

A Human Security Approach to Examining Banditry and Kidnapping in Nigeria

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Abstract

Banditry and kidnapping have been notorious words in Nigeria as bandits and kidnapers have have consisted huge security challenge for several years. These organized crimes by armed individuals who engage in several activities including robbery and extortion in mostly rural areas, have sacked local communities, raiding villages, looting property, and engaging in violent confrontations with security forces. The effects of these have been horrifying, leading to unquantifiable loss of livelihood, part reasons for most internal displacements and loss of lives. The key objective of this study is to examine the human security approach to banditry and kidnapping in Nigeria. The Frustration and aggression theory was utilized to hinge the argument why most youths have engaged in these societal ills. Poverty, high level of unemployment, the influx of arms proliferation and illiteracy and greed were identified as causes why youths are involved in the twin evil. The paper recommends that the Nigerian government need to come up with more realistic and meaningful employment programmes for the youth. The Nigerian Military should as well stand up to their jobs by finding a more workable approach for curbing occurrences of banditry and kidnapping in Nigeria.

Keywords: Banditry, Insecurity, Kidnapping, Internal Displacement, Crime

Introduction

Nigeria's security architecture has been dotted with complexities over the years. These complexities have manifested in form of internal conflicts between and among the major ethnic groups namely the Hausa, Yoruba and Igbo. The result had been instabilities in form of ethnic tensions that culminated in the Nigeria Civil war between 1967 and 1970. Aside this, the periods of 1960 until 1999 was characterized by military rule. The junta did not stop the ethnic rivalry as ethnic and religious tensions persisted, leading to sporadic outbreaks of violence, particularly in the oil producing communities of the Niger Delta region as well as in other parts of the country. The rise of militants groups such as the Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Niger Delta People's Salvation Force, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) and later the the Niger Delta Avengers (NDA) rose to compound the ailing security situation already created (Maigari, Dantani, & Arafat, 2021).

The 1990s and 2000s saw another trend in the form of religious and communal conflicts particularly between and Christians and Muslims. The introduction of Islamic Sharia law in most of the northern states sparked up tensions and violence between the major religious groups. As though the situation was not enough, since 2009 when Boko Haram, an Islamist extremist group in the Northeastern states of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa emerged, the people now live in fear of violent violent imposition of strict Islamic law. The sect have adopted various forms of attacks on unsuspecting citizens in the form of bombings, kidnappings, and mass abductions, targeting civilians, schools, security forces, and religious institutions. Similar to the tactics of Boko Haram is farmer-Herder conflicts, cattle rustling and banditry, occasioned by competition over land, access to resources, and clashes between sedentary farming communities and nomadic herders. Banditry and kidnapping for ransom have become pervasive, particularly in the northwest and central regions of Nigeria, with criminal groups exploiting the security vacuum and socio-economic challenges. These have resulted in widespread clashes and violence, casualties, displacements, loss of lives and property and humanitarian crisis across the country (Afe, 2017; Faluyi, Khan, & Akinola, 2019; Omotajo & Bode-Okunade, 2020).

Banditry and kidnapping have in most recent times in Nigeria become very challenging in Nigeria. These criminal activities have led to considerable loss of life and livelihood in almost every geo-political zones of the country. While banditry may represent organized activities by outlaws who are armed in forms of robbery, cattle rustling and extortion particularly in rural areas of northwestern and northeastern states, kidnapping for ransom is not limited to any zone. Kidnappers abduct people whether nationals or expatriates and demand ransom payments from families, employees and the government. The most prominent kidnap cases been those involving school girls in Chibok in 2014 and Dapchi in 2018. The unabating incidences of the duo complex and multifarious nature of banditry and kidnapping despite efforts from many quarters to bringing solution, have motivated a study on a human security approach addressing them in Nigeria.

This study adopts the Frustration Aggression Theory to underpin its arguments. It is when the government fails to do its part in securing its people that frustration sets in. This frustration tends to destabilize peace. Thus, this paper focuses on the Southwestern region of Nigeria, a geopolitical known for its relative peace until recently. Six states make up the southwestern region and they are Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo, and Ekiti. They are all Yoruba-speaking states with similar cultures and traditions.

Youths in Banditry: The Frustration Aggression Perspective

Frustration Aggression theory which was propounded by five Yale University scholars namely: Dollard, Miller, Doob, Mowrer, and Sears in 1939 with its major assumptions been that when an individual does not attain certain heights or is denied certain due privileges, the individual becomes dissatisfied, which manifests itself in an aggressive disposition or display was adopted in this study on banditry and kidnapping in Nigeria. The theory was later remodified by Ferberabend and Feirauben. The premise of this theory is that aggression results from frustration and that the appearance of violent behavior always necessitates the presence of dissatisfaction. The Yale scholars avered that frustration is an impediment to the occurrence of an elicited goal response at the appropriate point in the behavioral sequence.

To the proponents of this theory, aggression is the result of frustration or anger. It is important to note that frustration comes as a result of identifiable factors and not of abstract feelings, for example a period of economic distress could motivate a group of dissatisfied individuals to act aggressively (Ogu & Opakunbi, 2021). Berkowitz (1989) believed people are more likely to be frustrated and open to violence when they are aware or discover that they are willfully sabotaged or denied what should be legitimately theirs. He stated that frustration is an aversive event that can lead to aggressive inclinations and thus increases the negative effects in society.

A clear example is the kidnapping situation in Nigeria which to a large extent is being carried out by the youth. This is because, the government has failed them and they need a means of livelihood due to poverty, unemployment, and illiteracy. These youths' engagement in criminal activities is a display of their anger/frustration with the Nigerian government, thereby, discrediting the government by making the country insecure for citizens and foreigners.

Human Security Perspective on Nigeria's Insecurity

Human security theory is an emerging paradigm for understanding and managing national and international vulnerabilities of people. Human security contrasts state security; it arose out of growing discontent with the state-centered idea of security as a sufficient conceptual framework for comprehending current human vulnerabilities and military operations as adequate remedies to them (Newman, 2010; Adesina, 2017). Its popularity is traceable to 1994 by the United Nations Development Programme on Human Development (UNDP, 1994).

Human security optimists argue that security should start from humans rather than at the state/nation. It entails prioritizing the security of individuals, particularly their welfare and safety, over the security of nations. Insecurity, according to Callaway & Harrelson-Stephens (2006), is inherently related to threats to human security. Thus, to have a safe state or international system, the humans in it have to be secured, the security of citizens supersedes that of the state. The core of the human security theory is people, its end goal is to protect citizens who to a large extent make up the state from fear, want and human indignity (Hampson, 2004).

Ağır (2015) and Adesina (2017) noted that the concept of human security is focused on everyday living standards, human dignity and protection from threats like hunger, poverty, and restraints. Those who suffer from “want” are subject to several hazards and they are desperate to improve their lot, the populations impacted by inadequate governance, poverty, and lack of basic human requirements and fundamental rights to a decent life and dignity, must find ways to improve. Such human insecurities as persistent poverty, ethnic violence, people trafficking, climate change, health pandemics, and international terrorism are a few of the many challenges human security focuses on. This is because these forms of security challenges transcend the traditional state security paradigms (UN Trust Fund for Human Security Human Security, 2009).

Human security emphasizes freedom from human vulnerabilities and defines national security more broadly as freedom from all types of social, ecological, territorial, socioeconomic, economic, and sociopolitical vulnerabilities of citizens (UN Trust Fund for Human Security, 2009). A government is responsible for ensuring the community, economic, ecological/ environmental, physical, social, and food security of its citizens (Okoli, 2013). It is critical to understand that any threat to public safety or general well-being constitutes a threat to national security. Banditry and kidnapping are kinds of instability in Nigeria that endanger the general well-being and public safety; thus, the threat they have caused (and continue to generate) should attract measures other than military ones (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014). As a government of a state is expected to create a good life for its citizen, human insecurity such as poverty, unemployment, ethnic conflicts, kidnapping, etc., indicates lapses in governance. As such, Nigerian youths can be argued to engage in banditry and kidnapping as a result of the government’s incapacity to provide a good life for its citizens. Due to a lack of enabling environment to thrive in legitimate endeavors, many Nigerian youths are vulnerable thus, they engage in criminal activities such as banditry and kidnapping to escape poverty.

Banditry in Nigeria

Banditry is a word that is derived from the term bandit with the meaning of an unlawful armed group that keeps terrorizing the lives of people and confiscating or seizing their properties (Rosenje & Adeniyi, 2021). Shalangwa (2013) sees banditry as the practice of raiding and attacking victims by members of a gang or armed group, premeditated or not, employing the use of weapons of offense or defense, especially in semi-organized groups with the sole aim of overpowering the victims and carting away with their properties or to achieve some personalized goal such as political, ethical and sometimes religious. Egwu (2016) views banditry as a practice of stealing. A reflection of criminal escapades such as stealing, kidnapping, and gruesome massacre of people. In another way, banditry refers to events or incidences of armed robbery or violent crimes which relates such as kidnapping, market raiding or sometimes village raiding and cattle rustling. It employs the use of force alongside the threat to intimidate a person or a group of people to carry out their heinous crimes which in turn have a devastating effect on the said victims (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014). Danjuma (2021) refers to banditry as armed violence which is driven principally by the criminal intent to steal and plunder. Mostly motivated by the quest to amass economic wealth.

It is synonymous with the establishment of small gang groups that have grown to the use of light weapons to perpetrate their attack against a low set of people. When banditry in rural areas comes to play, it means a group of outlawed persons involved in illicit and illegal activities such as raiding the villages, kidnapping, and abductions, armed robbery, and cattle rustling for primitive accumulation of wealth. They terrorize and

dispossess local and indigenous people and travelers/commuters of their valuable properties and they mostly operate within and along rural borders, this is sometimes done with the aid of their local assistants or collaborators and they might be state agents deployed to help the people in terms of security (Abdullahi, 2019). Traveling and moving through major highways across Nigeria can be said to be an experience that offers passengers an opportunity to have a glimpse of the beautiful and natural scenery which most people take as tourism. Unfortunately, in the era of deep insecurity that is being caused by bandits (especially highway-armed bandits), the traveling experience has become worrisome. Banditry can be referred to as a type of organized crime that is committed by outlaws and it involves the use of threat and most times violence. The rate at which bandits attack the community is becoming high and the impact rests on the citizens because they are at the receiving end of the situation. Recently, the Nigerian state has had its fair share of banditry attacks. In Nigeria's history, a little over 133 highway banditry has been reported (Ezedinachi, 2020). Global Studies have on several different times confirmed that the realities of this bandit exist but the Nigeria leadership continues to live in denial. Banditry can take different forms and sometimes, it can be either religious or ethical two examples play to mind when banditry is mentioned in Nigeria and they are the Boko Haram sect and Fulani herdsmen (Ojo, 2020). Understanding that some of these bandits or terrorists group as they are often called are borne out of help and support to each other. In this case, the ISIS terrorists and the Abu Sayyaf group in the Philippines. The Abu Sayyaf came out to announce that they needed Germany to follow some instructions because they were holding a certain German hostage. This shows that some of these groups just provide support for the main group. ISIS is an acronym for the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant or popularly known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (Ojo, 2020).

The Boko Haram which started by saying Western education was handed down is Haram has gone deeper and it is not just against Western education but also against the existence of man in Nigeria and this can be explained using their incessant kidnapping and bombing as an example. The Fulani herdsmen are almost similar to the Boko haram sect that was explained earlier. Some roads in the Northeast have been declared unsafe for travelers and commuters using that road (Omitola, Adedire, Akinrinde, Omodunbi, & Sackflame, 2021). A recent case of the Fulani herdsmen was that which happened in Ondo state, when they felt uncomfortable with all of their happenings, they used the traditional method to see them out of the land. Highway banditry has not been established in the southwestern region of Nigeria as it is prominent in the North but one cannot deny its existence.

Kidnapping in Nigeria

Kidnapping has become prevalent in Nigeria and there is this unrest and uncertainty about who the next victim will likely be. Kidnapping cannot be said to be historically new nor can it be said to be peculiar or a new case in Nigeria. It is a universal occurrence that can be said to be like the man himself. This phenomenon has existed since there was the establishment of a coordinated human society. Kidnapping has been defined by many scholars and it is based on different perspectives. Olofin (2020) views kidnapping as when a person is abducted and taken from one place to another against their will or confined to a controlled space without the confinement being from a legal authority. Inyang and Abraham (2013) defined kidnapping as the "forcible" seizure, taking away, and unlawful detention of a person against his/her will. Worthy of note are the similarities in the two definitions given, it is the hostage against their will. Ezeibe and Eze (2012) posited that kidnapping is an illegal act of seizing, detaining, or unlawfully carrying away a person by force, threats, or fraud, and often the release of the victim comes with a payment which is popularly known as ransom.

The history of Kidnapping can be traced to the creeks of the Niger Delta Region in 2006. The very first act was carried out by the Niger Delta militants to protest inequality in the region. The action started with kidnapping government expatriates and now it has spread out to politicians, men of God, their children, wealthy men, and women. The effect of the kidnap is most times traumatizing to both the victims and their families because of the ordeal they encounter. Mosques, churches, schools, homes, marketplaces, and virtually everywhere are not

immune to this act.

Kidnapping has gained more ground as what used to be irritable to humans has been more domesticated. It used to be an act well known in the south-south region but now it has spread around Nigeria and has been described as a national problem that has eaten deep into the fabric of the country (Faluyi, Khan & Akinola, 2019). The menace caused by kidnapping has greatly contributed to the insecurity issue of the country. Kidnapping otherwise known as abduction has taken place in the northern areas with visible evidence like the case of the Chibok girls, and the case of the Baptist School Students amongst others (Faluyi, Khan, & Akinola, 2019). According to the 2021 Global Peace Index (GPI), Nigeria ranked 146 of 163 independent nations and territories. The country is 8th among the least peaceful countries in Africa (Olaiya, 2021).

Dodo (2010) views kidnapping from the lens of being more of a national problem that has eaten deep into the fabric of the country and it takes place everywhere in Nigeria. There is no doubt that Nigeria has now become one of the major kidnapping capitals of the world because of the high increase in the number of kidnapped persons in the country and this in turn has affected the investments (both foreign direct and domestic), development, economy and even the quality of governance of today. These sectors have been affected so much that it now has a reclining factor on Nigeria by slowing down its growth and to a greater extent, it has waded off investors from abroad that would have helped with the boosting of the economy. The act of kidnapping has dented the image of Nigeria amid other countries because Ekpe (2009) stated that in 2008, Nigeria ranked number six (6) on the global kidnap index by an online tourism site. This report could serve as an assumption due to a lack of statistical records/data but will still serve as a source for this paper.

Factors Promoting Kidnapping and Banditry in Nigeria

Poverty

Over the years, this has been a driving force and its effects have left the nation in shambles. When a man cannot afford his basic needs or they are not met, man delves into the illicit part of the business. It has contributed to the rising wave of banditry and kidnapping. Adeolu (2018) posited that the failure of successive administrations in Nigeria to address and tackle the challenges of poverty that are affecting the nation has made life quite burdensome and has turned into a game of survival of the fittest. While affirming Adebayo's (2018) perception, Adeolu (2018) maintained that Nigeria has overtaken India as the country which has a large number of people living in extreme poverty giving an estimated 87 million Nigerians said to be living on less than \$1.90 a day.

The influx of arms proliferation

The incremental influx of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW) into Nigeria from other countries (neighboring ones) has increased the rate of banditry. When these weapons and arms come into the country, it ends up in the hands of these non-state actors like terrorists, bandits, kidnappers, and the like and they use them to carry out their intended violence. The Nigerian Military coupled with the Department of State Services (DSS) has over time tried to lay hold on dealers of arms, though it has not been a successful job arms are being seized at borders (Rosenje & Adeniyi (2021).

High level of unemployment

Unemployment of youth can put the nation at risk and then promotes banditry and kidnapping which are forms of insecurity. According to the National Bureau of Statics (NBS) in 2019, they put Nigeria's unemployment rate at 23.1% and of this, and youth employment was put at 55.4% (Rosenje & Adeniyi, 2021). Understanding that these numbers over the years have continually shot up yearly because Nigerian institutions of higher learning keep graduating batches of youth and they graduate with the mindset of securing a job after graduation. Then, anxiety sets in if the jobs are not forthcoming and this gives room to frustration, from frustration down to aggression as is expected. Therefore, the high rate of unemployment especially youth unemployment is a leading factor because jobless youths in the country resort to violent crimes.

Political factors

Politics and political factors also contribute immensely to the growth of these violent crimes. Politicians set up kidnapers against their opponents so they can have an edge over them to win the election. When a politician wants to have some sort of headway, the likelihood that he will resort to the use of violent crimes stand.

Illiteracy and Greed

Noting that the Nigerian youth will rather delve into getting rich and will always go with the get-rich-quick syndrome not minding the illicit and illegal way they acquire it. Seeing that kidnapping and banditry to an extent enriches their pocket, they will rather keep the jobs as it is also a form of business just that in all shades of doing it, it has been declared illicit. This to an extent has affected the nation's security.

Also, illiteracy on its part has increased the rate of these crimes because they are easily wooed to the side of violence to have a means of living, even an illegal means. An illiterate with no education and zero skills will be cajoled because getting a job will be quite difficult and due to the get-rich-quick syndrome, taking up menial jobs to keep their livelihood will not be accepted.

Conclusion

The paper examined banditry and kidnapping and their leading causes while focusing on the southwest region of Nigeria. The paper started with an introductory part and delved into the conceptual clarification and gave a brief background of the concept and its inception in Nigeria and also highlighted explanations as to the factors militating against these violent crimes.

Also, the paper made some references to highway banditry and some evidential cases of kidnapping cases in Nigeria. The paper gave a brief statistical record of different rates of unemployment, kidnapping, and banditry. To adequately deal with the menace that banditry and kidnapping have caused in the southwestern region and the whole of Nigeria at large, the following recommendations are advanced:

The Nigerian government needs to come up with more realistic and meaningful employment for the youth of the country that has been trapped in the phenomenon. The employment can be a white-collar job or skill acquisition put properly. Largely, this will reduce the poverty rate in the country.

Based on the human security theory, the Nigerian government needs to prioritize the security of Nigerians. There should be a reorientation of ethical values and also the reverence for human rights and life. People should be taught how to coexist peacefully without involving violent nature.

The Nigerian Military should stand up to their jobs by finding a better approach to curbing banditry and kidnapping.

Government should put in place a functioning security system at all levels and arm the military and paramilitary with the necessary weapons and ammunitions needed to fight back in the case of banditry. Also when a community's security is tight, there will be fewer reports of violence.

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