



POLAC INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ECONS & MGT SCIENCE (PIJEMS)
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS & MANAGEMENT SCIENCE NIGERIA
POLICE ACADEMY, WUDIL-KANO



GLOBALISATION AND HUMAN SECURITY IN DEVELOPING STATES: A LITERATURE REVIEW WITH EVIDENCE FROM NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study reviews contemporary literature on the relationship between globalisation and human security in developing states, with particular emphasis on empirical evidence from Nigeria. It situates globalisation as a multidimensional process encompassing economic integration, technological change, transnational governance, and cross-border security dynamics, and examines how these processes shape human security outcomes. Drawing on recent theoretical and empirical scholarship, the study adopts a human security framework that shifts analytical focus from state-centric security to the protection and well-being of individuals and communities. The review reveals that globalisation produces uneven and context-dependent human security outcomes, mediated by governance quality, institutional capacity, and socio-economic structures. While globalisation has expanded access to markets, technology, and information, it has also intensified economic precarity, environmental degradation, labour insecurity, and exposure to transnational threats in many developing contexts. Empirical evidence from Nigeria illustrates how deep integration into global systems, particularly through extractive industries, trade liberalisation, and digital connectivity, has coexisted with persistent human security challenges, including poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, environmental harm, and insecurity. The study concludes that globalisation neither inherently enhances nor undermines human security; rather, its impacts are contingent on domestic political choices, institutional effectiveness, and inclusive governance, underscoring the need for integrated and people-centred analyses in future research.

Keywords: Globalization, Human Security, Economic Integration, Technological Change

Introduction

Globalisation continues to shape the political, economic, and social trajectories of developing states in profound and often contradictory ways. In its contemporary form, globalisation is no longer limited to trade liberalisation and capital mobility but increasingly encompasses digital connectivity, transnational governance regimes, global production networks, and cross-border security externalities (UNDP, 2022; World Bank, 2023). While these processes have expanded opportunities for growth, innovation, and global engagement, recent scholarship emphasises that their benefits are unevenly distributed, particularly in developing countries with fragile

institutions and persistent socio-economic inequalities (Rodrik, 2018; UNCTAD, 2021).

Against this backdrop, the concept of human security has gained renewed relevance in both academic and policy debates. Human security broadens the meaning of security beyond the protection of state borders to include the safety, dignity, and well-being of individuals and communities. Contemporary interpretations build on the foundational UNDP framework while adapting it to emerging global challenges such as climate change, pandemics, digital insecurity, economic precarity, and violent extremism (UNDP, 2022; Kaldor & Selchow, 2017). In developing states, human security threats are

increasingly multidimensional and interconnected, cutting across economic, health, environmental, personal, community, and political domains.

Recent literature highlights a complex relationship between globalisation and human security in developing contexts. Liberal perspectives maintain that global economic integration can enhance human security by stimulating growth, improving access to technology, and strengthening institutional cooperation (World Bank, 2020; IMF, 2021). However, a growing body of critical and empirical research challenges this optimistic view, demonstrating that globalisation often intensifies vulnerability where domestic governance capacity is weak. Exposure to volatile global markets, declining labour protections, environmental exploitation, and the diffusion of transnational security threats have, in many cases, undermined livelihoods and social cohesion (UNESCO, 2021; UNCTAD, 2023).

In sub-Saharan Africa, studies increasingly document how globalisation interacts with historical structural inequalities and contemporary governance deficits to produce mixed human security outcomes. Economic openness has coexisted with rising unemployment, informality, food insecurity, and exposure to transnational crime and extremist violence (Adejumobi, 2020; Aning & Edu-Afful, 2022). These patterns underscore the argument that globalisation does not operate in a political vacuum; rather, its human security implications are mediated by state capacity, policy choices, and socio-political contexts.

Nigeria represents a particularly salient case for analysing these dynamics. As Africa's most populous country and one of its largest economies, Nigeria is deeply embedded in global systems through oil exports, foreign direct investment, digital platforms, and international security cooperation. Yet, despite this level of integration, Nigeria continues to face acute human security challenges, including widespread poverty, youth unemployment, food insecurity, environmental degradation, terrorism, banditry, and communal conflicts (World Bank, 2022; Onuoha, 2022). Recent empirical studies link these challenges to Nigeria's dependent integration into the global economy, weak regulatory institutions, climate-related

stress, and the diffusion of transnational security risks (Obi & Rustad, 2023; Mustapha, 2021).

This literature review examines the nexus between globalisation and human security in developing states, using Nigeria as an empirical reference point. It critically engages contemporary theoretical and empirical debates, analysing how globalisation processes shape human security outcomes and how domestic political and institutional factors mediate these effects. By synthesising recent global and Nigeria-focused studies, the review seeks to demonstrate that globalisation's impact on human security is neither inherently beneficial nor uniformly harmful but contingent on governance quality, economic structure, and social resilience.

Conceptual Clarification

Globalisation

Globalisation is widely understood as a transformative process that restructures economic systems, political authority, social relations, and patterns of interaction across national boundaries. Contemporary scholarship emphasises that globalisation is not a singular or linear phenomenon but a complex set of processes that reorganise production, finance, communication, and governance on a global scale (Steger, 2020). Rather than simply increasing interconnectedness, globalisation reshapes power relations between states, markets, and societies, often producing asymmetric outcomes between developed and developing regions.

Recent conceptual approaches distinguish between economic, political, technological, and socio-cultural dimensions of globalisation. Economic globalisation involves trade liberalisation, capital mobility, global value chains, and the dominance of transnational corporations, which significantly influence domestic labour markets and income distribution in developing states (Gereffi, 2018). Political globalisation refers to the diffusion of global governance norms, international institutions, and policy conditionalities that can constrain national policy autonomy, particularly in weaker states (Weiss & Wilkinson, 2019). Technological globalisation, driven by digital platforms and information flows, has accelerated cross-border interactions while also introducing new

vulnerabilities such as cyber insecurity and digital exclusion (Zuboff, 2019).

Importantly, recent literature rejects earlier assumptions that globalisation is inherently beneficial or inevitable. Instead, scholars argue that globalisation is politically constructed and unevenly experienced, shaped by domestic institutions, historical legacies, and power asymmetries within the international system (Peck, 2016; Oatley, 2019). For developing states, globalisation often entails integration into global markets under conditions of structural dependency, limited diversification, and exposure to external economic shocks. This form of integration can constrain development policy space and heighten social and economic vulnerability.

In the African context, globalisation has been linked to mixed developmental outcomes, combining moments of growth with persistent inequality, informality, and social exclusion (Taylor & Zajontz, 2020). These dynamics suggest that globalisation should be conceptualised not merely as increased openness, but as a contested process with profound implications for governance, social welfare, and security. This understanding provides a necessary foundation for analysing how globalisation interacts with human security in developing states such as Nigeria.

Human Security

Human security emerged as a critical response to the limitations of traditional, state-centric security frameworks that prioritised territorial integrity over human well-being. Contemporary scholarship conceptualises human security as an analytical lens that focuses on the protection of individuals and communities from severe and pervasive threats to survival, livelihood, and dignity (Newman, 2016). Rather than replacing state security, human security reframes security analysis to address the everyday vulnerabilities faced by people, particularly in developing contexts.

Recent academic debates emphasise the people-centred, multidimensional, and preventive nature of human security. Scholars identify key dimensions including economic insecurity, food insecurity, health threats, environmental stress, personal violence, political repression, and social exclusion (Bajpai,

2020). These dimensions are not isolated; instead, they interact in ways that can produce cumulative and self-reinforcing insecurity. For example, economic marginalisation may increase exposure to crime, conflict, and political instability, thereby deepening human insecurity.

Unlike earlier formulations, contemporary human security scholarship places greater emphasis on structural and systemic drivers of insecurity, such as inequality, weak institutions, climate change, and global economic pressures (Hoogensen Gjörv, 2019). This shift moves the concept beyond short-term protection towards long-term resilience, empowerment, and social justice. Human security is thus increasingly linked to governance quality, inclusive development, and the capacity of states and societies to manage risk and uncertainty.

In developing states, human security analysis highlights the gap between formal state sovereignty and citizens' lived realities. Weak service delivery, limited social protection, and uneven access to justice often mean that individuals experience insecurity despite the absence of interstate conflict (Bilgin, 2021). As a result, human security provides a more appropriate framework for understanding insecurity in contexts characterised by poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, and internal violence. Conceptually, human security is particularly useful for examining the impacts of globalisation because it captures how global economic and political processes translate into concrete effects on livelihoods, safety, and well-being. By focusing on people rather than states alone, the concept enables a nuanced assessment of how globalisation can simultaneously create opportunities and intensify vulnerabilities in developing countries such as Nigeria.

Globalisation and Human Security Nexus

The relationship between globalisation and human security is theoretically contested. Three broad perspectives dominate contemporary debates: liberal, critical political economy, and human security-governance approaches.

Liberal Perspective

From a liberal viewpoint, globalisation is seen as a driver of human security through economic growth, technological diffusion, and international cooperation. Increased trade, foreign direct investment, and digital connectivity are expected to expand employment opportunities, improve service delivery, and enhance resilience through global governance mechanisms (IMF, 2021; World Bank, 2020). Proponents argue that integration into global markets enables developing states to access capital, innovation, and institutional best practices that can strengthen human security outcomes. However, recent empirical studies qualify this optimism by noting that positive outcomes are contingent on effective domestic institutions, inclusive policies, and social safety nets, conditions often lacking in developing states (Rodrik, 2018).

Critical Political Economy Perspective

Critical political economy approaches challenge liberal assumptions by emphasising power asymmetries embedded in the global system. This perspective argues that globalisation frequently reproduces dependency, marginalisation, and inequality in developing states, thereby undermining human security (Harvey, 2005; UNCTAD, 2023). Global market exposure without adequate regulatory capacity can erode labour protections, weaken public welfare systems, and intensify environmental exploitation. Recent African-focused studies show that neoliberal globalisation has contributed to rising informality, youth unemployment, and social dislocation, which in turn fuel insecurity and conflict (Adejumobi, 2020; Mustapha, 2021). From this standpoint, globalisation is not inherently beneficial but structurally biased in ways that often disadvantage vulnerable populations.

Human Security and Governance Perspective

A more integrative approach links globalisation and human security through the lens of governance. This perspective argues that globalisation's impact on human security is mediated by state capacity, institutional effectiveness, and policy choices (Acharya, 2011; UNDP, 2022). Where governance structures are inclusive and responsive, globalisation can enhance human security; where institutions are

weak or predatory, globalisation may deepen vulnerability. This approach is particularly useful for analysing developing states like Nigeria, where global economic integration coexists with governance deficits and persistent insecurity. It shifts analytical focus from globalisation as a deterministic force to the interaction between global pressures and domestic political economy.

Analytical Relevance to Nigeria

Applying this framework to Nigeria highlights the uneven human security outcomes of globalisation. Nigeria's integration into the global economy, largely through oil exports and increasingly through digital connectivity, has generated significant revenues and opportunities while simultaneously exposing the country to price volatility, environmental degradation, and transnational security threats (World Bank, 2022; Obi & Rustad, 2023). Weak regulatory institutions, corruption, and social inequality have constrained the translation of global engagement into broad-based human security gains. This paper adopts a governance-mediated human security framework, drawing selectively on liberal and critical political economy insights, to analyse how globalisation shapes human security in Nigeria. This approach allows for a nuanced understanding of both the opportunities and risks associated with globalisation, while foregrounding the role of domestic institutions in shaping outcomes.

Empirical Literature on Globalisation and Human Security

Empirical studies on globalisation and human security reveal mixed and context-dependent outcomes, particularly in developing states. Recent research moves beyond abstract debates to examine how global economic integration, technological change, and transnational flows affect livelihoods, safety, and well-being at individual and community levels. These studies consistently demonstrate that globalisation's human security impacts are mediated by structural conditions such as inequality, governance capacity, and social protection mechanisms.

A significant body of empirical literature focuses on the economic dimension of human security. Studies using cross-national data indicate that trade openness and financial integration have not uniformly improved

economic security in developing countries. Instead, they are often associated with rising income inequality, labour precarity, and informalisation of employment (Dorling, 2019; Milanovic, 2016). In many low- and middle-income countries, global competition has weakened labour protections and reduced the capacity of states to provide stable employment and social welfare, thereby increasing vulnerability among low-skilled workers and youth populations.

Other empirical research highlights the relationship between globalisation and food and health security. Global supply chains have improved food availability in some regions, yet they have also increased exposure to price volatility and external shocks, as evidenced during the COVID-19 pandemic (Clapp & Moseley, 2020). Studies show that reliance on global markets for essential goods can undermine food sovereignty and health resilience in developing states, particularly where domestic production systems are weak (Labonté & Schrecker, 2021). These findings underscore the uneven human security consequences of global integration in critical survival sectors.

Environmental security has also featured prominently in recent empirical work. Scholars document how global demand for natural resources drives extractive activities in developing states, often resulting in environmental degradation, displacement, and livelihood loss (Bebbington et al., 2018). Such processes have direct implications for human security, particularly for rural and indigenous communities whose survival depends on local ecosystems. Empirical evidence suggests that environmental insecurity linked to global production networks can exacerbate social conflict and migration pressures (Scheffran et al., 2019).

Another strand of empirical literature examines the security implications of transnational threats facilitated by globalisation. Increased cross-border flows have enabled the spread of organised crime, illicit financial networks, and violent extremism, particularly in regions with porous borders and weak regulatory institutions (Shelley, 2018). Studies indicate that these dynamics undermine personal and community security while overwhelming state capacity to provide protection, thereby eroding trust in governance structures (Agbibo, 2021).

Collectively, empirical studies suggest that globalisation does not produce linear improvements in human security. Instead, its effects are differentiated across sectors, social groups, and national contexts. Where governance systems are inclusive and adaptive, globalisation can enhance resilience and opportunity; where institutions are weak, it often intensifies insecurity. This body of empirical literature provides a critical foundation for analysing developing states such as Nigeria, where deep global integration coexists with persistent human security challenges.

Empirical Evidence on Globalisation and Human Security in Nigeria

Empirical studies on Nigeria demonstrate that globalisation has produced complex and often contradictory human security outcomes, shaped by the country's political economy, governance structures, and socio-economic inequalities. Nigeria's integration into the global system, largely through oil exports, foreign investment, digital connectivity, and participation in international security regimes, has not translated into commensurate improvements in human security. Instead, empirical research suggests that globalisation has interacted with domestic vulnerabilities to intensify economic, environmental, and personal insecurity for large segments of the population.

A substantial body of Nigerian scholarship links economic globalisation to declining economic security, particularly through labour market instability and youth unemployment. Studies show that trade liberalisation and dependence on oil exports have constrained industrial development and job creation, resulting in widespread underemployment and informalisation of labour (Adeniran, 2020; Akinwale, 2019). Empirical evidence indicates that these conditions have disproportionately affected young people, increasing exposure to crime, migration, and recruitment into violent networks, thereby undermining human security at both individual and community levels.

Food and livelihood security have also been significantly affected by Nigeria's integration into global markets. Research demonstrates that increased reliance on imported food, coupled with exposure to

global price fluctuations, has weakened domestic agricultural resilience and heightened food insecurity, particularly among rural households (Okuneye & Ogunniyi, 2021). These dynamics have been exacerbated by climate-related shocks and disruptions to global supply chains, revealing the vulnerability of Nigeria's food system to external forces.

Environmental insecurity represents another critical dimension of Nigeria's human security challenges in the context of globalisation. Empirical studies on the Niger Delta document how global oil demand has driven environmental degradation, loss of livelihoods, and displacement of local communities (Ebegbulem, Ekpe, & Adejumo, 2020). These environmental impacts have contributed to social unrest, militancy, and prolonged conflict, illustrating how global extractive processes can translate into local human insecurity when regulatory institutions are weak.

Nigeria's exposure to transnational security threats has further deepened human insecurity. Studies indicate that globalisation has facilitated the flow of arms, finances, and extremist ideologies across borders, intensifying terrorism, banditry, and organised crime (Okoli & Iortyer, 2021). Empirical research links these dynamics to porous borders, global criminal networks, and limited state capacity, which together undermine personal security and public trust in state institutions.

Recent scholarship also highlights the role of digital globalisation in reshaping human security in Nigeria. While increased digital connectivity has expanded access to information and economic opportunities, it has simultaneously introduced new forms of insecurity, including cybercrime, digital fraud, and online radicalisation (Abdulhamid, 2022). These emerging threats disproportionately affect economically vulnerable populations and further complicate Nigeria's human security landscape. Thus, empirical evidence suggests that globalisation in Nigeria has not yielded broad-based human security gains. Instead, its effects have been uneven, often reinforcing existing inequalities and governance deficits. These findings underscore the importance of examining how domestic institutional capacity, policy choices, and social protection mechanisms mediate the human security outcomes of globalisation in Nigeria.

Gaps in the Literature

Despite the growing body of scholarship on globalisation and human security, several conceptual, empirical, and methodological gaps remain, particularly in relation to developing states and Nigeria. First, much of the existing literature continues to treat globalisation and human security as largely separate domains of analysis. While studies examine globalisation's economic or political impacts and others focus on human security outcomes, relatively few works provide an integrated analytical framework that systematically links specific globalisation processes, such as trade liberalisation, digitalisation, or financial integration, to distinct dimensions of human security (Chandler, 2019; Hameiri & Jones, 2017). This fragmentation limits a comprehensive understanding of how global forces translate into everyday insecurities at the individual and community levels.

Also, there is a notable imbalance between theoretical and empirical contributions. A significant proportion of the literature remains conceptually rich but empirically thin, relying on broad generalisations or cross-national aggregates that obscure country-specific dynamics (Buzan & Hansen, 2009). Conversely, empirical studies often focus on isolated sectors, such as terrorism, unemployment, or environmental degradation, without situating these findings within a broader human security framework. This sectoral approach restricts the ability to capture the multidimensional and interconnected nature of human insecurity in developing states.

Further, in the Nigerian context, existing empirical studies tend to prioritise traditional and non-traditional security threats, particularly terrorism, insurgency, and communal violence, while underexploring the structural human security implications of globalisation. Issues such as labour precarity linked to global markets, digital insecurity, financial volatility, and global climate pressures receive limited integrated analysis within Nigerian human security scholarship (Arowosegbe, 2018; Aluko, 2020). As a result, the broader socio-economic pathways through which globalisation affects human security remain insufficiently examined.

Furthermore, methodological limitations persist in the literature. Many studies rely heavily on secondary data and descriptive analysis, with limited use of mixed methods or micro-level data that capture the lived experiences of insecurity. This has led to a gap between macro-level analyses of globalisation and the micro-level realities of individuals and communities in developing states (Maclean, 2017). The absence of people-centred empirical approaches constrains the explanatory depth of existing research.

Moreover, there is limited attention to the mediating role of domestic governance and institutional capacity in shaping the human security outcomes of globalisation. While governance is frequently acknowledged as important, few studies empirically demonstrate how specific institutional arrangements, policy choices, or governance failures condition the relationship between globalisation and human security in Nigeria (Peters, 2021). This gap is particularly significant given Nigeria's complex political economy and persistent governance challenges.

Addressing these gaps requires an integrated, context-sensitive approach that combines human security analysis with a critical examination of globalisation processes and domestic governance structures. This study responds to these gaps by systematically analysing how globalisation shapes multiple dimensions of human security in Nigeria, while foregrounding the role of institutional capacity and policy mediation. In doing so, it aims to contribute empirically and theoretically to the evolving literature on globalisation and human security in developing states.

Discussion/Synthesis of the Literature

The literature reviewed in this paper collectively demonstrates that the relationship between globalisation and human security in developing states is complex, non-linear, and deeply conditioned by domestic political and institutional contexts. Across conceptual, theoretical, and empirical contributions, there is broad agreement that globalisation cannot be understood as a neutral or uniformly beneficial process; rather, it operates through specific economic, technological, and governance mechanisms that generate differentiated human security outcomes.

While some strands of the literature emphasise the opportunities created by global integration, such as access to global markets, technology, and information, empirical evidence consistently shows that these benefits are unevenly distributed and frequently offset by heightened vulnerability among already marginalised populations.

A key point of convergence in the literature is the mediating role of governance and state capacity. Studies repeatedly highlight that globalisation's human security effects are shaped less by the degree of openness itself than by how states manage integration into global systems. Where institutions are weak, regulatory capacity is limited, and social protection mechanisms are underdeveloped, globalisation tends to exacerbate economic insecurity, labour precarity, environmental degradation, and exposure to transnational threats. Conversely, contexts with stronger institutions and inclusive policies are better positioned to translate global engagement into improved human security outcomes. This synthesis reinforces the argument that globalisation should be analysed as a governance-conditioned process rather than a deterministic force.

Another important pattern emerging from the literature is the multidimensional and interconnected nature of human insecurity in developing states. Empirical studies show that economic insecurity, food insecurity, environmental stress, and personal insecurity are rarely isolated phenomena; instead, they interact in ways that produce cumulative vulnerability. For example, labour market instability linked to global economic pressures often intersects with food price volatility, environmental degradation, and rising crime, creating reinforcing cycles of insecurity. The human security framework is particularly valuable in capturing these linkages, as it moves beyond sectoral or threat-specific analyses to provide a holistic understanding of how globalisation shapes lived experiences.

The Nigerian case, as synthesised in the literature, exemplifies these broader dynamics. Nigeria's deep integration into the global economy, especially through extractive industries, trade liberalisation, and digital connectivity, has coexisted with persistent human security challenges. The literature indicates

that globalisation has intensified existing structural weaknesses, including economic dependence, environmental vulnerability, and governance deficits, rather than resolving them. At the same time, the Nigerian experience underscores that globalisation is not inherently detrimental; rather, its adverse human security effects reflect the interaction between global pressures and domestic institutional constraints.

In a nutshell, the synthesis highlights enduring tensions and unresolved debates within the literature. While there is growing consensus on the importance of governance mediation and multidimensional analysis, disagreements remain regarding the extent to which globalisation can be reoriented to support human security in structurally unequal global systems. Moreover, the literature points to the need for more integrated and people-centred analyses that connect macro-level globalisation processes to micro-level human security outcomes. These unresolved issues directly inform the concluding reflections of this paper, which situate globalisation as a contingent force whose human security implications depend fundamentally on political choices, institutional capacity, and social inclusion in developing states.

Conclusion

This study has reviewed contemporary literature on globalisation and human security with particular

reference to developing states and empirical evidence from Nigeria, demonstrating that globalisation is a multidimensional and uneven process whose human security outcomes are highly contingent on domestic political, economic, and institutional conditions. The literature shows that while globalisation has expanded access to markets, technology, and transnational networks, it has also intensified economic precarity, environmental stress, labour insecurity, and exposure to transnational threats in contexts characterised by weak governance and structural inequality. Human security scholarship provides a critical people-centred framework for understanding these dynamics, revealing how global forces translate into everyday vulnerabilities across economic, food, health, environmental, personal, and political domains. Empirical evidence from Nigeria reinforces these insights, indicating that deep global integration, particularly through extractive industries, trade liberalisation, and digital connectivity, has not produced broad-based human security gains but has often exacerbated existing insecurities. Overall, the literature underscores that globalisation neither inherently enhances nor undermines human security; rather, its effects are mediated by governance quality, institutional capacity, and inclusive policy choices, highlighting the need for more integrated and context-sensitive analyses of globalisation and human security in developing states.

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