



Causes of Armed Banditry and its Impacts on Food Security in Zamfara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study investigated the causes of armed banditry on food security in Zamfara State, Nigeria. The research design adopted for this study was descriptive survey design. The population for this study consisted of all residents of Zamfara State whose population size was 5,804,059. The target population was four Local Government Area of Zamfara State. These were Birnin-Magaji, Maru, Shinkafi and Zurmi with the population of 1,249,200 as at 2016. The sample size was selected through the Research Advisors (2006) at 95% confidence level of 5.0% margin of error to determine the sample size of 384 while stratified sampling technique was also used. The instrument used for this study was a researcher designed questionnaire titled Causes of Banditry Attack on Food Security in Zamfara State Questionnaire (CBAFSQ). The instrument was validated by experts in Social Studies Education Department, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria. The reliability of the instrument was tested using test-re-test method within the interval of four weeks. Responses from the two administrations of the questionnaire were analyzed using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation statistic. The overall value of .89 coefficient was obtained. The data collected was analyzed by using frequency count and percentage. The findings of this study revealed that politics, poor security system, poverty, corruption and greed were factors responsible for rural banditry attacks on villages in Zamfara State and these have led to loss of means of livelihood of the rural farmers, prevented farming activities in most rural areas of Zamfara State, prevented rearing of livestock, led to loss of income and poor standard of living. The study, therefore, recommended among others that the government should strengthen the security situation of the state especially the rural villages where there is high occurrence of armed banditry attacks.

Keywords: Armed Banditry, Food Security, Kidnapping, Politics, Poverty.



Introduction

Food security has become a national priority especially in Nigeria where a vast majority of its 198.1 million population is food insecure (FMARD, 2016). Food and nutrition insecurity is prevalent in Nigeria despite its favorable agro-ecological endowments. It has a total landmass of 92.4 million hectares, out of which only about 32 million hectares or 34.63 percent are under cultivation. There are immense potentials in Nigeria's agricultural sector, which if properly managed would unleash income growth for farmers, food and nutritional security, and employment opportunities as well as elevate the country to the ranks of leading players in global food markets (FMARD, 2011).

The scenario of Nigeria's food and nutrition insecurity has been on worsening trend. According to FAO et al (2019), between 2004 and 2006, the total number of undernourished Nigerians was 9.1 million. This number increased to 25.6 million people or 281.32 percent in the period between 2016 and 2018. As Nigeria's population, which has growth rate of 3.1 percent continues to expand, the food and nutrition requirements of the country would also increase with the likelihood that food and nutrition insecurity might assume alarming dimensions. Food security in Northern Nigeria is under banditry attack.

Food security according to the World Food Summit 1996 "exists when all people at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active healthy life" (FAO, 2008). The Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO, 2010) simply defines food security as the availability of food in terms of production, distribution and consumption. Any form of violence that leads to insecurity in rural areas where majority of the people are farmers is bound to affect food security anywhere in the world.

Banditry refers to the incidences of armed robbery or allied violent crimes, such as kidnapping, cattle rustling, and village or market raids. It involves the use of force, or threat to that effect, to intimidate a person or a group of persons in order to rob, rape or kill (Okoli & Okpaleke 2014). Rural banditry has to do with armed violence perpetrated by criminal opportunists and syndicates in the countryside and frontiers of countries (Okoli & Okpaleke 2014a). It comprises acts of armed criminality targeting at human life or property: armed robbery, kidnapping, cattle rustling and allied armed violence (Okoli & Okpaleke 2014b). Banditry is a term used to refer to acts of robbery and violence in areas where the rule of law has broken down (Collins, 2000). Banditry consists of the organization of armed bands for the purpose of attacking state or social institutions or enterprises or individual persons. Participation in such bands and in the attacks committed by them is equally regarded as banditry (Collins, 2000).

In Nigeria, banditry came as a result of nearly four decades of unresolved conflicts between settled cultivators and nomadic herding communities that wander on the high plains of northern Nigeria particularly the North West geo-political zone in states such as Zamfara. Banditry in Zamfara State started since around 2009 and increased in 2011 especially after the general elections (Anka, 2017). In fact, Zamfara State has been the epicenter of banditry in Nigeria, where most of the bandit's leaders were based and from Zamfara state forests they would move riding on motor cycles to other states such as Katsina, to operate and return to their forest dens (Farouq & Chukwu, 2020). It is against this background that this study was carried out to investigate the influence of armed banditry on food security in Zamfara State, Nigeria.



The pervasive armed banditry and its associated threats to human security in the North-West region of Nigeria, particularly, Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Sokoto and Niger States, have become a subject of national security and public concern. The multifaceted layers of criminality involved, and recurrent nature of the armed banditry call for effective mechanisms to mitigate the threat it poses to peace and security in the affected States.

Zamfara State has become a centre of the obnoxious armed banditry in the Northern part of the country. This has affected economic development with the growth of unemployment and democratic setback through rise of groups of armed bandits. From 2011 to date, over 4000 lives have been lost. About five hundred and thirty-five (535) people (reported cases) were kidnapped and over 15,000 cattle and other livestock were rustled by bandits. In addition, not fewer than 36 communities along Dansadau, Zurmi, Shinkafi, Bakura, Maradun, Birnin Magaji, Anka, Gusau, Bukkuyum and Tsafe towns were burnt to the ground with their inhabitants displaced to alternative safer places (Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, 2018).

Mustapha (2019) investigated armed banditry and internal security in Zamfara State. His study found out that the factors responsible for armed banditry in the state, viz; unemployment, poverty, injustice by traditional fathers, drug abuse, vulnerability, disperse settlement, huge financial benefits, proliferation of fire arms, poor nature of security at the border, cultural conflict and out of court/police settlement. The study recommended among other things, adoption of Conflict Resolution Mechanism and Amnesty as well as Socio-economic policies that would lead to the rehabilitation and reconstruction of the affected communities.

Chitra (2020) conducted a study on the analysis of violence and insecurity in Zamfara. The findings revealed that the current administration, which campaigned on a platform of returning security to Zamfara, has taken promising actions but lacks capacity and conflict sensitivity which risks inflaming tensions once more. A peace deal was signed the middle of 2019 but the relative peace it has brought about remains fragile. In spite of these studies, security of rural farmers is still not guaranteed. Therefore, this study investigated the influence of armed banditry on food security in Zamfara State, Nigeria.

Zamfara State is among the seven states that formed the Northwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria. It was created in 1996 out of the then Sokoto State. It shares an international border with the Republic of Niger to the North, and interstate boundaries with Katsina to the East, Sokoto State to the West, Kebbi, Niger and Kaduna States to the South. Zamfara State comprises fourteen local government areas namely, Gusau, Tsafe, Bungudu, Maru, Kaura-Namoda, Zurmi, Shinkafi, Birnin-Magaji, Talata-Mafara, Bakura, Maradun, Anka, Bukkuyum, and Gummi. The State has a land mass of thirty-nine thousand seven hundred sixty-two square kilometres (39,762km²). It has a population of three million two hundred and seventy-eight thousand, eight hundred and seventy-three people (3,278,873 (2006 Census Figures) and predominantly agrarian. Hausas are the dominant tribe while the Fulanis formed between twenty to thirty percent total population out of which about fifteen to twenty percent are pastoral in nature. Zamfara State is endowed with vast forest composed of thirty thick grazing reserves. The grazing reserves cover million two hundred and twenty-five thousand, six hundred and forty-eight hectares (2,225,648 hectares). This provides the habitable environment for pastoral life. The State has an estimated total livestock of about Six million comprising Cattle, Sheep, Goats, Camels, Horses and Donkeys.

This study adopts the Queer Ladder Theory (QLT) as its analytical framework. The theory was influenced by an American sociologist, Daniel Bell (1919-2011), who coined the idea



of 'queer ladder' in an attempt to explain the instrumental essence of organized crime as a desperate means of socioeconomic Empowerment and social climbing. This theoretical perspective has since fertilized into a popular theoretical framework widely used in contemporary crime studies. The basic assumptions of QLT are;

1. Organized crime is an instrumental behaviour; it is means to an end.
2. It is an instrument of social climbing and/or socioeconomic advancement.
3. It is a measure to accumulate wealth and build power (Mallory, 2007 & Okoli & Orinya, 2013).

Often ascribed to Queer Ladder Theory is the notion that organized crime thrive in contexts where the government's capacity to dictate, sanction and deter crime is poor; where public corruption is endemic; and where prospects for legitimate livelihood opportunities are slim (Okoli, & Orinya, 2013, Lyman, 2007, Mallory, 2007). Under these circumstances, the incentive to indulge in crime is high, while deterrence from criminal living is low. In other words, the benefits of committing a crime surpass the costs and/or risks. This creates pretext for criminal impunity and franchise [3]. Applied to the purpose of this study, QLT would enable one to come to terms with the prevalence of organized crime in Zamfara State. In this regard, it is to be observed that the phenomenon of armed banditry in Zamfara State has been driven by criminal quest for economic accumulation in an environment that condones crimes.

Objectives of the Study

The study was set to achieve the following objectives:

1. To examine factors responsible for the rural banditry in Zamfara State, Nigeria;
2. To assess different types of crimes committed by rural armed bandits in Zamfara State, Nigeria
3. To examine the perceived influence of armed banditry attacks on food security in Zamfara state, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions are raised to guide the study:

1. What are the factors responsible for the rural banditry in Zamfara State, Nigeria?
2. What are the different types of crimes committed by rural armed bandits in Zamfara State, Nigeria?
3. What is the perceived influence of armed banditry attacks on food security in Zamfara State, Nigeria?

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was descriptive design of survey type. This, according to Adewale (2004), is an approach that looks for relationship on the basis of which projections are made. Also, it involves a planned collection of data over a large area for the purpose of making description. Thus, this method was considered appropriate because it allowed the researcher to make careful record of what was observed so that the researcher could analyse the information that was obtained from a representative sample of the population and describe situation as they exist.



The population for this study consisted of all residents in Zamfara State whose population size was 5,804,059 (citypop.gov.ng). The target population was four Local Government Area of Zamfara State. These were Birnin-Magaji, Maru, Shinkafi and Zurmi with the population of 1,249,200 as at 2016. The sample size was selected through the Research Advisors (2006) at 95% confidence level of 5.0% margin of error to determine the sample size of 384. Stratified sampling technique was used to select the sample by LGAs. Also, random sampling technique was used to distribute the questionnaire at each Local Government Area Headquarters.

The instrument used for this study was a researcher designed questionnaire, tagged, Influence of Banditry Attack on Food Security in Zamfara State Questionnaire (IBAFSQ). The instrument contained 15 items based on the research questions raised for this study. The response to this questionnaire was structured on a two scale of agree and disagree.

In order to ensure the validity of the research instrument, copies of the draft of the instrument were given to five experts (the supervisor of the study, two experts in the Department of Social Studies and one expert from the field of Measurement and Evaluation, Faculty of Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria) for their comments on the face and content validity. Based on their comments and corrections, corrected copy was tested for reliability. The test re-test method of reliability was used. Copies of the questionnaire were administered farmers in Gusau Local Government Area of Zamfara State using the sample of the study using 41 participants. The questionnaire was presented twice to the participants within the interval of four weeks. Responses from the two administrations of the questionnaire were analysed using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation statistic. The overall value of .89 coefficient was obtained. This indicated that the instrument is reliable.

The questionnaire was designed to collect data from rural dwellers at each Local Government Headquarters in Zamfara State. Due to security reason, the researcher was advised and administered the instrument to rural farmers who have relocated to their respective LGAs Headquarters. Data collected was analysed by using frequency count and percentage.

Results

Research Question 1:

What are the factors responsible for the rural banditry in Zamfara State, Nigeria?

Table 1: Factors responsible for the rural banditry in Zamfara State, Nigeria

S/N	Factors responsible for the rural banditry	%	%
1	Political Factor	102	27
2	Poor Security System	99	26
3	Greed	50	13
4	Corruption	53	14
5	Poverty	87	23
Total		384	100%

Table 1 revealed the factors responsible for the rural banditry attacks in Zamfara State, Nigeria. It was perceived by 102 (27%) of the respondents that politics is the number one factor responsible for the attacks in the state. It was also agreed that poor security system (26%) while



poverty was considered as a factor responsible for the banditry attacks in Zamfara State as agreed by 87 (23%) of the respondents. 53 (14%) of the respondents believed that corruption was responsible for the attacks and 50 (13%) of the respondents agreed that greed was responsible.

Research Question 2:

What are the different types of crimes committed by rural armed bandits in Zamfara State, Nigeria?

Table 2: Types of crimes committed by rural armed bandits in Zamfara State, Nigeria

S/N	Crimes committed by rural armed bandits	%	%
1	Murder	70	18
2	Kidnaping and abduction	120	31
3	Rape	60	16
4	Looting of Farm Produce	34	9
5	Theft of Flocks	100	26
Total		384	100%

Table 2 revealed the opinions of the respondents on the types of crimes committed by rural armed bandits in Zamfara State, Nigeria. As shown in the Table, 120 (31%) of the respondents agreed that kidnaping and abduction is the commonest type of crime committed by rural armed banditry in Zamfara State villages. Majority of the respondents (100, 26%) agreed also that theft of flocks among the crimes committed by rural armed banditry. The respondents (70, 18%, 60, 16%, and 34, 9%) agreed that other crimes committed by armed rural bandits were murder, rape and looting of farm produce.

Research Question 3:

What is the perceived influence of armed banditry attacks on food security in Zamfara state, Nigeria?

Table 3: Perceived influence of armed banditry attacks on food security in Zamfara state, Nigeria

S/N	Perceived influence of armed banditry attacks on food security	%	%
1	Prevention of Farming Activities	111	29
2	Loss of means of livelihood	120	31
3	Loss of Income	57	15
4	Prevention of Livestock Rearing	60	16
5	Poor Standard of Living	36	9
Total		384	100

Table 3 revealed the perceived influence of armed banditry attacks on food security in Zamfara state, Nigeria. As shown in the Table, 120 (31%) of the respondents agreed that banditry attacks have led to loss of means of livelihood of the rural farmers in the affected areas of Zamfara State. Also, 111 (29%) of the respondents agreed that armed banditry attacks prevented farming activities in most rural areas of Zamfara State. Similarly, the respondents (60, 16%, 57, 15% and 36, 9%) attested that banditry attacks have prevented rearing of livestock, led to loss of income and poor standard of living respectively.



Discussion of Findings

The finding of this study revealed that politics, poor security system, poverty, corruption and greed were factors responsible for rural banditry attacks on villages in Zamfara State, Nigeria. This finding is in congruence with Anka (2017) who narrated that the genesis of armed banditry in Zamfara State started since around 2009, but it became out of control in 2011 after the general elections. During that period, there were frequent theft of domestic animals by local bandits across many local government areas of the state. The bandits used to carry Dane guns, cutlasses and sticks for their operations and most of their activities were targeted on cattle owners/rearers found in isolated villages and forests. This unpleasant act triggered the affected communities that are predominantly in disperse rural settlements to organise a local vigilante group known as “Yansakai” in order to counter or checkmate the activities of the bandits (Anka, 2017). This finding supported Mustapha (2019) who asserted that the rate of poverty in Zamfara State is quite alarming and the result of this is an increase in armed banditry and other social vices that add to the problem of internal security in the state. Also, the findings of this study revealed that bandits in Zamfara State engaged in different criminal activities such as kidnaping and abduction, theft of flocks, murder, rape and looting of farm produce.

The findings of this study revealed that rural banditry attacks in Zamfara State have led to loss of means of livelihood of the rural farmers, prevented farming activities in most rural areas of Zamfara State, prevented rearing of livestock, led to loss of income and poor standard of living. This finding was in line with the thought of Olaniyan and Yahaya (2016) who argued that cattle rustling as a form of rural banditry has significantly contributed to integration challenges faced by some countries in Africa.

Conclusion

This study investigated the influence of armed banditry attacks on food security in Zamfara State, Nigeria. The study discovered that armed banditry attacks on rural villages was a threat to the lives and survival of people in Zamfara State. This is characterized with kidnapping, murder, theft of livestock among other vices. This therefore requires urgent attention in securing and defending the lives of everyone as well ensuring adequate food supply through farming system.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion of this study, the following are recommended that:

1. The issue of rural poverty among the people needs to be urgently addressed to prevent any form of compromise between the rural dwellers and the bandits;
2. The government should strengthen the security situation of the state especially the rural villages where there is high occurrence of armed banditry attacks;
3. Compensation plans (cash and cattles) should be made by government to assist those whose cattle were rustled by the bandits and people with no means of livelihood at present.

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