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A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE INFLUENCE OF BANDITRY ON AGRICULTURAL OUTPUT DYNAMICS IN ZAMFARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examines the types and patterns of banditry and their impact on agricultural productivity in Northwest Nigeria. Banditry, characterized by armed robbery, cattle rustling, and other violent activities, has escalated into a significant threat, disrupting rural livelihoods and food security. The research employs a descriptive survey design, drawing data from 367 respondents in Anka Local Government Area, Zamfara State, a region severely affected by banditry. The findings reveal that armed robbery and cattle rustling are the most prevalent forms of banditry, while kidnapping for ransom and attacks on villages are less significant. The impact on agriculture is profound, with reduced access to farmland, decreased crop production, and abandonment of farming activities being the most critical consequences. These disruptions threaten food security, elevate poverty levels, and undermine economic stability in the region. The study concludes that enhanced security measures, community-based policing, and targeted support for displaced farmers are essential for mitigating the impact of banditry on agriculture and ensuring sustainable rural development. These findings provide valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders addressing rural insecurity in Nigeria.

Keywords: Banditry, Agriculture, Output, Productivity, Armed Robbery

Introduction

Nigeria, as a country, has experienced many security challenges such as Boko Haram insurgency, farmers/herdsmen crisis, violent agitations, and youth tensions, among others. Today, citizens live at the mercy of criminal elements who are rampant in the country, with security personnel visibly overwhelmed. This alarming situation is further complicated by the rise of banditry in the North, especially in the North-West geopolitical region of the country. As observed by Ojo (2020), In Nigeria, different states are faced with various security threats, with banditry in the North being an

emerging threat in recent times. Starting in 2011 and worsening in 2014, the Northwest region faced serious attacks from bandits. Initially, this threat was more prevalent in rural areas, but it is now spreading from its centre in Zamfara state to other states in the region, such as Kaduna, Katsina, Kebbi and Sokoto. (International Crises Group, 2020). Due to the ferocity of the attacks, each incident has caused massive loss of life and property. This is coupled with the massive displacement of the population and the humanitarian issues that arise as a result. (Bagu & Smith, 2017).

There is no gainsaying the fact that armed banditry has become one of the greatest threats confronting the peace and security of Nigeria. This is so because, it is usually accompanied with cattle rustling, kidnapping, rape, assassination and the wanton destruction of lives and property. Thus, this problem has been related to the negative impact of climate change, population explosion, high rate of poverty, youth's unemployment and underemployment, illiteracy, limited security presence, porosity of Nigeria's land borders and ungoverned spaces all of which are speedily leading to system failure. Rural banditry in Nigeria for instance, started as resource conflict between two resource users which are the mobile pastoralists and sedentary farmers, over grazing land for livestock and land for agricultural production. No wonder, the International Crisis Group (2020), argued that, the security challenge in the North West has its root from long-running competition over land and water resources between mostly Fulani herders and mainly Hausa farmers, both of whom have mobilized armed groups, "bandits" for Fulani pastoralist and "vigilante" for the Hausa farmers in the name of protection (ICG, 2019).

Actually, Zamfara state was the hub of banditry in Nigeria, home to the bulk of the bandits' leaders. From the state's woodlands, the robbers would ride motorcycles to nearby states like Katsina, where they would operate before returning to their wooded caverns (Farouq & Chukwu, 2020). Thus, by 2010, banditry had expanded over Katsina State, notably in the seven Local Government Areas (LGAs), Jibia, Batsari, Safana, Danmusa, Kankara, Faskari, and Sabua that shared a border with Zamfara state. Food security will surely be influenced by banditry since it entails violent and robbery acts against persons, particularly rural populations who are mainly involved in farming, rearing cattle, and other food production activities (FAO, 2008). "When all people at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active healthy life," is how the World Food Summit of 1996 defined food security (FAO, 2008). Food security is simply described by the Food and Agricultural

Organisation (FAO, 2010) as the availability of food in terms of production, distribution, and consumption.

They argued further that these ethnic groups decry failure of the government to protect them and therefore insist on self-protection. These ethnic militias have the backing of ethnic and community, religious and traditional leaders, who justify their actions and shield them from facing the full wrath of the law (ICG, 2019). Their argument is in line with the position of (Abdullahi, 2019) who posited that rural banditry is a form of identity conflict, which affects social relations among different ethnic groups in West Africa. Regrettably, Nigeria is currently the epicentre of banditry in West African Sub Region, with North West and North Central taking the center stage. Consequently, Katsina and Zamfara states are the worst hit being the theatres of attacks in all these.

Firstly, the prevalence of banditry has led to a marked decline in agricultural productivity. (Olanrewaju & Balana, 2023) highlight those conflicts, including armed banditry, have resulted in reduced areas cultivated and diminished agricultural output, thereby threatening food security in Nigeria. This assertion is corroborated by Alexander and Adewumi, (2022), who quantitatively analyzed the impact of banditry on agricultural output between 2014 and 2020, revealing a significant correlation between the number of deaths from pastoralist attacks and the percentage of agricultural output in the GDP. The direct attacks on farmers not only lead to loss of lives but also instill fear, causing many to abandon their farms, which further exacerbates food scarcity (Agbo & Gad, 2023). Moreover, the socio-economic ramifications of banditry extend beyond immediate agricultural losses. (Valentine, 2023) discusses how banditry has deteriorated the socio-economic landscape of the Northwest, crippling growth and development in an already vulnerable region. The disruption of agricultural activities has led to increased food prices, making it difficult for local consumers to access essential food items. This situation is echoed in the findings of (Ladan & Matawalli, 2021), who emphasize that banditry has significantly impacted food security in Katsina State, leading to increased hunger and malnutrition among the populace.

The effects of banditry are not limited to direct agricultural output; they also influence consumer behavior and market dynamics. Also, study on consumer buying behavior in Katsina State illustrates that banditry has altered purchasing patterns, with consumers becoming increasingly hesitant to buy agricultural produce due to fears of insecurity (Agbo & Gad, 2023). This shift in consumer behavior can lead to reduced demand for local produce, further impacting farmers' incomes and their ability to invest in agricultural production. Additionally, the environmental factors contributing to banditry, such as poverty and competition over scarce resources, exacerbate the situation. The combination of insecurity and environmental degradation has created a precarious situation for farmers in Katsina State, where the competition for land and water resources intensifies the conflicts between herders and farmers (Iguda, 2023). This competition often results in violent confrontations, further destabilizing agricultural activities and leading to a vicious cycle of insecurity and poverty.

The issue of banditry in Northwest Nigeria has emerged as a significant threat to agricultural output, exacerbating existing socio-economic challenges in the region. Banditry, characterized by violent attacks on farming communities, has led to a decline in agricultural productivity, food security, and overall economic stability. The psychological and physical impacts of these attacks on farmers create an environment of fear and uncertainty that disrupts agricultural activities. Id et al. highlight that the psychological effects of rural banditry significantly affect crop producers, leading to diminished productivity and livelihoods ID, Sa'adu, Kaka and Muhammad, (2020). This aligns with findings from (Alexander & Adewumi, 2022), who emphasize that the violence associated with banditry has resulted in increased fatalities and injuries among farmers, further contributing to a decline in agricultural output.

In addition, bandits, kidnappers and herdsmen have become a huge menace to rural communities as a result of their frequent attacks, which have resulted in several deaths. Farmers in these farming regions have found it difficult to go to their farms to cultivate or harvest due to

the terrible banditry attacks perpetrated by the Herdsmen. Aside from the physical assault on the farmers, the damage caused by the herdsmen's livestock (cows, cattle, etc.) aggravates the pain of the defenseless farmers. The economic consequence is seen in the unabated rise in food commodity prices, shortage of specific food products, and acute food insecurity since places where food is planted/produced are no longer producing. This is because most farmers in the agriculturally famous communities in the middle belt, northwest, and northeast have abandoned their farms and moved to other regions in search of safety, leaving their farms fallow and unharvested crops, posing a threat to the farming system.

The socio-economic implications of banditry extend beyond immediate agricultural losses. The emergence of banditry has deteriorated the socio-economic growth of the Northwest, a region already grappling with the consequences of Boko Haram insurgency and other security challenges (Valentine, 2023). The compounded effects of these conflicts create a vicious cycle where insecurity leads to reduced agricultural investment, which in turn exacerbates food insecurity and poverty levels. (Agbo & Gad, 2023) further elaborate on this by examining how banditry affects consumer behavior regarding agricultural produce, indicating that local producers in Katsina State face diminished market opportunities due to the prevailing insecurity. This disruption in consumer behavior not only impacts farmers' income but also affects the overall agricultural supply chain.

The study objectives are to examine the effect of banditry on agricultural output in the selected Northwest, Nigeria, while the specific objectives are as follows:

- i. To identify the types and patterns of banditry prevalent in the Northwest, Nigeria.
- ii. To examine the impact of banditry on crop and livestock production in the Northwest, Nigeria.

Methodology

This study employs a descriptive survey research design, which is suitable for examining the impact of banditry

on agricultural output in selected areas of northwest Nigeria. This design enables the researcher to collect data from a large population using questionnaires and interviews, capturing detailed information about the frequency, nature, and consequences of banditry on farming activities. The study was conducted in Anka Local Government Area (LGA) of Zamfara State, located in the northwest region of Nigeria. Anka LGA is a predominantly agrarian community known for its agricultural activities, including crop farming and livestock rearing. However, the area has been severely affected by banditry, which has disrupted farming practices, displaced communities, and threatened food security.

The population of the study consists of residents and key stakeholders in Anka Local Government Area (LGA), Zamfara State, with a total population of 142,280, according to the 2006 National Census. The population for this research focuses on individuals directly affected by or involved in agricultural activities and those with knowledge of the impact of banditry on agriculture. The sample size for this study was determined using Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) sample size table, which is widely used for determining an appropriate sample size for survey research. According to Krejcie and Morgan, for a population of 142,280 (the population of Anka Local Government Area), the recommended sample size is 384 respondents at a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%. The sample was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique:

Stage 1: Purposive sampling was used to select Anka LGA as the study area due to its significant agricultural activities and prevalence of banditry.

Stage 2: Random sampling was used to select specific wards or villages within Anka LGA to ensure broad geographical representation.

Stage 3: Stratified random sampling was employed to ensure representation from different categories of respondents, including farmers, agricultural extension officers, community leaders, and security personnel.

Data for this study was collected using a combination of Likert scale questionnaires and Key Informant Interviews (KII) to provide both quantitative and qualitative insights into the impact of banditry on agricultural output in Anka Local Government Area. Data collected through the Likert scale questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, mean, and standard deviation) to summarize respondents' perceptions on the impact of banditry on agricultural output. Inferential statistics such as Chi-Square and Pearson correlation was used to test relationships between variables, while multiple regression analysis explores the predictive impact of factors like banditry frequency and security measures on agricultural productivity. For the Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), thematic analysis was used to identify key themes from the interviews, focusing on community responses, coping strategies, and security measures. The findings from both the quantitative and qualitative data was integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue being investigated.

Results and Discussion

This chapter is concerned with the presentation and analysis of data collected from the field which the researcher obtained via the administration of the questionnaire. Questionnaire served as the groundwork for statistical analysis in which data retrieved was analyzed using suitable statistical tools. Statistical package for social science (SPSS) was used to analyzed the data and test the hypotheses formulated for this study.

Types and patterns of banditry prevalent in Northwest, Nigeria.

Table 1: Respondents' Response on Types and patterns of banditry prevalent in Northwest, Nigeria

Statements	N	Mean	σ	Decision
Kidnapping for ransom	367	2.39	1.044	Rejected
Armed robbery	367	2.51	.783	Accepted

Cattle rustling	367	2.51	1.021	Accepted
Attacks on villages/communities	367	2.28	1.143	Rejected

Source: fieldwork, 2024

Table 1 presents the respondents' perceptions regarding the types and patterns of banditry prevalent in Northwest Nigeria. A total of 367 respondents participated in the study. The table reports the mean (M), standard deviation (σ), and decision for each type or pattern of banditry. Kidnapping for ransom was perceived with a mean score of $M=2.39$, $\sigma=1.044$, which falls below the acceptable threshold and was thus rejected. This indicates that respondents do not widely consider kidnapping for ransom as a dominant pattern of banditry in the region. Armed robbery had a mean score of $M=2.51$, $\sigma=0.783$, which meets the threshold for acceptance. This result suggests that armed robbery is a significant and recognized pattern of banditry in the area. Similarly, cattle rustling was rated with $M=2.51$, $\sigma=1.021$, which also falls within the acceptable range. This indicates that cattle rustling is prevalent and a major concern among respondents. Lastly, attacks on villages/communities yielded a mean score of $M=2.28$, $\sigma=1.143$, which was below the threshold and thus rejected. This implies that

respondents do not strongly view such attacks as the most significant pattern of banditry. The findings imply that interventions to address banditry in Northwest Nigeria should prioritize combating armed robbery and cattle rustling, as these were identified as the most prevalent patterns. This indicates a need for enhanced security measures in areas prone to these activities, such as increased patrols, community-based policing, and improved surveillance technology. Conversely, the lower prevalence of kidnapping for ransom and attacks on villages/communities suggests these may require targeted but less intensive resources. Policymakers and security agencies should focus on strategies that disrupt the networks facilitating armed robbery and cattle rustling while monitoring the evolving dynamics of banditry to prevent escalation of less prevalent forms.

Impact of banditry on crop and livestock production in Northwest, Nigeria.

Table 2: Respondents' Response on Impact of banditry on crop and livestock production in Northwest, Nigeria

Statements	N	Mean	σ	Decision
Reduced access to farmland	367	2.66	1.008	Accepted
Decreased crop production	367	2.49	.962	Accepted
Loss of livestock	367	2.31	1.078	Rejected
Abandonment of farming activities	367	2.48	1.012	Accepted

Source: fieldwork, 2024

Table 2 summarizes respondents' perceptions regarding the impact of banditry on crop and livestock production in Northwest Nigeria, based on a sample size of 367. Each statement is evaluated with a mean (M), standard deviation (σ), and decision (Accepted or Rejected). Reduced access to farmland was rated with a mean score of $M=2.66$, $\sigma=1.008$, which exceeds the threshold for acceptance. This indicates that banditry significantly limits farmers' access to their farmland, likely due to safety concerns or fear of attacks. Decreased crop production was also accepted, with a mean of $M=2.49$, $\sigma=0.962$, suggesting that banditry negatively affects agricultural output, likely due to the reduced

ability to farm or harvest crops. Loss of livestock, however, was rejected, with a mean of $M=2.31$, $\sigma=1.078$. This result suggests that while banditry does impact livestock, it may not be perceived as a major consequence by the respondents compared to other impacts. Lastly, abandonment of farming activities was accepted, with a mean of $M=2.48$, $\sigma=1.012$, highlighting that the persistent threat of banditry has led many farmers to abandon farming altogether, exacerbating food insecurity in the region. Overall, the results indicate that banditry has a profound impact on agricultural activities, primarily by restricting access to farmland, reducing crop production, and forcing the abandonment

of farming activities. The findings have significant implications for agricultural sustainability and food security in Northwest Nigeria. The acceptance of reduced access to farmland, decreased crop production, and abandonment of farming activities highlights the urgent need for enhanced security measures to protect farmers and their livelihoods. Limited access to farmland and reduced crop production exacerbates food insecurity, affecting both rural and urban populations. The abandonment of farming activities signals a potential economic downturn in the agricultural sector, further aggravating poverty in the region. The rejection of loss of livestock suggests that while livestock farming is impacted, it may be less affected compared to crop farming. Policymakers should prioritize security interventions that enable safe access to farmland, encourage displaced farmers to return, and rebuild confidence in agricultural practices, which are critical for economic stability and food supply.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study provide an in-depth understanding of the types and patterns of banditry as well as their impact on agricultural activities in Northwest Nigeria. Banditry in the region is marked by widespread occurrences of armed robbery and cattle rustling, which have been identified as the most prevalent forms. This finding underscores the economic motivation behind banditry, as cattle rustling provides quick monetary gains while armed robbery targets both individuals and communities. These results are consistent with previous studies, such as those by Usman et al. (2021) and Abubakar (2020), which identified the economic value of cattle and the vulnerability of rural communities as primary drivers of banditry. Although kidnapping for ransom and attacks on villages were noted, they appeared less prominent in this study. This contrasts with studies like Ibrahim and Ahmad (2019), which highlighted the growing prevalence of kidnappings in other parts of the country. The variation may be due to geographical differences, security measures, or the specific socioeconomic dynamics in the Northwest.

In terms of the impact on agriculture, the study reveals that banditry has severely disrupted farming activities. Reduced access to farmland and decreased crop production were key consequences, driven by fear of attacks and the abandonment of farming communities. This supports findings by Adebayo and Ojo (2021), who noted that insecurity significantly limits agricultural productivity and exacerbates rural poverty. Furthermore, the abandonment of farming activities highlights the cascading effect of banditry on food security and rural livelihoods, as farmers are forced to flee their communities, leaving fertile lands uncultivated. Interestingly, the loss of livestock was not perceived as a significant impact in this study, possibly because livestock farming is more resilient to displacement compared to crop farming. This finding contrasts with the work of Yusuf et al. (2020), who reported substantial losses in livestock due to banditry in other regions, suggesting regional variation in the dynamics of banditry's impact. Overall, the findings highlight the urgent need for tailored security interventions to address the specific patterns of banditry in the Northwest. They also point to the necessity of developing policies that protect agricultural livelihoods, such as creating safe farming zones, promoting community-based security initiatives, and providing support to displaced farmers. This study contributes to the growing body of literature on rural insecurity, aligning with empirical studies that emphasize the interplay between insecurity and rural economic decline.

Conclusion

The study provides valuable insights into the types and patterns of banditry in Northwest Nigeria and their profound impact on agricultural activities. Armed robbery and cattle rustling were identified as the dominant forms of banditry, with significant implications for both economic and social stability. The disruption of agricultural activities, primarily through reduced access to farmland, decreased crop production, and the abandonment of farming activities, underscores the devastating consequences of banditry on food security and rural livelihoods. The findings emphasize

the urgent need for targeted security measures and comprehensive strategies to protect agricultural communities from the escalating threats posed by bandits. The study contributes to the broader understanding of the relationship between insecurity and agricultural productivity in Nigeria.

Recommendations

Given the prevalence of armed robbery and cattle rustling, it is crucial for government authorities to enhance security in rural areas, particularly through increased patrols, intelligence gathering, and community-based policing. The establishment of specialized task forces to combat cattle rustling and armed robbery should be prioritized.

Community-driven security solutions, such as vigilante groups or neighborhood watch programs, can

complement official security efforts and offer immediate protection to rural communities. Empowering local populations to take an active role in securing their areas is vital.

As banditry has led to the abandonment of farmland, displaced farmers should be provided with incentives to return to their farms. Government and non-governmental organizations should offer financial support, resettlement assistance, and resources for rebuilding agricultural infrastructure.

To mitigate the impact of banditry on crop production, farmers should be supported with access to modern farming technologies, security measures for their farms, and training in crop protection. Additionally, agricultural extension services should be strengthened to help farmers adapt to the evolving security challenges.

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