

**INTERROGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BANDITRY AND ILLEGAL
MINING IN NIGERIA; IMPLICATIONS TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN
POST-COVID PERIOD; A PEEP INTO BAGEGA IN ZAMFARA STATE ILLEGAL
MINING SITE**

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Abstract

Mining is one of the activities of government that yield enormous income into its confers for the purpose of running and managing its social, economic, and political affairs. But when these activities of government are neglected, it, however, fall into the hands of illegal miners who are not regulated. It is overtaken by scrupulous elements who may want to cash in for the purpose of promoting illegality aimed at undermining development and promoting insecurity, through banditry which is regarded as terrorism. This paper adopted the Elite Theory for the purpose of providing an explanation within the context and content of this paper. The choice of adopting this theory was because it best suits the explanation of illegal mining which is sponsored by the political and economic big wits of the society. The methodology adopted by this paper in terms of data collection is both primary and secondary methods of data collection and the survey research design was used. The presenters were in the area where these illegal mining activities takes place in Bagega in Zamfara State for the purpose of having first hand information apart from the fact that revenue accruing to the Federal Government are lost, most of the proceed from these activities are used for acquisition of weapons, hiring of personnel for the purpose of banditry and provision of logistics to aid illicit activities and other crimes

which are inimical to national development. In order to deal with illegal mining in Nigeria, this paper provides that stiffer penalty should be made in line with the amendment of the Mining Act of 2007 to reduce or eliminate illegal mining in Zamfara State, and again, the issue of mining should be removed from the Exclusive list, for the purpose of proper regulation to deal with illegal mining activities in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Mining, Illegal Mining, Banditry, National Development, Post-Covid Period.*

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1. Introduction

Nigeria is a federal structure but how federal is this federal structure is one that have made the issue of mining which is under the exclusive list of the 1999 constitution as amended. If the issue of mining is a federal issue of mining but the North West region has large un-mined deposits of solid mineral resources - gold, lead, tin, and zinc - commercial quantities. Section (I) of the Nigerian Mineral and Mining Act 2007 gives the federal government ownership and control of all mining processes, however, an estimated 80 percent of mining in the region is carried out illegally and on n artisanal basis (Ogbonnaya, 2020).

One of the greatest problems militating against the Buhari-led administration is the issue of insecurity stemming from the activities of banditry as it affects Nigerian development. No doubt the activities of banditry are a serious menace to the political system, but this is too resolute whether there is a relationship between banditry and illegal mining in Nigeria considering the fact that banditry is a heavy capital 'project' that is not meant for the poor, feeble and weak. This paper seeks to establish whether there is a link between illegitimate mining of natural resource and banditry especially as it involves the North West of Nigeria and also sees how this relationship has eroded national development. It is how pertinent to examine the statement of problem vis-a-vis the objective for which this paper is set to achieve.

Statement of the Problem

The perplexing questions this paper set to resolve for on the statement of the problem and are;

- a. What is the motivation for illegal mining in Nigeria?
- b. Is the relationship between illegal mining and banditry?

c. Has national development been eroded due to illegal mining and banditry?

Objective of the Study

The purpose for which this paper was hinged is the aim of this paper, these are;

- i. to examine the motivation for illegal mining in Nigeria.
- ii. to examine the relationship between illegal mining and banditry.
- iii. to further examine whether national development been negatively affected illegal mining and banditry.

And at the end provide a suggestion that will help deal with the stated problem.

2. Methodology

The methodology is used to explain the design, method of data collection, study area, the instrument of data collection and analysis. The survey research design was used in order to assist the fieldwork. The study area was the illegal mining site in Bagega, Zamfara State. The choice of this community is because it has one of the largest illegal site in Zamfara State. There are about nineteen groups involved in these activities out of which four groups out of the nineteen are very organized operating as if it has legal backing. The six groups are;

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| i. SOJA Groups | ii. BATURE Groups |
| iii. ZAZABI Groups | iv. MU'KASA Groups |
| v. ABDULMALIK | vi. DANTATA |

The presenter has to disguise as one of the miners to get this information at a time where the Federal Government ban any form of mining activities and there was military presence in this community. This is one of the limitations of the presenter and the stress of hiring an interpreter.

3. Conceptual Clarification

- **Mining:** These are those activities that excavation, extraction and exploration of solid minerals from the earth for the purpose of personal survival, economic engagement, and for the development of the economy of the nation (Amosu and Adeosun 2021:14). Examples of those substances extracted from the earth include gold, coal, iron ore, diamond, etc.

Again mining is the process of extracting useful materials from the earth. This process of mining dates back to PREHISTORIC times when people mined flint, which was used in making tools and weapons for hunting in order to provide food for man (Ehi, 2010:16). No nation is without one form of mineral resource or the other especially considering the fact that every economy of the world depends on one mineral resource or the other. Mineral resources are valuable substances extracted or mined from the earth (Otegwu and Orungbami, 2019:14). However, there are two types of mining they are SURFACE mining and UNDERGROUND mining. Surface mining is all those extractive activities that involve blasting of the earth with a view of removing the minerals. This is very destructive to the environment. The other one involves those activities in removing minerals from the depth of the earth, which this study is considering (Drazen, 2016:6).

- **Illegal Mining:** Over the years illegal mining is one of the biggest challenges militating against countries of the world, especially Africa and Nigeria particular.

However, what is illegal mining, simply put illegal mining is all those illicit activities geared towards the extraction of mineral resources with permission or license from the state (Kana and Ibrahim 2015:16).

More so, illegal mining is mining activities that are carried out without consent, permit, or allowance of the Federal or State government, especially when rights to land, licensee to mine, or transport mineral allowed (Dozoline, 2018: 23). Again, illegal mining is the process where miners extract minerals in their rawest form without authorization, permission, and/or license (Amosu and Adeosun 2021:13) and also smuggle them out of the country to buyers who are willing without any interception by the Nigeria Customs Services. Over 80 percent of illegal mining activities take place in rural areas, rural communities, and hamlets. The labour is very cheap, sometimes illegal miners engage in most of these illegalities for the purpose of satisfying their hunger just to have something to eat for survival (Jiaye, 2013:12).

- **Banditry:** Can be seen as a type of organized crime committed by outlaws typically involving the threat or use of violence, a person who engages in banditry is known as a bandit and primarily commits a crime such as extortion, robbery, and murder either as an individual or groups. Banditry is a vague concept of criminality and in modern usage can be synonymous with gangsterism, brigandage, marauding, and thievery (Akintunde, 2020:11).

Moreso, banditry means the occurrence or prevalence of armed robbery or violent crime. It involves the use of force, or threat to that effect, to intimidate a person with the intent to rob, rape, or kill. Banditry is a crime against persons (Ahmed and Ahmed, 2021:2). According to the presenters, banditry is all those clandestine criminal activities aimed at satisfying evil curiosity and causing bodily harm to a person or group of persons.

- **National Development:** National development can be described as the overall development or a collective socio-economic, political as well as religious advancement of a country or nation (Tolu and Abe, 2017:3). National development on another hand is the capacity of the country to raise the standard of living of its residents (Egwu, 2016: 17) and this can be achieved by providing for an individual with basic lively hood requirements and supplying them with employment etc. development itself is a process that creates growth, brings in progress and positive change.

In 2020, Nigeria's economy was badly affected due to the incidence of the COVID 19 pandemic. Nigeria's economy was disrupted due to low oil prices and poor remittance couple with the heavy restriction which affected the non-oil sector of the economy, yet banditry activities continued to thrive in the North East and North West of Northern Nigeria (Okolie and Ugwu, 2019: 23).

- **Post – COVID 19 Era:** This is the evolutionary phase that concerns the period emerging of the COVID 19 crises, which leads the global socio-economic system and the various actors laying the ground for the appearance of an entirely new form of globalization (Ogbonnaya, 2020: 8). In other words, Post COVID 19 era is the period after the lockdown imposed on the people and their business has been relaxed by the government (Akintubde, 2020:11). Post-COVID 19 era is the period preceding the period of COVID 19 (Aliyu and Ukpeli 2021:31).

4. Theoretical Framework

There are so many theories that can be used to explain and analyze this work, but for the purpose of clarity and assimilation, this paper adopts the ELITE Theory. The elite theory is a Psychological Theory propounded by Vilfredo Pareto (1848 – 1923), Gaetano Mosca (1858 – 1941), and Robert Michels (1876 – 1936).

The elite theory posits that a small minority, consisting of members of the economic elite and policy–planning networks hold the most power and that this power is independent of democratic election, here power is concentrated on the elite. The elite are very few and they wield overwhelming influence (Mutiullah, 2015: 59).

The implication of the elite theory on the topic under discussion is that the classification of the elite into economic elite, political elite, religious elite, and traditional elite has provided ground to interrogate the activity(ies) of banditry in Nigeria. If most of the illegal activities that go on are situated in rural areas, it means that traditional rulers provide cover for these illegal mining activities, however, banditry is capital intensive although proceed from illegal mining can be used to purchase arms, most of this criminality is sponsored by the economic and political elite for sinister motive.

5. Analysis of Work

- Motivation for Illegal Mining in Nigeria: There are four basic reasons why miner engages in illegal mining activities in Nigeria and this include:

- i. Poverty
- ii. Level of Literacy
- iii. Unemployment
- iv. External Factor

- **Poverty:** This is one of the motivations for illegal mining, most of those involved in illegal mining are children between 6 – 15 years and they are recruited by agents to engage in these illicit activities just to have food to eat and to have strength in excavating the earth for their employers (Suleiman, 2019:14).

- **Level of Literacy:** The mobility of this local illegal miner to read and write and to even express themselves is one that has made the activities of illegal mining in Nigeria swell and due to this level of illiteracy it is easier to recruit this category of individuals as bandits (Ahmed and Ahmed, 2021:60).
- **Unemployment:** The state of unemployment in Nigeria is high but that should not be a yardstick for anyone to engage in criminality, but that is not so with illegal miners, especially those that hide under being an agent in the recruitment of illegal miner are young men and women who find employment in this criminality.
- **External Factors:** This is one of the most damning motivations for illegal mining in Nigeria, some motivations connive with the locals to perpetrate these criminal acts. Some Chinese nationals and others have been indicted has been part of illegal mining activities in Zamfara and Osun State of Nigeria (Dozolme, 2018:23).

- Interrogating Illegal Mining and Banditry: The issue of illegal mining and banditry cannot be separated especially in the North East and North West of Nigeria. This is because the activities of illegal mining in the Northern part of Nigeria have not been regulated, although government policies on mining and other mineral exploration. Most of the identities of these illegal miners are not known, recorded, or profiled, so it is impossible to know who does what, how, and when especially as it affects these illegal mining sites in Zamfara, Nasarawa, and the Osun States of Nigeria.

When the identities of illegal miners are not known, it means that the proceed from illegal mining activities could have been used to fund illicit crime, kidnap, and banditry (Akintude, 2020:17). Hence the source of these funds cannot be regulated no wonder the high rate of banditry in Zamfara State, in one of the most notorious illegal mining sites. The presenters were able to interact with some of the illegal miners on their activities, reasons for illegal mining, who are their sponsors, methods employed in their mining activities, confidence in the business, what are they using the proceed from the mining activities, and whether they are part of banditry going on in and around Zamfara State below in tabular presentation (Mutuillah, 2015:72).

It was not easy coming up with this table as the presenters had to employ the services of one YELWA, aka 10-10 to illicit information from these miners with a guarantee that we were researchers aimed at getting information that will make the government come to their aid.

The cooperation of Yelwa (10-10) to have this interview is commendable considering the risk involved. The presenters took a heavy risk considering the restriction placed by the Federal Government of Nigeria to bar anyone from the illegal mining site, but we were granted grace

to these areas for the interview to be conducted because the site is still been operated by these illegal miners. The discovery was mind-boggling as there is a big business going on in these areas, none of the interviewees has spent not less than eight years in this area and none has less than twenty boys and girls under them. They are also well protected by their boys and girls who they call an apprentice. Three discoveries were made by the researchers and they are;

- a. The quest to have money, elk a living, and pay bills is largely the reason for going into illegal mining, but they do not see it as illegal.
- b. There is no strong relationship between illegal mining and banditry as testified by the interview conducted even though public perception alludes to illegal mining and banditry. The relationship is very weak as banditry is seen as a sponsored crime in the North especially as it affect Zamfara State as testified by Bature and Hamisu.
- c. The killing of individuals, ransacking of communities, and burning of houses and government facilities showed that illegal mining and banditry have a negative impact on national development.

- The impact of Illegal Mining and Banditry on National Development

The activity of illegal mining which involves physical distortion of the environment of which illegal miners do not have a plan for mitigation, especially in host communities, groundwater regime and disposal of produced wastes generated from mining is a disadvantage to national development (Amosu and Adeosun, 2021:13). And the biological disturbance to the ecosystem through the noise, vibration, dust affects plants and animals' progress as well as an aquatic imbalance that leads to water – food shortage. The presence of these by illegal miners cannot make national development happen.

However, the presence of banditry was partly caused by illegal mining which involved organized criminality against individuals, societies, and government. The killing of people, looting their properties and burning of villages, and destroying of government facilities is a minus to national development, meaning that banditry is not in the interest of national development.

Interview Section With Available Illegal Mining Leaders in Bagega in Zamfara in January, 2021 With Their First Names and Pseudo Names (A.K.A.)

S/No	Miners	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3
		<i>Why did you go into mining (illegal)</i>	<i>Have you used your mining (illegal) for banditry</i>	<i>Can development be achieved if there is banditry</i>
1	Dansokoto (Soja)	To raise money to take care of myself and my wives.	I do not know what you are talking about	No
2	Bature (Yaya)	To train my loved ones since I left school in 2014, no job, I am a graduate of Chemistry from BUK.	Not banditry but we have guns to protect us against sponsored government mercenaries	No development can take place within where there is banditry
3	Hamisu (Zazabi)	To leave well and pay my boys, since the government does not care.	At times when we are told by the government that some villages are harboring criminals, we attack them	It is Abdul Azeez Yari that can answer that
4	Mohammed (Mu'kasa)	I need money to take care of myself. The salary government is giving is too poor.	No, I don't do banditry but we have weapons to protect ourselves	It is the government that know about the banditry
5	Sanusi (Dantata)	I am sponsoring a lot of people in school so I need money to see them through	No, because banditry is bad, so we are not part of banditry	Development cannot take place because people will die and burning take place
6	Abdulmalik (Shorty)	It is a good business	No banditry	I do not know

Source: Fieldwork 12th – 14th January 2021

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper after interrogation arrived at the conclusion that the correlation between illegal mining and banditry is not strong even though there exists a correlation that is variance with public perception on the topic under review. Illegal mining and banditry are social, economic, and political crimes that any serious nation would not want to condole especially in the post-

COVID 19 eras. The availability of these two crimes; illegal mining and banditry is a plague and unsafe to the advancement of National Development as the country has lost human beings, assets, and revenue, no wonder it is impossible for national development to be achieved. However, in order to deal with the issue of illegal mining and banditry in Nigeria, the following suggestions have been made by way of recommendations to include;

- i. Stiffer penalty should be made for all cases of illegal mining and banditry in all parts of Nigeria to reduce or eliminate this criminality in not only Zamfara State but across Nigeria through legislative amendment of the Mining Act of 2007.
- ii. Elimination of mining issue from the exclusive to deal with banditry that has been fueled by illegal mining in Nigeria and for the purpose of achieving regulation to deal with illegal mining activities.
- iii. Law regulating social, economic, and political crimes that has to do with illegal and criminal activities across Nigeria need to be upgraded to accommodate penalty for those that aid and abet illegal mining and banditry in Nigeria in either to cut off the possibility of sponsorship by some high and mighty in the society.

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