



RESEARCH ARTICLE

ABYSMAL EFFECTS OF ARMED BANDITRY ON THE EDUCATIONAL SECTOR OF NORTH-EAST AND NORTH-WEST OF NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The paper looks at the abysmal effects of Armed Banditry on the educational sector of the North-East and North-West Nigeria. The paper lays emphasis on the importance of education to societal development and the limitations armed banditry posed to the development of the Educational sector of the North-East and North-West regions. It also acknowledges the that parents and guardians are afraid of losing their children and wards to the armed bandits who in many cases kidnap the pupils or students along with some of their teachers for ransom; and therefore, prefer to withdraw their children and wards from school, which has led to the obvious depletion of the enrolment population and attendance of pupils and students in schools and teachers to skip classes for safety reasons. The paper adopted secondary research method that relies on the compilation of existing data sourced from the internet, journals and published text books. The paper therefore recommends that: the Federal Government of Nigeria should recruit more military personnel and make provision for more armoured vehicles, and ensure a good number of soldiers with armoured vehicle are stationed in the school premises, especially, in schools sited in remote areas of the State for effective security. It also recommends that Government at all levels, should encourage police-community relations and equip them with surveillance equipment for better policing of the community and schools environment; and the State governments in the North-East and North-West regions, should train and equip local vigilante group with crime fighting equipment, so that they can be more effective in securing school facilities and environs.

Keywords: Armed Banditry, Education, Insecurity, North-East and North-West, Nigeria.

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1.0. INTRODUCTION

Education is the foundation of development of any society, with the potentials of compelling good things to happen, especially when the citizens have access to better quality education. Indeed, access to quality education gives rise to worthwhile societal development. Dimensionally, education aid the application of science which leads to discoveries of today's modern day technology that made life truly easy and comfortable for everyone in one way or the other in the real world. Access and attainment of education truly makes development in all facets of life possible. However, any form of hindrance that prevent citizens access to education, impedes education and development generally, and such retrogress society.

Nigeria has been suffering from the challenges of insecurity and crimes such as armed banditry, coercion, terrorism and terrorism related crimes such as kidnapping, hijacking and hostage-taking, aggravated assault, etc. The North-East, and North-West in particular, are not exclusions. Apart from Boko Haram insurgency and other criminal elements, Armed Banditry have added to the worries and deteriorating security situation in the regions. All these insecurity caused by Armed Banditry has further heightened the tension, reduce confidence and access to the educational sector of the North-East and North-West of Nigeria to the lowest receding tide.

It is a reality in Nigeria of today that, whenever the name - Armed Bandit is mentioned, the first thing that comes to mind is danger, violence, radicalism, theft, extortion and illegal taxation, cattle rustling, a feeling of fear, ruin and above all, kidnapping and destruction of life and property. Armed Banditry is major unwanted phenomena that happened to the part of Northern-Nigeria, that are still ravaging the educational system. The insecurity complexities caused by armed Banditry has made the school system bleak and very unattractive. The presence of these destructive elements have depleted the enrolment population and attendance in schools, because parents and guardians are afraid of losing their children and wards to them who in many cases kidnap the pupils or students along with some of their teachers for ransom.

UNICEF (2023) assert that, in Northern-Nigeria, the North-East and North-West in particular, the educational situation is so bad, with a net of attendance of 53%, and getting the children back to school has become a herculean task. Aside, socio-economic and cultural barriers, States in the North-East and North-West have net attendance rates of 47.7%, and 47.3% respectively, meaning that more than half of the girls are not in school due to the impact of Armed Banditry in the region. In the North-East Nigeria, 2.8 million children from Borno, Yobe and Adamawa are in need of Western education, which the Islamic education cannot accomplish, due to the fact that 29% and 35% of Islamic education does not include basic skills such \as literacy and numeracy; which made the government to consider children attending such schools to be officially out-of-school. In these States, at least 802 schools remain closed and 497 classrooms destroyed, with another 1,392 damaged but repairable.



Similarly, Nigerian Bureau of Statistics (2022) state that, the majority of children aged 10 and above in Northern Nigeria besieged by insecurity have not finished 6 years of basic schooling, and State such as Borno State is worst, with 84%, followed by Sokoto and Zamfara State, both of which have 77% of young children who lack access to education. 73% and 72%, respectively, of the States of Katsina and Kebbi were also impacted with the insecurity menace. The data reveals that children of school age in the Northern-East and North-West Nigeria lack basic access to education.

These state of affair of insecurity caused by Armed Banditry, continue to put the educational sector in jeopardy as government interventions has not been able to achieve much success to bring the situation to a normal. For example, Anka (2017) confirmed that the amnesty initiative and empowerment programme of the Katsina state Governor (2015 - 2023) and that of the Zamfara State Governor (2019-2023) yielded little or no success just as the Military option. The situation therefore, calls for thorough examination of the abysmal effects of armed banditry on the educational sector.

Historical evidences have shown that the damage done by armed bandits in the North-East and North-West of Nigeria are immense, but the origin of modern-day banditry started in Zamfara State in the North-West in 2011. However, armed bandits in the North-West can be traceable to the pre-colonial days. Alistair (2014) states that the region was a major centre for international trade and migration, as Kano and Katsina were well places in the trans-Sahara routes for trade and tourism with additional connection to Sokoto in the West, Borno and others in the East and Benin Empire in the South. According to Auwai (2021), these trade routes were inhabited by armed bandits, which constituted dangers to caravan trading, tourism, political stability and territorial integrity of the pre-colonial states and societies in the region.

The situation persisted till early colonial period. Jaafar (2018) describes the historical account of armed banditry as far back as 1930, as pathetic, that the armed bandits and criminals were known to be targeting goods ferried on the back of donkeys, camels and ox carts on the trade routes and would forcefully take those goods and disappear into the bush. In some other instance, the armed bandits would raid farming communities and villages with the intention of killing them and destroying their property. During such raids the armed bandits would destroy almost everything in their path, including valuables, farm produce, etc. This situation has been in existence even before the coming of the colonial masters; however, the coming of the colonial government helped to suppress the menace of the armed bandits to a considerable level, which drove the armed bandits to the underworld (Obaro, 1980).

According to Auwal (2021), political violence, ethnicity, militarization of the society, inadequate policy attention for human development and climate change, and weak institutional capacity of state in governance and security increased the opportunities and motivations for armed resistance and criminal violence in post-colonial Nigeria. Amidst



these, armed bandit groups proliferate across the country, with surge of armed robbery and ethno-communal clashes from 1980s. In Northern Nigeria, and especially in the North-West, this development further expanded to include cattle rustling, which became prominent in 2000s. However, 2011 was considered a landmark in the contemporary re-emergence of armed banditry in the North-West of Nigeria, as armed groups commanded by the Fulanis Kundu and Buharin Daji emerged. Though, they were not young but they named the group *Kungiyar gayu*, the young guys' association. The group is known to the public as 'Kungiyar Barayin Shanu' - (the cattle rustlers association). However, Ojo (2012) reported that in 2012 the activities of the Kungiyar gayu group for cattle rustling became clearer and known to the state, exposing their underlying intentions. Grazing areas in the state were encroached upon and confiscated at a time when herders were migrating to neighbouring states. Prior to the recruitment process in 2011, membership was limited to Only Fulani. A combination of cash, cattle, sex, leisure, and intimidation were used to recruit Fulanis. Many herders joined the group to escape harassment by the gang after they discovered the gang was rustling livestock.

2.0. CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATIONS

Armed Banditry

The concept of armed banditry connotes different meanings to different people. Adekunle (2023) asserts that armed banditry is used to refer to a wide range of non-state actors such as terrorists, cultists, herdsmen, kidnappers, gangs and militants who engaged in violence to achieve their goal(s). Encyclopedia (2023) conceptualise armed banditry as the act of taking property from another by using force or the threat of force. Similarly, Abdullahi (2019) defines armed banditry as a form of organised crime perpetrated by a gang of criminals who terrorize and take valuable possessions of the local populace merchandise, money, livestock, camels, sheep, also involved in intimidation and killing of civilians, and destruction of properties. Egwu (2018) states that armed banditry is characterised by cattle rustling, attack, kidnapping, ransoming and killings of innocent citizens and rapes as a form of sexual violence against victims.

Additionally, Anka (2017) defines banditry as the practice of raiding and attacking victims by members of an armed group, whether or not it was planned, using weapons of offense or defense, especially in semi-organized groups with the goal of overpowering the victim and getting loot or achieving some political goals. Sanchi, Alhassan, Ajibade, and Sambo (2022) assert that most people think of these bandits as outlaws, desperate and lawless marauders who don't have home or a place to go. Instead, they wander around the forest and mountains to avoid being found, caught, and jailed. In rural communities, banditry means a group of criminals who do illegal things such as raiding villages, kidnapping, and rustling cattle to get money.



In the context of this paper the concept of banditry means an organised crime perpetrated by armed rural gangs or group known as bandits who engaged in banditry. They specialise in using violence to commit crimes such as kidnapping, robbery, cattle rustling, extortion, killings, etc.

Insecurity

The concept of insecurity means different thing to different people. For some, it connotes the lack of safety; danger, anything that has the potential to cause harm, doubt; absence of protection, etc. Baland (2005) refers to insecurity as a state of fear or anxiety due to absence or lack of protection. Similarly, Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpor-Rabaro (2013) defines insecurity as the state of being open or subject to danger or threat of danger, where danger is the condition of being susceptible to harm or injury. Achumba et al (2013) further, defines insecurity as the state of being exposed to risk or anxiety, where anxiety is a vague unpleasant emotion that is experienced in anticipation of some misfortune. In the context of this paper, insecurity refers to a breakdown security, absence of circumstances that brings peace and joy, be it socio-economic, cultural, political that leads to conscious destruction of lives and property. Those exposed to insecurity caused by Armed Banditry in Northern Nigeria, especially in the North-East and North-West are numerous.

Education

In the first place, Ogbondah (2016) asserts that, education is the process for transmitting culture in terms of continuity and growth and for disseminating knowledge either to ensure social control or guarantee rational direction of the society or both. Similarly, education is the socially organised regulated process of continuous transference of socially significant experience from previous to following generations (Aslanbek, 2017). Ajuzie (2017) suggests that, education seeks to transform natural forces and resources onto good for the benefit of man and to generate innovations, skills, services and techniques towards solution of the problem of man and his environment and for socio-economic and cultural transformation. There are three forms of education: formal education which is carried out in institutions of learning such as nursery school, primary school, secondary school and tertiary institutions like colleges of education, polytechnics and universities; reading and writing are integral parts of formal education. Informal education takes place incidentally in the immediate environment of the learner through the instrumentality of parents, relatives, peer groups, neighbours and all people of significance of the learner's immediate social contact, while non-formal education can be obtained by way of extramural courses, mass literacy programmes of Better Life for Rural Women, part time short courses, health enlightenment programmes of immunization, etc. Candidates of non-formal education are usually made to follow a planned study programme for specified period of time in the training centre.



Additionally, education seeks to socialize individuals so as to equip them with desired mode of behavior that is in conformity with the way of life of the society in which they live (Ademola & Ojo, 2018). Lamichhane (2018) conceptualise education as the process of facilitating learning, or the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, belief, and habits. According to Law Insider (2022) education means planned and organized activity by a consultant to impact information to employer and employees to enable them to establish and maintain employment and a place of employment that are safe and healthful. MBN (2022) conceptualize education as the process or act of learning or teaching, that is, acquiring or imparting knowledge. It includes the preparation of children for mature life. It also involves developing people's powers of reasoning and judgment. Furthermore, John (2020) defines education as a method or practice that aims at teaching an individual a new skill or new principles.

In the context of this paper, the kind of education refers to here are purely Western education, a process of imparting knowledge and skills to the younger generation of Nigerians. Unfortunately, the younger generation especially the pupils and students in primary and secondary schools have become soft targets for the Armed Bandits.

3.0. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Location

The North-East of Nigeria, comprises six States, namely, Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Tarabe, and Yobe. The people in these states are majorly traders and farmers but are the least developed in Nigeria; while the North-West of Nigeria comprises seven States, namely, Kano, Sokoto, Kaduna, Jigawa, Katsina, Kebbi, and Zamfara. These states are endowed with farming, trading, textile and plastic industries; and like the North-East geopolitical zone are plague with terrorism and armed banditry which has massively affected the economy and the educational sector, especially in the rural areas (This Day Live, 2022).

3.2. Research Design and Data Generation

This paper is qualitative in nature, with strict reliance on secondary research method. The authors rely on the compilations of existing data source from the internet, journals, published text books, and other documentaries. The presentations are built on balance discourses of armed banditries on schools in context of the Northeast and Northwest.

4.0. PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Armed Banditry Attacks on Schools in the North-East and North-West

Eons Intelligence (2022) reports shows that bandits kidnapped an Assistant Headmaster, of Central Primary School, Buni Yadi, and four others in Madiya, Illage, Gujba Local Government Area of Yobe State. However, one of the victim luckily escaped the abduction



by the bandits and ran into the Police checkpoint at Madiya. Similarly, Channels Incorporated Limited (2021) reported that gunmen suspected to be bandits deliberately killed the proprietor of New Edition Nursery and Primary School as well as Winners Comprehensive High School in Jalingo, Taraba State. The suspected bandits ambushed the proprietor in Gassol Local Government Area of the State and killed him. This deliberate killing shows that the bandits are fully out to destroy the educational system. In a related development, Ige (2024) confirmed that bandits abducted two students of Federal University in Wukari, Taraba State. The bandits stormed the students' hostel and abducted the students. This was another deliberate act, just to discourage students from going to school.

John (2022) avows that bandits in Adamawa State consciously killed fresh graduate after collecting a ransom of five hundred thousand naira from family. The ransom was taken to the bandits in their forest; unfortunately, as the victim turned to leave, the bandits shot and killed him instantly. The bandits were furious probably because he was a graduate of western education instead of Islamic education. One would have thought that the hatred was for only Western education but that was not to be. According to Salman (2024) armed bandits kidnapped 15 Tsangaya students at Gidan Bakuso area of Gada Local Government Area in Sokoto. The 15 students were Islamic school students. This shows that the bandits are careless and only interested in the ransom they are going to collect. Additionally, Nairaland (2021) confirmed that following the incessant abduction of school children, the Adamawa State Government decided to close 30 boarding Junior Secondary Schools out of 34 in 2021. Only 4 Government Girls Junior Secondary Schools were allowed to function in the State. Later the 30 schools were de-boarded for security reasons.

Musharafa, Zubair, Oluwadamilare, Temitope and Oluwatobi (2022) in their study - armed banditry and the collapse of education in North-West, Nigeria, avow that bandits abducted a lots of students in the North-West of Nigeria. Musharafa et al (2022) said in 2021 in Kaduna State alone, bandits kidnapped 3 students, injured many and demanded for fifty million naira ransom from St. Albert the Great Institute of Philosophy, Fadan Kogoma, Kafanchan; 22 students of Greenfield University, Kasarami, Chikun Local Government Area were kidnapped while 5 were killed; in Bethel Baptist High School, 140 students were kidnapped and about 107 of the abducted students were released after a ransom of 180 million naira was paid; 2 students and 3 teachers were also kidnapped from UBE Primary School, Rama, Birnin-Gwari, Local Government Area, later 2 of the students were found.

In Katsina State, Musharafa *et al.* (2022) state that in 2020, 300 students from Government Science Secondary School, Kankara were kidnapped and later released; in 2021, 10 students and teachers kidnapped from Islamiyya School, Sakakai, Faskasi Local Government Area; also in 2021, 4 students were also kidnapped from Community Secondary School, Runka town, Safana LGA, however, one narrowly escaped. In a similar development, according to Musharafa (2022) avows that 317 students were abducted from Government Girls Secondary School in Zamfara State, but only 279 students were released; 75 students were kidnapped



from Government Day Secondary School, Kaya village in 2021 and 5 students were released after 24 hours; and 300 schoolgirls were kidnapped from Government Science Secondary School, Abankula, Talatu Marafa Local Government Area. All these menace were deliberately carried out by the armed bandits to make money, and are infringement on right to education.

4.2. Abysmal Effects of Armed Banditry on the Educational Sector

Dreadful attacks on students and teachers and deliberate damage of school facilities by bandits pose serious threats to the educational sector of the regions. The death of students in the bandits den was abysmal, painful and inimitable. The death of students and proprietor of schools and fears driven into teachers that make them to skip classes was a red flag. Thus, making the future human resource of the regions is in trouble. The youths of course are the future of any country. Teachers are the ones who prepare the youths (students) for the tomorrows' societal development; and, since teachers' access to the classrooms to do their work is being denied, and students' access to learning is denied in the North-East and North-West. Clearly, the educational sector and development generally in the regions are bleak.

Ojewale (2024) study reveals that, the violence against educational facilities and students by bandits stated to rise from 2020. From 2013 to 2019, attacks against students were sporadic. They swelled to 25 incidents and 25 fatalities in 2021; and 15 reported incidents and 3 fatalities in 2022; and a total of 51 people were killed due to attacks on schools and students from 2013 to 2023. Such fatalities caused by bandits were consequential and the resultant effects were clear decrease in school enrolment, as thousands of student dropped out of school due to the menace of the armed bandits. Such out of school children could be a fertile ground for future terrorists' recruitment in the regions. These further make the future of the regions bleak. Education is key to meaningful development; and without education there can be no meaningful development in the regions.

Additionally, the incessant attacks on schools led to the closure of several schools in the regions. For example, bandits' abduction of 140 students from Bethel High School made the Kaduna State government to close down 13 schools in 2021. Similarly, the kidnapping of over 200 girls from the school in Jangebe and the 75 students kidnapped from Government Day Secondary School, in Kaya village in 2021, made the Kaduna State Government to close all schools in the State. In Yobe State, the government ordered all boarding schools students to go home, except the Junior Secondary Schools students. The Katsina State Government also closed all boarding schools in the state, after 300 students from Government Science Secondary School, Kankara were kidnapped in 2020. Most times when kidnapping of students takes place in the regions, student were asked to go home; out of fear, in most cases some of the students and teachers do not come back to resume school. Regrettably, when schools are closed, some children easily forget some of the things they learnt before the



closure. All these disrupt students' academic progress; coupled with the unnecessary elongation of academic calendar.

An interview with a traumatised teacher in Katsina State, reveals that some of the abducted school girls are sexually abused by the bandits. They became victims of rape by conscious design of the rapists. Many of the kidnapped female students were forcefully and deliberately infected with HIV by bandits through rape. For example, in one of the villages in Sokoto, attacked by bandits, the bandits kidnapped a teenage school girl and sexually assaulted her which resulted in unwanted pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases without access to healthcare. Such physical and psychological rape traumas among victims make parents and guardians to forcefully withdraw their wards from schools. A similar interview with a Primary School Headmaster in Katsina State, shows that, many of the out-of-schools girls have resulted to selling local foods such as Dawo, Fura, Aya and Gyada on the street; that further exposed the girls' to unwanted pregnancies and other dangers, instead of going to school.

Furthermore, the threats already experienced by children at the primary school level, may make it difficult for them to graduate from primary school to secondary school, and those traumatised at the secondary school levels may find it cumbersome to transit from the secondary school levels to tertiary institutions of learning; thereby putting so much doubt on the future of the educational sector in the regions; and because of the massive state of insecurity caused by armed banditry, lecturers and scholars of other institutions in the South-South, and West and other regions, may not want to participate in any form of physical intellectual cross fertilization of ideas, such as conferences, and workshops, unless through zoom or travel to do any form of educational businesses or any business with financial quantification in the North-East and North-West. The developmental trends raised a serious concern for the future of the educational sector in the regions.

5.0. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1. Conclusion

Aside Boko Haram insurgency and other criminal elements in the North-East and North-West, Armed Banditry have added to the worries and deteriorating security situation in the region. Whenever the name - Armed Bandit is mentioned, the first thing that comes to mind is danger, violence, radicalism, theft, extortion and illegal taxation, cattle rustling, a feeling of fear, ruin and above all, kidnapping and destruction of life and property. Armed Banditry are major unwanted phenomena in the Northern-East and North-West of Nigeria.

The threats of armed banditry have depleted the enrolment population and attendance of pupils and students in schools. This insecurity situation also makes teachers to skip classes. Parents and guardians are afraid of losing their children and wards to the armed bandits who in many cases delight in kidnapping the pupils or students along with some of their teachers



for ransom. Parents and guardians no longer feel safe sending their children or wards to school, because of the deteriorating security situation caused by armed bandits in the regions. The highlighted insecurity conditions raise serious concerns for the future of the educational sector in the regions.

5.2. Recommendations

Based on the aforementioned abysmal effects of armed banditry on the educational sector of the North-East and North-West regions of Nigeria, the following are recommended:

- (i). The Federal Government should recruit more military personnel and make provision for more armoured vehicles, and ensure a good number of soldiers with an armoured vehicle are stationed in the school premises, especially, in schools sited in remote areas of the State for effective security, to ward off banditry.
- (ii). Government at all levels, should encourage police-community relations and equip them with surveillance equipment for better policing of the community and schools environment.
- (iii). State governments in the North-East and North-West regions, should train and equip local vigilante group with crime fighting equipment, so that they can be more effective in securing the school facilities and environs.

Competing Interest

The authors have declared that no conflicting interest exist in this study.

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