BANDITRY AND THE COMPLICITY OF AUTHORITIES IN ZAMFARA STATE

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Abstract
Banditry is one of the major forms of insecurity in many states of the Northwest of Nigeria; it specifically poses significant threats to the wellbeing of the community and the economic stability in Zamfara State. The objective of this work is to examine the causes of banditry, analyze the impact on socio-economic, political and human security in Zamfara State and unravel the complicity of authorities in the banditry syndicate. Employing a qualitative approach, using primary sources, the study adopted the human security theory which emphasized the impact of banditry on the wellbeing and safety of people and communities in Zamfara State. The research findings include the identification of several causes of banditry which are farmer-herder conflicts, state and traditional rulers' complicity, poverty. Banditry's impact on the socio-economic activities has led to a significant decline in agricultural productivity, economic instability, loss of lives and property while in the political aspect it has resulted in a weak governance, political instability and threat to democratic process. Human security is severely impacted by banditry, with thousands of people displaced, human rights violation and disruption of basic services such as healthcare and education. The research recommended the adoption of integrated security strategies, economic support and development, community-based initiatives, government accountability and improvement, conflict resolution, human security and social services which should be critically used to mitigate the adverse effect of banditry and restore stability in Zamfara State.

Keywords*: Banditry, Zamfara, Human Security, Farmer-herder.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Nigeria has been a hotbed of conflicts, apart from the perennial conflict between the farmers and herdsmen; there are other notable security challenges, which include the activities of the Biafra separatists, militant Islamists in the North-East, kidnappings in many parts of the country, the Niger Delta imbroglio, and so on. However, the Boko Haram group remains arguably Nigeria's biggest security threat. The group poses a significant threat to neighboring countries as well, especially Cameroon, Niger, and Chad resulting in grave economic, social, and humanitarian consequences. For example, the group recently gruesomely executed 40 rice farmers in Jere Local Government area of Borno State, Nigeria. The United Nations had claimed that the number of deaths was far more than reported. Punch (2020) but while the group is making lives unbearable for the people living in Northeast Nigeria, another organised group referred to as the armed bandits are increasingly making lives difficult for the people living in the Northwest area of Nigeria. Life is no longer sacred in these parts of the country and the overall impact will certainly last for generations. Government is clearly overwhelmed and the citizens helpless.

Banditry is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria. The history of banditry in Nigeria can be traced to pre-civil war period when government deteriorated in certain parts of the old Western region resulting in political violence, crime and organised insurgency. Chidi (2018) accordingly, opined that during the civilian reign, local bandits were reportedly stealing domestic animals. Mustapha (2019) noted that recently, in the Northwest area of Nigeria particularly in Niger, Sokoto, Katsina, Niger, Kaduna and Kebbi States, the activities of Bandits have been particularly worrisome. The activity of these bandits ranges from kidnapping to murder, robbery, rape, 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 in the nights and shooting at will. Sometimes in the afternoon, once they were sure there are no security presences of the police or military around; they unleash terror in the communities. This growing threat is claiming victims in hundreds. Several children have been orphaned and women became widows overnight while the issues of food security as well as humanitarian tragedy further make life unbearable for many inhabitants.

The facts are scary, while about "1,100 people were murdered in 2018 in the six states of Northwest Nigeria in 2018, over 2,200 were killed in 2019 and 1,600 killed between January

and June 2020" (ACAPS, (2020). About 247,000 people had been displaced while their activities alone have led to the production of more than 41,000 refugees. In Niger alone, over 8000 people have been murdered in the last decade, 200,000 displaced internally and others fleeing to neighbouring states (ICGP Report, 2020). The situation is so rampant already that the religious leader and Sultan of Sokoto Muhammadu Sa'ad Abubakar opined that "Bandits now move in the North from house to house with AK47 and lamented that the region had become the worst place to live in Nigeria…"(Onyebuchi, 2020). In Sokoto, more than 250 people have been killed in about 20 attacks (Rakiya, 2020) just to mention but few.

It is important to note that the newest Northwest conflict started because of fight over depleting lands and water resources between farmers and herdsmen with the farmers belonging mostly to the Hausa people and the herdsmen being predominantly Fulani (ICG Report, 2020). As a consequence, there has been massive deforestation because of the impact of the Sahara desert spreading south (Nduka, 2020). Also, in an area where poverty is deeply rooted and illiteracy extremely high and rearing cattle is the preoccupation of many Fulani, thus, whenever this source of livelihood is threatened, whether by nature or human intervention, they will be willing to do anything to survive. In addition, there is the problem of the proliferation of small arms and light weapons in the area, inequality as John Campbell puts it in a "weakened, stretched and demoralized security services (John, 2020). There are also problems of failure of local justice and ethnic division (Emmanuel, 2020) as well as uncoordinated and under policed borders. Indeed, in recent history, banditry has become the order of the day because of government's inability to protect lives and properties of the citizens.

2. METHODOLOGY

The paper employed qualitative approach that includes in-depth interviews, focus groups discussions, and case studies to capture the livid experience, perceptions, and narrations of the affected individuals. The sampling technique involved is a combination of purposive and stratified sampling. Purposive sampling was used to select key informants, experts and individuals with direct experience, who provided valuable insights to the study. Stratified sampling was employed to ensure representation from various demographic groups, affected communities, and levels of government for a more comprehensive understanding of banditry in Zamfara State.

List of interviewees

S/No.	Name	Title/Profession	From	Interview code
1.	Abdulnasir Umar	Farmer	Bungudu	P_A
2.	Manir Sani Gwamna	Shop owner	Gusau	P_B
3.	Suwaiba	Housewife	Chafe	P_C
4.	Abubakar Hanafi,	District head	Maru	P_D
5.	Kasimu Sani Kaura	Chairman	Kaura	P_E
6.	Zulaihat	Groundnut oil producer	Maru	P_F
7.	Yahaya Umar	Student, Federal University Gusau	Gusau	P_G
8.	Tukur Aliyu	Victim of kidnapping	Anka	P_H
9.	Umaru Dangaladima	Victim of kidnapping	Anka	P_I
10.	Hasatu Bello	Street food seller	Bungudu	P_J

Where; **P**=represents persons. These codes were used as in-text citations to reference the interviewees

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

HUMAN SECURITY THEORY

Human security theory assumes that the security of individuals is paramount, focusing on protecting people rather than solely safeguarding States. It emphasizes the importance of addressing root causes of insecurity and promoting sustainable development for long-term well-being. The theory's relevance stems from its distinct emphasis on individual and communities, prioritizing the safeguarding of people from diverse threats. It aids in comprehending the local population's personal and communal experiences. It contributes

insights into how individuals and communities cope with and recover from security challenges. It allows the paper to address not only immediate security concerns but also implement measures that foster sustainable development, social cohesion, and political stability.

The idea places a strong emphasis on shielding people from harm and works to establish environments that allow people to live in dignity. Banditry often flourishes in areas characterized by economic inequality; therefore, the human security theory is applied to analyze ways in which banditry affects livelihood and exacerbates poverty and interferes with economic activities in Zamfara State. It also explores how the presence of banditry often exposes weakness in the security sector resulting in corruption and low response in security force which undermines political trust. It further contributes to political instability and undermines governance structures. Lastly, this approach is relevant when considering banditry in Zamfara state to comprehend the complex interaction of factors that contribute to the problem.

4. CAUSES OF BANDITRY IN ZAMFARA STATE

The causes of banditry in Zamfara are mining, farmers and herdsmen crises, hunger and unemployment, injustice from government, poverty illiteracy, which have tallied with themes presented in some articles. Thematically, armed banditry has been linked to several causes among which are, poverty and Unemployment (Mustapha,2020), ungoverned spaces and unprotected boarders (Mustapha, 2019), informal security operatives such as the vigilante (International Crisis Group, 2020,), State Complicity (ThisDay, 2021), Traditional Rulers involvement (The Guardian, 2022), displacement due to civil wars in Nigeria's neighboring countries (Mustapha, 2020), lack of basic amenities in the border communities (Mustapha, 2020). These have increased the recent occurrences of armed banditry, which remains the most significant threat to Nigeria's national security.

    a- Famer-Herder Crises

(P_A,2024), is of the view that the farmers and herdsmen conflict is a significant factor contributing to conflict in northwestern Nigeria. It started from competition over land and water resources when climate change led to the reduction in grazing areas so when the fulani herdsmen move in search of pasture for their cattle, they often encroach on farmlands leading to a clash with the farmers. This dispute was exploited by bandit groups making it a key driver of the broader banditry.

b- Poverty and Unemployment

Banditry was caused by Poverty and unemployment that has created lack of economic opportunities. Individuals or the community at large face long-term unemployment, low wages and poor living conditions which make people turn to banditry as an alternative means of survival (P$_F$, 2024).

Poverty and unemployment are connected with armed banditry as a result of the high degree of poverty in the northern region adds to the rise of armed banditry in the afflicted areas (Oyewole and Shola, 2022). The region's poor social conditions might be viewed as a primary cause of dissatisfaction and aggressiveness, driving young people to engage in banditry. Also, persons' active in banditry and other forms of armed resistance or criminal activity in the region may have adopted such a lifestyle as a means of surviving hard living conditions. Zamfara, located in Nigeria's north-west, has the highest poverty rate (45.0%) (Brenner, 2020).

Poverty is a major contributor to the high rate of banditry in Zamfara, Nigeria. Poverty has afflicted the region for many years, with the majority of the inhabitants unable to satisfy their basic necessities. A shortage of economic prospects, as well as limited access to education and healthcare, has created a cycle of poverty that frequently drives people to engage in criminal activities such as banditry (Oyewale and Shola, 2022). (P$_G$, 2024) shared his opinion that, Education is a crucial factor in providing individuals with the skills and opportunities needed for employment and education is limited in this region therefore the uneducated are easily manipulated into participating in criminal activities like banditry.

One of the primary reasons why poverty fuels banditry in Zamfara is a lack of legitimate job options. Many people in the region are unable to find permanent employment, leaving them with few choices for supporting themselves and their families. This economic struggle can drive individuals to turn to criminal activities, such as banditry, as a means of survival.

Zamfara's high degree of poverty has also made it an ideal breeding ground for banditry. Bandit gangs frequently target disadvantaged populations for recruitment and extortion, taking advantage of their precarious financial circumstances. The lack of resources to combat banditry has exacerbated the security situation in the region, allowing bandit organizations to operate with impunity.

   c- Porous Borders and Forests

Armed bandits' criminal operations in Zamfara are facilitated by unsecured borders and numerous ungoverned places that nurture these criminal gangs (Ogbonnaya, 2020). Zamfara State borders the Niger Republic in the north, Sokoto State in the west, Kebbi State in the southwest, and Katsina State in the southeast. These boundaries are frequently permeable and poorly patrolled, allowing for easy movement of bandits and illegal operations over state borders. Bandits flee to the neighboring Niger Republic after carrying out attacks in Zamfara, taking advantage of the absence of coordinated border protection. Furthermore, the flood of small guns and ammunition from war zones in neighboring countries across these porous borders promotes banditry in Zamfara. Uncontrolled arms flow empowers bandits, giving them the firepower to engage in violent confrontations with security forces and target civilian populations.

After years of strife and preferential land ownership legislation for farmers over herders, herders began engaging in brutal criminal behavior. They have now established camps in Rugu Forest, Zamfara State, primarily consisting of Fulanis and Hausas. In 2019, it was believed that Zamfara State has around 10,000 bandits spread over 40 camps. The majority of their camps are located in forest areas that have been left unattended or unguided. The weak institutional capacity of the federal and state governments in forest management, as well as the declining role of municipalities with regard to handling local affairs, provide opportunities for armed bandits to emerge and use such ungoverned spaces for capacity building and criminal activities (Tar and Yusuf, 2021).

In Collaboration to the first point these large ungoverned or under-governed areas of Zamfara State provide safe havens for bandits. These locations, which are frequently isolated and thinly inhabited, lack a visible and successful state presence, including law enforcement, security patrols, and governmental services. Bandits construct camps, store stolen cattle, and organize their operations in these areas, taking advantage of the lack of official control. The absence of authority creates a vacuum in which bandits may impose their own law and order, terrifying local people. Residents are compelled to pay protection money, give up their cattle, and follow the bandits' orders at the risk of assault or kidnapping.(Mustapha, 2019)

d- Activities of Vigilante – " '*Yan sa kai* "

Informal security and jungle justice are also significant contributors to armed banditry in northwestern Nigeria. Following herder-farmer tensions and criminal attacks in the north-west, farmer-dominated Hausa villages banded together to establish vigilante groups known as "*Yan sa ka*i" (volunteer guards) (Daily Trust, 2021). This is seen as an informal security architecture that has compensated the void of governmental security. Locally manufactured firearms, ammunition, clubs, and traditional weapons are utilized to battle instability. Furthermore, several vigilante organizations target pastoralist communities of Fulani origin, accusing them of crimes. Extrajudicial executions, torture, wrongful arrests, and livestock seizure have all been committed by informal security forces. As a result, instead of solving the problem, you are adding to it. Furthermore, Fulani communities are typically destroyed, causing pastoralists to escape into the wilderness. This technique has strained the connection between Hausa farmers and Fulani pastoralists. Fulani pastoralists have also organized militias to oppose Hausa farmers' informal security arrangements. Between 2011 and 2014, the development of armed groups was described as a form of self-defense and ethnic solidarity, although other Fulani pastoralists were driven by economic incentive, exacerbating the bloodshed (International Crisis Group, 2020).

I- Complicity of Authorities in Zamfara State Banditry

State involvement plays an important role in armed banditry in the North West (ThisDay, 2021). Some of the criminals are said to have been lured into Nigeria as political thugs and mercenaries by politicians, particularly in the run-up to the 2015 general elections, which brought Muhammadu Buhari to power. While these mercenaries and their local counterparts helped many contemporary political office holders rise, particularly in the north, they had been dropped by politicians after the election, leaving them with unmet promises (Blueprint, 2021). These explained their grievances with the political officials; they thus resorted to armed banditry, since they are left to subsist with the weapons and ammunitions in their control. These explain the lackluster approach of the government in handling the armed bandits.

Government officials and security agencies are often accused of collusion with bandits and the failure to address the issue has led to a lack of trust in the state authorities and increased insecurity in the region, also the perception undermines law enoforcement efforts which pave way for bandits to operate massively. (P$_B$, 2024)

Another perspective includes the traditional rulers and citizens' complicities (Rufai, 2021). Some high-ranking traditional rulers were overthrown for their involvement in armed banditry, with some notable local rulers frequently serving as major intelligence gatherers for the bandits. According to a recent investigation, certain disloyal individuals, including highly placed traditional rulers in the territories, were identified as providing intelligence to the bandits in order for them to carry out their nefarious deeds or to jeopardize military operations (The Guardian, 2019).

Two notable persons from Zamfara and Kaduna attempted to smuggle weapons into the north-west utilizing their contacts in the Sahel area through porous Nigerian borders (Daily Trust, 2021). In addition to these well-known Nigerians, several intermediaries and sellers were implicated in the weapons trafficking to woodlands inhabited by armed bandits (The Guardian, 2017). It was stated that weapons' vendors make more money than field combatants. Furthermore, the function of informants cannot be eliminated. Several informants were caught, posing as community members, in order to provide the armed bandits with required information (PRNigeria, 2020).

Negotiators play an extremely important role in armed banditry. Negotiators for bandits have played an important role in various incidences of kidnapping for ransom. For example, two famous religious personalities have been identified as negotiators who act as liaisons between the abducted victims' families and the bandits (The Guardian, 2017). They act as a go-between for the bandits and the families of the victims, helping to negotiate the ransom that the victims' relatives must pay. This has long been standard procedure in the armed banditry underworld of Nigeria. Moreover, the recent apprehension of a bandit negotiator suspected of unlawfully possessing damning documents, including military uniforms and substantial foreign currency, validates the existence of an abduction-based criminal economy, sometimes spearheaded by armed bandits. Some people have become exceedingly wealthy as a result of such illicit activities (TheGuardian, 2022).

Another opposing viewpoint was that some elites within the state incited or instigated the conflict by hiding behind a screen and continuing to fuel and ferment it. It was again suggested that the persons involved took advantage of the state's existing security position to induce new cracks in the already tense and growing conflict. Their involvement as argued had created another dimension to the conflict resulting to human abduction and kidnappings (Anka, 2018)

Closely connected to the above elite's plot in the state was another viewpoint held by certain commentators, who emphasized that the presence of natural resources in the state had typically contributed to the persistence of armed banditry in the state. The state's current threat of banditry, which was believed to be planned and remotely controlled by the state's elites in collusion with outside forces in order to illicitly exploit the state's mineral deposits, was significantly impacted by the abundance of gold deposits in the region. In essence, for them, the elite to have continuing unrestricted access to these minerals reserves, illegal mining is for them to continue tolerating and cultivating armed banditry in the state, which would scare the rural populace away from regions with abundant mineral deposits (Zugu, 2020). According to Rufai (2018), the main causes for inter and intra group rivalry include leadership conflicts, dominance for power, and the fight for territorial control and recognition. In 2018, it was stated that Buhari-Daji was slain in a gun duel between opposing factions in Zamfara (Daily Trust, 2018).

Another source claimed that 'there is 'cut-throat competition' amongst miners. Some of the attacks were partly instigated by traditional rulers involved in the illicit mining with a view to displacing their subjects'. According to Desert Herald Newspaper:

> The solid mineral resources in the state have been hijacked by highly placed people in the state including traditional rulers… mining has continued to arouse and attract local and international attentions with regard to mining and exploration of these vast deposits in the state …considering the fact that illegal mining is the main business of the traditional rulers and highly placed people in the state…who are always at loggerheads with other artisanal miners (Rufai, 2021).

5. EFFECTS OF BANDITRY ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN ZAMFARA STATE

Banditry in Zamfara State has had profound and far-reaching effects on socio-economic activities, disrupting livelihoods, undermining development initiatives, and exacerbating poverty and inequality. This section provides an in-depth analysis of the multifaceted impact of banditry on various aspects of socio-economic life in Zamfara State.

a- Effect of Banditry on Social Activities

Themes identified in terms of impact of banditry on social activities is Loss of Livelihoods and human freedom (Nwannah, 2021).The prevalence of banditry in Zamfara State has significantly disrupted social cohesion and community life, undermining trust, and cooperation among residents. Fear of attacks and insecurity has led to the breakdown of traditional social networks and support systems, as people become increasingly reluctant to engage in communal activities and gatherings. Research by Ibrahim et al. (2019) highlights the psychological toll of constant insecurity, with many residents experiencing heightened anxiety, trauma, and stress because of the pervasive threat of violence. This erosion of social capital not only weakens community resilience but also hampers efforts to address the root causes of banditry through collective action and cooperation.

Banditry has led to the relocation of farmers and pastoralists, interruption of agricultural activity, and loss of revenue. Armed banditry has had a disructiveeffect on the national and human aspects of security in Zamfara State. Moreover, the displacement of populations due to banditry has further strained social relations and exacerbated tensions within host communities and displaced persons' camps. Displaced families often face stigmatization and discrimination, as host community grapple with limited resources and capacity to support influxes of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Studies by Bello et al. (2020) and Lawal (2021) underscore the challenges faced by IDPs in accessing essential services such as healthcare, education, and sanitation, further exacerbating their vulnerability and marginalization.

Notably, it is accountable for death tolls and the loss of human liberty. Bandit assaults in Zamfara have killed numerous civilians, particularly in rural communities, and the government, media, and security institutions have significantly underreported the instances (UN, 2021). This has generated dread and menace to those who have survived, prompting many to flee to other states or towns for protection. This inhibited social activities and human interaction in the region.

Furthermore, robbers are said to have stolen 215,241 cows, 141,404 sheep, 20,600 camels, and donkeys, a source of income on which people rely to pay for health treatment (vanguard news,2021) As if that wasn't enough, they set fire to 3,587 residences and 1,487 automobiles (Vanguard News, 2021). According to another estimate, the situation in Zamfara alone resulted in almost 3,600 kidnappings, 8,000 deaths, and 200,000 displacements. Furthermore, the region

had over 1,000 kidnappings for ransom in 2021 (BBC, 2021).These and other examples show the dangers that armed banditry poses to human freedom and lives in the affected area. Due to armed banditry, the violence has also caused a humanitarian disaster, forcing many people to flee their homes. 144,996 displaced people live in Zamfara, according to a collaborative study by the National Commission for Refugees, Migrants, and Internally Displaced People and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.Agri and Eneji (2020) acknowledged that there are unprecedented levels of insecurity in Zamfara. He said. Insecurity feeds insecurity, which leads to crime.

The constant threat of violence and kidnappings which are being targeted at social events, like naming ceremonies, weddings has instilled fear in many stopping them from attending and also forcing hosts to cancel or drastically reduce scale of their events to avoid becoming targets (P_C, 2024).

There is decrease in customer turnout due to fear of violence, people are hesitant to visit markets or gather in public places, therefore impacting sales and reducing the income of vendors. Vendors are also forced to close their businesses earlier than usual while some have shut down entirely due to the unpredictability of bandit attacks. The insecurity has also led to shortage and higher prices of raw materials making profit of street food sellers low. (P_J, 2024)

Armed banditry disrupts the everyday routines of people in the state, preventing them from getting basic health care services, further exacerbating the population's poor health condition, resulting in additional unnecessary fatalities (Nwannah, 2021). These have caused migrations of citizens of the state to other areas where safety is assured.

b- Effect of Banditry on Economic Activities

The impact of banditry on economic activities were highlighted in terms of Health Disruption (West Africa Network for Peace Report, 2019), Education destruction, (Imran et al. 2023), disruption of Market and Trade activities (Mamamn, 2020).Banditry has had a devastating impact on economic activities in Zamfara State, disrupting key sectors such as agriculture, mining, trade, and transportation. The insecurity and instability brought by banditry have deterred investment, hindered productivity, and undermined efforts to diversify the economy. Agricultural production, which forms the backbone of the state's economy, has been severely affected, with farmers unable to cultivate their lands or access markets due to the risk of attacks and extortion by bandits.

School closures, limited access to healthcare, and fear have all had a negative impact on education and health results. Similarly, the mining sector, particularly artisanal and small-scale mining operations, has been targeted by bandits seeking to exploit the lucrative trade in minerals such as gold, lead, and zinc. The prevalence of banditry has deterred investment in the mining sector, as companies and investors face heightened risks and uncertainties. Research by Sani et al. (2018) documents the widespread disruption of mining activities in Zamfara State, with many mining communities experiencing economic hardship and loss of livelihoods because of banditry.

The impact of banditry on trade and commerce has also been profound, as the insecurity along major transportation routes has impeded the movement of goods and people, stifled cross-border trade, and undermined regional integration efforts. Small-scale traders, transporters, and businesses operating along these routes have been particularly hard hit, facing extortion, robbery, and abduction by bandits. The resulting increase in transaction costs and insecurity has eroded confidence in the business environment, hindering investment and economic growth.

Banditry has put fear in many investors that were willing to invest initially discouraging them from coming as it has created a hostile environment, with significant risks outweighing potential benefits and this has led to a decline in investments, further increasing the economic challenges in the region, (P_D, 2024).

The displacement of populations and destruction of infrastructure caused by banditry have disrupted local markets, supply chains, and value chains, further exacerbating food insecurity and economic vulnerability. Studies by Abdulahi (2017) and Aliyu et al. (2020) highlight the ripple effects of banditry on food production, distribution, and access, with many households facing acute food shortages and malnutrition as a result of the disruption of agricultural activities and markets.

The Nigerian government has classified armed banditry as terrorism. It is marked by large-scale slaughter, kidnapping, relocation of communities, and sexual brutality against women and girls. Armed bandits have destroyed almost 300 communities and 10,000 structures, including 23 of Anka LGA's 41 Primary Health Care institutions (Ighodalo and Abdul-Qadir, 2022). Furthermore, the criminal group claimed responsibility for the wanton killings of over 6,319 people, the frequent abduction or kidnapping of health care providers for ransom and

sexual exploitation, which has resulted in the continuous movement of health care personnel, the enormous theft of medical supplies and devices worth millions of naira, etc (West Africa Network for Peace building Report, 2019).

According to Ighodalo and Abdul-Qadir's (2022) research, armed bandits' operations have prevented the majority of people in Nigeria's Zamfara state access to basic health treatment. Adanna and Uche (2019) discovered in their study that banditry operations have deprived the majority of people access to health care in impacted locations, resulting in a high death rate. Unfortunately, Zamfara State is thought to have been the hardest struck in Nigeria. Approximately, there are over 10,000 armed bandits operating in Zamfara State with 105 camps from which they conducted attacks, murdering about 12,000 people between 2011 and 2021 and abducting between 78 and 120 health professionals (Global Terrorism index, 2020)

Armed bandits targeted 23 of Anka LGA's 41 primary health care institutions, disrupting the free movement of medical services, supplies, and pharmaceuticals, particularly to crisis-prone populations, resulting in acute shortages (Suleiman, 2019). This is because most authorities and vendors, Health workers and others involved in the distribution of drugs and medical supplies are afraid of being attacked, so they stayed behind and stopped obtaining supplies from nearby pharmacies and other healthcare facilities. Consequently, the few healthcare facilities that are not immediately impacted continue to operate even in the absence of patients' fundamental prescription medications.

As previously indicated, another significant consequence of armed banditry on health care is the frequent kidnapping of caregivers (Okoli et al. 2014). Armed bandits in Zamfara State employ sophisticated weaponry to abduct health care workers, tourists, villages, traders, farmers, strangers, and others for economic gain, which is currently a lucrative business for them (ACAPS, 2020). In addition to raping medical professionals for ransom, armed bandits often cruelly abuse their members who have been shot in the head. Even after they are released from captivity, the armed bandits still compel them to render free medical services to their team-mates who sustained injuries during gun battles with the military or vigilantes from time to time (BBC News pidgin, 2021).This largely leads the vigilante group to view them as potential informants of the armed bandits. As a result, most of them leave the neighborhood for fear of being attacked, leaving medical facilities without a care taker for their patients. This is one of the causes of the non-operation of several PHCs in the affected rural areas. In addition, most female careers suffer psychological harm from being sexually assaulted by bandits on a

regular basis, and some are held captive for use as sex slaves and medical help. Moreover, most non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that provide medical care to the harmed populations of these bandits in order to assist them in overcoming their circumstances are kidnapped. This has a huge negative impact on the State and Country's image and reputation in the international community. The majority of abduction victims were compelled to liquidate their assets in order to cover the ransom, leaving them severely impoverished and unable to cover their medical expenses. Their health issues are made worse by this depressing situation (Nadama, 2019).

Nadama (2019) found that armed bandits have also targeted certain nurses and Community Health Workers (CHEW) who provide healthcare services. While some suffered injuries, others were slain, kidnapped, or raped. The bulk of healthcare facilities were left abandoned and in a state of desolation as those who were lucky enough to avoid armed banditry attacks moved to other locations outside of the Local Government for protection. The unfortunate situation has made the already inadequate workforce required to provide health care services in the state much worse. Additionally, the public is afraid to visit these medical facilities without security because the majority of necessary medical supplies, equipment, and drugs were either destroyed during armed banditry attacks or prevented from being delivered to the state. These factors make it difficult for health care centres to operate effectively. The few health care facilities not damaged by banditry attacks are overburdened (Field Survey, 2021; Nigeria Watch, 2018).

Bandits' activities have great impact on Education (Premium Times, 2021). Armed banditry has had an impact on education as well, with a number of attacks on schools, students, and instructors. According to the NST database, seven bandit raids targeted Zamfara schools, abducting children and teachers between 2019 and 2021 (CBC, 2021). Armed gunmen raided and seized 317 female students from the Government Girls Secondary School in Jangebe, Zamfara State. Since December 2020, it was claimed that armed bandits had assaulted education targets and abducted over 700 people for ransom (Dakuku, 2021).

As a result of the threat posed by armed bandits in Zamfara, schools have been shuttered at various times. These have serious consequences for intergenerational human capacity development, since armed banditry has lowered school enrollment and increased out-of-school children in Zamfara, these youngsters can become a set of fresh recruits into the criminal and resistance groups, therefore recycling membership and fighters, ensuring the crisis is prolonged and insecurity endures (Blueprint, 2021).

According to Mamman (2020), schools were raised down by bandits, and even before they fell down, instructors who teach our children stopped coming for fear of being killed or abducted by the bandits. According to Sabogari (2020), their village has been attacked by bandits more than thirty-eight (38) times, scaring instructors away from going to teach their children. Musa (2020) and Abubakar (2020) have all asserted that banditry has driven away the majority of teachers from their communities for fear of their lives. This has caused schools to remain closed for an extended length of time. Moreover, now that they were displaced, their children have continued to stay at home without going to school; which have greatly affected their children's progressions with educational activities (Mamman, 2020).

Bandits impact on Market and Trade Disruptions (Olapeju and Adeniyi, 2021). Business closures, road insecurity, and panic have all caused interruptions to commerce and market activity. According to data from the Manufacturers' Association of Nigeria (MAN), there was a 56.5% drop in local raw materials in the first half of 2020 compared to 64% in the first half of 2019, indicating a 7.5% fall over the period (Olapeju and Adeniyi, 2021). This is due to the high-risk corporate climate tainted by instability. Since the cost of living increases due to inflation and more people are losing their source of income, these have had a negative effect on the state's efforts to reduce poverty and raise the standard of life for millions of people. Notably, the state's primary economic activities include farming and animal husbandry. Consequently, human poverty and inequality in the region have been made worse by cattle rustling, destruction of farmlands and rural settlements, as well as the killing and kidnapping of farmers, pastoralists, and agricultural merchants.

According to Zugu (2020), about three billion naira has been paid as money for ransom, and over ten thousand people have been kidnapped; not to mention the devastation of lands and crops already produced by many farmers within the communities; thus, the state's food production and supply shortages. According to him, all of these funds were gathered from the affluent, poor, and peasants in numerous communities and villages throughout Zamfara State, crippling many people financially inside and around the state and hurting economic operations.(Zugu, 2020). Mamman (2020) has also suggested that one of the most serious consequences of armed banditry was widespread poverty, exacerbated by the disruption of market activity in the state. They claim that, as victims of banditry, their main difficulty right now is a lack of finances and other basic necessities to support themselves and their families. They are now begging to keep the body and spirit together. Those in the village who had huge

farms with many herds of animals and were wealthy have suddenly lost everything to the bandits. The bandits destroyed everything of their houses and valuables. Not only are their riches lost, but the entire hamlet has been decimated to the point of non-existence.

According to Mamman (2020), many people in the state are now beggars as a result of banditry activities. According to Abubakar (2020), an indigene of Kuturu and also the village leader, which is now relocated in Zurmi local government, ascribed his situation to the repercussions of armed banditry in the state. He gave an explanation, saying that he is now departing in bondage because he is powerless to assist his family, himself, or his citizens. His family dispersed following one of the bandits' attacks, leaving him without contact with some of them and unable to even locate the others. He went on to say that he and a small portion of his family currently rely on the assistance of some of their friends and extended family who live nearby. In addition, he says that everything he owns is in the hands of Allah (God), since we find ourselves in an unclear and dangerous circumstance and don't even know where to begin trying to put our lives back together.(Abubakar, 2020)

The scenario of abject poverty tends to be positions of both (Abubakar, 2020, Salihu, 2020, and Sa'ad, 2020) They all concurred that the reason for their poverty was the banditry in their villages, which forced them to flee their settlements. Above all, the state's banditry has caused a number of sizable and well-known marketplaces that provided the nation with food and animal products to close. Shinkafi market was among the markets that, while in operation, supplied the southern portion of Nigeria with animals, since trucks loaded with animals are brought to the south on a regular basis, which was not in operation until recently (Zakari, 2020).

Displacement and disruption have limited access to food, resulting in food insecurity and malnutrition. Armed banditry has exacerbated food insecurity in the North-West and elsewhere. Following many attacks on agricultural villages, as well as kidnapping for ransom and farmer killings, many farmers have abandoned their farmlands for safety. These and other factors have severely hampered the ability of farming communities and pastoralists to produce enough food, which has led to a shortage of acceptable, marketable, affordable, and accessible food in the area and throughout the nation.

Armed banditry has the additional effect of causing a severe food shortage, which exacerbates malnutrition brought on by malaria and other illnesses for which there are insufficient critical medications to cure them. Due to this unfortunate circumstance, Médecins Sans Frontiers

(MSF), the only foreign aid organisation still operating in Zamfara State, was forced to treat 20,260 malnourished children, 35,358 malaria patients, treat patients, and offer psychological support to 312 survivors of sexual violence in Anka LGA between January and October 2020 (Médecins Sans Frontiers Report, 2020).

In addition to its direct impact on economic activities, banditry has also engendered a climate of fear, uncertainty, and mistrust, deterring both domestic and foreign investment and undermining efforts to attract tourists and promote tourism development in Zamfara State. The perception of insecurity and instability has tarnished the state's image and reputation, further hampering its economic prospects and inhibiting efforts to harness its rich natural and cultural heritage for sustainable development.

c- Effect of Banditry on Political Activities in Zamfara State

Banditry in Zamfara State has not only wrought havoc on socio-economic activities but has also significantly impacted political processes, governance structures, and the overall political landscape of the state. This part examines a comprehensive analysis of the multifaceted impact of banditry on political activities in Zamfara State, drawing on empirical evidence, scholarly literature, and expert opinions.

Banditry has affected politics with the constant threats of violence and the attacks have forced politicians to curtail their public engagements and campaign activities, reducing the opportunities for political leaders to interact with constituents and this has limited the public's ability to participate in political processes effectively.(P_E, 2024)

Tukur (2017), as mentioned in Jabrin and Musa (2020), claimed that banditry in Zamfara has resulted in unwelcome forceful migration among victims, displacing over 300 households. This has resulted in a scattering of the community's structure, altering both the political environment and the inhabitants' everyday lives. Banditry has produced a climate of dread and insecurity, making it impossible for political actors to function freely for citizens to engage in political processes.

Shehu (2017) and Bello (2017) suggested that, in addition to the countless rape instances and horrific deaths that have been documented, the loss of houses and other property accounts for the majority of the economic issues that the people of Zamfara would never forget. More than 400 children in Yargaladima alone were expelled from school because they either lost a

breadwinner or couldn't afford the 500 naira monthly wage of community-hired teachers. The position is nearly worse than anybody could have anticipated looking at the standpoint of the Fulani and the opportunity they have of enrolling in western education through Nomadic Education programs (Bello,2017). According to Kiruwa (2017), research has revealed that over 62 nomadic schools and their buildings have suffered severe damage, making it nearly impossible for children to use the facilities for their education.

Another negative component of the conflict is the rape and constant harassment of women (Shehu and Bello, 2017). According to Badaru (2017), rape cases have been documented in around two-thirds of the communities attacked by armed bandits along the Dansadau forest border since 2014. They pushed everyone away and raped women at will, with some even demanding that they accompany them to their camps. Women have been barred from engaging in political activities due to their fear of rape, as they are the weaker gender and are more vulnerable to it.

Another significant consequence of banditry on political activity in Zamfara state is the erosion of faith in government institutions and officials, as previously mentioned. The government's failure to properly handle the insecurity produced by banditry has resulted in a loss of trust in political leaders' capacity to rule and safeguard the interests of the people. As a result of the state's lack of security and administration, many people are disillusioned and disenfranchised, reducing voter turnout and participation in elections. Banditry has also altered the political scene in Zamfara state, with certain politicians accused of working with bandits for personal benefit. This has further undermined public faith in political leaders, complicating attempts to address the core causes of insecurity in the state.

The prevalence of banditry in Zamfara State has eroded public trust and confidence in government institutions and governance structures. Research by Ahmed and Musa (2019) highlights the perception of widespread corruption, nepotism, and inefficiency within government agencies, undermining their legitimacy and credibility in the eyes of the public. The inability of the government to effectively address the security challenges posed by banditry has further fueled public disillusionment and cynicism, with many residents expressing frustration and anger at the perceived incompetence and indifference of political leaders.

Moreover, the influence of bandits on political processes and decision-making has raised concerns about the integrity of elections and governance in Zamfara State. Studies by Lawal et

al. (2020) and Yusuf (2021) document instances of electoral violence, voter intimidation, and manipulation orchestrated by criminal elements seeking to exert control and influence over political outcomes. The pervasive insecurity and fear generated by banditry have also deterred political participation and civic engagement, as residents become increasingly reluctant to exercise their democratic rights in the face of violence and coercion.

Banditry in Zamfara State has become a highly politicized issue, with political actors exploiting insecurity and conflict for their own gain an advantage. Research by Adamu and Garba (2018) underscores the instrumentalization of violence and instability by political elites to mobilize support, consolidate power, and marginalize opponents. The manipulation of ethnic, religious, and regional cleavages for political purposes has exacerbated tensions and divisions within the state, undermining efforts to foster unity, reconciliation, and social cohesion.

Furthermore, the politicization of insecurity has hampered efforts to address the root causes of banditry and implement effective security measures. Studies by Ibrahim and Lawal (2020) highlight the prioritization of short-term political interests over long-term security considerations, leading to policy paralysis, bureaucratic inertia, and lack of coordination among government agencies. The absence of a coherent and holistic approach to addressing banditry has allowed the problem to persist and escalate, perpetuating cycles of violence and instability in Zamfara State.

The impact of banditry on political activities in Zamfara State extends beyond electoral processes to broader issues of democratic governance, rule of law, and human rights. Research by Abdullahi and Musa (2020) documents the erosion of democratic norms and values, as the prevalence of violence and insecurity undermines the principles of free and fair elections, transparency, and accountability. The intimidation and harassment of political opponents, civil society activists, and journalists further restrict civic space and freedom of expression, stifling dissent and dissenting voices.

Moreover, the breakdown of law and order caused by banditry has weakened the capacity of state institutions to uphold the rule of law and protect the rights and liberties of citizens. The proliferation of extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and forced disappearances perpetrated by security forces and vigilante groups has fueled grievances and resentment within communities, exacerbating tensions and exacerbating conflict dynamics. Studies by Musa and Garba (2019) highlight the need for enhanced accountability mechanisms and human rights

protections to address abuses and violations perpetrated in the name of counterinsurgency and security operations.

d- Effect of Banditry on Human Security in Zamfara State

The impact of banditry on humanitarian security in Zamfara State is profound and multifaceted, posing significant challenges to the protection and well-being of vulnerable populations, exacerbating displacement, and hindering access to essential services. This section provides a comprehensive analysis of the impact of banditry on humanitarian security.

There is extreme trauma and difficulties in resuming normal life activities for victims, also there is fear of attacks, kidnapping and killings in residents and this has lead to widespread displacement, with many leaving their homes to seek safety in more secure areas or refugee camps. (P_H, 2024)

The experience of being kidnapped leaves long lasting mental scars, survivors frequently requires psychological support and counseling to cope with the trauma. Some suffer from injuries sustained during the initial kidnapping or from maltreatment by their captors, ransoms paid by families to secure release sometimes decreases savings as they sell off their assets, or take on substantial debt, additionally time spent in captivity often means lost income and disrupted livelihoods. (P_I, 2024)

Armed banditry in Zamfara has exacerbated Nigeria's already precarious national security situation State authorities have faced a great deal of difficulty as a result of bandit attacks against government buildings, military installations, police stations, public office holders and their families, and a sizable portion of the local populace. One of the most immediate and visible impacts of banditry in Zamfara State is the displacement of populations from their homes and communities. Research by Ibrahim et al. (2018) and Abdullahi (2021) underscores the scale and severity of displacement caused by banditry, with thousands of families forced to flee their homes in search of safety and security. Displaced persons often face acute humanitarian needs, including access to shelter, food, water, healthcare, and protection.

The displacement of populations not only disrupts livelihoods and social networks but also places immense strain on host communities and humanitarian actors tasked with aiding and support. Overcrowded displacement camps and informal settlements often lack adequate infrastructure and services, exposing displaced persons to additional risks and vulnerabilities,

including disease outbreaks, gender-based violence, and exploitation. Studies by Musa and Lawal (2019) highlight the challenges faced by humanitarian agencies in delivering assistance to remote and inaccessible areas affected by banditry, due to insecurity, logistical constraints, and funding shortages.

People have been driven south by the crisis, and in the north-central, south-west to south-east regions, conflicts between immigrants or settlers and host communities over resources have intensified due to the influx of Fulani herders. The military and other security agencies are under stress as a result of this tendency, which has made Nigeria's national security issues worse. Nigeria allocated 6% of its military might against armed banditry in the north-west and north-central regions and kept one-third of its force for counterterrorism and counterinsurgency operations in the northeast as of 2018–2019.

Along with contributing to the growth of mob violence, subversive armed and unarmed radical groups, and jungle justice, inadequate resources, manpower, responses, and performance of security forces against armed bandits in Zamfara have also spawned the formation of regional security groups and the ensuing political division. Tukur (2017) stated that killings occur in communities that the security forces are unaware of. Bello (2017) attempts to highlight some few flashpoints that are considered victims of modern banditry, banditry has produced instability in Zamfara state, disrupting many people's livelihoods. Farmers are unable to care to their crops owing to fear of assaults, causing food insecurity and economic hardship for many households. Similarly, companies have been forced to close or operate at reduced capacity, affecting the local economy.

It has severely disrupted access to essential services, including healthcare, education, and water and sanitation facilities, exacerbating humanitarian needs and vulnerabilities. Research by Lawal et al. (2021) highlights the challenges faced by humanitarian actors in delivering assistance to conflict-affected populations, due to insecurity, access constraints, and resource limitations. Health facilities and schools have been targeted for attacks and looting by bandits, further depriving communities of vital services and exacerbating health and education disparities.

Furthermore, the destruction of infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and markets, has impeded the delivery of humanitarian assistance and hindered the movement of goods and supplies to affected areas. The resulting isolation and deprivation exacerbate the suffering of

already vulnerable populations, increasing their dependence on external aid and support. Studies by Ahmed and Musa (2020) underscore the importance of addressing humanitarian needs and protection concerns in conflict-affected areas, including through strengthened coordination, resource mobilization, and community engagement.

Banditry in Zamfara State has exposed vulnerable populations, including women, children, and internally displaced persons (IDPs), to heightened protection risks and human rights violations. Research by Garba and Sani (2020) documents instances of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), forced recruitment, abduction, and exploitation perpetrated by bandits and other armed groups operating in the region. Women and girls face increased risks of sexual violence, exploitation, and early marriage, as they are often targeted for abduction and forced marriage by bandits seeking to exert control and domination over communities.(Sani, 2020)

Moreover, the presence of armed actors and security forces in conflict-affected areas has led to a proliferation of human rights abuses and violations, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and torture. Studies by Adamu and Yusuf (2017) underscore the need for enhanced protection mechanisms and accountability measures to address abuses perpetrated by both state and non-state actors. The lack of effective oversight and accountability mechanisms further exacerbates the risk of impunity and undermines efforts to promote human rights, justice, and reconciliation in Zamfara State.

It was previously reported that certain government officials and community leaders who are meant to assist the military and other security services in battling banditry are providing assistance to the armed organization. This contributes to the security services' incapacity to handle the situation. The failure of security services to properly handle banditry in Zamfara state has damaged public faith in law enforcement. Many citizens believe the government has abandoned and failed to protect them, resulting in a collapse in social cohesiveness and an upsurge in vigilantism and self-help initiatives.

6. CONCLUSION

Poverty, unemployment, insufficient law enforcement, unfaithfulness of government leaders, betrayal of traditional leaders, and the proliferation of small guns and light weapons have all contributed to the growth of banditry in Zamfara State. These criminals have wrecked

devastation on the state, instilling fear and instability among the people. The impact of banditry in Zamfara State has been terrible, with many people killed, property damaged, and communities relocated. According to this study, banditry in Zamfara is induced by a complex combination of causes. Shocking to discover in the study is the involvement of the traditional rulers and the political or government office holders who should be addressing the issue.

Recommendations

Based on these research findings, the following recommendations were put forth to help address the issue of banditry in Zamfara state. The government should address the spread of small guns and light weapons. Tighter border controls and a crackdown on illicit arms trafficking can help restrict the availability of firearms for bandits, making it more difficult for them to carry out their criminal operations. The Zamfara State administration must take a multifaceted strategy to addressing the state's banditry problem. This should involve tackling the core causes of banditry, such as poverty and unemployment, clamping down on illegal arms trafficking, and boosting law enforcement and intelligence capacities. Only through a comprehensive and sustained effort can the government hope to eradicate the scourge of banditry and restore peace and security to the people of Zamfara State.

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