

**A PURVIEW OF THE CAUSES OF YOUTH INVOLVEMENT
IN ARMED BANDITRY IN KADUNA STATE, NORTH
WESTERN NIGERIA (2012-2022)**

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ABSTRACT: The work is a sociological inquisition of the causes of youth involvement in armed banditry in Kaduna State (2012-2022). The following research objectives guided the study: investigate the socio-economic factors responsible for youth involvement in armed banditry in Kaduna State; determine the institutional lapses in governance responsible for youth involvement in armed banditry; and analyse the government's poor policy formulation and implementation responsible for youth involvement in armed banditry in the study area. The study was anchored on the Routine Activities Theory by Cohen and Felson. Using a multi-stage sampling of cluster, stratified and simple random sampling, 1000 residents of the affected communities were administered questionnaires. In addition, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and In-depth Interviews were purposively conducted with members of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), vigilantes, traditional leaders, youth leaders and arrested bandits. The quantitative data from the use of questionnaires were analysed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.0 with descriptive statistics and Principal Factor Analysis (PFA). The study revealed that all the 10 variables given as socio-economic factors were responsible for youth involvement in armed banditry in the State. This was because the Bartlett's test of sphericity $\chi^2(75) = 4904.270$ for the socio-economic factors was statistically significant at $P < 0.01$. Additionally, the study revealed that though 10 socio-economic variables were responsible for youth involvement in armed banditry in the State, the abuse of hard drugs had the highest factor loading value with 0.92. In contrast, peer influence had the second highest factor loading value with 0.91. The study further revealed that although 7 variables were given as the institutional lapses in governance that resulted in youth involvement in armed banditry in the State, all the seven variables identified were retained. Also, the Bartlett's test of sphericity $\chi^2(21) = 4904.270$ for the factors was statistically significant at $P < 0.01$. At the same time, the diminishing role of traditional institutions in the governance of Kaduna State had the highest factor loading value of 0.79. More so, inadequate policing and weak security arrangements of the State came second with 0.78 factor loading. The study recommended that the Federal and State governments in the State must ensure that they minimized the abuse of hard drugs, youth unemployment, and poverty and reduce the ungoverned spaces in the State.

Keywords: Armed Banditry, Looting, Organized Crimes, Raiding, Youth.

INTRODUCTION

Armed banditry activities in the Northern Nigerian States of Zamfara, Niger, Katsina, Sokoto, Kebbi and Kaduna States have been facilitated by issues related to globalization, such as climate change, rising youth unemployment and proliferation of illicit weapons (International Crises Group, 2020). In Kaduna State, some young persons who lost their farmlands or cattle

in conflicts between sedentary farmers and herders or armed banditry attacks were, in several instances, not given any form of aid nor compensated by the authorities. These young persons have been disaffected from getting social justice in the State, thus predisposing them to armed banditry (Momale, 2016). The present form of armed banditry in the State is extremely vicious and associated with youth who routinely engage in the sacking of communities, the destruction of lives or property and the sexual abuse of females (Dutse & Olowose, 2020).

Realizing the destructive nature of armed banditry in Kaduna State, which has presently spread to all the 23 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the State, the Federal and State Governments in the State initiated a policy of military deployment to tackle the activities of armed bandits. However, the policy has not minimized the incidences of armed banditry in the State as menace seems to be defying military solution. This is because the incidences of armed banditry have continued to occur, thereby deteriorating the security of the state (Dutse and Olowose, 2020; Attah et al, 2021).

The seemingly young Nigerian population of an estimated 85,569,460 million (39.5%) and also 97,484,195 million (45%) children under 15 years, out of a projected population of 216,631,545 (United Nations Population Fund, 2022), it will be correct to assert that armed banditry portends danger for the future of Nigeria and youth in the State. It is in view of the above and increasing occurrences of armed banditry in Kaduna State that this work was conducted to study youth involvement in armed banditry in Kaduna State.

Statement of the Research Problem

The relative normalcy and social stability experienced by Nigerians living in the northern part of Nigeria have, in the last decade, been disrupted due to the increasing spate of armed banditry attacks. Armed banditry is usually more evident in remote communities where the presence of government social services and security agencies are almost not visible in terms of access to good roads, police stations, courts and primary schools. This makes the poorly governed remote communities become more vulnerable to the activities of armed bandits.

Traditionally, armed banditry was initially regarded as a small peasantry problem that forms part of the activities of crop farmers and herders' societies. Peasants who engaged in armed banditry were seen as heroes among their criminal groups, and some members of peasant communities saw them as heroes who could fight against society's injustices. However, armed banditry in the last decade has taken a new dimension from the nature and pattern that was previously known in the North Western States of Nigeria.

The present form of armed banditry in the North Western States of Nigeria, specifically in Kaduna State, is more vicious and destructive, and it is now being characterized by the commercialization of proceeds from armed banditry where proceeds from armed banditry are sold and bought on a large scale for financial motives. Furthermore, armed banditry attacks in the State now routinely involve the killing of victims, maiming, setting victims ablaze, looting of victims' properties and violent sexual abuse of women and girls (NPF, 2020).

The annual security report by Kaduna State Ministry of Internal Security and Home Affairs (2020) reported that 937 people were killed in 2020 as a result of armed banditry in the State. More so, the disturbing incidence of wasting human lives in Kaduna State due to armed banditry continued into the year 2021. This was because the annual security report released by

the State's Ministry of Internal Security and Home Affairs (2021) revealed that from 1st January to 31st to

In December 2021, there were 3,348 reported incidences of armed banditry attacks in Kaduna State. The report further indicated that of 1,192 people who were killed in 2021 by armed bandits and violence-related activities in the State 1,038 were males, 104 were females, and 50 were minors.

Similarly, the Kaduna State Ministry of Internal Security and Home Affairs (2022) 1st Quarterly security report of the year 2022 revealed that 360 people were killed while 1,389 victims were abducted by armed bandits in the State. Conversely, by the end of the 3rd Quarter of 2022, which coincides with 31st September 2022, 806 people were killed by armed bandits while 1,789 residents were abducted during armed banditry raids in the State.

Basically, armed banditry in Kaduna State has revealed how societal moral decadence and availability of hard drugs have transformed some youth in the State into hardened outlaws. More so, with the increasing levels of social inequality in the State with an average youth unemployment rate of 39.5% and 46% of the State's citizens living in extreme poverty, as reported by the World Bank (2021). Thus, these harsh socio-economic realities in the State have continued to facilitate the involvement of youth in armed banditry in Kaduna State.

Objectives of the Study

This study achieved the following research objectives:

- i. investigated the socio-economic factors responsible for youth involvement in armed banditry in Kaduna State;
- ii. Determined the institutional lapses in governance responsible for youth involvement in armed banditry in Kaduna State and
- iii. Analysed the government's poor policy formulation and implementation that was responsible for youth involvement in armed banditry in Kaduna State in Kaduna State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

One factor responsible for armed banditry across the rural communities of Latin America, the Middle East, North Africa, and West Africa is poor governance and the absence of government administrative services in rural communities. Onwuzuruigbo (2021) argued that one unique cause of armed banditry is the lapses in governance by regimes. Contrary to the factor explained by Onwuzuruigbo (2021); Robinson (2000) argued that a factor responsible for armed banditry is the breakdown of societal moral and traditional values which preserved the sacredness of human lives and sanctity of the human body. Buttressing this point further, Jumare and Surma (2016) argued that the breakdown of societal moral values that preserved the sacredness of human lives has become a causative factor for several individuals to resort to armed banditry.

Excessive land resource use conflict between the pastoralists and sedentary crop farmers in rural communities is another factor responsible for armed banditry. Armed banditry in rural communities of Latin America, Middle East and North Africa is one form of the many features of protest by farmers or herders against intolerable conditions which they were subjected to as result of losing their land resources which is inseparable from their sole means of livelihood

(Momale, 2016). Being frustrated with such prevailing conditions, individuals in these conditions perceived the society as unjust and over shadowed with injustice. Thus, facilitating them to go into brigandage as a means of showing their discontentment with the existing social order of the society (Davis, 2017).

Similarly, the social problem of armed banditry in Sub-Saharan Africa, specifically Nigeria, remains a typical example of how drought occasioned by climate change has resulted in excessive land resource use conflicts especially between the pastoralists and sedentary crop farmers. According to International Crises Group (2020), armed banditry in North West Nigeria basically revealed how those who lost their farmlands or cattle due to land resource use conflicts without government compensation and social justice were pushed into armed banditry in the rural areas of Kaduna State.

Satore (2017) have attributed armed banditry to poverty and hard economic realities such as unemployment as factors responsible for the widespread resurgence of the armed banditry in the last two decades across the rural communities of Latin America, Middle East, North Africa and West Africa. Also, Gadzama et al. (2018) argued that the harsh socio-economic realities from poverty and unemployment in the rural communities of sub-Saharan Africa have been linked to insecurity in the region. They further noted that poor and unemployed youth living in rural communities were easily mobilised into armed banditry.

Another factor responsible for the armed banditry is the availability of illicit proliferation of small firearms and ammunitions in circulation in several rural communities especially in Latin America, Asia, North Africa and West Africa. Onwuzuruigbo (2021), noted that the proliferation of illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALWs) in many rural communities of Latin America, Asia and North Africa and West Africa has remained a major factor responsible for armed banditry in the rural communities in these regions.

The porosity of borders in rural communities is another factor facilitating armed banditry and the regularity of attacks by armed bandits in rural communities across the globe. Jumare and Surma (2016) argued that several illicit drugs and weapons which serves as drivers of armed banditry in Nigeria, Cameroun and Niger entered into these countries through their porous land borders.

Another cause for armed banditry is the availability of hard drugs because the gruesome destructions carried out during armed banditry attacks have been further compounded by the easy access and availability of hard drugs used by armed bandits. The assertion was confirmed by a study conducted by Oluyemi-Kusa and Salihu (2016) on armed banditry in Kaduna State which revealed that some victims of armed banditry in the state explained that hard drugs were a major driver of youth into armed banditry and becoming informants or logistics suppliers to armed bandits.

Other responsible motivators for armed banditry across the globe were the prevailing conditions of global social and political instability, greed and corruption among the leaders in authority and law enforcement agencies (Williams, 2005; Curo and Fink, 2010). Davis (2017) argued that conditions of social and political instability, greed and corruption among the public officials, members of the communities and law enforcement agencies have undermined good governance, justice and fairness in the society and precipitate conditions that flourish armed banditry.

The inability of governments to create and implement sustainable policies that would protect their forest and game reserves from becoming a hideout for armed bandits is another factor responsible for armed banditry. Olaniyan (2018) and Onwuruigbo (2021) noted that countries or regions that neglect their forest will always risk having such natural endowments becoming threats to their respective national or regional security. In Nigeria, the incidences of armed banditry cut across several LGAs of the North West Nigeria, occurring more in LGAs with thick forests, mountains, vast land for crop farming, a large number of livestock farmers and available grazing land.

Theoretical Framework: Routine Activities Theory

This work is framed around Cohen and Felson's Routine Activities Theory (1979). The central theme of the Routine Activities Theory is that all criminals or potential criminals are rational actors who subject themselves to conscious decision-making out of their free will of human action (rational choice). The theory argues that potential criminals create a routine of committing crimes by being influenced by situations that are accompanied by opportunity.

This theory is hinged on three cues: there must be a suitable target, a target whose guardians (such as police, vigilantes, and passers-by) can be easily overcome by the potential criminal offender, and there must be a criminal offender.

Applying the Routine Activities Theory to explain armed banditry in Kaduna State implied that criminals who engage in armed banditry are rational actors who always make use of the available opportunity to subject themselves to conscious decision-making out of the free will of human action. Also, this implied that criminals who engage in armed banditry in Kaduna State simultaneously work toward achieving the maximum benefits and with minimum costs of committing the armed banditry without being caught or apprehended, prosecuted and punished for the gruesome crimes they routinely commit. Applying the theory also implied that communities affected by armed banditry in the study area have become suitable targets to armed banditry attacks because many of these communities are located largely within poorly governed or ungoverned spaces, rendering several of these villages vulnerable and soft targets to armed banditry attacks. Also, there are motivated armed bandits in the study area that routinely go around plundering affected communities.

METHODOLOGY

The location of the study for this research is Kaduna State, North West Nigeria. Official records from Kaduna State Command of Nigeria Police Force (2021) and the State's Ministry of Internal Security and Home Affairs (2021) indicated that 15 LGAs out of the overall 23 LGAs of the state were mostly affected by the incidences of armed banditry. The instruments used to collect qualitative data were the Key Informant Interview (KII) in-depth-interviews (IDIs). The category of people who formed this research's population for questionnaire administration were people who have experienced armed banditry attacks in the State. The qualitative data generated from the research was derived from members of the Nigerian Police Force NPF, staff of the Kaduna State Ministry of Internal Security and Home Affairs, traditional leaders and some victims of the attack were analysed and interpreted in a narrative form to supplement the quantitative data used by the study selected from fifteen 15 LGAs were mostly affected by the incidences of armed banditry attacks in the State. Descriptive statistical tools were used to analyse and interpret the data on the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the

respondents, while the Principal Factor Analysis (PFA) was used to achieve all the objectives of this work.

PRESENTATION OF STUDY FINDINGS

Section One: Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

This section presented the analysis and interpretation of data on the socio-economic and demographic data of the respondents.

Table 1: Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	619	61.9
Female	381	38.1
Total	1000	100
Age		
16-17 years	127	12.7
18-30 years	366	36.6
31-45 years	352	35.2
46 years and above	155	15.5
Total	1000	100
Occupation		
Civil Servant	214	21.4
Trading	290	29.0
Artisan	52	5.2
Crop farming	332	33.2
Livestock rearing	73	7.3
Other types of occupations	39	3.9
Total	1000	100
Level of Income		
N1000 - N200, 000 per annum	478	47.8
N201, 000 - N400, 000 per annum	290	29.0
N401, 000 – N600, 000 per annum	52	5.2
N600, 000 and above per annum	332	33.2
Total	1000	100
Educational Attainment		
Qur'anic education	240	24.0
Primary education	361	36.1
Secondary education	320	32.0
Tertiary education	79	7.9
Total	1000	100

Source: Fieldwork, 2022

In terms of the socio-demographic attributes of the respondents, result from Table 1 showed that out of the 1000 surveyed respondents in the study area, 61.9% of the respondents were

males while 38,1% of the respondents were females, implying that the majority of the respondents were males but with a significant proportion of female respondents in the research. Also, the table revealed that the majority of the respondents, with 36.6%, were within the age range of 18 - 30 years, 35.2%, while those within the age range of 16 -17 years were the least, with 2.7%. This implied that a significant number of the respondents for this study were within the youthful age and more likely to be very knowledgeable about why individuals within the age range go into armed banditry. Furthermore, Table 1 revealed that the majority of the respondents (52.7%) were married, 34.8% of the respondents were single, and 6.5% of the respondents were separated.

Factors responsible for Youth involvement in Armed Banditry in Kaduna State

This section presents the analysis and interpretation of data on the factors responsible for armed banditry in the study area. The study first sought to present the analysis and interpretation of the quantitative data, followed by the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data through KIIs and IDIs.

Results from the analysed responses from the study's respondents revealed that all the 10 variables that were given as socio-economic factors facilitating youth involvement in armed banditry in Kaduna State were all retained. This was because the analysed responses revealed that the KMO values for extracted individual variables were 0.893, which was greater than the acceptable limit of 0.5 commonalities threshold. Similarly, Bartlett's test of sphericity $X^2(75) = 4904.270$ was statistically significant at ($P < 0.01$), indicating strong positive correlations between variables given as the factors responsible for youth involvement in banditry and the menace-armed banditry. Additionally, the abuse of hard drugs, with 0.92, had the highest factor loading value; peer influence had the second highest value of factor loading with 0.91, and commercialisation of looted foodstuff/ rustled livestock, with 0.89, had the third factor loading. However, the lack of respect for the sanctity of human lives recorded the lowest loading value with 0.51-factor loading values, respectively. This finding conformed with the position of Robinson (2000), Jumare and Surma (2016), Momale (2016), Davis (2017), Gadzama et al. (2018), International Crises Group (2020), Onwuzuruigbo (2021) on the socio-economic factors responsible for youth involvement in armed banditry.

With regards to the second set of 7 independent variables given as institutional lapses in the governance of Kaduna State, results showed that the KMO value for each independent variable was 0.894, which was greater than the acceptable limit of 0.5 commonalities. Similarly, Bartlett's test of sphericity $X^2(21) = 4904.270$ was statistically significant at ($P < 0.01$), indicating a strong positive association between institutional lapses in the governance of the State and youth involvement in armed banditry in the State. In terms of the level of statistical association within institutional lapses in governance that were responsible for armed banditry in the State, results showed that the majority of the respondents were of the view that the entirety of the listed institutional lapses in governance of the State had strong positive association with armed banditry. This was because each of these variables had a factor loading value above 0.5, with the diminishing role of traditional institutions in the governance of Kaduna State having the highest factor loading value at 0.79. However, inadequate policing and weak security arrangements in the study area had the second highest factor loading with 0.78, while the inability of authorities to give compensation and assistance to farmers and herders who lost their means of livelihood due to armed banditry had the lowest factor loading value with 0.57. These findings supported the position of Lastowka (2010), Mohammed and Alimba (2016), Davis (2017), Rufai (2018), Gadzama et al. (2018), Suleiman (2019),

International Crises Group (2020), WANEP (2020) and Onwuzuruigbo (2020) whose previous works revealed that lapses in governance of territories were strong factors responsible for armed banditry remotely located rural communities.

In terms of the last seven variables identified, findings from the study revealed that all the variables given as governments' decades of poor policy formulation and implementation were factors responsible for youth involvement in armed banditry in the State. This was because the analysed data showed the KMO values for each independent variable was 0.870. In contrast, the loading factor for each of the independent variables was even greater than the minimum 0.5 coefficient. In terms of the level of statistical association, results showed that the inability of the government to formulate and implement policies that give genuine social intervention to reduce poverty had the highest factor loading value with 0.87, while the government's inability to formulate and implement policies that will encourage the private establishment of agro/non-industries had the least factor loading with 0.518. These findings implied that in spite of all the independent variables listed having a strong positive association with armed banditry in Kaduna State, the majority of the respondents were of the view that two factors were foremost. All these findings corroborated the position of Egwu (2016), Jumare and Surma (2016), Gadzama et al. (2018) and International Crises Group (2020).

The study also sought to get qualitative information on the factors responsible for youth involvement in armed banditry in the study area. In a KII interaction with an arrested bandit from Birnin Gwari LGA, who was always shaking his head and looked betrayed, he argued that:

I was coerced to join these people then as a small boy to protect the dignity and pride of the women in our family and protect our family's cattle from being pilfered. I was threatened against my will to join them. Many bandits were forced to join these activities against their own will. When we needed help against these people, there was none. Now, it has become part of us, and we are making it, and people are telling us to renounce armed banditry (KII/ Arrested Bandit from Giwa LGA, 2022).

During an IDI with a male youth leader in Jema'a, LGA was revealed. According to him:

To me, part of what is responsible for this problem of armed banditry in Kaduna State is the growing population of youth and unemployment, which is beyond belief. Parents here just give birth to children without taking care of them (IDI/Male Youth, Godogodo Community of Jema'a, 2022).

What all these interviewees and participants from the IDIs and KIIs seemed to be stressing is that there were several factors responsible for youth involvement in armed banditry in Kaduna State.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were proffered:

1. The Federal Government of Nigeria and NPF authorities must deploy more police personnel to Kaduna State and provide them with improved conditions of service, modern weapons, logistics, kits, Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs), patrol trucks, drones, night-vision spectacles, and modern telecommunication gadgets. This will enable the NPF to respond swiftly to distress calls during banditry attacks.
2. The Federal and State Governments should always direct the NPF and other security agents in the State to go after armed bandits in their enclaves and camps located inside the forests to raid and destroy their camps to prevent them from carrying out more attacks on communities in the State. Individual victims of armed banditry attacks or farmers-herders conflicts in the State who were bereaved, injured or lost their source of livelihood should be given professional counselling, emergency healthcare, and palliatives.
3. The Federal and State Governments should set up a Victim Support Fund (VSF), which will bear the financial responsibility for logistics and remuneration for the professionals who would provide the counselling services.
4. The residents of communities affected by armed banditry must cooperate with the NPF authorities at the village, ward, and LGA levels in Kaduna State to form community policing structures.

Conclusion

This work concluded that the continuous involvement of youth in armed banditry in Kaduna State has negatively affected both the youth and other residents in the State. The study also concluded that some of the factors responsible for youth involvement in armed banditry in the State were youth unemployment, greed, rising poverty, abuse of hard drugs, peer group influence, lack of respect for the sanctity of human lives and continued existence of large ungoverned spaces in the State. This work concluded that the government must secure the future of the youth by bringing an end to the menace of armed banditry in the study area.

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