities require clear institutional cooperation to prevent procedural uncertainty and ensure that criminal cases proceed efficiently. Police investigators, prosecutors, courts, and correctional institutions perform distinct but interconnected functions. Human security therefore depends on the effectiveness of the criminal justice system as a whole rather than on the police acting independently. The Nigeria Police Force occupies a central position in the relationship between law enforcement and human security. Its legal responsibilities encompass crime prevention, criminal investigation, maintenance of public order, protection of life and property, arrest of suspected offenders, and participation in criminal prosecution. However, the effectiveness of these powers depends on how security institutions exercise them in practice. A strong legal mandate cannot by itself guarantee human security when institutional weaknesses, inadequate resources, ineffective coordination, or limited public confidence restrict implementation. This distinction provides an important basis for examining police performance during violent social conflicts and public health emergencies. The central analytical question is therefore not whether Nigerian law grants the police sufficient formal authority, but whether the

³⁵ Nopriyandi Nopriyandi, Amad Sudiro and Hery Firmansyah, 'Rethinking Criminal Liability of Beneficial Owners in Tax Crime Enforcement', *Journal of Sustainable Development and Regulatory Issues (JSDERI)*, 4.2 (2026), 339–67 <https://doi.org/10.53955/jsderi.v4i2.285>

existing institutional structure enables the police to exercise that authority effectively, lawfully, and consistently in protecting citizens from the heightened forms of insecurity that emerge during periods of crisis.^{36v}

Crime Rate and Insecurity during Conflict and Crisis in Nigeria

Nigeria continues to experience serious forms of criminality and violent conflict that threaten human security, public order, and social stability. Kidnapping, murder, burglary, sexual violence, ritual killing, cybercrime, banditry, terrorism, and communal violence have affected individuals and communities across different parts of the country. The persistence of these offenses indicates that insecurity does not arise from a single source. Instead, criminal activity interacts with political tensions, economic hardship, communal disputes, institutional weaknesses, and limited law enforcement capacity. These conditions create a complex security environment in which citizens face threats to life, property, livelihoods, dignity, and freedom of movement.³⁷

Terrorism represents one of the most serious manifestations of human insecurity in Nigeria. Boko Haram has conducted violent attacks that have resulted in deaths, destruction of property, population displacement, and prolonged instability, particularly in communities affected by insurgency. The consequences extend beyond the immediate victims of terrorist attacks. Persistent violence disrupts education, employment, trade, agriculture, family life, and access to essential public services. It also forces individuals to leave their homes and creates communities of internally displaced persons who remain vulnerable to poverty, exploitation, and further violence. Terrorism therefore produces multidimensional insecurity that affects both physical safety and the wider social and economic conditions necessary for human development. Violent conflict between farmers and Fulani herders has also contributed substantially to insecurity in several parts of Nigeria. The conflict generally involves competing claims concerning access to land, grazing areas, agricultural resources, and the protection of livestock and crops. Farmers frequently accuse herders of allowing cattle to enter cultivated land and destroy crops, while herders may accuse farming communities of cattle theft and attacks against livestock. When public authorities fail to resolve these competing claims promptly and effectively,

³⁶ Himmaturojuli Rosyid Ridlo and others, 'Unregulated Orthodontic Practice and Its Implications for Equity and Sustainability in Public Health', *Journal of Sustainable Development and Regulatory Issues (JSDERI)*, 4.2 (2026), 368–405 <https://doi.org/10.53955/jsderi.v4i2.355>

³⁷ Ibrahim Al Shawabkeh, Enas AlQodsi and Mouaid Al Qudah, 'The Impact of Regulations on Social Protection Integration within the United Arab Emirates Value-Added Tax', *Journal of Sustainable Development and Regulatory Issues (JSDERI)*, 4.2 (2026), 406–33 <https://doi.org/10.53955/jsderi.v4i2.253>

local disputes may develop into retaliatory violence between communities.^{38v}

The consequences of these clashes can be severe. Violent confrontations have resulted in deaths, injuries, destruction of homes and property, loss of agricultural resources, and displacement of residents. Fear of repeated attacks may force individuals and families to abandon their communities, thereby increasing internal displacement and creating additional social and economic burdens. The conflict also affects agricultural production and rural livelihoods because insecurity may prevent farmers from cultivating land and discourage herders from moving safely through traditional grazing areas. What begins as a dispute concerning access to resources can therefore develop into a broader human security problem involving physical safety, food security, economic welfare, and community relations. Several incidents illustrate the seriousness of this problem. Between 1996 and 2006, violent clashes involving farmers and herders in Gombe and Bauchi reportedly resulted in more than one hundred deaths. The violence became particularly severe in 2016 when an armed group attacked Ukpabi Nimbo in Uzo Uwani Local Government Area of Enugu State. The attack resulted in deaths and extensive destruction of homes and property. Further violence occurred in Kajuru Local Government Area of Kaduna State in 2019, where attacks and retaliatory actions caused substantial loss of life. Another violent confrontation in Hong Local Government Area of Adamawa State reportedly affected thousands of individuals through displacement, injuries, disappearance, and other consequences of communal violence.³⁹

These incidents demonstrate that unresolved disputes between farmers and herders can develop from localized disagreements into serious threats to public security. They also expose limitations in preventive security governance. Effective law enforcement should not begin only after violence has resulted in deaths and destruction. Security institutions must identify emerging tensions, support peaceful dispute resolution, protect vulnerable communities, investigate criminal conduct, and prevent retaliatory attacks. A security system that responds primarily after violence has escalated may struggle to provide sustainable protection. The persistence of these conflicts therefore raises important questions concerning the preventive capacity, responsiveness, and institutional coordination of Nigerian security agencies. The events of 2020 introduced another dimension to the problem of human insecurity. The COVID 19 pandemic created an extraordinary public health crisis that disrupted social and economic activities throughout Nigeria.

³⁸ Muhammad Asif and others, 'Assessing the Impact of Ecofeminist Policy on Gender and Environmental Practices', *Journal of Sustainable Development and Regulatory Issues (JSDERI)*, 4.2 (2026), 434–65 <https://doi.org/10.53955/jsderi.v4i2.251>

³⁹ Enas Qutieshat, Majed Al Adwan and Maya Khater, 'Artificial Intelligence in Islamic Law: Ethics, Governance, and Accountability', *Journal of Sustainable Development and Regulatory Issues (JSDERI)*, 4.2 (2026), 467–714 <https://doi.org/10.53955/jsderi.v4i2.236>

Restrictions on movement affected employment, informal economic activities, transportation, education, and access to essential goods and services. For citizens who depended on daily income, prolonged restrictions created substantial economic pressure. The crisis therefore extended beyond public health and produced broader consequences for livelihoods and social stability.⁴⁰

The distribution of relief materials also generated public controversy during the pandemic. Reports concerning stored food and other relief materials contributed to public frustration at a time when many households experienced economic hardship. In some locations, individuals entered warehouses and removed stored materials. The disorder subsequently created opportunities for criminal actors to exploit the situation and target other public and private property. Security agencies consequently faced considerable difficulties in controlling looting, protecting property, maintaining public order, and responding to wider criminal activity during an already demanding public health emergency. This experience demonstrates the relationship between social welfare and security governance during periods of emergency. Public health restrictions may become difficult to enforce when citizens lack access to essential resources or lose their principal sources of income. Security agencies cannot independently resolve these socioeconomic problems because many of their underlying causes fall within the responsibilities of other government institutions. Effective human security during a public emergency therefore requires coordination among security agencies, health institutions, social welfare authorities, local governments, and other public bodies. The ability of government to address basic social needs can influence compliance with emergency measures and reduce conditions that criminal actors may exploit.

Nigeria faced additional security pressure when the EndSARS protests emerged during the same period. The protests reflected widespread public dissatisfaction with the conduct of the Special Anti-Robbery Squad and broader concerns regarding policing practices. Protesters raised allegations involving unlawful killings, torture, extortion, intimidation, arbitrary searches, harassment, unlawful detention, interference with privacy, and other forms of abuse. These allegations transformed the protest into a wider debate concerning police accountability, institutional legitimacy, and the relationship between law enforcement authorities and citizens. The EndSARS protests reveal an important dimension of human security that extends beyond protection from private criminal activity. State institutions themselves must exercise coercive authority according to law and respect the rights of citizens. Security governance becomes problematic when

⁴⁰ Made Sinthia Sukmayanti and AAA. Ngurah Tini Rusmini Gorda, 'Implementation of Substantive Justice in Juvenile Serious Crime Cases in Indonesia', *Journal of Sustainable Development and Regulatory Issues (JSDERI)*, 4.2 (2026), 715–44 <https://doi.org/10.53955/jsderi.v4i2.372>

institutions responsible for protecting the population become associated with conduct that generates fear or undermines public confidence. Human security therefore requires two complementary forms of protection. The state must protect individuals from crime and violence, while the legal system must also protect individuals against arbitrary or abusive exercises of state power.⁴¹

The convergence of the pandemic, economic hardship, public protests, allegations of police misconduct, looting, and other criminal activities placed exceptional pressure on Nigeria's security governance. These events demonstrate that insecurity during periods of crisis cannot be explained exclusively through conventional crime statistics. Social conditions, institutional performance, public confidence, economic vulnerability, and the legitimacy of law enforcement practices all influence the capacity of the state to maintain order. A crisis can expose existing institutional weaknesses and intensify public dissatisfaction when government institutions fail to respond effectively to citizens' needs. These circumstances also demonstrate the limitations of relying exclusively on reactive policing. Arresting offenders and prosecuting criminal conduct remain essential components of law enforcement, but sustainable human security requires preventive measures that address emerging risks before they develop into widespread violence. Security institutions require reliable intelligence, adequate personnel, appropriate technology, professional training, community cooperation, institutional accountability, and effective coordination with other public authorities. Government must also address social and economic conditions that contribute to conflict and criminal vulnerability.⁴²

The persistence of terrorism, communal violence, farmer and herder conflicts, criminal activity, and insecurity during public emergencies therefore reveals a broader governance problem. Nigeria possesses formal legal institutions and security agencies with substantial authority to prevent crime and maintain public order, yet serious threats to human security continue to occur. This apparent gap between formal authority and practical security outcomes requires empirical examination. Understanding how citizens perceive crime, violent conflict, public emergencies, and the performance of security agencies can provide important evidence for

⁴¹ Ghary Delia Handojo and Ariawan Gunadi, 'Legal Certainty in Underground Space Utilization: Lessons from Selected Jurisdictions', *Journal of Sustainable Development and Regulatory Issues (JSDERI)*, 4.2 (2026), 745–73 <https://doi.org/10.53955/jsderi.v4i2.390>

⁴² Sarvar Zafarovich Tojiboyev and others, 'Beyond Personal Data Protection: Constructing a Legal Framework for Big Data Governance in Uzbekistan', *Journal of Sustainable Development and Regulatory Issues (JSDERI)*, 4.2 (2026), 774–804 <https://doi.org/10.53955/jsderi.v4i2.395>

evaluating whether existing security governance adequately protects human security.⁴³

This study employed an empirical survey to examine public perceptions of human insecurity and the performance of security agencies during periods of violent conflict and public health crisis in Nigeria. The researchers administered an online questionnaire because the social distancing requirements associated with the COVID 19 pandemic restricted conventional physical data collection. Google Forms provided the primary instrument for collecting responses, while WhatsApp, Facebook, and email facilitated electronic distribution to participants across different states. The study selected 415 respondents from states across Nigeria and employed simple random sampling as the principal sampling technique. The researchers selected this method because it provided respondents within the relevant population with an opportunity to participate without deliberate preference for particular individuals. The approach also sought to reduce researcher influence during participant selection and support a broader representation of respondents from different geographical areas.⁴⁴

The questionnaire incorporated structured questions that allowed respondents to select predetermined answers and open questions that enabled them to express additional views. This combination provided quantitative information concerning general response patterns while allowing respondents to explain their perceptions and experiences in greater detail. The study used these responses to examine perceptions concerning violent conflict, criminal activity, public emergencies, law enforcement, and human security. The selection of 415 respondents sought to provide an empirical foundation for evaluating the research questions across different parts of Nigeria. Geographic diversity remained important because the nature and intensity of insecurity differ among regions. Some communities experience greater exposure to terrorism, while others face communal conflict, kidnapping, banditry, farmer and herder violence, cybercrime, or other security problems. Including respondents from different states therefore allowed the research to capture a broader range of perceptions concerning the effectiveness of security governance. However, the use of an online questionnaire also requires methodological caution. Electronic distribution may exclude individuals who lack reliable internet access, appropriate digital devices, or familiarity with online communication platforms. The sample should therefore be understood as representing the respondents who participated in the survey rather than automatically

⁴³ Akbar Zafar Ogli Tojiboev and others, 'Strengthening Startup Regulation to Advance Sustainable Economic Development in Uzbekistan', *Journal of Sustainable Development and Regulatory Issues (JSDERI)*, 4.2 (2026), 805–32 <https://doi.org/10.53955/jsderi.v4i2.396>

⁴⁴ R. Hendral R. Hendral and others, 'Regulatory Reform of Evidence Confiscation in Forestry Crimes for Sustainable Environmental Governance', *Journal of Sustainable Development and Regulatory Issues (JSDERI)*, 4.2 (2026), 833–76 <https://doi.org/10.53955/jsderi.v4i2.397>

representing every category of the Nigerian population. Recognizing this limitation strengthens the methodological transparency of the research and prevents claims that extend beyond the available empirical evidence.⁴⁵

The study analyzes the responses collected from the 415 participants to evaluate the relationship between violent conflict, public health crisis, criminal activity, and human insecurity in Nigeria. The analysis focuses on the research questions developed from the central objectives of the study. It examines respondents' perceptions of the prevalence of insecurity, the contribution of violent conflict and crisis conditions to criminal activity, and the effectiveness of security agencies in maintaining law and order. The study presents the empirical findings through descriptive analysis to identify patterns in respondents' answers and determine the dominant perceptions emerging from the survey. The analysis subsequently interprets these patterns within the broader legal and institutional framework governing law enforcement and human security. This approach connects empirical evidence with the study's legal analysis and enables the research to assess whether the formal responsibilities assigned to security institutions correspond with citizens' perceptions of their practical performance. The following analysis addresses each research question systematically. It presents the responses obtained from participants, identifies the principal empirical patterns, and evaluates their implications for law enforcement and human security. The analysis particularly considers whether periods of violent conflict and public health crisis increase exposure to criminal activity and whether existing security institutions possess sufficient capacity to prevent crime, maintain public order, and protect citizens during periods of heightened insecurity.⁴⁶

The geographical distribution of respondents across different states of Nigeria provides an important foundation for examining public perceptions of human insecurity. The participation of respondents from different geographical areas allows the study to capture experiences and perceptions from communities exposed to varying forms of criminal activity, violent conflict, and public emergencies. This geographical diversity strengthens the relevance of the empirical findings, although the results primarily represent the perceptions of individuals who participated in the survey rather than the entire Nigerian population. The findings reveal a strong perception that criminal activities constitute a serious threat to human security in Nigeria. A substantial 92.2 percent of respondents affirmed that criminal activities threatening human security occur in the country. This result indicates that insecurity represents a significant concern among the surveyed population.

⁴⁵ Abiodun O Adewuya and others, 'The MeHPriC Project in Lagos, Nigeria: A Mixed Methods Study on Policy, Governance, and Sustainability of Mental Health Integration', *The Lancet Regional Health - Africa*, 1 (2026), 100026 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lanafr.2026.100026>

⁴⁶ Godspower Oke Omokaro and others, 'Waste Management in Nigeria: Systemic Failures, Circular Economy Pathways and Sustainable Solutions', *Environmental Development*, 57 (2026), 101363 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envdev.2025.101363>

Kidnapping, terrorism, robbery, ritual killing, communal violence, and conflicts between farmers and herders contribute to an environment in which individuals may experience threats to their lives, property, livelihoods, freedom of movement, and social welfare. Persistent perceptions of insecurity also raise concerns regarding the ability of security institutions to fulfill their responsibility to prevent criminal conduct and protect communities.⁴⁷

The respondents identified several forms of criminal activity that become particularly concerning during periods of violent conflict and public health crisis. Destruction of property received responses from 85 percent of participants, representing 329 respondents, while 72.4 percent, representing 280 respondents, identified rape. Terrorism received responses from 81.9 percent, representing 317 respondents. Kidnapping recorded one of the highest levels of concern, with 92.8 percent, representing 359 respondents, identifying it as a significant threat. In addition, 68.5 percent, representing 265 respondents, identified robbery, while 86.3 percent, representing 334 respondents, identified cybercrime. Ritual killing recorded the highest proportion among the identified offenses, with 93.5 percent, representing 362 respondents. These results demonstrate the multidimensional character of human insecurity. Each form of criminal activity creates different but interconnected consequences for individuals and communities. Destruction of property threatens economic stability and livelihoods, while sexual violence directly affects physical integrity, dignity, and personal security. Terrorism creates fear, population displacement, loss of life, and disruption of community activities. Kidnapping threatens personal liberty and often creates severe financial and psychological consequences for victims and their families. Robbery affects personal safety and property, while cybercrime extends insecurity into financial and digital environments. Human insecurity should therefore encompass not only threats to physical survival but also threats to dignity, liberty, property, economic welfare, and social stability.⁴⁸

The findings further reveal a strong perceived relationship between periods of crisis and criminal vulnerability. A total of 85.2 percent of respondents, representing 351 participants, considered violent conflict and pandemic conditions important circumstances associated with crimes that threaten human security. This result suggests that respondents perceive crisis conditions as environments in which existing security problems may intensify. Violent conflict can disrupt community relations, weaken social control, displace populations, interrupt economic activities, and place

⁴⁷ Sunday Owonibi and others, 'Geospatial Identification and Ranking of Speed-Related Road Traffic Crash Blackspots on Lagos-Ibadan Expressway, Nigeria', *African Transport Studies*, 4 (2026), 100094 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.afrtran.2026.100094>

⁴⁸ Adewale George Adeniyi and others, 'Lead Pollution in Nigeria: Recent Trends, Distribution, and Remediation Strategies', *Next Research*, 10 (2026), 101895 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nexres.2026.101895>

additional pressure on law enforcement institutions. Public health emergencies can similarly restrict economic activity, increase social vulnerability, and divert institutional resources toward emergency management. These findings should not be interpreted as establishing that violent conflict or public health emergencies directly cause every criminal offense. Instead, they indicate that crisis conditions may create or intensify circumstances that increase vulnerability to criminal conduct. Social disorder, reduced economic opportunities, institutional disruption, displacement, and weakened security presence can provide opportunities for individuals or organized groups to engage in unlawful activities. The relationship between crisis and crime therefore requires attention to both individual criminal responsibility and the wider institutional conditions that influence security.⁴⁹

The experience of the EndSARS protests provides an important context for understanding this relationship. Periods of widespread protest can place considerable pressure on security institutions, particularly when peaceful demonstrations coincide with incidents of violence, looting, destruction of property, or other criminal activity. Criminal actors may exploit disorder to pursue activities unrelated to legitimate public protest. Security agencies consequently face the difficult responsibility of protecting peaceful civic participation while preventing criminal conduct and maintaining public order. Effective security governance requires authorities to distinguish clearly between the lawful exercise of civic rights and conduct that constitutes a criminal offense. The results therefore reveal an important institutional challenge. Respondents perceive high levels of insecurity and associate several forms of criminality with periods in which government and security institutions experience extraordinary pressure. This finding suggests that effective security governance requires institutional resilience. Security agencies must maintain essential crime prevention, investigation, and public protection functions even during violent conflict, public protest, or public health emergencies. Institutional preparedness becomes particularly important because criminal actors may exploit periods when government resources and law enforcement attention become divided among competing priorities.^{50v}

The respondents also identified several measures that they considered necessary for reducing criminal activity and strengthening human security. The strongest response concerned the quality of governance. A substantial 96.5 percent of respondents considered effective and efficient governance

⁴⁹ Philip N Ndubueze, 'Patterns of Child and Adolescent Sexual Abuse in the Era of COVID-19 Lockdown in Nigeria', *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, 77 (2024), 100671 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlcrj.2024.100671>

⁵⁰ Olayinka M Onayemi and others, 'Structural Violence and Everyday Survival during COVID-19 Lockdown: The Experiences of Street Children in Uyo, Nigeria', *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, 77 (2024), 100662 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlcrj.2024.100662>

that addresses health, social, economic, and political problems essential for reducing conditions that contribute to violent conflict and insecurity. This finding demonstrates that respondents do not perceive insecurity solely as a policing or criminal justice problem. Instead, they recognize that broader governance conditions can influence the emergence and persistence of criminal activity. This perception supports a more comprehensive approach to human security. Criminal law can prohibit harmful conduct and provide sanctions against offenders, but punitive measures alone cannot eliminate the structural conditions that contribute to insecurity. Economic hardship, unemployment, political tensions, social exclusion, weak public services, public health vulnerability, and competition over resources can create circumstances in which conflicts become more difficult to prevent. Government must therefore combine effective law enforcement with social, economic, political, and public health policies capable of reducing vulnerability and preventing conflict.⁵¹

Citizen participation also emerged as an important element of effective security governance. A total of 89.6 percent of respondents considered inclusive governance and active citizen participation necessary for reducing criminal activity. This finding emphasizes that security cannot depend exclusively on government institutions. Communities possess important information concerning emerging disputes, suspicious activities, local security threats, and patterns of criminal conduct. Effective cooperation between citizens and security institutions can therefore improve early detection and strengthen preventive responses. However, meaningful citizen participation requires public confidence in security institutions. Citizens may hesitate to report criminal conduct or cooperate with law enforcement authorities when they fear retaliation, harassment, abuse of authority, or ineffective institutional responses. Inclusive security governance must therefore strengthen accountability, transparency, responsiveness, and respect for individual rights. Improving institutional trust can encourage citizens to share information and participate constructively in community security initiatives.^{52v}

The findings also emphasize the importance of improving the operational capacity of law enforcement institutions. A total of 73.7 percent of respondents identified modern policing equipment and technology as important instruments for detecting and preventing crime. Contemporary criminal activity increasingly requires sophisticated investigative

⁵¹ Aliu Oladimeji Shodunke, 'Enforcement of COVID-19 Pandemic Lockdown Orders in Nigeria: Evidence of Public (Non)Compliance and Police Illegalities', *International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction*, 77 (2022), 103082 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdrr.2022.103082>

⁵² Richard Abayomi Aborisade, Niyi Adegoke and Oladele Adelere Adeleke, 'Enforcement of COVID-19 Lockdown Regulations and Human Rights Violations: Accounts of Arbitrary Arrests, Detention and Hazardous Conditions in Nigerian Police Cells', *International Journal of Law, Crime and Justice*, 77 (2024), 100677 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijlcrj.2024.100677>

capabilities. Terrorism, kidnapping networks, organized crime, cybercrime, and other complex offenses may exceed the capacity of conventional policing methods. Security institutions therefore require appropriate communication systems, forensic resources, digital investigation capacity, information management systems, intelligence capabilities, and professionally trained personnel. Nevertheless, technology alone cannot guarantee effective law enforcement. Modern equipment provides limited benefits when institutions lack professional competence, effective leadership, adequate training, accountability, or coordination. Technological modernization should therefore operate as part of broader institutional reform. Security agencies need to combine appropriate technology with professional development, effective investigative procedures, intelligence capacity, institutional accountability, and cooperation with other institutions within the criminal justice system.⁵³

The empirical findings reveal three interconnected dimensions of human insecurity in Nigeria. First, respondents perceive criminal activity as a serious threat to life, property, dignity, and social stability. Second, respondents associate periods of violent conflict and public health crisis with increased vulnerability to various forms of criminal conduct. Third, respondents favor a comprehensive response that combines effective governance, meaningful citizen participation, and stronger institutional capacity for law enforcement. These findings expose the limitations of a security system that relies predominantly on reactive enforcement. Arresting and prosecuting offenders remain essential components of criminal justice, but these measures operate after criminal activity has already occurred. Effective human security requires preventive governance that identifies potential threats, addresses emerging conflicts, improves institutional preparedness, strengthens community cooperation, and reduces conditions that enable criminal activity to develop. Security governance must therefore combine prevention and enforcement rather than treating them as separate responsibilities.⁵⁴

The results also demonstrate the importance of evaluating security from the perspective of individuals and communities. The effectiveness of security governance should not depend exclusively on the number of arrests, prosecutions, or security operations conducted by public authorities. A more meaningful assessment should consider whether citizens can live, work, travel, and participate in community life without persistent fear of kidnapping, terrorism, sexual violence, robbery, communal conflict,

⁵³ Oghenowede Eyawo and others, 'Predictors of the Willingness to Accept a Free COVID-19 Vaccine among Households in Nigeria', *Vaccine*, 42.23 (2024), 126225 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.vaccine.2024.126225>

⁵⁴ Nathaly Aguilera Vasquez and others, 'COVID-19 Policies and Tuberculosis Services in Private Health Sectors of India, Indonesia, and Nigeria', *Journal of Clinical Tuberculosis and Other Mycobacterial Diseases*, 38 (2025), 100503 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jctube.2024.100503>

destruction of property, and other serious threats. Human security therefore requires the state to protect physical safety while also safeguarding dignity, liberty, property, economic welfare, and social stability. The empirical evidence ultimately indicates that human insecurity in Nigeria represents both a criminal justice challenge and a broader governance problem. Violent conflict and public emergencies may intensify existing social vulnerabilities, while institutional weaknesses can reduce the capacity of security agencies to respond effectively. Strengthening human security consequently requires an integrated approach that combines effective governance, crime prevention, institutional coordination, citizen participation, technological capacity, and attention to the underlying social and economic conditions associated with insecurity. Such an approach can move security governance beyond reactive law enforcement toward a preventive and responsive system capable of protecting citizens during both ordinary conditions and periods of national crisis.⁵⁵

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that human insecurity in Nigeria intensifies during periods of violent conflict and public health crisis because existing social vulnerabilities interact with limitations in security governance and law enforcement capacity. The empirical findings reveal that respondents perceive crime and violence as serious threats to life, property, dignity, livelihoods, and social stability. The study further establishes that insecurity cannot be addressed effectively through reactive law enforcement alone. Although security agencies perform an essential role in preventing crime and maintaining public order, sustainable human security requires the government to address the social, economic, political, and public health conditions that contribute to violent conflict and criminal vulnerability. Nigeria should therefore adopt an integrated security governance model that combines effective law enforcement with preventive social policies, meaningful citizen participation, employment opportunities, institutional coordination, and accountable governance. Security institutions also require modern technology, adequate resources, professional capacity, and effective crime detection mechanisms to respond to contemporary security threats. Ultimately, strengthening human security requires Nigeria to move beyond a predominantly reactive approach toward preventive and inclusive security governance that addresses both criminal conduct and its underlying causes. This approach can strengthen public confidence, improve institutional effectiveness, reduce vulnerability during periods of crisis, and provide a more sustainable foundation for maintaining public order and protecting citizens.

⁵⁵ Boluwatife Solomon Ajibola, 'From COVID-19 to Fuel Subsidy Removal in Nigeria: Assessing the Political Opportunities for Local Grievance', *Urban Governance*, 4.4 (2024), 351–61 <https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ugi.2024.12.007>

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