

ARMED BANDITRY AND ITS EFFECT ON AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN KATSINA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study assesses the causes and effect of armed banditry on agricultural production in Katsina State, Nigeria. To achieve this aim, two objectives were outlined: to examine the causes of armed banditry in Katsina State and to assess the effect of armed banditry on agricultural production in Katsina State. Frustration-aggression theory and routine activity theory were adopted to explain issues raised in the study. The study utilized quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection and analysis. A Multi stage cluster sampling technique was used to select sample of 384 respondents. The findings revealed that the lack of basic social amenities in some communities, growing level of unemployment, harsh economic conditions, availability of small and light weapons were the major causes of armed banditry in the study areas. Also, the study noted that the attacks on farmers, their livestock, homes and farmlands have undermined crop production, food cultivation and harvest, leading to general food shortage. The study recommended for community policing; increase patrols and checkpoints in high-risk areas to deter banditry and provide a visible security presence. Government at both State and national level should invest in economic development programmes to address poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment, which are often drivers of banditry

Key Words: Armed banditry, Agricultural production, Causes, Effect

Introduction

Banditry is a criminal activity typically involving the use of violence or the threat of violence to rob, extort, or intimidate victims, often by individuals or groups operating outside of the law. According to Epron (2019), armed banditry is a form of criminal activity where individuals or groups engage in violent theft. This involves using weapons, typically firearms, to rob people, villages, or towns. In many societies such as southern Spain, Sicily, Greece and the Balkans, banditry had a predominantly agro pastoral base. In Sicily and Greece, violent entrepreneurs from pastoral background managed to create a new niche for themselves in the Nation State, especially when the new regime attempted to penetrate the country side (Shalangwa, 2013).

In Africa, particularly in East Africa, Romney (1986), revealed that banditry emerged as an attempt to protest against central authority, similar to modern day rebel groups. Armed banditry in West Africa has exploded on the basis of long-term crisis located in climate change. As the climate become drier, there is an increase in the southward migration of pastoralists from the Sahelian belt in search of water and pastures for their livestock, creating pressure on the available land and water resources (Gaye, 2018).

However, in Nigeria, banditry has become more organized in the past two decades and the activities of the bandits have become more complex. Its organized activities spreads beyond the North West where agricultural production is mostly carried out. The North-western Nigeria encompasses seven States namely Kano, Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi, Zamfara, Jigawa and Sokoto. According to Olanniya and Yahaya, (2016), five of these States, (Katsina, Kaduna, Zamfara, Kebbi and Sokoto) have been mostly affected by the scourge of banditry or armed banditry. Out of these five States, Kaduna, Katsina and Zamfara have been the most critical hotspots (Yusufu and Abdulrahman, 2021). In Katsina State, which is by design, the locus of this study, banditry started in 2010 primarily in seven Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the State that share boundaries with Zamfara State namely; Jibia, Batsari, Safana, Danmusa, Kankara, Faskari and Sabua (Ladan & Matawalli, 2020). Majority of the people of Katsina State engage in agriculture either as full time or part time crop farmers and cattle breeders. According to El-Ladan and Sani (2012), Katsina State has more than 80,000 farming families and cultivating more than 1.5 million hectares of farmlands becoming one of the largest producers of maize and cotton in the country

The rising incidence of armed banditry may not be unconnected to the problem of small arms and light weapons that have found their way into the hands of non-State actors, now a part of the wider challenges of human security confronting Nigeria. According to Okoro (2013), the proliferation of small arms is largely as a result of porous borders, including the affinity between communities which consider any stringent border control as an infringement upon the social and cultural rights of the people.

Banditry has been a major cause of food insecurity in the study area. As reported by National Bureau of Statistics (2022), agricultural output in Nigeria recorded a growth of 2.17% in 2020 compared to 2.36% in 2019. It also grew by 1.3% (year-on-year) in real terms in the second quarter of 2021, a decrease compared to 1.58% recorded in the same period of 2020, and a decrease of -0.97% points from the Q1 2021 which recorded a growth rate of 2.28% . It is against this backdrop that the study intends to extensively elaborate on the causes and effects of Armed Banditry on agricultural production in Katsina State, North western Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

In recent time, North western Nigeria has faced devastating attacks from armed banditry, particularly in the States of Katsina, Kaduna, Zamfara, and Sokoto. Armed bandits who are soft-targeting innocent citizens, looting their assets, raping women, burning their homes, and killing them indiscriminately has emerged as a primary security threat in Katsina State which continues to suffer from numerous attacks (Vatican News, 2021). For instance, between July and October 2021 only, bandits had killed no fewer than 213 persons and kidnapped 676 others across local government areas of Katsina State (Sardauna, 2022).

The activities of armed bandits in Katsina State adversely affects many social groups, with certain occupational groups suffering most acutely. For instance, occupational groups such as farmers, herders and traders experience greater harm both during and also in the aftermath. Although, according to Mohammed (2021), as armed banditry ravages Katsina State, farmers, especially in rural communities are worst hit because they are subjected to being chased out of their farms, theft of cattle, seizure of farmlands, burning and raiding of grain silos, killing and kidnapping of farmers. Cattle rustling used to be the predominant crime in rural Katsina, but now kidnapping has taken the centre stage and disrupted farming activities. However, the disruptions due to bandit attacks affect agricultural productivity with serious implications for food security.

The problem has led to the reduction in agricultural outputs in the affected areas, farmers are now scared to go to their farmlands to cultivate crops, young men and women who hitherto contributed in farming activities have all deserted their homelands and moved to the cities, perceived to be relatively more peaceful. Many farmers are either kidnapped for ransom or killed on their farms (Mohammed, 2021). Kidnapping for ransom has become a quick-win for the bandits in Katsina State. The bandits see their new trade of kidnapping for ransom as pure business, and they see it as more profitable than the business of cattle rearing among others

Banditry, as a social phenomenon, has been explored through various academic lenses. For instance, Ladan (2014), focused on the just causes of banditry, examining the socio-economic and political factors that fuel such activities. Kuna & Jibrin (2016) investigated the nature of banditry, exploring its characteristics, patterns, and the groups involved. Okoli and Ochim (2016) analyzed the effects of armed banditry, delving into the social, economic, and security impacts on affected communities. Collectively, these studies provide a comprehensive understanding of banditry from multiple perspectives, contributing to the ongoing discourse on the issue

Therefore, in an effort to fill the existing gaps, the present study intends to take a holistic look at causes of banditry and its perceived consequences on agricultural production in Katsina State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The study aimed at assessing the causes and effects of armed banditry on agricultural production in Katsina State. The specific objectives are;

- i. To identify the causes of armed banditry in Katsina State
- ii. To assess the effect of armed banditry on agricultural production in Katsina State

Research Questions

Two research questions guided the study;

- i. What are the underlying causes of armed banditry in Katsina State?
- ii. How has armed banditry affected agricultural production in Katsina State?

Methodological Approach

The study employed a descriptive survey research design to examine the causes and effects of armed banditry on agricultural production in Katsina State, Nigeria. A multi-stage sampling technique was utilized to select 384 respondents from a total population of 921,100.

The study adopted a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative data collected through self-administered questionnaire with qualitative insights obtained from Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). The questionnaire and interview guides were validated by two experts from the Department of Sociology, Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State. Reliability testing, conducted using the Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 (KR-20), yielded a coefficient of 0.74, indicating acceptable internal consistency.

The questionnaire targeted two primary respondent groups: farmers and bandits. For the qualitative component, six key informants were purposively selected across three categories: two community

leaders, two police officers, and two officials from the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA). Interviews were conducted individually at times and locations convenient for the respondents by two trained research assistants.

The rationale for employing a mixed-methods approach lies in its capacity to provide both statistical evidence such as the percentage of affected farmers, crop loss figures, and income reduction and contextual understanding through narratives of personal experiences, perceptions, and socio-cultural impacts. As Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) assert, the complex and multidimensional nature of farmer–herder conflicts encompassing social, economic, environmental, and cultural dimensions necessitates the use of multiple data collection tools to generate a comprehensive understanding

Results and Discussion

- i. **Objective One:** to identify the causes of armed banditry in Katsina State

Table 1.1: Causes of armed banditry in Katsina State

| Items | Responses | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|--|------------|----------------|
| Significant of the role of unemployment in the rise of armed banditry in your area | Very significant | 270 | 70.3 |
| | Significant | 83 | 21.6 |
| | Not significant | 31 | 8.1 |
| Total | | 384 | 100.0 |
| Armed banditry in our community is majorly caused by disagreement between farmers and herders over grazing routes | Agree | 258 | 67.2 |
| | Disagree | 93 | 24.2 |
| | Undecided | 33 | 8.6 |
| Total | | 384 | 100.0 |
| Proliferation of arms is one of the causes of armed banditry in your area? | Yes | 320 | 83.3 |
| | No | 64 | 16.7 |
| | Total | 384 | 100.0 |
| Inability of the government to secure the ungoverned spaces and hinterlands. | Agree | 252 | 65.6 |
| | Disagree | 96 | 25.0 |
| | Undecided | 36 | 9.4 |
| Total | | 384 | 100.0 |
| Which of the following is the recent cause of armed banditry in your community? | Lack of basic social amenities in some communities | 22 | 5.7 |
| | Rising tide of moral decadence | 62 | 16.1 |
| | Farmers/Fulani herdsman clashes | 52 | 13.5 |
| | Hash economic environment | 31 | 8.1 |
| | Availability of small and light arms weapons | 27 | 7.0 |
| | Bad Leadership | 35 | 9.1 |
| | All of the above | 155 | 40.4 |
| | Total | 384 | 100.0 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table above summarizes participants' perceptions of the causes of armed banditry in the study areas. Notably, there is a strong consensus among the respondents represented by 70.3% that

growing unemployment played a significant role for the rise of armed banditry activities in communities sampled for the study. Again, majority of the respondents 83.3% felt that proliferation of arms is one of the causes of armed banditry in their locality while insignificant number 16.7% disagree that arms proliferation causes armed banditry in their various communities. The availability of small and light weapons in Nigeria has been an issue of serious concern with severe damaging consequences, contributing to the perpetuation of crime and violence in most of the study area. Supporting the above finding, Gaye, (2018) observed that there has been an incremental influx of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) into Nigeria from the Sahel since the fall of Ghadaffi's regime in Libya. In other words, the proliferation of small and light arms occasioned in part by complicity of agents of government has heightened the menace of banditry. Although, some governments officials have encouraged self-defence in the face of security threats, in 2021, the then governor Aminu Masari of Katsina State asked his people to arm themselves and confront the bandits This strategy will likely require the use of guns to operate as well (Daily Trust, 2021). This therefore suggests that while terror groups constantly need weapons, self-defense will also require arms.

Furthermore, majority of the participants 65.6% consider the inability of the government to secure the ungoverned spaces and hinterlands as a big factor that aid frequent armed banditry attacks on vulnerable communities in Katsina State.

An in-depth interview with a Police Officer from Batsari revealed that;

The rate of unemployment is high, if you take a look at our street today, you will see a large number of unemployed youths with no jobs. He further stated that with his years of experience in the force, he has come to realize that unemployment is actually a major contributing factor to crime. **(Source: Field Survey, 2024)**

A SEMA official from Dan Musa totally disagreed with the police officer's view and replied thus;

It is not due to unemployment. Our youth of nowadays are lazy and don't want to work. They want to make quick money. Out of curiosity, I once visited a bet9ja office very close to my house one day and found out that many of our children waste their precious time there, idling away and betting, playing games with some sleeping on bare floor, all with the hope of hitting the jackpot. **(Source: Field Survey, 2024)**

A community leader from Dan Musa also expressed his displeasure with the unchecked access to small arms by bandits thus;

Our local people cannot defend themselves with ordinary sticks and cutlasses. They are left vulnerable to these bandits and even the security available to us cannot prevent the destructions occasioned by bandit attacks. **(Source: Field Survey, 2024)**

From the quantitative and qualitative data, it can be rightly stated that unemployment is a major factor contributing to the menace of armed banditry in Katsina State. The findings is also in consonance with the unemployment index statistics in Katsina State by the National Bureau of

Statistics (2024), which put the unemployment rate in Katsina State at 8.6%, reflecting significant challenges in securing employment for people in the State.

- i. **Objective Two:** to assess the effect of armed banditry on agricultural production in Katsina State

Table 1. 2: Effect of Armed Banditry on Agricultural Production

| Question | Response | Frequency | Percentage |
|--|----------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| In your opinion, how has armed banditry affected agricultural activities in your community | Negatively | 340 | 88.5 |
| | Positively | 33 | 8.5 |
| | No impact | 21 | 5.5 |
| | Total | 384 | 100.0 |
| What specific agricultural activities have been affected by armed banditry? | Land preparation | 23 | 6.0 |
| | Crop harvesting | 41 | 10.7 |
| | Transporting produce to markets | 57 | 14.8 |
| | Livestock farming | 27 | 7.0 |
| | Selling produce in local markets | 35 | 9.1 |
| | All of the above | 201 | 52.3 |
| | Total | 384 | 100.0 |
| Been directly or indirectly affected by the activities of armed bandits in your area | Yes | 341 | 88.8 |
| | No | 43 | 11.2 |
| | Total | 384 | 100 |
| How would you describe the economic impact of armed banditry on your agricultural income? | Negatively | 313 | 81.5 |
| | Positively | 51 | 13.3 |
| | No impact | 20 | 5.2 |
| | Total | 384 | 100.0 |
| Has the fear of armed banditry caused you to reduce your farm production? | Yes, significantly | 329 | 85.6 |
| | Yes, to some extent | 30 | 7.8 |
| | No reduction | 25 | 6.5 |
| | Total | 384 | 100 |
| Extent armed banditry affect agricultural production in your community? | Negatively | 344 | 89.5 |
| | Positively | 30 | 7.8 |
| | No effect | 40 | 10.4 |
| | Total | 384 | 100.0 |

| | | | |
|--|--------------------|------------|--------------|
| Categories of people mostly affected by the frequent attacks of bandits in your area | Youths | 46 | 12.0 |
| | Women and children | 263 | 68.5 |
| | Elderly | 75 | 19.5 |
| | Total | 384 | 100.0 |

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 1.2 delves into respondents’ perspectives on effects of armed banditry, with majority of the respondents represented by 88.5% agreeing that armed banditry has negatively affected agricultural production in their localities. Supporting this view, Ladan, (2022) asserted that activities of armed banditry have directly affected the production and distribution of agricultural output in most communities if not all the local government areas of Katsina State. Also, the above data indicates a consistent and strong agreement among participants on specific agricultural activities affected by armed banditry. The activities majority of respondents 52.3% attested that affect agricultural production in their localities includes land preparation, crop harvesting, transporting produce to markets, livestock farming and selling produce in local markets.

On the other hand, the table distribution in 1.2 shows that majority of the respondents 85.6% affirmed that armed banditry has negative economic impact on their agricultural income. However, considering the increasing bandits’ activities and the upsurge in killing of farmers and massive kidnappings in some of the areas visited by the researcher, agricultural production faces drastic depletion and a threat to food security. In the words of Tanko, (2019), “a Katsina revenue officer revealed that food trailers in the market decreased from eight (8) weekly trailers to half a truck in two months, while revenue earnings decreased from 500,000 to less than 10,000 naira”. In other words, bandits’ activities not only affect the above listed variables, it also affects revenue generation. Nevertheless, the in-depth interview conducted by the researcher aligned with the above views and findings.

A Community leader from Dan Musa said that;

Honestly, I was terrified by the sound of gun shot. One day, when they were attacking, I almost had a heart attack and my body was shivering consistently even after they had left. I can tell you, for 5days after the attack, I couldn’t sleep nor eat anything except “fura” and I think most of my subjects had similar experience. **(Source: Field Survey, 2024)**

A SEMA official from Dan Musa narrated that;

There are people in large numbers who suffer silently due to attacks and we try to do the best we can by providing psychological care in the form of counselling. It is very unfortunate said the SEMA official. **(Source: Field Survey, 2024)**

From the observed responses, it can be inferred that the numerous attacks and high level of violence unleashed by armed bandits in the study area have resulted to trauma among security agents, traditional rulers and community members thereby leaving many with mental health challenges.

On the other hand, most of the respondents testified that they have been directly affected in one way or the other by the activities of the bandits in their communities 88.8%. What this implies is that most of the residence of the sampled communities have been affected directly by the activities of the bandits and this has had drastic effect on agricultural production. In furtherance to their views on personal experience with the activities of bandits, the participants also attested that they were severely affected by the activities of the bandits 55.5%. Also, the respondents further stated that fear of armed banditry have caused them to reduce their farm production 55.5%.

A police officer in Faskari responded by saying;

The government has no plan negotiating with them, we are going to face them and deal with them so everyone can go back to their homes soon.

(Source: Field Survey, 2024)

From the qualitative and quantitative data, it can be rightly stated that armed banditry significantly affects agricultural production in Katsina State. Due to the activities of armed bandits, agricultural production in the State has been rendered comatose, thereby leading to a downward spiral in the quality of life of most rural inhabitants who depend on agriculture for their sustenance. This aligned with the finding of Ayanlade and Ojebode (2019), in their work titled “Impact of armed banditry on agricultural development in Northern Nigeria”. They indicated that insecurity caused by banditry leads to the abandonment of farmlands, loss of crops, and reduced access to markets, thereby impacting food security and economic stability.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study identified the following factors as causes of armed banditry in the State; disagreement between farmers and herders, inability of government to secure ungoverned spaces and hinterlands, and arms proliferation. The increase in crime in Nigeria more recently is quite worrisome and disturbing and can be link to act of armed banditry and other criminal activities. Other causes of armed banditry revealed by the study are; lack of basic social amenities in some communities, rising tide of moral decadence, farmers/Fulani herdsman clashes, harsh economic environment and bad Leadership. The uncertainty regarding the availability of these crucial life supports to the people in most communities within the study area is troubling and a significant cause for concern. This is because both the State and local governments hosting these communities seem not have plans to introduce sustained changes towards improving the standard of the local communities. The implication of these findings is that unemployment and poverty has led most zealous youths to look for a shortest way and means to survive and the available means is to engage in armed banditry. Also, the proliferation of light armed has contributed greatly to armed banditry in the state in recent times because of porous border and ineffective security measures to checkmate arms smuggling. The above findings aligned with the empirical studies carried out by eminent scholars like (Gaye, 2018; Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016) on the causes of armed banditry in Nigeria. Their findings identified factors like remote and under-policed areas, unemployment, poverty, and arms proliferation as causes of armed banditry (Gaye, 2018; Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016).

The study also looked at the widespread impact of armed banditry on agricultural production as regards attacks on farmers, disruption of cultivation and harvest etc. However, armed banditry has affected land preparation, crop harvesting, livestock farming and selling of farm produce in the local markets. It was also observed that most of the people in the sampled communities have been directly affected by the activities of the bandits. The attacks on farmers, their livestock, homes and farmlands have undermined crop production, food cultivation and harvest leading to a general food

shortage in most communities in the study area. In this regard, harsh economic condition is seen as a cause of armed banditry in the area covered by the researcher. The implication of this finding is that when farmers are displaced or killed as a result of banditry activities, food security becomes a mirage and prices of available food commodities doubles causing inflation and economic hardship. Thus, the findings are in line with the empirical literature of (Muhammed, 2020; Muggah & Batchelor, 2002) who noted that armed banditry affects the supply of cash crops, disrupts transportation to markets, and leads to economic decline and food insecurity.

Conclusion

This study concludes that armed banditry in Nigeria constitutes a multifaceted crisis with profound socio-economic consequences, particularly devastating the agricultural sector through destruction of farm produce and livestock, which has destabilized rural livelihoods, exacerbated food insecurity, and weakened community economic foundations. The psychological trauma inflicted on victims and their families presents far-reaching implications for social and mental well-being that may persist across generations, while the overall threat to national security manifests in humanitarian, economic, and social repercussions that undermine the peace, stability, and unity of the Nigerian state.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made;

1. **Enhanced Security Presence:** there is need for government to increase patrols and checkpoints in high-risk areas to deter banditry and provide a visible security presence. This includes deploying specialized units trained to handle bandit-related violence.
2. **Intelligence Gathering:** Effort should be made by the government to improve intelligence operations to better understand the networks and movements of bandits. This involves both human intelligence (informants) and technological tools (surveillance).
3. **Community Engagement:** Affected communities should strengthen ties with local communities to encourage cooperation and information sharing among the security apparatus in their communities. Community leaders can play a crucial role in gathering intelligence and providing support.
4. **Economic Development:** Government at both State and national level should invest in economic development programs to address poverty, unemployment, and underdevelopment, which are often drivers of banditry. Focus on creating job opportunities, especially in rural areas, and supporting local businesses.

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