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Democracy Governance and Human Security in Nigeria: A Need for Recap

Abstract

The relationship between democracy and human security is often assumed to be mutually reinforcing, with democratic governance expected to promote citizens' welfare, political freedom, and socioeconomic well-being. However, the Nigerian experience presents a significant puzzle: despite more than two decades of uninterrupted democratic rule since 1999, the country continues to experience persistent poverty, insecurity, unemployment, food insecurity, weak healthcare systems, and a decline in public trust in governance. This study investigates why democratic governance has not translated into meaningful human security outcomes in Nigeria, despite the institutional presence of democratic structures and processes. This study is anchored in Human Security Theory and adopts a qualitative case study approach. Data were obtained from semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and relevant secondary sources, including policy documents, journal articles, government reports and other scholarly materials. The data were analyzed thematically. The findings reveal that the relationship between democracy and human security in Nigeria is mediated by weak institutional capacity, poor governance quality, policy discontinuity, elite-driven political behavior, and inadequate implementation of development programmes. While democratic administrations have introduced various policies aimed at improving citizens' welfare, these initiatives have produced limited results owing to governance failures and institutional weaknesses that undermine the effective delivery of public goods and services. The study argues that democracy is a necessary but insufficient condition for human security, as the benefits of democratic governance can only be realized when supported by effective institutions, accountability, policy consistency, and citizen-oriented governance practices. This study contributes to the democracy-human security debate by demonstrating that the persistence of human security challenges in Nigeria is not primarily a consequence of democracy itself, but of the weak institutional mechanisms through which democratic governance is implemented. The study recommends strengthening governance institutions, improving accountability mechanisms, ensuring policy continuity, and adopting a comprehensive human security framework that simultaneously addresses freedom from fear and want.

Keywords: democracy; governance; human security; democratic backsliding; institutional capacity; Nigeria

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Introduction

The relationship between democracy and human security has attracted considerable scholarly attention since the publication of the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report of 1994, which shifted the focus of security from the protection of the state to the protection of individuals. Democracy is generally regarded as a political system that promotes popular participation, accountability, the rule of law, and responsiveness to citizens' needs. In contrast, human security emphasizes the protection of individuals from threats such as poverty, hunger, disease, political repression, environmental degradation, and violence. In principle, both concepts share a common objective: to improve the quality of life and well-being of citizens.

The prevailing assumption in the democratic governance literature is that democratic institutions create incentives for governments to respond to public demands and provide essential social services. Through periodic elections, political accountability, and citizen participation, democracy is expected to enhance welfare outcomes and strengthen the human security. Evidence from several established democracies suggests that democratic governance can contribute positively to social protection, economic development, political stability, and the protection of fundamental rights of citizens.

However, the Nigerian experience presents a more complex reality. Since returning to democratic rule in 1999, Nigeria has conducted regular elections and maintained civilian governments. Despite these democratic gains, the country continues to face persistent challenges, including widespread poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, insecurity of lives and property, inadequate healthcare services, environmental vulnerabilities, and declining public confidence in governance. These conditions raise important questions about the capacity of democratic governance to deliver meaningful human security outcomes in developing countries.

The central puzzle of this study is that, although Nigeria has sustained democratic rule for over two decades, the expected improvements in human security have remained limited. This creates a contradiction between the theoretical expectations of democracy and the empirical realities of citizens' lived experiences. While democratic institutions and processes have expanded, many indicators of human security continue to reveal significant deficits across the economic, political, health, food, environmental, and personal security dimensions.

Several democratic administrations have introduced policies and programs aimed at addressing poverty, unemployment, agricultural development, healthcare delivery, social welfare, and security challenges. Initiatives such as the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS), Seven-Point Agenda, Transformation Agenda, Economic Sustainability Plan, Anchor Borrowers Programme, and various social intervention programmes were designed to improve citizens' welfare and strengthen development outcomes. Nevertheless, the persistence of human

security challenges suggests that the existence of democratic institutions alone may not guarantee improved human security.

Despite the growing literature on democracy and development in Nigeria, limited attention has been devoted to explaining the mechanisms through which democratic governance fails to translate into tangible human-security outcomes. Existing studies have largely focused on describing democratic performance or documenting security challenges without adequately examining the governance and institutional factors that mediate the relationship between democracy and human security in Africa. This represents an important gap in the existing literature.

Against this background, this study seeks to answer the following question: Why has democratic governance in Nigeria failed to produce the expected human security outcomes despite more than two decades of democratic rule? This study argues that the relationship between democracy and human security is mediated by factors such as institutional capacity, governance quality, policy continuity, accountability mechanisms, and the behavior of political actors. Consequently, democracy alone cannot guarantee human security unless it is supported by effective institutions and citizen-oriented governance.

This study focuses on the period from 2015 to 2025, covering the administrations of Muhammadu Buhari and Bola Ahmed Tinubu. This period is particularly significant because it witnessed major policy interventions aimed at improving security, economic development, agricultural productivity, and social welfare while simultaneously experiencing rising concerns about democratic backsliding and human security challenges.

The contributions of this study are twofold. First, it moves beyond the conventional assumption that democracy automatically produces human security by examining the institutional and governance conditions under which it can generate positive human security outcomes. Second, it contributes to the broader debate on democracy and development in Africa by demonstrating that the effectiveness of democracy depends not only on the existence of electoral institutions but also on the quality of governance through which democratic objectives are implemented.

Research Problem

Since independence in 1960, poverty, unemployment, internal crisis, and insecurity have been the landmarks of Nigeria's politics. After Nigeria returned to democratic rule in 1999, four different people with different policies served Nigeria as presidents, each with policies aimed at improving human security, yet with little or no significant development. Some came with policies in the form of packages, while others used random policies. Olusegun Obasanjo (1999-2007) the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) was an initiated program to address the problems of poverty and unemployment and to increase the productive capacity of the economy. PAP was designed to coordinate and monitor poverty alleviation and ensure that Nigerians were provided with a steady income, quality education, water, healthcare, housing, and a stable and affordable power supply (Jibrin, 2019). The policy thrust of the National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy (NEEDS) in 2004 by the Obasanjo administration set up the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) to solve the problems of poverty and unemployment, but the program could not realize its targeted goals.

One of the popular human security packages was the "Seven-point Agenda" of the administration of Umar Yar'adua (2007-2010). Yar'adua's human security package included power and energy, food security and agriculture, wealth creation and employment, mass transportation, land reform, security, and qualitative functional education (Suyatno, Mohd, Nasa'i Muhammad, AbdMajid, & Abdullahi, 2017). These human security policies started yielding fruitful results, as fairly good GDP per capita growth rates of 7% were maintained during his administration before they were truncated in 2010 by President Yar' adua's death. Unfortunately, Yar'adua died before he could implement his seven-point agenda. The discontinuation of this policy might directly or indirectly be connected to the problem of prebendal or identity politics, as there was a new president, Goodluck Ebele Jonathan, from another part of the country, who put a halt to those policies and initiated his random policy strategy. The absence of policy continuation has retarded Nigeria's prosperity, not only in the case of Yar'adua to Jonathan but throughout the political history of Nigeria (Suyatno,

Mohd, Nasa'i Muhammad, AbdMajid, & Abdullahi, 2017).

Jonathan (2010-2015) Transformation Agenda and Human Rights, which center on freedom from fear. Jonathan's administration was appraised on human rights issues in line with democratic considerations in Nigeria's polity. However, at this time, there was no serious improvement in the socioeconomic status of Nigerian citizens, as the increasing GDP growth was only on paper and not real in the economy (Idowu & Jeill, 2019).

Muhammadu Buhari (2015-2023) developed policies on the Economic Sustainability Plan, Economy Development, and Agriculture development programs, with a special focus on the N-power empowerment program and the Anchor Borrowers Programme, respectively. Agricultural development programs, such as the Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP), were established on November 17, 2015, to create an economic connection between Small Holder Farmers (SHF) and anchors. In summary, the program benefited approximately 4.67 million farmers in maize, rice, and wheat farming. In addition, approximately N1.12 trillion was loaned to 563 anchors, with approximately N670.4 billion repaid and an outstanding payment of N450.90 billion (Aghogho, 2024). The program has been discontinued, and the apex bank is currently trying to recover the funds. The Federal Executive Council approved the 2020 National Agricultural Mechanization Programme, the Green Imperative, in partnership with the Government of Brazil and multilateral financing institutions. These programs and policies target food security and livelihoods to enhance the standard of living and development in Nigeria. Banditry, insurgency, and continuing farmers-herders conflict hindered significant development of human security as the level of poverty was high during this time. This shows that democracy and governance in Nigeria require constant attention and requisite reforms to deliver the fundamental aspirations of citizens, among which human security is paramount. The assessment of human security during the presidency of Bola Ahmed Tinubu is in progress. Against this background, this study focuses on whether democracy has achieved human security development within the last five years (2029-2025).

This is to ascertain whether democracy and human security are myths or reality.

Research Objectives

This study examines the critical connection between democracy and human security in Nigeria, against the assumption that democracy promotes human security in a state. The paramount goal of any political system under state institutions is to ensure a better livelihood for citizens, which is the premise of human security. The discourse of democracy and human security in Nigeria will reveal the objectivities of democratic administrations in Nigeria on citizens' livelihoods, focusing on 2019 -2025. Nigeria's situation as one of the largest population states in Africa can be used to predict some prevailing levels of human security development in Africa from a case analysis, but not generalization, as many countries are moving from shackled human security challenges to the level of state development.

The paper is segmented into six stages: introduction, research problem, objectives, literature review and theoretical framework, discussions of findings, conclusion, and recommendations.

Theoretical Orientation

This study is anchored in Human Security Theory. The emergence of the human security paradigm represents a significant departure from the traditional state-centered conception of security that emphasizes territorial protection, military strength, and state sovereignty. Historically, the dominant understanding of security has focused on the survival of the state and the protection of national interests. This perspective was influenced by the principles of state sovereignty associated with the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648 and reinforced by the experiences of the First and Second World Wars and the Cold War period. Within this framework, security was largely viewed in terms of military threats, territorial integrity, political stability, and preservation of state power (Burchill, 2001; Clarke, 2003).

However, the limitations of a purely state-centric approach became increasingly evident as many societies continued to experience poverty, hunger, disease, environmental degradation, unemployment,

and social exclusion despite the absence of external military threats to their security. This reality stimulated the development of the human security perspective, which shifted attention from the security of states to that of individuals. Human security advocates argue that the ultimate purpose of governance and development should be the protection of human life, dignity, and well-being through the promotion of freedom from fear and freedom from want.

Therefore, Human Security Theory advances a people-centered and multidimensional understanding of security. It maintains that sustainable peace and development can only be achieved when individuals are protected from economic hardship, political repression, violence, disease, hunger, and other vulnerabilities. The theory views poverty, inequality, and social exclusion as major sources of insecurity and emphasizes the interconnectedness of the different dimensions of human well-being.

The major assumptions of Human Security Theory include:

- i. It prioritizes individual security over state security.
- ii. It emphasizes freedom from fear and freedom from want as fundamental conditions for human survival and development.
- iii. It regards poverty, inequality, and deprivation as major causes of insecurity.
- iv. It views the various dimensions of human security as being interconnected and mutually reinforcing.
- v. It promotes democratic governance, human development, and protection of human dignity.

The multidimensional nature of the theory makes it particularly relevant for understanding contemporary governance challenges. Human security encompasses economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security. Consequently, the performance of a government cannot be assessed solely by the existence of democratic institutions or regular elections but also by its ability to improve the welfare and security of citizens across these dimensions.

The relevance of Human Security Theory to this study lies in its ability to explain why the existence of democratic institutions does not automatically

translate into improved human security outcomes. While democratic governance is often expected to enhance citizens' welfare through accountability, participation, and responsiveness, Human Security Theory directs attention to the actual conditions of people's lives rather than the mere existence of democratic procedures. Therefore, the theory provides a useful framework for examining whether democratic governance in Nigeria has effectively improved citizens' freedom from fear and freedom from want.

More importantly, Human Security Theory helps illuminate the central puzzle of this study. Despite more than two decades of democratic governance, many Nigerians continue to experience poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, inadequate healthcare services, insecurity of lives and property, and political exclusion. From the perspective of Human Security Theory, this suggests that the presence of democratic structures alone is insufficient to guarantee human security. Rather, the effectiveness of democratic governance depends on the extent to which institutions can translate political authority into tangible improvements in citizens' welfare and security.

The theory further assists in explaining the gap between democracy and human security outcomes in Nigeria by highlighting the importance of governance, institutional effectiveness, policy implementation, and accountability mechanisms. Where these mediating factors are weak, democratic governments may possess electoral legitimacy without delivering meaningful improvements to human security. Consequently, democratic governance may coexist with widespread insecurity, poverty, and social vulnerability, as observed in Nigeria.

Although Human Security Theory provides a valuable framework for understanding the relationship between governance and citizens' welfare, it is not without limitations. Critics have argued that many of the issues addressed under the human security agenda existed before the concept formally emerged, raising questions about its distinctiveness as a theoretical framework. Others contend that the broad scope of the concept makes it difficult to identify precise causal explanations for the outcomes of governance.

This limitation is particularly relevant to the Nigerian case because Human Security Theory identifies what constitutes human well-being but does not, by itself, fully explain why democratic institutions sometimes fail to deliver those outcomes. To address this limitation, this study complements the theory by examining institutional capacity, governance quality, policy continuity, and political behavior as factors that mediate the relationship between democracy and human security.

Therefore, Human Security Theory remains appropriate for this study because it provides an analytical lens through which the performance of democratic governance can be evaluated beyond elections and political procedures. This enables an assessment of whether democratic administrations in Nigeria have succeeded in fulfilling the fundamental objective of governance: improving the security, welfare, dignity, and quality of life of citizens.

Method

This study adopted a qualitative case study design to examine the relationship between democracy and human security in Nigeria. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources for this study. Primary data were obtained through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with selected participants who possessed adequate knowledge of democratic governance and human security issues in Nigeria. Secondary data were sourced from journal articles, government publications, policy documents, books and other relevant scholarly materials. The study population comprised Nigerians with knowledge and experience of democracy and human security. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants based on their relevance to the subject of investigation. The study drew information from respondents across selected states and geopolitical zones in Nigeria. Data generated from the interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary sources were analyzed thematically. This approach enabled the identification and interpretation of recurring themes related to democratic governance, institutional performance, and human security outcomes in Nigeria. The qualitative case study approach was considered appropriate because it provided an in-

depth understanding of the factors shaping the relationship between democracy and human security in Nigeria.

The Concept of Democracy

Like most concepts in the social sciences, democracy has no universally accepted definition. Democracy is today considered the most desirable form of government and man's best idea on earth for governance. However, it is a contested concept, which does not lend itself to any universally accepted definition due to the ideological, cultural, and historical conceptualizations that underpin it (Ondugo, Benjamin, & Nwuba, 2015). Scholars have viewed it from different perspectives, which are born from environmental determinism, the political environment, and the experiences and feelings of philosophers.

Democracy is one of the abiding legacies of ancient Greek civilization in the contemporary world. It is often observed that the practice of democracy in its original form originated in Greece. This is not without prejudice to the notion that comparable practices of democracy thrived in other places, even in Africa before Written History (Okoli & Gusau, 2013, cited in Atelhe, 2014). This establishes the fact that democracy is rooted in some cultures as a way of life that reflects their political system. Democracy has existed in African culture and tradition before written history.

The development of democracy and the dynamism that characterizes its development have led to various democratic theories, each explaining different types of democratic systems. These differences have enriched our understanding of democracy as a concept and political system (Nanna & Etham, 2019). There is a serious theoretical conflict between democracy defined as a form of rule characterized by universal suffrage, regular elections, and basic civil rights and democracy conceptualized as political equality in actual practice (Tar & Mustapha, 2016). This tension arises from both procedural and substantive democracy. Proceduralists emphasize meeting the basic criteria of democracy and establishing all necessary institutions of democracy, irrespective of whether they function according to the basic tenets of democratic values (Kura, 2009).

Kura (2009) further attests that Substantivists on the other hand, go beyond the basic procedures to define a democratic system as one whose institutions are indefatigably functional. This means that democracy goes beyond the characteristics of information; it must be a system that encourages the political participation of the people and the accountability of the government to the citizens. However, it is vital to emphasize that using empirical illustrations from Nigeria, it can be argued that establishing mere elements of democracy does not make a country democratic (Nanna & Etham, 2019).

Lord-Mallam (2016) sees democracy as a form of government in which the sovereign power resides and is exercised by the whole body of free citizens directly or indirectly through a system of representation, as distinguished from a monarchy, aristocracy, or oligarchy. Democracy is a system of government based on the participation of all qualified citizens in decision-making. Therefore, democracy today is understood in terms of representative government. In this indirect form, democracy depicts a political system in which the individual is involved in choosing a representative, usually from competing political parties (Renwick and Swinburn, 1980). Democracy presupposes a political system in which the people of a country rule through any form of government of their choice.

The Concept of Human Security

The concept of human security represents a significant paradigm shift for scholars and practitioners working in the field of development studies, changing the focus from state-centric to human-centric. The genealogy of the term 'human security' can be traced back to the establishment of the United Nations (UN) in 1945 and draws on the views of the US Secretary of State Edward R. Stettinus, Jr., who said, "The battle for peace has to be fought on two fronts. The first is security, where victory spells freedom from fear. The second is the economic and social front, where victory means freedom from want. Only victory on both fronts can assure the world of a peaceful future. No provisions that can be written into the Charter will enable the Security Council to make the world secure from war if men and women have no security in their homes and their jobs" (quoted in Grimm, 2004).

Human Security is a strategy for development that can ensure lasting peace in the world and secure a better life for human beings. It is pointed out that the concept of human security was often mentioned before 1994, as the end of the Cold War ushered in the moment for re-examining the "traditional" concept of security. However, UNDP's Human Development Report 1994 made human security a common phenomenon among scholars and practitioners of international affairs. Advancing the discussion on "capability" introduced by Amartya Sen, the Human Development Report (1993) first mentioned the concept of human security, and the 1994 version provided a systematic explanation of it. It should be noted that the concept is therefore primarily understood as a tool for discussing a particular type of development. The idea of human security shifts the focus away from the state and makes the individual the primary unit of analysis, who is meant to live under socio-economic and political conditions that seek to guarantee the two core values of freedom from fear and freedom from want. This idea relied on the fact that human security paved the way for the development and survival of a state, from the understanding that what triggers war is when people are not secure from the threat of fear and the threat of want.

Human security is defined as access to a minimum threshold of food, water, health care, shelter, education, and work. It diverges from traditional notions of national or territorial security by placing the primary focus on the individual's freedom from want rather than on a preoccupation with freedom from fear (Ted, 2017). This definition is limited in capturing the two hearts of human security, as more emphasis is placed on freedom from want than freedom from fear; Ted's idea was silence on freedom from fear in his definition of human security. In today's world, threats to 'security' come as much from factors that occur within states as from the historically significant threat of war between states. Security is being more broadly defined away from the traditional state-centered focus on 'national security and in terms of the well-being of whole populations, the need for equitable development and sound inter-group relations, and the human needs of both sub-national groups and individuals within a state's borders. The idea of human security shifts the focus away from

the state and makes the primary unit of analysis the individual, who is meant to live in freedom from fear and freedom from want. This concept developed in response to the complex emergencies of the 1990s and the 2000s (Ted, 2017).

The essence of any good government should be to provide “human security” as a public good for all citizens. Human security, defined as freedom from both fear and want, should not take a backseat to the security interests of the state or those of the international system, which is currently using Afghanistan as a base from which to conduct a global war against terror (Shahrbanou, 2005). Sadako Ogata, Co-Chair of the United Nations Commission on Human Security, stated that ‘for the Commission, human security is concerned with safeguarding and expanding people’s vital freedoms.

Democracy and Human Security

Definitions of democracy claim that contestation and participation capture the notions of collective decision-making and popular sovereignty, and presume the legitimacy of the opposition, the right to challenge incumbents, the protection of the freedoms of expression and association, the existence of free and fair elections, a consolidated political party system, and the protection of the right to vote with universal suffrage (Dahl, 1971). The concept of human security represents a significant paradigm shift for scholars and practitioners in the fields of development, democracy, human rights, and humanitarian assistance. Traditional approaches and policies in international relations have placed the state and its interests at the center of concern, while the interests, grievances, and collective experiences

of individuals remain subsumed under the larger analytical unit of the state (Landman, 2005).

Democratic practice is the key to attaining human security, aimed at organizing democratic institutions that can ensure political freedom and welfare. Democracy matters for human security because well-designed and inclusive institutional processes are the key to both preventing violence and managing conflict constructively, and respect for human rights and public participation are essential for meeting human development objectives (Jan, 2006).

Since the 1974 Portuguese transition to democracy, the world has witnessed a dramatic spread of democratization, such that 60 percent of the countries in the world can now be considered at least nominally democratic. The Community of Democracies boasts that over 100 countries have attended its various ministerial meetings (Warsaw, 2000; Seoul, 2002; Santiago, 2005). International policy discourse has tended to make ‘declaratory’ linkages between democracy and human security without specifying the causal mechanisms between them or the empirical features of democracy that may make it an appropriate form of government for providing human security. These declaratory linkages define democracy as including features that overlap significantly with the elements of human security, for instance, the protection of fundamental human rights by simply claiming in a tautological fashion that human security lies at the core of democracy. It is crucial to understand that different conceptions of democracy have varying degrees of connection with human security. Procedural democracy only partially addresses some of the key features of human security. The assumed rights protections necessary

Table 1. Typologies of Human Security and Threats

Type of Security	Main Threats
Economic Security	Persistent poverty; unemployment
Food Security	Hunger; Famine
Health Security	Deadly infectious diseases; Malnutrition; lack of access to basic health care
Environmental Security	Environmental degradation; resource depletion; natural disasters; pollution
Personal Security	Physical violence; crime; terrorism; Domestic violence; child labour
Community Security	Inter-ethnic, religious, and other identity-based tensions
Political Security	Political repression; human rights abuses; exclusion

Source: UN (2009, p.6)

for contestation begin to address freedom from fear, although there may be an indirect link between participation and the elimination of freedom from want (Judith & Philip, 2006).

However, no study has revealed specific data on the aspects of democratic practices that people are dissatisfied with across the world. This has impeded a systematic analysis of the causes of citizens' dissatisfaction and its variation across developing countries and Europe, which makes democracies have various connections with human security.

Empirical Review

Democracy and Human Security in Nigeria

Democratic administrations in Nigeria have become whistle-blowers on human security and development, and achieving this goal is a fact that is far from reality. The challenges of sustainability of social cohesion are more rooted in the socio-political problem of Nigeria (Jibrin, 2023), which is affecting human security development in Nigeria. One of the basic characteristics of democratic backsliding is when democracies fail to deliver adequate socioeconomic goods to citizens, which leads to citizens ignoring democracy and embracing authoritarian democratic leaders who undermine democracy once elected (Carothers, 2019). This reveals the political scenario of Nigeria's democracy, which is combating human security development in the state. Since the beginning of the Fourth Republic in Nigeria, performance realities have witnessed a setback in human security, which is challenging national security. Sajo (2018) proved that the value of human security is desirable in contemporary Nigeria but has yet to yield positive results considering the policy agenda of the administrations. The youth who are agents of development are combating new trends of human security challenges in all facets of human security dimensions in Nigeria (Akpan & Ecoma, 2020), and the challenges of reversal democracy are not favorable to freedom of fear politically, and freedom of want economically.

The security challenges in Nigeria are rooted in democratic institutional fragility, which is caused by weak security, ethnoreligious conflicts, loss of sociocultural and communal value systems, poverty,

unemployment, and a porous border system (NSACC, 2021). National security challenges are a threat to the business environment in Nigeria, which hinders the economic security of the state. Kidnapping and insurgency are a challenge to human security in Nigeria (Taiye, 2021), and the Nigerian government has been spending more on security than on other sectors since the Jonathan administration (2011-2015) to the present administration of Bola Ahmed Tinubu under the All Progressive Party (APC). It is to be noted that kidnapping and insurgency acts are becoming lucrative business ventures, where the insurgent dealer's bargain for millions as ransom to leave the victims under their bondage. In this scenario, individuals, families, and groups spend money to retain their lives. The Nigerian government's expenditure on security sectors is higher, yet governance and challenges of human security are increasing (Ikechukwu & Bashir, 2024).

Nigeria's latest report identified multifaceted security threats. However, the European Union Agency for Asylum (2024) reported that the number of Nigerians for Asylum was 21000 from January 2023 to March 2024, but from March 2024, it gradually reduced to the range of 11000-17000. This is positive for the current APC administration, but much is desired from the government. Emina (2020) understands that the pushing of human security from economic reform may not yield positive results, but social-political issues should be addressed in Nigeria's context. The position of administrative governance in Nigeria's democracy on food, political, economic, health, communal, personal, and environmental security has yielded little or no significant development in the human security index in Nigeria.

Global Benchmark for Human Security Index

There is no universally acceptable benchmark for measuring the human security index. This is because these measures are deficient in one aspect or another. The measuring standard conditions of one country may not adequately fit those of another country, considering developed and developing countries (Homolar, 2015). However, to a large extent, the Human Development Report (HDR of 1994) under the United Nations Development Programme

(UNDP) still maintains a high standard for measuring the human security index. Here are the criteria for measuring the seven typologies of human security:

Economic Security is measured by the Gross National Product of developing countries and the level of employment in advanced countries (HRD, 1994; Richard & Deepayan, 2006; Homolar, 2015). Political Security is measured by fundamental human rights, political participation, absence of political violence, and suppression. The benchmarks for food security are food accessibility, income security, employment, and a balanced diet. Environmental security prioritizes the prevention of earthquakes and flooding and the ability to manage climate change. Personal security prevention from domestic violence, sexual harassment, child abuse, sexual assault, or assault of any kind. Community security is measured by the security of lives and property in the communities. Health Security through the Global Health Security Index (GHS), and HDR of 1994 attribute the measurement to the degree of death of persons in the state; the indicators are the ratio of doctors to the people, access to health insurance, and national per capita health spending. However, this study uses a Failed State Index (FSI) for an objective analysis, complemented by the Human Development Report.

Results

The focus of the analysis is to assess the 10 years of APC (2015-2025) Administration in line with human security and development.

Environmental Security

Environmental security has been critically affected by climate change, which has resulted in rising sea levels and drought due to inadequate rainfall in Nigeria. This experience was not favorable for the agricultural development of the country. The recent floods in northeastern Nigeria have challenged the livelihood security of the people. The government's inability to manage weather forecasts before environmental challenges is questionable. Unfavorable weather conditions have led to continuous conflicts between farmers and herdsman, mostly in northern central Nigeria (Ogundare, 2024). However, the

measures taken by the Buhari administration (2015-2023) have not been effective, and the conflict persists to the detriment of human security, particularly in Benue State in the Northern Central region. The weak fragility of the institutional mechanism to combat this farmer-herdsman conflict is a reflection of the Present APC government; that is, from 2023-2025 to unhealthy farmer-herdsman conflicts persist in Nigeria. This finding suggests that environmental insecurity in Nigeria is not solely a product of climatic conditions, but also reflects governance and institutional challenges. The inability of democratic institutions to effectively manage environmental risks and conflict resolution mechanisms has continued to expose citizens to livelihood vulnerabilities, thereby limiting the human security benefits expected from democratic governance.

Food Security

Food security, as defined by the United Nations, entails that people have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs for an effective and healthy life. Globally, over a billion people live in extreme poverty (i.e., earning less than US\$1 per day), with millions of Nigerians facing dire economic circumstances. Approximately 870 million people worldwide lack access to adequate food, exacerbating malnutrition and hunger (Food and Agriculture Organisation, 2012). In Nigeria, food security challenges stem from factors such as insurgency, low agricultural productivity, inadequate healthcare infrastructure, and flawed government policies. The prospects for food security in Nigeria are high, considering the weather and climatic conditions, good vegetation for agricultural purposes, and natural resource endowment. However, Nigeria faces escalating food security challenges, leading to increased hunger and poverty rates (World Bank, 2018). The prevalence of food insecurity has been steadily increasing since 2015, reflecting a concerning trend. For instance, in 2015, the hunger statistics were 11.10% (a 1.3% increase from 2014); it was 12% in 2016 (0.9% increase from 2015); 11.90% in 2017 (0.1% decrease from 2016), and 12.6% in 2018 (0.7 increase from 2017) (World Bank, 2018). The persistence of food insecurity despite Nigeria's vast agricultural potential indicates a disconnect between

policy intentions and outcomes. This suggests that democratic governance has not been sufficiently supported by effective implementation mechanisms capable of translating agricultural and economic policies into improved food security for the citizens.

Health Security

Health security in Nigeria is a significant challenge to the survival of its citizens. The health policy in Nigeria is not comprehensive enough to meet the demands of the masses due to the predicament of low income security. The National Health Services in Nigeria struggle for survival. The National Health Insurance Scheme (NHIS) in Nigeria is currently facing implementation problems (Eze, Kanmi, & Adeloje, 2024). The NHIS was signed into law in 1999 and officially launched in 2005 to cover all Nigerians by 2015 (Eze, Kanmi, & Adeloje, 2024). This dream is yet to be achieved by 2025. The financial burden of healthcare for Nigerians has continued to increase, and the informal sector bears the burden (Pate, 2025). The detriment position of health security in Nigeria was at its worst when only 5% of Nigerians in the formal sector were enrolled in Health Insurance, and 70% financed the healthcare system by themselves, while the informal sector was completely out of the process (Eze, Kanmi, & Adeloje, 2024).

The challenges of health security in Nigeria are at a piteous level, witnessing inequitable resource distribution, poor management, human resources, decaying infrastructure, and a weak referral system (Premium Times, 2025; Abah, 2022; Omoleke & Taleat, 2018). The analysis of the health workforce in Nigeria declined between 2015 and 2021, with approximately 5000 doctors moving to the United Kingdom. In 2022, over 3000 doctors demanded better good standing from the Medical and Dental Council of Nigeria (MDCN) for migration purposes. The number of health professionals in 2017 was 39,912, which increased to 44,021 in 2018 but decreased to 24,640 recently (Premium Times, 2025). This is the worst scenario for the health situation in Nigeria, which requires four doctors for 10,000 people, contrary to the World Health Organization (WHO) recommendation of one doctor per 600 people (Eze, Kanmi, & Adeloje, 2024). According

to the Minister of Health, 15,000 to 16,000 health workers have departed in the past five years, leaving about 55,000 doctors to cater to over 220 million people. Muhammed Ali Pate identified low wages, poor working conditions, insecurity, and inadequate infrastructure as the major causes of the migration trend. The findings reveal that Nigeria's health security challenges extend beyond resource shortages to broader issues of governance and institutional performance. The inability of democratic administrations to ensure adequate healthcare coverage, retain skilled professionals, and strengthen public health infrastructure reflects weaknesses in policy implementation, which continue to undermine human security.

Political Security

The right to life is fundamental to human existence, serving as a cornerstone for the attainment of human dignity and the exercise of all other human rights (Akpambang 2018). Political security, as defined by the UN (2009), ensures freedom from political repression and violence and safeguards citizens' human rights. Life with dignity encompasses various aspects, including education, access to freedom and rights, equality, and community and political security (UN, 2008). Although the protection of the right to life is enshrined in Nigeria's Constitution, its significance transcends national borders and is integral to the global human rights framework (Akpambang, 2018). Recognized as the most vital of all rights, the right to life underpins other rights.

The position of not having free and fair elections in Nigeria since the beginning of the Fourth Republic is a breach of the political security of the citizens (Adam, Edun, & Ogundare, 2023). The assumption that the voting process and procedure do not count has discouraged many Nigerians from participating in political activities has been discouraged. The Nigeria election was not free from political manipulation, election malpractices, and political thuggery, where the election empires were not 100% objective. Political analysts and leaders of opposition parties have argued that the recent declaration of a state of emergency in Rivers State is unconstitutional (News Central, 2025). The opposition emphasized that it

constituted a breach of the fundamental rights of the people, particularly the suspension of elected officials. Opatola (2025) argues that a state of emergency is not equivalent to the suspension of elected officials. The series of political crises before and after elections in Nigeria indicates persistent political and security challenges. These developments demonstrate that democratic governance is weakened when institutions responsible for electoral integrity, accountability, and the protection of political rights fail to function. Consequently, the erosion of public trust in political processes contributes to political apathy and limits the capacity of democracy to enhance the human security.

Personal Security

The Nigerian government is not involved in personal security scandals; however, government policies are intended to prevent abuses such as child labor, sexual assault, human rights violations, and domestic violence. The recent case involving the senator representing the Kogi Central Senatorial District, Natasha Akpoti-Uduaghan, and the Senate President, Godswill Akpabio, reflects concerns relating to personal security and rights protection. Senator Natasha alleged sexual harassment and maintained that she was denied a fair hearing before her suspension from the Senate. This matter has attracted national and international attention, including discussions within international human rights circles.

The level of educational development not only challenges political security but also affects personal security. The low level of education is increasing in Nigeria, particularly in the northern region. The educational sector budget remains below the recommended standards. While UNESCO recommends that countries allocate approximately 26% of their budget to education, Nigeria has consistently fallen below this benchmark (Waziri, 2020). The education budget stood at 10.7% in 2015, 7.6% in 2016, and 5.6% in 2021 (ThisDay 2025). In 2021, the Academic Staff Union of Universities embarked on an eight-month strike, while approximately 13 million children remained out of school nationwide, including about 10 million in Northern Nigeria (Elbinawi, 2021; ThisDay, 2025). These findings indicate that personal security is closely linked to the capacity of governance

institutions to protect individual rights and expand access to education. The persistence of rights-related concerns and educational deprivation suggests that democratic governance has not sufficiently addressed important dimensions of human security, particularly those related to individual empowerment and social inclusion.

Discussion

The reversal of democracy and democratic backsliding in Nigeria is detrimental to human security and development. The study shows that there is a correlation between democracy and human security, particularly evident in the challenges experienced during the democratic administrations in Nigeria from 2015 to 2025. The findings suggest that the perceived impact of democracy on human security in Nigeria has been limited, contributing to its status as a state witnessing democratic backsliding and human security challenges despite abundant human and natural resources. Issues such as political instability, economic insecurity, and food scarcity have persisted, hindering the development and livelihood security. This suggests that democracy alone does not guarantee human security outcomes. Rather, the extent to which democratic governance improves human security depends on the quality of governance institutions, policy implementation, and leadership commitment to citizens' welfare.

Insights gathered from in-depth interviews further contribute to the validity of this study. A respondent from Ado Ekiti was asked about the situation of human security in Nigeria, and he said:

“The political situation in Ekiti State from 2015-2025 witnessed a political crisis, which challenged the political security of the state. It is a situation of political violence, political assassination, low political culture and participation, and denial of fundamental human rights” (Field Work, 2025).

This situation shows the level of political insecurity in one of the southwestern Nigerian states. Furthermore, the respondents stated that agriculture, which is the mainstay of the economy, was not stable at that time and was detrimental to food security in the state, which also had an impact on the economic security of the state. The poverty situation was

clearer and unable to be overcome by democratic administrations in the state, which is a challenge to livelihood security in Ekiti State. This is the situation in Nigeria's democratic system. This implies that the existence of democratic structures has not been sufficient to address the socio-economic conditions affecting citizens. Weak institutional responses to political and economic challenges continue to undermine the human security.

Similarly, a respondent from Kwara State opined that despite the advent of democratic administrations, meaningful advancements in human security had not materialized in Kwara State.

He said, "The poor people in the state are used as an axe to cut the trees in the forest, and after they are used, they are forgotten".

Politicians used the poor to achieve their goal of winning the election through voting, thuggery, political violence by unemployed youth, and vote-buying. After winning the election, the people of the state were ignored. Politics in Kwara State is more of an investment than humanitarian service, which is a challenge to human security. The democratic administrations' policies in Kwara State had a good outlook on human security, but their implementation lacked positive results. This is in agreement with Ogundare (2024) on political administrations and human security in Nigeria. Likewise, a respondent from the Northeast lamented the unfavorable climatic conditions, high levels of human insecurity, and the banditry activities of Boko Haram, which have made this region unbearable for living, and the weak governance institution of the country is not helpful to the situation. These responses indicate that the major challenge is not the absence of democratic policies but the inability of governance institutions to effectively implement and sustain them in the long run. This governance gap helps to explain the disconnect between democratic rule and human security outcomes.

The study revealed that Nigerian administrations have not made any meaningful impact on human security and development. From the respondents' perspective, it can be inferred that the lifestyles of democratic actors holistically formed the basis of democratic administrations in Nigeria. Democratic

administrations at these focal periods underwent a democratic psychological behavior pattern, where the leader influences members of his political team to his will at the expense of the people. Democratic sociological behavior is infinitely decimal in Nigeria, where the party is not able to influence the political leader, and the governments are more authoritarian, democratic, and dictatorial. This finding reinforces the argument that political behavior and leadership style play critical roles in determining whether democratic governance translates into improved human security. When public interests are subordinated to personal or political interests, the developmental benefits of democracy are limited.

A respondent in Kano State stated that the self-centeredness of political leaders and inadequate understanding between Nigeria and illiterate people on human security programs had not yielded the desired results within the focal periods of 2015-2025. The respondent believes that the democratic administrations in Nigeria have blueprints on human security development, but the level of illiteracy is too high, particularly in the northern part of the country, which has resulted in terrorism, insurgency, and kidnapping across various component units of Nigeria State. This suggests that effective human security requires not only democratic governance, but also inclusive civic awareness, institutional effectiveness, and citizen participation in governance processes.

One of the respondents, an educationist from Ekiti South with experience in the political position he occupied in the past, said, "The basic concept of human security phenomenon had never been understood in Ekiti State and Nigeria Politics. Therefore, democratic administrations cannot be fruitful in what they have a faint knowledge of. You can only address what you know" (Field Work, 2023). That is, most politicians, political actors, and Nigerians do not have a basic understanding of human security. This observation supports the human security perspective that governance outcomes are influenced by the extent to which leaders understand and prioritize citizens' welfare beyond electoral politics.

According to some female respondents, there is no balance in gender-based policies to ensure human security in Nigeria. The APC governments have made

fewer achievements in this area. However, there is a conscious effort by the APC governments to achieve a gender-based policy, but much is desired as some women are advocating for gender-based balance. This poses a challenge to the personal security of women in Nigeria. Some respondents thought that democracy in Nigeria was designed and structured to enrich poverty and retard the development of the state. There is no genuine purpose for a human security development program. The APC government Agenda (2015-2025) captured the human security program but failed to achieve a significant positive result due to self-centeredness and political segregation. A better democratic government emerges when the administration is with a cabinet that can ensure equity and meet the needs and desires of the citizens for developmental purposes in a state (Uzondo, 2019; Mattes, 2017; Suyatno, Mohd, Nasa'i Muhammad, AbdMajid, & Abdullahi, 2017). This finding further demonstrates that democracy is a necessary but insufficient condition for human security. The presence of democratic institutions must be complemented by inclusive governance, accountability, and the equitable implementation of policies.

The respondents from the eastern part of Nigeria felt that the rate of political marginalization of the eastern people is too high; this is a great challenge to human security in Nigeria. Abioye and Ogundare (2024) felt that the feeling of economic and political marginalization and the impact of the Biafra War had negative effects on human security development in the eastern part of the country. The persistence of perceived marginalization highlights the importance of political inclusion and institutional fairness in promoting human security within democratic systems.

In the youth focus group discussions at Oye Ekiti in Ekiti State and Kwara South in Kwara State, it was found that Nigeria's administrations have little or no significance for human security in the governing process. These youth believe that the government gained the attention of Nigerians by working on the poverty situation of the people to enhance the administration's political popularity rather than human security development.

Youth empowerment is needed. Youth can provide for their aging parents when there is job

creation for them. The government should stop extravagant expenditures for political gain and selfishness. There is a need to concentrate on the useful population to enhance long-term security. The essence of human security is to prevent poverty at the individual level and the occurrence of war. There is always a tendency for war when human security is not addressed (Field Work, 2023; Field Work, 2025).

The youth use social media networks as a tool to fight the government and express their public opinions, rather than actively participating in politics. This is evidence of democratic backsliding that is weakening the state institution and democratic structures of Nigeria; when the democratic political actors discourage the youth from participating in politics, it challenges the human security of the state. Overall, the findings demonstrate that the gap between democracy and human security in Nigeria is largely mediated by weak institutional capacity, poor governance quality, policy implementation failures and the behavior of political actors. Consequently, while democracy remains important for development and human security, its effectiveness depends on the strength of the institutions through which it is practiced.

Conclusion

The relationship between democracy and human security in Nigeria appears more rhetorical than real. This study argues that persistent democratic reversal and backsliding have weakened human security outcomes, with the Nigerian system increasingly reflecting elements of authoritarian democracy, rather than genuine popular rule. In this context, political actors often prioritize self-interest over public welfare, resulting in a decline in governance standards over time. Consequently, citizens experience limited dividends of democracy due to weak transparency, poor accountability, inadequate rule of law, and insufficient responsiveness in the delivery of basic social amenities and public goods. This reflects a pattern of stunted or retarded democratic practices within the Nigerian state. Theoretically, this study reinforces the argument that democracy only enhances human security when institutions are accountable and development-oriented, as seen in advanced democracies (Ted, 2017). However, this link is disrupted in Nigeria. Policy-wise, there is a need to strengthen human security

consciousness and governance reforms so that democracy can better serve citizens rather than mere symbolic policy rhetoric.

Recommendations

The democratic administration in Nigeria should prioritize the implementation of a comprehensive human security program that holistically addresses both freedom from fear and freedom from want for all segments of society.

There should be widespread education on human security capacity building within Nigeria, given that a significant portion of the population lacks a fundamental understanding of this crucial concept of human security. The health program should be emphasized to enhance the strength of the people toward human resource development and livelihood security in a state.

To propel individuals towards future prosperity and economic security, the democratic administration should implement concrete empowerment programs, with a particular emphasis on the diversification of sectors, which will enhance the state's economy. Furthermore, governance and political processes should ensure youth development and equitable gender-based policies, enabling active youth engagement and meaningful participation of women in both the political and economic spheres.

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