ISSN NO: 2769-996X
October 2026

Investigating The Nexus Among Unemployment, Poverty And Insecurity In Nigeria

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Abstract
This study empirically examines the nexus among unemployment, poverty and insecurity in Nigeria. The estimations are carried out with time-series data from 1991 to 2025 using autoregressive distributed lag (ARDL) technique. The long-run results from the ARDL model clearly showed that poverty and economic growth positively and significantly affect insecurity, while unemployment has negatively significant effect on insecurity. Nevertheless, inequality, inflation, corruption, and literacy rate displayed positive but insignificant relationship with insecurity. However, the short-run result shows that one-year lagged value of insecurity, current year value of poverty, current year value of inflation, and one-year lagged value of inflation all have positive significant relationship with the current year level of insecurity. Therefore, the study recommends that the government should diversify Nigeria's economy and boost value addition in the agricultural sector which can both contribute to the elimination of poverty and by expanding agriculture, the government will be able to offer even more specialized professions, enabling people to move up the employment ladder. More so, the government should support increased employment creation by fostering entrepreneurial ecosystems and encouraging private-sector cooperation through incentives and social impact bonds.
Key words: Insecurity, Unemployment, Poverty, Economic Growth, Nigeria**,**

JEL: O1, O2, J6, I3

INTRODUCTION

Twenty years into the twenty first century, all efforts are being made globally to accelerate economic growth and development in different nations. The recession of 2007 that started in USA spilled over the world and presented a shock in the pace of global economic growth and development. To worsen the situation, COVID- 19 pandemic pushed over 100 million people globally into extreme poverty (World Bank, 2020); as a result of that hardship, criminality and insecurity have become order of the day (Agogbua et al., 2022). Nigeria is not left out in the global economic growth and development meltdown; and consequent hardship that brought increase in crime and other social vices.

In Nigeria, World Bank (2024) reported that between 2000 and 2014, Nigeria's economy experienced broad-based and sustained growth of over 7% annually on average, benefitting from favorable global conditions, and macroeconomic and first-stage structural reforms. From 2015-2022, however, growth rates decreased and GDP per capita flattened, driven by monetary and exchange rate policy distortions, increasing fiscal deficits due to lower oil production and a costly fuel subsidy program, increased trade protectionism, and external shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Weakened economic fundamentals led the country's inflation to reach 24-years high of 31.7% in February 2024, which, in combination with sluggish growth, has

ISSN NO: 2769-996X
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pushed millions of Nigerians into poverty (World Bank, 2024). Nwachukwu (2023) reported that majority of Nigerians currently live in poverty, over 70 per cent of the citizens were living below the poverty line.

One threat that poverty possesses in any place where its rate is quite high is crime augmentation. Poverty frustrates. It can propel a man into doing what is morally, ethically and socially wrong. This is no lie because poverty is one of the cardinal mothers of crime in different human societies. It is based on the above that the Nigerian government, together with non-governmental organizations went in search of and came up with different policies and programmers at different times aimed at "banishing" the crime-augmenting agent – poverty from the country. This is evident in the policies almost every regime had pursued in Nigeria many decades and years ago (and even presently). Some of the policies/programmers include Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) under General Olusegun Obasanjo, Green Revolution under Shehu Shagari, Structural Adjustment Programme under General Ibrahim Babangida and so forth. Nevertheless, regardless of this, multitudinous Nigerians still lived (and live) below poverty line, which is present at $1.90 per day.

However, Nigeria is the giant of Africa considering the size of her economy, population and her impact on the continent but also for the enormous size of her population growth. According to the 2006 census, the age demography of the population shows that the labour force (15 – 64 years) represents 50.3% of the population. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) showed that a staggering 24.5 million persons were either unemployed or underemployed as at the first quarter of 2016. The addition of the yearly graduates from the universities further worsens the unemployment crisis. However, the NBS noted that using its previous methodology unemployment alone in Q1 of 2016 would stand at 31.2% as against 12.1%. Macro trends (2024) reported that Nigeria's unemployment rate for 2019 was 5.21%, a 0.24% increase from 2018. In 2020 it was 6.00%, a 0.79% increase from 2019. 2021 revealed unemployment rate at 5.94%, a 0.06% decline from 2020. Nigeria's unemployment rate for 2022 was 5.76%, a 0.18% decline from 2021. Honoré De Mirabeau (1749-1791) once said "I know only of three ways of living in society: one must be a beggar, a thief, or a wage earner" and every individual in society should be able to meet his/her primary needs of shelter, food and clothing at the very least. The assertion is that the high rates of unemployment in an economy is a stimulating factor for unemployed persons to commit crime for monetary gains (Syed et al, 2011).

The rise in unemployment and unimproved economic situation is considered to be the proximate cause of increased crime rate and insecurity in Nigeria. This has been shown in the countless fatalities, damage to household valuables and infrastructure worth billions when estimated in naira to various criminal activities (Ajibola, 2016).

Nigerian national security threat increased phenomenally which prompted increase in national budget allocation on security and criminalization of terrorism by passing Anti- Terrorism Act in 2011. Despite government counter-terrorism expenditure and efforts in recent years, the level of insecurity in Nigeria has continued to increase and the terrorists and bandits are seemingly more emboldened and audacious. Why has the government effort at stemming the tide of insecurity in Nigeria yielded little results despite increased security spending? To understand this, one must ask whether government attempt at resolving the problem of insecurity in Nigeria is directed at the root causes which are believed to be economic in nature. The gloomy situation poses critical question on the extent of impact of unemployment and poverty on insecurity in Nigeria as guide for policy makers in resolving the country's current insecurity situation in its pursuit of growth and development. The main objective of this study is to show the connections among unemployment, poverty and insecurity in Nigeria. Specifically, the study analyzed the long-run and short-run effects of unemployment on insecurity in Nigeria; examined the long-run and short-run effects of poverty on insecurity in Nigeria.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Second section presents the literature review, third section presents the methodology, fourth section presents the methodology, the fifth section relates the estimation results and discussion, and the last section summarizes, concludes, and recommends.

LITERATURE REVIEW
CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Concept of Unemployment

There is no universal standard definition of unemployment as various countries adopt definitions to suit their local priorities. However, all countries however use the International Labor Organization (ILO)

ISSN NO: 2769-996X
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definition, or a variant of it to compute unemployment. The ILO definition covers persons aged 15–64 who during the reference period (which is usually the week preceding the time the survey is administered) were available for work, actively seeking work, but were unable to find work(NBS, 2017). The Nigerian National Bureau of Statistics, like most countries in the world, uses a variant of the ILO definition such that the unemployment is the proportion of those in the labor force (not in the entire economic active population, nor the entire Nigerian population) who were actively looking for work but could not find work for at least 20 hours during the reference period to the total currently active (labor force) population. Accordingly, a person is unemployed if he or she did absolutely nothing at all or did something but for less than 20 hours during the reference week(NBS, 2017).

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The Concept of Poverty

There is no applicable definition of poverty due to the character of poverty and its multi-dimensional effect on the household. According to Chen (2023), poverty refers to the state or condition in which people or communities lack the financial resources and other essentials for a minimum standard of living. As such, they cannot meet their basic human needs. Poverty in its most universal sense, is the absence of vital demands including food, shelter, medical care and safety which can be typically important for reflection (Bradshaw, 2007). The diverse measures of poverty lead to two perspectives which are "income poverty" and "lack of basic need poverty". Income poverty happens while a person does not have sufficient money to fulfill up with a sure popular of dwelling whilst loss of fundamental wants. Poverty takes place while is not able to fulfill a number of the fundamental wishes along food, safe haven and apparel according to United Nations, Children Fund (UNICEF, 2016).

Concept of Insecurity

Buzan (1991) sees insecurity as political, economic, social and environmental threats that affect the individual as well as the state at national and international levels. This encompasses insecurity in most aspects of human endeavors and thus insecurity is a threatening factor that deters the progress of human in his pursuit of socio-economic life.

According to Nwagboso (2012) insecurity is the danger that entrepreneurs and executives of business organizations exercise by relocating their business ventures from an insecure environment to a more secure one. This view is applicable to Igbo and Yoruba business men who relocated to their native lands in the wake of Boko Haram Insurgency (Adegbami, 2013). The view is also applicable to many manufacturing companies that relocated from the Northeast geo-political zone of Nigeria to other countries due to the high level of insecurity occasioned by the Boko Haram Insurgency (Ajodo-Adebanjo and Okorie, 2014).

However, Chris (2021) defines insecurity as the state of fear or anxiety, stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection. This definition reflects physical insecurity which is the most visible form of insecurity, and it feeds into many other forms of insecurity such as economic security and social security, political, environmental insecurity. From the above definitions, insecurity is the feeling or conditions that threaten the social survival of people, and the consequence of which affect human capital development.

Theories of Unemployment

Keynesian Theory of Unemployment

John Maynard Keynes in the 1930s revolutionized thinking in several areas of macroeconomics including unemployment, money supply, and inflation which is seen in his publication of 1936 titled "The General Theory of Unemployment, Interest and Money" (Keynes,1936). Keynesian theory of unemployment is also known as cyclical unemployment or deficient demand theory of unemployment occurs when there is no adequate aggregate demand in the economy. The theory argued that as there is decrease in the demand of goods and services, production level will also decreases making few workers to be needed. The Keynesian model is predicated on the assumption of inflexible prices and market imperfection, Keynes saw the lack of demand for jobs as potentially resolvable by the government by raising its aggregate expenditure, deficit spending which can boost employment level and increases aggregate demand in the economy.

Okun's Theory of Unemployment

Okun's theory describes a relationship in economics between unemployment and economic output, such that when unemployment falls GDP increases, and when unemployment rises, GDP decreases. The theory states that for every 1% decrease in the unemployment rate, a country's GDP will be roughly 2% higher than its potential output (Law, 2024). Conceptually, this relationship means that as people find jobs, they contribute to economic production of goods and services, and vice versa—Okun's theory quantifies that reasonable premise.

Search Theory of Unemployment

The search theory of unemployment was propounded by Stigler in 1961 and the theory was later developed into dynamic models by John McCall in 1970 (Effiong and Asidok, 2026). The theory identified unemployment as rational, information seeking process, the further argued that unemployment is a result of

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October 2026

employers quitting their job to search for a new and better-paid job. This involves a certain optimum time spent searching in order to find the best paid job while searching, the worker is employed.

Theories of Poverty

The Individual Attribute Theory

This theory proposed that the motive of poverty cannot be fully be blamed on the productive activities of capitalists in an economy but rather individual characteristics, that is, the area of a person with inside the society's rating of income and wealth which become ascertained to be determined, through the motivations, attitudes of such individual (Mc Clelland, 1961; Hagen, 1962). The poor are assumed to be accountable for creating their problems through lack of hard work choices and bad choices. Neo classical economists reinforce individualistic origin of poverty with the assumption that people are responsible for their choices in maximizing their well being through wise investment. The theory depicts the poor as moral hazard with claims that poverty continues because the poor are engaged in activities which are counter-productive.

The Vicious Cycle of Poverty Theory

The vicious cycle of poverty theory was propounded by Ragnar Nurkse in 1966 (Ukpe et al., 2025). The theory posits that poverty breeds poverty, and its effect is transmitted from one generation to another over time. The vicious cycle has no beginning and no end. The theory states that, various conditions of the poor combine to make the poor remain in poverty such that, the poor are so ensnared in poverty that there is little or no chance to escape it (Ewhrudjakpor, 2008).

THEORIES OF INSECURITY

Queer Ladder Theory (QLT)

The Queer Ladder Theory (QLT) is of the notion that organized crime thrives in contexts where the government's capacity to dictate, sanction and deter crime is poor; where public corruption is endemic; and where prospects for legitimate livelihood opportunities are slim. Under these circumstances, the incentive to indulge in crime is high, while deterrence from criminal living is low. In other words, the benefits of committing a crime surpass the costs and/or risks involved. This creates pretext for criminal impunity and franchise (Usman, 2025).

Frustration-Aggression Theory

The frustration-aggression theory is another interesting theory developed by psychologist and behavioral analyst "John Dollard and associates" in 1939 but was expanded and modified by Yale (1962) and Berkowitz (1988). The theory draws mainly from the psychological basis of motivations and behaviour. The theoretical framework complements relative deprivation theory to provide explanation for violent behavioural disposition resulting from the inability of a people to fulfil their human needs. It is based on the general premise that all humans have basic needs, which they seek to fulfill and that any blockade to the fulfillment of these needs by individuals or groups elicit violent responses. Frustration-aggression theory emphasizes the difference between what people feel they want and the discrepancy however, marginal, between what is sought and what they get, the greater the violent reaction.

EMPIRICAL STUDIES

Unemployment

Several studies carried out on unemployment include Calmfors and Holmlund (2000), Oyefusi (2010), Durosinmi (2012), Dodo & Idris (2022), Ekpeyong (2023), and Okeowo (2023). Others are Azeng and Yogo (2013) that examined the link between youth unemployment and political instability in 24 developing countries among five regions in the World using a time and cross section data from 1980 to 2010. Political instability was proxy by internal conflict and political stability, and data was analysed using fixed effects regression with instrumental variables approach. They found that youth unemployment causes internal conflict but reduces political stability. These results informs that nations with political stability with low economic opportunity for the youth are bound to have internal conflict and further political instability since the youth find it difficult to get employed, and where employments were available they are underemployed.

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Adekoya (2020) examined the link between youth unemployment and violent crime from 2006-2016 for ten developing countries in Africa (Botswana, Morocco, Mauritius, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, and Zambia). Analysis of the data is done using the Panel Corrected Standard Error Approach. This study found that youth unemployment and population increase violent crime. But income per capita and employment in agriculture reduce violent crime. The result suggests to the policy makers to invest in agriculture, as it is capable to provide income-employment to the large youth population. This serves as discouragement tool to engage in violent crime, thereby reducing violent crime in the region.

Onwuka, Ugwu, and Chukwuma (2020) examined the implications of youth unemployment and violent crimes on the economic growth of Nigeria. A sample of 272 persons was selected from the population of 147 business owners and 125 members of the national council of youth in Anambra state Nigeria and questionnaires were administered through simple random sampling to collect data for analysis. The study concludes that youth unemployment affects negatively economic growth in Nigeria due to a high increase in violent crimes such as, kidnapping, robbery, hugger, and terrorism which hinders business investment and economic growth.

Olayemi et al. (2023) examined the impact of unemployment on economic growth in Nigeria. It was found out that unemployment had a positive and significant impact on economic growth both in the short run and in the long run. Furthermore, based on the findings, the paper recommended the introduction of programmes and policies that will promote enabling business environment to enable the teeming unemployed population to contribute to economic growth in Nigeria.

Poverty

Previous studies on poverty include Tru (2022), Zhu et al (2022), Yu and Liu (2022), Mahembe et al (2019), Nindi and Odhiambo (2015), Achia et al. (2010). In Nigeria, studies were conducted by Okoroafor and Chinweoke (2013), Nurudeen and Ibrahim (2014), Akawu and Charles (2018), Itari et al. (2018),Mba et al (2018), and Osinowo et al (2019). Also, Segun (2014) examines the complex relationships of unemployment, poverty' and insecurity with a particular focus on the Nigeria's Fourth Republic. With heavy reliance on secondary and empirical data, the paper finds that, although there is an increase in the country's GDP and foreign reserve, poverty is still on the increase and consequently, selves as a driver of insecurity.

Ajodo-Adebanjokoand Walter (2014) examined the relationship between poverty, conflict and insecurity in Nigeria with particular reference to conflict-ridden areas of the North-East, South-South and Middle-Belt. Secondary sources of data were used and data were taken from the National Bureau of Statistics (NDS). Research findings show that insecurity contributes to poverty with implications for development and the need to shun violence was recommended.

Awojobi (2014) analysed the link between poverty and insecurity in Nigeria. The study was based on secondary data. The data were taken from journals, textbooks, magazines and newspaper publications. From the evidence of existing empirical literature, the paper identified a higher incidence of poverty as a factor that is responsible for the security challenges facing Nigeria.

Okolie et al (2019) examined the relationship between poverty and insecurity in Nigeria. The results among others showed that poverty has a positive and significant relationship with insecurity in Nigeria. As predicted, the study also revealed that poverty exerts a positive and statistically significant impact on insecurity in Nigeria. Therefore, the study recommends among others that Nigerian government at all levels should care more about the welfare of the people by attending to their essential needs.

Nzeribe et al (2022) appraised the relationship between poverty, economic growth and income inequality in Nigeria and the interaction effect of growth and income inequality on Nigeria’s poverty level. The study applied Auto-Regressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) model on annual data between 1980 and 2018. The study established that per-capita economic growth has a positive but insignificant relationship with poverty in the long run. The result also showed that inequality had a positive relationship with poverty, while the interaction of growth and inequality had a negative relationship with poverty.

Insecurity

Investigations on insecurity include Blomberg, Hess and Orphanides (2004), Tavaries (2004), Eckstein and Tsiddon (2004), Gupta et al (2004), and Sandler and Ender (2008). In Nigeria, studies include Nwagwu

ISSN NO: 2769-996X
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(2014) which ascertained whether the increased wave of violence in Nigeria is as a result of unemployment and poverty. The study underscores that unemployment and poverty are universal phenomena, not necessarily a peculiar characteristic of any particular segment of the society. The research revealed that unemployment and poverty have direct link to security challenges in Nigeria. Obi (2015) had carried out an empirical investigation on the challenges of insecurity and terrorism on national development in Nigeria using the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) method and data set from 1990 to 2012. The result showed that terrorism and insecurity have an indirect effect on economic development by making the government to incur the cost of diverting the scarce resources that were hitherto aimed at attaining rapid development to be committed to attaining security instead. He ascertained that expenditure on security matters and significantly and positively impacts on economic development. Jelilov et al (2018) empirically investigate the effect of insecurity and investment on the economy of Nigeria from 2007 to 2017 and they found that terrorist activities have significant effect on economic growth in Nigeria. Edomwonyi-Out and Edomwonyi-Out (2020) study focuses on the relationship between unemployment and insecurity in Nigeria using historical and descriptive statistic. The study found a link between unemployment and insecurity in Nigeria, it also found out that the problem is exacerbated in an election year due to the thuggery and violence linked to elections.

Yakubu (2020) analysed the impact of poverty on insecurity in Nigeria. The study adopt secondary data for it analysis. From the evidence of existing empirical literature, the paper identified a higher incidence of poverty as a factor that is responsible for the security challenges facing Nigeria currently. Other studies on insecurity in Nigeria include Stewart (2021), Adenike (2021), Austin-Egole et al (2022), Olasehinde (2022), Yusuf and Mohd (2023).

The literature review shows that most studies pioneered by various scholars have focused on the issues concern separately and the connection between unemployment and poverty were frequently obscured and unrelated to insecurity. For instance, unemployment: unemployment and political instability; unemployment and violent crime; economic growth and unemployment; economic growth, inflation and unemployment; inflation, unemployment, economic growth and poverty reduction (see Azeng and Yogo (2013); Adekoya (2020); Calmfors and Holmlund (2000); Durosinmi (2012); Olayemi et al. (2023)). Also, Poverty: inequality, poverty and economic development; poverty and CO2 emissions; foreign aid, poverty, and economic growth; poverty reduction and economic growth; poverty and inequality; unemployment, poverty' and insecurity; poverty and insecurity (see Zhu et al (2022); Yu and Liu (2022) ; Mahembe et al (2019); Nindi and Odhiambo (2015); Okoroafor and Chinweoke (2013)**;** Segun (2014)**;**Awojobi (2014)). Similarly, security: terrorism and per capita income growth; insecurity and trade; terrorism and economy; violence, unemployment and poverty; insecurity, terrorism and national development; unemployment and security challenges (see Blomberg et al (2004); Anderson and Marcouiller (2002); Nwagwu (2014); Stewart (2021)).

Despite the few studies that put little emphasis on unemployment, poverty and insecurity(see Segun (2014); and Adenike (2021)), the previous findings on the subject matter are still ambiguous which calls for further research. However, the empirical literature on unemployment, poverty and insecurity in Nigeria is very scanty which constitutes the major gap in knowledge filled by this indispensable research. On this note, this study re-investigates the link between unemployment, poverty and economic growth in Nigeria between the periods of 1991 to 2025.

METHODOLOGY

Theoretical Framework

The theories guiding this study are the new Keynesian theory of unemployment, economic theory of poverty, the relative dependency theory. Each presents its concept of poverty, unemployment, insecurity, and the nexus between the three. For instance, Keynesian theory of unemployment also known as cyclical unemployment or deficient demand theory of unemployment opines that unemployment occurs when there is no adequate aggregate demand in the economy. The theory argued that as there is decrease in the demand of goods and services, production level will also decreases making few workers to be needed. The Keynesian model is predicated on the assumption of inflexible prices and market imperfection, Keynes saw the lack of

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demand for jobs as potentially resolvable by the government by raising its aggregate expenditure, deficit spending which can boost employment level and increases aggregate demand in the economy.

The economic theory of poverty is of the view that poverty emerges from the morphology of the economy. Part of the determinant of poverty is differing employment stage and character of earning distribution. Surprisingly, a person is poverty bothered now no longer due to his laziness however because of the truth that he lacks, the possibility to work. He becomes poor resulting from the defective monetary device that deprived him is part of income and equity.

The relative deprivation theory explains the emergence of violence as a result of the gap between the expected and achieved welfare, which causes discontentment. According to this theory, revolution or other acts of violence—like banditry, insecurity, kidnapping, terrorism and so on—are driven by a relative feeling of inequality rather than natural instinct (Gurr, 1970). That is, people resort to violence when they perceive that what is legitimately theirs has been given or taken by others.

Model Specification

Based on the theoretical framework of the study and on the discussion paper of Becker (1968) that generated the model for crime supply function which considered economic factor as an incentive to motivate crime (which include intentional homicides, assault, armed robbery, etc.), the empirical model to capture the objective of this study which is the effect of unemployment and poverty on insecurity (indicators of the prevailing insecurity cases in Nigeria include armed robbery, kidnapping of innocent citizens, humans trafficking, religious motivated killings, inter-tribal or communal wars, terrorism, nefarious activities of gangster/cultist, insurgence and banditry)in Nigeria is presented as follows:

INSEC = f(UNEM, POV) …….(2)

Where, INSEC = insecurity

UNEM = unemployment

POV = poverty

The equation above is specified in functional form and explains that insecurity depends on unemployment and poverty. However, based on empirical reviews (Enofe et al., 2016; Steward, 2002; Obi, 2005; Orokpo et al., 2018; and Humphreys and Weinstein, 2008; Adenike, 2021) several numbers of other relevant variables should be included. For simplicity, this study specifies the following;

INSEC = f (UNEM, POV, INEQ, INFR, COR, LIT, ECG) ……(3)

The stochastic form of the model above is provided as follows:

$LINSECt = \delta_0 + \delta_1 LUNEM_t + \delta_2 LPOV_t + \delta_3 LINEQ_t + \delta_4 LINFR_t + \delta_5 LCOR_t + \delta_6 LLIT_t + \delta_7 LECGt + Ωt$ ……(4)

Where INSEC is insecurity; POV = Poverty rate(Nigeria poverty rate , % under US $5.50 per day); ECG= Economic growth (proxy by GDP at Current Market Prices (₦' Billion)); INF =Inflation (proxy by consumer price index); UNEM = Unemployment, total (% of total labor force); INSEC =Insecurity (proxy by internal security expenditure ₦' Billion); INEQ = Inequality (proxy by Gini coefficient index); COR =Corruption (The Corruption Perceptions Index %); LIT = Literacy (%); L is logarithmic term;δ_0 is constant intercept, δ_1, δ_2, δ_3, , δ_4, δ_5, δ_6, and δ_7 are coefficients of associated variables, subscript t represents time period; Ω is the error term that captures effects of other variables omitted in the model. The a priori expectations of the parameters are: δ_1 to $\delta_5 > 0$; $\delta_6 \& \delta_7$ 0 <.

This study employed the Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) approach by Pesaran, Shin and Smith (2001) to examine the effects of unemployment and poverty on insecurity in the long and the short run periods in Nigeria. With this approach, insecurity is expressed as a function of the lagged value of itself and the current and the lagged values of the explanatory variables. Therefore, equation (4) is transformed to an ARDL-ECM framework as follows:

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$$\Delta LOGINSEC_t = \alpha_0 + \sum_{i=1}^{n} \pi_{1i} LOGINSEC_{t-1} + \sum_{i=1}^{n} \pi_{2i} \Delta LOGUNEM_{t-1} + \sum_{i=1}^{n} \pi_{3i} \Delta LOGPOV_{t-1} + \sum_{i=1}^{n} \pi_{4i} \Delta LOGINEQ_{t-1} + \sum_{i=1}^{n} \pi_{5i} \Delta LOGINFR_{t-1} + \sum_{i=1}^{n} \pi_{6i} \Delta LOGCOR_{t-1} + \sum_{i=1}^{n} \pi_{7i} \Delta LOGLIT_{t-1} + \sum_{i=1}^{n} \pi_{8i} \Delta LOGECG_{t-1} + \psi_1 LOGINSEC_{t-1} + \psi_2 LOGUNEM_{t-1} + \psi_3 LOGPOV_{t-1} + \psi_4 LOGINEQ_{t-1} + \psi_5 LOGINFR_{t-1} + \psi_6 LOGCOR_{t-1} + \psi_7 LOGLIT_{t-1} + \psi_8 LOGECG_{t-1} + \delta ECM_{t-1} + \varphi_t \quad \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots (5)$$

where $\alpha_0$is the drift term, Δ is the difference operator, π and ψ are parameters that need to be tested, $\varphi_t$is the error term,$ECMt-1$ is the error correction term obtained from the cointegration model. The error coefficients (δ) indicates the rate at which the cointegration model corrects its previous period's disequilibrium or speed of adjustment to restore the long run equilibrium relationship. A negative and significant $ECMt-1$ coefficient implies that any short run movement between the dependant and explanatory variables will converge back to the long run relationship.

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DATA SOURCE

The data for this study were obtained mainly from secondary sources; specifically, from Central Bank of Nigeria Statistical Bulletin; World Development Indicator (2022),World Bank, www.indexmundi.com (sourced from World Bank, Development Research Group); www.macrotrends (sourced from U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) and World Bank.); www.theglobaleconomy.com (Sourced from The World Bank);www.globaldata.com(sourced from World Bank Databases, International Monetary Fund); www.statista.com (Sourced from The World Bank); https://tradingeconomics.com (sourced from Transparency International); and UNESCO. The data used for this study cover the period 1991-2025.

ESTIMATION RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Stationary Test Result

To satisfy the stationary property of the time series data in the study, Augmented Dickey-Fuller unit root test was used on the logarithm form of the data as shown in Table 1. The result shows that economic growth measured by gross domestic product (LECG) became integrated of order I(0), i.e., stationary at level I(0) while insecurity (LINSEC) was found to be stationary at first difference I(1). More so, unemployment (LUNEM), inequality (LINEQ), and corruption (LCOR) exhibited stationary at level I(0) while poverty (LPOV), inflation (LINFR), and literacy rate (LLIT) depicted stationary at first difference I(1). Given that the variables were integrated of order I(0) and I(1). The requirement to fit in an ARDL model to test for long run relationship is satisfied.

Table 1: Unit Root Results for Logarithm of Variables

Variable	Levels (Intercept)	1st difference (Intercept)	Order of Integration
LINSEC	-0.239536	-6.941900*	I(1)
LUNEM	-5.061441*	-3.744757*	I(0)
LPOV	-1.780485	-3.202855**	I(1)
LINEQ	-2.984629**	-8.673309*	I(0)
LINFR	-2.116318	-4.441379*	I(1)
LCOR	-6.316176*	-3.596855**	I(0)
LLIT	-1.535757	-5.983829*	I(1)
LECG	-3.105179**	-2.474625	I(0)

Note: ADF test was performed using Schwarz information criterion and the automatic lag selection set as 8 lags. Also, *, ** and *** imply statistical significance at 1%, 5% and 10% levels respectively.
Source: Researcher's computation using Eviews 10

Co-integration Test

The estimated bounds and F-test results are summarized in Table 2. The bounds F-test for cointegration test yields evidence of a long-run relationship among the variables. This is because the computed F statistic (7.732546) is greater than the upper bound of the 1% critical values resulting in the rejection of the null hypothesis of no long-run relationship among the examined variables. This evidence rules out the possibility of estimated relationship being spurious. Having established the presence of co-integrating relationship among the variables, the next step in the ARDL approach was to determine the long-run coefficients.

Table 2: F-Bounds Test Null Hypothesis: No levels relationship

Test Statistic	Value	Signif.	I(0)	I(1)
F-statistic	7.732546	10%	1.92	2.89
K	7	5%	2.17	3.21
		2.5%	2.43	3.51
		1%	2.73	3.9

Source: Authors computation using Eviews 10

Long-Run Estimates

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The details in Table 3 showed that the long-run coefficient of unemployment (LUNEM) portrayed a negative relationship with insecurity and was significant at 1% level. The result revealed that a percentage increase in unemployment (LUNEM) other things remaining equal, was associated with about 1.580981% decline in insecurity (measured by internal security expenditure (LINSEC)). The negative sign of this variable is inconsistent with a-priori expectation. A plausible explanation for this is that unemployment may lead to migration or informal sector participation, making insecurity less visible in formal expenditure data. In contexts of extreme poverty, the employed may be targets of crime (they have something that can be stolen), while the unemployed have less to lose. Nevertheless, the result in this study aligns withOyefusi (2010) that unemployment was negatively significant to low-level violence and oil crimes in Nigeria. On the contrary, the result of this study does not align with Adegoke (2015), Edomwonyi-Out and Edomwonyi-Out (2020), Stewart (2021) Adenike (2021) who revealed a significant positive relationship between unemployment and insecurity in Nigeria.

As further depicted in Table 3, poverty rate (LPOV) has a significant positive effect on insecurity in the long-run. The implication of the result is that as more people fall below the poverty line, the rate of unemployment increases and government spends more on security. This result showed statistical significance at 1% significance level, and it conforms with Awojobi (2014), Nwagwu (2014) Okolie et al (2019), Yakubu (2020), Adenike (2021) who revealed that poverty exerts a positive and statistically significant impact on insecurity in Nigeria.

In addition, Table 3 revealed that the long-run coefficient of economic growth (LECG) indicated a positive impact on insecurity. This means that a percentage increase in economic growth (LECG) holding other explanatory variables constant triggered an increase of about 1.312965% in insecurity in the long run. This result shows that while economic growth is often seen as a positive indicator of development, it can also be a driver of insecurity if not managed properly.

More so, inequality (LINEQ) has a positive relationship with insecurity. It was evident from the results that a percentage increase in inequality (LINEQ) will increase insecurity by 0.092225%. This result is not surprising because Nigeria, Africa's largest economy, has been grappling with the challenges of economic inequality and insecurity. The country's economic growth has not translated into improved living standards for many of its citizens, leading to widespread poverty and inequality. This, in turn, has contributed to the growing insecurity in the country. However, despite the positive relationship exhibited between inequality and insecurity in this study, the coefficient of inequality (LINEQ) appeared to be statistically insignificant at any conventional significance level. This suggests that while inequality may theoretically contribute to insecurity (as argued by Hbdexines, 2025), the Nigerian data over 1991-2024 does not provide strong statistical evidence for this relationship in the context of our model. Possible reasons may be that inequality may affect insecurity through indirect channels already captured by other variables (i.e., poverty, unemployment).

Also, Table 3 depicts a positive relationship between inflation (LINFR) and insecurity. It was evident from the results that a percentage increase in inflation (LINFR) will increase insecurity by 0.105694%. This is not surprising because inflation in Nigeria has reached alarming levels, pushing millions into financial distress (Falaiye, 2025). However; the coefficient of inflation (LINFR) is statistically insignificant at any conventional significance level.

In the same vein, corruption (LCOR) exhibited a positive relationship with insecurity. Evidence revealed that a 1% increase in corruption (LCOR) spurs insecurity by approximately 0.155898%. Nonetheless, this relationship showed no statistical significance at any standard significance level. Finally, the relationship between literacy rate (LLIT) and insecurity was also found to be positive. It indicates that a 1% increase in literacy rate (LLIT) spurs insecurity by approximately 0.102144%.

Table 3: Long Run ARDL Result

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
LUNEM	-1.580981	0.375927	-4.205550	0.0040*
LPOV	23.56215	6.044831	3.897900	0.0059*
LINEQ	0.092225	0.261288	0.352963	0.7345

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LINFR	0.105694	0.123064	0.858853	0.4189
LCOR	0.155898	0.236108	0.660285	0.5302
LLIT	0.102144	0.428140	0.238576	0.8183
LECG	1.312965	0.073383	17.89199	0.0000*

Note: *, ** and *** imply statistical significance at 1%, 5% and 10% levels respectively.
Source: Author's computation using Eviews 10

Short-Run Estimates

Table 4 shows that the coefficient of error correction mechanism (ECM) has the correct sign, which is negative and statistically significant at a 1 per cent significance level. The ECM result indicates a low speed of adjustment of about 27.79 per cent from the short run to the long run. As observed in Table 4, the one-year lagged value of insecurity as measured by the internal security expenditure (D(LINSEC(-1))), current year value of poverty (D(LPOV)), current year value of inflation (D(LINFR)), and one-year lagged value of inflation (D(LINFR(-1))) all have positive significant relationship with the current year level (value) of insecurity in Nigeria during the period covered in this study.

On the other hand, a percentage increase in present value of unemployment (D(LUNEM)) results in about 2.165588% decrease in current year level (value) of insecurity and statistically significant at 1% significance level. The result also shows that one percent increase in present value of inequality (D(LINEQ)) brought a decrease in current year level (value) of insecurity by approximately 0.390836 percent. This relationship showed statistical significance at 10% significance level. In the same vein, one percent increase in one-year period lagged value of inequality (D(LINEQ(-1))) leads to a decrease in current year level (value) of insecurity by approximately 0.573895 percent and statistically significant at 5% significance level. In addition, current year level (value) of insecurity decreased significantly by approximately 0.745104%, 0.727744%, 1.428989%, and 2.354569% due to one percent increase in present value of corruption (D(LCOR)), one-year period lagged value of corruption (D(LCOR(-1))),present value of economic growth (D(LECG)), and one-year period lagged value of economic growth (D(LECG(-1))) respectively.

Table 4: Short Run ARDL Results

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
D(LINSEC(-1))	1.219075	0.155574	7.835965	0.0001*
D(LUNEM)	-2.165588	0.315392	-6.866331	0.0002*
D(LPOV)	34.46494	6.247640	5.516473	0.0009*
D(LINEQ)	-0.390836	0.178857	-2.185187	0.0651**
D(LINEQ(-1))	-0.573895	0.183682	-3.124397	0.0167**
D(LINFR)	0.428576	0.088290	4.854179	0.0018*
D(LINFR(-1))	0.406433	0.071912	5.651811	0.0008*
D(LCOR)	-0.745104	0.205502	-3.625781	0.0084*
D(LCOR(-1))	-0.727744	0.187807	-3.874946	0.0061*
D(LECG)	-1.428989	0.332915	-4.292360	0.0036*
D(LECG(-1))	-2.354569	0.486903	-4.835803	0.0019*
ECM(-1)	-0.277890	0.031026	-8.956743	0.0000*

Note: *, ** and *** imply statistical significance at 1%, 5% and 10% levels respectively.
Source: Authors computation using Eviews 10

Post Estimation Diagnostic Tests

To ensure the overall stability of the estimated models, several diagnostic analyses were carried out. In Table 5, the p-value for the F-stat is 0.8054. Therefore, at 5% significance level, we fail to reject the Ramsey RESET test null hypothesis of correct specification. This indicates that the functional form is correct and the model does not suffer from omitted variables. Thereafter, the residual tests of serial correlation were conducted using Correlograms Q-Statistics. Concerning the correlogram, Table 6 displays the autocorrelation and partial autocorrelation functions up to a specified order of 12 lags. The Q-statistics are insignificant at all lags, indicating insignificant serial correlation in the residuals, i.e., there is no presence of serial correlation.

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Table 5: Ramsey RESET Test

Omitted Variables: Squares of fitted values			
	Value	Df	Probability
t-statistic	0.257523	6	0.8054
F-statistic	0.066318	(1, 6)	0.8054

Source: Computed by the Researcher using E-views 10.

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Table 6: Correlograms Q-Statistics

Autocorrelation	Partial Correlation		AC	PAC	Q-Stat	Prob*
. *| . |	. *| . |	1	-0.075	-0.075	0.1690	0.681
. *| . |	. *| . |	2	-0.130	-0.136	0.6961	0.706
. | . |	. *| . |	3	-0.057	-0.080	0.8032	0.849
. | . |	. | . |	4	-0.012	-0.044	0.8084	0.937
. *| . |	. *| . |	5	-0.142	-0.171	1.5236	0.910
.**| . |	.**| . |	6	-0.240	-0.302	3.6652	0.722
.**| . |	****| . |	7	-0.297	-0.489	7.1121	0.417
. |* . |	. *| . |	8	0.184	-0.166	8.5056	0.386
. |**. |	. | . |	9	0.269	0.060	11.646	0.234
. | . |	. *| . |	10	-0.048	-0.148	11.750	0.302
. |* . |	. | . |	11	0.131	0.011	12.595	0.321
. *| . |	***| . |	12	-0.069	-0.357	12.844	0.380

Source: Computed by the Researcher using E-views 10.

Table 7 shows that the null hypothesis of homoscedasticity (absence of heteroskedasticity) is not rejected at 5% level. Therefore, the conclusion is that the residual of the model is free from heteroskedasticy problem.

Table 7: Heteroskedasticity Test: Breusch-Pagan-Godfrey

F-statistic	0.988802	Prob. F(20,7)	0.5458
Obs*R-squared	19.67079	Prob. Chi-Square(20)	0.4146
Scaled explained SS	1.340885	Prob. Chi-Square(20)	1.0000

Source: Computed by the Researcher using E-views 10.

Finally, cumulative sum of recursive residuals (CUSUM) and CUSUM of square tests were also applied to assess parameter stability. Figures 1 and 2 plot the results for CUSUM and CUSUMSQ of squares tests. The results indicate the absence of any instability of the coefficients because the plot of the CUSUM and CUSUMSQ statistic fall inside the critical bands of the 5% confidence interval of parameter stability, meaning, the short-run and long-run coefficients are stable.

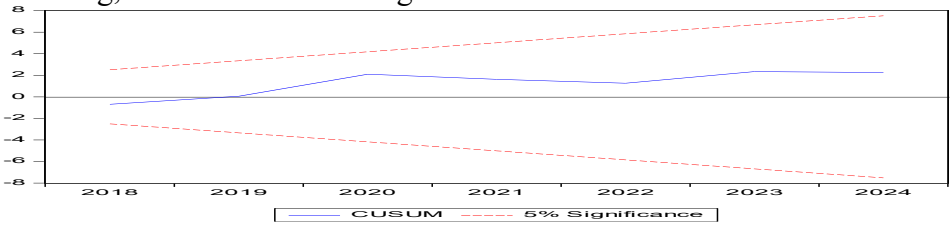


Figure 1: CUSUM Test
Source: Extracted from Eviews 10

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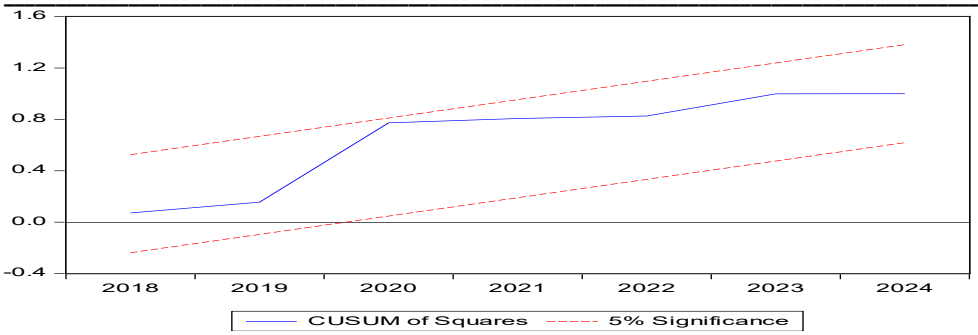


Figure 2: CUSUM of squares Test
Source: Extracted from Eviews 10

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

This study aimed at showing the connections among unemployment, poverty and insecurity in Nigeria from 1991 to 2025. Specifically,it determined the effect of unemployment on insecurity, examined the impact of poverty on insecurity. Secondary data on inflation(INFR),unemployment (UNEM), Nigeria poverty rate (POV),gross domestic product(ECG),internal security expenditure (INSEC),Gini index (INEQ),corruption perceptions index(COR), and literacy rate (LIT) were used. The study employed an Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) model as the main analytical tool. The long-run results from the ARDL model clearly showed that poverty (LPOV) and economic growth (LECG) positively and significantly affect insecurity, while unemployment (LUNEM) has negatively significant affect on insecurity. Nevertheless, inequality (LINEQ), inflation (LINFR), corruption (LCOR), and literacy rate (LLIT) displayed positive but insignificant relationship with insecurity. However, the short-run result shows that one-year lagged value of insecurity as measured by the internal security expenditure (D(LINSEC(-1))), current year value of poverty (D(LPOV)), current year value of inflation (D(LINFR)), and one-year lagged value of inflation (D(LINFR(-1))) all have positive significant relationship with the current year level (value) of insecurity in Nigeria during the period covered in this study.

Conclusion

This study concludes that poverty (LPOV) positively and significantly affects insecurity, while unemployment (LUNEM) has negatively significant effect on insecurity. Economic growth (LECG) also showed positive significant relationship with insecurity. Addressing the security situation in Nigeria is imperative, not only for the population's safety but also for the economic stability and development of the country.

Recommendations

Based on the empirical evidence emanating from the study, the following economic policy recommendations are made:

1. Government should diversify the economy. Since, economic instability brought on by an overreliance on oil money has contributed to Nigeria's growing poverty levels, therefore, it is essential to diversify economic activity to provide opportunities for Nigerians while preserving economic stability. Diversifying Nigeria's economy and boosting value addition in the agricultural sector can both contribute to the elimination of poverty. More so, by expanding agriculture, the government will be able to offer even more specialized professions, enabling people to move up the employment ladder.
2. Given the impressive economic growth in Nigeria, government should ensure efficient allocation of resources earmarked for specified projects or programmes and not for other unconstitutional selfish purposes. As a result, funds that should be utilized for developmental projects, infrastructure, employment creation and poverty alleviation must be directed towards these critical economic issues in order to combating security threats.
3. The government should concentrate on generating more employment opportunities irrespective of the security situation. Generating employment can be done through laws, making macro- and micro-

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economic policies that will allow both local and international businesses to thrive and encouraging especially among the youths, the establishment of small- and medium-enterprises and supporting them through single-digit interest rates, concessional loans, and tax rebates; and provision of infrastructural facilities which will facilitate investment. When people are employed, busy, and can earn income; they cannot easily be lured to commit acts of insecurity.

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