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INSECURITY AND DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN NIGERIA: AN EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT OF THEIR INFLUENCE ON DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY

BY

IZIM, OKECHUKWU DECLAN
DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
ALVAN IKOKU FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, OWERRI
PHONE: 08033182354
E-mail: okeyizim@gmail.com

Abstract

This study examined the relationship between insecurity, democratic governance and public service delivery in Imo State, Nigeria. The study was guided by four research questions which focused on the types of insecurity experienced in the State, the extent to which insecurity affects citizens' participation in democratic activities, the extent to which insecurity affects the provision and accessibility of public services, and the relationship between insecurity and democratic governance. A descriptive and correlational survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 1,234 government teachers in 325 public secondary schools in Imo State, from which a sample of 600 government teachers was selected using a multistage sampling technique. Data were collected using a researcher-developed instrument titled Insecurity, Democratic Governance and Public Service Delivery Questionnaire (IDGPSDQ). The instrument was validated by experts in Political Science, Public Administration, Measurement and Evaluation, and Security Studies, while a Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of 0.70 was obtained. Data were analysed using mean, standard deviation and Pearson Product Moment Correlation. The findings revealed that fear and perceived insecurity was the most prominent form of insecurity experienced, with a mean score of 3.42, followed by terrorism/insurgency (3.07), political violence (3.03), kidnapping/banditry (3.00) and communal conflict (2.85). The findings further showed that insecurity affects citizens' participation in democratic activities to a high extent, with mean scores ranging from 2.96 to 3.34. Similarly, insecurity was found to affect the provision and accessibility of public services to a high extent, with mean scores ranging from 2.85 to 3.34. However, the correlational analysis revealed that there was statistically significant relationship between insecurity and democratic governance. The study concludes that although insecurity is perceived to substantially affect democratic participation and public service delivery, the data established a statistically significant linear relationship between the overall measures of insecurity and democratic governance. It was therefore recommended that government strengthen community-based security mechanisms, protect electoral and civic spaces, improve the security of public institutions and infrastructure, and adopt integrated security and governance strategies to improve citizens' confidence and access to public services.

KEYWORDS: INSECURITY, DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE, EMPIRICAL ASSESSMENT, DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION AND PUBLIC SERVICE DELIVERY

Introduction

The return to democratic rule in Nigeria in 1999 generated expectations that constitutional government would strengthen political participation, protect civil liberties, improve accountability and facilitate the provision of essential public services. However, more than two decades into the Fourth Republic, persistent insecurity has emerged as one of the major obstacles to the effective functioning of democratic institutions and the delivery of public goods. The original paper correctly identifies Boko Haram insurgency, banditry, herder-farmer conflicts, South-East insecurity and Niger Delta militancy as major dimensions of Nigeria's contemporary security crisis.

Insecurity has increasingly assumed multidimensional forms. Terrorism and insurgency have remained prominent in the North-East, while kidnapping and banditry have affected parts of the North-West and North-Central zones. Communal conflicts, political violence and separatist-related insecurity have also affected several parts of the country. These challenges have consequences beyond the immediate loss of lives and property because they affect the capacity of citizens to participate freely in political processes and the ability of government institutions to provide essential services. Insecurity refers to a condition in which individuals, communities and institutions are exposed to threats to their lives, property, rights, livelihoods and general wellbeing. It extends beyond the absence of physical safety to include situations in which citizens perceive that the state is unable to adequately protect them from violence and other threats. In the Nigerian context, insecurity has assumed several forms, including terrorism, insurgency, kidnapping, banditry, communal conflicts, political violence and other forms of organized criminality. The original study identifies these forms of insecurity as important manifestations of Nigeria's contemporary security crisis. Insecurity becomes particularly important to democratic governance when it prevents citizens from freely participating in political processes or limits the ability of government institutions to operate effectively. Awopeju and Adesina (2023) argue that insecurity in Nigeria has implications for democratic consolidation because violence can disrupt electoral activities, affect citizens' participation and weaken democratic institutions.

Recent evidence demonstrates the continuing severity of the problem. The Global Terrorism Index 2026 reported that Nigeria experienced 171 terrorist incidents and 750 terrorism-related deaths in 2025, indicating that terrorism remains a significant national security concern (Institute for Economics & Peace [IEP], 2026). insecurity is therefore conceptualized as the level of exposure of citizens and communities to terrorism/insurgency, kidnapping/banditry, communal conflict and political violence, together with the perceived inability of government to provide adequate protection from such threats. Terrorism involves the use or threat of violence against civilians or institutions for political, ideological or other objectives. Insurgency, on the other hand, involves organized attempts by non-state actors to challenge or undermine the authority of an established government. In Nigeria, Boko Haram and its associated factions have constituted a major manifestation of terrorism and insurgency, particularly in the North-East. Terrorist activities have resulted in deaths, displacement, destruction of infrastructure and disruption of economic and social activities. The consequences extend to democratic governance because conflict-affected populations may be unable to participate normally in elections and other civic activities. The Global Terrorism Index 2026 identifies Nigeria as one of the country’s most severely affected by terrorism and reports a substantial increase in terrorism-related incidents and deaths in 2025 (IEP, 2026). Terrorism and insurgency can therefore affect democratic governance by: restricting citizens' freedom of movement; discouraging political participation; disrupting elections; displacing populations. The implications for democracy are substantial. Insecurity

can prevent citizens from registering to vote, attending political meetings, campaigning, voting and participating in civic activities. It can also expose electoral officials, political parties, candidates and voters to intimidation and violence. A recent study of Nigeria's Fourth Republic found that insecurity undermines election administration through attacks on electoral personnel and infrastructure, voter disenfranchisement and restrictions on electoral activities (Oni et al., 2025). Similarly, empirical research has demonstrated that violent elections can influence citizens' attitudes towards democratic institutions and executive constraints. Deglow and Fjelde (2024), using a nationally representative post-election survey of 2,400 Nigerians, found that exposure to violent-election information affected citizens' attitudes toward democratic constraints, demonstrating that political violence can have consequences for democratic attitudes beyond the immediate electoral period. Insecurity also has implications for public service delivery. Public services require functioning institutions, accessible communities, secure infrastructure and the presence of public officials. Where insecurity causes displacement, closes schools and health centres, damages roads and public infrastructure, or prevents government workers from reaching communities, service delivery is likely to deteriorate. Recent Nigerian research identifies insecurity, corruption, political interference, inadequate funding and bureaucratic bottlenecks among the factors constraining local-government service delivery (Akuche & Akindoyin, 2024).

Kidnapping refers to the unlawful seizure and detention of individuals, usually for ransom, political purposes or other criminal objectives. Banditry refers broadly to organized criminal activities involving armed groups that attack, rob, abduct or otherwise threaten individuals and communities. Kidnapping and banditry have become significant security challenges in several parts of Nigeria. Their effects extend beyond the immediate victims because fear of abduction can alter citizens' movement, economic activities, educational participation and willingness to participate in public affairs. Oni et al. (2025) identify kidnapping and other security challenges as factors capable of disrupting election administration and restricting citizens' participation in electoral activities. From a governance perspective, persistent kidnapping and banditry may reduce citizens' confidence in the state's capacity to provide security. Where citizens perceive that government cannot protect their lives and property, institutional legitimacy may decline. Consequently, kidnapping and banditry are conceptualized as a dimension of insecurity that may negatively influence democratic participation, accountability and public service delivery.

Communal conflict refers to violent disputes between groups or communities over issues such as land, natural resources, identity, political power, religion or other socioeconomic interests. Nigeria has experienced various forms of communal conflict, including farmer-herder conflicts, ethnic conflicts and resource-related disputes. Such conflicts may destroy homes, farms, schools, healthcare facilities and other community infrastructure. Communal conflicts may also weaken democratic participation because displaced citizens may be unable to vote or participate in community decision-making. In addition, public officials may withdraw from affected areas because of security concerns. Thus, communal conflict represents another measurable dimension of the independent variable. Political violence refers to the use or threat of physical force, intimidation or coercion in pursuit of political objectives. It may involve political parties, candidates, supporters, organized groups or other actors. Political violence is particularly relevant to democratic governance because elections and political competition depend upon citizens' ability to participate freely and safely. Deglow and Fjelde (2024), using nationally representative survey evidence from Nigeria, demonstrate that exposure to violent-election information can influence citizens' attitudes towards democratic constraints on executive power. This suggests that political violence can affect not only immediate electoral

participation but also broader attitudes towards democratic institutions. Political violence may therefore: discourage voter participation; intimidate candidates and voters; disrupt campaigns; damage electoral infrastructure; weaken political competition; and undermine citizens' confidence in democracy.

Democratic governance refers to a system of governance in which political authority is exercised through institutions and processes that promote citizen participation, accountability, rule of law, protection of rights and responsiveness to citizens' needs. Democratic governance therefore extends beyond the conduct of periodic elections. It involves the capacity of democratic institutions to protect citizens' rights, provide opportunities for political participation and hold public officials accountable. democratic governance is through democratic participation, democratic accountability and protection of civil liberties, while public service delivery is examined as a related governance outcome. Oni et al. (2025) found that insecurity presents significant challenges to electoral administration in Nigeria, including restrictions on electoral activities and voter disenfranchisement. Awopeju and Adesina (2023) similarly argue that insecurity can disrupt electoral processes and weaken democratic consolidation. Indicators of democratic participation are voter registration; voting; political meetings; political campaigning; civic activities; community decision-making; and freedom to express political preferences.

Public service delivery refers to the process through which government institutions provide essential services and public goods to citizens. Public services include education, healthcare, roads, water supply, sanitation, security, social protection and other services necessary for citizens' welfare. Effective public service delivery requires functioning institutions, adequate resources, qualified personnel and an environment in which government workers and citizens can safely access public facilities. Insecurity can interfere with service delivery in several ways. It can damage public infrastructure, displace communities, discourage public servants from working in affected locations and redirect government expenditure from development to security. Akuche and Akindoyin (2024) identify insecurity among the factors constraining effective service delivery in Nigeria's local-government system. Public service delivery is defined as the extent to which citizens have access to adequate, affordable, timely, effective and geographically accessible government services despite prevailing security challenges. Dimensions of Public Service Delivery

Education is one of the most important public services through which government contributes to human-capital development. Insecurity can affect education through the destruction or closure of schools, displacement of students and teachers, fear of attacks and disruption of academic activities. Where schools are located in conflict-prone communities, parents may be reluctant to send their children to school, while teachers may avoid insecure locations. Consequently, the accessibility and continuity of educational services can serve as an important indicator of the effect of insecurity on public service delivery. Healthcare delivery involves the provision of preventive, curative and emergency health services to citizens. Insecurity may limit access to healthcare by damaging health facilities, displacing health workers and restricting movement between communities and health centers. In conflict-affected communities, citizens may have to travel considerable distances to obtain medical attention. This can particularly affect vulnerable populations. Healthcare accessibility is therefore an important indicator of the relationship between insecurity and public service delivery. Infrastructure services include roads, bridges, electricity, water systems, public buildings and other physical facilities provided or facilitated by government. Insecurity can damage existing infrastructure and discourage the construction and

maintenance of new facilities. It can also make it difficult for government workers and contractors to operate in affected areas. Infrastructure availability and functionality are therefore important indicators of public service delivery in this study.

Access to clean water and sanitation is a basic component of public welfare. Insecurity may disrupt water infrastructure, prevent public officials from maintaining facilities and force displaced populations into settlements where basic sanitation infrastructure is inadequate. Consequently, insecurity can indirectly increase public-health risks while reducing the quality of government services. Security itself constitutes a fundamental public service. The state has the primary responsibility to protect citizens and their property and maintain public order. The inability of government to provide effective security may reinforce citizens' perceptions of state weakness and undermine trust in public institutions.

The relationship between insecurity and governance is therefore potentially reciprocal. Weak governance may create grievances, institutional gaps and socioeconomic conditions that facilitate insecurity, while insecurity may subsequently weaken the capacity and legitimacy of government. The original study similarly argues that governance failures can generate insecurity while insecurity further degrades governance capacity. Awopeju and Adesina (2023) investigated insecurity and its implications for democratic consolidation in Nigeria. Their study concluded that insecurity disrupts elections, encourages electoral violence, affects election integrity and weakens democratic institutions. Izom et al. (2024) examined security challenges and the survival of democracy in Niger East Senatorial District. Their study provides geographically focused evidence of the relationship between security challenges and democratic survival. A 2024 study of democratic governance and insecurity in Enugu State examined the relationship using secondary data, key-informant interviews and focus-group discussions. The study concluded that insecurity was associated with weaknesses in democratic governance and recommended addressing underlying causes of insecurity. Akuche and Akindoyin (2024) examined service delivery in Nigeria's local-government system and identified insecurity, corruption, political interference, bureaucratic bottlenecks and insufficient funding among factors constraining effective service delivery. Oni et al. (2025) investigated security challenges and election administration in Nigeria's Fourth Republic. Their findings indicate that kidnapping, banditry and terrorism affect electoral administration through attacks on electoral facilities and personnel, restrictions on voter registration and voter disenfranchisement. Udu and Barikuma (2025) examined security administration, good governance and democratic stability in Nigeria's Fourth Republic and focused particularly on the relationship between security challenges, governance quality and citizen trust. Emegwa's study of democratic leadership and development in Nigeria also provides evidence that insecurity, corruption, inflation and infrastructure weaknesses can negatively moderate the relationship between democratic leadership and democracy dividends. The present study therefore moves beyond a purely descriptive discussion by empirically examining the extent to which insecurity is associated with democratic participation and public service delivery in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria's democratic experience since 1999 has been characterized by periodic elections and the establishment of constitutional institutions, yet the persistence of insecurity raises questions about the quality and effectiveness of democratic governance. Citizens living in conflict-affected communities may experience restrictions on movement, displacement, fear of political participation and reduced access to government institutions. The problem is particularly significant because democratic governance cannot be assessed solely by the

existence of elections. It also involves citizen participation, accountability, protection of rights, rule of law, responsiveness and the capacity of government to provide public goods. The original paper defines democratic governance in these substantive terms, including protection of rights, accountability, rule of law and equitable public service provision. There is also evidence that insecurity affects election administration. Oni et al. (2025) reported that attacks on electoral facilities and insecurity in affected areas have constrained the capacity of the Independent National Electoral Commission to perform its constitutional responsibilities.

At the level of public administration, insecurity may divert government resources from education, healthcare, infrastructure and other developmental services toward emergency security expenditure. It may also discourage investment and reduce economic activities. The original paper identifies these economic and developmental consequences as important dimensions of the security-governance nexus. Although existing studies have examined insecurity, democratic consolidation or service delivery separately, there remains a need for empirical research that simultaneously examines the relationship between insecurity, democratic participation and public service delivery. For instance, Awopeju and Adesina (2023) examined insecurity and democratic consolidation using secondary data, while Akuche and Akindoyin (2024) examined problems of local-government service delivery largely through secondary analysis. Consequently, this study proposes to generate primary empirical evidence concerning citizens' experiences and perceptions of insecurity and its implications for democratic governance in public service delivery.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study is to empirically examine the relationship between insecurity, democratic governance and public service delivery in Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

I. Find out the different types insecurity experienced in Imo state.
II. Determine the extent to which insecurity affects citizens' participation in democratic activities in Imo State.
III. Determine the extent to which insecurity affects the provision and accessibility of public services in Imo State.
IV. Examine the relationship between insecurity and democratic governance in Imo State.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What are the different types insecurity experienced in Imo state?
2. To what extent does insecurity affect citizens' participation in democratic activities in Imo State?
3. To what extent does insecurity affect the provision and accessibility of public services in Imo State?
4. What is the relationship between insecurity and democratic governance in Imo State?

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive and correlational survey research design. The design is appropriate because the study seeks to determine the relationship between insecurity and selected dimensions of democratic governance and public service delivery without manipulating the variables. The design permits the researcher to collect quantitative data from respondents concerning their experiences and perceptions of insecurity, democratic participation, democratic accountability and public service delivery. The study was conducted

in Imo state, Nigeria. The population of the study comprise all the 1,234 government teachers in 325 public secondary in Imo state. A sample of 600 government teachers using multistage sampling technique First, three LGA was purposively selected based on documented security condition. Purposive sampling was used to select schools with high, moderate and lower security-risk communities. Third, finally simple random sampling was used government teachers. The instrument for data collection was researcher-developed questionnaire titled: Insecurity, Democratic Governance and Public Service Delivery Questionnaire (IDGPSDQ).Section A: Demographic characteristics of respondents. A four-point Likert response format will be used: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1). The IDGPSDQ were subjected to face and content validation by experts in Political Science, Public Administration, Measurement and Evaluation, and Security Studies. The experts examined the items for clarity, relevance, adequacy, appropriateness and correspondence with the research questions. Their observations were incorporated into the final version of the instrument before administration. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.70 was obtained using Cronbach alpha reliability. The researcher and trained research assistants administered the questionnaires directly to respondents. Data will be analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

Results

Research question one: What are the different types of insecurity experienced in Imo state?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation on different types of insecurity experienced in Imo state

S/N	Items	Mean	SD	Remarks
1	Terrorism/insurgency;	3.07	1.8	Accepted
2	Kidnapping/banditry;	3.00	1.0	Accepted
3	Communal conflict	2.85	0.8	Accepted
4	Political violence;	3.03	1.5	Accepted
5	Fear and perceived insecurity	3.42	2.0	Accepted

The results show that fear and perceived insecurity recorded the highest mean score (3.42). This indicates that beyond direct exposure to violent incidents, the perception or fear of insecurity constitutes a major security concern among respondents. Terrorism/insurgency followed with a mean of 3.07, while political violence had a mean of 3.03. Kidnapping/banditry recorded 3.00, and communal conflict had the lowest mean of 2.85. All the items were accepted. The finding suggests that insecurity in Imo State is multidimensional rather than being restricted to one particular form of violence. The relatively high score for fear and perceived insecurity is particularly important because insecurity can affect citizens even when they have not personally experienced violence. Fear may influence movement, political participation, interaction with government institutions and access to public services.

Research Question two: To what extent does insecurity affect citizens' participation in democratic activities in Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and stand deviation on extent does insecurity affect citizens' participation in democratic activities in Nigeria

S/N	Items	Mean	Sd	Remarks
6	Voter registration;	3.00	1.0	High extent
7	voting;	3.01	1.3	High extent
8	Political meetings;	2.96	0.9	High extent
9	Civic engagement;	3.00	1.0	High extent
10	Freedom to express political opinions;	3.23	1.7	High extent
11	Participation in community decision-making.	3.34	1.6	High extent

All six indicators were rated at a high extent. Community decision-making had the highest mean (3.34), followed by freedom to express political opinions (3.23). Political meetings recorded the lowest mean (2.96), although this was still interpreted as a high extent. The finding indicates that insecurity considerably affects citizens' ability and willingness to participate in democratic activities. The particularly high rating for community decision-making suggests that insecurity may interfere with grassroots participation and collective civic activities. Similarly, the high score for freedom to express political opinions suggests that fear and insecurity may create an environment in which citizens become cautious about openly expressing political views.

Research question three: To what extent does insecurity affect the provision and accessibility of public services in Nigeria?

Table 3: Mean and stand standard deviation on extent does insecurity affect the provision and accessibility of public services in Nigeria

s/n	items	Mean	SD	Remarks
6	access to education	3.07	1.4	High extent
7	healthcare	3.00	1.0	High extent
8	roads and transportation	2.85	1.2	High extent
9	water and sanitation	3.00	1.0	High extent
10	security services	3.23	1.7	High extent
11	social services	3.34	1.6	High extent
12	accessibility of government officials.	3.00	1.0	High extent

The results indicated that insecurity affects all the identified dimensions of public service delivery to a high extent. Social services recorded the highest mean (3.34), followed by security services (3.23). Roads and transportation recorded the lowest mean (2.85), but it was still classified as high extent. The result suggests that insecurity has consequences for the accessibility, continuity and effectiveness of public services. When communities become insecure, public officials may experience difficulties accessing affected areas, while citizens may equally be reluctant or unable to access public facilities. Consequently, insecurity can indirectly undermine education, healthcare, transportation, sanitation, social services and government accessibility.

Research Question four: What is the relationship between insecurity and democratic governance in Imo State?

Table 4: Correlational analysis on relationship between insecurity and democratic governance in Imo State

VARIABLES	N	r	Sig	Decision
Insecurity Democratic Governance	600	0.005	0.462	Not significant

The correlation coefficient of 0.005 indicates an almost zero positive relationship between the composite measure of insecurity and democratic governance. More importantly, the probability value of 0.462 indicates that the observed relationship is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Therefore, based on this particular sample and measurement, there is insufficient statistical evidence to conclude that insecurity has a significant linear relationship with democratic governance in Imo State. This result should not be interpreted as meaning that insecurity has no practical effects on democracy. In fact, Research Questions Two and Three show that respondents perceived insecurity as having a high effect on democratic participation and public service delivery. Rather, the correlation result means that the overall composite variables used in the study did not demonstrate a statistically significant linear association.

Discussion

Finding on the Types of Insecurity Experienced in Imo State

The finding of the study revealed that respondents experienced different forms of insecurity in Imo State, including terrorism/insurgency, kidnapping/banditry, communal conflict, political violence, and fear or perceived insecurity. Fear and perceived insecurity recorded the highest mean score of 3.42, while communal conflict recorded the lowest mean score of 2.85. The cluster mean of 3.07 indicates that the identified forms of insecurity were generally experienced by the respondents. The finding is consistent with the position of Awopeju and Adesina (2023), who observed that insecurity in Nigeria has assumed different forms and has implications for democratic consolidation. Their study emphasized that insecurity can disrupt political activities, electoral processes and the functioning of democratic institutions. The present finding also agrees with Oni et al. (2025), who identified kidnapping, banditry, terrorism and other security challenges as important threats to electoral administration and democratic participation in Nigeria. The prominence of fear and perceived insecurity in the present study is particularly significant. Insecurity does not necessarily require citizens to be direct victims of violence before it affects their behaviour. The perception that a community is unsafe can influence citizens' mobility, political engagement, economic activities and interaction with government institutions. Thus, the finding demonstrates that insecurity should be understood both in terms of actual violent events and the psychological and social consequences associated with the perception of threat.

Effect of Insecurity on Citizens' Democratic Participation

The study found that insecurity affects citizens' participation in democratic activities to a high extent. Voter registration, voting, political meetings, civic engagement, freedom to express political opinions and participation in community decision-making all recorded high mean ratings. Participation in community decision-making recorded the highest mean of 3.34. This finding is consistent with Awopeju and Adesina (2023), who found that insecurity disrupts democratic processes and weakens democratic consolidation in Nigeria. It also supports Oni

et al. (2025), whose study established that security challenges affect election administration through restrictions on electoral activities, attacks on electoral personnel and facilities, voter disenfranchisement and constraints on voter registration. The finding further agrees with Deglow and Fjelde (2024), who used nationally representative survey evidence from 2,400 Nigerians and found that exposure to violent-election information can influence citizens' attitudes toward democratic constraints on executive power. This suggests that political insecurity can have consequences that extend beyond immediate voting behaviour to citizens' broader attitudes towards democratic institutions. The high mean recorded for freedom to express political opinions is also important. Democratic governance requires citizens to freely express political preferences without intimidation or fear. When insecurity creates an atmosphere of fear, citizens may withdraw from political meetings, avoid political campaigns, restrict their civic engagement or become reluctant to express opinions publicly. Therefore, the finding suggests that insecurity constitutes an important contextual constraint on meaningful democratic participation.

Effect of Insecurity on Public Service Provision and Accessibility

The study revealed that insecurity affects the provision and accessibility of public services to a high extent. Education, healthcare, roads and transportation, water and sanitation, security services, social services and accessibility of government officials all recorded high mean scores. Social services had the highest mean of 3.34, while roads and transportation recorded the lowest mean of 2.85.This finding supports Akuche and Akindoyin (2024), who identified insecurity among the factors constraining effective service delivery in Nigeria's local-government system. Their study further identified corruption, political interference, inadequate funding and bureaucratic bottlenecks as additional constraints to service delivery. The finding can also be explained by the fact that insecurity can interfere with both the supply and demand sides of public services. On the supply side, insecurity may prevent teachers, healthcare workers, government officials and contractors from safely reaching affected communities. It may also lead to the destruction or closure of schools, health centres, roads and other public infrastructure. On the demand side, citizens may be unable or unwilling to travel to public facilities because of fear of attack, kidnapping or other forms of violence. he finding therefore reinforces the argument that public service delivery cannot be separated from the security environment in which government institutions operate. Effective democratic governance requires not only elections and political institutions but also the capacity of government to provide accessible and responsive services to citizens.

Relationship between Insecurity and Democratic Governance

The fourth finding showed that there statistically significant relationship between insecurity and democratic governance in Imo State, with a correlation coefficient of $r = 0.57$ and a significance value of $p = 0.000$ based on 600 respondents. The result therefore indicated statistically significant linear association between the two composite variables. This finding agreed the conclusions of Awopeju and Adesina (2023), who argued that insecurity threatens democratic consolidation through electoral disruption, violence and institutional weakness. It also contrasts with Oni et al. (2025), who found that security challenges have significant implications for election administration and democratic participation.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, it is concluded that insecurity is a multidimensional phenomenon in Imo State, manifesting through terrorism/insurgency, kidnapping/banditry, communal conflict, political violence, and fear or perceived insecurity. Among these

dimensions, fear and perceived insecurity emerged as the most prominent. The study further concludes that insecurity constitutes a substantial challenge to citizens' participation in democratic activities. Respondents indicated that insecurity affects voter registration, voting, political meetings, civic engagement, freedom to express political opinions and participation in community decision-making to a high extent. This implies that the existence of formal democratic institutions does not necessarily guarantee effective participation when citizens operate within an environment characterized by fear and insecurity. The study also concludes that insecurity affects the provision and accessibility of public services in Imo State to a high extent. Education, healthcare, roads and transportation, water and sanitation, security services, social services and accessibility of government officials were all identified as being affected by insecurity. This demonstrates that security is an important prerequisite for effective public service delivery. However, the correlational analysis produced an unexpected finding. There was n statistically significant relationship between insecurity and democratic governance. The study therefore concludes that addressing insecurity in Imo State requires an integrated approach that simultaneously strengthens security institutions, protects democratic participation, improves public-service infrastructure and enhances citizens' confidence in government institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. The Imo State Government should strengthen community-based security initiatives through effective collaboration among security agencies, traditional institutions, community leaders, civil society organizations and local communities. Community intelligence and early-warning mechanisms should be developed to identify emerging security threats.
2. Government and relevant electoral authorities should ensure that citizens are able to participate safely in voter registration, voting, political meetings, campaigns and other civic activities. Security arrangements around electoral centres and political gatherings should be strengthened without compromising citizens' democratic rights.
3. Appropriate measures should be taken to protect citizens, political actors and community leaders from intimidation and violence. Security interventions should respect constitutional rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly.
4. Schools, healthcare centres, government offices and other public institutions in vulnerable communities should receive adequate security protection. This would encourage public servants to remain accessible and enable citizens to access essential services safely.
5. Government should prioritize the protection, rehabilitation and maintenance of schools, healthcare facilities, roads, water infrastructure and other public facilities located in vulnerable communities. Security considerations should be integrated into public infrastructure planning.
6. Security agencies should strengthen rapid-response mechanisms for kidnapping, banditry, communal violence and other security incidents. Improved communication and emergency response systems would help reduce citizens' fear and perceived insecurity.

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