

IMPACT OF KIDNAPPING AND BANDITRY ON ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN KATSINA-ALA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of kidnapping and banditry on economic activities in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State. Two research questions were raised for the study while two hypotheses were formulated and tested and 0.05 level of significance. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design while multistage sampling techniques were used to select 300 respondents for study. The area of study was Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State. A structured questionnaire titled 'Kidnapping/Banditry and Economic Activities Questionnaire, (KBEAQ) was used for data collection. A four point modified rating scale was used to establish the disparity in the respondents' opinions. Thus, Strongly Agree (SA) =4; Agree (A) =3; Disagree (D) =2; Strongly Disagree (SD) =1 were used by respondents to respond to each questionnaire. Chi square was used for testing the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha. The study found out that prevalent banditry activities included kidnapping and extortion among others. Devastating impact of banditry on the economic activities were found to include disruption of commercial activities, out-migration of rural population, extortions in rural markets, abandonment of farming and displacement of rural population amongst others.. The study therefore recommends for increased deployment of adequate security personnel, highly classified security information and counter strategies to curb the menace.

Keywords: Impact, Kidnapping, Banditry, Economic activities, Katsina-Ala Local Government Area.

Background of the Study

Nigeria is facing series of challenges which are affecting the economic activities of the country. One of such problems bedeviling economic activities of the country is the issue of kidnapping and banditry. This anomaly has turned into a social problem which is affecting virtually every member of the Nigerian society in one way or the other. In different parts of Nigeria, kidnapping and banditry is used to describe different variants of outlawry (Yusuf, 2021). Since Independence, successive governments have had to confront variants of these trends. The evidence over time suggests a link between governance and its policy failure. In response to the incessant increases in banditry and kidnapping in the country, the military government in 1970 introduced a mandatory death by firing squad for convicted armed robbers. This policy was aimed at reducing the high rate of the crime (Emewu and Anyanwu, 2019). Asuquo (2019) noted that the term "kidnapping" is difficult to define with precision, because it varies from State to State and jurisdiction to jurisdiction. In any case, it is seen as the forceful seizure, taking away and unlawful detention of a person against his/her will. It is a common law offence and the key part is that, it is an unwanted act on the part of the victim. It is a restriction of someone else's liberty which violates the provision of freedom of movement as enshrined in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, where every other law takes its cue from. For this reason, Siegel (2022) sees it as a serious offence. Abraham (2018) defined kidnapping as an act of seizing, taking away and keeping a person in custody either by force or fraud; for personal gratification (i.e. demanding ransom and a times gaining sexual satisfaction in terms of female victims). The widening scale of insecurity in Nigeria is a cause for concern as all are affected by it. Churches, mosques, markets, schools, homes and the highway, all are susceptible to this menace. The abductees and their families are traumatised by the ordeal of kidnapping. Foreign investors are scared away from Nigeria. Nigerians are paying the price of poor governance and failures of leadership (Ngwama, 2014). Kidnapping has now become a generic word both in public and private discuss going by its prevalence in the country. Literarily, the word, which has become notorious, putrid and nauseating in the ears of virtually everyone is derived from "kid" meaning; child and "nab" which means; to snatch. Davidson (2021) points out that the general state of insecurity in some parts of the country has no doubt reached a stage where virtually everybody is now worried the direction the region is going. Presently, hardly can people sleep because of the fear of being robbed or kidnapped. Businessmen have taken flight with their businesses for fear of being kidnapped or robbed.

Banditry refers to criminal activities involving armed gangs or groups that engage in robbery, extortion, kidnapping and violence often in rural or remote areas and villages. Bandits may target individuals, communities or business, their action can disrupt economic activities, instill fear and undermine social stability, the bandits often operates in forest and rural areas attacking villagers, farmers and travelers collaborating with terrorist group or kidnappers (Akinyetun, 2022). Banditry means occurrence or prevalence of armed robbery or violent crime. It involves the use of force, or threat to that effect, to intimidate a person with the intent to rob rape or kill. Banditry is a crime against persons. It has been a common genre of crime, as well as cause of violence in contemporary societies (Nigeria Watch, 2019). Banditry involves premeditated armed attacks or raids by gang or criminals, terrorists called bandits on communities or groups for purpose of looting, stealing or controlling material possessions or financial resources of the victims (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019). Banditry is motivated by economic

or political interests. The rural areas in Nigeria have become enmeshed with all kinds of crime more especially armed banditry.

The prevalence of banditry in Nigeria appears to have been high and rising over the years. According to Rotberg (2017), crime against persons, including murder, rape, and robbery has grown in scale and viciousness in Nigeria since 1999. This has been demonstrated by the pervasive trend of armed robbery in the country, which in effect mirrors the Africa-wide experience. The incidents of kidnapping and banditry have affected the image of the country both domestically and internationally as a nation. It has affected Nigeria's quest to attract foreign direct investment (FDI) and also an attempt to develop a viable tourism industry as visitors are regularly warned by their countries to be wary of coming to Nigeria. Many would-be investors have also stayed away for fears of being kidnapped (Ekpe, 2020).

Socio-Economic factors facilitating kidnapping in Nigeria according to Ngwama (2014) include:

Leadership Failure: The current state of anomie on our political history could be blamed on poor leadership elite who are unresponsive to this state of insecurity as they over concentrate on how to acquire political power. They place and give little or no value to matters concerning greater nation aspiration and the dignity of lives of the people. Increasing rate of kidnapping and other criminal activities is a direct consequence of failure of leadership. Our political leadership is too engrossed with issue of power acquisition because of what they personally get out of it and negates the responsibilities expected of them. The character of our political leadership at all levels contradicts the logic and philosophy of governance which essentially is the promotion of human dignity and the protection of core values of society.

Poor security system: While there is need to condemn these acts of criminality, there is need also to condemn the security agencies for incompetence and complicity on their part. There is the need to restate that the Federal Government which has the exclusive power over security matters immediately put in place a mechanism for ending the booming kidnapping or hostage-taking racket particularly in some parts of the country, anything short of ending the prevailing tension, regime of fear and general insecurity is unacceptable to the Nigerians who have waited in vain for the realization of the promises of democratic governance since 1999. The negative impact of the worrying trend on the economic well being of the country was also lost on government. Wogu (2010) described the incident as a violent assault on the dignity and right of Nigeria workers.

Political Economy of the Niger Delta: Political Economy of the Niger Delta Crisis continues to dominate the discussion on the current Nigeria political economy. Lack of true federalism has contributed to the injustice in Nigeria, which has denied the people of Niger Delta the fair share of the national resources to finance community development projects. Thus, the inequity in resources allocation and systemic injustice that have subjected the people to economic hardship and misery prompted the agitation for resource control and youth militancy (it appears that force is the only option to correct social injustice in Nigeria) in the region. This could degenerate into a greater political and national security problem and cripple the economy if the root causes of the agitation are not amicably resolved. As the crisis deepens

and as the key economic indicators look southwards, foreign and local investors would relocate their resources elsewhere.

Loss of societal value: Looking at Nigeria today we have mortgaged our culture of respect, love for human lives, hard work, friendliness and receptiveness to strangers in exchange of the Western culture and ostentatious orientation. These have given birth to the modern crime and social evil destroying the core value of our society.

In Benue State, and in particular, Katsina-Ala Local Government Area, kidnapping and banditry have become recurring phenomena. Economic activities in this part of the state are most affected by kidnapping and banditry. In the area, the activities of kidnapers and bandits have led to so many losses of lives and properties, destruction of farmlands, displacement of rural farming communities, extortion of farmers and labor out-migration in affected areas. Banditry has been seen as both a symptom and a cause of rural underdevelopment and has far reaching ramifications on all the sectors of rural economy (Abdussalam, Olayiwola and Akinniyi- Duyile, 2022). Katsina-Ala Local Government Area (LGA) in Benue State, Nigeria has been grappling with the menace of kidnapping in recent years. Those criminal activities have not only claimed numerous lives but also wrecked havoc on the economic fabric of the region. The constant fear of attacks and abduction has led to a significant decline in economic activities, as farmers, traders and entrepreneurs struggle to survive in environment characterized by uncertainty and violence. This paper therefore, examines the far reaching impact of kidnapping and banditry on economic activities in Katsina-Ala LGA, including effects on agricultural production, trade and entrepreneurship. By exploring the consequences of this crisis, this paper aim to shed light on the urgent need for effective security measures and economic interventions to restore stability and prosperity to this troubled region. The study therefore was carried out to assess the devastating impact of kidnapers and bandits on the economic activities of Katsina-Ala LGA, the causes and see how to proffer solutions that would go a long way in mitigating this menace.

Statement of the Problem

Nigerian State has been turned to a playing ground of carnage, incessant kidnapping and banditry which discourage many people to have hope in a better Nigeria or to have belief in promised change. Many researches shows that things have completely changed towards negativity in Nigeria because the bandits and kidnapers are usually supported by influential people to gain ground of huge ransom and those behind it are youths that are supposed to be the leaders of tomorrow. Unfortunately, because of the corruption, injustice, poverty, and unemployment, they become bandits and kidnapers. There is no gain saying that the mass media has exhausted tenacity in reporting the cases of kidnapping and banditry in Nigeria. Considering the speed with which these evil activities are growing in Nigeria and the merciless ways that lives of innocent ones are being used is worrisome. Similarly, the horror of kidnapping and banditry could have negatively impacted the economic activities in the Katsina-Ala LGA given the fact that, it has hampered economic growth as well as youth unemployment escalation. The statement of the problem is: What is the impact of kidnapping and banditry on the economic activities in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State?

Objectives of the study

The major objective of this study is to assess the impact of kidnapping and banditry on the economic activities of Katsina-Ala LGA. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- (i). examine the specific criminal activities perpetuated by these kidnappers and bandits in the study area.
- (ii). examine the impact of kidnapping and banditry on the economic activities of Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

Methodology

Research Design

Descriptive survey design was adopted for this study. A descriptive survey research design deals with data collection from a large population by drawing a representative sample of such population for the purpose of describing, interpreting, evaluating and analyzing the existing perceptions, conditions or variables and prevailing situations through the formulation and testing of relevant hypotheses for drawing inferences. This research design was appropriate for this study because it enabled the researchers to get opinions or perceptions of a sample of respondents drawn from a larger population that could not be completely studied. The design also enabled the researcher to draw inference from the responses of the sampled respondents that was generalized on the entire population.

Population of the Study

The population for the study comprised all the 224, 718 citizens in the urban, semi-urban and rural areas of the study area. Those areas are Katsina-Ala town, Abaji-Kpav, Tor Donga, Gbor, Amaafu, Joo Mbatyough, Ayua, Gbisha, Ikowe, Gawa, Abako and Harga. The sample size of this study is 300 respondents which was 0.13% of the population which is 224,718 respondents from all the twelve (12) geographic regions of the study area. Multistage sampling technique was used to select respondents from the twelve settlements in the area of study. In the first stage, the researchers selected all the twelve settlements as they were not too many for all of them to be studied (this is called a census). In the second stage, after deciding the number of respondents to be sampled from settlement, the researcher adopted simple random sampling to draw sample size. The researchers got the names and locations of the households in the settlements from the traditional rulers, which were then written on pieces of paper that were folded uniformly, dropped in a basket and picked one at a time with replacement

Instrumentation

One instrument was used for data collection. It was a structured questionnaire titled "Kidnapping/Banditry and Economic Activities Questionnaire, (KBEAQ). The questionnaire consisted of Parts 'I' and 'II'. Part 'I' was a letter of introduction. Part 'II' of the questionnaire consisted of two (2) clusters named Section A and B. Section A contained items concerned with the prevalence of kidnapping/banditry activities in the area of study. It had five items related to the theme of the cluster. Section B elicited information on the impact of kidnapping and banditry on the economic activities of the citizens. The response format was Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree and Strongly Disagree.

Method of Data Collection

The instrument was administered on the respondents by the researchers. A total number of 300 copies of the questionnaire were taken to the field and administered to the respondents

and 287 copies were recovered for data analysis. A four point modified rating scale was used to establish the disparity in the respondents' opinions. Thus, Strongly Agree (SA) =4; Agree (A) =3; Disagree (D) =2; Strongly Disagree (SD) =1 were used by respondents to respond to each item in each cluster. The descriptive statistics of Mean Score was used to answer the research questions. A cut-off point of 2.50 was used for decision making. The Boundary for Decision Making with respect to positive items was 1.00-1.49= SD; 1.50-2.49= D; 2.50-3.49= A; 3.50-4.00= SA while the reverse was the case for negative items. Chi Square statistics was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) version 17 software was used for analysis of the data collected.

Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: What are the kidnapping banditry activities in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State?

The analysis on this research question is presented on Table 1.

Table 1: Mean Scores on the prevalence of kidnapping/ banditry activities in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State

Item No	Item Description	N	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	Decision
1	Kidnapping	300	150	98	47	5	3.34	Agree
2	extortion	300	155	98	46	6	3.52	Agree
3	Theft of motorcycles	300	147	122	31	0	2.55	Agree
4	Armed robbery	300	182	95	13	10	3.69	Agree
5	Theft of farm produce	300	212	82	6	0	2.79	Agree

Source: Researcher's Field Survey Results (2024)

Table 1 shows the mean score of respondents' opinions on the prevalence of kidnapping and banditry activities in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State. This result reveals that all items had a mean score above 2.50. The cluster Mean Score 2.84 was also found to be above the cut-off point of 2.50 which implies that the respondents agreed that all the items are statements relating to the prevalence of kidnapping and banditry activities in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the prevalence of kidnapping and banditry activities among the urban and rural areas in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

The collected and analyzed data relating to the hypothesis stated above is presented on Table 2.

Table 2: Chi-Square Analysis on the prevalence of kidnapping and banditry activities in the urban and rural areas in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State

	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Item 5	Decision
Chi square	34.651	85.33	83.22	23.23	22.82	Ho not rejected
df	4	4	4	4	4	
Asym. sig	.140	.085	.037	.021	.073	

(P-value=0.00; P=0.00>0.05; Ho not rejected; Significant Difference).

Table 2 shows the calculated Chi-square (χ^2) value between 22.82 and 85.33 and a critical value between .021 and .140. Since the calculated value is greater than the Chi-square critical value at 0.005 level of significance, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This result reveals that the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference in the prevalence of kidnapping and banditry activities among the urban and rural areas in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State was rejected. This implies that there is significant difference in the prevalence of kidnapping and banditry activities among the urban and rural areas in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

Research Question 2: What is the impact of kidnapping banditry on economic activities in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State?

The analysis on this research question is presented on Table 3.

Table 3: Mean Scores on the impact of kidnapping banditry on economic activities in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

Item No	Item Description	N	SA	A	D	SD	\bar{X}	Decision
6	Disruption of commercial activities	300	199	77	16	8	3.94	Agree
7	Abandonment of farming	300	112	75	11	2	3.86	Agree
8	Displacement of citizens	300	121	144	23	12	3.62	Agree
9	Out-migration of rural dwellers	300	118	232	9	4	2.72	Agree
10	Arson	300	135	129	28	8	2.58	Agree

Source: Researcher’s Field Survey Results (2024)

Table 3 shows the mean score of respondents’ opinions on the impact of kidnapping and banditry on the economic activities in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State. This result reveals that all items had a mean score above 2.50. The cluster Mean Score 2.84 was also found to be above the cut-off point of 2.50 which implies that the respondents agreed that all the items are statements relating to the impact of kidnapping and banditry on the economic activities in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

Hypothesis 2: Kidnapping and banditry has no significant impact on the economic activities in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State

The collected and analyzed data relating to the hypothesis stated above is presented on Table 4.

Table 4: Chi-Square Analysis on the impact of kidnapping and banditry on the economic activities in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State

	Item 6	Item 7	Item 8	Item 9	Item 10	Decision
Chi square	11.98	18.24	13.63	17.14	2.98	Ho not rejected
df	4	4	4	4	4	
Asym. sig	.00	.000	.00	.001	.003	

(P-value=0.00; P=0.00>0.05; Ho not rejected; Significant Difference).

Table 4 shows the calculated Chi-square (χ^2) value between 2.98 and 18.24 and a critical value between .000 and .001. Since the calculated value is less than the Chi-square critical value at

0.005 level of significance, the null hypothesis is rejected. This result reveals that the null hypothesis which states that kidnapping and banditry has no significant impact on the economic activities in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State was rejected. This implies that there is significant impact of kidnapping and banditry on the economic activities in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area of Benue State.

Discussion of Findings

The first finding of the research reveals that, kidnapping and extortion are the main activities perpetrated by bandits in Benue State. There are other activities perpetrated namely are killings and theft, especially of motorcycles which they used in their operations; armed robbery and theft of farm produce. The study also found out that the prevalence of kidnapping and banditry activities did not differ based on location as it was the same both in urban and rural areas of the study are. These findings are consistent with Ityonzughul and Jonah (2022) who found that kidnapping, extortions and armed robbery are the major activities perpetrated by bandits in North-East Nigeria.

The second finding of the study reveals that, banditry has heinous impact on the economy of urban/rural of Benue State. Continuous interruption of economic activities such as farming, trading, market day's attacks have been impoverishing people, depopulating the rural areas, disrupting commercial activities and increasing the high cost of living. This corroborates previous findings by Ityonzughul and Jonah (2022) who found that banditry activities had adverse effects on the economy in the North-East. This is through displacement of farmers and disruption of farming activities which are the base of economy of urban/rural areas. The menace also affects rural areas in the region interfering in commercial activities through persistent attacks on people on market days.

Finally, table 4 above suggests the measures put in place by the government are mainly reactionary in nature while ignoring proactive measures. They center on arrest and killing of bandits and security operatives and placing of ban on commercial motorcycles as motorcycles were used for perpetration of banditry attacks.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concludes kidnapping and banditry activities are prevalent in Katsina-Ala Local Government Area with devastating impact on economic activities such as disruption of commercial activities, out-migration of rural population and high cost of transportation, impoverishment of farmers, extortions in rural markets, abandonment of farming and displacement of rural population.

Recommendations

Based on the conclusion drawn, the following recommendations are hereby made:

- (i). The government should increase the deployment of adequate security personnel in the area to counter the activities of the kidnapers and bandits.
- (ii). Government and security operatives should come up with strategies to ensure that security information and counter strategies against the kidnapers and bandits are highly classified.

- (iii). There should be comprehensive and total de-radicalization of kidnappers and bandits by equipping them with requisite skills from where they can earn a living.
- (iv). Government, NOGs, private organizations and well meaning citizens of the country are encouraged to establish industries so as to engage these idle youths; for there is a popular saying that, “ an idle mind is no less a devil’s workshop.”
- (v). Government should provide free education and scholarship to enlighten some of these idle youths on the dangers of engaging in these dastard acts.

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