

Rail Transportation and Economic Security Implications in Nigeria's South Eastern Rail Lines

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Abstract

This study investigated the economic security implications of rail transport operations in Nigeria, with specific focus on the present rail transport system in South East Nigeria. Survey research design was adopted, which supported the use of primary data obtained from the study sample of 124 and 276 respondents in Enugu and Port Harcourt clusters respectively. The study conducted the pre-test test reliability testing of the research instrument, while the Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) statistical regression analysis was adopted to determine the significant effect of the present rail transportation operations on the economic security in south east Nigeria. The findings of the study established that the present rail transport operations in south east have negative effect on economic security, as there is a threat to economic opportunities resulting from loss of both direct and indirect jobs that a well-functioning rail transport system provides. Train services in the south east at the moment are mostly limited to Port Harcourt in Rivers State and Aba in Abia State while Enugu which is the administrative headquarters only coordinates operations without enjoying the actual rail services. The study recommends a complete revitalisation of rail infrastructure in the south east, repeal of the Nigeria Railway Act of 1955 to allow private sector funding, rehabilitation of the existing narrow gauge eastern rail lines in the interim, to enable it resume services covering Port Harcourt to Maiduguri in the north east.

Keywords: *Commercial, economic security, rail transportation, south east*

Introduction

Nigeria's rail transportation system ought to be a modern tool for the elimination of threats such as unemployment, hunger, socio-economic inequalities and social disconnections associated with high cost of alternative means of transport. Railway infrastructure promotes ease of movement, liberty, national friendship and peace; hence, an efficient rail transport system promotes human relations and economic activities across various geographical areas along the stretch of

the rail line. In boosting economic empowerment and commercial activities in the 21st century, a critical transport infrastructure like the railway is considered as desirable and inevitable for the general good and welfare of the people.

The Eastern Nigeria Rail line, established in 1916 has its District Headquarters in Enugu and controls the operations of other stations in the area. The station was established to facilitate the transportation of coal from its mines to other

places. The rail stations and tracks transverse the south eastern region at very busy and strategic locations in Enugu, Umuahia, Aba and Port Harcourt towns (Ujam, 1997).

Economic security is an indispensable ingredient for human existence. It is at the core of the smooth functioning of individuals, societies, groups, local and international agencies, and their host states. It is at the threshold for social, human and economic development. It is a value enjoyed where people or society is protected and safe from disruptions of their means of livelihood, harm or danger. It encompasses the defense, protection and preservation of values, and the absence of threats to their acquired values, including occupation, family life, peaceful coexistence, customs and traditions. The presence or availability of security is a necessary precondition for development and economic well-being of a people. Nigeria's Draft National Transport Policy (1993) states that transport plays a crucial role in the economic and social development of any state. A well-functioning and integrated Transport System will amongst other things: stimulate national development and enhance the quality of life for all; enable markets to operate given the seamless movement of goods and people; provide the nexus between spatially separated facilities and enable social contact and

interaction; create and provide access to employment, health, education and services.

Adesanya (2002) while stressing the economic importance of rail transportation stated that rail transport plays a critical role in the development and overall growth of Nigeria's economy; it drives economic activities, because of its crucial role as catalyst to economic growth and development. It opens up regions, hinterlands and rural areas by facilitating economic and rural agricultural ventures as well as the growth of small, medium and large-scale industries. The railway played a very active role in land transport in the early years of Nigeria's national independence in 1960, to the extent that it accounted for approximately one third of freight traffic. Uzundu (2011), postulated that a strong "rail system of transportation has become a major catalyst in sustainable economic development as evident in its impact in Britain, USA, Canada, Russia, France and China. Nigeria as a developing nation can leverage on the experience of these countries in upgrading her rail infrastructure and services to promote economic activities, integration and development.

In Igwe, et al (2013) review of Nigeria's transport system and the place of entrepreneurs, they found that rail transportation holds huge potential due to its

relative safety, reliability, lower cost to the users and being singularly capable of transforming the national economy through mass movement of people, goods and services. An efficient railway would necessitate a reduction in the prices of local commodities, culminating into cheaper cost of living. Moreover, travelling time on the roads would be minimized as many more people would be encouraged to use the rail service as opposed to the use of cars. This would also lead to a reduction in the cost of road maintenance, resulting in more funds for the provision of other social amenities (Oni, 2010; Ademiluyi & Dina, 2011; Akwara et al., 2014).

Economic insecurity is a major catalyst for most other forms of insecurity in the history of any community, state or country. Economic security is a sine qua non for peace, trust and patriotism. Being the basis and foundation for other forms of security, it is a value for which serious nations and leaders strive to enhance and preserve for the good of the greater majority. Its absence is an existential threat to humanity and all we hold and preserve dearly. It is an essential source of happiness, patriotism, development, justice and national unity.

Economic security is an avenue for accessing infrastructure such as effective and efficient transportation system, education, food, shelter and clothing. The threats of lack

of opportunities, unemployment, insurgency, hunger and disease are common where economic security is deficient and inadequate.

The Eastern Railway district of the Nigerian Railway Corporation has been enmeshed in myriads of challenges over the years. Firstly, the Eastern Railway division suffered from its geographical peculiarity resulting from being situated in the hot-bed of the country's three-year civil war (1967-1970). According to Ujam (1997), about 600 employees of various skills were lost and the railway was closed down as a result of the war.

The rail infrastructure in Enugu North Local Government Area and Portharcourt Local Government axis is inundated by unreliable services due to delays in takeoff and arrival times. Communities, including Amaigbo, Onuato, Umunevo, Ihenwuzi and Woji which hitherto were beehive of socio-economic activities resulting from rail transport operations now bear the direct impact of the problem. Transporters that conveyed railway passengers have lost much of their patronage to road transport, and several food vendors around the rail stations have closed shop due to lack of adequate patronage. Rail services available in the eastern district are grossly inadequate.

Several obsolete and abandoned rail coaches and equipment are visible in the

Enugu and Port Harcourt rail stations with their economic consequences. Abandoned coaches could serve as hideouts for criminals in the area. Some sections of the rail stations have been overgrown with weeds due to inadequate human activities and staff neglect.

The 21st century Nigeria has a rail transportation system that has both failed to meet the yearnings of the average Nigerian commuter by its declining fortunes and to attain the Federal Government's transport objectives as articulated in its National Transport Policy document (2010) which include "stimulating national development and enhancing the quality of life for all; providing access to employment".

Therefore, the motivation for this study is to identify and analyse among others, the economic and security issues emanating from rail transport operations in Nigeria's eastern rail corridor; security concerns resulting from loss of economic activities associated with erratic rail transportation and its ancillary services, job losses, poverty and hunger.

Research Questions and Objectives

Premised on the statement of problem, a research question was here posited to guide the study: what is the effect of the rail transportation operations on economic security in South-East Nigeria? The main objective of

this study is to investigate the economic security implications of rail transportation and to determine the effect of the operations of rail transportation on South-East Nigeria.

Statement of the Hypothesis

Premised on the above, the study sought to investigate the economic security implications of rail transportation in Nigeria and to determine the effects of the operations of rail transportation on South-East Nigeria. One hypothesis was formulated:

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of rail transportation operations on economic security in South-East Nigeria.

The Rail Transportation System

Rail transport is also known as train transport. It involves the movement of a special vehicle and all its components on a road known as rail tracks. It is a means of transport, on which vehicles run on tracks (rails or railroads). It is one of the most important, commonly used and very cost-effective modes of commuting and goods carriage over long, as well as, short distances. Since this system runs on metal (usually steel) rails and wheels, it has an inherent benefit of lesser frictional resistance which helps attach more loads in terms of wagons or carriages (The Economic Times, 2018).

In his definition of rail transport and the characteristics, Franklin (1999) states that a railway is a road laid with wood, iron or steel on which wagons conveying commuters or goods are moved by a locomotive engine otherwise referred to the train. It is a combination of the whole organization necessary for the working of this, and the company of persons owing or managing the system.

Rail transport system offers the movement of freight and people in the most efficient manner possible and the principal means of economically moving large, heavy freight long distances across land and country. The characteristics of a well-managed 21st century rail transport infrastructure include speed, reliability, affordability, space and convenience, safety and energy efficiency. Findings show that the rail is three times more efficient than road transport (<https://web.engr.uky.edu/~jrose/Railway>). The volume of traffic and its attendant congestion on roads in the south eastern part of the country and Nigeria in general would be mitigated with an efficient deployment of railway service. Consequently, the positive impact on the prices of goods and services would create a whole value chain of economic benefits for the populace.

Simply put, rail transport is one of the modern means of land transport which involves the movement of commuters, goods

and services on rail. It involves the use of vehicles referred to as trains. The trains move on fixed routes made of iron, sticks and stones known as tracks. They stop over at designated places known as stations. Over the years, passenger trains have served millions of commuters to different destinations across the world at relatively lower cost and lower rates of accidents.

Rail transportation has been in Nigeria since the colonial era. In 1895 the then Nigeria's secretary of state gave approval for the construction by the colonial government of a 1067 (3'6") gauge rail track from Iddo Lagos to Otta, covering a distance of 32km which was geared for freight and passenger movement (Franklin, 1999). According to Onokala (2015), it was in order to enable the colonial administration evacuate agricultural raw materials and forest resources from the interior parts of the country and also to enable the selling of imported manufactured goods in these interior locations ditto for connecting different regions of the country and thereby promote inter-regional trade which increases economic security and industrial development.

Economic security

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) report (2004) says "economic security is composed of basic social security, defined by

access to basic needs infrastructure pertaining to health, education, dwelling, information, and social protection, as well as work-related security.” The report added that “basic security means limiting the impact of uncertainties and risks people face daily while providing a social environment in which people can belong to a range of communities, have a fair opportunity to pursue a chosen occupation and develop their capacities via what the ILO calls decent work”. By this definition, any action or inaction of state actors that tend to prevent people’s free pursuit of their chosen occupation can constitute a security threat.

Neu and Wolf (1994) explain economic security in terms of having the ability to promote a nation’s interest. They define economic security as “the ability to protect or advance economic interests in the face of events, developments, or actions that may threaten or block these interests. These obstacles may be foreign or domestic in origin, international or accidental, and the consequences of human natural forces.” This definition subsumed individual interests in the national interests. The International Committee of The Red Cross (ICRC, 2013) defines economic security as “the condition of individuals, households or communities able to cover their essential needs and unavoidable expenditures in a sustainable manner, given

physiological requirements, the environment, and prevailing cultural standards.” The ICRC considers essential needs to include food, basic shelter, clothing and hygiene. Related expenditures which are considered unavoidable are made on assets which support “minimum livelihood”, healthcare, education and taxes.

Stone (2009) expressed the significance of economic security in the life of a nation and its people. According to him, “economic security can be considered a key indicator as to the general security of a state. If developed and developing countries are compared, it is clear that with economic security other levels of security become easier to establish”. If a nation can address its economic challenges through adequate and efficient deployment of the rail transport infrastructure, other related challenges like high cost of living, poverty become easier. In the postulation of Nwosu (2022), ‘a transport infrastructure such as the railway has the propensity to enhance the economic security and well-being, promote environmental security by reducing traffic congestion and emissions, and reduce intercommunity conflicts through social interactions and understanding’.

Hussein et al (2004 summarized economic security as “assured basic income:

access to employment and resources”. Adedayo (2015) explains economic security in terms of what it guarantees or adds to the economy by submitting that economic security “guarantees security of economic activities, networking and flourishing within a social system, in terms of productivity and remuneration that serve as end results of public economic activities and safety”. Baldwin (1985) defines economic security as “influence attempts relying primarily on resources which have a reasonable semblance of a market price in terms of money.” Meanwhile, Buzan, Waever and Wilde (1998) cited in Malec (2003) states that “The whole idea of economic security is exceedingly controversial and politicized, and it is not easy to distinguish what should be thought of as economic security from both politicized economics and security spillover from the economic sector to other sectors”. Economic security can be summarized as freedom and ability to create, generate, enjoy and protect economic values without threats or with diminished or insignificant quantum of threats. Under such circumstances, jobs and economic opportunities are available for the able-bodied who carry on their daily economic activities without undue hindrances, wealth created are secure and a future guaranteed.

The Eastern Nigeria Railway and Economic Security of the People

According to Franklin (1999), the 1.05m gauge railway which runs from Port Harcourt to Enugu was built between 1913 and 1916. This line known as Eastern railway had a distance of about 307 kilometres and runs from Port Harcourt to Igbede (the last railway station) in Eastern Nigeria. The Eastern railway and the colliery were under one management until 1955 with its district headquarters in headquarters at Enugu.

The Eastern railway has some short branches. In Port Harcourt there is a 9.6 kilometres branch from Elelenwa, built between 1913 and 1916. This branch evacuates products from the oil refinery in Alesa Eleme at Port Harcourt Main Station. Another branch from Port Harcourt to Onne, connecting the National Fertilizer Company (NAFCON) to the sea, was built in 1985. In Enugu 8 kilometres of rail lines that carried coal from Ogbete (Obwetti) and Iva mines were constructed in 1915. Another 14.8 kilometres branch line from Ogbaho to Nkalagu, which is used for carrying coal and gypsum to Nkalagu Cement factory, was built in 1958. Eastern Nigeria has only 10 percent of the 3,484.8 kilometres of railways in Nigeria (Ofomata (ed) 1975 cited in Franklin 1999).

Tracing the history of the Nigerian Railway Corporation, Adesanya (2010) stated that in 1898, the railway in Nigeria was initially a department of government which later metamorphosed to NRC as created by the Act of 1955 (amended by 1990 Act). NRC was therefore established to enhance the movement of passengers and haulage of freight in a way that offers full scale transportation services, ensure value for money, adhere to the corporate goals, ensure safety of operation with maximum efficiency, meeting the social responsibility of the corporation in the manner that meets and satisfies the needs of the rail users, industry, the general public, other stakeholders, among others. For Oyeyemi (2015) the history of the system is traced to October 1912 when the Nigerian railway system officially came into existence following the merger of the pre-existing Lagos government railway with the Baro-Kano railway to become the Nigerian Railway by Fredrick Luggard. Thus Nigeria became one of the first countries in Africa to have a well-planned, well-developed and well-funded railway.

From the foregoing, the rail transport system was designed as a veritable critical infrastructure for the provision, enhancement and protection of economic security in Nigeria and the south eastern axis of the country in

particular. The rail transport system is designed to create and provide opportunities for economic benefits and security as identified below.

Affordable transportation and integration

Responsible governments across the world embark on programmes that positively impact on and improve the living condition of its citizenry. Economic security is people-centered; consequently, the creation of an efficient, cheaper and affordable transport system, particularly the rail transport can enhance inter-community interactions, understanding and security. Akwara (2014) noted that economic integration engenders the ambience required for nurturing stability in a federal system such as Nigeria.

Cheaper and affordable agricultural and industrial produce

The railway is a reliable means to deliver cheaper products to citizens, majority of whom fall within the low-income bracket. According to Filani (2003), rail transport will significantly offer a relatively cheaper alternative for the transportation of both agricultural and industrial goods. The overall impact of a shift to rail, as a dominant mode of transport, is likely to substantially reduce the final prices of most goods. The seeming

neglect of rail transport puts a serious burden on our roads in terms of vehicular density, pressure of heavy-duty machines, traffic congestions and loss of human lives and man-hour. An affordable and well managed railway infrastructure is significant for the elimination of the threat of unemployment through job creation and employment opportunities in Enugu (Nwosu, 2022).

Efficient and effective distribution of economic goods

Rail transportation as a form of product distribution channel denotes the deliberate adoption of a distribution channel to enhance the firm's competitive advantage (Kotler & Keller, 2014), competitive market price of the product and wide market presence for their products (Elikwu & Mohammed, 2020). It also supports a deliberate strategy of economic entities to offer, sell or distribute products to their dispersed customers (Bardhan, et al., 2012), which comprises the quantity, safety and security of products ordered and delivered. The enablers of effective distribution of industrial (machineries, petroleum products) and economic consumable goods being the various mode of transportation, requires the optimal functioning of the entire system. More importantly, the rail transport system, which effectively supports the distribution of heavy-

duty machineries for industrial use, petroleum products for continuous energy delivery, large quantities of goods and agricultural products for household consumption, moved from one part of the country to the other.

A well-functioning distribution channel (rail transportation) bridges among others, information and communication gaps, geographical and time gaps between producers and consumers (Friedman & Furley, 2009), irrespective of the location of both parties. Economic benefits of rail transportation as a distribution channel includes strengthening of firm performance and growth through increased productivity and sales, increased availability of products and services from multiple access points, creating better accessibility and convenience for product end-users across various geographical locations (Elikwu & Mohammed, 2020), provide firms with capability to focus and exploit best opportunities (Soe, et al., 2015), and sustain employment creation. However, an ineffective rail transportation system reduces massive distribution of economic goods and may become counter-productive in costs (Bardhan, et al., 2012) and general prices of goods and services.

Better living standards

Deepening poverty is a threat to decent living and economic security. The high level of

deprivation and poverty in Nigeria could be drastically reduced using the instrumentality of rail transport systems. This view is supported by Ujam (1997) who stated that railway as a means of transport was essential to trade and brought wealth, liberty, new and desirable goods and security to the people of Eastern Nigeria. This therefore suffices that the absence of an effective rail transport system and its numerous benefits inadvertently exposes the people to economic insecurity evident in higher food prices and impediment to trade.

Akwara (2014) added that it is arguable that inadequate railway services is a clog on the mobility and accessibility of people, especially the minority groups of Nigeria's Middle Belt and the South-Eastern regions to facilities such as markets, hospitals and good highway links. These situations have serious implication on deepening levels of poverty among the south eastern populace.

Theoretical Framework

This thesis is situated within the *douce commerce* which embraces security within liberal economic thoughts. Ebeling (2000) opined that True internationalism and world peace will come through individual freedom, the free market, and the peaceful and voluntary associations of civil society. According to

Moravcsik (2001) cited in Williams(ed) (2008), '*commercial liberalism*' focuses on '*incentives created by opportunities for trans-border economic transactions.*' The *douce commerce* promotes the idea that economic activities promote peace and lessens hostilities. During the depression of the 1930s, Wilhelm Ropke, a German economist declared that the '*genuinely liberal principle*' required '*the widest possible separation of the two spheres of government and economy.*' Proponents of *douce commerce* aver that a new world order of peace, security and prosperity is possible only when governments exited from control of the economy. The *douce commerce* ideology implies that human and economic security would be enhanced through the operations of the Nigerian Railway Corporations if the federal government completely divests its management and control of rail transportation systems.

Methodology

The estimated population of Enugu North Local Government Area, where the South Eastern railway headquarters is domiciled is 326,900 (NBS, 2016). Portharcourt Local Government Area of Rivers State is one of the twenty-four local Government Areas of the state. It has an estimated population of 756,600 (NBS,

2016) giving a combined total of 1,083,500 while the sample size of this study is Four hundred (400).

Data Collection

This study obtained data from both secondary and primary sources. The primary sources of data included questionnaires and oral interviews. A two-stage cluster was employed. The study area was segmented into clusters representative of the population including Artisan Quarters, Ogbete Area and Okpara Avenue in Enugu North Local Government Area. Others included Station Road and Fruit Garden by D-Line in Portharcourt Local Government Area. Respondents were randomly selected from each of the clusters in the two local governments.

Four hundred (400) copies of the structured questionnaire were administered, supervised and retrieved by the researcher with the aid of research assistance. One hundred and twenty-four (124) copies of the questionnaire representing 31% of the sample were randomly administered and retrieved at the clusters in Enugu North L.G.A. A total of two hundred and seventy-six (276) questionnaires representing 69% of the respondents were randomly administered at the clusters in Portharcourt L.G.A. In order to test for the

validity and reliability of the questionnaire, this study adopted a pre-test reliability testing of the questionnaire. Oral interviews were elicited from seven respondents from among the clusters. Three of the respondents were from Portharcourt while four of them were from Enugu.

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Results and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics for the Variables

Table 1.1

<i>STATS</i>	<i>ECS</i>	<i>RTO</i>
<i>Mean</i>	3.76	3.45
<i>P50</i>	4	3
<i>Sd</i>	0.80	0.54
<i>Min</i>	1	2
<i>Max</i>	5	5
<i>Skewness</i>	-0.61	-0.34
<i>Kurtosis</i>	3.29	2.90
<i>N</i>	400	400

Source: Field Survey, May, 2019

Table 1.1 above shows the descriptive statistics for all the variables used in this study. The total observation for each of the variables was 400. The average value for Economic Security (ECS) 3.76 and the median (p50) value was 4. The minimum and maximum value was 1 and 5 respectively. These values do not indicate presence of outliers as there is no much difference between the maximum and the minimum values. The standard deviation was found to be 0.8 from the mean value.

Finally, for Rail Transportation Operations (RTO) of Public sector agencies in south eastern axis, the mean value is 3.45, median 3, minimum and maximum 2 and 5 respectively and standard deviation is 0.54 with no indication of outliers. The skewedness statistics which was used to show the direction of the normal distribution curve showed that, ECS and RTO all had a negative distribution and they all tailed to the left-hand side of the

normal distribution curve. Their skewedness values gave -0.61, and -0.34 respectively.

The analysis of some of the personal interviews conducted revealed the following:

A resident of Njemanze Street, Railway Quarters in Enugu north LGA, Mr. Chidi Onyia was asked to explain how rail transport has contributed to the economic well-being of the people. He said:

The railway used to be the pride of this area until early 2017. We hardly see the trains nowadays. Our people who used to sell food items around the rail stations have all packed up for lack of patronage. You can even see that most of the stores are closed. The situation has negatively impacted on the economy of the people that depended on railway customers and other related activities for patronage (Onyia, Enugu, May, 2019).

The District Public Relations Officer (DPRO) of the Nigerian Railway Corporation, Eastern District, Mr. Onyedikachi Onovo, was asked, Sir what is the impact of the Corporation's present state on job creation in your district? His response:

It is difficult to assess the impact of rail transport operations on the economy and general welfare of the people. Some agricultural produce that were hitherto transported from the northern part of the country by rail are now conveyed by road. Consequently, many intra-city drivers who rendered support services to train passengers have either been driven out of business or look for alternative means of survival (Onovo, Enugu, May, 2019).

The prevalence of obsolete and abandoned coaches is a common sight at the Enugu and Portharcourt rail stations. The coaches are mostly in state of disrepair and constitute a menace. A response was elicited from a resident of Okpara Avenue, adjacent to the Enugu rail lines, Chief Ugwu Eze:

Rail transport has united several communities in the past three or four decades.

However in recent years, rail operations have dwindled and it no longer bring communities together like it used to. I have equally observed that it poses security risk to pedestrians as there are no flyovers for pedestrians at railway crossings. The caution signs that train will pass in no distant time is not enough in this age and time. This poses a security risk for the community and it has sometimes caused accidents and loss of human lives and property along the old market intersection (Eze, Enugu, May, 2019).

The pains of the people who hitherto were both direct and indirect beneficiaries of rail transport operations in the area are visible and understandably so. Economic activities that were in time past emanated from railway infrastructure and services have dwindled so much as evident in loss of economic opportunities and poor living conditions.

Test of hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant effect of rail transportation operations on economic security in South-East Nigeria.

Table 1.2 Regression for Hypothesis One

Independent variable	Dependent Variable		Coefficient	p-value	f-stats	p-value	R ²
RTO	ECS		-0.1552	0.000	9.43	0.000	0.964

Source: Field Survey, May, 2019

The statistical decision rule of p-value states that the Null hypothesis should be accepted if P-value is greater than alpha value (i.e. level of significant which is 0.05) otherwise it should be rejected while the Alternative hypothesis is adopted.

The analysis shows a negative and significant effect of Rail Transportation Operations (RTO) on Economic Security (ECS) with a coefficient value of 0.1552, p-value < 0.05 at 0.000, disagreeing with the null hypotheses of the study. This result implies that the present RTOs negatively affect ECS in Eastern Nigeria. In other words, the greater the present state of RTOs, the lower the ECS in the area. The result indicates that continuation of the present RTOs is less effective in attaining higher ECS. Furthermore, the F-stat is 9.43 with a p-value of 0.000 which shows that the model is in good fit. The R² value of 0.964 shows that the model explains about 96% of the dependent variable, the remaining 4% may be explained by other factors.

Discussion of findings

The study found a negative and significant effect of Rail Transportation Operations (RTO) on Economic Security (ECS) in Eastern Nigeria, disagreeing with the null hypotheses of the study, implying that the present RTO negatively affects ECS and significantly. In other words, continuation of the present RTOs would lead to significantly lower ECS indicating that improved RTO would be more effective in attaining higher ECS. This finding is in line with the postulation of Akwara (2014) who postulated that it is arguable that insufficient rail transport facilities and services have imposed constraint on the mobility and accessibility of people such as the minority groups of the Middle Belt and South-Eastern states to facilities like markets, hospitals and easier access to highways. These have grave implications as it adds to deepening poverty levels and insecurity in those communities. Also,

Adesanya (2002) described rail transportation as “the wheels of economic activity because of its crucial role in catalyzing economic growth and development.” Ujam (1997) corroborated that railway as a means of transport brought wealth, liberty, new and desirable goods and security to the people of Eastern Nigeria. The railway is an economic infrastructure with critical benefits to the living standards and economic transactions of its benefiting and traversed communities in Nigeria.

It is evident therefore that deepening poverty is a threat to decent living and human security. The high level of deprivation and poverty along the eastern rail lines could be drastically reduced using the instrumentality of rail transport systems and infrastructure. The decline of the Eastern railway posed severe consequences on both the Nigerian economy and society. The transportation of goods by road made most goods expensive contrary to what they would have been had they been transported by railway, which was cheap (Ujam, 1997). This could only mean lower value for money and purchasing power and a decline in economic activities and security for the people.

This finding is in line with that of Faajir & Zidan (2016) which stated that the Nigerian railway is a classic illustration of a transportation policy which has side-lined an

important and cheap means of transport to foster the growth of privately-owned long haulage transport services.

Conclusion and Recommendations

It is evident from the data analysis that the present operational capacity of the Nigerian railway in the eastern region has a negative effect on the economic security of the people. Trains in the region still operate on the narrow gauge between Portharcourt and Aba in Abia state without reaching Enugu, the eastern railway headquarters. Consequently, its operations provide minimum support to economic activities when compared to road transport. Odeleye (2010) corroborated this when he postulated that today; Nigeria's economy ultimately relies on road mode for sustenance of its economic activities.

Empirical works have shown that rail transport provide the most cost-effective, affordable, energy saving and environmentally friendly form of transportation especially in areas where traffic densities are high (Onakomaiya, 1978; Olanrewaju, 1986, World Bank, 1994). With an efficient railway, travelling by roads could be minimized as many more people would be encouraged to use the rail service as opposed to the use of cars, thereby reducing the cost of goods and services. Commercial activities in communities where rail stations are domiciled

have dwindled, leading to higher cost of consumer goods and dwindling standard of living.

This confirms Onokala's postulation that ... the Nigerian railway system has ceased to be economically viable. It had deteriorated in all aspects and was caught up in a vicious circle of declining traffic, endemic deficits, decreasing capacity to serve its customers. In addition, the existing railway network is no longer connected to the major population, resources and activity centres of the country (Onokala, 2015). An efficient railway corporation would encourage freight of passengers and bulky goods. This would bring about a reduction in the prices of local commodities, resulting in cheaper cost of living and better living standard (Oni, 2010; Ademiluyi and Dina, 2011; Akwara et al., 2014). The present state of Nigeria's railway infrastructure along the south eastern district is an impediment to economic diversification, job creation and improved living conditions for the populace.

This study recommends in line with the research findings that:

- i. Rail Transportation Operations should be improved in ways that provide employment for the people in its environs and improve their living standards in order to attain true and better economic security, particularly in South Eastern Nigeria. It should be positioned to transport agricultural products such as tomatoes, grains, beef, groundnut, potatoes, beans, etc. from the far north where they are in abundance to the south eastern district to promote economic and food security in towns and villages.
- ii. Given the negative but insignificant effect of Rail Transportation Operations (RTO) on Environmental Security (ENS) in Eastern Nigeria, the study recommends that rail transportation operations should be revitalized to reduce the increasing vehicular patronage and cost of goods and services.

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