

## **Interrogating State Response in the Management of Banditry activities in Nigeria: A Study of Katsina State**

**<sup>1</sup>P.P. Izah, <sup>1</sup>Uchenna S. Nzeako, <sup>1</sup>Dimas Garba & <sup>2</sup>Yerima, E. Gyong**

<sup>1</sup>Department of Political Science, Federal University, Dutsin ma, Katsina State

<sup>2</sup>Department of Economics, Federal University, Dutsin ma, Katsina State

Correspondence: paulizah65@gmail.com:

### **Abstract**

Armed banditry is fast becoming a new normal life in Nigeria. From the North-East to the North-West, to North-Central and from the South-East, South-West and South-South; the story is the same, armed bandits have taken over both govern and ungoverned spaces in Nigeria. Nigerians are currently living in palpable fears of been kidnapped by armed bandits. Travelling across the country by road or even by rail is now a nightmare. This paper therefore interrogated the state's response in the management of banditry activities in Nigeria, with special focus on Katsina State; which to many, has become the epicenter of these armed bandits. The paper deployed Hearts and Minds (HAM) theory as its framework of analysis. The paper collected data from primary sources such as questionnaire and secondary sources such as books, journals, newspapers/magazines and online materials among others. Data collected from the field survey were presented in tables and descriptively analysed. The paper found that that armed banditry has been prevalent in the state in recent times, and has become a new normal life for the people of the state. Based on this finding, the paper recommended among others that, the activities of informants should be tackled by the security agencies especially, the Directorate of State Services (DSS). Furthermore, the government should urgently address the problem of unemployment, which is a major cause of banditry activities in the state.

**Keywords:** Armed Banditry, Kidnapping, Management, State, Response.

### Introduction

Armed bandits have taken over most parts of the country, making it difficult for people to travel by roads and even by rail. Many Nigerians have lost their lives and millions paid to bandits as result of banditry activities. As it stands today, no region in the country is spared. The South West is plagued by a surge in cybercrime, armed robbery, kidnapping, domestic crime, extrajudicial killings, herder-farmer conflicts, ritual killings, and banditry. The South East is a haven for ritual killings, commercial crime, secessionist agitation, kidnapping, herder-farmer clashes, attacks by unknown gunmen, and banditry. The South South remains threatened by militancy, kidnapping, and environmental agitation. The North East has been subject to a humanitarian crisis lasting over a decade and caused by the Boko Haram insurgency and the Islamic State in West Africa Province. Meanwhile, the North West is enmeshed in illegal mining, ethno-religious killings, and banditry. It is, therefore, an axiom that insecurity in Nigeria has assumed a disproportionate geopolitical stance and that it has claimed thousands of lives and extensive damage and loss of property (ACCORD, 2022).

The Northern part of the country, especially the North West seems to be worst hit by the activities of the bandits. Villages in Northern Nigeria continue to face security challenges similar to those in Katsina, Kaduna and Zamfara States. The forests that cut across the three states (Kaduna, Katsina and Zamfara states), made the residents vulnerable to repeated abductions (Amnesty International, 2018, p 22).

In view of the lethality of such attacks, many lives and property have been lost in every incident. This is in addition to massive population displacements and allied humanitarian complications that are also engendered (Bagu & Smith 2017). Highway robbery is another critical dimension to the rural banditry phenomenon in the North West. This obtains mainly in the fashion of waylaying of commuters on the various expressways in the region. Abuja-Kaduna-Zaria highway has been particularly notorious for highway robberies. The incidence has also been alarming on the Kaduna-Birnin- Gwari-Zamfara-Funtua and Zaria-Funtua-Katsina highways. The highway robbers operate with wartime arms and commando-like brutality. In most incidents, they kill and maim people in their scores. The rampant cases of armed robbery on the Abuja-Kaduna expressway have forced some regular travelers on that route to defect to the use of rail services to commute to and from their destinations in order to safeguard themselves. Today, the rail operation from Abuja to Kaduna has been put on hold as a result of the terrorists attack on the train,

were many died and many kidnapped. People look for alternative movement to Kaduna and other flash point in the North,

Closely associated with highway robbery is the menace of kidnapping. This has been incessant in states like Kaduna, Katsina and Zamfara. Kidnapping is a predatory criminality driven by quest for ransom. Victims of the crime are often those perceived by the perpetrators as possessing some Kidnap Ransom Value (KRV) based on their socio-economic background (Okoli & Agada 2014). Patterns of kidnapping in northwestern Nigeria include highway-armed abduction whereby travelers are ambushed and abducted by bandits and then taken to a hideout in the forest where their relatives or associates are contacted for ransom payment. This form of kidnapping is common on the Abuja-Kaduna highway.

Another important game of kidnapping prevalent in northwestern Nigeria is mass abduction. This is an instance where a group of persons is taken hostage by bandits who are prospecting for ransom. A case in point is the abduction of twenty caregivers in Jibya Local Government Area of Katsina State on December 23, 2018. The incidence of kidnapping for ransom in northwestern Nigeria has been disturbing. Between December, 2018, and March, 2019, Zamfara State alone recorded many incidents of kidnapping involving 227 victims (Gusua 2019, 1). The crime is also prevalent in Kaduna and Katsina States where scores of persons have been kidnapped over the recent years. In Katsina State, kidnapping is most rampant in the rural communities surrounding the notorious Rugu forest, which has been a veritable hideout for bandits (Ladan, 2014).

The most patent dimension of rural banditry in Northwestern Nigeria is cattle rustling. This is a form of organized cattle theft driven by allied accumulative or profiteering tendencies. Of this, Bagu and Smith (2017, p.5) aptly opine that “in North West Nigeria, criminal gangs are reportedly engaging in organized rural banditry to profit off livestock theft and trade...”. A cattle rustling is intractable in northwest Nigeria because it fits organically into the peculiar political economy of the region wherein mobile pastoralism is an abiding practice (CDD 2015). This political economy is situated within the rural agrarian sector that is hardly regulated. However, mobile pastoralism in the area has been associated with systemic contradictions, one of which is the emergence of a tribe of criminal nomads who indulge in all forms of opportunistic rural criminality (Okoli & Lenshie 2018). This explains, to a reasonable extent, the prevalence and apparent intractability of cattle rustling in parts of northwestern Nigeria.

In the works of CDD (2015), Contemporary narrative on rural banditry in Nigeria presents a pathetic humanitarian scenario. In effect, the bandits “have been robbing people on highway, rustling cattle, looting, laying siege on rural markets and killing innocent people”. This motivates the researchers to delve into the role of the Nigerian state in the management of banditry activities in Nigeria with specific focus on Katsina State. The general aim of this research is to examine the role of the Nigerian State in the management of banditry activities in Katsina State. The Specific objective is the examination of the effects of banditry activities in Katsina State;

### **Literature Review**

Research on the prevailing precarious security situation of northern Nigeria has been perennial, albeit with disproportionate emphasis on the phenomena of Boko Haram insurgency and herdsman-farmers disturbances, incidentally, while scholarship on Boko Haram and farmers-herder crises has come a full cycle, organized research on banditry is still at an inchoate stage of nascence. Although there exist some important scholarly works on aspects of the subject matter none of these extant works could systematically and aptly account for the state and management of banditry activities in Nigeria and the scenario where banditry has assumed the scale of a complex emergency in Katsina and other North-Western States.

According to Okoli & Okpaleke (2014), banditry has to do with armed violence perpetrated by criminal opportunists and syndicates in the countryside and frontiers of countries. It comprises acts of armed criminality targeting at human life or property: armed robbery, kidnapping, cattle rustling and allied armed violence. Foremost among these perspectives is the narrative that situates the phenomenon as a necessary complication of farmer-herder crisis in a volatile security context characterized by the declining state’s capacity to govern (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016).

According to Okoli and Ugwu (2019), drivers of rural banditry in northwestern Nigeria consist in some socio-existential conditions that characterize the interior as well as the frontiers of the region. Prominent among these conditions are the scarcely governed hinterlands, forestlands and borderlines of the region. The northwestern hinterlands are marked by extremely dispersed rural settlements, separated by rangelands and farmlands that are susceptible to violent contestations

They are also interspersed by diverse forested landscapes, some of which are dotted by wetlands, rocks and caves. Apart from being separated from each other, they are equally far separated from the centers of governance at the local and state levels.

Akinyetun(2022), maintained that banditry is a serious crime that poses a security challenge to democratic governance and peaceful coexistence in Nigeria. Bandits often terrorize communities in the North West region. Their activities include kidnapping, arson, shooting, rape, cattle rustling, killing, and looting. The prevalence of under-governed spaces where the government's control is ineffective and limited is a major factor giving rise to banditry (Ojo, 2020). Such areas are characterized by bad governance, weak legitimacy, protracted conflict, and poor leadership, which make citizens vulnerable to exploitation by terrorist groups, traffickers, and other criminal elements. Such areas are not generally entirely devoid of the government's control but are governed poorly and differently from larger communities. These poorly governed territories are plagued by bandits and other criminal gangs due to their remoteness, which allows for the perpetuation of an array of illegal business activities. It is not uncommon to find human trafficking, piracy, cattle rustling, and illegal mining in such areas. These areas are used to promote and sustain an illegal, informal economy. Examples of such include large forests in Rumah/KukarJangarai, Kamuku (Akinyetun, 2022).

The forestlands of the region are vast, rugged and hazardous. Most importantly, they are grossly under-policed to the point that makes them conducive to all forms of jungle criminality. In view of this, violent crimes, such as cattle rustling, have festered in such forested areas. Hence,

Nigerian authorities have recorded an increase in cattle/livestock rustling activities mainly in the north and north-west regions of Nigeria that is directly connected to Boko Haram. Most attacks occur in remote villages, close to forested regions in the north-west where there is little security presence. These activities are profitable for BH but also terrorize the local population and deprive them of their food and livelihoods (FATF-GIABA-GABAC 2016, p.12).

Okoli (2017) asserts that four patterns of rural banditry are common in the North West, namely: village raids, highway robbery, kidnapping and cattle rustling. Village raids, are the invasion and plundering of rural communities, especially at nights. These often take the form of scorch-earth attacks that leave affected communities in utter desolation in the aftermath of an incident. Village raids can be uni-episodic or coordinated. The former occurs when a single community is attacked while the latter happens when the

attack occurs simultaneously on a number of adjacent communities within a locality. The principal purpose of village raids is material plundering. In effect, in most instances, household, farmlands, shops and markets are targets of looting. It is pertinent to note, however, that some of the attacks have been merely reprisals, designed to show down on communities, which have hitherto challenged or resisted the bandits' onslaught through organized vigilantism (Okoli 2017).

Under-governed spaces coupled with the country's porous borders have increased the influx of small arms and light weapons from the Sahel region – thus increasing the opportunities for crime. This is facilitated by vast forests which allow the illegal arms trade to fester. It is further complicated by the socioeconomic conditions prevalent in the North West, which leave the youth vulnerable to recruitment for criminal activities. The socioeconomic realities that exist include multidimensional poverty, widespread unemployment, deprivation, inequality, marginalization, exclusion and lack of access to basic amenities. Even though this is a national challenge, the North is particularly affected. For example, Zamfara, Jigawa, and Sokoto states have poverty levels of 74%, 87%, and 87.7%, respectively (Abdulrasheed, 2020). These conditions make the region even more susceptible to crime, including as a result of the activities of Boko Haram and now, banditry.

Village raids have been a common feature of the rural banditry escapade in northwestern Nigeria. Their occurrence has been perennial in the hinterlands of Katsina, Zamfara and Kaduna States. Incidentally, existing studies hardly pay attention to the role of the Nigerian State in managing the activities of bandits in the country, and the extent of banditry activities, especially using primary method of data gathering to find out the operations of the bandits. Therefore, this research evaluated the role of the Nigerian state in the management of banditry activities in Katsina State. This is the gap in extant literature which the present study sought to fill.

### **Theoretical Exploration**

This research was anchored on Hearts and Minds (HAM) theory by Sir Gerald Templer who introduced this term during the Malayan Emergency. The theory however was developed during the Vietnam war, when the United States asked the RAND to assist them in developing counter-insurgency measures. For hearts and minds analysts, the first problem is protection of the populace from insurgent, thus the government in need must receive assistance to strengthen their armed forces (security). Furthermore, hearts and minds theory suggests that insurgency-threatened countries ought to attack the two basic

political problems behind insurgency: bad administration and lack of administration. Therefore reforms are essential, the rule of law should be enforced and distributional, ethnic communal and corruption problems should be addressed and the quantity and quality of government should be improved to enforce the reforms (governance). The final issue that needs to be addressed according to the HAM theory, is the unrest which is caused by bad living conditions or rising expectations. Especially, if the legitimacy of the government is poor, HAM theory argues that economic aid will help persuade the population to support the government instead of the insurgents/bandits (development). What is required is a coordinated effort by military, political, and administrative leaders to insure balanced action on all fronts and at all level.

Finally, the hearts and minds prescriptions amount to three great ought: governments ought to secure the population from insurgent coercion, they ought to provide competent, legal, responsive administration and they ought to meet rising expectations with higher living standards. This theory is apt in understanding the management of banditry in Katsina State.

### Presentation and Analysis of Data

**Table 1. Local Government Area (LGA)**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Bakori	76	12.5	12.5	12.5
Batagarawa	68	11.2	11.2	23.6
Batsari	105	17.2	17.2	40.9
Baure	33	5.4	5.4	46.3
Bindawa	1	.2	.2	46.5
Charanchi	33	5.4	5.4	51.9
Dan Musa	4	.7	.7	52.5
Danja	65	10.7	10.7	63.2

Daura	112	18.4	18.4	81.6
Dutsi	35	5.7	5.7	87.4
Dutsin-Ma	76	12.5	12.5	99.8
Faskari	1	.2	.2	100.0
Total	609	100.0	100.0	

**Source: Researcher's Field trip 2022**

Table 1 shows the twelve (12) Local Government Areas covered during the field trip. It further reflect the number of questionnaires administered in the field.

**Table 2. Banditry has destroyed your means of livelihood**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No response	23	3.8	3.8	3.8
Strongly Agreed	236	38.8	38.8	42.5
Agreed	200	32.8	32.8	75.4
Valid Neutral	72	11.8	11.8	87.2
Disagreed	54	8.9	8.9	96.1
Strongly Disagreed	24	3.9	3.9	100.0
Total	609	100.0	100.0	

**Source: Researcher's Field trip 2022**

Table 2 shows that 436 respondents agreed that their means of their livelihood has been destroyed by the bandits in their various local government areas. This means that the effects of banditry activities in most places in Katsina State is very high.



**Table 3. Banditry activities have prevented you from going to the farm**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No response	17	2.8	2.8	2.8
Strongly Agreed	238	39.1	39.1	41.9
Agreed	175	28.7	28.7	70.6
Valid Neutral	65	10.7	10.7	81.3
Disagreed	79	13.0	13.0	94.3
Strongly Disagreed	35	5.7	5.7	100.0
Total	609	100.0	100.0	

**Source: Researcher's Field trip 2022**

Table 3 reflected the extent of banditry activities against the farmers. As shown above, 39.1% and 28.7% agreed that going to the farm is as good as committing suicide. This means that farmers are affected by the activities of the bandits which has affected agricultural productivity in the state as agriculture is the main occupation of the indigenes of the state.

**Table 4. Banditry has affected trade of commodities in the market**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No response	12	2.0	2.0	2.0
Valid Strongly Agreed	247	40.6	40.6	42.5
Agreed	237	38.9	38.9	81.4

Neutral	57	9.4	9.4	90.8
Disagreed	39	6.4	6.4	97.2
Strongly Disagreed	17	2.8	2.8	100.0
Total	609	100.0	100.0	

**Source: Researcher's Field trip 2022**

Table 4 also shows the level of banditry activities on trade of commodities in the market. Majority of the respondents agreed that banditry activities have grossly affected trading of commodities in the state. Thus, many persons are restricted from going to market to sell their produce. The percentage of the respondents that agreed that they have been affected by the banditry activities is 79.5%.

**Table 5. Banditry has caused the death of your loved ones**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No response	14	2.3	2.3	2.3
Strongly Agreed	275	45.2	45.2	47.5
Agreed	185	30.4	30.4	77.8
Valid Neutral	73	12.0	12.0	89.8
Disagreed	33	5.4	5.4	95.2
Strongly Disagreed	29	4.8	4.8	100.0
Total	609	100.0	100.0	

**Source: Researcher's Field trip 2022**

From Table 5 above, it is obvious that bandits in Katsina State have killed many people, thereby causing pains and agony on their loved ones. As shown in Table 5, 75.6% of the respondents agreed that they have lost their love ones as a result of banditry activities in Katsina State.

**Table 6. Banditry has affected schooling in your community**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
No response	19	3.1	3.1	3.1
Strongly Agreed	255	41.9	41.9	45.0
Agreed	203	33.3	33.3	78.3
Valid Neutral	55	9.0	9.0	87.4
Disagreed	54	8.9	8.9	96.2
Strongly Disagreed	23	3.8	3.8	100.0
Total	609	100.0	100.0	

**Source: Researcher's Field trip 2022**

According to respondents in Table 6, many schools were shut down and children stayed at home as a result of banditry activities in their areas. This was according to them as some children that went to school were kidnapped. As showed in Table 6, majority of the respondents that is 76.2% agreed that their children's education have been seriously affected by the banditry activities in Katsina State.

### **Findings**

The findings of this study revealed that the people's means of livelihood have been adversely affected, especially trading, commercial, and farming among other socio-economic activities. Most children are out of school for fear of being kidnapped from school by these armed bandits.

Furthermore, many victims have lost their family members as a result of frequent attacks orchestrated by these bandits in rural communities across the state. Many people were kidnapped, ransom paid; yet many died in these kidnappers' dens. Their cattle were rustled, thus causing more economic hardship to the people of the state.

## Conclusion

The paper has x-rayed the effects of banditry activities in Katsina State. Although, banditry activities are not peculiar to Katsina State; most states in Nigeria's North-West, especially Kaduna, Zamfara and Sokoto and other regions are facing almost the same problem of banditry activities. It is a cankerworm that has become a new normal life in most parts of the country. On daily basis, people are kidnapped, ransom paid and most often killed in captivity. Cattle are rustled, and the fear of going to farm is palpable.

It is against the foregoing that the paper makes the following recommendations:

- i The activities of informants should be tackled by the security agencies especially the Directorate of State Services (DSS).
- ii. There should be a strong synergy between security agencies especially on information sharing.
- iii. The security agencies should be provided with modern equipment that will help them in the fight against the bandits.
- iv. The government should urgently address the problems of unemployment and poverty, which to many, are the major drivers of banditry activities in the state

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