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THE NEXUS AMONG UNEMPLOYMENT, POVERTY AND CRIME IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA

Key words: Consequence, Crime, Nexus, Poverty, Unemployment.

ABSTRACT: Unemployment and poverty have been the major causes of crime in developing countries, Nigeria inclusive. The main objective of this paper was to show the connections among unemployment, poverty and crime in Nigeria. It also examined unemployment and poverty rates in Nigeria. The research design adopted for this paper is cross-sectional and explanatory. The paper adopted conceptual framework to show the nexus among the concepts. It used secondary sources of data collection and data analysis was based on content analysis. The study revealed that there is a strong link between unemployment, poverty and crime in Nigeria. The relationship among the concepts is bi-directional. Unemployment has adverse effect on poverty and crime rate. So also poverty negatively affects unemployment and crime rates. Increase in crime rates leads to increase in unemployment and poverty. The paper therefore recommended amongst others that the rate of unemployment must reduce if poverty and crime must reduce. Also the rate of unemployment can be reduced through provision of jobs which will consequently reduce the rate of poverty and also make crime unattractive on the long run.

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INTRODUCTION

Employment occurs if a person is engaged in the production of goods and services thereby contributing to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in a legitimate manner which is a component of the national accounts and receives any form or amount of compensation for that activity (NBS, 2019). Under-employment occurs if a person works less than full time hours (40 hours) but work at least 20 hours on the average per week and/ or if a person works full time but is engaged in an activity that underutilizes his/her skills, time, and educational qualifications (NBS, 2019). Unemployment occurs if persons within the age of 15–64 years who are available for work, actively seeking work, but were unable to find work during the reference period (usually the week before the survey was administered) (ILO). The National Bureau of Statistics defines unemployment as the proportion of those in the labour 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 within the reference period (usually the week before the survey was administered) to the total currently active (labour force) population (NBS, 2019). Unemployment rates in Nigeria have been fluctuating over the years. Following the above definition, the unemployment rate is calculated as thus:

$$\text{Unemployment Rate} = 100 \times \frac{\text{Unemployment}}{\text{Labour force population}}$$

Nigeria has been experiencing increase in unemployment rate over the years as the nation's tertiary institutions graduate thousands of youths in different fields without creating jobs to accommodate them (Maku & Alimi, 2018). Even the few that are employed are under-paid or under-employed; working for longer hours with nothing to show for it. Consequently, so many youths are hopeless, living in abject poverty and lack, frustrated and taking to crime as short cut to financial freedom (Aborisode & Oni, 2020; Ebobo, 2016).

In Nigeria, like in many other countries, poverty is measured by consumption expenditures and not income (NBS, 2019). Reasons being that consumption expenditures better reflect the condition of a particular level of welfare of individual households and income reflects the opportunity of attaining a particular level of well-being of individual households. On the other hand, household incomes can also be of diverse sources which cannot be accurately calculated (NBS, 2019). However, consumption expenditures is measured by “consumption aggregate” which is the money value of food and other non-food goods and services consumed by particular households (NBS, 2019). Poverty is therefore, said to be a situation of lack of income to meet basic necessities of life which includes education, housing, health care, clothing, isolation, powerlessness, vulnerability and social exclusion (NBS, 2016). However, national poverty rate is calculated based on three components which are poverty headcount ratio, poverty gap and Gini index. Poverty headcount ratio represents the population of households living equal or below the poverty line; poverty gap indicates the depth of poverty in particular households and Gini index represents the statistical measure of expenditure distribution in the country (NBS, 2019).

Consequently, the national poverty rate in 2003/2004 was 64.2% and by 2009/2010 it declined to 62.6% with a slight decrease of 2.4%. By 2018, poverty rate in Nigeria increased to 92.00%. In 2019, a total population of about 82.9 million people in Nigeria were classified as poor that is, the national poverty rate stood at 40.1%. This indicates that 4 out of every 10 people lived below 137,430 Naira real per capital expenditure per annum in Nigeria (NBS, 2019). The annual food poverty line was 81,767 naira, annual lower poverty line was 124,948 naira and the annual upper poverty line was 137,430 naira (Nigeria Living Standards Survey, 2018–2019). The upper poverty line is a summation of food poverty line + cost of non-food basic needs which is equal to 137,430 naira per annum). This indicates that 4 out of every 10 people survive on 11,452.5 naira per month (381.75 naira per day). Meanwhile this calculation did not include Borno state because they could not get data from some communities in Borno state; hence sample was considered non-random and non-representative. This accounts for an increase in people living below poverty line from 80.0

million in 2003/2004 to 102.2 million in 2009/2010 and a decrease from 102.2 million in 2009/2010 to 82.9 million in 2018/2019 (NBS, 2012; NBS 2019). This also indicates a downward slope in poverty rate with a tremendous increase in the number of people living below poverty line (27%).

The word crime is derived from the Greek word '*crimen*' which means the violation of law, a defiance or breaking of the law. That is, behavior or act that violates the criminal law which is punishable by payment of fine and/or imprisonment. Over the years crime has evolved in different shapes, types and frequencies in Nigeria despite the consequences clearly spelt out in the criminal/penal codes of the country. It can rightly be said that crime rate is increasing over time in Nigeria arising from three major factors which are unemployment, poverty and inflation amongst others. The situation of the country is such that many have taken to crimes as means of employment and to cushion the effect of poverty coupled with prolonged deprivation and hard ship experienced in Nigeria. In support of this, World Bank report stated that inflation which is 17.93% as at May, 2020 pushed seven (7) million Nigerians into poverty in 2020 (Nigerian Tribune, 2021; Daily Independent, 2021). Consequently, World Bank suggested that inflation limits growth, fuels crime and unemployment also fuels crime and insecurity in Nigeria (Nigerian Tribune, 2021; Daily Independent, 2021). Some of these serious crimes that are prevalent in Nigeria are kidnapping for ransom, kidnapping for ritual, armed robbery, one chance robbery, terrorism, boko haram insurgency and herdsmen attacks.

The frequency and distribution of these crimes have instilled fear into the minds of Nigerians such that everybody is afraid of being attacked whether in public places or within the homes at any time of the day (Abo-risade, 2017). It is most appalling that many of these crimes like armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, boko haram insurgency and herdsmen attacks happen in broad day light and the perpetrators escape without being apprehended by the law enforcement agents. Most times, the law enforcements officers appear at the crime scenes when the perpetrators would have long gone into thin air. It therefore appears that some people are above the law in Nigeria since they can break the laws and go un-arrested. No wonder, the New Telegraph, (2021) has the report of the Niger

State Governor who said that there are informants to the bandits in his cabinet because they get their decisions even during cabinet meetings at government house. So he concluded that government officials and politicians aid bandits in Nigeria (Daily Sun, 2021). The question then is what are the connections between unemployment, poverty and the prevalence of crimes that have made people become so merciless as to rob, maim and kill defenceless and helpless citizens at will incessantly? Therefore, this paper aimed at examining the connection between two major factors: unemployment and poverty that predispose people to crime in Nigeria. The paper is cross-sectional and exploratory in design. Conceptual framework was used to show the connections among the three factors; unemployment, poverty and crime. Data was collected from secondary sources such as journal articles, official statistics and bulletin and was analyzed based on content analysis.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Akwara, Akwara, Enwuchola, Adekunle, & Udaw (2013) suggested that unemployment leads to poverty and poverty causes insecurity. Insecurity could arise from increase in the prevalence of crimes and other social vices resulting from prolonged poverty and unemployment which are detrimental to the nation's economy. Akinmulegun (2014) suggested that unemployment is the root of poverty in Nigeria. He said unemployment brings about lack and poverty in the immediate family which trickles down to poverty in the society. Therefore he suggested that as a result of poverty and unemployment in the society, so many Nigerians especially the youths have lost confidence in the government. Hence many of such youths take to seeking greener pastures out of the country while some others take to criminal involvements as means of survival.

Egunbjobi & Adenike, (2014) in their study on the nexus between economic growth, poverty and unemployment using a 31-year data from 1970 to 2000 found that there is a strong positive relationship between poverty and unemployment. This corroborates Aiyedogbon & Ohwofasa (2012) which also found a robust relationship between poverty and

unemployment in Nigeria. Therefore, Egunjobi & Adenike (2014) suggested that unemployment and poverty adversely impacts on the economy, population as well as deepen the income distribution level which *eventually leads to the increase in crime rates* in Nigeria. In the same manner, Omojolaibi & Omojolaibi (2014) established in their study that there is a robust proportionate relationship between poverty and unemployment in Nigeria.

Adebobola, Rafiu, & Igbayemi (2015) in their study titled; poverty and rate of unemployment in Nigeria suggested that unemployment is a key factor that leads to poverty in Nigeria. They see poverty and unemployment as very critical to the economic development as well as major barrier to social development in Nigeria. Umar & David (2019) in their study on the relationship between poverty and unemployment in Niger state, Nigeria, found that most of their respondents fell below poverty line even though they were employed. This indicates that one can be employed and still be poor in Nigeria. They also found that there is a positive relationship between household poverty and unemployment. They found that unemployment causes increase in poverty by 23% as a result of the marginal effect of unemployment. Hence came to the conclusion that there is a positive relationship between poverty and unemployment in Nigeria. They concluded that a positive change in income level as a result of gainful employment causes a fall in the level of poverty.

In the same manner, Adelowokan, Maku, Babasanya, & Adesoye (2019) also found that an increase in unemployment causes an increase in poverty level in Nigeria. Ebobo (2016) in her study on the influence of youth unemployment on crime in Nigeria found a strong relationship between unemployment, poverty and crime. She therefore concluded that an increase in unemployment brings about an increase in crime rates in Nigeria (Ebobo, 2016). Consequently, it is not surprising that crime rates in Nigeria is on the increase following the effects of unemployment and poverty which have given birth to so many other challenges which includes marital infidelity, divorce and national insecurity (Ebobo, 2016). 'Poverty they say' is the root of all evil because it makes the poor vulnerable to crimes and other social vices which would not have been possible, all things being equal.

This paper is hinged on criminal opportunity theory which states that community economic deprivation has two countervailing effects on property crime. That is, poverty brings about strain and disorganization which may encourage some persons to offend. At the same time, it also reduces opportunities to engage in property crime by reducing the supply of worthwhile targets in an area (Van Dijk, 1994). Either way, poverty creates avenues for non-criminally minded persons to develop criminal minds through effective motivation, association with criminally minded peers and criminal opportunities as well as perceived weakness in social control mechanisms thereby engaging in crime. The motivated offenders therefore engage in crime because they are frustrated by deprivation and lack of money especially in a country like Nigeria where very few people (leaders) divert national funds into their personal pockets and still oppress the marginalized poor with monies that should have been used to better the lives of the masses (Arinze, 2012).

Consequently, unemployment coupled with poverty/economic deprivation lead to social strain and social disorganization. These conditions lead to availability of a high proportion of motivated offenders arising from the frustration experienced from lack of money (social strain) and at the same time leads to weakness in community bonds and collective mechanisms of social control (social disorganization) which paves way for unrestrained offenders who only need suitable targets (victims) to engage in crime. This best describes the situation in Nigeria where many youths are frustrated because they lack money and hope for the future and predicated on the weakness of social control mechanisms to recruit like minds in large numbers to perpetrate crimes such as kidnapping for ransom, kidnapping for ritual, banditry, armed robbery, one chance robbery and other property crimes. Also the Boko haram insurgencies and the herdsmen attacks have preyed on the weakness of the law enforcement agents/forms of social control to perpetrate their evil acts of killing and maiming innocent and armless citizens in Nigeria. Just as they have premeditated, they perpetrate these crimes without restrictions from the law enforcement agents and escape with their loots and victims without being arrested. Hence their continual attacks in Nigeria. Just as Robinson (1999) suggested about space of interaction between offenders and victims, these

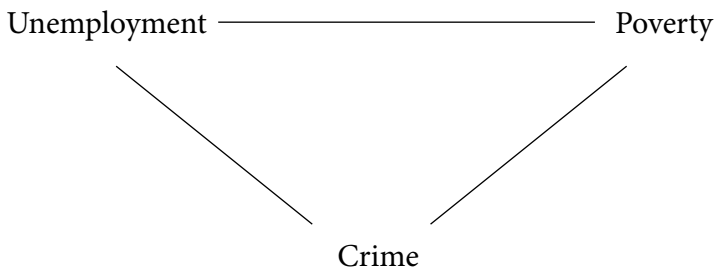
attacks are mostly targeted at the rich/wealthy citizens as well as vulnerable citizens (passengers) on the highways, farms, communities and deserted places until most recently when they started attacking government schools to demand for ransom (Daily Trust, 2021; The Punch, 2021). Hence the high rate of unemployment in Nigeria created more than enough frustrated youths and adults to be motivated and encouraged into crimes that generate quick money and poverty alleviation. Hence so many lives as well as millions of naira have been lost to crimes such as kidnapping, armed robbery and banditry in the recent times in Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Connections between the three concepts are represented as thus:

- Unemployment Poverty: → Unemployment leads to poverty
- Poverty Unemployment: → Poverty leads to unemployment
- Unemployment + Poverty → Crime: Unemployment plus poverty leads to crime
- Crime → Unemployment → Poverty: In the same vein, crime leads to unemployment which also leads to poverty.

It can also be presented as a diagram



Source: Researchers Graphical Illustration, 2021

In a situation where there is high rate of unemployment, the level of poverty is strongly likely to be high and in such situation, crime rate is most likely to be high. Increase in one brings about increase in the others. The case of Nigeria for instance, the level of unemployment is a major contributory factor to the increase in poverty as well as increase in crime rates. All criminal offenders that have been interviewed in Nigeria blamed their criminality on poverty and unemployment which plunged them into prolonged hardship and deprivation which eventually led them into crime.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

THE NEXUS AMONG UNEMPLOYMENT, POVERTY AND CRIME IN NIGERIA

The most common reasons for the increase in crime rate in Nigeria are unemployment and poverty. The rate of unemployment in Nigeria in 2010 was 21.14%. It increased to 23.9% in 2011 and by 2012 it further increased to 27.4%. But in Q4–2013, unemployment rate dropped to 24.7% and in Q4–2014 it slightly rose to 25.1%, as at Q4–2015 it was 10.44%, by Q4–2016 it was 14.23%, by Q4–2017 it was 20.42% and as at Q3–2018 it was 23.13% and as at Q4 2020 it was 33.30% (NBS, 2015 & 2019, 2020). As at the 2nd quarter of the year 2020, Nigeria unemployment rate stood at 27.10% and the last quarter (4th) of the same year 2020, unemployment rate rose to 33.30%. Specifically, youth unemployment stood at 30.7% as at Q1–2021. Youths are the most active and restless population which needs to be gainfully employed in order to keep them away from crime since they are also the most vulnerable to crime. This specifically brought about youth restiveness and high involvement in crimes to gain financial freedom/empowerment within the last five years in Nigeria. Hence the increase in the rate of crimes aimed at quick money making and status enhancement such as yahoo-yahoo, yahoo-plus, internet fraud, Ponzi schemes, kidnapping for ransom, one chance robbery, armed robbery and ritual killings in contemporary Nigeria (Bello, 2017; Ebobo, 2016; Usman, 2015, Ugwuoke, 2014). This also had adverse effects on poverty rate within

the same period with the number of people living in absolute poverty at 82.9 million in Nigeria as at 2018/2019 (NBS, 2019). This also had adverse effects on crime rates especially robbery, armed robbery, stealing, kidnapping for ransom, kidnapping for ritual and assault making them the most common types of crime in Nigeria within the same period (NCS, 2017).

Nigeria as at 1st quarter of 2017 had a labour force of 82.592,121 with 70.665,896 employed and 28.763,017 unemployed. The 4th Quarter of the same 2017 had a labour force of 86.537,538 out of which 68.866,396 were employed and 35.372,009 were unemployed. (Job Creation Survey, Labour Force Statistics, 2017 cited in NBS, 2019). In the same vein, the 1st Quarter of 2018 had a labour force of 88.206,724 out of which 68.955,348 were employed and 37.052,243 were unemployed. The 3rd Quarter of 2018, recorded a labour force of 90.470.592 million across the nation 69.542,944 were employed and 39.143,938 were unemployed (Job Creation Survey, Labour Force Statistics, 2017 cited in NBS, 2019). This implied that about 43.3% of the active labour force was unemployed which was strongly likely to negatively impact on the rate of crime in Nigeria within this period. This is represented in table 1 below:

Table 1. Labour Force Statistics in Nigeria: Emphasis on Employment and Unemployment Levels in Nigeria (2017/2018)

| | 2017 | | | 2018 | | |
|-------------|--------------|----------------|--------------------|--------------|----------------|------------------|
| | Labour Force | Total Employed | Total Unemployment | Labour Force | Total Employed | Total Unemployed |
| 1st Quarter | 82.592,121 | 70.665,896 | 28.763,017 | 88.206,724 | 68.955,348 | 37.052,243 |
| 2nd Quarter | 83.940,088 | 70.354,896 | 31.264,108 | 89.509,201 | 69.165,624 | 38.335,443 |
| 3rd Quarter | 85.088,055 | 69.090,007 | 34.027,119 | 90.470,592 | 69.542,944 | 39.143,938 |
| 4th Quarter | 86.537,538 | 68.866,396 | 35.372,009 | - | - | - |

Source: Job Creation Survey, Labour Force Statistics, 2017 cited in NBS, 2019).

Poverty on the other side of the coin negatively impacts on the society (Aborisade & Oni, 2020; Ebobo, 2016). It is believed that in every society where there is lack and poverty, where people cannot meet their basic needs of feeding, clothing, shelter, education and medical needs, there is

bound to be an increase in crime rate especially armed robbery. The rate at which prices of commodities are rising in Nigeria is alarming. This has increased the level of poverty and inability to meet basic necessities of life (food, shelter, clothing, education, medical) which has pushed about 7 million people below poverty line and further forced many into crime (Nigerian Tribune, 2021; Daily Independent, 2021). For instance a bag of rice which was sold for 6,500 naira in 2014 now sells for 32,000 naira in 2021. Whereas rice is the most consumed food in Nigeria, and it is now out of the reach of the poor. Same thing goes to Garri which was formerly consumed mostly by the poor is now out of the reach of the poor because a 5kg pack of garri sells for 1,500 in 2021 instead of the 300 naira as at the year 2014. Taking three square meals in Nigeria presently is only for the rich and wealthy as majority of the masses take only one or two meals per day because they cannot afford otherwise. The effects of poverty in Nigeria over the years have deteriorated to the extent that nothing and nobody is safe in Nigeria. Anything can be stolen as a result of hunger caused by poverty while some pick food stuff wastes on the ground from the market places and dustbins. In so many parts of the country there have been cases of robbery induced by hunger which included stealing boiling pots of soup, rice, beans, and anything edible from the fire at the slightest lapses of the owners (Edokwe, 2021). So also food stuff shops have been broken into and bags of raw food stuff carted away by hungry robbers. Enugu the capital of Enugu State has witnessed a spate of this kind of robbery in broad day lights (Edokwe, 2021). Poverty as a major concept of economic condition was found to lead to an increase in crime rate in a study conducted by Folorunsho (2021) in Nigeria. He stated that “economic condition statistically and positively influences crime rate in Nigeria” having tested for relationship between economic condition and crime rate using three models (short run analysis, diagnostic test and long-run analysis) (Folorunsho, 2021).

Poverty also impacts negatively on national development arising from low Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and National income. The situation of Nigeria is such that as the population size is increasing so unemployment, inflation, poverty and crime are increasing (World Bank, 2021; Adelowokan et al., 2018; Oduwole, 2015). Also as population and unem-

ployment are increasing, there are no forms of increase in government intervention such as creation of new organizations and industries that will provide employment for the teeming population to alleviate the effects of poverty. All these put together negatively impact on the economy and development of the nation.

Poverty and unemployment go hand in hand (Siyan, Adegioriola & Adolphus, 2016; Egunjobi & Adenike, 2014; Aiyedogbon & Ohwofasa, 2012). These authors carried out different studies in Nigeria between 1980–2014, 1970–2000 and 1978–2011 respectively and they found that poverty has a strong positive relationship with unemployment in Nigeria. In addition to that, Siyan, et al., (2016) also carried out a study on the implication of unemployment on poverty level in Nigeria 1980–2014 and they found that there is a strong relationship between unemployment and poverty and this relationship is bi-directional. This shows that either way, poverty positively affects unemployment and vice versa. In other words, it can be rightly concluded that a high rate of unemployment leads to a high rate of poverty which also leads to a high rate of crime and insecurity (Aborisade & Oni, 2020; Oyelade, 2019; Ebobo, 2016). Nigeria is considered as one of the most affected nations of the world where hunger, lack, poverty and unemployment rates are high (NBS, 2017). Therefore, a country where majority of her citizens live below 1 dollar per day is likely to be infested with crimes of all sorts.

An increase in unemployment leads to increase in the level of poverty and crime. In the same vein, increase in poverty can lead to increase in crime with resultant effects of loss of lives and properties, closure of businesses; small, medium and large scale enterprises. This can also lead to people being laid off their jobs or forced to retire with little or nothing to fall back to and if the situation continues for a long time, the likelihood of criminal involvements as means of survival becomes the only option. Government and non-governmental organizations may also decide to cut down their staff strengths arising from inability to pay staff salaries which can also lead to increase in unemployment and poverty. This may also affect the economic situation of the country and could lead to a down turn of economic activities which will also affect the GDP as well as discourage local and foreign investments.

The concepts of unemployment, poverty and crime are therefore inter-related and an increase in one may spark off an increase in the other if not effectively checked and curtailed from the onset. Poverty births material deprivation and inability to meet basic needs which informs individual's feeling of economic insecurity coupled with unemployment are strongly likely to result to criminal involvements. Mushtag, Ahmad, Farooq & Saeed (2018) found in their study on relative deprivation and robbery in Pakistan that relative deprivation of material resources to meet individual daily basic needs and robbery are significantly associated. In fact, that is the situation Nigeria has found itself in the recent times. For instance, today the Naira exchange rate to a dollar is 570 to 1 dollar as against 180 to 1 dollar about 6 years ago. This has further deepened the level of poverty and unemployment resulting to further increase in the level and types of crime prevalent in the nation today. The combination of these three factors consistently paved way for increase in the level of insecurity in Nigeria. The prevalence of crime in Nigeria such as kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, once chance robbery, activities of bandits and terrorism have increased the state of insecurity and fear of crime such that has limited so many people to their places and regions of abode (Ugwuoke, Obinna, Ameh, Aliyu, Akor & Amadi, 2021; Aborisade & Oni, 2020; Abiodun, Ayo-Adeyekun, Onafowora, & Nwannenaya, 2018; Umahi, 2017; Abiodun, 2016; Eke, 2014). The new spate of banditry and terrorism now is to attack schools; primary, secondary and tertiary institutions in the country, killing, maiming and kidnapping students and personnel for ransom from individuals, State and Federal government. (The Punch, 2021; New Telegraph, 2021). The situation is so bad that the bandits' spokesman Sheik Gumi, (2021) publicly declared that no school is safe until the government negotiates with the bandits. Consequently, nowhere and no one is safe in Nigeria while some parts of the north are declared unsafe to travel to anytime of the day or night because of the activities of bandits which includes Boko haram, herdsmen, kidnappers, armed robbers and ritual killers.

CONCLUSION

This paper has successfully shown that there is a strong positive connection between unemployment, poverty and crime in Nigeria. The connection is also bi-directional as an increase in one sparks up an increase in the other. The paper also revealed that the Nigerian society is a breeding ground for crimes because the society itself creates the enabling environment for crimes to thrive (corrupt public officers, self-centered leaders, unemployment, poverty, enabling environment to motivate offenders, unrestrained offenders, availability of unarmed victims, unprotected victims, weak community bonds, weak social control mechanisms and enabling environment to escape arrest amongst others).

RECOMMENDATION

The recommendations of this paper are: Provision of jobs for the teeming youth should be encouraged by the government and non-governmental organizations. Programs/Schemes aimed at poverty eradication in the society should be developed. This will go a long way to put food on the tables of the masses such that frustration that could lead to crimes will be forgotten. Government and security/law enforcement agencies should develop programs aimed at monitoring, close marking and arresting criminals including those occupying government offices. If possible, the law enforcement agencies should go house to house in search of guns in the possession of thugs and hoodlums. There is a strong need to combat Boko Haram insurgency and Herdsmen attacks in affected states in Nigeria. Lastly, the government should throw more funds into provision of arms and ammunitions for the Military and Police and ensure that they get to the desired hands (they should not be lost/stolen in transit)

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