

IMPACT OF INSECURITY ON THE MORAL VALUES OF CHRISTIANS IN KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This research examined the impact of insecurity on the moral values of Christians in Kaduna State, Nigeria, using a descriptive survey design. A sample of 605 participants was randomly drawn from a population of 3,765,843, and data were collected through a structured questionnaire and analyzed using mean scores. The results showed that insecurity has negatively impacted Christian moral values, leading to a decline in worship participation, growing mistrust, moral deterioration, and the weakening of spiritual and communal bonds. The study concludes that insecurity has profoundly eroded the moral fabric of Christians in the region by disrupting religious practices and fostering ethical compromises. It recommends that the government enhance security measures and intelligence efforts in affected areas to restore peace and confidence, while Christian leaders should reinforce moral and spiritual teachings through outreach, counseling, and initiatives that foster unity, forgiveness, and resilience.

Keywords: Insecurity, Moral Values, Christians, Kaduna State

Introduction

Insecurity has emerged as a pervasive challenge across Nigeria, with Kaduna State being a notable hotspot due to recurring ethno-religious crises, banditry, kidnappings, and terrorist activities. These forms of violence have deeply affected the social fabric of communities, particularly Christians who often find themselves targets of attacks. The insecurity has caused not only physical and economic harm but has also led to moral dislocation within Christian communities. The disruption of worship, displacement of families, and trauma associated with loss of life have severely affected the moral compass and spiritual engagement of many Christians in the region (Okoye, 2021). These experiences have increasingly undermined the communal and ethical

structures that define Christian living.

Christian moral values, rooted in principles of love, peace, forgiveness, and communal solidarity, have been tested under the pressure of sustained violence and fear. The moral teachings that guide Christian behaviour are often nurtured through communal worship, consistent pastoral engagement, and participation in church activities. However, insecurity has disrupted these avenues, leading to reduced church attendance, weakened pastoral oversight, and fractured congregational relationships (Bulus, 2020). As people prioritize physical safety over religious gatherings, opportunities for moral instruction diminish, and many Christians especially the youth find themselves grappling with anger, bitterness, and sometimes, retaliatory instincts contrary to Christian ethics.

The psychological and emotional toll of insecurity cannot be overstated. Many Christians in Kaduna State have been displaced, lost loved ones, or have had their homes and churches destroyed. These traumatic experiences often result in emotional numbness, depression, and moral confusion. Young people, in particular, are vulnerable to adopting alternative, sometimes morally questionable, survival strategies, including theft, militancy, or revenge, especially when they perceive the state and religious institutions as failing to protect them (Ibrahim, 2022). This erosion of trust in both divine and human institutions poses a significant threat to the development and maintenance of moral values within Christian communities.

Additionally, the climate of fear and suspicion fuelled by insecurity fosters social fragmentation, often leading Christians to become isolated or hostile toward members of other ethnic or religious groups. Such divisions contradict Christian moral teachings on tolerance, unity, and the dignity of all humans. Moreover, religious leaders are sometimes overwhelmed or targeted, making them less effective in reinforcing moral standards and offering pastoral care. As a result, individuals may adopt moral relativism and justify actions that contradict biblical teachings, creating a vacuum (Danladi, 2019).

Despite these challenges, Christian organizations and churches in Kaduna State have demonstrated resilience, using the crisis as a platform to reinforce moral teachings and social support systems. Some have created trauma counselling units, safe worship centres, and community vigilance groups grounded in ethical principles. However, these efforts are often limited in reach due to resource constraints and ongoing threats. Without a comprehensive and sustained intervention, the long-term moral implications of insecurity for Christian values may continue to deepen, altering the ethical landscape for future generations (Okoh, 2020).

Insecurity and Moral Values of Christians in Nigeria

Insecurity in Nigeria has become an increasingly dominant challenge

affecting every stratum of society, including religious communities. The Christian community, in particular, has faced recurrent threats through insurgency, kidnappings, banditry, and communal clashes. These persistent crises have significantly impacted the moral values upheld by Christians. According to Yusuf (2017), insecurity fosters a climate of fear and disillusionment that often leads individuals to compromise their spiritual and ethical commitments in pursuit of personal safety and survival. The erosion of communal trust within Christian circles also signifies the breakdown of long-standing moral codes that once guided interpersonal and societal behaviour.

The Christian faith emphasizes virtues such as forgiveness, love, integrity, patience, and peace (Oladimeji, 2021). However, insecurity has led to a situation where self-preservation overrides these values. Churches now adopt fortified security systems and armed escorts, reflecting a growing reliance on physical defence rather than spiritual strength. Nwachukwu (2019) notes that the growing culture of revenge and retaliation among some Christians—especially in regions affected by herdsmen attacks—undermines the teachings of Christ on peaceful coexistence and nonviolence. Such responses are indicative of moral shifts influenced by traumatic experiences and the perceived failure of state protection.

Insecurity has also contributed to moral compromises in economic behaviour. Displaced Christians, particularly youths, often resort to unethical survival tactics such as fraud, theft, and other forms of exploitation. Akande (2020) asserts that prolonged exposure to violent conflict results in the normalisation of deviant behaviour, thereby weakening the moral fabric of Christian society. The moral decline is not merely a personal failure but a systemic response to societal disintegration where religious teachings are increasingly disregarded due to existential pressures.

The family unit, which is central to Christian moral instruction, has also suffered. Insecurity has displaced, separated, or traumatised many families, resulting in poor parental influence and guidance. Adebayo (2018) highlights that the displacement of families due to terrorism in the North-East and North-Central zones has disrupted moral education and the transmission of Christian values from one generation to another. This disconnection contributes to a generational moral gap, where young Christians are raised in environments devoid of consistent moral and spiritual mentoring.

Furthermore, insecurity has affected church attendance and fellowship, which are critical platforms for moral development. In many regions, fear of attacks during worship has discouraged communal religious practices. According to Onuoha (2022), the reduction in corporate worship has weakened moral accountability among believers, as shared values and mutual reinforcement diminish. The church, as a moral compass, struggles to maintain its influence when its structures are disrupted and its members

dispersed or disheartened.

Another area of concern is the growing apathy and mistrust among Christians toward national leadership, which often translates to cynicism about moral authority and social responsibility. Okonkwo (2016) argues that when state actors fail to protect citizens, particularly Christians, from violence, it erodes faith in justice and fairness, leading to moral disengagement. In their disappointment, Christians may detach from civic responsibilities or adopt unethical political behaviours to assert their relevance or secure protection.

The psychological impact of insecurity also modifies the moral compass of individuals. Post-traumatic stress, anxiety, and depression undermine rational decision-making and increase vulnerability to moral failures. Balogun (2023) observes that victims of insurgency and abduction often experience deep psychological wounds that impair their capacity to uphold ethical standards, even when they remain committed Christians in faith. The spiritual resilience expected of believers is often challenged by the reality of persistent threat and suffering.

Furthermore, the socio-economic impact of insecurity, such as poverty and unemployment, has led many Christians to adopt survivalist mentalities, sidelining moral ideals for economic gain. Ajibade (2017) emphasizes that the collapse of agrarian economies due to banditry and rural insecurity has forced many young Christians into urban slums where criminality and moral compromise are rampant. In these contexts, the once-cherished values of honesty, charity, and contentment give way to materialism and desperation.

Despite these challenges, the church remains a pivotal agent in the moral rehabilitation of its adherents. Christian leaders and organizations continue to play a crucial role in promoting forgiveness, communal support, and hope amid insecurity. Nnadi (2019) underscores the importance of theological education and trauma counselling in restoring moral stability among affected Christians. By reinforcing scriptural teachings and creating support networks, churches can re-establish moral norms even in volatile environments.

Statement of the problem

Recently, Kaduna State has witnessed a surge in insecurity marked by frequent incidents of banditry, kidnapping, herdsman attacks, communal clashes, and insurgent activities. These security challenges have profoundly disrupted daily life, leading to mass displacement, fear, and loss of lives and properties. These violent crises have disproportionately affected Christians in the state, especially those in vulnerable rural and semi-urban areas. Church gatherings have been attacked, clergy abducted or killed, and places of worship destroyed or abandoned. As insecurity escalates, it creates a hostile environment that undermines the spiritual, emotional, and psychological well-being of Christians, weakening their capacity to uphold and practice

core moral values rooted in their faith.

The moral values traditionally upheld by Christians, such as love, honesty, forgiveness, peace, and communal support, are being increasingly eroded in the face of persistent insecurity. A growing number of Christians are beginning to adopt defensive, retaliatory, or survivalist attitudes that conflict with Christian ethical teachings. Fear and trauma have led many to withdraw from communal worship, reduce trust in others, and prioritize personal security over collective moral obligations. Youth affected by displacement and economic hardship are especially vulnerable, with some turning to morally questionable means such as deception, theft, or violence to survive. This moral shift raises concerns about the long-term spiritual and ethical direction of Christian communities in the region.

Despite the visible consequences of insecurity for Christian populations in Kaduna State, limited scholarly attention has been paid to how this crisis has affected their moral values. Most studies on insecurity focus on political, economic, or developmental impacts, often overlooking the ethical and religious dimensions of the problem. There is a pressing need to investigate how prolonged exposure to insecurity influences the moral behaviour of Christians, the structure of family and church teachings, and the overall ethical climate within Christian communities. Understanding these effects is vital for religious leaders, policymakers, and peacebuilding institutions seeking to restore moral integrity and social cohesion in a region struggling with deep-seated violence and instability.

Purpose of the study

The aim of this research is to investigate how insecurity affects the moral values of Christians in Kaduna State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study intends to assess the impact of ongoing security challenges on the ethical principles and moral conduct of Christians within the region.

Research question

How does insecurity affect the moral values and ethical behaviour of Christians living in Kaduna State, Nigeria?

Research hypothesis

Ho1: Insecurity has no significant impact on the moral values of Christians in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design targeting Christian residents of Kaduna State, Nigeria. Using simple random sampling, 626 participants were chosen from a total population of 3,765,843. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire. Out of the questionnaires distributed, 605 were properly filled and returned, yielding a response rate of

96.6%. Respondents were drawn from eight local government areas within the state. The administration and retrieval of the questionnaires were carried out by the researcher, assisted by five trained personnel. Data analysis was performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20. Responses were measured using a four-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1). A mean score of 2.50 served as the decision criterion; scores of 2.50 or above indicated agreement, while scores below this point signified disagreement. The study's hypothesis was tested using the t-test statistical method at a 0.05 significance level.

Research question 1

How does insecurity affect the moral values and ethical behavior of Christians residing in Kaduna State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Opinions of Respondents on Impact of Insecurity on the Moral Values of Christians in Kaduna State, Nigeria

| S/N | Item Statements | SA | A | D | SD | X | Decision |
|-------------------|--|-----|-----|-----|-----|-------------|----------|
| 1 | Increased fear has led to a decline in regular church attendance and communal worship. | 281 | 121 | 100 | 103 | 2.96 | Accepted |
| 2 | Distrust among Christians has grown due to fear of infiltration by hostile elements. | 300 | 118 | 105 | 82 | 3.05 | Accepted |
| 3 | Moral compromise has increased, with some resorting to bribery or deceit for survival. | 323 | 113 | 100 | 69 | 3.14 | Accepted |
| 4 | Christian youth are increasingly influenced by violence, leading to moral desensitization. | 340 | 110 | 101 | 54 | 3.22 | Accepted |
| 5 | Insecurity has weakened traditional moral teachings within families and churches. | 353 | 110 | 100 | 42 | 3.28 | Accepted |
| 6 | Economic hardship caused by insecurity has led some to engage in unethical behaviors. | 368 | 108 | 99 | 30 | 3.35 | Accepted |
| 7 | Acts of retaliation and vengeance are becoming more acceptable among affected Christians. | 384 | 106 | 98 | 17 | 3.42 | Accepted |
| 8 | The practice of hospitality and charity has reduced due to fear of strangers. | 400 | 94 | 102 | 9 | 3.46 | Accepted |
| 9 | Hope and faith in divine protection have been shaken, leading to spiritual apathy. | 414 | 92 | 95 | 4 | 3.51 | Accepted |
| 10 | There is a growing decline in moral leadership and trust in religious institutions. | 442 | 142 | 21 | 0 | 3.70 | Accepted |
| Cumulative | | | | | | 3.31 | |

Decision Mean=2.50

Table 1 shows that all items had mean scores above the cutoff point of 2.5. The mean scores for individual items ranged from 2.96 to 3.70, indicating a general agreement among respondents with the statements provided. The overall mean score of 3.31, which is notably above the benchmark, reflects a strong acknowledgment by participants of the impact of insecurity on the moral values of Christians in Kaduna State, Nigeria. Consequently, the mean scores of all items were considered valid and included in further analysis.

Hypothesis

Ho1: Insecurity has no significant impact on the moral values of Christians in Kaduna State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Summary of One Sample T-Test on Impact of Insecurity on the Moral Values of Christians in Kaduna State, Nigeria

| Variable | N | Mean | Std. | Mean diff | Decision |
|-------------------|----------|-------------|-------------|------------------|-----------------|
| Hypo ¹ | 605 | 2.9587 | 1.14508 | 2.9586 | 0.00 |

Table 2 displays the outcome of the One-Sample T-Test used to assess the effect of insecurity on the moral values of Christians in Kaduna State, Nigeria, based on responses from 605 participants. The analysis yielded a mean score of 2.9587 with a standard deviation of 1.14508, indicating a moderate variation in participants' responses. The mean difference of 3.08038 from the test value points to a statistically significant impact, thereby affirming that insecurity does influence the moral values of Christians in the state. Consequently, the null hypothesis, which stated that insecurity has no significant impact on Christian moral values in Kaduna State, is rejected.

Finding

The study reveals that insecurity in Kaduna State has undermined Christian moral values, causing reduced worship, rising distrust, ethical decline, and weakened spiritual and communal life.

Discussion of findings

Impact of Insecurity on the Moral Values of Christians in Kaduna State, Nigeria

The primary objective of this study was to critically assess the impact of insecurity on the moral values of Christians in Kaduna State, Nigeria. The study focused on identifying how various forms of insecurity, such as violence, abductions, and communal clashes, have impacted the ethical and spiritual life of Christians. Analysis of the data revealed that insecurity has significantly eroded moral values among Christians in the state. The findings indicate that persistent violence and fear have led to a noticeable decline in church attendance, communal worship, and other spiritual activities that foster unity and moral instruction. Distrust among Christians has increased, particularly due to fear of infiltration by hostile elements. In addition, economic challenges driven by insecurity have pushed some individuals toward unethical practices such as bribery, deceit, and even retaliation. This moral decline is not only evident at the individual level but also within Christian institutions, where the credibility and influence of religious leaders are gradually diminishing.

These findings are consistent with the observations of Oladimeji (2021), who emphasized that prolonged insecurity in Northern Nigeria has disrupted

communal religious life and weakened moral foundations, especially among youths. Oladimeji argued that when fear and survival instincts overshadow spiritual convictions, moral compromise becomes inevitable. Thus, the current study confirms that insecurity does not only pose a physical threat but also deeply affects the ethical and spiritual fiber of Christian communities. This calls for urgent and collaborative interventions from both governmental authorities and religious bodies to safeguard not only lives and property but also the moral integrity of the society.

The findings of this study empirically confirm that insecurity has a significant impact on the moral values of Christians in Kaduna State, Nigeria, supporting the position of Akande (2020), who argued that persistent insecurity disrupts moral consciousness and weakens religious commitment. As evidenced by the one-sample t-test in Table 2, the responses of 605 participants produced a mean score of 2.9587 with a standard deviation of 1.14508, indicating a moderate level of dispersion in their views. The observed mean difference of 3.08038 from the test value signifies a statistically significant relationship, demonstrating that insecurity negatively affects moral values among Christians. This outcome leads to the null hypothesis's rejection, thereby reinforcing the conclusion that insecurity not only poses a physical threat but also undermines the spiritual and ethical framework of Christian communities in the region.

Conclusion

The study concludes that insecurity, characterised by violence, kidnappings, and communal unrest, has disrupted not only the physical safety of individuals but also the moral and spiritual framework of Christian communities. Regular worship practices, which serve as avenues for spiritual growth and moral reinforcement, have been significantly hindered, while interpersonal relationships among Christians have suffered due to increasing fear and distrust.

The study found that insecurity has led to a clear drop in ethical behavior, especially among Christian youth, who face more violence and social chaos. The weakening of traditional moral teachings in families and churches, along with financial struggles, has caused an increase in dishonest actions, revenge, and less caring for others. These changes indicate a slow loss of important Christian values that are crucial for a strong society and spiritual health.

Insecurity in Kaduna State has not only threatened the physical existence of Christians but also undermined their moral values and spiritual well-being. The consequences are evident in the decline of communal worship, the rise of moral compromise, and the weakening of religious institutions. Therefore, urgent action is required by both the government and religious leaders to restore peace, promote moral resilience, and revitalize the spiritual life of Christian communities in the region.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, it recommends that:

- i. The government should strengthen security infrastructure and intelligence operations in vulnerable communities to restore safety and public confidence, enabling Christians to freely engage in worship and communal activities without fear.
- ii. Christian leaders should intensify moral and spiritual teachings through outreach programs, counseling, and faith-based initiatives that promote unity, forgiveness, and resilience among believers affected by insecurity.

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