

Public Perception Of Media Representation Of Insecurity In Impoverished Societies: A Study Of Southeast States In Nigeria

Original Research Article | Volume 1 | Issue 5 | 2026 | Article Number: 078

Accepted: 30 September 2026 | Published: 10 October 2026 | ISSN: 2979-8582 (Online)



Crossref : <https://doi.org/10.67693/BJCR-6UL62RCF>



**Nkwocha Chike Martins (PhD)¹, Uzoukwa Ebere (PhD)², Ogwurumba Uchenna Iheanacho³,
Loveth Ebere Okoye (PhD)⁴**

¹Department of Mass Communication Rhema University, Aba, Nigeria,

²Department of Advertising Imo State University, Owerri, Nigeria,

³Education Technology Unit, Department of Library and Information Science, Faculty of Education Imo State University, Owerri, Nigeria,

⁴Department of Mass Communication, Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Igbariam, Anambra State, Nigeria

 NCM [0009-0004-8887-688x](https://orcid.org/0009-0004-8887-688x), LEO [0009-0004-8256-5335](https://orcid.org/0009-0004-8256-5335)

Correspondence: Nkwocha Chike Martins (PhD), stmartinz@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

Insecurity in Nigeria's South-east has become a dominant media theme, with coverage often focusing on violent attacks, “Unknown gunmen” and civil unrest. This study attempts to examine how the public in impoverished communities in the Southeast region of Nigeria perceives media representation of insecurity and how such perceptions shape attitudes and behaviour. The study is anchored on Agenda-setting and media framing theories. The study adopted a mixed-method approach for quantitative and qualitative data collection. A survey of 384 respondents was conducted across selected LGAs in Anambra, Abia, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo States, complemented by IDI (in-depth interview) to elicit qualitative data, with media practitioners and community leaders. Data obtained were analyzed and presented in simple percentage and frequency tables in a form of Likert scale. The findings revealed that media representation of insecurity in the Southeast has not been satisfactory and is largely sensational, biased and threat-focused. The framing generates high levels of fear, panic, anxiety and distrust. That media messages about insecurity are enmeshed with propaganda and disinformation against Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) and Eastern Security Network (ESN) which promotes ethnic views and mistrust in the media and increased reliance on social media for information more than the traditional news media. The study further found that the southeast residents' behaviour and attitude are affected by elevated fears, anxiety which contributes to behavioural outcomes such as economic withdrawals (Sit-at-home) syndrome, reduced participation in development programs and disruption of daily life activities. The study concludes that media

representation does not only mirror insecurity but actually was enmeshed with propaganda and dis-information by ethnically profiling IPOB and ESN which evoked threats, fears, provocation, violence and inciting tendencies. The study recommends a solution-focused and development oriented reporting that will promote media convergence to advance peace and stability in the Southeast. The federal government should create social media laws to check excesses and sensationalism so that those negative factors that influence media representation will be checked which in return will place Southeast residents' perception in a right direction. And that media organisation should ensure adequate training of its reporters and correspondents on conflict, security and war reporting so that the elevated fear, anxiety and panic which are the direct impact of negative media representation will be checked.

Keywords: Public Perception, Media Representation, Insecurity, Impoverished Societies and Southeast States

INTRODUCTION

Insecurity has become a major hydra headed concern in many impoverished societies, particularly in Nigeria. Zubairu (2023). Nigeria is currently engulfed in a security crisis which has turned into an unending challenge not only by defying security procedures but making scorn of the efforts of the law enforcement agents and millions of naira annually budgeted by the government as security votes. Nkwocha et al (2024) the clash between farmers and herders in recent times has contributed to the heightened insecurity issues in Nigeria and by extension, Southeast Nigeria. Insecurity of lives no doubt have adversely reduced the life span of the Nigerian people and brought untold hardship to the citizens of this country with the displacement of some people, particularly in the northern region of Nigeria. Many people in Nigeria now see the need to migrate the country to comparatively better places to stay since development cannot take place in a country or state besieged with security challenges. According to Oviasuyi (2021), insecurity is a feeling of uncertainty, a lack of confidence or anxiety about oneself. It can also be described as the state of being open to danger or threat.

The objective to achieve global peace and national development in any country including Nigeria has long been a priority of every government in the world and international organizations. But ironically, in Nigeria, the deliberate action to achieve peace and tranquility seem to be a herculean task in consideration to the ravages of insecurity caused by ethnic, religious crises and mundane interest as witnessed in Nigeria albeit Southeastern Nigeria. There is no gainsaying the fact that security is vital for national and regional cohesion, peace and sustainable development. In south east zone, bandits known as unknown gunmen (UGM) and IPOB a secessionist group also known as Indigenous People of Biafra are contributing a serious security threat every Monday since August, 2021, no business, education, religious and other human activities takes place in the region in what is called "Monday-sit-at-home. Nwagbo et al (2025) by implication, the development of Southeast is obstructed and its existence as a country is threatened as a result of rising forces of insecurity. The setback has exposed and engendered the entire southeast to hunger and poverty which has affected efforts towards policy implementation of the drive towards human development and fight against hunger and poverty. Nkwocha et al (2024) insecurity has caused food production to decline and resulted in negative effects on cost and insufficient food in both rural and urban cities.

Just recently, in January 26, 2026 during an unscheduled visit to Onitsha main market, governor Chukwuma Charles Soludo directed traders in Anambra state to open their shops from Mondays through Saturdays, warning that those who refuse would face sanctions or relocate. This directive was given when he observed that many shops were still closed in observance of the Monday sit-at-home practice. These

directives of the Anambra state government under governor Soludo came as a result of the negative economic and social impacts of the sit-at-home.

Economic losses during the sit-at-home is estimated to be a daily loss of N20 billion naira for the Southeastern states, including Anambra, Abia, Imo, Ebonyi and Enugu respectively. Business closures including shops, markets and restaurants were forced to close, affecting livelihoods and income. The sit-at-home order disrupts food supply chains, leading to food shortages and price increase. Social disruption is another nightmare. The order disrupted social activities, including education, healthcare night life and community events. The worst of it all is fear and insecurity, the sit-at-home order created an atmosphere of fear, with many residents across southeast staying indoors and avoiding public gathering.

One of the SDG's (Sustainable Development goals) is to reduce extreme hunger in an articulated drive as committed by world leaders to actualize this goal by 2015. But by 2026, it cannot be categorically said that Nigeria has met or achieved this set goal. Amongst other reasons, insecurity has been a bane militating against this important goal. Rashid (2012), the insecurity in Nigeria is having a serious negative impact on farming communities as it prevents them from engaging in crop production at an optimal level. Report from Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (PLAC) in February 5, 2024 has it that in 2001 when insecurity was not a thing of grave concern, the budget for defense in Nigeria was N966.4 million but after 21 years in 2022 that Nigeria is seriously in quagmire of insecurity. The defense budget rose significantly to N1.2 billion. In 2023 it rose to 1.383 trillion naira, and in 2024 it increased to N1.647 trillion. The police force meant to secure lives and properties of Nigerians got a budget of N455 billion in 2021, N559 billion in 2022, N838 billion in 2023 and N969.6 in 2024. Juxtaposing the increase in budget yearly and the rate of insecurity as the year goes by poses a million dollar question..

Of all these, the way and manner the Nigerian media represents insecurity report to Nigerians is of great concern to all and sundry. There is no gainsaying the fact that the press in Nigeria faces significant challenges and often contributes to the political maneuvering surrounding insecurity, which can exacerbate or mitigate the situation. Suffice to say, that journalist operates under intense pressure from powerful interest groups and security forces, leading to intimidation, self-censorship and a rise in threats and attacks resulting in a decline in press freedom and a crisis for the profession. However, the press is expected to frame insecurity in Nigeria by frequently reporting incidents such as terrorism, kidnapping, rapping, killings and banditry which result in negative impacts on the lives of the southeast people and Nigeria people in general. Adegboyega et al (2025) are of the opinion that investigative journalism should be deployed by the media to assist the armed forces in apprehending the perpetrators of kidnapping, banditry and terrorism debacles.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Despite the growing concern about insecurity in impoverished societies, there is limited understanding of how the public perceives media representation of the incessant insecurity ravaging the great country, Nigeria. According to the Global Terrorism Index of 2026, Nigeria is currently ranked 4th, a significant jump from its 6th position in 2024. The country experienced a 46% increase in terrorism-related deaths, with 750 fatalities in 2025, primarily attributed to Boko Haram and Islamic State West African Province (ISWAP). According to the key highlights of the report terrorism incidents increased by 43% from 120 in 2024 to 171 in 2025, civilian casualties accounted for 67% of fatalities while military personnel accounted for 19%. New groups like Lakurawa are emerging, including a spread of insecurity beyond traditional hotspots. The report has sparked criticism from opposition parties in Nigeria, with the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) and African Democratic Congress (ADC) accusing the government of APC of failure to address the security crisis.

The Southeast is not left in the terror and torment by insecurity groups. There is a new group of bandits in Imo State led by Ifeanyi Eze Okorienta, also known as “Gentle” de Yahoo. He is the commander of the Biafra Liberation Army (BLA), a group linked to violent attacks in Imo State and other parts of South-East. Gentle de Yahoo was reportedly arrested by the Nigerian Army in September 2025 but there’s uncertainty about his current status, with some reports suggesting he might have escaped. The Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in 2024 reported that about 614,937 Nigerians were killed, 2,235,954 were kidnapped and 2.2 trillion was paid as ransom between May 2023 and April 2024. That even the rural areas where foodstuffs among production activities are undertaken were mostly affected as there were about 335,827 incidents of murder cases and 1,668,104 persons were kidnapped.

How can progress be made in an atmosphere that is charged with the burning desire to do evil and create havoc? There is hardly a day that passes without one unpleasant story or the other. A critical observation to any discerning and patriotic mind would reveal that the whole shenanigan is not unconnected to bad governance, poor value system and possible internal and external influence. Recent reports from January to September 2025 highlights a surge in killings and kidnapping across Nigerian Southeast, with significant incidents of violence reported in Imo, Anambra, Enugu, Abia and Ebonyi States. The security crisis involves multiple actors including state backed paramilitary outfits, like Ebube Agu, Criminal gangs, cult-groups and Separatist groups such as Indigenous people of Biafra (IPOB) and its armed wing, the Eastern Security Network (ESN). The near collapse of security intelligence and reportage of the apprehensive insecurity situation in the Southeast in recent time is often shaped by deep-seated skepticism toward both traditional media and government narratives.

Considering the attacks and downplaying of the severity of the crisis by both the press and government, including the fact that there is limited empirical studies that have investigated the representation of the media to the public, hence this research examined the public perception of media representation of insecurity in impoverished society in the Southeast, Nigeria.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the public perception of media representation of insecurity in Southeast Nigeria.
2. To identify the factors that influence public perception of media representation of insecurity in Southeast Nigeria.
3. To investigate the impact of media representation of insecurity on public attitude and behavior in security in impoverished states in southeast Nigeria.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Obasanjo (2019), the former head of state of Nigeria in Vanguard News reports queried the Federal government for allowing the Bokoharam and herdsmen attack to fester by treating the matter with kid-gloves, urging president Buhari to rally local and global stakeholders in seeking solutions to the fight against terrorism. Taiwo et al (2021) opined that the broadcast media has not effectively played its role in creating needed awareness through adequate coverage. The surveillance function of the media must be effectively played to warn people of an impending danger. While (Adeyemi, 2019, Nwankwo (2021) argues that media representation can be biased, sensationalized, or inadequate influencing public opinion and government response. (Okorie, 2018, Ekwueme 2020) on the other hand said “the media plays a crucial role in shaping public perception, often amplifying fear and anxiety. The media’s portrayal of insecurity in Southeast Nigeria may be contributing to increased fear and mistrust among the public, potentially exacerbating the region's security challenges. Ogundele (2020) media coverage can increase public awareness but also perpetuate stereotypes. Akinola (2022) with a different view point, saying social media has transformed public discourse on insecurity, enabling real-time reporting and citizen journalism

to thrive. Those threats have not only destabilized communities but also disrupted economic activities, strained governmental resources, and exacerbated social inequalities, (Akandoyin and Akintomiwa 2025).

The societal issue that contributes to the level of insecurity in Nigeria is so alarming that the growth of insecurity has definitely left the population in an extreme condition of despair, with the majority of economic operations failing. The most important aspect of human existence is peace and where there is a lack of peace. The implication is that social, economic, and political gains will be impossible to achieve (Omodero 2024).

There is no gainsaying the fact that the media is capable of inflaming or mitigating conflict depending on the way they report it. There is no doubt a mitigating interest towards conflict sensitive journalism, the media are expected to lend their voice to all concerned in the conflict by focusing on the reason for the conflict and be guided professionally to report the truth as well as possible solution to the conflict. It may be tempting to describe the insecurity situation in Nigeria along regional lines as well as unethical reporting, where framing of the Boko Haram debacle is not free from bias that the southern press may give weight to war journalism while the northern papers or press may prioritize peace journalism depending on their client. Vulnerability to the current insecurity situation. Give and take, the media should be alive to its responsibility.

Concept of Public Perception

Public opinion refers to the collective views, attitudes, beliefs and judgment held by citizens about political leaders, public policies, public phenomenal topics or issues and governance processes. In democratic societies, public opinion is an essential element of governance because it reflects how citizens evaluate leadership performance and the effectiveness of public institutions. Public opinion is only recognized in a democratic setting and in an accountable governance. Hence Boven et al (2023) Government derives legitimacy not only from elections but also from the continuous support and approval of citizens expressed through their opinions and attitudes. Public opinion is shaped by various factors which include media coverage, personal experiences, social influences, cultural background and information availability. This in turn brings about public perception which can influence public opinion, behavior, policy decisions and reputation.

In the context of insecurity in Nigeria, public perception might refer to how people view the government's handling of security issues, like Boko Haram or herdsmen, same applies to how the people view how the media represent the issue of insecurity to them. The media and political communication play an important role in shaping public opinion which in turn shapes their perception in democratic societies. Citizens rely on different media platforms to obtain information about government policies and official communications. The media helps citizens to understand the government's stand on the issue of insecurity in their environment. Media exposure is one of the major factors influencing how citizens evaluate the security situation and government concern about the situation. Another important influence is media framing, which refers to the way information is presented. The same insecurity situations can be interpreted and presented differently depending on how it is reported. The choice of words, emphasis, and context used by the media can affect whether citizens interpret the insecurity debacle positively or negatively. Ghana (2025), this mixed media environment allows information to circulate quickly and widely, increasing the influence of communication on perception.

Media Representation

Media representation generally refers to how different media like television, radio, films, newspapers, or magazines and social media represent different groups, communities, states and so on in matters or issues

of importance. Its impact, stereotypes, biases and whose stories get told. UNDP (2021), media institutions function as critical intermediaries between the state and society, translating policy actions into accessible, public knowledge while simultaneously channeling public concerns into political discourse. Nigerians are currently faced with how media represents insecurity to the public, especially the media outlets such as newspapers, T.V, radio, films and social media frame and portray the country's security challenges. Security threats like Boko Haram, banditry, kidnapping, herder-farmer clashes and ritual killing cum political killings have become the regular signature that characterizes Nigeria in news coverage. It has become a great concern how the Northern and Southern media often polarize and show differences motivated by nationalist, regionalist, tribalistic, religiosity and parochial ideologies. It's been noted that the report on insecurity between 2011 and 2015 was focused heavily on farmer-herder conflicts and Boko Haram while armed banditry received little attention despite becoming deadlier. The media seems to enhance awareness of Boko Haram and government strategies, but are also susceptible to manipulation by non-state actors to create fear and whittle down governments interventions.

Insecurity presently in Nigeria is a state of being unsafe, vulnerable or exposed to danger in an environment, community, state or nation that affects individuals, communities and the nation. It has encompassed not just physical violence, but threats to life, property livelihood and peace of mind. As bad as it is today in Nigeria, it shows the absence of safety and protection from threats that can disrupt normal, social, economic, and political life. Insecurity, all around the country has taken the shape of terrorism/insurgency as carried out by Bandits, Boko Haram, ISWAP in the Southwest, Southeast, Northeast and Northwest, attacking communities, schools, mosques and churches. There is also armed banditry as framed by government and the media who engages in kidnapping for ransom, cattle rusting, village raids especially in the Northwest and North central, what can we say of communal and ethnic clashes where farmer-herder conflicts are abound, indigene and settler disputes across the nation. Violent crimes are not left out where kidnappings, armed robbery, ritual killings, cultism, political killings are recorded on a daily basis. As the envisaged 2027 general election is imminent, election or political related killing which are politically motivated are showing signs of occurrence. Ochuko et al (2023) A critical observation in a discerning and patriotic mind revealed that the white shenanigan is not unconnected to bad governance and poor value system. There is hardly a day that passes without an unpleasant story or the other reported by the media in and outside Nigeria.

Concept of Impoverished Society in Nigeria

World Bank (2025) economic projections has it that Nigeria's GNI (Gross National Income) revealed a GNI per capita of \$1.930, dollars which is about \$5.30 dollars per day if income were shared equally. But Nigeria has a high inequality index. Top 1% on a huge share of wealth, 60% lives on less than 3 dollars a day according to world bank 2025 projections. It has it that 133 million Nigerians (63%) are multi dimensionally poor, lacking health, education, clean water or housing. The poverty index indicates that 61% of people live below 3 dollars a day, the multi dimensional poverty stood at 63% who are deprived of health, education and a good living standard. 2 among 3 of Nigerian kids are multi-dimensionally poor meaning they have no care. The rural areas are ravaged as 72% are poor.

The report is so pathetic and damning that comfort ability which entails basic needs such as needs plus security is becoming a far cry in Nigeria society. Comfort usually means one can afford food, rent, healthcare, school and don't fear sudden shocks. But in Nigeria today inflation in terms of food in 2024 was 35%, 85 million Nigerians lack electricity and where it's available it's epileptic, millions also lack clean water.

Insecurity has made matters worse where kidnapping, banditry force farmers off their lands and families to

pay ransom. It's pathetic that 80% of employment is grossly informal with no social protection. The world bank data shows that the middle and upper class who exist in the cities like Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt and the rest that have access to cars, private schools, generators are in the minority and yet have the need to "Japa" (migrate). It reported that Nigeria's middle class shrank after 2015 due to recession and currency devaluation. The bottom line is that the UN definition of Nigeria by LDC (Least Developed Countries) Nigeria was not defined as a poor country but by GNI (Gross National Income) as above and in reality Nigerians are poor and vulnerable. GNI per capita tells how the size of a country's economy is divided by the people (population), but not how it's shared or covers the basic needs of the people, but of the living of a people. Omodero (2024) insecurity hampered the growth of the economy by reducing ventures, boosting joblessness, and reducing tax income, among other things. Despite the fact that Nigeria GNI stood at 1,930 dollars above the cut off 1.088 dollars, the inequality in income distribution had made it vulnerable to poverty and poverty.

Empirical Review

Odunayo et al (2025) carried out a study on "influence of media framing on Audience perception of insecurity issues in Nigeria". The researchers examined reports of insecurity issues and how the media frame such issues which sharpens audience perceptions of insecurity in Nigeria. They employed content analysis research methods via quantitative and qualitative approaches to analyze data. The study concluded that there was a substantial relationship between media framing of insecurity issues and audience perceptions of the issues. The study recommended that media elites should adopt thematic framing while reporting any insecurity issues in Nigeria, that it will influence the audience perception, and that insecurity is a collective fight in Nigeria, all hands should be on the deck.

Ademola A.S. et al (2025). The researchers in their study examined media representation of kidnapping and banditry, their framing effects as perceived among farmers, and their implications to food security. It also seeks to identify the policy implications of newspapers reports on kidnapping for food security. The researchers adopted the qualitative content analysis and in-depth interview research method. They anchored their study on framing theory. They explored Punch and Daily Trust newspapers reports (January 2023 to December 2023) on kidnapping and banditry with particular capture of selected 14 farmers in Southwest Nigeria. Findings showed that newspapers made deliberate efforts to frame reports on insecurity, having made negative implications on food security. It recommended that investigative journalism should be deployed by media to assist the armed forces to apprehend the criminals., Ogbah C. et al (2021) in a study entitled "Social Media and Insecurity Issues in Nigeria" examined the heinous and ghastly images of insecurity issues that have maliciously affected Nigeria's economic cum political stability, thus threatening the unity of the state in the 21st century. The study found out that insecurity issues have massively increased the concern of poverty, suffering, pain, sickness and death of the people, and underdevelopment to the Nigerian state. That the violence are oftentimes viewed or noted by some social media platforms while some were not due to insufficient social equipment.

The study recommended strongly that social media houses should be empowered and protected as that would increase confidence in the discharge of their duty, and that social media laws should be established by the federal government to monitor the activities of social media users to curtail fake news reportage.

Ternenge K et al (2023) carried out a study on "Us vs Them" narrative: Deconstructing stereotypes in reporting insecurity in the era of media convergence in Nigeria. The study was anchored on Framing Theory and Identity Construction Theory, and adopted a library method where secondary data were drawn. The study found that insecurity in Nigeria is complex and multifaceted, often linked to government failures and poor governance; that the media often frames security issues in terms of "us vs them," fueling conflict

and animosity. The researchers recommended that media should adopt conflict-sensitive reporting practices, prioritize peace and resolution and leverage media conveyance to promote peace and stability.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Framing Theory and Agenda Setting Theory

In a bid to find theoretical support for our investigation, and backing for our investigation, two theories were reviewed that shared similar basic beliefs with the assumptions that forms the crux of the study; the Framing Theory as well as the Agenda Setting Theory of the media. The Framing Theory of the media was considered because it provided support for us to moderate how mass media represented insecurity in impoverished societies in Southeast Nigeria, as perceived by the public. The theory was first put forth by Gregory Bateson in 1972; he posited the concept. He defined psychological frames as a spatial and temporary bounding of a set of interactive messages that act as metacommunication. Basically, he said we use frames to signal what kind of interaction we are in. While Erving Goffman in 1974 took Bateson's idea into sociology. He argued that people frame experiences to organize and understand the world like a picture frame that excludes some things while focusing attention on others. This is where "frame analysis" as a social movement comes from. In the case of this study, a frame refers to how the media organizes and presents ideas, events and topics they cover about insecurity in the Southeast region of Nigeria. Framing is the way and manner a communicator such as journalists, feature writers and editorial writers defines and constructs any piece of communicated information in order to give the information, how that information should be perceived and interpreted.

The Agenda Setting Theory was also considered for this study. The theory described the power of the media content to influence the importance placed on a topic of public concern. The agenda setting theory assumes that the news items covered frequently and prominently attract the audience's attention as to what issues are important. This is another key mass communicating theory. Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw (1972) are the originators of this theory. They published the classic study 'The Agenda – Setting Function of Mass Media' after the 1968 U.S. Presidential election. The core idea is that the media may not tell people what to think, but they are stunningly successful in telling people what to think about. Hence, Agenda Setting can be regarded as the spotlight and Framing the color of the light.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers used the survey research design, with close-ended questionnaire and interview schedules as instruments for data collection. From a projected population of the Southeast as at 2025 at 23,560,378, the Wimmer and Dominick online Sample Size Calculator was used to determine the sample size of 384 at 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error.

The multistage sampling technique was used. At stage one, the researcher purposively selected the state capitals for easy access to respondents and the fact that most of the news media are found in the capital cities. At stage two, major cities within the state capitals were purposively chosen, one from each state. At stage three, from these cities one community was randomly selected from each of the cities; that are from Owerri Municipal (Umuodu), Abakaliki (Ikwo), Awka North (Achala), Umuahia South (Abaukwu) and Enugu North (Nsukka). At stage four, the researchers distributed questionnaires among these five communities — that is $384/5 = 77$. That is to say the researchers gave 77 copies of questionnaires to respondents in each of the communities proportionately. The respondents who were included were educated and enlightened, especially on the issue of insecurity and media reporting. Simple percentage and mean analysis were used for data presentation and analysis with 4-point Likert Scale.

Data Presentation Analysis and Findings**Section A: Socio-Demographic Factors of Respondents**

Table 1	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
	Male	200	51%
	Female	184	49%
	Total	384	100

Table 2	Age	Frequency	Percentage
	20 – 29	40	10%
	30 – 39	84	22
	40 – 49	95	25
	50 – 59	108	28
	60 – above	57	15
	Total	384	100%

Marital Status

Table 3	Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
	Married	300	78%
	Single	44	13%
	Widowed	40	10%
	Total	384	100%

Occupation

Table 4	Occupation	Frequency	Percentage
	White Collar Job	112	29
	Student	68	18
	Business/Artisans	150	39
	Farmers	36	9
	Unemployed	18	5
	Total	384	100%

Educational Status

Table 5	Educational Status	Frequency	Percentage
	No education	26	6.7
	Primary	58	15.1
	Secondary	117	30.2

	Tertiary	98	26.0
	Quran education	85	22.0
	Total	384	100%

Source: Field Survey, 2026

In this study the analysis revealed that there were more male than females in the area of age distribution. Those within the age bracket of 50 – 59 were marginally higher than other age groups. They were more married respondents at 78% in the study. In terms of occupation, those Business/Artisans were more at 39%, while for educational status, those with secondary education were more at 30.2%.

Research Question 1: How do residents of Southeast perceive media representation of insecurity in their communities?

Table 6: Perceptions of Southeast residents of media representation of insecurity.

S/NO	OPINIONS	SA	A	D	SD	N	M	DECISION
1	Media reportage of insecurity in Southeast has been satisfactory	50 13.0%	40 10.4%	110 28.6%	184 48.0%	384 100%	1.8	Reject
2.	The killings, rapping, kidnapping, destruction and burning of houses, during conflicts and invasions of towns and villages were reported adequately by the media	45 11.7%	33 8.6%	168 43.8%	138 35.9%	384 100%		
3.	Conflicts and killings in the rural communities and urban cities did not affect farmers in terms of food production and work hours during Monday sit-at-home on Mondays in Southeast	35 91%	28 7.2%	149 389%	172 44.8%	384 100%	1.8	Reject
Grand Mean						1.8	1.8	Reject

Source: Field Survey 2026

Table 6 shows the responses from the respondent's perception in Southeast states on media representation of insecurity. From table six variable one, it was revealed that respondents disagreed with the opinions enumerated. Based on this grand mean of 1.8 derived which is lower than the criteria mean of 2.5. This confirms that media reportage of insecurity in Southeast has not been satisfactory. Therefore, from the

table above, the highest proportion of each of the opinions showed that 184 (48%) of the respondents strongly disagreed with the motion that the media reportage of insecurity in Southeast is satisfactory. Inversely, meaning that media reportage of insecurity in Southeast is not satisfactory. While also 168 (43.8%) of the respondents disagreed that killings, rapping, kidnapping, destruction and burning of properties during invasion of towns and village were reported adequately by the medias same applies to the third variable 172 (44.8%) of the respondents strongly disagreed to the assertion that conflicts and killings in the rural communities and urban cities did not affect farmers food production and no loss of man hour during Monday's seat-at-homes in Southeast, Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What factors influence public perception of media representation of insecurity in the Southeast states?

Table 7: Factors that influence public perception of Southeast residents on media representation on insecurity in Southeast, Nigeria.

S/NO	OPINIONS	SA	A	D	SD	N	M	DECISION
1	There is low confidence in unbiased coverage from traditional media, often viewed as being colored by political interest or government influence	174 45.3%	105 27.3%	65 16.9%	40 10.4%	384 100%	3.0	Accepted
2.	Southeast audiences don't perceive media messages about insecurity as enmeshed in propaganda and disinformation concerning IPOB, ESN as distorting facts to promote ethnic views, trust in the media.	63 16.4%	50 13.0%	90 23.4%	181 47.3%	384 100%	1.9	Reject
3.	Social media posts and tone about insecurity are often hostile which evokes threat, fear provocation, violence and inciting tendencies making audiences perceive media as escalating tension rather than engagements.	130 33.9%	168 43.8%	50 13.0%	36 9.3%	384 100%	30	Accepted
Grand Mean 2.6								

Source: Field survey 2026

Table 7 indicates the responses from the respondents in the five Southeast states of Nigeria on factors that influence public perception of Southeast residents on media representation of insecurity in Southeast Nigeria. From the table, it's observed that the respondents agreed to most of the options stated. By the response of a grand mean = 2.6 was derived which is above the criterion mean = 2.5. This revealed the factors that influence Southeast resident's perception on the media insecurity report in the Southeast. The highest proportion of each of the option showed that 174 (45.3%) strongly agreed to option which says that there is low confidence in unbiased coverage from traditional media, who often viewed as being colored by political interest or government influence while 181 (47.2%) strongly disagreed with the variable that Southeast audiences don't perceive media messages about insecurity as enmeshed in propaganda and disinformation concerning facts to promote ethnic views and trust in the media. The implication here is that Southeast respondents/residents are invariably saying that media messages about insecurity in Southeast are enmeshed with propaganda and disinformation against IPOB and ESN which in turn promotes ethnic views and no trust in the media.

Research Question 3: What is the impact of media representation of insecurity on public attitude and behavior of Southeast residents in Nigeria?

Table 8: Impact of media representation of insecurity on the attitude and behavior of Southeast residents.

S/NO	OPINIONS	SA	A	D	SD	N	M	DECISION
1	Behaviour and attitude of the Southeast resident is not affected by elevated fear, anxiety, sense of psychological insecurity panic through widespread dissemination of misinformation and sensational reporting.	38 100%	50 13.0%	110 28.6%	186 48.4%	384 100%	1.8	Reject
2.	Despite the check by Southeast residents on new media for safety updates, their daily life, economy, seat-at-home on Mondays, does not cause economic decline and disruption of daily life in Southeast.	34 8.9%	26 69%	147 38.2%	177 46.0%	384 100%	1.8	Reject
3.	Heightened psychological insecurity, the constant reporting of unknown gunmen (UGM)	45 11.7%	36 9.4%	138 35.9%	163 43%	163 43%	1.9	Reject

	activities and killings has not created deep fear, anxiety and distrust in government ability to promote security							
Grand Mean								1.8

Source: Field survey 2026

Table 8 shows that the respondents in Southeast state on the variable that said the attitude and behavior of Southeast residents are not affected by elevated fear, anxiety, or sense of psychological fear through insecurity. Panic through widespread dissemination of misinformation and sensational reporting rejected the options enumerated. Based on this a grand mean 1.8 was derived which is lower than the criterion mean = 2.5. This confirms that southeast residents' behavior and attitude are affected. From the table above the highest proportion affected. Each of the groups showed that 186 (48.48%) rejected (strongly disagreed) to this option, while 177 (46.06%) strongly disagreed that the bare Dispute the check on new media for safety updates, the daily life, economy, seat of daily life did not affect the results of Southeast. 163 (43%) also disagreed that heightened psychological insecurity, constant reporting of unknown gunmen (UGM) activities did not create deep fear and anxiety in Southeast Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings in table 6 reveal that media reportage of insecurity in Southeast has not been satisfactory. The killings, raping, kidnappings, destruction and burning of homes/properties during conflicts, invasions of towns and villages were not reported adequately. Also that killings as a result of conflict between farmers and herdsmen in the rural and urban cities affected food production and availability in Southeast states, that the Monday sit at home is not helping matters. The findings above are in tandem with Adamola A.S et al (2025) study which revealed that Newspapers made deliberate efforts to frame reports on insecurity having made negative implications on food security. Also Ojobah et al (2021) supports the findings of this study where in their study they found out that insecurity issues have maliciously increased the concern of poverty, suffering, pain, sickness and death of the people and underdevelopment to the Nigerian States.

Findings in table 7 show that there is less confidence in unbiased coverage from traditional media often viewed as colored by political interest or government influence. And that the Southeast audience perceives media messages about insecurity as enmeshed in propaganda and disinformation concerning IPOB (Indigenous people of Biafra) and ESN (Eastern Security Network) as disturbing slants to promote alternative views and distrust the media. The Southeast residents see social media posts and tone about insecurity as often hostile which evokes threat fears, provocation, violence and inciting tendencies making audiences perceive media as escalating tension rather than engagement. Ternenge K et al (2025) in their study "Us vs Them" found out that insecurity in Nigeria is so complex and multifaceted which is often linked to government failure

and poor governance that media often frame fueling conflicts and animosity. These findings tallied with the findings of this study.

While findings in table 8 indicate that behaviour and attitude of the Southeast residents are affected negatively by elevated fear, anxiety, sense of psychological insecurity, panic through widespread dissemination of misinformation and sensational reporting. And that despite the check on social media updates for safety, Southeast residents' daily life, economy, the sit at home on Mondays cause decline of

their economy and disruption of their daily life activities. Also the heightened psychological insecurity. The constant reporting of unknown gunmen (UGM) and IPOB killings in the region created a lot of fears, anxiety and distrust in government ability to provide security.

This finding is in tandem with the findings of Ternenge et al (2021) where they stated that insecurity in Nigeria is complex as well as multifaceted, advising the media to adopt sensitive reporting practices to promote peace and resolution to leverage media convergence to promote peace and stability.

CONCLUSION

From the findings, variables such as low confidence in unbiased coverage from traditional media, security messages from the media enmeshed in propaganda and disinformation concerning IPOB and ESN as coupled with social media post and tone about insecurity in Southeast often hostile which evokes threat fears, provocations, violence and inciting tendencies are not handled properly by the media in terms of representation in the Southeast states.

And because of the elevated fear, sense of psychological insecurity, panic through widespread dissemination of misinformation and sensational reporting, the behaviour and attitude of Southeast residents are affected negatively. Those negative feelings are not assuaged despite their check on social media for safety updates. The economy and daily life activities are on the decline. The heightened constant report of UGM and IPOB creates deep fears, anxiety and eventual distrust in government ability to provide security for the Southeast residents.

Recommendations

1. The media at all levels (traditional, public, private and social media) should as a matter of urgency promote media convergence to advance peace and stability.
2. The federal government of Nigeria should create social media laws to check excess and sensationalism of social media reports so that those negative factors that influence media representation will be checked, which in return will place the perception of Southeast audiences in the right direction.
3. The elevated fear, anxiety and panic which are a direct impact of negative media representation that affects the behaviour and attitude of the Southeast residents should be checked by media organizations by training their best reporters and correspondents on good security, conflict and war reporting.

References

- Adegboyega S.A, Adelabu O, Oluwakemi A (2025) Newspaper representation of insecurity and farmers perception of the implications on food security in Nigeria. *Journal of Political Discourse*, Federal University of Gusau. Vol 3 no 2 (2025).
- Adeyemi O.A (2019) Media representation and public opinion on herdsmen attack in Nigeria. *Journal of African Media Studies* 11 (3) p265-280.
- Akindoyin D and Akintomiwa O (2025) Evaluating the impact of insecurity on Nigeria National Development since the Fourth Republic. *African Journal of Stability & Development*. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.53982/ajsd.2025.1701.05-J>.
- Akinola J.O (2022) Social media and Public Discourse on insecurity in Nigeria: A critical Analysis. *African journal of communication*. 10 (2) 1-15.

- Ayo Osisanwo (2025) Insecurity and Safety Complications in Nigeria: A Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Study of Human Security threat in Nigeria Newspapers. *Corpus Pragmatics* 9 (2) p. 167-198. DOI: 10.1007/s41701-025-00184-7.
- Boven V.H & Ramona P. (2023) Understanding Legitimacy in Governance: A Comprehensive overview. *Global journal of Technology and optimizations*. Open Access ISSN: 2229-8711 Volume 14 Issue 3 P127.
- Ekweme (2020) Media plays a crucial role: The Role of Public Relations in shaping Political communication. *International Journal of Education, Culture and Society*. <https://doi.org/10.58578/IJECS.v4i3> e-ISSN: 3024-8973 P-ISSN: 3024-8981.
- Global Terrorism Index (2019). Global death from terrorism. <https://www.visionofhumanity.org>, <https://www.facebook.com>.
- NBS (2024) Crime Experience and Security Perception survey (CESPS) 2024. <https://www.facebook.com> – Punch Newspapers.
- Nkamnebe C.M, Ogu C.C and Okoye L. (2024) An assessment of herders/farmers conflict on Insecurity and food crisis in Nigeria. *Akungba Communication and media journal*. Vol. 1 No 1 ISSN: 1115-621X Sept. 2024.
- Nwagbo S.N & Ikechukwu I.O (2025) Insecurity in South East Nigeria and Leadership Responsibility: An analysis of the socio-economic Implications. *journal.aptirapub.com*. Vol 19 No 3 (2024).
- Nwankwo (2021) The Farmer-Herder conflict: Analysis (2017-2021). Uni-civil Discourse and Politics of Nigeria Security Response. Publications.aston.ac.uk P.1-23.
- Ochuko E.D & Egbon T.N (2023) Insecurity in Nigeria: its implications for education sector. *Hukari international studies journal*. Vol 7 (3). 2023.
- Odunayo F.O, Ajaegbu O.O & Atakiti I.O (2025) Influence of media Framing on Audience Perception of Insecurity issues in Nigeria. *Communication Review* 9 (2). PP. 162-183 2025.
- Ogundele T.O (2020) Media coverage of insecurity in Nigeria: A study of Public perception. *Journal of Communication and media Research*. 12 (1) P1-12.
- Ojobah C., Aminsteabu F.I, Agim C.C and Owunari G.S (2021) Social media and Insecurity issues in Nigeria: A post COVID-19 Issues. *International journal of Advanced Research in Social sciences, Environmental Studies & Technology*. P-ISSN: 2536-6505 e-ISSN: 2536-6513. Volume 6 number 1 June 2021.
- Okoro N. (2018) Media coverage and Public perception of Boko Haram Insurgency in Nigeria. *Journal of media and communication studies*. 10 (2) P1-10.
- Olusegun Obasanjo (2019) Killing can no longer be treated with kid-gloves. Statement on Insecurity in Nigeria. March 15th (2019) Vanguard Newspapers.
- Omodan C.D (2024) Social Factors Associated with Insecurity in Nigeria Society. MDPI-Societies DOI: 10.3390/soc14060074. 14 (6) P.74.
- Owasuyi P.D (2021) Nigeria, the paradox of blessings and Challenges of Poverty and Insecurity. In *NPSA-South south Journal of Political Sciences* Vol 2 (1) PP 1-13.
- Policy and Legal Advocacy Centre (2021) Key programs, Legislative engagements and youth initiatives to strengthen democratic governance in Nigeria. <https://placng.org>

- Rashid S.A (2012) Land Use conflict Between Farmers and Herdsmen – Implications for Agricultural and Rural Development in Nigeria. Rural Development Contemporary issues and Practice IDEAS: RePEc:ito:pchaps:84750 DOI: 10.5772/45787.
- Ternenge S. and Achalpanyo (2025) “Us vs Them” narratives: Deconstructing stereotypes in reporting insecurity in the era of media Convergence in Nigeria. *International Journal of Advanced Mass Communication and Journalism*. <https://www.masscomjournal.com>. 2025. Vol 6 Issue 2 Part B. P-ISSN: 2708-4450. E-ISSN: 2708-4469.
- UNDP (2021) Media Institutions as a critical intermediary in democratic governance, human rights and sustainable development. Publication report. <https://www.undp.org>
- World Bank (2025) Economic projection in Gross National Income (GNI) 2025 data. World Bank data Help desk <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org>
- Zubairu Nasiru (2023) Rising insecurity in Nigeria: *Causes and solution*. *Journal of studies in Social sciences* ISSN: 2201-4624 vol 19 p. 4.



© 2026 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)