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## IMPACTS OF BANDITRY ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF ZAMFARA STATE

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### Abstract

The study investigated the impacts of banditry on the socio-economic activities in Nigeria, with Zamfara State as a case study. To achieve the objective of the research, primary and secondary method of data collection were employed. Primary data through structured questionnaire was administered to critical stakeholders in addition to interview method. Findings revealed that banditry which started in 2011 has led to loss of lives and property, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, social dislocation, famine, stagnation of business and other trading activities, displacement, and migration. Findings further revealed that corruption and bad governance, lack of education, and unemployment gave birth to banditry in the State. Arising from the findings, the study recommends both kinetic and non-kinetic military operations, political will, intelligence gathering, poverty alleviation programmes, good governance, employment opportunities, infrastructure development, social cohesion and inclusion, youth empowerment, and skills acquisition programmes as panacea towards curbing the menace.

**KEYWORDS:** Banditry, Poverty, Unemployment, Corruption, Insecurity, Displacement, Famine.

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### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Armed Banditry is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria. The history of banditry can be traced to pre-civil war period when the government deteriorated in certain parts of the old Western region resulting in political violence, crime, and organized insurgency. According to Olaniyan and Yahaya, (2016), pervasive banditry and its associated threats to security, which have enveloped the Northwest zone of Nigeria, particularly, Zamfara State has become a national security worrisome issue of public concern.

Mustapha (2019) opines that the Northwest zone of Nigeria and its banditry activities have become very worrisome. The activities of bandits range from kidnapping to murder, rape, robbery, cattle-rustling, and the likes. Their modus operandi involves maiming and killing their victims when they least expect. Usually, they mobilized themselves through the forests into the neighborhood, riding on fast motorcycles especially at nights and shoot at will. Most times in the afternoon, once they were sure that there was no security presence, they unleash terror on the communities. This

growing security threat claims lives of victims in hundreds. Several children have been orphaned and women became widows over night while the issue of food security has further made life unbearable in Zamfara State.

However, the current situation of things in the state can be likened to the scenario of the war-torn countries where people are found living in fear of uncertainty. This is due to the fact that most of the people living in some of the villages in the state hardly sleep with their eyes closed. In effect, because of the constant spontaneous and erratic nature of the attacks by the bandits, the villagers have resorted to abandoning their houses in the night to look for shelter in nearby bushes; and to return in the following morning with their families.

Moreover, because of these heinous activities of the bandits in the state, most of the people's political, social and economic activities have been at the lowest ebb. Farming and pastoral activities have also resulted to the level of non-existence in most of the communities and villages in the state. This disturbing development



has made Zamfara State and its environs insecure which therefore prompted both the federal and Zamfara State governments in this dire situation to seek for measures to end the menace or to bring it to the barest minimum. Zamfara state actually grapples with issues of socio-economic development as an agrarian state, as it is engulfed in conflict that is centered on forcefully denying communities from engaging in their main occupation which is farming. Farm products were most times burnt down and the process of further cultivation hindered by the bandits.

Scholars like Gaye (2018) and Yahaya (2016) have advanced several factors for the causes and prevalence of banditry in Nigeria. Some of the factors they argued include the following factors herein understated:

- fragility of the Nigerian state,
- weak state institutions,
- Overcentralisation of the security architecture, especially the agencies,
- availability of grossly ungoverned spaces,
- porosity of Nigeria's international borders with its neighboring countries
- small arms and light weapons proliferation,
- weak leadership,
- corruption,
- unemployment and mass poverty.

Furthermore, despite the federal framework adopted by Nigeria's forefathers, Nigeria's security architecture since the incursion of the military in Nigeria's politics is contrived in such a manner that the control of every security outfit is placed in the hands of federal government at the centre. Though the state executive governor is recognized by the Nigeria's constitution as the Chief Security Officer of his state, yet in actual fact, he wields no power over the police that could be put to use in time of crisis. This precarious situation places every executive state governor at the mercy of the President in period of crises at the state level due to being denied the opportunity of confronting security challenges with expediency and expertise. This is one of the reasons why people are clamouring for restructuring and the establishment of state-controlled Police to meet the immediate needs for every state.

The essence of this research, therefore, is to investigate the causes of banditry in Zamfara State with a view to affirming the socio-economic impact on the state and to proffer policy recommendations.

### 1.1 Statement of the problem

As Nigeria is suffering from the Boko Haram insurgency which has crippled the socio-economic development, new emerging security threats are fast paving their ways to either complement or to gradually replace further threats to the country's socio-economic progress. Armed banditry has recently become rampant in Nigeria and poses a threat to Nigeria's socio-economic development.

### 1.2 Objectives of the study

The main objective of this study is to empirically investigate the effects of banditry on the Socioeconomic activities of Zamfara state.

The study was guided by the following specific objectives;

1. To examine the causes of banditry in Nigeria.
2. To proffer policy recommendations on how to curb the menace of banditry in Nigeria.

### 1.3 Research questions

1. What are the factors responsible for banditry in Nigeria?
2. What are the implications of Banditry on Zamfara State socioeconomic development?
3. What are the measures towards checkmating the menace of banditry in Zamfara State?

### 1.4 Significance of the study

The study seeks to add to the existing body of knowledge on the subject matter. Students undergoing research on similar study would find this research useful as reference material.

The policy recommendation from the study will also help to guide government and security personnels in their task of confronting the challenges posed by insecurity, especially banditry in the country.

### 1.5 Research methodology

The study adopted a survey design. The survey design is the most appropriate because the researchers do not control or manipulate the independent variable because they are not manipulatable. Two sources of data collections were utilized in the study. The study being on current issue in the historical antecedents demanded primary and secondary sources of data. The primary sources of data for the study included personal interviews, direct observations, and a structured questionnaire to respondents and critical stakeholders who are direct primary providers of information for the study. On the other hand, the secondary sources of data were collected from newspapers, articles, journals, conference/workshop proceedings, scholarly publications, and internet sources. To establish the population of the study, the researchers adopted deliberate non probability sampling method in selecting respondents from Zamfara State. The target population cut across groups, age, sex, occupation, class, et cetera. Careful measures were taken to ensure a fair representation of the entire population.

## 2.0 Literature Review

The literature review is in various segments aimed at highlighting the scholarly contributions of various authors on the subject matter in this research. Issues like proliferation of firearms, causes and manifestations of Banditry in Zamfara State and perspectives on armed banditry among others were the main focus.

### 2.1 Banditry/Armed Banditry

The issues of banditry have been subjected to so many perceptions by divergent scholars. For instance, some people explain the concept based on the views of the ancient societies in which bandits were considered as the champions of courses of the masses. These group of people tend to engage in robbing the rich

and giving to the poor, deriving admirations and respect from them (Rife, 2011) cited in Tar (2021).

In the same vein, White (1981) also conceives bandits as persons who were forced by the society to become outlaws who rob from the rich to help the poor and only kills in self-defense which earned him respect and love by the downtrodden in society. However, the term bandit, in recent time has a different explanation as it was viewed from the socio-economic angle of pauperization of an individual living in a harsh physical environment emanating from some sorts of political or social disorder in the region. Thus, this exposition has shown the obvious delineation between ancient and contemporary conception of banditry.

According to Warty (2011), banditry is a crime committed by the inhabitants of a given rural community or people in the low economic and social stratum with a view to fulfilling their essential needs and desires. This definition can be attributed to the problem of structural pressure that kept on increasing which, as a result of lack of access to the natural resources that sustained their lives. This assertion tends to be tenable as most of crimes committed in the country were partly due to the neglect by the government. Armed banditry is generally characterized by cattle rustling, armed robbery, kidnapping for ransom, and illegal collection of tax at rural community market, especially in the Northern Nigeria (Mohammed & Alimba, 2015). They observed further that, in Nigeria, shortly before the civil-war, when government broke down in some parts of the Western Region and there were violence everywhere. They further observed that because the military regime of Gowon failed to manage demobilization process very well, the demobilized combatants from the civil war returned home jobless, and outlawry thus easily became appealing to them. To the scholars, all these are tenable because of youth unemployment in the country.

Egwu (2015), views armed banditry from the angle of stealing cattle and animals from herders or the process of raiding of animals from ranches. He argued that in most cases these activities were usually driven by several factors.

He sees banditry generally as an economically-based form of criminality perpetuated through an informal network. As an economic activity, he further postulates that armed banditry progressed as a means of "primitive" accumulation of cow herds in the context of subsistence and commercial pastoralism. Linking this to its effect on security generally, Egwu further explained that, armed banditry and cattle rustling has impacted negatively on national security and also to some greater extent brought about frictions in state-society relation. More importantly, he further claimed that armed banditry has impacted negatively on livestock production in Nigeria. This is because livestock production tends to be not only a significant aspect of agriculture in Nigeria's quest for diversification of the economy, but it has also remained one of the major alternative sources of protein and dairy production in Nigeria.

Momale (2015) characterizes Armed Banditry as a wider scope of extensive cattle rustling which involves different forms of crimes;

among which are the highway robbery and gang-like invasion of settlements with a view to confiscating wealth and properties. His argument pontificates that banditry activities are usually associated with societies suffering from social and economic upheavals and that it is tenable where the structure and functioning of leadership and governance have completely collapsed and/ or are insignificantly weakened. Based on this fact, he emphasized that these heinous acts are much more tenable and condoned in rural areas and marginal communities.

Momale further discovered that the extant consequences and impact of armed banditry in all societies affected; have led to the repeated and continual attacks and killings of heads of many households in all the states of the federation, and that poverty and loss of livelihood are on the rise with women and children being the most victims. In some cases, many heads of households affected have abandoned their families, and leaving women to engage in excessive labor to cater for their families. Similarly, he also made a strong case regarding the consequences of armed banditry in Nigeria.

The banditry activities in Zamfara State have led to the rising incidence of cattle theft and accompanying rape of women and children by heartless rustlers. These have also resulted into conflicts, deaths, and loss of means of livelihood to countless number of cattle breeders across the country. The resultant factor has been the manifestation of a pattern of organized crime with immense lawlessness. The prevalence of Armed Banditry has, of recent, been a big problem, especially in the North-Western zone of the country where cattle rearing is an integral part of their agricultural practice. (Desert Herald Newspaper 15 November, 2015).

Armed bandits have regularly attacked Fulani settlements in the region, stealing cattle, setting fires on homes, and raping women, prompting the herders to move southwards. In response, young Fulani men have become involved in cross-border rustling and armed robbery syndicates in West Africa. According to the Miyette Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), the umbrella body of Fulani herders in Nigeria; they have turned against their kinsmen for not helping them out during decades of conflicts between herders and farmers over grazing and watering rights, which led to the loss of their entire herds and poverty (Daily Mail Newspaper 11 May, 2016).

Ducan Lenairoshi, (2015) posited that, "Armed Banditry is largely caused by competition over control of and access to natural resources; particularly water and pasture. Other causes of conflicts include historical rivalry, deep-seated cultural values, land issues, political interments, idleness amongst the youth and more recently proliferation of illicit arms."

Again, Omitola (2014) looked at the phenomena from different perspectives and stated that "the influence of foreign Fulani groups in search of pasture accounts for irreconcilable conflicts being witnessed between the Fulani and their hosts communities. Due to cultural and religious affinity, it is practically difficult to

distinguish between Nigeria Fulani and Fulani from other countries across the Sahel region moving into Nigeria”

Okoli, A. and Opakele, N. (2014) also observed that “Armed Banditry has been a perennial problem in Nigeria. In Northern Nigeria where cattle rearing constitute a dominant occupation, the problem has been complicated by the rising incidence of farmers/herders conflicts as well as the Boko Haram insurgency”. Olayoku (2014) argued that,

*“climate changes, the migration further south, the growth of agro-pastoralism, the expansion of farming on pastures, the invasion of farmlands by cattle, assault on” non-Fulani women by herders, blockage stock routes and water points, freshwater scarcity, burning of range lands, cattle theft, inadequate animal health care, and disease control, over grazing on fallow lands, defecation in stream, and road by cattle, extensive sensitization, ineffective coping strategies, ethnic stereotyping, and the breakdown of conflict intervention mechanism, has been identified by scholars as the root causes of banditry in rural areas.”*

Furthermore, Olayoku(2014), added that “the major source of tension between pastoralist and farmers is basically economic, with land-related issues accounting for the majority of the conflicts”.

In the recent years, the upsurge in Armed Banditry and attacks on villagers by the rustlers could be attributed to the problem of arms proliferation in the African continent particularly in the West African sub-region where conflicts have become daily occurrence. Owa, O.G., and Anthony, (2015) have argued that, “the regular interception of illegal arms trafficking within and across the borders by security agencies also reveals the worrisome dimension that arms proliferation has recently assumed in the country”.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

The researchers have adopted the Human Needs Theory as the theoretical framework for this study. The Concept of Human Conflicts and Peace are interrelated and also affects all aspects of human life. The theory generally proposed that all humans have certain basic needs and that whenever these needs are denied, conflict is likely to occur. The theory was generally popularized by Abraham Maslow (1954), John Burton (1990), Marshal Rosenberg (1984), and Manfred Maxeef (1991).

These theorists have agreed and posited that the main cause of most intractable conflicts was the underlying requirements of people to meet their needs; which can either be on individual, groups or societal basis. The position of Human Needs Theory is that the unavailability of any alternative means to meet the needs of individuals or group is usually what triggers violence or conflict in a society.

The theory further believed that often times, violence also occurs when human requires understanding, respect, and consideration for their needs. These needs, as argued by the theory are not only the subsistence such as food, water, and shelter but also contained

psychological needs such as participation, identity, understanding and recognition.

The Human Needs Theory is relevant to the research topic in the sense that it was propounded to address issues that are conflict in nature and in this context, it is not an unarguable fact that Zamfara State is grappling with the menace of armed banditry which has generally and negatively affected socio-economic and human development.

The relevance of Human Needs Theory could further be attributed to the inability of government to provide the basic essential elements for human survival. In fact, the inability of the Zamfara State government to provide essential needs such as employment, water, electricity, roads, healthcare in most communities was responsible and has been the bane of the conflicts.

## 3.0 Discussion of Findings.

Based on the research findings, the menace of banditry which started since 2011 in Zamfara State was characterized by indiscriminate attacks and killings of cattle owners, Vigilante members, and other innocent rural dwellers. In addition to cattle’s rustling, significant number of the hoodlums involved in armed banditry in the affected communities were mostly of Fulani descent.

The proliferation of arms in Zamfara State by herdsmen according to the research study was largely responsible for the increasing incidences of armed banditry. As a result of this widespread possession of small arms and light weapons and other dangerous weapons, the efficacy of local vigilante groups to deal with these ravaging acts has been greatly undermined as they usually are out-gunned and thus cannot match the fire power of the hoodlums.

The research further affirmed that as a result of indiscriminate attacks and killings of innocent livestock owners and general lack of security and safety in the affected districts, many families have relocated from their places of abode or/and troubled spots and areas. Consequently, socio- economic activities have suffered and life has become unbearable because farming, which is the main occupation of the people, has suffered setbacks. This has resulted to food shortages and decrease in income of farmers and consequently poverty. In addition, trading and other businesses were not feasible anymore due to banditry activities.

According to the research findings, the efforts of government and the security agencies in tackling the menace of banditry have not been, as expected, much positive. While the governments, both at the federal and state levels, have not been able to effectively tackle the menace due to political reason, it was also affirmed that the State government prefers dialogue with the criminals rather than employing the military’s kinetic and non-kinetic options.

The findings in the research further indicate that a lot of people have migrated from Zamfara State to other neighboring states and across the international border into Niger Republic for fear of attack and to escape the rampaging marauders. Apart from abduction of a lot of people for ransom payments, women were

most times raped and molested. This has led to communal ceremonies being suspended since the attacks have refused to abate.

Furthermore, the high level of insecurity has disrupted social activities in Zamfara State with schools closed down in some communities that were displaced as a result of bandit attacks. This has negatively impacted on the education system.

Based on the research findings, the insecurity caused by banditry has deterred investors from setting up businesses in the state, leading to stagnation in economic growth and development. The lack of economic opportunities has forced many residents to flee the state in search of safer environment, further depleting the workforce and hindering the overall progress of the region.

#### 4.0 Conclusion and Recommendations.

The security challenges which started in Zamfara State in 2011 was as a result of the government neglect of the people in providing the basic needs and social amenities and in addition, the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the State. This has led to banditry activities resulting in the creation of severe negative effects on the socio-economic activities in Zamfara State in particular and the North - west zone in general. Unfortunately, the interventions of the government and security agents have not yielded the desired results due to the lackadaisical political approach in tackling the menace. In other words, there is no clear and convincing political will on the part of the governments to curb the menace.

In the light of this, the following measures are proffered in tackling the security challenges in Nigeria, and in Zamfara State in particular.

- (i) Government should enact legislation to deal with problems relating to all forms of banditry and culprits should be prosecuted in order to serve as a deterrent against subsequent infractions.
- (ii) Government should also create an enabling environment for local jobs to strive for the teeming unemployed youths as an "idle mind is a devil's workshop." Many of the youth population took to banditry because of lack of job and consequently, hunger, in the first instance.
- (iii) Collaborative efforts among states in the North-West zone, namely Kaduna, Zamfara, Sokoto, Kebbi, Niger and Katsina States to checkmate the bandits in their respective hideout in the various concealing forests is important.
- (iv) There should be constant and effective deployment of adequate number of security personnels to the affected communities to checkmate the illegal activities of cattle rustlers and rural banditry
- (v) Aerial surveillance and intelligence gathering on bandits hide out in the forest is important for easier identification and location for troops operation.
- (vi) Twenty four hours surveillance and patrol along the 1,608 kilometers (999 miles) Nigeria-Niger

Republic land borders to checkmate the influx of foreign nomads who are smugglers of dangerous weapons into the county is important.

- (vii) Government should summon the needed courage and the political will to put an end to the security challenges through the military kinetic and non-kinetic operations rather than seeking paliative political solutions that cut no ice.
- (viii) Government should equally put in place youth empowerment and skills acquisition programs in addition to other employment opportunities.

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