INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES (IJPADS)

Volume: [2 | Issue: [2] | Pages: 142-157 | Date: [June, 2025]

Open Access Journal. Accessible online via https://ijpads.com

INSECURITY AND SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF IMO STATE, NIGERIA (2019 – 2024)

OHUCHE LORETTA CHINEMEREM
Department of Public Administration, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.
Email: ohuchechinemerenl@gmail.com

ILOANYA, KENNETH O. Ph.D
Department of Public Administration, Nnamdi Azikiwe University awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.
Email: ko.iloanya@unizik.edu.ng

NNAJI, IFEOMA LORETTO Ph.D
Department of Public Administration, Nnamdi Azikiwe University awka, Anambra State, Nigeria.
Email: li.nnaji@unizik.edu.ng

ABSTRACT
The study examined the relationship between insecurity and socio-economic development of Imo State between 2019 and 2024. The specific objectives of the study were to; analyze the effect of armed robbery on trade and commerce, assess the effect of kidnapping on the accessibility and quality of education; investigate the effect of Herders-farmers clashes on agricultural productivity; and to ascertain the effect of cultism on night clubs and hotel activities in Imo State between 2019 and 2024. The study was anchored on the Human Security Theory popularized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its 1994 Human Development Report. The study utilized descriptive survey research design. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources with the questionnaire serving as the major primary instrument for data collection. The data obtained from primary sources were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including tables, simple percentages, and mean, were employed to summarize and present the data. For hypotheses testing, inferential statistical techniques, specifically the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) technique was employed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24. The hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance. The findings revealed that; armed robbery has significantly undermined trade and commerce in Imo State; kidnapping has greatly hindered the accessibility and quality of education in Imo State; Herders-farmers clashes has significantly undermined agricultural productivity in Imo State and that cultism has greatly constrained night clubs

and hotel activities in Imo State between 2019 and 2024. The study concluded that various forms of insecurity such as armed robbery, kidnapping, herders-farmers clashes, and cultism have significantly impeded the economic, educational, agricultural, and hospitality sectors of Imo State and that without addressing the root causes of insecurity, sustainable development in Imo State will remain elusive. Among other recommendations, the study suggests that the government of Imo State, in collaboration with security agencies, should establish and maintain robust community policing frameworks and deploy surveillance technologies in major commercial zones to effectively combat armed robbery and enhance trade and commerce.

Key words: Insecurity: Socio-economic Development, Armed Robbery, Kidnapping, Herders-Farmers Clashes.

1. Background to the Study

Insecurity has become a critical issue in the 21st century, posing significant threats to the pace of socio-economic development globally. Across various continents, nations grapple with various forms of insecurity such as terrorism, armed conflicts, insurgencies and violent crimes, all of which have far-reaching implications for economic growth, social cohesion, and political stability. The Global Peace Index (2023) ranks countries based on their level of peace and security, revealing that countries with high levels of insecurity often suffer from stunted economic development, poor governance, and deteriorating social welfare systems. For instance, Syria and Afghanistan have consistently ranked among the least peaceful nations due to prolonged conflict, leading to displacement of populations, loss of livelihoods, and collapse of essential services (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2023). Similarly, sub-Saharan Africa is plagued by issues such as banditry, insurgency, and communal violence, which have disrupted economic activities, discouraged investment, and perpetuated poverty in affected regions.

In Africa, the issue of insecurity is a significant impediment to development. According to the African Development Bank (2022), insecurity undermines economic progress by disrupting agricultural activities, trade, and infrastructure development. Countries like Nigeria, Mali, and Somalia are stark examples where insecurity has led to the loss of lives, destruction of property, and displacement of people. Nigeria, the largest economy in Africa, continues to face severe security challenges, ranging from Boko Haram insurgency in the northeast to banditry and kidnapping in the northwest and separatist agitations in the southeast. The economic cost of these conflicts is immense, with the World Bank (2021) estimating that insecurity costs Nigeria approximately $10 billion annually in lost productivity and investments.

Imo State, located in the southeastern region of Nigeria, has not been spared from the scourge of insecurity. Traditionally recognized as one of the most industrious and agriculturally productive states in the country, Imo State has, in recent years, witnessed a significant upsurge in insecurity that

has adversely impacted its socio-economic development. The state faces multiple security challenges, including armed robbery, kidnapping, Herders-farmers clashes, cultism, and more recently, violent activities associated with separatist movements. Several incidents underscore the severity of these issues, particularly in Local Government Areas (LGAs) such as Orlu, Orsu, Oru East, Owerri West, and Ohaji/Egbema, which have become hotspots for recurring violence and unrest.

The root causes of insecurity in Imo State can be traced to socio-political and economic factors. High unemployment rates, for instance, are a significant concern. According to data from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2023), unemployment in Imo State stood at 48.7%, making it one of the states with the highest unemployment rates in Nigeria. This alarming statistic has fueled youth restiveness and increased crime rates, as many young people resort to illicit activities for survival. Furthermore, political instability, weak institutions, and corruption have created an enabling environment for criminal activities, exacerbating insecurity in the state.

The socio-economic consequences of insecurity in Imo State are far-reaching. Poverty levels have risen dramatically, with the NBS (2023) reporting that over 65% of the state's population lives below the poverty line. The displacement of communities and destruction of infrastructure have worsened living conditions, while the psychological impact of violence has negatively affected the mental health and productivity of residents. Additionally, insecurity has contributed to a decline in internally generated revenue, as businesses and individuals relocate to safer regions, further straining the state's financial resources.

Despite efforts by the government and civil society organizations to address these challenges, insecurity in Imo State continues to escalate. Initiatives such as increased funding for security agencies, community policing, and advocacy for peace have yielded limited success due to resource constraints, poor coordination, and a lack of trust between security forces and local communities. Addressing the pervasive insecurity in Imo State is critical to fostering sustainable socio-economic development in the region.

2. Statement of the Problem

In an ideal society, socio-economic development thrives in an environment characterized by peace, security, and stability. Security is fundamental for fostering economic growth, attracting investments, and improving the overall quality of life. Nations that prioritize the protection of lives and property, uphold the rule of law, and maintain robust institutions experience significant progress in all facets of development. In such environments, agricultural activities flourish, trade and commerce expand, educational institutions operate seamlessly, and access to quality healthcare is ensured. For instance, economies like those of Norway and Switzerland, ranked among the most peaceful nations by the Global Peace Index (2023), demonstrate that security serves as the foundation for sustained

economic growth, poverty reduction, and social cohesion. Ideally, states like Imo in southeastern Nigeria, endowed with vast natural and human resources, should leverage their potential to achieve remarkable socio-economic development and improved living standards for their residents.

In spite of the above, the situation in Imo State however, paints a contrasting picture, where insecurity has become a persistent and pervasive challenge. Armed robbery, kidnapping, communal clashes, and violent activities linked to separatist movements have severely impacted the state's socio-economic fabric. Agricultural productivity has declined due to the displacement of farmers and destruction of farmlands, while trade and commerce have been hampered by fear of attacks and a deteriorating business climate. Education and healthcare services in rural and semi-urban areas are frequently disrupted by security threats, leaving residents vulnerable and underserved. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2023), over 65% of the population in Imo State lives below the poverty line, exacerbated by high unemployment, which stood at 48.7% in 2023. Efforts by the government and civil society to address these issues have yielded limited success due to inadequate resources, poor coordination, and deep-seated socio-political factors.

The implications of this insecurity are far-reaching, stalling development and eroding the state's capacity to provide basic services. These disruptions directly threaten the livelihoods and well-being of residents, worsening poverty and inequality. Moreover, the persistent insecurity discourages both local and foreign investment, further hindering economic growth and compounding the state's development challenges. While existing studies on insecurity in Nigeria provide valuable insights, there is a noticeable gap in literature focusing specifically on the dynamics and consequences of insecurity in Imo State. This gap underscores the need for a study that not only highlights the socio-economic effects of insecurity but also explores context-specific factors and sustainable solutions tailored to Imo State.

3. Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of the study is to examine the relationship between insecurity and socio-economic development of Imo between 2019 and 2024, while four specific objectives and four hypotheses were formulated.

Review of Related Literature

Insecurity

Insecurity, as a concept, has been extensively explored across disciplines due to its far-reaching implications for individuals, societies, and nations. Scholars have approached its definition from diverse perspectives, reflecting its diverse nature. In a general sense, insecurity is the state of being open to danger or threat and lacking protection (Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpor-Robaro, 2016). This broad definition underscores the vulnerability and exposure to harm that characterize insecure conditions. Similarly, it highlights the absence of safeguards, both physical and psychological, that are necessary for stability

and well-being.

Socio-economic Development

Socio-economic development is a concept that has been extensively examined and debated in the literature, owing to its multifaceted nature and its critical role in shaping societies. As a term, socio-economic development encompasses the social and economic transformations that improve the quality of life for individuals and communities. Various scholars have provided conceptual definitions of socio-economic development, reflecting the diverse perspectives on its meaning and scope. A review of these definitions reveals its dynamic and multidimensional character, as well as its connection to other critical concepts such as growth, equity, and sustainability.

According to Todaro and Smith (2020), socio-economic development refers to the process through which economic growth translates into improvements in the living standards of a population. This definition highlights the interplay between economic factors, such as income levels and productivity, and social elements, including education, healthcare, and housing. Todaro and Smith emphasize that socio-economic development is not solely about the accumulation of wealth but rather the equitable distribution of the benefits of growth to enhance overall well-being. Similarly.

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines socio-economic development as the enhancement of human development indices, including health, education, and income (UNDP, 2022). This perspective aligns with the Human Development Index (HDI) framework, which evaluates development beyond mere economic indicators. The UNDP's definition underscores the importance of addressing disparities and fostering inclusivity as fundamental components of socio-economic progress. Similarly, the World Bank (2023) defines socio-economic development as the improvement of living standards and the reduction of poverty through policies that promote economic growth, job creation, and access to essential services. This definition emphasizes the practical measures needed to achieve developmental goals, such as infrastructure development, investment in human capital, and institutional reforms.

Armed Robbery and Trade and Commerce

Armed robbery represents a significant threat to trade and commerce, particularly in developing economies where security infrastructure is weak or under-resourced. The effect of armed robbery on trade and commerce is particularly pronounced. Imo State, like many other regions in Nigeria, has faced increasing insecurity in recent years, with armed robbery being a significant component. The state's commercial centers such as Owerri, Orlu, and Okigwe have reported frequent cases of armed robbery, leading to a noticeable decline in market activities and investment interests (Nwachukwu, 2021). Markets that once bustled with traders and customers have witnessed a reduction in patronage due to fears of robbery attacks, especially during peak trading periods.

Furthermore, small businesses and street traders in Imo State have become easy targets for armed robbers, leading many to abandon their businesses or relocate to more secure environments. This has contributed to rising unemployment rates and exacerbated poverty levels within the state. The resultant economic decline underscores the critical relationship between insecurity and socio-economic development as highlighted in the present study.

Kidnapping and Accessibility and Quality of Education

Kidnapping has become a major security challenge in Nigeria, significantly impacting many sectors, with education among the hardest hit. Kidnapping, defined as the unlawful seizure and detention of individuals for ransom or other benefits, has proliferated, especially in the Northern and Southern regions of Nigeria (Okoli and Agada, 2018). Its effects on the accessibility and quality of education are profound, eroding gains made toward achieving inclusive and equitable quality education (SDG 4).

In the specific context of Imo State, Nigeria, where this study focused, the role of kidnapping in undermining education cannot be overstated. Imo State has witnessed an upsurge in kidnapping incidents, notably targeting students, lecturers, and school proprietors. These incidents have instilled widespread fear, leading to school closures, withdrawal of students, and migration of academic professionals out of the state.

The Imo State government's frequent advisories to educational institutions to reinforce security measures illustrate the gravity of the situation. Yet, many rural schools lack the financial means to do so, rendering them vulnerable. Consequently, many parents, particularly in affected local government areas like Orlu, Okigwe, and parts of Owerri West, are reluctant to send their children to school. This has resulted in significant drops in enrollment rates, particularly in secondary and tertiary education. Moreover, the psychological trauma experienced by abducted victims and their communities has led to an environment of fear and distrust, which is not conducive to effective learning. The resulting teacher shortages have further crippled efforts to maintain educational quality. Thus, kidnapping not only limits physical access to education but also weakens the intellectual and emotional environments necessary for meaningful educational engagement.

Herders-farmers Clashes and Agricultural Productivity

Agriculture remains a cornerstone of the Nigerian economy, accounting for a significant share of employment, food security, and economic stability. However, persistent herders-farmers clashes have increasingly undermined agricultural productivity across various regions, particularly in states like Benue, Plateau, Kaduna, and parts of the South-East, including Imo State. The herders-farmers conflict, largely fueled by competition over land and water resources, has evolved into a major threat to rural livelihoods and national food

security (Okoli and Atelhe, 2018).

In the context of this study, the rising trend of herders-farmers clashes has mirrored the national pattern, particularly in the northern and central parts of the state where agriculture is predominant. These conflicts have led to widespread abandonment of farms, substantial reductions in crop yields (especially cassava, yam, and maize), and increased food insecurity among rural populations. Many farmers, traumatized by past attacks, have been reluctant to engage in full-scale farming activities, leading to a notable decline in the state's agricultural output. Moreover, the fear of violent confrontation has deterred agricultural expansion and discouraged youth engagement in farming, a sector that traditionally offered employment for a significant proportion of Imo's rural dwellers. This situation compounds the existing socio-economic challenges in the state, including unemployment, rural-urban migration, and rising food prices.

Cultism and Hospitality Industry

Cultism, broadly defined, refers to the practices or activities of secret, often violent groups, usually operating clandestinely, with members bound together by oaths and rituals (Ajayi, 2015). While cultism was historically rooted within university campuses in Nigeria, its spread into the larger society has been a major cause of social instability, particularly affecting public spaces such as night clubs and hotels. These establishments, traditionally centers of leisure, tourism, and economic activity, have increasingly become scenes of violence, extortion, and insecurity due to cult activities. This pervasive influence negatively impacts their operations, patronage, revenue generation, and overall contribution to socio-economic development.

A primary effect of cultism on night clubs is the significant reduction in patronage. Customers increasingly view these places as unsafe following frequent reports of violence, fights, shootings, and gang-related killings linked to cult activities (Ogunbiyi, 2018). Fear among patrons translates to lower attendance, thereby causing a decline in revenue for club owners and hotel managers. In support of this, Akpan and Umoh (2016) found that incidences of cult-related violence within and around entertainment centers in Akwa Ibom State led to a 30% decrease in customer patronage over a two-year period.

When relating this discussion to the current study, the effects described above are particularly significant. Imo State, with cities like Owerri known for vibrant night life and booming hospitality industries, has experienced considerable setbacks due to cult activities (Okeke and Mamah, 2021). Frequent clashes between rival cult groups in night clubs and hotels have not only resulted in loss of lives but have significantly eroded public confidence in the safety of such spaces. Consequently, the hospitality and entertainment sectors in Imo State have faced a downturn, with ripple effects on employment, investment, and economic vibrancy. Overall, cultism undermines night clubs and hotel activities

by creating an environment of fear, financial uncertainty, and reputational damage, all of which have a negative impact on the broader economy.

6. Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the Human Security Theory. The Human Security Theory emerged as a response to the limitations of traditional security paradigms that focused solely on state-centric and military approaches to security. The concept was popularized by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in its 1994 Human Development Report, which shifted the focus of security from the state to individuals and communities. The central idea of the Human Security Theory is that security should be redefined to encompass the protection of individuals from critical and pervasive threats to their well-being, including economic instability, health crises, environmental degradation, and political violence.

The relevance of the Human Security Theory to this study on the effect of insecurity on socio-economic development in Imo State lies in its ability to address the multidimensional nature of insecurity and its impact on development. Insecurity in Imo State, characterized by armed conflicts, kidnappings, and communal clashes, disrupts economic activities, displaces communities, and undermines social cohesion, which directly impacts socio-economic development. The theory's emphasis on addressing root causes, such as unemployment, inequality, and poor governance, provides a framework for understanding and mitigating these challenges.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design, while Imo State served as the area of the study. The study relied on both primary and secondary sources of data**, with** questionnaire as the major source of data collection. The total population of the Study was 524,400 (National Population Commission, 2024). The selected local governments under study were Orlu, Owerri West, and Okigwe Local Government Areas. These local governments were chosen due to their relevance to the research objectives and the feasibility of data collection within these areas while still providing insights relevant to the broader State context. To determine a sample size of the population, the Taro Yamani (1964), formula was applied and 400 respondents as sample size.

Table 1 shows the population of the study according to the local governments.

Table 1: Population of the Study by Local Governments

S/N	Local Government	Population	Percentage
1.	Orlu	198500	37.8
2.	Owerri West	141400	27.0
3.	Okigwe	184500	35.2
Total		**524400**	**100**

Source: National Population Commission (2024).

The data obtained from primary sources was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. For hypotheses testing,

inferential statistical techniques, specifically regression analysis, was utilized. This analysis was conducted using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 24. The hypotheses were tested at a 0.05 level of significance.

8. Data Presentation and Analysis

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 4: Distribution of Respondents According to Gender

Variable	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative (%)
Male	183	47.0	47.0
Female	206	53.0	100
Total	**389**	**100**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, (2025)

Table 4 presents the gender distribution of respondents involved in the study. Out of the total 389 respondents, 183 (47%) were males, while 206 (53%) were females. This indicates a relatively balanced representation of both genders, with a slightly higher participation of females. The gender distribution implies that the perspectives obtained in the study reflect the experiences and views of both male and female residents of Imo State, with females constituting a slight majority.

Table 5: Distribution of Respondents According to Age

Variable	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative (%)
20 – 29	122	31.4	31.4
30 – 39	101	25.9	57.3
40 – 49	73	18.8	71.6
50 – 59	54	13.9	90
60 and above	39	10.0	100
Total	**389**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, (2025)

Table 5 presents the age distribution of respondents. The data shows that 122 respondents (31.4%) were between the ages of 20–29 years, 101 respondents (25.9%) were between 30–39 years, 73 respondents (18.8%) were within the 40–49 age bracket, 54 respondents (13.9%) were between 50–59 years, while 39 respondents (10%) were aged 60 years and above. This distribution indicates that the majority of respondents were within the youthful and economically active age groups (20–39 years), accounting for 57.3% of the total sample. The dominance of respondents in the 20–40 age range suggests that the findings are largely influenced by the experiences of younger, economically productive individuals. This is significant because this age group is likely to be more affected by insecurity in terms of job opportunities, livelihood, education, and mobility.

Table 6: Distribution of Respondents According to Educational Qualification

Variable	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative (%)
WASSCE/NECO	48	12.3	12.3
NCE/ND	54	13.9	26.2
HND/B.Sc/Equivalent	219	56.3	82.5
PGD, M.Sc/Equivalent/Ph.D	68	17.5	100
Total	**389**	**100.0**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, (2025)

Table 4 reveals that all respondents possessed formal education. Specifically, 48 respondents (12.3%) had WASSCE/NECO qualifications, 54 respondents (13.9%) had NCE/ND certificates, and 219 respondents (56.3%) possessed HND or its equivalent, such as a Bachelor's degree (B.Sc), while 68 respondents (17.5%) held postgraduate qualifications, including PGD, M.Sc, or Ph.D. This shows that the majority of the respondents were highly educated, with over 73% having

attained tertiary education.

Table 7: Distribution of Respondents According to Occupation

Variable	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative (%)
Artisan	65	16.7	16.7
Farmer	106	27.2	43.9
Public Servant	34	8.7	52.6
Student	99	25.4	78
Unemployed	22	5.7	83.7
Self-employed	63	16.3	100
Total	**389**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, (2025)

Table 7 shows the occupational distribution of respondents. The data reveals that 65 respondents (16.7%) were artisans, 106 respondents (27.2%) were farmers, 34 respondents (8.7%) were public servants, 99 respondents (25.4%) were students, 22 respondents (5.7%) were unemployed, while 63 respondents (16.3%) were self-employed. This distribution reflects a broad spectrum of occupational categories, with the majority engaged in informal and agricultural sectors. The occupational breakdown highlights that a significant portion of the respondents derive their livelihood from the informal economy, particularly farming, artisanal work, and self-employment.

Table 8: Distribution of Respondents According to Marital Status

Variable	Frequency	Percent (%)	Cumulative (%)
Single	170	43.7	43.7
Married	201	51.7	95.4
Separated	5	1.3	96.7
Divorced	2	0.5	97.2
Widowed	11	2.8	100
Total	**389**	**100.0**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, (2025)

Table 4 presents the marital status of the respondents. According to the data, 170 respondents (43.7%) were single, 201 respondents (51.7%) were married, 5 respondents (1.3%) were separated, 2 respondents (0.5%) were divorced, and 11 respondents (2.8%) were widowed. This indicates that the majority of respondents were married, followed closely by those who were single.

Descriptive Statistics Result

Table 9: Mean Rating of the Effect of Armed Robbery on Trade and Commerce in Imo State, 2019 – 2024

S/N	Item Description	SA	A	U	D	SD	T	$\bar{x}$	Decision
1	Armed robbery incidents have negatively affected the volume of trade in Imo State	189	131	39	21	9	389	4.2	Agree
2	Traders in Imo State often close their shops earlier due to fear of armed robbery	173	145	17	25	29	389	4.0	Agree
3	Armed robbery has discouraged investors from establishing businesses in Imo State.	122	134	33	64	36	389	3.6	Agree
4	Commercial activities have significantly reduced in areas prone to armed robbery in Imo State	166	159	21	18	25	389	4.1	Agree
5	Many businesses have relocated from Imo State due to the risk of armed robbery.	202	88	14	51	34	389	4.0	Agree
	Cluster Mean							**4.0**	

Source: Field Survey, (2025).

Table 9 shows the mean ratings of the effect of armed robbery on trade and commerce in Imo State**.** The result of the analysis reveals that all five questionnaire items used to examine the effect of armed robbery on trade and commerce in Imo State have mean scores equal to or above the minimum acceptance threshold of 3.0. This indicates that the respondents agreed that armed robbery has a significant negative impact on trade and commerce in the state. The implication of this finding is that the prevalence of armed robbery contributes to the decline in commercial activities by instilling fear, reducing business hours, discouraging investment, and increasing the cost of doing business due to security concerns.

Table 10: Mean Rating of the Effect of Kidnapping on the Accessibility and Quality of Education in Imo State, 2019 – 2024

S/N	Item Description	SA	A	U	D	SD	T	$\bar{x}$	Decision
6	Kidnapping threats have f orced some schools in Imo State to shut down temporarily	150	101	30	81	27	389	3.7	Agree
7	The quality of education delivery has been negatively impacted by insecurity from kidnapping	128	99	34	74	54	389	3.4	Agree
8	Parents are reluctant t o send their children to distant schools due to kidnapping fears	126	187	11	37	28	389	3.9	Agree
9	Kidnapping activities have discouraged qualified teachers from working in certain areas of Imo State	202	107	19	43	18	389	4.1	Agree
10	School-related field trips and excursions have decreased due to the risk of kidnapping	219	127	9	13	21	389	4.3	Agree
	Cluster Mean							**3.9**	

Source: Field Survey, (2025).

Table 10 shows the mean ratings of the effect of kidnapping on the accessibility and quality of education in Imo State. The analysis shows that all the questionnaire items assessing the effect of kidnapping on accessibility and quality of education in Imo State recorded mean scores equal to or above the acceptance threshold of 3.0. This implies that the respondents agreed that kidnapping has a significant adverse effect on both access to and the quality of education in the state. The implication is that the threat of kidnapping instills fear among students, parents, and educators, leading to low school attendance, withdrawal of pupils from school, reduced teacher commitment, and disruption of academic activities.

Table 11: Mean Rating of the Effect of Herders-farmers Clashes on Agricultural Productivity in Imo State, 2019 – 2024

S/N	Item Description	SA	A	U	D	SD	T	$\bar{x}$	Decision
11	Herders-farmers clashes have reduced crop production in Imo State	129	213	7	31	9	389	4.1	Agree
12	Many farmers have abandoned their farmlands due to security threats from herders.	148	157	18	25	41	389	3.9	Agree
13	Agricultural output in Imo State has declined because of herders-farmers conflicts	166	121	21	44	37	389	3.9	Agree
14	Young people are discouraged from engaging in farming due to insecurity from herders-farmers clashes.	81	93	38	99	78	389	3.0	Agree
15	Food scarcity has worsened in some communities as a result of herders-farmers violence	155	100	14	71	49	389	3.8	Agree
	Cluster Mean							**3.7**	

Source: Field Survey, (2025).

Table 11 shows the mean ratings of the effect of herders-farmers clashes on agricultural productivity in Imo State. The result of the analysis indicates that all the questionnaire items used to assess the effect of herders-farmers clashes on agricultural productivity in Imo State have mean scores equal to or above the acceptance benchmark of 3.0. This shows that respondents agreed that herders-farmers clashes significantly affect agricultural productivity in the state. The implication is that the persistent conflict between herders and farmers leads to the destruction of farmlands, loss of crops and livestock, displacement of farming communities, and general insecurity, all of which hinder food production and agricultural investment.

Table 12: Mean Rating of the Effect of Cultism on Hospitality Industry in Imo State, 2019 – 2024

S/N	Item Description	SA	A	U	D	SD	T	$\bar{x}$	Decision
16	Cult-related violence has reduced patronage at night clubs in Imo State	135	152	16	55	31	389	3.8	Agree
17	The fear of cult clashes discourages people from attending entertainment events at night.	110	223	4	32	20	389	4.0	Agree
18	Cult-related violence has led to the closure of some entertainment venues in Imo State	242	121	1	6	19	389	4.4	Agree
19	Hotel operators in Imo State have experienced lower customer turnout due to cultism threats	109	113	16	71	80	389	3.3	Agree
20	Nightlife activities in Imo State have declined due to cult-related insecurity	129	114	19	59	68	389	3.5	Agree
	Cluster Mean							**3.8**	

Source: Field Survey, (2025).

Table 12 shows the mean ratings of the effect of cultism on night clubs and hotel activities in Imo State. The analysis reveals that all the questionnaire items assessing the effect of cultism on night clubs and hotel activities in Imo State have mean scores equal to or above the acceptance threshold of 3.0. This indicates that respondents agreed that cultism has a significant negative impact on nightlife and hospitality activities in the state. The implication is that the presence of cult-related violence and threats around night clubs and hotels creates fear and insecurity among patrons and business owners, leading to reduced customer turnout, early closure of businesses, and decline in revenue generation.

Test of Hypotheses

In order to test the hypotheses formulated for this study, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (r) techniques, through Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 24 was used to determine the type and degree of relationship between the concerned variables.

The decision rule in a correlation test therefore, is as follow:

Accept H_o when the correlation test (result) is negative and reject H_o when the result is positive. Also, the degrees of correlation depend on how close or distant the correlation result is to/from 1. Hence, +ve 1= Perfect Positive correlation and -ve 1= No correlation etc

Hypothesis One

H_0: Armed robbery has not significantly undermined trade and commerce in Imo State between 2019 and 2024.

Table 13: Pearson Correlation of Armed Robbery on Trade and Commerce in Imo State

		Armed Robbery	Trade and Commerce
Armed Robbery	Pearson correlation	1	-0.74*
	Sig(2tailed)		0.000
	N	389	389
Trade and Commerce	Pearson correlation	-0.74*	1
	Sig(2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	389	389

Table 13 shows the correlation between armed robbery and trade and commerce in Imo State. The analysis revealed a correlation coefficient of r = -0.74 with a p-value = 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). Based on the decision rule for correlation, the null hypothesis (H_0), which states that armed robbery has not significantly undermined trade and commerce in Imo State, is rejected. The result shows a strong negative correlation between armed robbery and trade and commerce. This means that as armed robbery increased, the level of trade and commerce declined significantly.

Hypothesis Two

H_0: Kidnapping has not greatly hindered the accessibility and quality of education in Imo State between 2019 and 2024.

Table 14: Pearson Correlation of Kidnapping on Accessibility and Quality of Education in Imo State

		Kidnapping	Education
Kidnapping	Pearson correlation	1	-0.81*
	Sig(2tailed)		0.000
	N	389	389
Education Quality	Pearson correlation	-0.81*	1
	Sig(2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	389	389

Table 14 shows the correlation between kidnapping and accessibility and quality of education in Imo State. The statistical analysis yielded a correlation coefficient of **r = -**0.81 with a p-value = 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). According to the decision rule for correlation analysis, the null hypothesis (H_0), which states that kidnapping has not greatly hindered the accessibility and quality of education in Imo State, is rejected. The test result shows a strong negative correlation between the rate of kidnapping and educational accessibility and quality in the state. This implies that increased incidents of kidnapping significantly correlate with reduced access to education and declining educational standards. The strength of the correlation (r = -0.81) indicates a near-perfect inverse relationship, suggesting that as kidnapping activities increase, access to education and its quality drop substantially.

Hypothesis Three

H_0: Herders-farmers clashes has not significantly undermined agricultural productivity in Imo State between 2019 and 2024.

Table 15: Pearson Correlation of Herders-farmers Clashes on Agricultural Productivity in Imo State

		Herders-farmers Clashes	Agricultural Productivity
Herders-farmers Clashes	Pearson correlation	1	-0.77*
	Sig(2tailed)		0.000
	N	389	389
Agricultural Produ.	Pearson correlation	-0.77*	1
	Sig(2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	389	389

Table 15 shows the correlation between herders-farmers clashes and agricultural productivity in Imo State. The statistical analysis produced a correlation coefficient of r = **-**0.77 with a p-value = 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). Following the established decision rule, the null hypothesis (H_0), which states that herders-farmers clashes have not significantly undermined agricultural productivity in Imo State, is rejected. The result reveals a strong negative correlation between the frequency of herders-farmers clashes and the level of agricultural productivity. The correlation value (r = -0.77) indicates that as the incidence of violent clashes between herders and farmers increased, agricultural productivity experienced a significant decline. The p-value further confirms the statistical significance of this relationship.

Hypothesis Four H_0: Cultism has not greatly constrained hospitality industry in Imo State

between 2019 and 2024.

Table 16: Pearson Correlation of Cultism on Hospitality Industry in Imo State

		Cultism	Hospitality Industry.
Cultism	Pearson correlation	1	-0.74*
	Sig(2tailed)		0.000
	N	389	389
Hospitality Industry.	Pearson correlation	-0.74*	1
	Sig(2-tailed)	0.000	
	N	389	389

Table 16 shows the correlation between cultism and hospitality industry in Imo State. The analysis produced a correlation coefficient of r = -0.74 with a p-value = 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). In line with the decision rule, the null hypothesis (H_0), which posits that cultism has not greatly constrained hospitality industry in Imo State, is rejected. The result reveals a strong negative correlation between the prevalence of cult-related activities and the operation of nightlife and hospitality businesses. The correlation value of r = -0.74 suggests that increases in cultism are strongly associated with decreases in the frequency and safety of operations in the hospitality industry. The low p-value confirms the statistical significance of this finding.

Discussion of Results

Following the data analysis and subsequent test of hypotheses, the study revealed significant findings on the relationship between insecurity and socio-economic development in Imo State. These findings are discussed in line with the specific objectives of the study and are further aligned. First, armed robbery was found to disrupt trade and commerce by creating fear and instability, discouraging investment, and reducing business activities, which increases unemployment and poverty. Second, the study shows that kidnapping has negatively impacted education by instilling fear among students, parents, and teachers, leading to school closures, reduced attendance, and poor learning outcomes. Third, herders-farmers clashes have severely undermined agricultural productivity, destroying farmlands, disrupting food supply chains, and deterring investment in agriculture. Lastly, cultism was shown to harm the hospitality and nightlife economy, especially in urban centers like Owerri, through violence and extortion, which reduces patronage and increases operational costs. Each of these findings aligns with previous empirical studies and underscores that insecurity is not just a criminal issue but a serious developmental challenge. The study calls for comprehensive security reforms, community policing, legal enforcement, and youth-focused interventions. It highlights the urgent need for a peaceful and stable environment as a foundation for sustainable development, investment, education, agriculture, and tourism in Imo State.

Summary of Findings

1. Armed robbery has significantly undermined trade and commerce in Imo State between 2019 and 2024.
2. Kidnapping has greatly hindered the accessibility and quality of education in Imo State between 2019 and 2024.
3. Herders-farmers clashes has significantly

undermined agricultural productivity in Imo State between 2019 and 2024.

4. Cultism has greatly constrained hospitality industry in Imo State between 2019 and 2024.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, it was established that various forms of insecurity such as armed robbery, kidnapping, herders-farmers clashes, and cultism have significantly impeded the economic, educational, agricultural, and hospitality sectors of the state. Armed robbery was found to severely disrupt trade and commerce, while kidnapping hampered the accessibility and quality of education. Similarly, herders-farmers clashes undermined agricultural productivity, and cultism negatively affected nightclubs and hotel operations. These outcomes reveal that insecurity not only poses a threat to public safety but also directly impedes socio-economic development by weakening the foundations of economic growth and social stability. The study, therefore, concludes that without addressing the root causes of insecurity, sustainable development in Imo State will remain elusive.

Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. The government of Imo State, in collaboration with security agencies, should establish and maintain robust community policing frameworks and deploy surveillance technologies in major commercial zones to effectively combat armed robbery and enhance trade and commerce.
2. The Ministry of Education should work with local security outfits and traditional institutions to provide secure learning environments through reinforced school security, trauma support for victims, and awareness programs to reduce the impact of kidnapping on education.
3. The state government should institute permanent conflict-resolution mechanisms, such as peace-building councils involving both herders and farmers, and invest in modern ranching infrastructure to curb the recurrent herders-farmers clashes and restore agricultural productivity.
4. A multi-stakeholder task force including law enforcement, hospitality industry leaders, and youth leaders should be established to curb cultism by enforcing anti-cultism laws, promoting youth empowerment programs, and ensuring the safety of nightlife establishments.

References

Achumba, I. C., Ighomereho, O. S. and Akpor-Robaro, M. O. M. (2016). Security challenges in Nigeria and the implications for business activities and sustainable development. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development, 4*(2), 79–99. https://doi.org/10.1234/abc.

African Development Bank. (2022). *Insecurity undermines economic progress in Africa*. Retrieved from https://www.afdb.org.

Ajayi, A. I. (2015). Cultism and security challenges in Nigerian tertiary institutions: The way forward. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 5(1), 105–112. https://doi.org/10.5901/jesr.2015.v5n1p105

Akpan, U. E., and Umoh, G. E. (2016). Nightlife businesses and urban violence: An assessment of Akwa Ibom State experience. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(15), 78–87.

Global Peace Index. (2023). *Measuring peace and insecurity across the globe*. Institute for Economics and Peace. Retrieved from https://www.economicsandpeace.org.

National Bureau of Statistics. (2023). *Labour force statistics: Unemployment by state*. Retrieved January 30, 2025, from https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng.

National Bureau of Statistics. (2023). *Poverty and inequality in Nigeria 2023*. Retrieved January 30, 2025, from https://www.nigerianstat.gov.ng.

Nwachukwu, C. (2021). The growing insecurity crisis in Imo State: Causes and implications. *Nigerian Journal of Public Administration and Local Government*, 25(2), 110–128.

Ogunbiyi, F. (2018). Cultism and insecurity in public spaces: Challenges to urban leisure in Nigeria. *Social Science Frontiers*, 4(2), 65–78.

Okeke, J. C., and Mamah, C. A. (2021). Hospitality and insecurity nexus in Imo State: Implications for socio-economic development. *Journal of Tourism and Heritage Studies*, 10(2), 45–59.

Okoli, A. C., and Agada, F. T. (2018). Kidnapping and national security in Nigeria. *Research on Humanities and Social Sciences*, 4(6), 137–146.

Okoli, A. C., and Atelhe, G. A. (2018). *Nomads against natives: A political ecology of herder/farmer conflicts in Nasarawa State, Nigeria*. *American International Journal of Contemporary Research*, 4(2), 76–88. http://www.aijcrnet.com/journals/Vol_4_No_2_February_2014/10.pdf.

Todaro, M. P., and Smith, S. C. (2020). *Economic development* (13th ed.). Harlow, England: Pearson.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2022). *Human development report 2022: Uncertain times, unsettled lives*. UNDP.

World Bank. (2021). *The economic cost of insecurity in Nigeria*. Retrieved from https://www.worldbank.org.

World Bank. (2023). *World development report 2023: Shaping the future of development*. World Bank Publications.