

Banditry and Food Security in Northern Nigeria: Trend and Tackle

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Abstract:

The threat of banditry on food security in northern Nigeria is becoming alarming as it has affected the livelihoods of thousands of farmers in the region. There is need therefore to combat this menace as it effects gravitates nationwide, hence the formation of the state police, which is leveraged by local intelligence. This paper objective is to evaluate banditry and its threat on food security in northern Nigeria during the period August 2021 to July, 2022 on farmers in Kaduna, Zamfara, Bornu, Sokoto, Kebbi and Niger states . Secondary data was employed using descriptive statistics such as percentage, frequency and mean for summary of attacks, murder of farmers, kidnap of farmers and major flashpoints by region. The record shows that an average of 122 farmers was murdered in the period under study; with a mean of 87 farmers abducted per month. Northwest recorded the highest killings of 480 farmers (72%), with Kaduna state ranking first overall with 199 farmers (29%) deaths. Farmers' means of livelihood were destroyed, and many were taxed and heavily levied. The study further revealed that these bandits use motorcycles, sophisticated guns and mining activities as logistical measures. The trend of banditry in the region has tremendously increased with negative impact on the farmers, and consequent increased prices of common food items.

Keywords: 1. Banditry 2. Farmers 3. northern Nigeria 4. Threat 5. Food security

Introduction

Banditry is a worldwide menace. Banditry has implications for many socioeconomic aspects of human endeavors, among which is food security (Suleiman and Bilkisa, 2020). Any kind of conflict resulting in violence can ruin farm activities and local farmers' livelihoods, generating significant economic depletion and all scales of damage (Food and Agriculture Organization, 2017).

Banditry, by definition, comprises an armed band organization saddled with the task of assaulting social institutions, an individual person, or a state (Collins, 2000). It is an act that involves robbery and violence in a

lawless society; being party to such an association and having assault carried out by them is said to be banditry (Collins, 2010). Bandits are criminals and perpetrators who wield guns and other dangerous instruments to assault or take advantage of an unorganized and weak government system to maim and extort innocent people.

Banditry as a form of organized crime embodies armed robbery, murder, rape, cattle rustling, kidnapping, and environmental scavenging. It is the state government that defines the bandit, apportions the sections of the law, and also defines the outlaw. There is a strong relationship between banditry and insurgency, with the former playing a prominent role in this case (Anthonin, 2019).

The present-day banditry and terrorist activities in Northern Nigeria by Boko Haram and the Islamic States of West Africa (ISWA) have enormously impacted negatively on the people's agricultural activities and farming patterns. For ages, the trade routes of the bandits have continuously been the trans-Saharan of the Niger Republic via Libya, East and Central Africa of the continent, and have since posed a security threat. In Nigeria, the arrival of banditry anchors over four decades of unresolved conflicts and reprisal attacks between nomadic herdsmen and local farmers in Zamfara and Katsina States, geopolitical zones of northern Nigeria. Banditry first gained traction in about 2009 in Zamfara State (Campbell, 2019) and was later popularized at the close of the 2011 general election (Anka, 2017). For quite a number of years, the North East, North Central, and North West regions have become the focus of everyone's attention with regard to banditry activity in Nigeria. Nextier Support, Peace, and Development (2022) recorded in 2021, two thousand two hundred and forty seven (2,247) deaths from 354 banditry attacks in the North West and North Central regions alone. While the first half of 2022 recorded 1,769 deaths from 200 banditry incidents, with the figure expected to exceed 2021. A consequential threat to food security has been posed by bandits' exertions, as the place the villagers once called home has been abandoned for safety.

The United Nations' foremost goal in tackling the issue of economic challenges to food security is poverty and hunger eradication. Food is the entropy that vitalizes the body's mechanism for effective performance of its routine. Unfortunately, the cogent and primary role of securing food for lives in Nigeria has been downplayed terribly by insecurity amidst other factors. Therefore, a social system devoid of food security leads to food insecurity.

FAO (2016) defines food security as all-time food availability and its accessibility to people in adequate and nutritious form for healthy living. Food security is mainly determined by availability, accessibility, and utilization (FAO, 2006). Concisely, food security is the ability to meet individual or family basic food needs without being indebted.

An increased rate of poverty resulting from a lack of food access is influenced by one's income, food prices, and purchasing power. Problems associated with food security include hunger, food shortages, poor sanitation, malnutrition, and political instability. Food security at the household level is when the concept considers the family level, with a focus on individuals at the household level. The measurement of food security at the household level is the presence of hunger and abject poverty. Therefore, food insecurity is said to exist when people lack adequate economic, social, and physical access to food. Food security has continuously been a global issue as international stakeholders and governments have relentlessly developed food security reduction strategies. In Nigeria, with over 160 million people, not less than 70% are suffering and undernourished due to poverty (Nwajiuba, 2012). It has been noted in recent years that banditry activities in northern Nigeria have increased the number of households falling into food insecurity. The Boko Haram crisis in the North has intensified the insecurity of food in the region.

Prior to independence, agriculture played a pivotal role in the economy of Nigeria by creating jobs, earning foreign exchange, and producing food and raw materials for our local industries. Various Nigerian regions did specialize in food or cash crop production. The northern region has the groundnut pyramid along with crops such as maize, beans, rice, soya bean, sorghum, millet, etc.; in the west were the cocoa mountains; in the east were oil palm and kernel; and rubber is in the Midwest. Crops such as yam, maize, rice, cassava, sorghum, millet, and soy beans were abundant in production.

The main threat in northern Nigeria to the agricultural industry is the insecurity caused by bandits and terrorism. Their activities have not only hampered agricultural activities from being conducted; they have also stifled domestic agricultural production, displaced farming communities, and blocked access to markets (Eigege and Cookey, 2016). The impact is reflected in the economy in the undaunted price rise of food commodities, some food item scarcity, and adverse food insecurity as areas where food items were being cultivated are no longer producing. This is mainly because most farmers in communities known for farming in the middle belt (Benue and Kogi), north west (Kaduna, Sokoto, and Zamfara states), north central (Niger states), and north east (Bornu and Adamama states) have deserted their farms and drifted to other safe neighboring communities or urban areas, leaving farmlands fallow and crops uncollected.

Any kind of violence resulting in insecurity in areas where farmers mostly constitute the population is bound to impact global food security. Ayinde et al. (2020) berate the persistence of seasonal and chronic food insecurity being exuberated by insurgency effects, banditry, kidnapping, cattle rusting, communal/pastoral crises, and climate changes. Banditry is most likely to affect food production since it embraces violence and robbery against individuals, especially farmers and livestock breeders who are rural inhabitants.

In Bornu, Adamawa, and Yobe States in the northeast of Nigeria, conflict is plaguing millions of people's lives and livelihoods. About 8 million people are facing food insecurity, with an estimated 4.4 million facing acute hunger and 320,000 children suffering malnutrition. The region also records over 2 million internally displaced persons. Insecurity and violence are causing people to move *en masse* to live in camps or host communities in Nigeria, with thousands drifting to neighboring countries like Cameroon, Niger, and Chad (World Food Programme, 2022). The intensity and level of banditry, ransom on kidnapping, inter-communal aggressions, and other kinds of cruel criminalities are anticipated to be adverse with marginal consequential fatalities. Internally displaced person (IDP) camps have been overcrowded, multiplied, and have become too expensive for the various state governments to fund.

Today, unarguably, Nigeria is confronted with overcoming food security as a major issue. This paper does not only deal with banditry and threats to food security but also suggests needed policy solutions. As far as the authors are concerned, no serious study on the threat to food security in northern Nigeria, focusing on bandit attacks on farmers, challenges, and ways forward, has been done.

Literature Review

Leeson (2009) defines banditry as the act of stealing from others through the use of violence, intimidation, or coercion. Lomnitz (2005), in another view, defines banditry in Mexico as a mode of social organization that confronted the centralized state without necessarily challenging its legitimacy. While Thompson (1975) defines banditry as a violent but localized form of class struggle, a spontaneous and direct confrontation of the law by the impoverished, and a cultural expression of agrarian protest, Banditry refers to the act of engaging in organized criminal activities, such as robbery, plundering, or looting, typically carried out by a group of armed individuals called bandits. These individuals often operate in remote or lawless areas, targeting travelers, farmers, traders, or wealthy individuals to steal their possessions, money, or goods.

Borlaug (2000), an American agronomist and Nobel laureate, defined food security as the use of high-yielding crop varieties, modern agricultural techniques, and increased investment in agriculture to meet the growing global demand for food. De Schutter (2011), former United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, promotes the concept of "food sovereignty." He argues that food security should not only be about access to sufficient food but also about people's right to choose and shape their own agricultural and food systems. Da Silva (2011), a Brazilian agronomist and former Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), emphasizes the need for a holistic approach to food security, addressing not only the quantity of food produced but also its nutritional quality and accessibility for all.

Banditry can have a significant impact on food security in affected areas. In regions where banditry is prevalent, it can disrupt agricultural activities, hinder trade routes, and create an atmosphere of insecurity. This can have several implications for food security.

Bandits may target farms, agricultural equipment, or livestock, causing damage or looting. This can result in the loss of crops and livestock, reducing the availability of food, and affecting agricultural livelihoods. In areas with high levels of banditry, farmers and food producers may be forced to flee their homes and abandon their fields, leading to decreased agricultural production and lower food availability (Sian, 2019; Hinds and Pezzi, 2019; Gollin, 2013). Banditry can disrupt trade routes and make it difficult for farmers to transport their products to markets. This can limit their ability to sell their produce, leading to lower incomes and reducing the availability of food in local markets. Banditry can disrupt supply chains, leading to increased transportation costs as traders may have to take longer or riskier routes to avoid bandit-infested areas. These increased costs are often passed on to consumers, resulting in higher food prices (Egger, 2019; Taffese and David, 2019; Fafchamps and Hill, 2005).

Several countries around the world have experienced banditry that has disrupted agricultural activities. In Nigeria, groups such as Boko Haram and armed bandits have frequently targeted rural areas and agricultural communities. They often carry out attacks, looting, kidnappings, and livestock rustling, leading to significant disruptions in agricultural activities. Somalia has been plagued by banditry and piracy, particularly along its coastline. Bandits often target fishing vessels and disrupt maritime activities, affecting the livelihoods of fishermen and limiting access to seafood resources. In parts of Mexico, criminal groups engaged in drug trafficking and organized crime often involve themselves in activities that disrupt agricultural activities. This includes extorting farmers, stealing livestock, and creating an atmosphere of insecurity that hampers food production and trade. Colombia: In rural areas of Colombia, banditry and the activities of illegal armed groups have been a long-standing problem. These groups often target farmers and agricultural infrastructure, which has had a negative impact on agricultural activities and food security. In conflict-affected regions of Sudan, banditry and attacks by armed groups have disrupted agricultural activities, causing displacement and limiting access to land for farming. This has contributed to food insecurity in these areas (Shirk, Olson, and Selee, 2014; Shortland and Varese, 2009; Salgado, 2013).

The mode of operation of bandits can vary depending on the specific context and region. However, some common methods and tactics are employed by bandits. Bandits often target farmers, rural communities, and agricultural infrastructure to steal crops, livestock, machinery, and other valuable resources. They may carry out raids on farms, barns, and warehouses to loot agricultural produce and equipment. Bandits may engage in extortion by demanding protection money from farmers and agricultural workers. They intimidate and threaten them with violence if they refuse to pay, creating a climate of fear and disruption. In some cases, bandits resort to kidnapping individuals, including farmers and agricultural workers, to demand ransom payments. This not only poses a direct threat to the individuals involved but also creates a sense of insecurity within the farming community. Bandits may engage in acts of violence aimed at displacing farmers from their lands. This could involve destroying crops, burning down buildings, or attacking rural communities, forcing people to flee and abandon their agricultural activities. Bandits may disrupt the transportation and distribution of agricultural products by blocking roads, hijacking vehicles, or attacking convoys. This can severely affect the marketability and availability of agricultural goods (Lockyer and McLeman, 2016; Brown, 2015; Boix, Elff, and Schneider, 2014; Hoeffler and Collier, 2004).

The motives of bandits transitioning into terrorism can vary depending on the specific context and region. Bandits may adopt a terrorist ideology or become affiliated with extremist groups due to ideological motivations. They may embrace radical ideologies, religious extremism, or political ideologies that drive them to engage in acts of terrorism. Bandits may be attracted to terrorism as a means to exert greater control and power over the regions they operate in. By aligning with terrorist groups, they can enhance their influence and extend their criminal operations. Bandits may see terrorism as a method to gain tactical advantages over security forces and law enforcement agencies. By adopting terrorist tactics such as bombings, ambushes, or guerrilla warfare, they can level the playing field and create fear and instability in their target areas. Bandits may resort to terrorism as a response to real or perceived grievances against the government or a particular societal group. They may seek revenge for past injustices or retaliate against perceived oppressors. Bandits

may view terrorism as an avenue for greater financial rewards compared to their previous criminal activities. By associating with terrorist organizations, they may gain access to funding, weapons, and resources that can enhance their criminal enterprises. It's important to note that these motives are not exhaustive and can vary depending on the specific circumstances and individual motivations. In many cases, the motives may be a combination of multiple factors, making it difficult to attribute a single motive to all bandits transitioning into terrorism (Felbab-Brown and Nemr, 2019; Lehr, 2018; Felbab-Brown, 2010; Reno and Zircher, 2008; Kaidor and Johnson, 2007).

Identifying the sponsors of banditry-inclined terrorism can be challenging as it varies based on the specific region and context. Certain governments or state actors have been accused of or found to support terrorists engaged in banditry. This support may come in the form of financial assistance, weaponry, training, safe havens, or ideological backing. However, it's important to note that state sponsorship of terrorism is not universally representative of all governments or states. Regional or international actors, including governments, extremist organizations, or individuals with specific agendas, can sometimes provide support to banditry-inclined terrorist groups to achieve broader goals. This support may be driven by strategic considerations, ideological alignment, or attempts to exploit local grievances and conflicts. Terrorist groups inclined toward banditry may attract support from individuals or organizations with similar ideological or religious beliefs. These supporters can provide financial assistance, recruitment efforts, propaganda dissemination, or other forms of support that fuel banditry-inclined terrorism (Napoleoni and Orded, 2018; Ranstorp, 2018; Rapoport and Prakash, 2009; Byman, 2016).

3. Objective of the study

The main objective of the study is to assess the trend of banditry on food security in northern Nigerian from the period 2021-2022, and suggest measures to tackle.

4. Methods of the Study

This paper aims to assess banditry and food security in northern Nigeria. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select the states that are hard hit by banditry activities in the region. In the North-West region, Kaduna, Zamfara, Sokoto, and Kebbi states were selected. In the North East region, Bornu State was selected, and the North Central region had Niger State. A secondary source of information was used to pool data for the study. This was obtained by drawing on empirical studies from journal articles, security assessment reports, and media records from the period of August 2021–July 2022 of banditry attacks on farmers in various communities, as shown in Table 1.0. Descriptive statistics such as mean, frequency and percentage was employed to summarise data collected. This method, though improved, was adopted from Musharraf and Oluwatobi (2022). The uniqueness of this work is that it covers only farmers when compared to similar studies by Ladan and Matawalli (2002) and other authors on banditry and food security in Nigeria.

5. Data Used

The data regarding banditry, deaths of farmers, kidnaps of farmers, farmers livelihood status, ransom paid and levy/ was collected from secondary data of various sources from the year 2021-2022. This data is as represented in Table 1.

Table 1.0: Banditry attacks on different farm communities in northern Nigeria.

DATE	VILLAGE	STATE	DEATH/ ABDUCTION	RAMSON/ INV.STATUS	EDITOR
1/8/21	Damari	Kaduna	-/50	Still inv.	Ahmad Sahabi
23/8/21	Maradun	Zamfara	4/ 50	Still inv.	Marahaji Atine
7/9/21	Iburu	Kaduna	15/ 4	Unsp	Godwin Isenyo
2/10/21	Gatawa	Sokoto	20/ No kid.	N20M	Mohammed badan
20/12/21	Kogara	Niger	2/No kid.	-	Abu Mashioni
6/10/21	Kurya	Zamfara	18/ 42	Still inv.	Marahaji Atine
21/1/22	Goronyo	Sokoto	2/2	N3.3M	Abdul Audu
19/10/21	Idasu	Kaduna	35/Rustle cattle	-	Jesupemi Are
21/1/22	Mazakuka	Niger	18/ No kid	-	Wole Masadoni
8/11/21	Rijiya	Zamfara	6/ 20	Still inv.	Marahaji Atine
26/11/21	Yanbuiki	Zamfara	7/ No kid.	-	Marahaji Atine
20/12/21	Mashegu	Niger	2/ 5	N300,000	Amos Tauna
29/12/21	Gada	Zamfara	5/ 22		Marahaji Atine
12/1/22	Kulho	Niger	1/20	-	Laloye Dipo
12/1/22	Farin-shinge	Niger	1/20	350litrs(PMS)	Laloye Dipo
1/8/21	Damari	Kaduna	-/50	Still inv.	Ahmad Sahabi
23/8/21	Maradun	Zamfara	4/ 50	Still inv.	Marahaji Atine
7/9/21	Iburu	Kaduna	15/ 4	Unsp	Godwin Isenyo
2/10/21	Gatawa	Sokoto	20/ No kid.	N20M	Mohammed ladan
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8/11/21	Rijiya	Zamfara	6/ 20	Still inv.	Marahaji Atine
26/11/21	Yanbuiki	Zamfara	7/ No kid.	-	Marahaji Atine
20/12/21	Kilanga	Bornu	20/Cattle rustle	-	Johnbosco Agba
29/12/21	Gada	Zamfara	5/ 22		Marahaji Atine
12/1/22	Kulho	Niger	1/20	-	Laloye Dipo
12/1/22	Farin-shinge	Niger	1/20	350 litrs(PMS)	Laloye Dipo
15/6/22	Mashegu	Niger	2/ 5	N300,000	Amos Tauna
14/2/22	Dankade	Kebbi	50/18	Still inv.	Mohammed Garza
18/1/22	Tele/ Pam	Kaduna	20/ No kid	-	Nathaniel Biyan
21/1/22	Piyemi	Bornu	2/20	Still inv.	Agence France
25/1/22	Magazawa	Zamfara	7/ 18	Still inv.	Mohammed Baba
14/2/22	Masarawa mai	Zamfara	9/ 17	N40 M	Mohammed Baba
1/8/21	Damari	Kaduna	-/50	Still inv.	Ahmad Sahabi
23/8/21	Maradun	Zamfara	4/ 50	Still inv.	Marahaji Atine
7/9/21	Iburu	Kaduna	15/ 4	Unsp	Godwin Isenyo
2/10/21	Gatawa	Sokoto	20/ No kid.	N20M	Mohammed ladan
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14/2/22	Masarawa mai	Zamfara	9/ 17	N40 M	Mohammed Baba

Compiled by Ewododhe, Nwadiolu, and Owigho, 2022

Abbreviation	Interpretation
Still Inv.:	Still investigating
M :	Million
Unsp.:	Unspecified
Prot. Levy:	Protection levy

6. Data Analysis

A. Banditry in Northern Nigeria: Trend

For the past few years, the center stage has been taken over by bandits in Nigeria's North East, North Central, and North West regions. These armed bands have ransacked numerous villages and their farms. Their incessant attacks have caused so many fatalities and kidnappings demanding ransom, which have become common occurrences. Some observable trends and threats to food security in Northern Nigeria posed by banditry attacks are enumerated as follows:

Loss of lives and livelihoods

Many farmers have lost their lives, while others have lost their wives, children, and barns of foodstuffs and seedlings sacked and set on fire by bandits. Many of the farmers who have become destitute and drifted to urban areas cannot go back to their villages because they don't have what it takes to start a new life all over again. Results in Table 2.0 show that the most affected states with high death records of farmers include Kaduna, with 199 (29%); Bornu, with 157 (23%); Zamfara, with 157 (23%); Kebbi, with 75 (11%); Sokoto, with 51 (8%); and Niger, with 41 (6%), with an average of 122 murders per year. A combined chart representation of the farmers murdered in each selected state on a monthly basis from August 2021–July 2022 also showed Kaduna state as the highest in the murder of farmers by bandits (See Fig. 2.0). Result further revealed that no fewer than 480 (72%) farmers have been killed by local gunmen bandits' attacks in the country's North West region alone. According to the data, more people have lost their lives in this region compared to any other region across the country. Second in the record of killings is the North East region, with a total of 157 (23.1%) murders of farmers, while the North Central region recorded 41 (6.0%) killings in the same period (see Fig 3.0). This result corroborates Sassu's (2022) list of the most affected states by the

deadly attack by Boko Haram in Nigeria within the period. Also, according to data released by the Nigeria Security Tracker (2022), insecurity in Northern Nigeria has resulted in the killing of 2,968 mostly rural dwellers in three months in Niger, Kaduna, and Zamfara states. For numerous communities raided by these bandits, life has become miserable for them. Entire family has been lost, and properties invaluable have been burned to ashes (Segun and Felix, 2021). Many farmers whose farms are close to rivers are stopped by bandits from attending to their farms. Bandits in the region operate with sophisticated weapons unchallenged, leaving many farmers with sustained injuries and unable to attend to their farms. They shoot sporadically at unarmed villagers with no provocation of any sort from the locals to warrant such attacks. The chart representation of farmers killed on a monthly basis was highest in the month of June (see Fig. 4). This timing coincides with the peak of farmers' harvest in the region. During this period attack is highest.

Farmers in these areas are emotionally traumatized when members of their households, families, and relatives are captured. Also as part of their cruelty, houses have been burned down by these bandits after villagers fled, and cattle have been rustled and other animals cornered during attack. The economic consequences of the continuous disruption of agricultural production caused by the activity of armed bands in the region include inflation, food shortages, hunger and starvation, loss of livelihood, poverty, and an increasing decline in agricultural production.

Table 2.0: Farmers murdered in selected northern states (Aug., 2021–Jul., 2022)

STATE	FARMERS MURDERED	PERCENTAGE
Kaduna	199	29
Bornu	157	23
Zamfara	157	23
Kebbi	75	11
Sokoto	51	8
Niger	41	6
Mean	113	
SD	66	

Source: Calculations based on data of collated reports, 2021-2022

Fig. 2.0: Combined representation of farmers murdered from each selected state on a monthly basis (Aug., 2021–Jul., 2022)

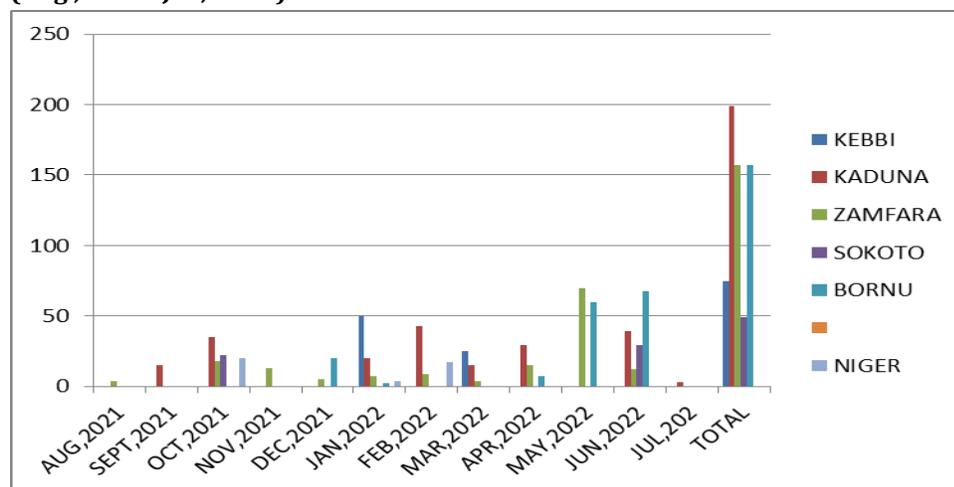


Figure 3.0: Banditry farmer deaths by region (Aug. 2021–July 2022)

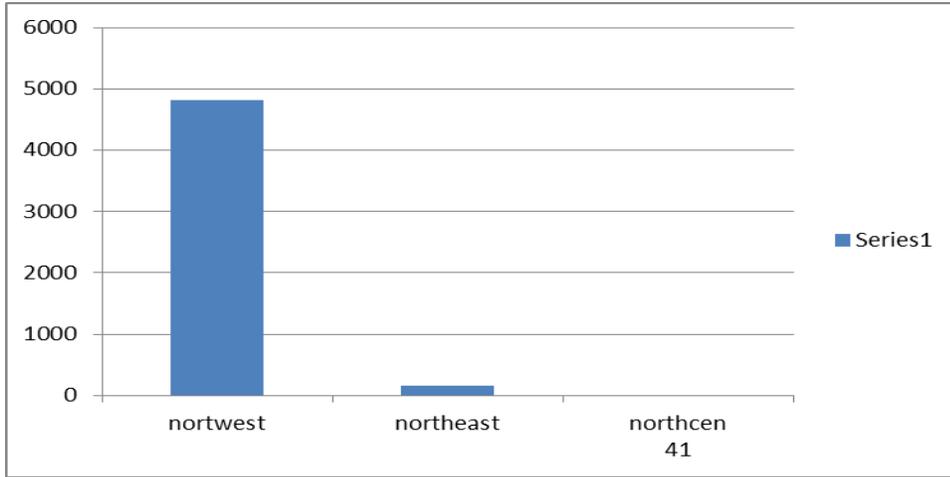
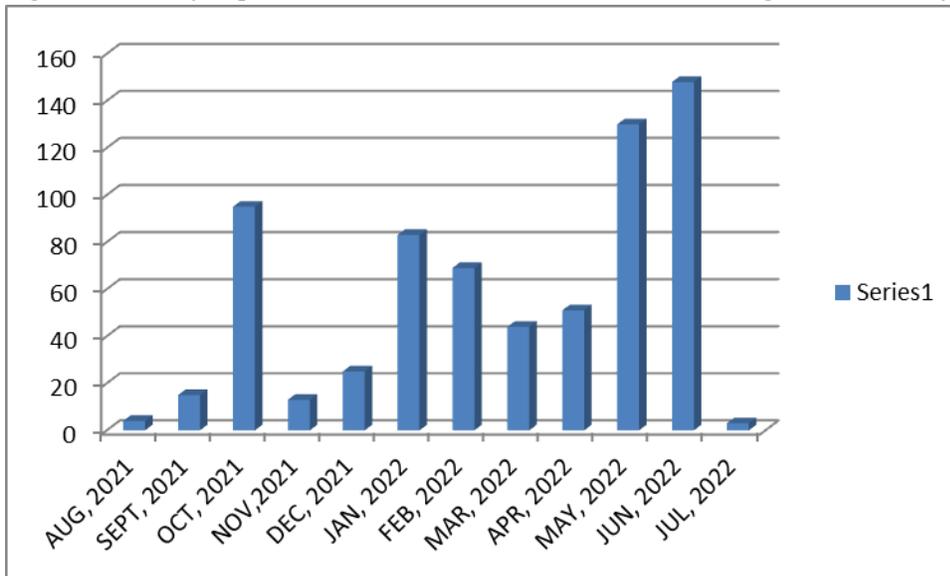


Fig. 4.0: Monthly representation of farmers murdered from August 20, 21–July 20, 22



Abduction/ Ransom

Kidnapping has been seen as a lucrative business and a shortcut to wealth by those who indulge in it, but to the bandits (Boko Haram and ISIS), it is a means of raising funds to buy arms in order to actualize their motives. Bandits' reason for attacking farmers is based on their opinion that farmers are rich people who appear to be poor and also that they are easily vulnerable and easy targets for attack. From Table 1, Kurya (52 farmers in Zamfara state), Maradun (50 farmers also in Zamfara), and Damani (50 farmers in Kaduna) had recorded high cases of farmer abduction in their communities in northern Nigeria. The result in Table 3.0 revealed that abduction of farmers between August 2021 and July 2022 was highest in Zamfara State (229; 44%), followed by Kaduna State (102; 20%); Bornu State (80; 15%); Niger State (46; 9%); Kebbi State (40;

8%); and So koto State (24; 4%). The mean number of farmers abducted per year was 87. In some cases, cattle were rustled, as in Kilanga (Borno state), Kujama and Idasu (Kaduna state), and Unguwa Rogo (Zamfara state). These bandits have been popularized by their abduction activities and have become the worst ransom kidnapers in the history of Nigeria. In 2021, it was found that not less than one billion naira was paid to kidnapers by local residents in the north central and northwest regions of Sokoto, Jigawa, Katsina, Kano, and Kaduna states in Nigeria (International Centre for Investigative Reporting, ICRI, 2022). Most farmer abductions happen on their own farms, located outside the community. The dilemma of kidnapped victims as to whether to pay ransom or not is that they fear being kidnapped again after the ransom is paid, but refusal to pay may amount to being killed. Dozens of villagers who are spared death upon abduction are taken by the bandits to their hideouts, while the unlucky ones are killed and burned. Their families are not allowed to recover their corpses. Family heads and community leaders have sold victims' properties to secure their release, only for the impoverished victims to migrate to internal displacement camps. According to the Nigerian Security Tracker (2022), the North West had an abduction record of 746 persons in the period of January to March 2022; for the North Central region, it was 347 abductions; and for the North East, it was 61 abductions. In comparison to the southern part of Nigeria, northern Nigeria had 1,354 (91.7%) abductions while southern Nigeria had 130 abductions, representing 8.3 percent.

Table 3.0: Farmers kidnapped in the selected states from August 2021 to July 2022

STATE	FARMERS KIDNAPPED	PERCENTAGE
Zamfara	229	44
Kaduna	102	20
Borno	15	15
Niger	46	9
Kebbi	40	8
Sokoto	24	4
Mean	87	
SD	75	

Source: Calculations based on data of collated reports, 2021-2022

Levy/Tax Collection

These bandits attack rural dwellers and destroy their farmlands. In most cases, they permit the farmers access to their farms after they have paid protection fees. Before allowing communities to cultivate or harvest crops on their farms, they impose levies and taxes on them. Bandits operating in an area may decide to take residents of the town under their authority. They may impose a levy on hapless residents, which could be paid monthly through the head of the village. In Table 1.0, the local farmers in Randu village in Zamfara state and Anguwa Bulus in Kaduna state were asked to pay protection fees of N50 million and N20 million, respectively, to secure their lives and to allow them access to their farmlands. Bandits may also increase the levy and set a deadline. Apart from access to farmlands, a levy or tax imposed could also be for the reason of granting them permission to access their daughters and wives in their custody or as a way to enslave them. Contrarily, residents may decide not to pay. This is in accordance with the National War Tax Resistance Coordinating Committee (2022), which stipulates war tax resistance (which means refusal to pay tax of any kind to anyone), and this could attract punitive measures, even death by the bandits.

Mode of Operation

Back in the 19th century, bandits rode largely on horseback, carrying wood and knives while executing their operations. They attack by moving from their hideouts and retreat similarly after engagements. But today, their *modus operandi* has stepped up. All the operations of the bandits in Table 1.0 were aided using motorbikes. According to Akiyetum (2022), terrorists now use motorbikes, sophisticated guns, and mining activities as logistical measures. Because of this, the government of Nigeria is thinking of placing a ban on motorcycle usage nationwide as applicable to some places in Nigeria. The ban is being considered a panacea to curtail the incessant attacks by bandits using motorcycles. As part of their logistics, most of them disguise as Okada riders, wheelbarrow pushers, water vendors, shoe cobblers, and mobile tailors, among others, to elicit information on security presence and movement before engaging in an attack.

Displacement/Total Neglect

Months of continuous attacks by bandits and killings by terrorists have done so much damage to farming in northern Nigeria. This is because entreaties by state governments to farmers to return to their farmlands and communities and resume farming activities so as to prevent food shortage crises have been rejected. Farmers may not be far from being killed in droves by rampaging bandits going by the way they boldly steal, destroy, and kill with reckless abandonment without any tangible investigation or response from security operatives. As things stand, many farmers would prefer to engage in small-scale business or subsistence farming in urban areas where they have relocated than return to the overrun communities by bandits. Even if the government assures many of their safety, they may never be convinced until security in the area returns to normal. Most of the interior villages in the northern part of Nigeria do not have a military presence or a capable security outfit to guarantee safety for farmers' returns, as they live in fear from past bandit attacks. The consequence of this continuous attack has caused some of them to be kidnapped twice, with repeated ransom demands. According to Masadomi (2021), consequent to the refusal of 18 local government areas' major large-scale farmers from Niger State to return to their farms as a result of incessant banditry attacks, it has become a heinous task for the few farmers in the state to meet the food demand of its people. Thus, most of these farmers have relocated to environments where they can peacefully do their farming and harvest produce. Returning households of all persuasions are at high risk of vulnerability because many of them reside in conflict-stricken, inaccessible areas with restricted income and opportunity access.

B. Banditry in Northern Nigeria: Tackle

The security challenges in the northern part of the country have degenerated to such an abysmal level that farmers are at the mercy of bandits, Boko Haram, ISWAP, and their likes. In the 1963 constitution, Section 106(4) gave recognition to the regional police establishment. Contrarily, subsequent governments abrogated this section and instituted Section (215)(4), which handicaps governors, as the chief security officer of the state, from exercising this power. This has since aroused a bone of contention between the central government and the state as regards combating crime and who is in control of police operations within their jurisdiction, especially when they are parallel to the group's interests. Therefore, attempts to amend the constitution to accommodate state police and community policing have been futile.

Notwithstanding the existence of the Nigerian Army, Air Force, Police Force, NIA, DIA, and Department of State Security Service, unimaginable crimes remain unabated across Nigeria. In this regard, some concerned Nigerians have inaugurated security outfits in the North Region like the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF), the Hunters Group, and the Vigilante Group of Nigeria. This is in anticipation of the demand for state police and community policing. According to Ikuteyijo and Rotimi (2012), this agitation is the result of police inefficiency at curtailing the crime wave, and the Nigerian people are left with no choice but to turn to formal local militia groups for protection instead of formal law enforcement personnel.

The relationship existing between the police and the local militia group is often strained, and this is not good enough for the people whom the police have an obligation to protect. The Nigerian Police Force (NPF) has

been accused of excessive militarization (Aborisade 2021) and is well known for oppression, violence, human rights violations, coercion, sexual abuse, professional harassment, and intimidation (Aborisade and Obileye, 2018; Akinlabi 2019, Aborisade 2021; Madubuike Ekwe and Obayemi 2019). Due to the police's frequent involvement in illegal activities, especially corruption and extortion, they have become a major source of insecurity. The disproportionate use of force by the police is well known (Kimani, 2009). As a result, the relationship between locals and formal militia groups is more cordial than that of the police. These groups, whom the locals consider to be closer to them and better than the police, have become their heroes by restoring their hopes of safety and boosting their confidence through indulgence in various activities such as policing, assisting in humanitarian aid disbursement in the IDPs' camp, and providing security.

Like in other African countries, the hatred for Nigerian police is deeply rooted in their protracted brutality and corruption, which have had a far-reaching negative effect on community relations (Campbell 2020). Corruption is a social maladministration in Nigeria, especially when an institution whose duties are to maintain law and order becomes the culprit of such an act. Corruption has undeniably raised an iron curtain between the Nigerian police and its citizenry, with a cumulatively negative effect on the police among the populace. For this reason, assisting the police or volunteering information to them in uncovering a crime is almost impossible. In Wambua (2015), a survey conducted in 34 countries in Africa for Afrobarometer, it is reported that most Africans do not report crime to police due to their negligence, poor performance, and desire for bribery. It also revealed that Nigeria's ranking in crime was not being reported as above average by victims due to the people's mistrust of the police. Akinlabi (2019) supported this view, insinuating that police use of excessive force and abuse has negatively impacted the public's trust in them.

Presently, in society, one does not close both eyes when sleeping for fear of the unknown. In some regions or states of the country, law and order have been alienated to the extent that abnormality is taken for normalcy. Also, the fact that the teeming populace cannot at present be catered for by the NPF is a pointer and a call for decentralization and control of the security apparatus as each state demands. At present, it is desirable to have a state police, as this will have a positive and far-reaching effect in nipping insecurity, banditry, terrorism, and kidnapping, which are currently a trend in our local communities in Nigeria. It is disheartening to know that Nigeria, the most populous black nation in the world with about 170 million people, is managed or secured by a paltry fraction of a little above 370,000 police officers, giving a frightening ratio of 1 policeman to 460 of its citizens, contrary to the recommended United Nations requirement of 1 policeman to 400 citizens (Akinyetun, 2017).

Recently, the delay in every state amid agitation in Nigeria for its own state police has become annoying in the face of increasing crime as the government still arguably propagates that Nigerians are not mature enough to accommodate different police forces. But the position of the state government on solutions to the security problem in Nigeria is constitutional amendments that accommodate state police (Ugochukwu, 2012). State police are favored based on the fact that they are anchored in true federalism. In the federal system of government, power is shared between the central government and the federating states (1999 Constitution). A state without a coercive force is likened to a barking dog that cannot bite (Alemika and Chukwuma, 2012). Nigeria is too vast for security issues to be decentralized. The idea of decentralizing the police force was corroborated by Akinyetun's studies (2017, 2022), which concluded that the state police is in line with true federalism. It is a belief that the proximity of state police to the society within its jurisdiction positions them to act proactively to observe and uproot emerging crime before it develops. The inclusion by the police of indigenes that are known to the people and have their relatives and acquaintances in the community will ensure security at its best. These indigenes know their terrain very well and would combat crime effectively. But Adedeji (2012), in a similar study, is of the view that instead of creating the state police, the Nigeria Police should be completely overhauled.

Conclusions

The conclusion of this work does not seem to be exhaustive but calls for further research as farmers who are supposed to be the respondents are dead, kidnapped, or relocated and their livelihoods destroyed or abandoned. The bandits' operations overtime have changed from bad to worse. These include the reckless killing of farmers in droves, the conscription of captives into armed bands, the exchange demand of captives for prisoners of war, the imposition of levy, the alliance of Boko Haram and ISWAP for a common front, and the excessive demand for ransom from concerned kidnapped victim families, state governments, and the federal government.

The study has shown that banditry and its attendant unhealthy activities, pose a great threat to food security in northern Nigeria. And if this is not quickly checked, the resultant multiplier effect could result to hunger and inflation in Nigeria as a whole. Therefore, state police leverage on local intelligence is a welcome development. Whistleblowing and reestablishing trust in the police by giving them access to information that could aid in the crackdown on the bandits are two potential ways that local communities and security forces could work together to reduce armed gang activities. Government should do all it can to help displaced farmers return to their native land.

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