

Insecurity and Food Price Inflation in Post-Covid-19 Era in Nigeria

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Abstract

This study used annual data from 2018 to 2022 to examine the trend of food price inflation and insecurity in post-covid-19 era in Nigeria. Data on prices of grains (maize, beans, rice and wheat), prices of fast foods (noodles, semovita, Garri, spaghetti, egg, and milk, CocaCola) and failed state index (proxy for insecurity) were collected for the study. Graphs and charts were used to analyze the data. Findings from trend analysis show that Nigeria markets had, on the average, experienced more than 100 per cent rise in prices of wheat, rice, maize and beans over the period of 5 years investigated. Findings also show that there is about 68.8 per cent and 27.3 per cent increase in average prices of noodles and spaghetti respectively, while the prices of semovita, Garri, egg, and milk, have increase more than double, except CocaCola whose price rises by about 27.4 per cent within the period of five years investigated. Findings further show that insecurity and COVID-19 pandemic were fundamental factors that triggered food price inflation over the study period. Given the findings, the study recommends that the stakeholder in Nigeria should increase expenditure on covid-19 vaccines and intensify measures that reduce insecurity in Nigeria.

Keywords: food inflation, insecurity, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Globally, the market prices of foodstuffs have increased since 2019, following the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, and have almost doubled by 2022 in most developed and developing economies. For example, Turkey, one of the developed economies, with food price inflation of 13.2 per cent in 2020, recorded close to a double rate of 24.8 per cent in the first quarter of 2022 (Abubakar, Alexander, Alfa, & Esther, 2022). The world's food price inflation index rose to an average of 27.7 per cent in August 2022, from an average of 23.9 per cent and 21.6 per cent in December 2021 and December 2020 respectively (International Monetary Fund (IMF), 2022). Factors that have contributed to these inflationary pressures include global insecurity and COVID-19 pandemic, and had also dragged on the global markets for grains, tuber crops, edible oils, fruits and vegetables across the world (Alfa, 2019).

In Africa, although prices of food commodities vary widely among countries, rising food price inflation is a shared trend in the continent. For example, in August, 2022, the overall food price inflation in Africa grew to an average of 12.2 per cent. This is about 0.5 per cent rise from 11.7 per cent in 2020, and 5.3 per cent rise from 6.9 per cent in 2019. A survey of market prices of edible oils, fruits, and five major grains (cassava, maize, beans, rice and wheat) consumed in the continent shows that countries with high food price inflation are Zimbabwe, Sudan and Ghana. In contrast, countries with low food price inflation include Benin, Guinea, and Gabon. Zimbabwe had the highest food price inflation (280 per cent in September 2022) followed by Sudan (125 per cent in September 2022) and Ghana (33.9 per cent in September 2022), while Benin (0.3 per cent) has the lowest food inflation rate followed by Guinea (2.7 per cent) and Gabon (3 per cent). The high food inflation rates in Zimbabwe, Sudan and Ghana were driven by net import dependence, volatile effective exchange rates and political instability in the countries (James, 2022).

In Nigeria, the rate of food price inflation has been on the increase for over half a decade. Food price inflation hit 23.12 per cent in August of 2022 from 22.02 percent in July, 2022. This is as result of increases in prices of Bread, Cereals, Milk, Cheese, Eggs, Fish, Soft drinks, Coffee, Tea, Fruits, Meat, Oils and fats, and Vegetables (National Bureau of Statistics, 2022). Factors that have contributed to hike in food prices in Nigeria ranged from increase in fuel price, transportation costs to insecurity in the country.

The rising cases of insecurity in Nigeria are alarming. There are many records of death of farmers at the hands of armed herdsmen, unknown gunmen and other militia groups. This situation scared farmers away from their farms, leading not only to reduction in the quantity of staple foods but also in the total output of the agricultural sector in the country.

As important as understating the dynamics of food price inflation is, especially in informing monetary policy decisions, not much academic research has been devoted to the subject with respect to insecurity. Few studies on food inflation such as Moser (1995), Bayo (2005), Odusanya and Atanda (2010), Alexander et al. (2015), Bawa et al. (2016), and Alfa, Sa'ad, and Abdulrasheed (2021), have all examined food inflation only in relation to structural factors such as external debt, money supply, transmission lag, or aggregate demand. Such attempts, though valid within early economic theories of inflation, appears too restrictive when modern theory of inflation is considered. The modern theory of inflation linked inflation to driving factors such as corruption, insecurity, and politics while seeing money supply and aggregate demand as remote factors (Yayo, 2019). Against this backdrop, this study examines the trend of food price inflation and insecurity in post-covid-19 era in Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Insecurity

Patterson and Troy (2019) describe insecurity as the common feeling the people will experience which make them lack confidence, anxiety, and uncertainty. Thus, the symptoms of insecurity include a feeling of inadequacy, lack of self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-worth, uncertainty about the world and anxious about their relationships with others. The American Psychological Association (2018) posits that insecurity pertains to an overall sense of uncertainty or anxiety about one's worth, abilities, skills, and value as a person, conveying the message that one is at risk or in danger of something or someone. That negative impact of insecurity could be physical, mental, or emotional. Without security, one cannot accomplish full trust or function to the fullest potential.

Williams (2015) noted that insecurity is the state of being subject to danger or injury. The anxiety that is experienced when one feels vulnerable and insecure. It is a state of being not secure, lack of confidence or a state of not being safe or protected. According to Achumba and Ighomereho (2013), insecurity entails a lack of protection from crime (being unsafe) and lack of freedom from psychological harm (unprotected from emotional stress resulting from paucity of assurance that an individual is accepted, has opportunity and choices to fulfill his or her own potentials including freedom from fear.

Collier (2006) stressed those countries which have a substantial share of their income (GDP) coming from the export of primary commodities are radically more at risk of conflict. The most dangerous level of primary commodity dependence is 26% of GDP. According to him, conflicts and insecurity is concentrated in countries with little education, fast population growth and economic decline.

2.2 Food Inflation

According Usman (2019), food inflation is the upward rise in prices of food items over time. The rising rate of food inflation is evidenced in the rising prices of food items such as rice, beans, bread, yam, vegetables, fruits and eggs which have all gone up by at least 50 per cent.

According to Auta, Usman, Alfa, and Ya'u (2021), food inflation in Nigeria has witnessed dramatic changes in recent years, reaching a peak of 23.32 per cent in September 2022. Beginning from February 2019 food inflation as well as overall inflation has remained high at double digits. In a developing country like Nigeria, food price inflation is a critical economic problem posing threats to the poor who constitutes the large proportion of the population. According to the Central Bank of Nigeria, the average household in Nigerian spends about 73 percent of their income on food and beverage (Onyewuchi, 2016).

This situation is made worse in the light of recent economic deterioration which has placed Nigeria as the country with the largest number of extremely poor people, with about 87 million people

living in extreme poverty and six people becoming extremely poor every minute (Kharas et al., 2018). Thus the ability of the poor households to hedge against inflation especially regarding agricultural commodities is significantly hampered, leading to severe malnutrition and productivity losses (Alderman, 2005; Chand et al., 2011).

2.3 Causes of Hike in Food Prices in Nigeria

a) **Fall in Quantity of Food Produce:** The volume of food produced in Nigeria has not been growing in the past few years owing to insecurity in the country. Since the security situation became intense a few years ago, agricultural activities have been adversely affected as farmers in the country had to abandon their farmlands owing to escalating issues of kidnapping, banditry, and terrorism in major crops-producing States. Nigeria has lost about 60 percent of food production in the northern region due to insecurity (Ibrahim, 2021). Therefore, in order to tackle the continuous high cost of food in the country, the government must address the insecurity situation.

b) **Government Reluctant to reduce Tariff and levies on Food Crops:** Since the disruption of the global supply chain by the COVID-19 pandemic and now the Russia/Ukraine war, governments of various countries have been showing support for imports of critical commodities their countries lack comparative advantage in production. For example, South Korea cut the import duty on wheat flour to check rising food prices, which have contributed to near-decade-high food inflation. Thailand in June, 2022 waived the import surcharge of about \$4.70 per ton to bridge its supply gap. However, despite expert advice to the Nigerian government to temporarily suspend tariffs and levies on wheat and other food commodities to ease food inflation, the Nigerian government has yet to act..

c) **High Cost of Transportation:** The hike in cost of transportation was induced by the increased oil prices. Food producers and retailers in Nigeria are now facing intense pressure from rising energy costs as they have to spend more on diesel to power their factories and logistics. For example, the pump price of petrol has increased from N165/litre to more than N200/litre before it eventually stabilizes at N185/litre in August 2022. These increases have doubled the cost of food transportation and have affected commodity prices. Also, a litre of diesel is above N800. This has led to airline operators increasing fare prices by nearly 100 percent or in some cases suspending operations. This has affected the prices of imported foods in the country.

d) **Fall in the value of Naira:** The key drivers of inflation were exchange rate depreciation, the illiquidity in the foreign exchange market and structural constraints impacting negatively on productivity in the economy. Therefore, a lot of companies had to cut down on operating cost and daily maintenance services to be able to regulate the pressures coming out of the foreign exchange market

2.4 Causes of Insecurity in Nigeria

a) **Failure of Government:** The increasing incidents of violent attacks are symptoms of weak, marginal or exploitative government systems in Nigeria. The government's inability to provide public services and meet the basic needs of the masses has created a group of frustrated people who are easily classified as violent by events.

b) **Poor Security System:** This results from inadequate government security equipment in both weapons and training. It contributes to the poor disposition of the security personnel. In many cases, security officers tasked with certain security situations lack the experience and equipment to handle situations so that they will not arise.

c) **Porous Border:** Nigeria shares borders with Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali. The Nigerian immigration and customs authorities poorly secure these borders.. The porous nature of these borders

has exacerbated the possible spread of terrorist activity in Nigeria. With terrorism in the country there will be no room for adequate development in the country.

d) High Unemployment: According to statistical evidence from National Bureau of Statistics (2021), 55.4 per cent of young citizens in Nigeria are officially unemployed. Young people are overwhelmed by the high unemployment rate in the country and are frustrated. Every year, universities make many graduates who were unfortunately thrown onto the job market with no prospect of job opportunities.

e) Corruption: Corruption is already a part of life in the country and, unfortunately, is now part of Nigeria's economic problems, and public appropriation. It has gained popularity in the Nigeria's system of government. This creates financial insecurity which has exacerbated poverty, there is corruption in public offices at all levels and this has created a lot of instability in the country.

2.5 Theoretical Review

This study is anchored on social conflict theory. The theory is credited to Marx (1842). The theory **argues that** society is an arena of inequality that generates social conflict and social change. Therefore, **individuals and groups (social classes) within society interact on the basis of conflict rather than consensus**. The conflict generates competition among individual in the society who try to ensure that their selfish interest is protected. This conflict results to the acquisition of weapons and ammunitions for self-preservation thus leading to social conflicts and threats to the national security, food shortages and eventually higher food prices (Adebakin & Raimi, 2012). This argument is in line Marx and Engel (1848) that, the history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an uninterrupted, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in a common ruin of the contenting classes.

2.6 Empirical Review

Ogunleye, Olabiyi and Isayomi (2021) investigate the impact of inflation and unemployment rate on insecurity in Nigeria. The study used ordinary least square technique to determine how unemployment and inflation affect the rate of total crimes in Nigeria. The results of the OLS estimation show that about 78.1% of the total variation in the level of security is explained by the joint linear influence of unemployment and inflation. It is suggested that policies should be designed to reduce inflation and unemployment within the limits of some acceptable level of inflationary bias. The study concludes that security issues goes beyond politics and the act of politicking.

Jung (2021) examines food insecurity in Nigeria, investigates its drivers in a cross-country setting, and assesses the role of policies. Using two proxies for food security, the study finds that high per capita consumption, high yields and low food inflation support food security. Cross-country estimates of yields and production provided by the FAO/OECD reveal that use of inputs is lower in Nigeria than in other countries, and that policies to raise crop yields positively correlate with better food security conditions.

Eze (2020) examines the prices of food products and its implications for food security in Nigeria. Data for the study were analyzed using histogram and Laspyres index. The study show that food price inflation is caused by frequent hike in the prices of petroleum products coupled with poor performance of the agricultural sector. The study further revealed that it is the poverty syndrome occasioned by a lack of purchasing power coupled with food price inflation that renders the populace vulnerable to food insecurity.

Ajibola (2016) examines the impact of security on economic growth in Nigeria, making use of time series data that covered the period 1981 to 2014. Data on Real Gross Domestic Product was used to capture economic growth, while data on Total Expenditure on security was used to capture Security.

Adopting the technique of multiple regression, the study showed that 90% systematic variation in Real GDP during the period was caused by variation in the explanatory variables: total labour force, total expenditure on security, corruption perception index, poverty index, unemployment rate, inflation rate and gross fixed capital formation. The study further showed that security does not only contribute positively to economic growth in Nigeria.

3. Methodology

The study uses trend analysis and the descriptive statistics to examine the movement in the prices of selected food stuff in Nigeria. These tools are appropriately employed for the examination of the implication of upward changes in prices of selected foods resulting from insecurity challenges in Nigeria. Data for the study covers a period of five years from 2018 – 2022. The choice of 2018 – 2022 was informed by the need to cover pre covid-19 and post covid-19 pandemic period. Also data on selected food stuff for the study were available for 2018 – 2022 selected for this study.

Four major grain crops (maize, beans, rice and wheat) consumed in the Nigeria were selected in order to determine how fast or slow their prices have change post covid-19 pandemic era. In addition, movement in the prices of fast foods such as noodles, semovita, Garri, spaghetti, egg, and milk were also investigated. The variable used as proxy for insecurity is the failed state index prepared by Global Fund for Peace (2022). This measure of insecurity is one of the most universally acceptable measures of economic tension and animosity perpetrated by gunmen, hoodlums, assassins and terrorists (Audu, 2021). The index has twelve (12) components capturing different aspect of insecurity.

4. Results and Discussion

Trend Analysis of Selected Food Prices in Nigeria

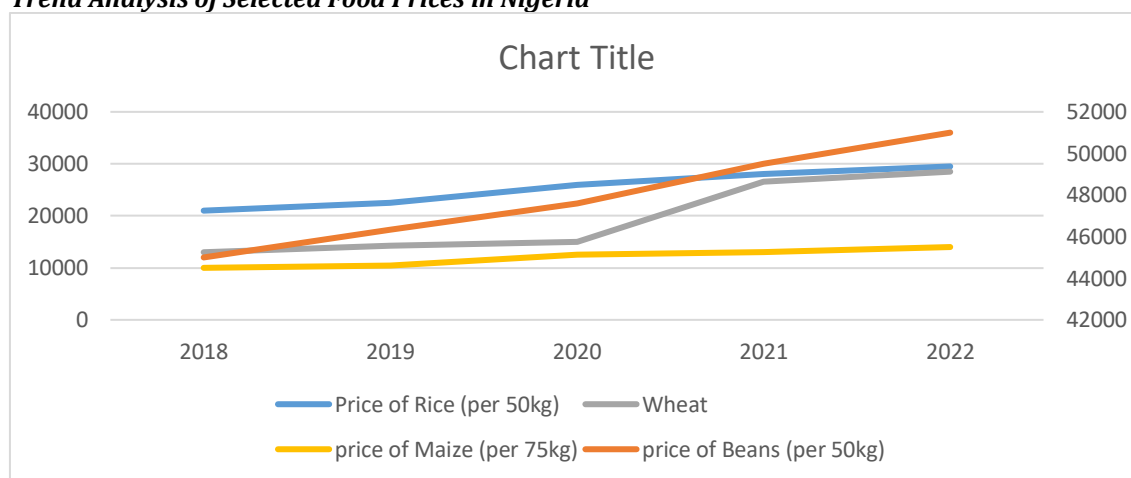


Figure 1

Prices of selected Grains in Nigeria from 2018 – 2022

Sources: Computed by the Researcher (2023)

The figure 1 shows an upward movement in the average prices of grains over a period of 5 years in Nigeria. Over this period (2018 – 2022), the average prices of rice and beans stood at ₦21000 and ₦4500 respectively in 2018, but increased to ₦29,500 and ₦51000 respectively in 2022. This is about 40.5 per cent and 13.3 per cent increase in average prices of rice and beans respectively within a period of five years. Similarly, the average prices of Wheat and Maize stood at ₦13000 and ₦10000 respectively in 2018, but increased to ₦28,500 and ₦14000 respectively in 2022. This is about 119.2 per cent and 40.0 per cent increase in average prices of wheat and maize respectively within a period of five years.

What is evident from the result is that, over a period of 5 years, Nigeria markets had experienced more than 100 per cent increase in the average price of wheat and sharp increases in the average prices of rice and maize than the average price of beans. The sharp increase in the prices could be attributed to disruption in crop supply chain, induced by the activities of kidnapping and banditry, leading to drastic fall in the volume of production of grain crops in the country. For example, among the thirteen States that produced Wheat in Nigeria, Northern region States such as Kano, Taraba and Plateau (in the northern axis) had, over the years, suffered frequent attacked by the “Boko Haram” insurgency and banditry.

The famers in the northern region had also suffered destruction in their farms by the Fulani herdsmen. This is similar to the experience of other farmers in Kogi, Abuja, Kaduna, and Adamawa where rice is produced in commercial quantity and in Zamfara, Bauchi and Sokoto where Beans is produced in large quantity. Furthermore, farmers in Cross River, one of the Wheat producing State in the south-south region of Nigeria had also suffered frequent attack by hoodlums, unknown gunmen and kidnappers. These factors had triggered the state of insecurity in the country. Hence, farmers in Nigeria were forced to abandon their farms leading to shortage in the supply of food crops and subsequent hike in the prices.

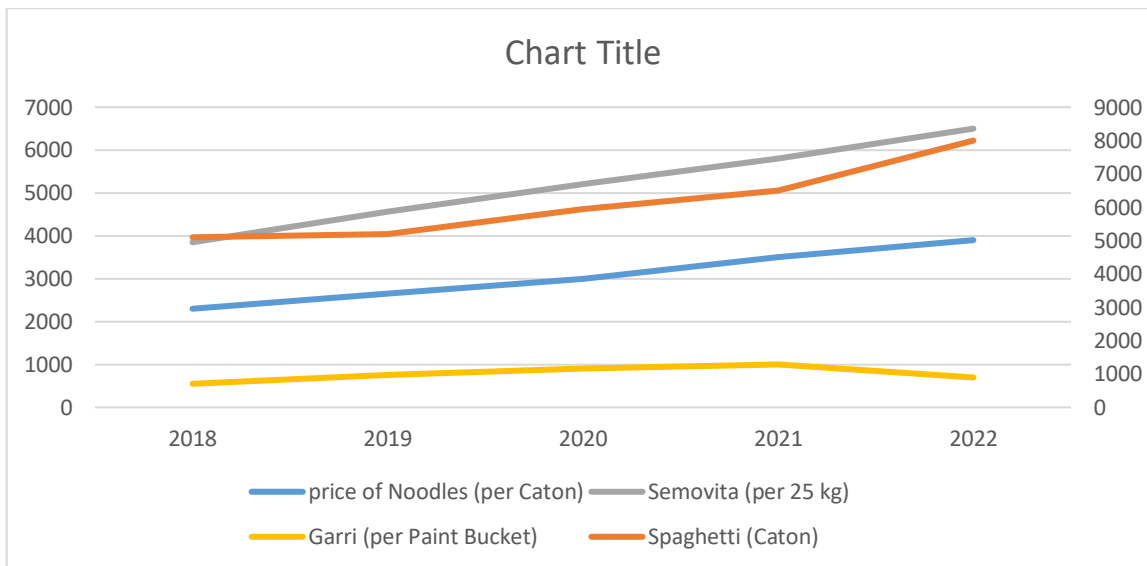


Figure 2
Prices of selected Fast foods in Nigeria from 2018 - 2022
Sources: Field Survey by Researcher (October, 2022)

The figure 2 shows an upward movement in the average prices of noodles, spaghetti, semovita and garri over a period of 5 years in Nigeria. Over this period (2018 - 2022), the average prices of noodles and spaghetti stood at ₦2300 and ₦5100 respectively in 2018, but increased to ₦3900 and ₦8000 respectively in 2022. This is about 69.5 per cent and 56.9 per cent increase in average prices of noodles and spaghetti respectively within a period of five years. Similarly, the average prices of semovita and garri stood at ₦3850 and ₦550 respectively in 2018 but increased to ₦6500 and ₦700 respectively in 2022. This is about 68.8 per cent and 27.3 per cent increase in average prices of noodles and spaghetti respectively within a period of five years. The increased in the price of noodles, semovita and spaghetti is attributable to shortage of wheat, a very important row material for production of noodles, semovita and spaghetti in Nigeria. The kidnappers’ invasion of famers continues to play havoc on wheat prices and the products it can produce.

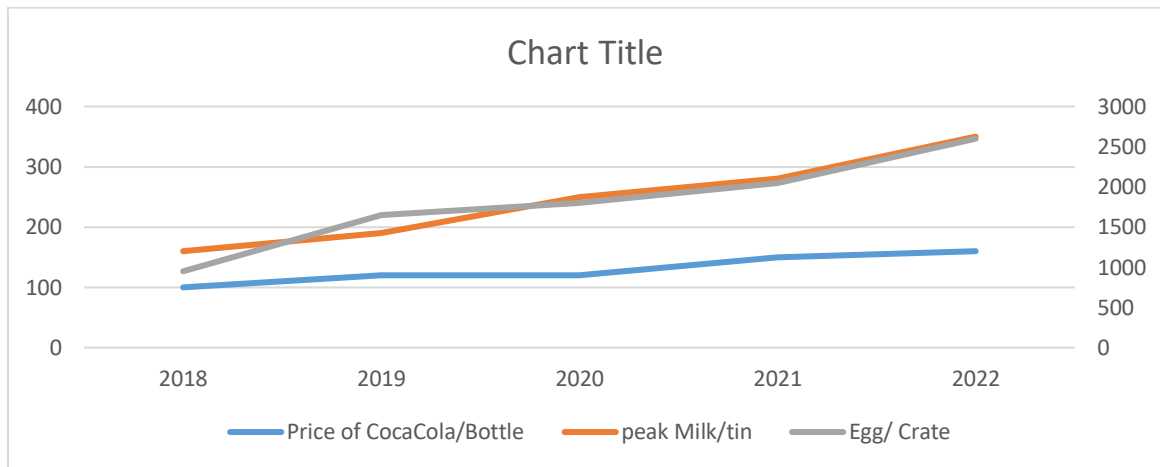


Figure 3
Prices of CocaCola, Milk and Egg in Nigeria from 2018 – 2022
Sources: Field Survey by Researcher (October, 2022)

The figure 3 shows an upward movement in the average prices of *CocaCola, Milk and Egg* over a period of 5 years in Nigeria. Over this period (2018 – 2022), the average prices of cocacola, milk and egg stood at ₦100, ₦160 and ₦950 respectively in 2018, but increased to ₦160, ₦350 and ₦2600 respectively in 2022. This is about 60.0 per cent, 11.9 per cent and 173.7 per cent increase in average prices cocacola, milk and egg respectively within a period of five years. Market survey attributed the rise to foreign exchange rate and insecurity that has affected transportation of the product form production points to the market.

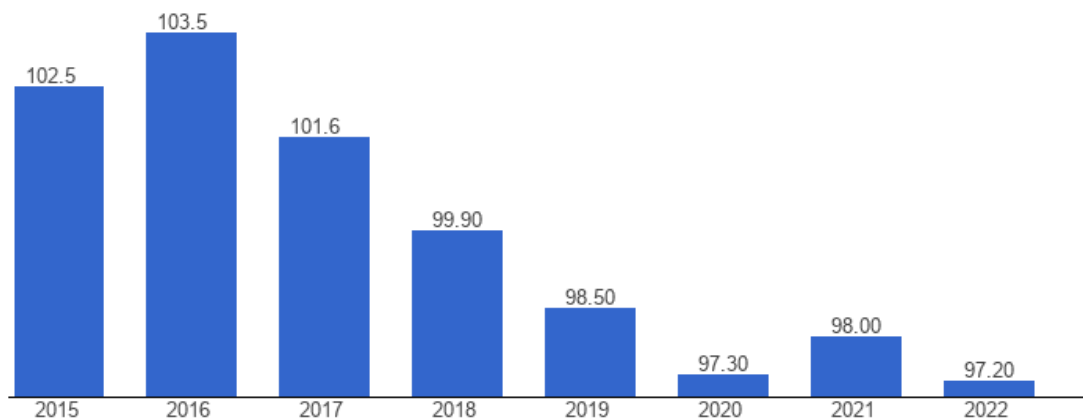


Figure 4
Failed state index of insecurity from 2015 – 2022
Sources: Adopted from Global Fund for Peace (2022).

Figure 4 shows the index of Insecurity in Nigeria using the fragile state index composed by Global Fund for Peace (2022). The Fragile States Index measures the vulnerability in insecurity and other conflict related situations in a country. The index comprises twelve conflict risk indicators that are used to measure the condition of a state at a given moment such indicators include security apparatus, factionalized elites, and group grievance. The higher the value of the index, the more "fragile" the country is. The 2022 report on Figure 4 shows that, for a period of eight years (2015 -2022), the

index only drops by 5.3% (102.5 – 97.2). What the report reveals is that not much progress has been made in the effort to remedy insecurity and political and socio-economic conditions that have been dragging the country down the slope.

With the Boko Haram devastation of the North-east, wanton kidnapping and armed robbery, the rampage of violent herdsmen in most part of the Middle-Belt as well as separatist agitations in some parts of the country, Nigeria has fallen so badly short of the standards set for the various political indicators. It is clear that the Nigerian state is losing the dominance of the machinery of violence to non-state actors. The multiplier effect of these scenarios is the current hike in food price inflation in the country.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

Findings from the analyses suggests that insecurity is a major reason for hike in food price inflation in Nigeria. The failure to protect the people is put squarely at the doorsteps of the federal government that has lost the capacity to rein in sundry cartels of gunmen who now terrorized several communities across the country, particularly in the North.

Furthermore, the prevailing hike in food prices was worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic and this has constrained the capacity of both the state and individuals so much that necessities of life, including food, medicare and shelter have gone far beyond the reach of most Nigerians. The conflicts are widening, and agitations are increasing by the day. Therefore, the study urges the federal government to take the lead in instituting the appropriate social policies that would engender a regime of justice, a major requirement for the peace and security. The government could start with the restructuring process. It will resolve a lot of the pressures in the country.

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