

## Effect Of Banditry On Socio-Economic Development Of North-West Geopolitical Zone Of Nigeria

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### Abstract:

This study investigates the impact of banditry on socio-economic development in the North West geopolitical region of Nigeria. The research focuses on various acts of violence committed by criminal groups such as kidnapping, cattle theft, and village attacks, and presents evidence that these activities have a damaging impact on socio-economic indices in the region. The study results show that banditry causes a decline in the average per capita income of the community, undermines human dignity among women, and disrupts food security. The findings emphasise the importance of security in the socio-economic development of a region, and the need for serious efforts to address the problem of banditry in order to achieve sustainable progress and prosperity..

**Key words:** Effect, Banditry, Development, North-west & Nigeria.

### 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).

As a result of the intense attacks, the socio-economic activities in the region have experienced a significant decline. Agricultural productivity has been severely affected, as farmers are reluctant to go to their farms due to the insecurity. Academic activities have been repeatedly disrupted, hindering the progress of education in the region. Additionally, market activities have been heavily impacted, as traders are compelled to pay taxes to the bandits before conducting business in the markets, causing economic losses. Moreover, traders are avoiding traveling to purchase goods due to the prevailing insecurity. Consequently, there is a growing interest among scholars in understanding the menace of banditry in Nigeria. However, their focus has been limited, as there is little or no emphasis on the broader implications of banditry on the socio-economic development of the affected region. This observation has been made by Ladan, indicating that further research is needed to explore the comprehensive impact of banditry on the socio-economic landscape of Nigeria. (2014); Kuna & Ibrahim (2016); Okoli & Ochim (2016); Olaniyan & Yahaya (2016) and Olaniyan (2018), While there have been several notable studies on banditism, research on this phenomenon is still at an early stage of its development and no study has properly considered the threat in the North West region, where banditism has become particularly disruptive and requires urgent attention. Given this void in research on the subject, this article primarily aims to investigate the impact of banditism on socio-economic development in the North West region. The remaining sections of this article have the following thematic structure: socio-economic development, banditism/bandits, the damaging consequences of banditism on socio-economic development in the North West, state responses to banditism, and conclusion.

### Literature Review

#### Socio-economic development

Socio-economic development is a very wide and interesting concept because of its centrality to nations among other reasons. Socio-economic development embraces changes taking place in the social sphere, mostly of an economic nature (Chojnicki, 2010). Development processes and/or development goals determine the type of socio-economic development. In general, these processes are internal sequences of changes in states, or stages, in which some states determine others. This quantitative, qualitative and structural change is the result of the subject's actions carried out in social practice. it is related to the consumption of goods and services. (Stemplowski (1987); Chojnicki (2010), UNDP (2012)

and Bellu (2011).

## **Banditry**

Banditry is the taking of property using force or the threat of force, often by a group, usually made up of men. Banditry usually operates in the shadows, often on the outskirts of civilisation, in remote locations, and it is done out of necessity. (Slatta, 1987). The term "banditism" is used to refer to various types of extrajudicial acts. Although banditism has historically mainly occurred in urban areas and major highways, such acts can occur in homes, workplaces, schools, highways, banks, and even in residential neighbourhoods. It is also important to note that the perpetrators of these acts live close to the areas where the banditry occurs. (Odinkalu, 2018 in Chibuzor, Ibrahim & Paul, 2020).

The above indicates that banditry is a criminal activity characterised by kidnappings, armed robberies, cattle thefts and village raids. It is important to remember that these bandits are not complete strangers, as some of them are known to members of the community who have been victims of suffering and injuries as a result of their actions.

Banditry is a form of crime that can pose a serious threat to communities in the affected areas. The criminal activities associated with banditry include various acts of violence and theft that cause physical and economic harm to local residents. The fact that some bandits are recognised by the local community creates complexity in addressing this issue, as it can cause fear and mistrust within the community. Efforts to tackle banditry should include a holistic approach and involve collaboration between authorities and communities to identify and address the root causes of banditry behaviour.

## **Exploring the damaging consequences of banditry on socio-economic development of north-west**

The Northwest Region is one of the regions in the country that has a variety of advanced socio-economic activities, such as cash crops like food crops, beans, cotton, millet, and sesame seeds, among others. The region stretches through the states of Sokoto, Kebbi, Zamfara, Katsina, Kano, and Jigawa, and has a variety of food and cash crops, as well as the rearing of sheep, goats, and cattle. Cotton is widely grown in the Northwest region, although in smaller quantities and not as much as the more common groundnut (United State Agency International Development, 2007). According to a survey conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (2012), out of a total of 15,629,709 male crop owners in the country, Kano state had the highest percentage at 981,693 (6.28%), followed by Kaduna state with 874,943 (5.60%) and Katsina state with 738,456 (4.72%). In addition, the total maize crop area across the country, including the Federal Capital Territory, stood at 4,149.33 ('000 ha), with Kaduna state being the highest at 435.72 ('000 ha). The total amount of cotton produced across the country was 602.44 ('000 metric tonnes), with Zamfara state as the largest with a production of 155.19 ('000 metric tonnes), followed by Katsina state with 128.92 ('000 metric tonnes). Meanwhile, the total amount of sorghum produced was 7,140.96 ('000 metric tonnes), with Kano state as the largest, reaching 745.72 ('000 metric tonnes), followed by Borno with 720.40 ('000 metric tonnes) and Zamfara with 702.13 ('000 metric tonnes).

Furthermore, livestock such as cattle, goats, sheep, small cattle, poultry and horses are widely kept throughout northern Nigeria, especially in the North West region. Although some farmers keep a few dozen chickens in their backyards, the commercial poultry production sector in the region is sizeable but mainly confined to urban/peri-urban areas. For example, the National Bureau of Statistics and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (2012) show that 28 states in Nigeria recorded a total of 18,871,399 head of cattle of different breeds as closing stock for the country. Of this, Zamfara state had 3,174,900 (16.8%), followed by Jigawa and Katsina states with 2,196,537 (11.61%) and 2,008,592 (10.62%) respectively. In addition, more than half of all cattle (52.4%) in Nigeria were produced in the North West geopolitical region during the year. In addition, all states in Nigeria recorded a total of 65,651,252 goats of different types as closing stock, except Bayelsa which did not provide data. Of this, Katsina state recorded the highest number with 5,049,049 goats (7.7%), followed by Jigawa state with 4,916,205 (7.5%) and Zamfara and Benue states with 4,478,818 (6.8%) and 3,642,813 (5.5%) respectively. (National Bureau of Statistics and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, 2012).

Women also participate in various socio-economic activities and play critical roles in the region. As described by Raji, Olumoh, and Ajibade (2013), women in the northern region, including the Northwest, are involved in various social and economic activities that are of great benefit to the country, such as weaving and dyeing, bead and jewellery making, iron smelting, agriculture, handicrafts, food processing, pottery, and livestock production. Some agricultural activities such as fishing, livestock production, animal rearing, and cattle breeding also involve the role of women. In addition, cultural activities also receive appropriate attention, with festivals being organised to promote culture and deepen peace and unity among the community. As described by Folarin (2007), the Argungu Culture and Fisheries Festival in the North West is an annual social activity that predates Nigeria's independence. The festival is an annual social event where communities come together to participate in Fisheries and Cultural exercises near the Matan Fada River.

The above progress and many more others recorded in the socio-economic activities of the North-west have apparently been eroded by banditry that has bedeviled the people of the region for years. The bandits are moved by quest for economic accumulation while the victims are individuals and communities with material valuables. The most common examples of banditry in Nigeria are armed robbery, kidnapping, cattle rustling, sexual violence and village raids (Chukwuma cited in Abubakar & Ibrahim (2020). There is a devastating effect of banditry on food security especially in Kastina state where farmers are kidnapped, taken to the forest and huge amount of money paid before they are released. This dreadful condition impoverishes farmers by forcing them to sell their assets, including their fields, in order to obtain money for ransom (Suleiman & Bilkisu, 2020). According to Ibrahim (2020), one of the kidnapping cases occurred on the 4th of October, 2020, in Mallamawa Village, Jibia local government area, where 22 farmers working on farmlands were kidnapped, with some escaping.

In Anka Local Government Area of the state, over sixteen thousand people have been internally displaced. Suleiman & Bilkiu (2020), contributing to the discussion on the threat of banditry in the Northwest, noted that on January 5, 2020, robbers blocked a part of Jibia to Batsari route in Kastina state, capturing roughly 38 traders returning from Jibia weekly market. On the 3rd of May, 2020, bandits chased off some farmers who were on their farmlands in the Faskari local government area of the State, preparing for the farming season. "Who told you guys there would be farming this season?" the bandits questioned rhetorically. The alarming event instilled panic among the farmers, deterring them from continuing with the season's farming preparations. Some farmers and pastoralists have abandoned farming and cattle grazing and taken refuge in neighbouring states or camps for internally displaced persons with squalid living conditions. This has negative impact on average per-capita of people and food security given that Nigeria is already one of the countries with highest number of hungry citizens, with millions especially in northern Nigeria who are at risk of dying from famine. As a result, some farmers in the state have warned that if the government does not effectively address the revival of banditry, the state could face a historic food catastrophe (Sardauna, 2020).

Bandit activities in the region have seen acts of rape and sexual violence against women. In contrast to conventional conventions, women and children are not spared from contemporary bandit operations (Centre for International Cooperation and Security, 2005). They appear to be the main victims of abuse in the form of rape, torture and murder. During incidents of banditry, the immediate consequences for female victims of sexual violence are psychological trauma, pregnancy, and the spread of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV and others. Victims of kidnapping by armed bandits suffer physical and psychological harm during detention due to starvation, torture, rape, abuse, and death (Ejiofor, 2022). As recognised by Murtala (2018), the District Head of Mada in Gusau local government area of Zamfara state has lamented as his people have witnessed over 12 different attacks by bandits who have killed over 20 people and stolen 1,500 cattle from 2014 to 2016; including other attacks such as rape, kidnapping, and injuries to women. Banditry has left many people destitute, orphaned, and widowed in Northwestern states such as Kaduna, Katsina, and Zamfara due to continuous attacks, theft, and rape. A village head in the state has compiled a list of 318 widows, orphans, and poor people who lost their loved ones in different attacks by bandits in 2015. Many of them have been abducted and raped, sexually assaulted during raids or forced into "marriages", especially with members of pastoralist-related armed groups whose attacks on farming villages are partly fuelled by communal grudges. Some women raped in detention face a double challenge, as even when they survive and are released or escape, they are often rejected by their husbands or when they carry the child of their captors, the baby they give birth to is stigmatised in the community (International crises group, 2020). This further worsens the human dignity conditions for women in the region.

Education, which is one of the key drivers of socio-economic development, has also been negatively impacted by bandit operations. Daily Times (2019) revealed that banditry is one of the major challenges hindering the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Cash Transfer Programme (CTP) aimed at increasing the number of female students in schools in Kastina, Zamfara and Sokoto states. According to the project Coordinators in the states, bandit activities operating freely in the states have adversely affected the programme and some beneficiaries of the programme have been displaced to neighbouring communities as a result of bandit activities.

The threat to close down Government Day Secondary School in TalataMafara local government area, in Zamfara state, issued by bandits, created tension as students and teachers stayed away from the school for a period of time. Guardian (2021) reported that bandits abducted students and teachers from UBE Primary School in Rama, in BirninGwari local government area, in Kaduna state. Additionally, CNN (2021) revealed that at least 30 students went missing after criminals attacked the Federal College of Forestry Mechanisation in Mnado, Kaduna state. Prior to the attack, about 279 students were abducted from their boarding school at Government Girls Secondary School, Jangebe, in Zamfara state (Daily Trust, 2021). There was also an abduction of 333 boys from Government Science Secondary School in Katsina state in December 2020. Banditry activities have led to the closure of several schools, which is not good for education in the region, coupled with the fact that the North West is the richest geopolitical zone in Nigeria, with a literacy rate of 29.7% and the highest number of out-of-school children in Nigeria (Ejiofor, 2022).

## **State Response To Banditry In The North-West**

The Nigerian government has been slow and reactive in responding to this security issue. Yusuf (2015) states that coordination efforts began in 2014 under the leadership of former Inspector General, Suleiman Abba, the Nigeria Police Force established the Task Force on Livestock Theft and Related Crimes. This Task Force was supposed to be responsible for patrolling and acting in the context of anti-livestock theft and related crimes intelligence gathering, as well as investigating and possibly prosecuting reported instances of such crimes. However, since its inception, this task force has been largely inactive. In 2015, some governors in the northern region expressed interest in an anti-livestock theft campaign. They met twice between July and October 2015, agreeing to pool their resources to fund a coordination operation combining the military, police, state security services and Civil Defence Corps to comb the forests of the affected states that were considered sanctuaries for bandits (Binniyat, 2015). In late 2015, the Katsina state government also implemented the same combined patrol operation approach.

The Kaduna State government came up with the most creative reaction. Security agents were stationed among herders to protect them from bandits; the state's borders were tightened to prevent the entry of bandits from outside the state; and, most importantly, computer microchips were implanted in farm animals to track their movements and prevent armed robbers from taking them away (Jimoh, 2015). This "El-Rufai Model" programme in Kaduna reflects a proactive and preventive strategy through the use of information and communication technology (ICT) (Leadership, 2015). In 2016, the Zamfara State government and bandit leaders agreed to a peace settlement and amnesty to find a different way to address the crisis. After reviewing the impact of cohesive measures, particularly the use of military and mobile police, the state government concluded that despite spending a lot of money, the operations had not yielded the expected results. As a result, the state government decided that negotiating with the armed bandits with the aim of having them surrender their

weapons to the state government was the best option for achieving long-term peace (Tangaza, 2014). The government agreed to their demands, emphasising that for the amnesty to be fulfilled, the bandits had to surrender their weapons and promise not to attack any villages during the validity of the deal. The government also offered some clever methods to help the bandits reintegrate into their society, such as providing capital assistance to help them start businesses and bringing some of them closer to the government (Anka, 2017; Mustapha, 2019).

The above strategies implemented by the government can be categorised as kinetic and non-kinetic approaches. The kinetic approach essentially involves military warfare and lethal force. This resulted in the formation of the aforementioned joint task team, among other efforts aimed at ridding the region of rampant bandits. However, it can be concluded that the kinetic force adopted by the government has not produced the desired results as criminal groups still continue to carry out violent operations in the region. The failure of this kinetic approach essentially relates to poor intelligence gathering stemming from the inability of the local people to provide useful information to the security personnel, largely due to the fear of being attacked by non-state actors who seem to have overcome the security personnel.

Non-kinetic approaches implemented in the form of amnesty programmes or peace deals between bandits and the government also failed as predicted by some. Ejiofor (2022) attributed the failure of the amnesty programme to the lack of central command and common goals among the bandits. It is very difficult to bring different groups of bandits to the same negotiating table; therefore, treating them as one group with a common leader is counterproductive. As a result, peace agreements reached with one group are not binding on other bandit groups. In addition, there is an argument that most hardened criminals do not surrender their weapons and that the weapons-for-money exchange programme financially empowers bandits to buy more weapons and motivates them to commit more crimes of great violence.

## Methodology

This article adopts descriptive and analytical research designs. As viewed by Bruns & Grove (2009), descriptive research design is a method that provides a clear depiction of a situation in a natural way which enables a researcher to make informed judgment on current practice. Therefore, this design enables a researcher to report, explain, summarize and validate nature and issues around banditry as they concern socio-economic development of Northwest. Analytical design is a method that enables a researcher to critically assess facts and information on a subject under study (Oni, Oni, Ibietan & DeindeAdedeji, 2020).

As a result, only literature from secondary source such as journal articles, newspapers, books and government publications were considered and carefully reviewed with a view to establishing their relevance and currency to the study.

## Discussion of result findings

Result findings from the research reveal that banditry has significantly affected average per-capita income of the people in the zone. This is as result of inability of farmers, traders and market men and women in the region to carry out their economic activities. The above result is consistent with the submission of Mashi (2017) that banditry has caused social and economic disruptions and an unprecedented loss of livelihoods for poor men, women and children in the area. The people of the region have suffered the loss of means of production, assets, and the means to convert their production to income. This finding is also in congruence with the view of Suleiman & Bilkisu (2021) that when the bandits attack villages, they shoot sporadically into the air so as to scare away the villagers and create an atmosphere of chaos as the villagers run for safety. Thereafter, the bandits direct a group among them that specializes in cattle theft to invade houses and steal cattle. Besides farming, cattle-rearing is another source of livelihood in the villages. Hence, the theft of cattle deprives the villagers of their source of livelihood, farm labour, manure thereby halting cattle rearing activities.

The study also showed that bandit activities have negatively impacted human dignity among women in the region. The findings are in line with an earlier report by the Centre for International Cooperation and Security (2005) which noted that unlike traditional norms, women and children are not spared from contemporary bandit operations. They seem to even be the main victims in the form of rape, torture and murder. During incidents of banditry, the immediate consequences for female victims of sexual violence are psychological trauma, pregnancy, and the spread of diseases such as gonorrhoea and HIV, among others. The study by Murtala (2018) also supports these findings, where it was revealed that the District Chief of Mada in Gusau Local Government Area of Zamfara State reported that his people had witnessed more than 12 different attacks by bandits who killed more than 20 people and stole 1,500 head of cattle from 2014 to 2016; including other attacks such as rape, kidnapping, and wounding of the people. Banditry has created many poor, orphans, and widows in the Northwest due to constant attacks, theft, and rape. The Council on Foreign Relations (2020) also highlighted the negative effects of banditry on women, stating that women and girls are vulnerable to abduction, sexual violence, and abuse, including rape. Ayot (1995) quotes Layashi Yaker, the then UN Under-Secretary-General, as stating that women account for 80 per cent of the number of people displaced and refugees in Africa. In times of heinous crimes such as rape, torture, murder, abuse, and neglect, violations of the basic rights of women and girls are common.

The findings of this study also highlight that banditism has significantly affected food security in the northwest. This finding is in line with the opinion of Sardauna (2020) who stated that bandit operations in the northwest have had a deleterious effect on the food security of the region and Nigeria as a whole. He clearly mentioned the events of May 2020 in Katsina state, where some farmers warned that the increasing activities of rogue bandits, if not properly addressed by the security agencies and government, would result in an unprecedented food crisis in the state. Similarly, during the commemoration of World Food Day on 16 October, the President of the Association of Farmers of Nigeria (AFAN) highlighted banditry as one of the current obstacles to achieving food security in the North West (FRCN, 2020). Banditry has hampered livestock farming in the region, according to Anka (2017), as violence and forced evictions have left affected communities unable to rely on their own cereal production for survival and commercial farming, increasing the risk of food insecurity for displaced and non-displaced populations. About 70 per cent of the 309,000 displaced people in the

northwest are malnourished, with global acute malnutrition rates in children reaching 18 per cent and 31 per cent in Sokoto and Zamfara states, respectively (WFP, 2019).

## Conclusion

The place of security in the socio-economic development of a region, community or country can never be overlooked. In this context, this study investigated the various forms of banditism and their impact on socio-economic development in the North West geopolitical region of Nigeria. It is argued that banditry is responsible for the deplorable state of socio-economic indices in the region. Specifically, it was alleged that bandit activities such as kidnapping, cattle theft, and village attacks have a devastating impact on the average per capita income of the people, human dignity among women, and food security, among others.

As a result, the article holds that the region's socioeconomic development is still a long way off. However, the implementation of the recommendations suggested below would address the problem of banditry in the region and return their socio-economic status to path of growth.

- In the envisaged new order, local government and traditional institutions should be actively and fully involved in any measure adopted against banditry in the region..
- Governance failure was identified in the study as a remote cause of banditry in the region. So, political authorities in Nigeria especially in the region are strongly advised to urgently with concrete actions make good governance their top priority in order to end general hardship that engenders insecurity in the zone.
- Lastly, there is need to decentralize security governance so as to make security agencies more effective in crime prevention, control and management.

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