

RURAL ARMED BANDITRY AND IT EFFECTS ON FOOD SECURITY IN SELECTED LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF NIGER NORTHERN NIGERIA

Mustapha Musa Gwadabe

Department of Liberal Studies,
Niger State Polytechnic Zungeru.

Abstract

Social and contemporary problems such as Terrorism, Substance abuse, ethnicity, corruption, etc. are some the major basic factors that use to hindered the development of any society, as such rural arm banditry is one of the major challenges faced by most society in both rural and some part of urban societies as a result of daily and routine activities of arm banditry attacks which directly affect food security of a particular given society. Thus, this paper aimed at to find answers to the following research questions, what are causes of rural arm banditry, how and why do people engaged in arm banditry activities, and to what extend arm banditry affects food security. The scope of this study vested in selected local government areas of Niger north namely Mariga, Magama, Mashagu. Routine activity theory was used as theoretical framework. Key informal interview and In-depth interview were used in the research data collection. At the end of the study the followings are the findings of the research which are as follows. unemployment, peer group influence, Vengeance, Substance abuse are some of the factors that leads people to engaged in arm banditry activities which at the end it will serves as a threat to food security in the society.

Key words: Armed Banditry, Food Security, Rural, Urban

Introduction

Nigeria, like any other African country has been experiencing various forms of violent crimes such as ethnic conflicts, rape, armed robbery, assault, murder and kidnapping. A specie of armed robbery that has been of national concern in Nigeria is armed banditry, Nigeria's north- central have been bedeviled by frequent incident of armed banditry. Cattle are being stolen by rural armed bandits. A gang of bandits taking cover in the forest in this state have been terrorizing the people of the areas. The bandits rob travelers, raid villages and kidnap people. They also demand huge sum of money as from the victim's relations as ransom. The mode of operation of the bandits could constitute an obstacle to preventive measures that could have been put in place by the law enforcement agents. This is because bandits engaged in one-time raids and follow a 'slash and burn' form of appropriation. The nature and pattern of armed banditry in contemporary Nigeria has become so pervasive that only a few Nigerians that travel or live within the border communities can claim not to have suffered its impact. The phenomenon could take various forms in various places which may include waylaying victims on the highways and on transit points, storming and sacking of whole villages, stealing hundreds of cattle. Losses could range from farm crops, monetary, material and valuables livestock and above all human resources.

Considering how armed banditry emanated can easily be described as often involving violence, extortion, and kidnapping has a long history in various part of the world with the roots in historical conflicts and social unrest, as such the history of banditry is traced back to centuries past, particularly in regions like Southern Italy and Sardinia. Arm banditry in Italy (Brigandry) existed

in Italy since pre historic times becoming particularly widespread in southern Italy after the unification of Italy in the 1860s Carmine Crocco and Salvatore Giuliano became figures folk's heroes due to their routine actions of frequent attacks in both rural and urban areas of Southern Italy. In other regions, arm banditry has also been documented in other part of the world which including Sardinia, where the "anonima sarda" group was very dangerous and active.

In the history of Nigerian today arm banditry problem has gained and drawn significant attention in recent years due to its frequent and devastating impact on communities in which as a result of that, it will escalate and directly affect food security. Bandits have engaged in numerous activities such as kidnapping for ransom, cattle rustling, and village raids to mention but few.

Historically, there have been people on highway, rustling cattle, looting, laying siege on rural markets and killing innocent people. In May 2021 for example, gunmen attacked and killed more than 15 people from Kamfanin Bobi, Beri of Mariga local government down to Rijiyen Nagwamatse village of Kontagora Local Government Area of Niger state. The neighbouring states of Niger state, Kebbi and Kaduna have not been immune to these attacks either. For example, in March 2014 attack on Anguwan Sakwai of Kaura LGA, Kaduna state led to the death of 57 people with several others injured (Muhammad, 2019). In the north eastern states of Adamawa, Bauchi, Bornu, Gombe, Taraba and Yobe, as well as in the remaining central states of Kogi, Kwara and Nasarawa, there have been regular reports of banditry and violence. Actually, in 2013, a local militia ambushed and killed 46 police officers in the village of Alakyo in Nasarawa state (Muhammad, 2019).

Finally, according to Centre of Democracy and Development (2015) the growing evidence of the menace of cattle rustling and rural banditry in contemporary Nigeria is seen in the disturbing increase in cattle rustling incidents in different parts of the country, and in the accompanying humanitarian tragedies. Recent documentation of cattle rustling incidents by the Sunday Trust Newspaper (June 1, 2014) brings the pervasive nature of cattle rustling in Nigeria into clear relief. Cattle rustling have a global character, and clear economic consequences for countries where it is entrenched. Recent Nigerian evidence shows just how frightening it has become.

The aim of the study is to find the effects of rural armed banditry on food security, and the objectives of the study are as follows;

- a. To examine the threats of Rural armed banditry on human security in Niger northern Nigeria.
- b. To ascertain the efforts made by government in tackling the menace of Rural armed banditry and improve food security in Niger northern Nigeria.
- c. To examine the effects of rural armed banditry on food security in Niger northern Nigeria.
- d. To make recommendations on some of the measures to be taken in tackling the menace of Rural armed banditry and a way to improve food security in the study area.

As regards to the significance advantage of the study, the study has a theoretical significance, in the sense that scholars that wants to make research on the above topic of the study in the discipline of Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology and Political Science, the study will be of great benefit, and government will find it very useful in tackling the menace of arm banditry. Moreover, the study rises some questions which are as follows;

- i. What are the causes of Rural Armed Banditry?

- ii. Why do people engage in the deviant act of Rural Banditry?
- iii. To what extent armed banditry affect food security?

Rural Arm Banditry

The term "banditry" refers to criminal acts associated with armed robbery and violent crime. Banditry involves the use of threat or force to intimidate targets, with intent to kill or rob the victims (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014). In Nigeria, banditry has become increasingly prevalent over the years. Since 1999, Nigeria has seen a vicious rise in crimes against persons, including both robbery and murder (Rotberg, 2007).

The rising incidence of cattle rustling as a part of the problem of rural banditry may also be partially attributed to the problem of small arms and light weapons (SALW) that have found their way into the hands of non-state actors, part of the wider challenge of human security confronting Nigeria. At the domestic level, the discourse on illicit SALW has often implicated the fragility of the state system in Africa, which explains the power vacuum that is exploited by non-state actors and criminal elements who need unfettered access to weapons in these categories. Nigeria, for example, provides evidence that state failure and an overall decline in the capacity of the state to regulate, extract and distribute - the very core functions of the modern state are at the heart of the problem of SALW. In a recent collection of thoroughly-researched contributions by Nigerian scholars, Okome (2013) drives home the different ways in which the weaknesses of the state system account for the persistent flow of arms into the country, and the corresponding democratization of the instruments of violence. And when in the hands of non-state actors, the legitimate monopoly of the state over instruments of coercion is compromised.

There has been some ambiguity in understanding banditry in both historic and contemporary terms. As a type of predatory, acquisitive, and violent action by groups of men (sometimes including women), banditry has a long history dating from ancient Greece, Rome, and China. In central and eastern Europe and in the Balkans, it was found in the countryside, in specific conditions (such as following wars and massive dislocations) and in specific periods, especially in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the modern nation-state was emerging (Paul, 2018).

Food Security

Food security is multifaceted. The World Bank (2001) identified three pillars underpinning food security. These are food availability, food accessibility, and food utilization. This means that a nation whose food production level is unable to satisfy these three criteria is said to be food insecure. Supporting this assertion, Maxwell (in Nana- Sinkam, 1995) stated that a country and its people are food secured when their food system operates in such a way as to remove the fear that there will not be enough to eat. He further stressed that food security requires that the poor and vulnerable have secure access to the food they want.

In contemporary Nigeria, food insecurity is aggravated by national insecurity as a result of protracted armed conflicts involving various groups, especially the Boko Haram group and Fulani herders. The activities of these groups in terms of invasion and sacking of farming communities have resulted in many civilian fatalities, thus creating acute insecurity. The state of insecurity in many of these farming communities has made it practically difficult or even impossible for farmers to continue to engage in agricultural production optimally, thus affecting productivity and causing market disruptions with attendant food price shocks (Fadare, et al 2019). Therefore, a peaceful

environment is a sine qua non for productive agricultural engagement, which results in food security.

In the recent time, there have been a lot of concerns expressed over the looming danger of food crisis in many nations, including Nigeria. According to Food and Agriculture Organization, food security obtains when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO,1996). The main goal of food security therefore, is for individuals to be able to obtain adequate food needed at all times, and to be able to utilize the food to meet the body's needs.

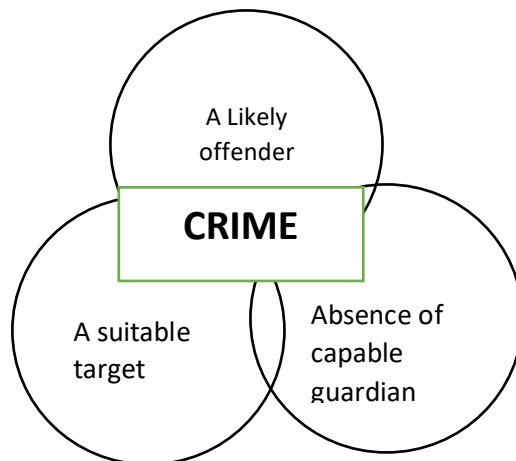
Significantly, food security should not be seen only from the perspective of availability as earlier mentioned either in quantitative or qualitative terms. Food hygiene and safety should also be given important consideration in order to protect the health of the people. Food, for instance, may be available but the source from which the food is produced or processed may be unhygienic or that the chemical substances used to produce or preserve the food may constitute a health hazard. Health and safety consideration therefore becomes important in food production.

Finally, food insecurity cause pressure on national security and invariably exacerbates national insecurity. Thus, sustainable food security under peaceful environment is an indispensable requisite to ensuring national security. Therefore, ensuring a peaceful environment will vanish food insecurity by enhancing agricultural activities.

Theoretical Analysis

The paper utilizes Routine Activity Theory as a theoretical framework of analysis. Routine activity theory is a sub-field of crime opportunity theory that focuses on situations of crimes. The theory was first proposed by Marcus Felson and Lawrence E. Cohen in their explanation of crime rate changes in the United States between 1947 and 1974 (Cohen & Felson, 1979). The theory has been extensively applied and has become one of the most cited theories in criminology. In routine activity theory, crime is likely to occur when three essential elements of crime converge in space and time: a motivated offender, an attractive target, and the absence of capable guardianship (Cohen, Kluegel, & Land, 1981). The theory holds that crime is likely to occur when there is a spatial-temporal convergence of three essential elements of crime, namely a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of capable guardianship.

ROUTINE ACTIVITY THEORY



Source: Adapted from Cohel and Felson (1979). Note: The three interrelated variables depicted in Fig.1 require physical convergence in time and space

Firstly, a motivated offender can be pointed out as any type of person who has true intent to commit a crime against an individual or property. However, the motivated offender has to be someone who is able to commit the crime, or, in other words, has everything he or she needs to commit a crime, physically, and mentally Miro (2014). Motivated offenders are individuals who are not only capable of committing criminal activity, but are willing to do so (Cohen and Felson, 1980). As such, this is where rural armed bandits fall, they are regarded as the motivated offender.

Secondly, a suitable target is any type of individual or property that the motivated offender can damage or threaten in the easiest way possible (Miro, 2014). If a target is suitable, this means that there is a greater chance that the crime can be committed, rather than, a target that is hard to achieve. And the suitable targets are the farmers, villagers and travelers.

Thirdly, Guardianship can be a person or an object that is effective in deterring offense to occur and sometimes crime is stopped by simple presence of guardianship in space and time. Cohen (1981) and Felson (1990). In this regard the state and national security as well as the local vigilantes and as well as the traditional institutions can be described as the guardian.

Conclusion and Findings of the study

Summarily, based on the interpretations of the data collected from the respondents which comprises the Villagers, Farmers, Local vigilantes, Government Security agencies, and Traditional institutions through the use of Key informal interview (KII) and In-depth interview (IDI) guide, the researcher is able to find out that rural arm banditry crisis is very complex due to the fact that factors like poverty, unemployment, vengeance, peer group influence and negligence of government are some of the contributing factors to the rise of arm banditry attacks in different part of the country. And as a result of frequent attacking activities by the rural arm banditry crisis has led to widespread displacement of both farmers and the villagers, destruction of properties such as houses and places of worshipping, burning of farms and numerous fatalities, with thousands of people killed and displaced mostly in state like Niger, Sokoto, Katsina, Kaduna. Therefore, as a result of frequent attacks by rural arm banditry in the above mentioned case study peoples including villagers and farmers are running for their life in which by so doing they will be scared of going back to the farm and as such in the end it will directly affect food security in the Niger northern and Nigeria at large.

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