BANDITRY AND GENDER-BASED VOLIENCE IN NORTH-WEST NIGERIA

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Abstract

The menace of banditry over the years had had a devastating effects on both developed and developing countries of the world alike. This emerging security challenge has threatened the very fabric of the fragile peace the Nigerian State was enjoying; especially, in the Northwest states of Zamfara, Kaduna, Katsina, etc. However, the paper examines the impact of banditry activities on women and children who are mostly victims. This study uses a qualitative methodology that relies on secondary data sources. Books, periodicals, newspapers, online information, and reports were frequently used. The paper posits that the presence of high level of unemployment with the attendant poverty, weak security system, grossly ungoverned spaces, porosity of Nigeria's borders, and arms proliferations, among many, are the driving factors quickening banditry in the Northwest region of Nigeria. It further contends that the banditry activities pervading the Northwest Nigeria has undermined human security; peace and development of the region and that the efforts made by stakeholders to combat the scourge have not yielded the desired result. The paper hence recommends, among others, that the Nigerian government should come up with working poverty alleviation programme(s) and should be directed towards addressing the high incidence of poverty among women and children who are a vulnerable segment of the population mostly attacked and trapped by banditry activities vis-à-vis empowerment programmes or employment opportunities, targeting youths who are primarily involved in abductions and kidnappings out of economic frustration, such as unemployment; and also establish a special force and intelligence unit that will be trained and equipped to fight against human trafficking, banditry, kidnapping and terrorism, as this will help in curtailing if not eliminating criminal activities in our society.

Keywords: Banditry, gender, violence, North, and Nigeria

Introduction

There have been widespread fears about the safety of people and property worldwide. The tremendous security dangers that the world's governments face have sparked these concerns. The disturbance of global peace began with the first and second world wars, leading to the Cold War era. These periods marked the end of state-to-state fighting. The rise of non-state actors seeking to improve things for the betterment of man or creating harm has followed. Taking our cue from the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York on September 11, 2001, widespread concern about the unchecked growth

in the power of evil non-state actors, their ability to carry out acts of terrorism, and their overarching negative influence has continued to engage scholars.

The success of Al Qaeda, the terrorist organization that masterminded the attack on the World Trade Center, served as a model of strength for many other terror organizations, bandits, and criminal gangs who believe that the modern state's instrument is failing to fulfil its primary responsibility and thus deserves to be fought and dethroned. In response to Al Qaeda's success, terrorist organizations in Africa such as Boko Haram, ISWAP, Al-Shabab, and others launched large-scale operations. As a result, a slew of militia organizations sprouted up across Africa, eager to acquire weapons and use them to spread fear. The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has aided the growth of criminal gangs engaged in Banditry in most countries of Africa, particularly Nigeria. In Nigeria, the problem of Banditry is due primarily to Boko Haram's operations, which have a cascading effect on the farmers-herders conflict. Unfortunately, women and children constitute the majority of these bandits' victims, and they are routinely subjected to terrible sexual abuse. For instance, in the central Nigerian state of Niger, 30 women were raped in a single day (Adams, 2021). As reported, an 18-year-old housewife was kidnapped and raped for five months in Katsina state (ChannelsTelevision, 2021). Many more were abducted raped in Kaduna, and their kidnappers demanded ransom before releasing them in Zamfara. Bandits are co-opting women for their nefarious activities as events progress. The Nigerian Police Force detained a woman in November 2021 for providing criminals in Zamfara with 991 rounds of AK-47 live ammunition and cocaine. This single arrest points to the copying of operational tactics that Boko Haram has long established in the northeast (Ojewale & Balogun, 2022). Banditry and gender-based Violence are discussed in this article.

This study uses a qualitative methodology that relies on secondary data sources. Books, periodicals, newspapers, online information, and reports were frequently used.

Understanding Banditry and Gender-based Violence

Banditry: Various authors have argued for different definitions of what constitutes Banditry. These many viewpoints have concurred, however, that Banditry, as it is practised in Nigeria, has a negative impact on the country's security and generally makes the lives of victims, particularly women and girls, miserable**.** Therefore, "banditry refers to a person or group of individuals who involved in the activities ranges[sic] from kidnapping to murder, robbery, rape

and cattle –rustling" (Dayo and Amina, 2015, cited in (Mohammed, 2021)**.** Again, Banditry is a term used to describe armed Violence motivated primarily by a desire to steal and plunder. The desire for financial gain drives it (Dami, 2021). Individuals and communities with tangible assets are among the sufferers. Armed robbery, kidnapping, livestock rustling, and village raids are among Nigeria's most common forms of rural Banditry. In recent years, rural Banditry has reached frightening heights in the northern states of Zamfara, Kaduna, and Katsina. Women and girls face the brunt of Banditry in the region due to these attacks. Women are increasingly being raped, kidnapped, or commodified by families compelled to exchange their daughters for safety.

Gender-based Violence: (Rico 1997**)** defines Gender-based Violence as "violence that reflects current asymmetry in power relations between men and women and reinforces the female's subjugation and devaluation as contrasted to the male." 1 He went on to say that gender-based violence can take many forms and that it can fall into any of the following categories depending on the type of relationship in question and the type of power being wielded: rape and incest, sexual harassment at work or school, sexual violence against women detainees or prisoners, acts of violence against displaced women, trafficking in women, and domestic violence. This viewpoint emphasizes that the gender gap between men and women puts women in danger of discrimination. Referred to inHossain M, and McAlpine A, (2017)2, corroborated the above view but expanded it to include any form of discrimination against Lesbians, Gay, Bisexual and or Intersex (LGBTI). The organization's statement reflects that gender-based Violence as

An umbrella term for any harmful act perpetrated against a person's will is based on socially ascribed (i.e. gender) differences between males and females. The term is primarily used to underscore the fact that structural gender-based power differentials between males and females worldwide place females at risk for multiple forms of Violence. This includes acts that inflict physical, mental or sexual harm or suffering, threats of such acts, coercion and other deprivations of liberty, whether in public or private life. Some actors also use the term to describe forms of sexual violence against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and or intersex (LGBTI) populations. In this case, when referencing the Violence related to gender-inequitable norms of masculinity and/or norms of gender identity (Hossain M, and McAlpine A, 2017, P 9)

While it is true that the majority of gender-based violence is high among the female gender, the male gender also suffers from gender-based Violence. On the whole, gender base violence can occur to anyone (male or female). It covers Violence related to inequitable gender norms. It can include physical or sexual Violence against women and girls, sexual violence against males, the recruitment of boys into armed groups, or LGBTI targeted Violence. (Ward, 2015) The health impact of GBV on women and girls is more devastating than that of the males or boys, as noted by Hossain and McAlpine. They further argued that in all settings, GBV against women is considered a risk factor for a range of poor health outcomes, including poor mental health, adverse reproductive outcomes, poor sexual health, disability, chronic pain, coronary heart disease, traumatic brain injury and death.

Within the context of Banditry and gender-based Violence in Northern, which is the subject of study, the above expressions suffice with the exception of the discussion on LGBTI. The power asymmetry between women and girls in the North is quite glaring even in enrolment in schools, employment, forceful marriage etc. Kidnapping for ransom, rape, sex (Hossain, 2017), sexual harassment of women and girls have significantly played out in virtually all cases of Banditry in the North of Nigeria.

Gender Mainstreaming

Gender mainstreaming is one of the critical strategies for promoting gender equality and women's rights and eliminating all forms of discrimination against women based on sex and gender. Thus, it promotes the human rights of women and the elimination of discrimination against women. It also ensures that measures to prevent and counter violent extremism and terrorism are better informed and targeted, ultimately making those measures more effective.

Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels. It is a way to make women's and men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programs in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality."

Be that as it may, the Nigerian National Gender Policy (2006) aims to promote a gender-sensitive and gender-responsive culture in national policymaking through a gender mainstreaming approach. The objectives of the Policy include, inter alia, to:

1. Promote gender mainstreaming in all Policy, programming and organizational cultures in Nigeria.
2. Establish the framework for gender responsiveness in all public and private sector policies and programs.
3. Promote equal opportunity in all areas of the political, social, and economic life of the country for women and men.
4. Incorporate the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and other global and regional frameworks that support gender equality and women empowerment in the country's legislative processes.

Historical evolution of Banditry in Nigeria

The concept of what constitutes Banditry has undergone a significant transformation. Banditry, for example, was once regarded as a unique practice in Europe and the Americas. Because bandits were viewed as freedom warriors who thwarted the efforts of a bad government run by a self-serving ruling class at the expense of the poor. Alternatively, they could have been individuals who organized and led the colonized to battle for independence from their colonizers (Rosenje M. O, 2021)

As Robinson pointed out, bandits such as Chucho el Roto, Herachio Bernel, and Santa were often hailed as heroes of Mexican freedom. Even though the Government labels them as outlaws and nuisances, commoners and peasants in the Americas regarded them as avenging angels or freedom fighters, the African experience with these individuals or groups of individuals is entirely different. From traditional African society, where inter-tribal wars over scarce economic resources and territorial expansion, conflicts for political reasons reigned, to modern African society, where kidnapping for ransom, rape, and cattle rustling reign, Banditry has been and is associated with killings, rape, armed robbery, and the destruction of lives and properties. The historical origins of Banditry in Nigeria can be traced back to the colonial era, as demonstrated by Jaafar, particularly in the 1930s. He clarifies that

In those days, wayfarers and merchants travelling along our local economic roads usually faced the threats and dangers of ambush from nondescript bandits. Armed bandits and criminals were known to be targeting goods ferried on the back of donkeys, camels and ox carts.

Those bandits on our trade routes would forcefully take those goods and disappear into the bush. That is just one dimension of the problem, then. In other instances, the bandits would sometimes raid farming communities and villages with the intent of willful killing and wanton destruction of property. During such raids, the bandits would destroy virtually everything in their path, including valuables, farm produce, etc. This subculture has been in existence even before the coming of colonialists to the territories of northern Nigeria (Jaafar, 2018, p.2).

It is evident from the foregoing story that Banditry existed in the Northern section of the country before colonial times. During the colonial period, there were additional indications of Banditry.

Various regions that makeup Nigeria's northern region have suffered Banditry at various times. In recent years, the Northwest of Nigeria, which includes Zamfara, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina Jigawa, Kebbi, and Sokoto, has become the epicentre of Banditry. Banditry has been a long-standing problem in the region. Bandits have posed a severe security threat in the region since 1901. Communities along the Nigeria-Niger border in the Northwest reported in 1901 when a powerful Carmel train with different grains was ambushed, killing 210 merchants. The number of bandits has increased in recent years.

Causal Factors of Banditry

Numerous factors have been given as the driving forces of Banditry and kidnapping in Nigeria and most especially in the northwest region of the country. Drivers of Banditry in northwestern Nigeria consist of some socio-existential conditions that characterize the interior and frontiers of the area. These causal factors are;

Economic Deprivation and Sense of Desperation: Economic deprivation and desperation have planted the seeds of Banditry anchored on kidnapping as a way of getting money in poor communities and today even in cities. It can then become a way of life, even when legal options become available (Catlin Group, 2012)3. The disparity between rich and poor is growing, and thanks to the internet and global media, everyone can see how the rich live. According to (Catlin Group, 2012), "this fuels resentment and a desire for a bigger share."

Unemployment and Mass Poverty: Another factor that promotes Banditry in Nigeria is the high unemployment rate. The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in 2019 puts Nigeria's unemployment rate at 23.1%, of which youth unemployment is 55.4% 4. Equally, the poverty index in the Northwest is 77.7% (NBS, 2012; Rosenje &

Moliki, 2016). These figures have continued to drastically increase yearly as Nigerian institutions keep graduating batches of youths with the primary impression of getting better jobs and opportunities after graduation (Adegoke, 2019). The anxiety from Nigerian graduates that later turn to frustration and aggression on the Government has fuelled the emergence of most of these bandit attacks and security threats in the country (Suleiman, 2017; Mustapha, 2019)5.

Furthermore, Kilishi, Mobolaji, Usman, Yakubu and Yaru (2014 as cited in Abdulkabir, 2017) canvassed that the rising wave of crime in Nigeria has been blamed on the increasing level of unemployment. Thus, idle youths tend to engage in illegal activities to meet contemporary trends. Suffice to say that the youths easily get enticed to riches due to the prevailing "get rich quick syndrome" that pervades the country. Hence, they tend to do whatever it takes to get rich quick. Therefore, Nigeria's high rate of unemployment, especially the increasing rate of youth's unemployment, is what majorly prompts the jobless youths in the country to resort to violent crime like Banditry (Adagba, Ugwu, & Eme, 2012; Epron, 2019).

Most disturbing and threatening one is even those youths who do not see anything good in schooling or to be serious with academics as they see an army of graduates with employable credentials cum skills out there without jobs for an uncountable number of years after graduation; this portends great danger to our society (Kums and Kwede, 2021).

Grossly ungoverned spaces: As a country, most of the hinterlands, forestlands and borderlines, especially in the northern part, are laced with many conundrums. The northwestern hinterlands are marked by highly dispersed rural settlements, separated by rangelands and farmlands susceptible to violent contestations (Gaye, 2018).

They are also interspersed by diverse forested landscapes dotted by wetlands, rocks, and caves. Apart from being separated from each other, they are equally far separated from the centres of governance at the local and state levels. The forestlands of the region are vast, rugged and hazardous. Most importantly, they are grossly under-policed to the point conducive to all forms of jungle criminality. Because of this, violent crimes, such as Banditry, have festered and thrived in such forested areas. Most attacks occur in remote villages, close to forested regions in the Northwest, with little security presence (Gaye, 2018).

In likewise manner, Banditry occurs in large swathes of forest reserves that are generally out of the reach of the Nigerian security

operatives. Most bandit activities occur in state-owned resources such as the Kamuku, Kiyanbana, and Fagore forests in Northern Nigeria. The forests offer perfect locations as hideouts for the criminals to evade arrest from security forces. The reluctance of the Nigerian security operatives to enter these forest areas seems to be primarily due to inefficiency, connivance of the local people, lack of sophisticated equipment and poor motivation of the Nigerian security forces (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016).

Weak Security System: There is no gainsaying that a weak security system complements the alarming rate of Banditry in the northwest region of Nigeria. This could have possibly been caused by the inadequate equipment for the security arm of the Government, both in weaponry and training (Achumba, Ighomereho, & Akpor-Rabaro, 2013). This is in addition to the poor attitudinal and behavioural disposition of security personnel. In many cases, security personnel assigned to deal with given security situations lack the expertise and equipment to handle the problems to prevent them from occurring. Even when these exist, some personnel get influenced by ethnic, religious or communal sentiment and are easily prejudiced by their interest to serve their people rather than the nation (Achumba, Ighomereho, & Akpor-Rabaro, 2013). Thus, instead of being national watchdogs and defending national interest and values, and protecting people from being harmed by criminals, they soon become saboteurs of government efforts by supporting and fuelling insecurity through either leaking vital security information or conniving with criminals to acquire weapons or to escape the long arm of the law (Offem & Ichoku, 2015).

Arms Proliferation: Another driving factor of Banditry in northern Nigeria worthy of mentioning is the issue of arms proliferation. There has been an incremental influx of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) into Nigeria from the Sahel since the fall of Ghadaffi's regime in Libya (Gaye, 2018). These arms and weapons end up in the hands of non-state actors like terrorists, militants and bandits, who use them to terrorize individuals and communities. In September 2018, military troops in joint operations with personnel of the Department of State Service (DSS) arrested two suspected illicit arms dealers along Funtua-Gusau road with 1,479 rounds of 7.62mm (special) ammunition on their way to deliver the weapons to armed bandits (Adeniyi 2018). Incidents such as this have been prevalent in the various states of northwestern Nigeria, where Banditry has become the order of the day (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019).

Selected Incidents of Bandits Attacks in North-West Nigeria

S/N	Newspapers	Dates of Publication	Nature and Place of Attack	Casualties
1	The Punch	31/03/2018	Bandits attacked Bawan Daji village of Anka LGA of Zamfara State and killed over 30 people	30 people were killed
2	The Nation	01/03/2019	21 killed in Kawaye village in Bagega community of Anka LGA of Zamfara State	16 people were killed and 40 others got abducted
3	The Punch	09/06/2019	25 people killed in bandit attack in Khalu, Ysage and Geeri in Rabah LGA of Sokoto State	25 people killed
4	The Nation	19/08/2019	Four villagers were killed in banditry attacks in Tsayu village of Jibiya LGA of Kastina State	4 people lost their lives
5	The Tribune	02/03/2020	Bandits kill 50 people in villages in Igabi and Giwa LGA of Kaduna State	50 people were killed while several others injured
6	The Nation	24/04/2020	Bandits kill seven and kidnap one in Akwunakwo, Kabirasha and Damba villages in Chikun LGA of Kaduna State.	7 persons were killed and one person was kidnapped
7	The Tribune	06/05/2020	5 killed and DPO shot in multiple bandit attacks at Faskari and Sabuwa LGA of Kastina State	5 persons were killed and one other was kidnapped
8	The Nation	26/07/2020	Bandits kill 10 in two attacks on 3 villages of Jema'a and Kaura LGA of Kaduna State	10 people killed
9	Vanguard	18/09/2020	Bandits invade Police Station in Tangaza LGA of Sokoto State	DPO, 1 Inspector and 2 women were abducted

10	Vanguard	12/10/2020	Bandits kill 14 persons in Ruwan Godiya village of Faskari LGA of Kastina State and Kagara town of Rafi LGA of Niger State Bandits kill Southern Kaduna District Head and son	14 people were killed, 3 injured and 1 kidnapped
11	Vanguard	17/11/2020	Bandits kidnap 8 ABU students on the Kaduna-Abuja road Bandits kill Southern Kaduna District head and son at Gidan Zaki, Zangon Kataf LGA	8 students were kidnapped
12	Vanguard	22/12/2021	Bandits kidnapped over 70 bound traders in Kaduna State	Death of over 70 people recorded
13	Vanguard	23/12/2021	Again, bandits have attacked another convoy of travellers along the dreaded Kaduna-Birnin Gwari road, killed 6 persons and kidnapped many others.	6 persons killed and many others kidnapped
14	Premium Times	27/12/2021	Christmas Day tragedy: bandits attacked Zamfara communities, killed 6, kidnapped 33	6 people killed and 33 others kidnapped
15	03/01/2022	The Guardian	Bandits killed 7, kidnapped 18 in Kuduna State	7 killed and 18 kidnapped
16	08/01/2022	Sahara Reporters	Some communities of Barayar Zaki, Wanu, Rafin Gero, Laho, Lallaho, Kurfar Danya, Dutsin Dan Ajiya, Tungar Geza, Kewaye and Tungar attacked in Zamfara State and over 200 persons killed and buried	Over 200 persons killed and buried

***Source**: Compiled by the Authors (Kums & Kwede, 2022) from the Nigerian Newspapers*

Effects of Banditry on Women and Children in North-West Nigeria

Irrespective of the type of Banditry and the motive for perpetration, the psychological, gender, and financial impact of the problem can be devastating, both for the victims and their relatives. Victims of Banditry differ in age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, level of education, and country of origin. Although anyone can become a victim of Banditry, specific populations are especially vulnerable to this form of victimization (Kaylor, 2015)6. Here, we will examine the effect of Banditry on women and children, which is more common and a deep-rooted crime worldwide. Most of the women involved in bandits and kidnapping quagmire are abused sexually, as this has, over time, had devastating effects on their lives, given the trauma. Children are not left out of the conundrum of Banditry as many are forcefully removed from their families and others initiated into it. This traumatizes the victim; it also unravels the lives of his/her parents, family, and community (Orset, 2008). One common effect of the abduction, which seemed memorably traumatic for those concerned and raised many times, was the lack of contact for many parents with their children during the period that they were away. This was often because the left-behind parent did not know the children's whereabouts (Freeman, 2006). He further opines that sexual abuse resulting from kidnapping also exposes the girl-child to the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases7.

Another guise form of sexual molestation of kidnapped children is that underage victims are often forced to marriage with older husbands. As reported by Clark (2004), "the child brides are married to older, more sexually experienced men with whom it is difficult to negotiate safe sexual behaviours, especially when under pressure to bear children." A study conducted in Kenya and Zambia in 2004 finds that married girls aged 15-19 were 75 per cent more likely to contract HIV than sexually active, unmarried girls of the same age. Similar figures have been found in 29 countries across Africa and Latin America (Clark, 2004)8.

According to Freeman (2006), "some left-behind parents disclosed having thoughts of extreme Violence at that time as well as finding solace through religious faith. Others talked of their inability to settle while knowing that their children were somewhere else and feeling constantly depressed and ill.

The impact of bandits' activities can be highly gendered. Women are among the victims of generalized acts of terrorist violence, while their health, education and participation in public life are disparately affected by bandits' activities compared to men. In some contexts, women are disproportionately affected by internal displacement as the result of Violence caused by bandit groups in Northern Nigeria; women constitute the majority of those displaced as a result of the terrorist activities in Northern Nigeria. Women may also face difficulties accessing justice and seeking remedies for the violations and abuses they have suffered due to inequalities or discrimination in the criminal justice system.

In addition, terrorist groups intentionally target women, infringing on their human rights and hindering their socioeconomic development, including restricting their freedom of movement and access to education. Women are also targeted for acts of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), such as rapes, forced marriages, and sexual slavery. As recognized by the United Nations Security Council, acts of SGBV "are known to be part of the strategic objectives and ideology of certain terrorist groups, used as a tactic of terrorism, and an instrument to increase their power through supporting financing, recruitment, and the destruction of communities". In Nigeria, the infliction of this form of violence on women and girls is highly disproportionate: they constitute 99 per cent of the reported sexual violence victims across Adamawa, Borno and Yobe States.

The Lake Chad crisis has disproportionately affected women and girls. From being at the forefront of the displacement crisis to constitute the majority of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse to suffering stigmatization from association with different groups, women and girls are faced with other challenges than men and boys. While Violence against women and girls is a severe patriarchal and cultural issue, it has been even more pronounced throughout the conflict as women and girls are subjected to sexual abuses and harassment as a weapon of war, enabled by families' and communities' denial and rejection. Thousands of women and girls have been abducted, raped or forced into marriage and continue to be used as suicide bombers against their will or due to religious conviction and radicalization. While gender-based violence is predominantly caused by terrorist onslaughts, on the one hand, they are regrettably victims of abuses and harassment by security providers also. Upon returning to their communities, they live with trauma and stigma, undermining their social and economic reintegration.

The significant impacts on women's and girls' rights resulting from Banditry, including the use of SGBV as a tactic of terrorism, call for a robust and gender-sensitive criminal justice response that considers women's specific needs and interests supports their access to justice. Women and children have been the primary victims of the breakdown of peace due to the activities of insurgents and bandits, which have led to more widespread displacement and poverty.

Buhari spoke at the opening ceremony of the 9th General Assembly of the African First Ladies Peace Mission (AFLPM), held at the State House Conference Center. He called upon African Leaders and other stakeholders to support women in realizing their core objective of building a peaceful society (President Buhari, Saharareporters, New York November 22, 2021*)9.*

"The activities of insurgents and Banditry have led to more widespread displacement and poverty. It is not in doubt that women and children are the worst affected by the breakdown of peace.

Between March 2020 and June 2021, over 1,400 students and staff were kidnapped in several school abductions reported in northwest Nigeria. These abductions took place in Kankara and Mahuta (Katsina state), Kagara and Regina (Niger state), Jangebe and Maradun (Zamfara state), Mando, Afaka, and Kasarami (Kaduna state), and Birnin Yauri (Kebbi state), mass abductions of over 700 school children in Chibok (Borno state) in 2014 and in Dapchi (Yobe State)in 2018andmore of the victims are girls.

Conclusion and Policy Recommendations

The chapter examines the impact of Banditry on women and children, focusing on the northwest region of the country. The work started with a general review of the issue of Banditry from its inception. It deduces that the menace of Banditry is becoming worrisome as a result of the high level of unemployment, weak security system, poverty, the porosity of Nigeria's borders, arms proliferation and the presence of scarcely governed spaces that serve as hideouts to the bandits. Consequently, the chapter reveals that there have been high incidences of Banditry, mostly on women and children. (Other attacks are experienced on-farm settlements, villages, highways resulting in kidnapping and cattle rustling in the region with attendant human security challenges). The research thus concluded that Nigeria security has been quite tense and volatile in the Northwest due to the alarming rate of Banditry with the attendant massive plundering and

carnage, which has plunged the region into a state of insecurity in all spheres of life.

Be that as it may, we made the following recommendations to address the Banditry correlates and, by implication, provide the opportunity for reducing Banditry related crimes in Nigeria. The prayers will task Government, NGOs, communities, families and the vulnerable groups in devising various measures toward fighting Banditry with all its evils.

1. The Nigerian Government should come up with Poverty alleviation programmes and should be directed towards addressing the high incidence of poverty among women and children who are a vulnerable segment of the population mostly attacked and trapped by banditry activities vis-à-vis empowerment programmes or employment opportunities, targeting youths who are primarily involved in abductions and kidnappings out of economic frustration, such as unemployment.
2. The work also recommends that the Government, NGOs, communities, and families shoulder the responsibility of training women and children on self-defence and on local intelligence to identify suspicious persons (bandits, kidnappers, terrorists, etc.).
3. The Nigerian Government, as a matter of urgency, establish a special force and intelligence unit that will be trained and equipped to fight against human trafficking, Banditry, kidnapping and terrorism, as this will help in curtailing if not eliminating criminal activities in our society.
4. Constitutionally, there should be sections pronouncing severe penalties against Banditry, rape, kidnapping and terrorism. This might serve as deterrence for those already involved and those willing to be involved.

Endnotes

1. Rico Nieve (2017) demonstrated in his research that, while anyone can be a victim of violence, gender is one of the elements that enhance vulnerability greatly. The following are some of the factors that support the claim that gender-based violence exists:a) Most aggressors are men, regardless of whether the victim is a man or a woman; b) Violence affects men and women differently, because the type of injury or damage they suffer is usually determined by their gender; c) Aggressors are typically motivated by gender considerations, such as the need to reinforce male power and privileges, 2

2. Hossain M, and McAlpine A, (2017) Women and girls are vulnerable to violence and exploitation, including sex trafficking, at all stages of conflict. Women and

girls are frequently victims of violence perpetrated by people they know, such as their husbands, boyfriends, or other family members, in armed conflict-affected settings, 3.

3. Catlin Group (2012). Kidnap and ransom today. A report by Catlin Group Limited. London, UK. He stressed the fact that though there's always a legal action against banditry, but that couldn't scare them given the flamboyuant life-style lived by the rich at the peril, 7.

4. National Bureau of Statistics (2019). Statistical report on unemployment. Retrieved from htt://nigerianstat.goving/elibrary. NBS reported that in 2019 puts Nigeria's unemployment rate at 23.1%, of which youth unemployment is 55.4%; which he demonstrated as one of the causes of banditry in the country, 7.

5. Suleiman, A. O. (2017). Thematic Appraisal on the impulsive upsurge of yahoo-yahoo in the 21st Century in Nigeria: Qur'anic standpoint. Submitted that the frustration cum aggresion from Nigerian graduates which they blame on the government fuelled the emergence of most of these bandit attacks and security threats in the country, 7.

6. Kaylor, L. (2015). Psychological impact of human trafficking and sex slavery worldwide: Empowerment and intervention. John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York, NY. Argued that anyone can become a victim of banditry, but certain population (i.e women) are vulnerable; as they are sexually abused, 12.

7. Freeman, M. (2006). International child abduction effects. Reunite International Child Abduction Centre. Demonstrated in his research that the sexually abused girl-child exposes her to the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases, 12.

8. Clark, S. (2004). Early marriage and HIV risks in Sub-Saharan Africa. Studies in family planning, 35(3). 149–160. http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15511059, A research conducted in Kenya, Zambia and 29 countries across Africa and Latin America in 2004 finds that married girls aged 15-19 were 75 percent more likely to contract HIV than sexually active, unmarried girls of the same age, 13.

9. President Buhari M. In his AFLPM speech called on African leaders and other stakeholders to support *women in realising their core objective of building a peaceful society* (Saharareporters, New York,Nov 22, 2021), *14.*

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