

PRIVATIZATION OF SECURITY SERVICES IN NIGERIA: THE PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT: *The escalating insecurity in Nigeria has prompted the exploration of privatized security services as a viable alternative to complement State (nation's) security forces overwhelmed by challenges such as terrorism, armed banditry, and organized crime. The objective of this research is to examine the psychological implications associated with the privatization of security services in Nigeria, focusing on the implications for both security personnel and the broader society. The research is anchored on the General Strain Theory by Agnew (1985). While privatized security services provide specialized solutions to fill gaps created by underfunded State agencies, they also raise important concerns regarding the mental wellbeing of security personnel, including stress, emotional exhaustion, and job dissatisfaction due to hazardous working conditions. Moreover, the growing reliance on private security firms has led to certain psychosocial implications, such as erosion of trust in State institutions and the creation of a two-tiered security system that exacerbates existing social inequalities. This research, using a non-empirical approach, draws on existing literature and personal observations to analyse the psychological implications of privatized security. The research also proposes the need for policies that promote the wellbeing of security providers, equitable and accountable security systems. The findings contribute to the discourse on security privatization, governance, and the psychosocial implications. This offers insights into the challenges, risks and benefits associated with this growing trend in Nigeria. It is therefore recommended that governments must strengthen public security systems to reduce overreliance on privatized security services.*

KEYWORDS: Privatization, Private Security Services, Nigeria, Psychosocial Implications

INTRODUCTION

The escalating insecurity in Nigeria has become a pressing issue, prompting the exploration of alternative security measures to complement the traditional role of State (nation's) security forces. Over the past few decades, the nation has faced manifold security challenges, including terrorism, armed banditry, kidnapping, communal conflicts, and organized crime. These challenges have overwhelmed public law enforcement agencies, such as the Nigerian Police Force and other government security apparatus, which are plagued by inadequate funding, poor training, lack of manpower, and systemic inefficiencies (Adebayo, 2020; Onyekachi, 2022).

In response to these limitations, the privatization of security services has emerged as a viable alternative. This process involves outsourcing security responsibilities to private entities that provide specialized security solutions to individuals, organizations, and communities.

Privatization of security services can be defined as the delegation of security functions from government-controlled agencies to privately owned organizations that deliver tailored and professional security solutions to individuals, organizations, and communities (Adeyemi, 2021). This transfer of responsibility is driven by increasing demands for safety and protection in the face of rising crime, terrorism, and social unrest. Private security entities provide specialized services such as manned guarding,

technological surveillance, asset protection, and crisis response.

The delegation of these functions allows for a more market-oriented approach to security provision, filling operational gaps caused by the overstretched capacity of state institutions and addressing specific client needs with enhanced efficiency (Adeyemi, 2021).

Globally, the privatization of security is rooted in neoliberal principles that advocate for the reduction of state intervention and the transfer of certain public responsibilities to private entities to enhance efficiency and effectiveness (Ogunrotifa & Olalekan, 2021). In Nigeria, private security firms have proliferated, offering flexible, rapid, and tailored security solutions to fill the gaps created by the shortcomings of state security agencies. This trend has been driven by rising crime rates, increasing insecurity, and public distrust in the government's ability to provide adequate protection. The privatized security sector now plays a pivotal role in safeguarding individuals, businesses, and properties, particularly in urban centres and regions most affected by violence and instability (Okechukwu, 2022).

However, the privatization of security raises important theoretical and societal questions, particularly regarding its psychological implications. Private security personnel often operate under extreme conditions, including long working hours, constant exposure to danger, low wages, and inadequate welfare support. These factors contribute to significant psychological stress, emotional exhaustion, and job dissatisfaction (Adeyemi, 2021; Ibrahim, 2023). Unlike public law enforcement officers, private security personnel are often excluded from structured psychological interventions or mental health support systems, exacerbating their vulnerability to burnout, anxiety, and mental fatigue (Okechukwu, 2022).

On a broader societal level, the privatization of security services introduces a range of psychological concerns that extend beyond security personnel to include the general public. The growing reliance on private security firms can erode trust in the state's capacity to fulfil its constitutional duty of ensuring the safety

and security of its citizens. This perceived abdication of responsibility may heighten public fear, insecurity, and feelings of vulnerability (Uche & Amadi, 2022). Furthermore, privatized security services, in some cases, blur the lines between legitimate security provision and informal or unregulated vigilante operations, leading to ethical concerns, lack of accountability, and potential human rights violations (Ezeani, 2023). These issues can deepen public mistrust, particularly in contexts where private security providers are seen as profit-driven entities rather than public servants committed to collective safety.

From a theoretical standpoint, the privatization of security raises questions about power dynamics, governance, and equity. Scholars have argued that the reliance on private security disproportionately benefits the wealthy, who can afford tailored protection services, while leaving marginalized and economically disadvantaged populations more vulnerable to insecurity (Adebayo, 2020; Ogunrotifa & Olalekan, 2021). This creates a two-tiered security system that undermines the principle of collective security and exacerbates existing inequalities within society.

Given these theoretical underpinnings, this study aims to critically examine the psychological challenges associated with the privatization of security services in Nigeria. By exploring the lived realities of private security personnel and analysing the societal implications, this research seeks to contribute to the ongoing discourse on security privatization, governance, and its psychological dimensions. The study adopts a non-empirical approach, relying on existing literature, theoretical frameworks, and secondary data to provide a comprehensive analysis of the psychological effects of privatized security on both security providers and the wider society. Through this lens, the review highlights the need for policies and interventions that address the psychological wellbeing of private security personnel and promote equitable and accountable security systems for all.

Statement of the Problem

The escalating insecurity in Nigeria, characterized by terrorism, armed banditry, and

organized crime, has overwhelmed the nation's security forces, necessitating the exploration of privatized security services as a complementary solution. However, while privatized security services address gaps created by underfunded State agencies, they pose significant psychosocial challenges. Security personnel employed by private firms face mental health risks such as stress, emotional exhaustion, and job dissatisfaction due to hazardous working conditions. Furthermore, the increasing reliance on private security firms raises psychosocial concerns, including the erosion of trust in State institutions and the exacerbation of social inequalities through a two-tiered security system. These issues underscore the urgent need to address the psychosocial implications of privatized security services in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study includes to:

1. Ascertain the psychosocial implications of the privatization of security services in Nigeria.
2. Examine policies that promote the wellbeing of private security personnel in Nigeria.
3. Contribute to the discourse on security privatization, governance, and its psychosocial implications in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Framework

General Strain Theory (Agnew, 1985):

General strain theory, propounded by Agnew (1985), provides a useful framework for understanding the psychological challenges faced by private security personnel and the broader societal implications of privatized security services. The theory posits that strain generates negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, and depression, which may compel individuals to adopt various coping mechanisms, including delinquent or maladaptive behaviours. In the context of private security services, these strains are evident among both security personnel and society at large.

For private security personnel, strain arises from multiple factors. The failure to achieve positively valued goals, such as career

advancement, recognition, and adequate remuneration, is a primary source of strain. Security guards often endure low wages, long working hours, and harsh working conditions, which prevent them from attaining financial stability or professional fulfilment. Additionally, the removal of positively valued stimuli, such as access to proper welfare systems, mental health support, and job satisfaction, contributes to feelings of hopelessness and emotional exhaustion. Lastly, the presentation of negatively valued stimuli, including threats of physical harm, dangerous work environments, and societal stigma associated with their profession, intensifies their psychological burden.

According to general strain theory, the strains faced by private security personnel can lead to negative emotions, such as anger, resentment, and anxiety. For instance, security guards may experience anger when they perceive their working conditions and compensation as unjust, particularly compared to the risks they face daily. This anger can manifest in behavioural adaptations, such as increased aggression, interpersonal conflicts, and poor job performance. Similarly, feelings of anxiety and depression may arise when personnel blame themselves for their inability to escape stressful working conditions or provide adequate security. Such emotions may lead to withdrawal, emotional numbness, and mental health deterioration.

On a societal level, the privatization of security services introduces its own psychological challenges. The failure of state security institutions to ensure adequate protection represents a significant strain on citizens, fostering widespread fear, distrust, and insecurity. Agnew's theory highlights that when individuals perceive their adversity as unjust—for example, feeling abandoned by the government—they may develop anger and resentment toward the state. This anger can fuel disillusionment with public institutions and generate retaliatory attitudes, contributing to societal polarization and unrest. Moreover, the reliance on private security services may exacerbate social inequalities, as access to protection becomes dependent on wealth and

status, further straining community trust and cohesion.

The negative emotions triggered by privatization necessitate coping responses. Agnew identifies coping strategies as behavioural, cognitive, or emotional, though not all responses are productive. For security personnel, behavioural adaptations may include absenteeism, job turnover, or substance abuse as a form of escape. For society, cognitive coping may involve rationalizing the perceived failure of state security, while emotional responses may include heightened anxiety, distrust of authority, or reliance on self-help measures such as vigilante actions.

Agnew's (1985) emphasis on anger as a key mediating factor is particularly relevant in understanding the impact of privatized security. For instance, anger "increases the individual's level of felt injury, creates a desire for retaliation/vengeance, energizes the individual for action, and lowers inhibitions" (Agnew, 1992). Security guards who feel exploited or unfairly treated may express anger through interpersonal violence or other destructive behaviours. Similarly, citizens who feel abandoned by the state may adopt anti-establishment attitudes, contributing to social unrest.

The application of general strain theory suggests that individuals experiencing strain are more likely to respond maladaptively when they lack adequate coping resources, such as mental health support, social safety nets, and job satisfaction. Private security personnel, who often operate under resource-constrained environments, are at a higher risk of maladaptive coping due to low social control and limited institutional support. Additionally, societal strain exacerbates when individuals perceive that the costs of alternative coping strategies, such as protesting or engaging in retaliatory actions, are low.

Conceptual Review

Psycho-History of Private Security Services in Nigeria

Historically, security provision in Nigeria was predominantly the responsibility of the government through the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) and other state security agencies,

such as the Nigerian Army, Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and Department of State Services (DSS). These public agencies were constitutionally mandated to ensure national security, maintain law and order, and protect lives and property. The NPF, in particular, was entrusted with the core function of law enforcement, ensuring peace and security within Nigerian communities.

The military and other paramilitary agencies also played crucial roles, especially during times of national crises, political instability, or insurgency. However, over the years, systemic challenges such as poor funding, inadequate personnel, lack of modern equipment, corruption, and bureaucratic inefficiencies have significantly hampered the effectiveness of public security agencies in Nigeria (Okechukwu, 2022). These challenges have contributed to a steady decline in the capacity of public institutions to provide comprehensive security, leading to widespread insecurity.

The Nigerian Police Force, which remains the primary law enforcement agency, is significantly understaffed and under-resourced. According to Ogunrotifa and Olalekan (2021), Nigeria has a police-to-citizen ratio of approximately 1:600, which falls far below the United Nations' recommended ratio of 1:450. This disparity is compounded by the fact that the police are often overwhelmed by the sheer volume of security demands, from urban crime to insurgency and terrorism. In addition to the staffing shortage, the police are plagued by inadequate training, outdated equipment, and poor working conditions, which have all contributed to diminished effectiveness and low morale among officers.

The lack of sufficient resources for modern policing tools, such as advanced surveillance technology, body cameras, and vehicles, has further crippled the police's ability to respond effectively to evolving threats. As a result, the police force has struggled to maintain law and order, particularly in rural and underserved regions, where lawlessness and criminal activities are often rampant. Consequently, crime rates have soared, particularly in urban areas, and public confidence

in the state's ability to ensure security has steadily declined.

Beyond the NPF, other public security agencies such as the Nigerian Army, NSCDC, and DSS have also faced their own set of challenges. The Nigerian Army, often deployed for internal security operations, is tasked with handling insurgencies, terrorism, and national Défense, which has, at times, drawn them away from routine law enforcement duties. The NSCDC, while mandated to protect critical infrastructure and provide civil Défense, has been criticized for limited operational reach and its struggle to effectively combat rising criminal activities. The DSS, which focuses on intelligence gathering and counterintelligence operations, has similarly faced resource constraints and limitations in operational effectiveness, especially in handling complex security issues like terrorism and insurgency (Adebayo, 2020).

This systemic failure of public agencies to provide sufficient and reliable security led to the gradual emergence of private security services in Nigeria as an alternative means of protecting lives and property. The rise of private security services can be traced to the late 20th century, particularly during periods of political instability and economic downturn. As crime rates increased and the state struggled to keep up with the growing demand for protection, individuals, businesses, and multinational corporations sought to safeguard their assets and personnel through private security arrangements. The inability of public agencies to provide adequate security, coupled with escalating insecurity, prompted citizens and organizations to look for more responsive and personalized security solutions.

The formalization of private security in Nigeria began in the mid-1980s when private security companies began to operate more formally following the enactment of the Private Guard Companies Act of 1986. This legislation established a legal framework for the operation of private security companies and placed them under the supervision of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC). The Act regulated the operations of private security firms, requiring them to obtain licenses and adhere to

operational standards, thereby legitimizing their role as supplementary security providers (Adeyemi, 2021). This legal framework marked a significant turning point in the development of the private security industry in Nigeria, providing structure and oversight to a sector that was previously unregulated.

The establishment of the Private Guard Companies Act led to the proliferation of private security firms throughout Nigeria, especially in urban centres where crime rates were highest. By the 1990s, private security services became a critical component of the Nigerian security landscape, providing a range of services, including manned guarding, surveillance, alarm systems, and asset protection. This expansion was further supported by the increasing demand for personalized security and the growing distrust in the public security apparatus. Over time, private security companies have increasingly complemented the efforts of public agencies, providing a responsive and dynamic security solution to individuals and organizations that seek immediate protection (Ibrahim, 2023).

The rise of private security services in Nigeria has not only addressed the gap left by public agencies but has also introduced a range of challenges and opportunities. While private security has helped to alleviate some of the pressure on public law enforcement agencies, it has also raised concerns about regulation, accountability, and the potential for exploitation. The sector's growth has underscored the need for comprehensive policies that address the integration of private and public security services, ensuring that private firms operate within a framework that promotes public safety and aligns with national security goals (Uche & Amadi, 2022).

The increasing prevalence of insecurity in Nigeria, characterized by armed robbery, kidnapping, terrorism, banditry, communal clashes, and violent extremism, has necessitated the rise of private security services as a critical supplement to public law enforcement agencies. Over the past two decades, Nigeria has witnessed a steady escalation in violent crimes and security threats, largely fuelled by socio-economic disparities, high levels of unemployment,

political instability, and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons across the country.

These challenges have significantly overwhelmed the capacity of public security institutions, such as the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) and other state security agencies, to effectively combat the rising wave of insecurity. The resulting vacuum has created a fertile ground for the emergence and expansion of private security services as an alternative mechanism to ensure safety and protection for individuals, organizations, and communities (Adebayo, 2020; Uche & Amadi, 2022).

Overview of Current Security Situations in Nigeria

In Nigeria, available data showed that crime and insecurity have been very high in the last ten years and the country is still experiencing a sharp rise in criminal activities of various dimensions (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2023). Salay (2015) asserted that cases of high-profile criminalities and politically motivated killings, ethno-religious violence, kidnapping for ransom and terrorism have recently worsened the crime problem in Nigeria. In addition, organized and non-organized crime and other vices, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, armed robberies, cross border crimes, money laundering, murder, rape, cybercrime, carjacking, and human trafficking have become serious security issues of concern to the government and security agencies.

In a press briefing on the state of security in Lagos on November 22, 2021, the then Lagos State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Umar Tamko, confirmed the rising cases of armed robbery attacks in the state. According to him 61-armed robbery cases were reported in 2021 as against 48 in 2010. Armed robbers killed 164 persons in 2021, as against 124 in 2020. In the same period under review, 319 persons were murdered in 2021 as against 204 in 2020. The Police Commissioner also affirmed that between September 2017 and September, 2021 a total of 124 Police Officers were killed by armed robbers (Ugbodaga, 2021).

Similarly, in another press briefing on November 27, 2014, the immediate past Lagos State Commissioner of Police, Mr. Kayode

Aderanti, stated that between November 2023 and October 2024, 68 cases of armed robbery were recorded while 280 people were murdered. In the same period, 8 Policemen lost their lives to armed robbery operations (Olufowobi, 2024). On a daily basis, armed robbers, kidnappers, rapists, burglars and other criminals carry out their attacks on the public in daylight and at night with impunity, as if government law enforcement agents are non-existent. The state of insecurity in the country is manifested in increase in crime rate; the emergence and spread of politically motivated violence and assassinations; increased importation of arms and ammunition; an upsurge in ethnic, communal and religious conflicts; proliferation of ethnic and sectional militias; and the deteriorating standard of living of the people.

More so, between 2016 and 2024 about 8, 516 deaths were reported in 3,840 violent crimes cases. Armed robbery was reported to have contributed 50% of all death cases recorded (Ukoji & Okolie-Osemene, 2023). More so, in its 2023 report, National Bureau of Statistics stated that a total of 125,790 criminal cases were reported in Nigeria in 2022. It went on to state that Lagos State had about 45,384 (36.1%) cases as against 13,181(10.1%) cases reported in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja.

The statistics also show that property crime had about 65,397 followed by crime against person which accounted for about 45,554 cases. The South-West had the highest number of cases which was about 19,939 followed by South-South with about 8,877 cases while South-East had the least cases of about 3,540 cases (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). The implication is that Nigeria generally has a crime problem and government seemingly lacks the wherewithal to contain the menace. This background provides the basis for the emergence of private security companies to complement the efforts of the police in providing security for citizens.

Private security services in Nigeria refer to activities carried out by licensed private entities or firms that specialize in providing protection, surveillance, risk mitigation, and conflict management tailored to the specific needs of their clients. These services encompass a wide range of functions, including manned guarding, installation of security infrastructure

(such as CCTV and alarm systems), surveillance, escort services, asset protection, and risk assessment. By offering more flexible, responsive, and customized security solutions, private security firms have positioned themselves as key players in addressing the country's deepening security crisis (Ibrahim, 2023).

The proliferation of private security services can be directly linked to the limitations and inadequacies of Nigeria's public security system. The Nigerian Police Force, as the primary law enforcement body, is critically understaffed, poorly funded, and plagued by corruption and inefficiency. Reports indicate that Nigeria's police-to-population ratio remains far below global standards, with one officer for every 600 citizens, compared to the United Nations' recommended ratio of one officer for every 450 citizens (Ogunrotifa & Olalekan, 2021).

This deficiency has left vast areas of the country, particularly rural regions and economically marginalized communities, vulnerable to criminal activities and security breaches. Furthermore, public security agencies face chronic challenges, including outdated infrastructure, poor training, low morale, and a lack of modern technological tools necessary to combat organized crime and emerging security threats.

The rising demand for private security services in Nigeria is also fuelled by the increasing need for individuals and businesses to protect their assets, operations, and personnel in a highly volatile environment. Businesses operating in high-risk sectors, such as oil and gas, telecommunications, and finance, require sophisticated security solutions to mitigate risks associated with vandalism, sabotage, and violent attacks. Similarly, affluent individuals, expatriates, and high-ranking professionals rely on private security firms to safeguard their lives and properties in response to escalating threats such as kidnapping for ransom and targeted attacks (Adeyemi, 2021).

Moreover, the failure of the state to provide timely and adequate responses to security crises has further eroded public confidence in government security agencies, prompting citizens to seek alternative protection. Private security services, by contrast, are often perceived as more

efficient and proactive, offering immediate deployment, modern surveillance tools, and client-centred security solutions (Ibrahim, 2023). This has resulted in a significant shift in public perception, where private security is increasingly seen not just as a luxury for the elite but as a necessity for businesses and communities struggling with the growing wave of insecurity.

However, while private security services play a crucial role in addressing Nigeria's security challenges, their growth is not without concerns. Issues such as inadequate regulation, proliferation of unlicensed operators, and ethical dilemmas surrounding accountability and professionalism remain critical areas of concern. Private security firms, despite their effectiveness in some cases, often operate in a fragmented and poorly monitored environment, raising questions about their legitimacy and overall impact on national security frameworks (Uche & Amadi, 2022). Furthermore, the reliance on private security services highlights deeper structural issues within the Nigerian security apparatus, reflecting systemic state failure and unequal access to security for the economically disadvantaged.

The growth of private security services in Nigeria underscores both the severity of the country's security challenges and the limitations of public law enforcement agencies. Private security firms have become indispensable in safeguarding individuals, businesses, and communities, offering customized and technology-driven security solutions. However, their expansion also brings to the forefront critical issues surrounding regulation, professionalism, and equity in access to security. Addressing these concerns requires a holistic approach that strengthens public security institutions while ensuring that private security services are effectively regulated and integrated into the broader national security architecture (Adeyemi, 2021; Ibrahim, 2023).

The privatization of security services in Nigeria gained prominence in the late 20th century as a direct response to the escalating insecurity that plagued the country. The rapid urbanization, coupled with increasing crime rates, terrorism, kidnappings, and social unrest, necessitated a shift toward privatized security

solutions. The inability of public law enforcement agencies, particularly the Nigerian Police Force, to effectively address these growing security concerns led to the increasing demand for private security firms to fill the gap. In the face of dwindling public trust in the state's ability to maintain law and order, private security services emerged as a viable alternative to ensure the safety of individuals, businesses, and communities.

The formal establishment of private security services in Nigeria was made possible through regulatory measures, particularly the enactment of the Private Guard Companies Act of 1986. This legislation, under the supervision of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), laid the foundation for the operation of private security firms. The Act provided a legal framework that required private companies to obtain licenses to operate, thereby establishing standards for the sector and ensuring some level of oversight and regulation (Adeyemi, 2021). This development marked the beginning of the rapid expansion of the private security sector in Nigeria.

Some of the key services provided by private security firms in Nigeria include:

Manned Guarding Services: The deployment of trained personnel to secure residential, commercial, and industrial properties. This is one of the most common services provided by private security firms. Security guards are stationed at various locations to deter criminal activity, monitor premises, and respond to security breaches. This service is essential for both high-profile clients and everyday citizens who seek enhanced protection from the growing wave of criminal activities, such as armed robbery and burglary (Ogunrotifa & Olalekan, 2021).

Surveillance and Monitoring: Private security companies often use advanced technologies such as CCTV systems, motion detectors, alarm systems, and tracking devices to monitor properties and individuals. Surveillance services are increasingly essential in the digital age, where security threats may involve cybercrime, corporate espionage, and other sophisticated risks. These technologies allow for

constant monitoring, early detection of threats, and rapid response to emergencies, significantly reducing the likelihood of criminal activity going undetected (Ibrahim, 2023).

Event Security: Event security is another major service offered by private security companies in Nigeria. With the increasing number of public and private gatherings, ranging from corporate events, weddings, and concerts to political rallies and sporting events, private security firms are tasked with maintaining order and ensuring the safety of attendees. This service involves crowd control, the screening of individuals for weapons or contraband, and the provision of security at event venues to prevent incidents of violence or disorder.

Asset Protection: Safeguarding both physical and financial assets is a critical service provided by private security firms. This includes protecting valuables such as cash, inventory, equipment, and intellectual property, as well as ensuring the security of transport vehicles carrying goods or personnel. As the number of armed robberies and hijackings increases, businesses and individuals alike rely on private security services to safeguard their assets from theft, damage, and other risks (Uche & Amadi, 2022). This service is especially important for multinational corporations operating in Nigeria, which may be targeted by criminal groups due to the high value of their assets.

Escort and Personal Protection: Another important service offered by private security firms is the protection of high-profile individuals, business executives, diplomats, and expatriates. The increasing number of kidnappings for ransom and targeted attacks on wealthy individuals has created a demand for personal protection services. Private security firms deploy highly trained bodyguards who provide 24/7 protection for individuals, accompanying them during travel, meetings, and other high-risk activities. This service is essential for both domestic and foreign individuals operating in Nigeria's high-risk environments (Adeyemi, 2021).

In addition to these core services, private security firms in Nigeria are also involved in more specialized areas such as risk assessment, crisis management, and intelligence gathering.

As the threat landscape evolves, private security companies are continuously adapting their services to meet the ever-changing security needs of their clients. This adaptability, along with the growing availability of technology-driven security solutions, has contributed to the increasing reliance on private security firms as critical partners in maintaining public safety. While these services play a vital role in supplementing public law enforcement, they also raise important questions regarding regulation, accountability, and the potential for inequality in access to security based on wealth (Ezeani, 2023).

Drivers of the Growth of Private Security Services

The growth of private security services in Nigeria can be attributed to a variety of interconnected factors that have collectively driven the sector's rapid expansion. These drivers highlight the gaps in public security provision and underscore the increasing demand for private security services to address complex security challenges in the country.

Below are some of the key drivers:

Rising Insecurity: The escalation of violent crimes in Nigeria, including kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, insurgency, terrorism, and communal clashes, has made security a paramount concern for individuals, businesses, and communities. In particular, the proliferation of kidnapping for ransom has instilled widespread fear, particularly in regions like the South-East and North-Central, where this crime has reached alarming levels (Uche & Amadi, 2022). As the scope and intensity of these threats grow, public security agencies, notably the Nigerian Police Force, have struggled to respond promptly and effectively.

This has created a gap in protection, which private security firms have increasingly filled. These firms are seen as offering immediate and adaptable solutions that can swiftly address specific security needs, such as manned guarding, surveillance, and personal protection (Adeyemi, 2021). In response to these threats, private security services have become essential for ensuring the safety of both individuals and businesses in high-risk areas.

Weak Public Security Institutions:

Despite efforts to enhance the capacity of the Nigerian Police Force, there remain significant challenges in the country's public security infrastructure. The police are often critically understaffed, with the police-to-citizen ratio in Nigeria falling far below international standards (Ogunrotifa & Olalekan, 2021). Moreover, systemic issues such as corruption, inadequate training, limited access to modern equipment, and low morale among officers further hamper the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies.

These deficiencies have contributed to a lack of public confidence in the state's ability to guarantee safety and maintain law and order. As a result, individuals and businesses have increasingly turned to private security firms for reliable and proactive protection. Private security services offer a level of professionalism, expertise, and responsiveness that is often perceived as lacking in public security agencies, making them a preferred choice for many (Adebayo, 2020).

Urbanization and Economic Growth:

Nigeria's rapid urbanization and industrial growth have contributed significantly to the rising demand for private security services. Major urban centres such as Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, and Kano have seen population booms, with an increasing concentration of both individuals and businesses in urban areas. This urban expansion has led to heightened competition for resources and, consequently, an increase in crimes such as armed robbery and residential burglaries (Ibrahim, 2023).

Moreover, economic growth, particularly in sectors like real estate, manufacturing, and retail, has led to the emergence of high-net-worth individuals and businesses with valuable assets that require safeguarding. The protection of corporate assets, real estate, and financial resources has become a top priority. In response, private security companies have developed tailored services to meet the diverse security needs of businesses and affluent individuals, including risk assessment, asset protection, and surveillance (Okechukwu, 2022).

Technological Advances: The advent of new technologies has revolutionized the private security sector in Nigeria. Surveillance

technologies, such as CCTV cameras, biometric access control systems, motion sensors, and alarm systems, have made it easier for security companies to monitor and protect properties and individuals in real-time (Ibrahim, 2023). Additionally, advancements in artificial intelligence (AI) and data analytics have enabled private security firms to detect and respond to threats more efficiently.

For example, AI-powered surveillance systems can now identify suspicious behaviour and alert security personnel before an incident occurs, significantly reducing response times. This integration of cutting-edge technology has made private security services more attractive to businesses and individuals seeking reliable, modern solutions to their security challenges. As technology continues to evolve, the scope and capabilities of private security services will likely expand, further solidifying their role in Nigeria's security landscape.

Globalization: As Nigeria's economy becomes increasingly integrated into the global market, the presence of multinational corporations, particularly in sectors like oil and gas, telecommunications, banking, and finance, has spurred the demand for private security services. These companies, often dealing with high-value assets and operating in high-risk areas, require robust security to protect both their personnel and infrastructure from potential threats (Okechukwu, 2022). In particular, the oil and gas sector, which is critical to Nigeria's economy, faces heightened security risks due to attacks on oil pipelines, oil theft, and the presence of militant groups in the Niger Delta region.

Similarly, foreign businesses operating in urban areas must contend with the potential risks of urban crime, social unrest, and terrorism. To mitigate these risks, multinational companies often engage private security firms that offer comprehensive security packages, including close protection for executives, asset protection, and surveillance systems to safeguard critical infrastructure (Adeyemi, 2021).

Together, these factors have converged to create a thriving private security sector in Nigeria. The growing reliance on private security firms reflects both the increasing inadequacy of public security institutions and the evolving

nature of security threats. As the demand for security services continues to grow, the private security sector in Nigeria is poised to expand, playing a crucial role in supplementing public law enforcement and addressing the nation's diverse and complex security challenges. However, as the sector grows, so too does the need for regulatory frameworks to ensure professionalism, accountability, and effective service delivery.

Challenges in Private Security Service Delivery

While private security services in Nigeria play an essential role in addressing gaps in the nation's security infrastructure, several challenges hinder the effectiveness and sustainability of these services. These challenges range from regulatory weaknesses to concerns about the welfare of security personnel, and they can significantly impact the quality-of-service delivery. The key challenges faced by private security firms in Nigeria include:

Regulatory Weakness: The regulatory framework for private security services in Nigeria is overseen by the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), which is responsible for licensing and supervising private security firms. However, the NSCDC has faced significant challenges in effectively enforcing its regulatory mandate. Limited enforcement capacity, inadequate resources, and lack of manpower have allowed many unregistered and unprofessional operators to flourish in the private security sector (Ezeani, 2023).

These unregistered firms often operate outside the legal framework, providing substandard services and engaging in unethical practices that compromise the integrity of the industry. Moreover, the lack of stringent regulations regarding the recruitment, training, and conduct of security personnel has led to the proliferation of poorly trained staff who are ill-equipped to handle the complex security challenges they face. Without stronger regulatory oversight and enforcement mechanisms, these issues are likely to persist, undermining public trust in private security services.

Poor Working Conditions: One of the most pressing issues within the private security

sector in Nigeria is the poor working conditions of security personnel. Many private security guards work long, gruelling hours, often for low wages, without adequate compensation or welfare support (Adeyemi, 2021). This lack of financial incentives, coupled with a lack of access to healthcare, pensions, and other basic benefits, leads to high levels of stress, burnout, and job dissatisfaction among security personnel.

The nature of security work, which is physically demanding and emotionally taxing, can also take a toll on workers' mental health. The absence of professional development opportunities and ongoing training further contributes to employee dissatisfaction, as guards often feel unprepared to handle the increasingly sophisticated security challenges they face. These poor working conditions negatively impact the quality-of-service delivery, as demotivated personnel may lack the drive and expertise to respond to security threats effectively.

Lack of Public Trust: Despite the growth of the private security sector, there remains a significant lack of public trust in these services. Many Nigerians view the rise of private security firms as indicative of a systemic failure of the state to adequately protect its citizens (Uche & Amadi, 2022). In a country where public security agencies like the Nigerian Police Force are constitutionally mandated to ensure law and order, the need for private security services is often perceived as a reflection of the government's inability to fulfil its primary responsibility.

This perception has contributed to scepticism regarding the legitimacy and effectiveness of private security firms. Moreover, there are concerns that the growing reliance on private security could undermine public confidence in state institutions, further eroding trust in the government's ability to provide safety and security. In some cases, citizens may also perceive private security services as exclusive to wealthy individuals and businesses, reinforcing the divide between the rich and the poor and exacerbating inequality in security provision.

Ethical and Accountability Issues: Another significant challenge faced by private security firms in Nigeria is the prevalence of ethical and accountability issues. Some private

security companies have been accused of engaging in unprofessional conduct, including human rights abuses, extortion, and involvement in illegal activities. Reports of security personnel using excessive force, engaging in corrupt practices, and even colluding with criminal elements have emerged over the years, undermining the credibility of the sector (Uche & Amadi, 2022).

These ethical violations not only harm individuals but also damage the reputation of the entire industry, making it more difficult for law-abiding firms to establish trust with clients and the general public. Additionally, the lack of a robust accountability framework means that many of these violations go unpunished, further eroding confidence in the industry. Without proper oversight and enforcement of ethical standards, these problems will persist, potentially harming the long-term sustainability of the private security sector in Nigeria.

Psychological Implications

The expansion of private security services in Nigeria has introduced significant psychological challenges for both the personnel involved and the wider society. These challenges stem from the stressful nature of security work, the emotional toll of working in high-risk environments, and the broader societal consequences of privatized security provision. The psychological implications can manifest in various forms, including burnout, stress, anxiety, social distrust, and a sense of insecurity among citizens.

Psychological Strain on Security Personnel: Private security guards in Nigeria often operate in high-pressure environments, where they are required to be vigilant and responsive to potential threats at all times. Working in dangerous conditions, such as monitoring high-risk areas prone to armed robbery or terrorist attacks, can result in heightened stress levels (Animasahun, 2021). Many security personnel work long hours, sometimes with little time for rest or recuperation, which further exacerbates the psychological toll of the job. This prolonged exposure to high-stress situations, coupled with the lack of mental health support, can contribute

to chronic anxiety, depression, and emotional exhaustion among security guards.

Moreover, the low pay, lack of job security, and poor working conditions add to the psychological burden, leaving many security workers feeling undervalued and demoralized. The absence of proper psychological care and counselling services for private security personnel means that these individuals often struggle to cope with the emotional and psychological demands of their roles. Over time, this can lead to burnout, which diminishes their ability to perform effectively, thereby compromising the quality of service delivered to clients (Ogunleye, 2020).

The mental health challenges faced by security personnel can also affect their interpersonal relationships and their overall quality of life. As stress and anxiety build up, security workers may exhibit signs of irritability, aggression, and detachment from their families and communities, further exacerbating the psychological strain of their profession (Akinlabi, 2022). Additionally, the stigma associated with seeking mental health support in Nigeria can prevent many private security workers from accessing the help they need, making it more difficult to address their psychological wellbeing (Alabi, 2021).

Psychological Impact on Society: On a broader societal level, the growth of private security services in Nigeria reflects a deep-seated perception that the state has failed in its primary duty to protect its citizens (Chukwu, 2023). As more individuals, businesses, and communities turn to private security firms for protection, the reliance on privatized security can foster a sense of distrust and fear. Citizens may begin to view the state's inability to safeguard its citizens as a failure of governance, which can lead to feelings of alienation and insecurity (Okechukwu & Amadi, 2022).

The perception that the government is incapable of providing adequate security can generate a heightened sense of vulnerability within society. People may begin to question the legitimacy and effectiveness of public law enforcement agencies, particularly the Nigerian Police Force, which has struggled with understaffing, inadequate resources, and

corruption (Adebayo & Okechukwu, 2021). As a result, the public may feel increasingly isolated and uncertain about the safety of their communities, leading to widespread anxiety and fear (Ezeani, 2022).

The growing reliance on private security can also contribute to a sense of social division, particularly between wealthy individuals and the general public. Those who can afford private security services are better protected, while the rest of society is left to contend with an overstretched and ineffective public security system. This disparity can create feelings of resentment and frustration, further eroding trust in both private and public security systems (Nwachukwu & Idowu, 2022). The reliance on private security to fill the gaps left by public agencies can reinforce the idea that security is a commodity, rather than a fundamental right that should be accessible to all citizens.

Moreover, the increase in private security personnel across urban and rural areas may alter the way communities perceive safety and trust. The presence of armed guards at public and private events, residential areas, and commercial establishments can create a climate of heightened alertness, where individuals feel they must constantly be on guard against potential threats. This pervasive fear can lead to a decline in social interactions, community cohesion, and overall societal wellbeing, as people may become more suspicious and less trusting of one another (Akinlabi, 2022).

Impact on Social Norms and Trust: The proliferation of private security services also has implications for social norms and the overall social fabric. The increasing reliance on private security may inadvertently shift the responsibility for law enforcement away from the state, creating a situation where citizens feel that personal security is a matter of individual responsibility rather than collective wellbeing. This shift can diminish social cohesion, as people begin to retreat into more isolated, protected spaces, trusting only those who can afford private security or the services of private security firms (Adeyemi & Adebayo, 2020).

Furthermore, the presence of private security can alter the way communities interact with one another, with heightened fears of

criminal activity and a greater tendency to view others with suspicion. In communities where private security services are commonplace, individuals may feel a constant need to protect their belongings and themselves, reinforcing a culture of insecurity. Over time, this may erode the sense of collective safety and mutual responsibility that traditionally underpinned Nigerian communities (Ogunleye, 2021).

The psychological implications of private security services in Nigeria are far-reaching, affecting both security personnel and society at large. For private security guards, the intense pressure of the job, coupled with poor working conditions and a lack of mental health support, can lead to significant emotional and psychological distress. At the societal level, the increasing reliance on private security reflects broader concerns about the state's ability to provide safety, contributing to a climate of fear, distrust, and social division.

Addressing these psychological challenges is essential for creating a more resilient, effective, and socially cohesive security framework in Nigeria. This includes improving mental health support for security personnel, strengthening the public's trust in the state's security apparatus, and fostering a sense of collective responsibility for safety within communities.

Legal Framework for the Emergence of Private Security Services

While there may not be a general consensus as to the definition of private security services (PSS), The services provided by private security companies towards enhancing security include "armed and unarmed guarding; patrols; escorts; transport of valuables and commercial goods; intelligence services; trained dogs; electronic monitoring; investigations; fortification of buildings; protection of works and infrastructure; protection against kidnapping; safety and self-defence training and marketing of weapons" (Anyanwu, 2022).

Anyanwu (2022) went on to say that these services draw a broad range of customers, including government and its agencies, private industries, corporate organizations, and a growing number of businessmen and individuals

seeking to ensure security of life and property. It must be emphasized that "the overriding services that private security companies provide is the prevention and control of crime aimed at protecting lives and property" (Anyanwu, 2022). It is very imperative to note that under CAP 367 Laws of the Federation of Nigeria (1990) the Private Guards Company Act, private security companies are prohibited from carrying gun in the execution of their functions.

The duties and functions of PSCs in Nigeria in addition to guarding public and private places include: joint police/PSC patrols; escort services particularly airport transit; rapid response; key point security; executive protection; security consulting; security surveys and risk assessments; electronic surveillance; audio intelligence services; alarm system installation; cash in transit movement; security awareness training; K-9 services (Dog handling); private investigations; protocol services; security driver (Chauffeur) services; crime analysis; static guards/custodial service; cleaning/environmental services; fraud examination; strategic planning; forensic analysis and expert or witness testimony in Court (Ekhomu, 2015).

Section 1 (1) of CAP 367 summarizes the functions of the PSCs as watching, guarding, patrolling, cash-in-transit protection and crime prevention. Thus, Ekhomu (2015) asserted that "essentially, PSCs have continued to contribute meaningfully to the economic development of Nigeria through their crime control and crime prevention activities. It is clear that the government expects PSCs to play a prominent role in Nigeria's socio-economic arrangement"

Private security officers are empowered under Section 12 of the Criminal Procedure Act, Laws of the Federation of Nigeria (1990) to arrest any person who commits any offence in his presence while Section 14 of the same Act requires that such arrest should be handed over to the police within a reasonable time (24 Hours). PSCs lack the legal capacity to investigate and prosecute criminal offenders in Nigeria.

However, Dempsey (2018) observed that private detectives and investigators are authorized to investigate criminal cases in the United States. PSCs in Nigeria do investigate criminal cases for their client's benefit, but they

can be integrated into the mainstream criminal investigation through appropriate legislation.

COMPARISON OF PRIVATE SECURITY SERVICES WITH PUBLIC SECURITY FORCES

Private security services and public security forces both play vital roles in ensuring the safety and security of individuals, businesses, and communities. However, they differ significantly in several key areas, including their mandates, structure, functioning, and the public's perception of their effectiveness.

Below is a comparison of these two security providers based on several relevant dimensions.

Mandate and Legal Authority

Private Security Services: Private security companies operate based on contractual agreements with their clients. Their mandate is typically to protect specific properties, assets, and individuals, such as businesses, residential buildings, or high-profile individuals. These firms are legally restricted in terms of the scope of their actions, as they do not have the power to arrest or use lethal force unless in self-defence. Their operations are regulated by national laws, such as the Private Guard Companies Act of 1986 in Nigeria, which sets out the legal framework for licensing and operations (Okechukwu, 2022).

Public Security Forces: Public security forces, such as the Nigerian Police Force or the military, are state-sponsored entities with a broad mandate to maintain public order, prevent crime, and protect citizens at large. They have the authority to make arrests, conduct investigations, and use force, including lethal force, when necessary. They operate under the rule of law and are accountable to the government and the public (Adebayo, 2021).

Scope of Services

Private Security Services: Private security services are primarily focused on specific, client-based needs. These services include manned guarding, surveillance and monitoring, risk assessments, event security, and personal protection for high-profile individuals. Their scope is usually limited to the parameters of a service contract and typically does not extend

to general crime prevention or law enforcement in the broader community (Adeyemi, 2021).

Public Security Forces: Public security forces have a much broader scope, encompassing general crime prevention, investigation of criminal activities, enforcement of law and order, and maintaining national security. They are responsible for responding to emergencies, upholding the rule of law, and ensuring public safety on a large scale, across neighbourhoods, cities, and even at a national level (Ogunleye, 2020).

Accountability and Oversight

Private Security Services: Private security firms are typically accountable to their clients and are regulated by national security bodies (such as the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps, NSCDC), which ensure that companies adhere to legal and operational standards. However, there is often less public scrutiny and transparency regarding the activities of private security firms, which can raise concerns over unethical practices or abuse of power (Uche & Amadi, 2022). Accountability is mainly tied to contractual obligations and regulatory compliance.

Public Security Forces: Public security forces are accountable to the government and the public. In democratic societies, they are subject to oversight by governmental agencies, such as the Police Service Commission in Nigeria. There are also mechanisms like internal affairs departments and independent review boards that ensure public security forces operate within the confines of the law. However, issues such as corruption, lack of accountability, and human rights abuses have been persistent challenges within public security institutions (Chukwu, 2023).

Training and Expertise

Private Security Services: Private security personnel are often trained in specific skills related to guarding, surveillance, and asset protection. While some private security companies may provide specialized training in advanced technology and security systems, many guards receive basic training focused on customer service, vigilance, and emergency response. However, training standards can vary

significantly between firms, leading to differences in professionalism and effectiveness (Animasahun, 2021).

Public Security Forces: Public security forces, on the other hand, undergo rigorous and extensive training that includes law enforcement techniques, criminal investigations, legal knowledge, physical fitness, and the use of force. Police officers, military personnel, and other law enforcement officers are trained to handle a variety of complex situations, including violent crimes, public disturbances, and national security threats. The training standards are generally more consistent, given the centralized structure of public security forces (Ezeani, 2022).

Response Time and Efficiency

Private Security Services: Private security firms are generally more flexible and can respond quickly to specific client needs. Their response times are often quicker in the case of security breaches within the areas they are hired to protect, as they are present on-site and constantly monitoring the premises. However, their resources may be limited, and their ability to respond to large-scale crises or crimes outside the scope of their contracts is restricted (Ogunleye, 2021).

Public Security Forces: Public security forces, particularly the police, are responsible for responding to incidents across the entire community, and their response times can vary based on location, availability of resources, and priority of the situation. While they are equipped to handle large-scale emergencies and complex criminal activities, delays in response times can occur, especially in under-resourced regions or during crises (Akinlabi, 2022).

Cost and Affordability

Private Security Services: The cost of private security services varies widely depending on the level of protection required, such as the use of advanced technology (e.g., CCTV, biometric systems) or specialized personnel for high-risk situations. These services can be costly, making them more accessible to wealthy individuals, corporations, and large institutions. Many private security firms offer tiered pricing plans based on the level of protection, but the overall costs tend

to be high compared to public security services (Okechukwu, 2022).

Public Security Forces: Public security services are funded by the government and are generally free to citizens, though individuals may still face indirect costs, such as taxes, that support the security infrastructure. Public security services are meant to serve everyone equally, regardless of wealth or status. However, the quality of services can vary based on the available budget, regional disparities, and political factors (Adebayo & Okechukwu, 2021).

Public Perception

Private Security Services: Public perception of private security services is mixed. On one hand, these services are often viewed as a reliable alternative to the public security system, particularly in areas where the police are under-resourced or ineffective. On the other hand, some citizens view private security firms with scepticism, questioning their legitimacy and accountability. The reliance on private security services can also signal a failure of public security systems (Nwachukwu & Idowu, 2022).

Public Security Forces: Public security forces often face criticism, particularly in contexts where there is corruption, inadequate resources, or human rights violations. Despite this, they are generally seen as the legitimate authority for maintaining law and order in society. Public confidence in the police may be influenced by recent experiences with law enforcement, political issues, or national security concerns (Chukwu, 2023).

FACTORS MILITATING AGAINST THE PERFORMANCE OF PRIVATE SECURITY COMPANIES

There are various factors which militate against the performance of private security companies in crime control in Nigeria. These include among others the following:

Prohibition from Carrying Firearms: One of the greatest obstacles facing the operations of private security company in Nigeria is the prohibition of the private security sector from carrying firearms. PSCs in Nigeria are prohibited from carrying firearms in their operations. This has resulted in the untimely death of many private security guards in Nigeria

(Ekhomu, 2015). It has also reduced the recognition and entry of PSCs in Nigeria into the international security market. The lack of legal framework for permission to carry firearms has made PSCs to rely dependently on the police in the execution of high-risk contracts requiring firearms protection. The legal framework in this regard needs to be re-considered.

In the United States it is revealed that most of these jobs (including government critical infrastructures or facilities) are outsourced to private securities to protect because private security companies are allowed to carry firearms (Strom et al., 2020). In South Africa, Uganda, Angola, United States and Europe, PSCs bear firearms and have been involved in international military operations, for example, in Iraq, over 100,000 private armed security personnel participated under the United State Défense, in Afghanistan over 65,000 private armed security personnel were contracted, in Liberia, Angola, Sierra Leone etc., unnumbered private armed security personnel were involved (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2015).

Public Awareness of PSCs' Role in the Society: PSCs are said to fill a gap left open by inadequate public police policing. The services they provide are only procured by individuals who can afford to pay for their services. Thus, it is not a protection which the ordinary man in the street benefits. The implication is that members of the public lack adequate knowledge of the duties they perform or even their role in the security architecture of the society.

This lack of public awareness of their role and functions places a smack on their importance in the society. Cozens (2021) argued that based on this backdrop, the effectiveness of private security companies is significantly limited to their area of jurisdiction or sphere of operation (Cozens, 2021). This means that the duties and roles of the private security companies are not clearly known by the general public and even to the police.

Mesko et al., (2014) in their study carried out in Slovenia found that members of the public have little knowledge of the works of private security companies. Furthermore, Inyang and Abraham (2014) in their study of Akwa Ibom state found that 75.3% of the public did not know

anything about PSCs and their crime control functions.

The effect is that the public have limited information about the existence, role, relevance and contribution of PSCs in the security arrangement in the country. This may be due mainly to poor media reportage of the existence, role and importance of PSCs in complementing the efforts of public police in crime control in the country. Media coverage and reports of PSC's participation in crime control in the country will enhance their acceptability, growth and contribution to national security policing as the public become more aware of their role in the country.

Lack of Training, Certification and Education: One other major challenge of private security companies in Nigeria is lack of adequate training of their staff (Abrahamsen & Williams, 2015; Macucci, 2018). There is a general believe that private security guards are poorly educated, school dropouts and indiscipline and lacking knowledge of the industrial security practice. It is important to know that the fact that someone is an ex-military, police or any of the government security outfits does not confer a pre-requisite knowledge to operate an industrial security company.

The training, knowledge, operational base/site and practice of public policing are entirely different from that of industrial security. Therefore, for anyone to venture into industrial security practice, there is need to blend the knowledge acquired from public police practice with the principles and practice to be acquired from industrial security training in order to be competently qualified professionally to establish and own a private security company (man guarding) in Nigeria. This is currently lacking in Nigeria due largely to government lackadaisical attitude towards the activities and practice of the private security sector.

Most private security companies are always in the habit of recruiting people as guards with very little or no training. Many of the private security guards only certify their guards of physical fitness as prerequisite for their recruitment without providing them with any kind of training. In cases where trainings are given, it is ad hoc and perhaps inadequate to

expose the guard to the actual job requirement. Aside from the above problems, an important issue which is a great concern to private security companies is the lack of a body responsible for the certification of private security operators (especially the directors and managers), which makes it possible for every Dick and Harry to float a PSC without proper pre-requisite knowledge and understanding of industrial security.

Plessis (2023) contended that certification would essentially comprise a process whereby private security companies submit an application to a certification body, showing that they are in compliance with the standards in the Code of Conduct. Those companies that fulfilled these requirements would be issued a certificate, which would act as a 'stamp of approval' that the private security outfit is tested, suitable and competent to render security services to the public. An auditing team could then periodically evaluate this certification to ensure they are being adhered to by PSCs. By only hiring such companies, the public; especially beneficiaries of PSC services are assured they have hired competent and capable hands to tackle their security related issues.

Lack of Funds and Poor Welfare: It is believed that the issue of funding is very critical for the functionality of private security companies. It is one of the areas that have encouraged unhealthy rivalry and competition amongst private security companies. This is because in an effort to keep afloat in the security market economy, some of the private security companies have reduced their market worth by accepting contracts requiring the payment of less than ₦10,000 or \$28.6 US dollar per month as guard's salary thereby depriving others of an expected potential profitable contract.

This is a confirmation of Ekhomu (2015) and Abrahamsen and Williams (2015), who observed that in spite of high cost of living, many security guards earn salaries as low as ₦6,000 or \$17.1 US dollar per month. This is not healthy for the growth of the private security sector. The result is that some of the security guards in such companies end up engaging in criminal activities in order to augment their pay. This has also resulted in the bad image associated with the

activities of private security companies, and most trending reason that majority of the public have great disdain and reservation in the participation of PSCs in crime control in the country.

Intra-agency and Inter-agency Squabbles: Aside from struggle for juicy contracts, private security companies also struggle for dominance in the security market economy. This has led to polarization within the private security sector. The situation is that there is no single association in Nigeria under which private security companies can voice their agitations for recognition.

Today, the private security company has such associations as: Society of Security Practitioners of Nigeria (SSPN), American Society for Industrial Security (ASIS – Nigerian branch), National Professional Security Association (APSA), Society and Safety Association of Nigeria (SSAN), Association of Industrial Security and Safety Organization of Nigeria (AISSON), Nigeria Institute of Industrial Security (NIIS), International Foundation for Protection Officers (IFPO) and many such others. This is fundamentally unhealthy for a private security sector that is struggling for national and international recognition and relevance in the global security market economy.

The effect is that the struggle within the private security sector has deprived them of their relevance and place in the national security policy. This is unlike the private security companies in the United States which have prominent role in the security policymaking of their country. More devastating to the growth of PSCs is the inter-agency conflict between PSCs and other government security agencies. There exists a competition between the Private Security and public law enforcement agencies which serve as a barrier against crime control (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2014).

Private security personnel on the other hand argue that public law enforcement officers have limited knowledge about the private security industry and so do not appreciate the important role they play in solving and preventing crime.

Lack of Synergy between PSCs and Government Agencies: PSCs and other government agencies like the Police and the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps

(NSCDC) are expected to have strong bond and inter-networking relationship, but this is not so. In South Africa, United States of America, United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia intelligence information, sharing and gathering of evidence forms the basis for PSCs and Police collaboration in crime control.

In addition, PSCs collaborate with the police in mapping out hotspots for crime in order to ensure effective crime control and prevention (Ruddell et al., 2020; Sotlar & Mesko, 2021). In Nigeria, PSCs and the police do not have a synergy of working cordially in crime control. This is because the Police see PSCs as uneducated, unskilled, and unprofessional. Thus, Abrahamsen and Williams (2019) noted that the collaboration between private security guards and the police was unstructured, and often inefficient and ineffective. On the other hand, the NSCDC are legally bound to supervise the activities of PSCs but instead both struggle for oil company contracts.

Gucia and Manning (2017), found in their study of Republic of Moldova that the regulating agency of PSCs was in constant competition with PSCs over guard job contracts. This means that NSCDC does not adequately regulate or monitor PSC operations. Kasali (2021) in his study confirmed this when he found that there was inadequate regulation of private security companies and expressed his fear that it might pose severe risk to subscribers because of the illegal activities of security guards working in unlicensed private security companies especially if the private security guards commit any crime. These can pose a serious operational challenge for PSCs and therefore affect their performance in crime control.

PSYCHOSOCIAL IMPLICATIONS ASSOCIATED WITH PRIVATIZATION OF SECURITY SERVICES

The privatization of security services has significant psychological implications for various stakeholders, including private security personnel, and the general public. The growing reliance on private security to fill gaps left by public security agencies requires robust examination.

The Psychosocial implications include:

Stress and Burnout among Private Security Personnel: Private security personnel are subjected to physically and mentally demanding work conditions, including long hours, low pay, and exposure to dangerous environments. Unlike public security forces, private guards often lack access to adequate resources, protective gear, and mental health support systems. This combination of factors culminates in significant stress, burnout, and psychological distress.

Workplace Stress: Security guards face constant pressure to remain vigilant, especially in high-risk environments, such as banks, estates, oil facilities, and events. The anticipation of violent incidents, robberies, or confrontations increases their psychological burden.

Emotional Exhaustion and Burnout: Long, gruelling shifts without adequate breaks and rest cycles often result in burnout, a condition characterized by emotional exhaustion, physical fatigue, and a reduced sense of accomplishment. Burnout can impair performance and exacerbate mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, and anger (Adeyemi, 2022).

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): Repeated exposure to violence, thefts, kidnappings, or near-death experiences can cause PTSD. Security guards in high-crime areas may experience flashbacks, hypervigilance, nightmares, and emotional numbness, all of which impact their mental wellbeing (Ogunleye, 2021).

Inadequate Training: Insufficient or improper training can leave security personnel unprepared for high-pressure situations, increasing self-doubt, anxiety, and the risk of psychological breakdowns during crises.

Fear and Anxiety among Citizens: The growing reliance on private security services reflects public concerns about state security agencies' inability to ensure safety. This reality exacerbates citizens' sense of vulnerability and fear, resulting in significant psychological distress.

Perceived Insecurity: The increasing visibility of private security guards, surveillance systems, and gated communities signals a heightened sense of danger, leading citizens to perceive their environment as unsafe. This

constant fear contributes to chronic anxiety and hypervigilance (Nwachukwu & Idowu, 2022).

Lack of Trust in Public Institutions: Privatization underscores systemic failures in public security institutions, such as the police and military. Citizens lose confidence in the state's ability to protect them, which creates feelings of helplessness, frustration, and distrust. Over time, this erodes the psychological sense of safety that citizens derive from strong state institutions (Chukwu, 2023).

Paranoia and Hypervigilance: The privatization of security often involves the use of visible measures such as armed guards and surveillance systems. While these measures aim to deter crime, they can create a culture of paranoia, where individuals feel constantly watched and threatened, even in otherwise safe areas.

Social Inequality and Psychological Exclusion: Privatized security services cater predominantly to affluent individuals, businesses, and communities that can afford additional protection. This creates a "two-tier" security system where wealthier populations enjoy greater safety, while poorer communities remain exposed to crime and violence. The psychological consequences of this inequality are profound:

Feelings of Marginalization: Individuals in underprivileged communities may feel neglected and excluded, as they lack access to adequate security. This exclusion reinforces feelings of hopelessness, frustration, and resentment toward both the state and wealthier groups (Adebayo & Okechukwu, 2021).

Learned Helplessness: The inability of marginalized groups to access reliable security fosters a sense of helplessness and despair. Over time, this learned helplessness discourages efforts to seek protection, as individuals internalize their vulnerability to crime.

Social Division and Distrust: The privatization of security exacerbates social division, creating an "us versus them" mentality between those who can afford private protection and those who cannot. This further weakens social cohesion and mutual trust, heightening societal tensions.

Diminished Trust and Legitimacy of State Institutions: Privatized security systems

challenge the legitimacy of public security institutions by highlighting their inefficiency and inability to fulfil their responsibilities. This loss of trust in the state has significant psychological consequences:

Cynicism and Distrust: Citizens may become cynical about government promises to improve security, leading to widespread feelings of distrust. This distrust extends beyond security agencies to other public institutions, creating systemic scepticism about the state's capacity to address societal needs (Chukwu, 2023).

Erosion of National Identity: The state's inability to fulfil its fundamental role of protecting citizens erodes the social contract, where individuals expect protection in exchange for their allegiance to the government. This failure undermines national pride and collective identity, fostering alienation and psychological detachment.

Disillusionment: For citizens, the constant need to "purchase" protection through private security services highlights systemic inequality and injustice. This disillusionment creates feelings of betrayal and deepens societal resentment.

Ethical and Moral Dilemmas for Private Security Guards: Private security personnel often encounter situations where their professional duties conflict with their moral values or ethical principles. These conflicts create significant internal tension and psychological strain:

Moral Distress: Guards may be required to enforce actions perceived as unjust, such as forcibly removing individuals from private properties or restricting access to resources. Such situations can evoke guilt, moral conflict, and emotional distress (Ezeani, 2022).

Role Ambiguity: Private security guards operate with limited legal authority compared to public law enforcement. This ambiguity creates anxiety, particularly when confronted with dangerous or legally ambiguous situations, such as detaining criminals or managing violent conflicts.

Psychological Isolation: Guards assigned to remote locations, night shifts, or solitary posts often experience prolonged isolation, contributing to loneliness, depression,

and reduced emotional resilience (Ogunleye, 2021).

Impact of Surveillance Culture on Mental Health: Privatized security services increasingly incorporate advanced surveillance technologies, including CCTV cameras, biometrics, and tracking systems. While these tools enhance security, they raise critical psychological concerns:

Loss of Privacy: The pervasive use of surveillance systems compromises individuals' sense of personal privacy, fostering feelings of discomfort, anxiety, and unease. Over time, the loss of privacy can lead to feelings of powerlessness and distrust in institutions (Uche & Amadi, 2022).

Paranoia and Stress: The awareness of constant surveillance can create paranoia, as individuals feel watched and scrutinized at all times. This "surveillance culture" undermines psychological wellbeing and creates stress, particularly in environments where individuals feel disproportionately monitored.

Psychological Impact on State Actors: The rise of private security services also impacts public security forces, such as police officers and military personnel. The privatization of security creates competition and undermines the legitimacy of state actors, leading to:

Reduced Morale: Public security officers may feel undervalued or overshadowed by private security providers, particularly when private guards receive better equipment, training, or compensation. This reduces job satisfaction and morale among public security personnel.

Job Insecurity: The growing reliance on privatized security may threaten public security jobs, leading to anxiety and uncertainty among state actors about their future roles.

Advantages of Privatization of Security Services in Nigeria

1. Privatized security services provide an additional layer of protection, especially in areas where state security forces are overstretched or under-resourced. This ensures greater coverage and faster response times to security needs.
2. Private security companies often specialize in specific areas such as

industrial protection, event security, or technological surveillance, offering tailored solutions that address unique security challenges.

3. Unlike government security forces, private companies operate in a competitive market, which motivates them to deliver higher-quality services and ensure client satisfaction.
4. The privatization of security services creates employment opportunities, particularly for individuals without formal higher education, contributing to poverty reduction and economic growth.
5. Private security firms can adjust their personnel and resources to meet the varying demands of clients, providing a level of adaptability that state forces may lack due to bureaucratic constraints.
6. Many private security firms invest in advanced technologies, such as surveillance cameras, drones, and biometric systems, to enhance the quality of their services, improving overall safety standards.
7. Private security services often relieve the burden on public law enforcement agencies by handling low-risk security tasks, allowing state forces to focus on more complex and high-risk operations.

Disadvantages of Privatization of Security Services in Nigeria

1. Privatization can exacerbate social inequality, as only individuals and organizations with sufficient financial resources can afford private security services, leaving poorer communities vulnerable.
2. The private security sector in Nigeria often operates with minimal government oversight, leading to concerns about accountability, ethical breaches, and the potential misuse of power.
3. Many private security guards face low wages, poor working conditions, and a lack of benefits, despite the high-risk nature of their work, contributing to job dissatisfaction and high turnover rates.

4. The growing reliance on private security services may signal a lack of confidence in state institutions, further undermining trust in government security agencies.
5. Some private security companies have been accused of overstepping their roles, engaging in intimidation, or using excessive force, which can lead to legal and ethical concerns.
6. Private security companies prioritize profitability, which may result in cost-cutting measures that compromise service quality, such as inadequate training for personnel or insufficient investment in equipment.
7. The proliferation of private security services can lead to a fragmented approach to safety, making coordination and information sharing between private and public security agencies difficult.
8. Private security firms may face conflicts of interest, especially when hired by competing entities, potentially leading to unethical practices or compromised security services.
9. An overreliance on private security services may reduce the government's urgency to improve public security forces, perpetuating weaknesses in state policing.
10. The lack of stringent regulatory frameworks in Nigeria's private security industry makes it susceptible to corruption, including bribery and collusion with criminal elements.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided for the improvement of the performance and effectiveness of private security services.

Addressing Societal Inequality and Promoting Equity: The privatization of security services often exacerbates societal inequality, as access to protection becomes determined by financial resources. This creates societal strain and fuels distrust among disadvantaged communities. To address this issue, governments must strengthen public security systems to reduce overreliance on privatized security services. Investing in public law enforcement ensures

equitable access to security, fostering trust and safety among all citizens.

Additionally, promoting community-based security initiatives such as neighbourhood watch programs and community policing can create more inclusive and collaborative approaches to security. These programs empower communities to take ownership of their safety while reducing societal strain caused by unequal access to protection. By addressing systemic inequality, governments can minimize the psychological impact of privatized security on both individuals and society.

Improving Working Conditions and Employee Welfare: One of the most pressing psychological challenges faced by private security personnel is the strain caused by poor working conditions and inadequate welfare support. Long hours, low wages, and unsafe work environments create a sense of frustration and perceived injustice, leading to anger, resentment, and reduced morale. To address these issues, it is critical to improve the overall working conditions of private security personnel.

Employers should prioritize fair compensation, including competitive wages, overtime pay, and financial incentives that reflect the risks associated with their duties. This can alleviate the stress associated with financial strain and provide workers with a greater sense of job satisfaction. Moreover, implementing reasonable working hours is essential to minimize burnout. Excessively long shifts without adequate rest can exacerbate psychological stress, leaving workers physically and mentally exhausted. Enforcing standardized shifts and mandatory rest periods will help private security personnel manage stress more effectively and maintain optimal performance.

Additionally, employers must provide safety training, protective equipment, and regular health check-ups to minimize exposure to physical harm and associated psychological trauma. Ensuring better working conditions not only reduces strain but also enhances the morale, motivation, and wellbeing of security personnel.

Strengthening Mental Health Support Systems: Another critical area that requires intervention is the lack of mental health support for private security personnel. The emotional toll

of their work, including constant exposure to high-risk situations, fear, and societal stigma, can lead to anxiety, depression, and emotional instability. To help workers cope with these strains, employers should integrate mental health support systems into the workplace.

For example, providing access to professional counselling services can help private security workers manage their emotions, process traumatic experiences, and develop healthier coping mechanisms. Counselling offers a safe space to address anger, frustration, and fear, thereby reducing the likelihood of maladaptive responses such as aggression or withdrawal.

In addition to counselling, stress management and resilience training should be offered as part of employee development programs. These initiatives equip private security personnel with practical techniques for managing workplace pressures, improving emotional regulation, and fostering resilience. Employers can also implement peer support programs, where workers share experiences, provide mutual encouragement, and create a sense of camaraderie. By normalizing discussions about mental health and offering adequate resources, private security companies can significantly reduce the emotional strain and psychological challenges faced by their workforce.

Enhancing Training and Professional Development of Regular Security Personnel: The lack of proper training and career development opportunities often contributes to the psychological strain experienced by private security personnel. Inadequate preparation for handling complex or dangerous situations can lead to feelings of incompetence, insecurity, and anxiety.

To address this challenge, private security companies must prioritize comprehensive training programs that focus on conflict resolution, crisis management, and de-escalation techniques. Equipping workers with the necessary skills ensures they can navigate challenging scenarios more confidently and effectively, reducing the emotional toll of their responsibilities.

Furthermore, introducing certification programs and career advancement pathways can enhance the job satisfaction and motivation of

private security personnel. Workers who see opportunities for personal and professional growth are more likely to experience fulfilment and reduced frustration. Providing structured development programs also improves their self-confidence and competence, which in turn mitigates feelings of inadequacy. By investing in continuous training and career development, employers can foster a skilled, motivated, and emotionally stable workforce.

Reducing Stigma and Promoting Recognition: Societal perceptions of private security personnel often contribute to their psychological challenges. Workers frequently face stigma, disrespect, and low societal recognition, which can undermine their self-esteem and lead to feelings of worthlessness. Addressing this issue requires targeted efforts to change public attitudes toward private security personnel. Public awareness campaigns should highlight the crucial role these workers play in maintaining safety and security, fostering a greater appreciation for their contributions. Educating the public about their sacrifices and challenges can help reduce stigma and promote societal respect.

Employers can further enhance recognition by publicly acknowledging and rewarding the efforts of private security personnel. Introducing award programs, promotions, and recognition events allows workers to feel valued for their contributions. Positive reinforcement not only boosts morale but also enhances workers' sense of pride in their profession. By reducing societal stigma and promoting recognition, the psychological wellbeing of private security personnel can be significantly improved.

Improving Regulatory Oversight and Policy Interventions: The lack of adequate regulatory oversight in the private security sector contributes to exploitative practices and job insecurity, which exacerbate workers' psychological strain. To address this challenge, governments and policymakers must enforce regulations that ensure fair treatment of private security personnel. Policies regulating wages, working hours, and safety standards should be strictly implemented to protect workers from exploitation. Licensing requirements for private

security firms can ensure that companies meet professional and ethical standards, promoting a healthier work environment.

Furthermore, introducing job security measures such as contractual protections, employment benefits, and insurance policies can address the stress caused by precarious employment conditions. Workers who perceive their jobs as stable and secure are less likely to experience emotional strain and anxiety. Stronger regulatory frameworks will ensure private security companies operate ethically while prioritizing the wellbeing of their employees.

Establishment of Security Institute:

There is no profession that can grow or seek for national and international recognition and relevance without a well packaged institute to provide the needed human capital resources. The private security has come of age after five decades of its existence in Nigeria to have a functioning and efficient institute to drive its growth and streamline its operations and entry qualifications.

It is necessary to establish a standard security institute for private security practitioners for the training, re-training, certification and re-certification of security operators and security guards to make the sector more economically viable, competitive, and more relevant in the global security market and national security discourse. In most countries (USA, Europe, South Africa, Canada etc.) where security privatization is in place, both the operators of private security companies and security guards are required to attain certain level of security training in an institute, after which they are awarded security certificates authorizing them to practice private investigation/detection or private guarding or both with a license.

Training and certification are based on specialized area of security provisioning to encourage diversification of knowledge and professionalism required to operate competent and efficient private security outfits that will assist in driving socioeconomic development and growth in the country. This should be the basis of private security practice in Nigeria and not the other way round where every Dick and Harry is professed to be a security professional without basic industrial security certification and training.

Suggestions for Further Studies

Here are some suggestions for further studies related to the privatization of security services in Nigeria:

1. A study comparing the efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability of private security firms and state security forces in addressing security challenges in Nigeria.
2. Research into how the privatization of security services affects marginalized and low-income communities, with a focus on social inequalities and access to protection.
3. An in-depth exploration of the mental health challenges faced by private security workers, with an emphasis on stress management, job satisfaction, and coping mechanisms.
4. A study assessing the regulatory environment for private security firms in Nigeria, identifying gaps, and recommending policy measures to enhance oversight, accountability, and ethical practices.
5. Research on how the privatization of security services contributes to the economy, particularly in terms of employment generation, business growth, and foreign investment attraction.
6. A study examining how citizens perceive the role and effectiveness of private security services in contrast to public security agencies, particularly in urban versus rural settings.

Conclusion

Private security services have come to stay not only in Nigeria but globally. They have assumed a very vital role in the security provisioning in the country. The growth of private security services has been driven by the ever-increasing insecurity, inadequate police presence and the growth of enclosed estates in springing up across the length and breadth of the nation. They have become an area of business activity with great potential for profitable reward and investment, providing a variety of security and allied services that have impacted directly on

the lives and property of their clients. Private security will develop better in crime control duties and reduction of fear of criminal victimization if competent persons, are recruited, adequately trained and properly motivated and equipped for security duties especially if adequate, workable and proper efforts are geared towards improving the private security sector.

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