THE ROLE OF INFORMANTS IN THE ACCENTUATION OF ARMED BANDITRY IN NORTH-WESTERN NIGERIA: A CASE STUDY OF ZAMFARA STATE

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ABSTRACT
The north-western region of Nigeria has been hit by an unprecedented wave of insecurity such as kidnapping for ransom, cattle rustling and armed banditry which has led to maiming, killings, displacements of people and disruption of socio-economic activities due to the havoc wreaked by armed bandits in the region. These events have created a climate of uncertainty that has become a cause for concern for the government and the citizenry.Government at the local, state and federal levels have been making efforts to tackle the menace of armed banditry in the north-western region since it assumed a national dimension. However, some criminally-minded individuals in the region are crippling the efforts by providing information and other logistics to the armed bandits. This development is a threat to national security and the effort to combat armed banditry in the north-western region and Zamfara State in particular. Eventhough a lot has been written on armed banditry in north-western Nigeria,most of the literature do not analyse and explore the role of the bandits informants in the accentuation of armed banditry in north-western Nigeria, with specific reference to Zamfara State. This formed a serious academic gap in the studies of armed banditry in north-western Nigeria and Nigeria at large.This paper therefore, assess the role of informants in the accentuation of armed banditry in north-western Nigeria with specific reference to Zamfara State.The study revealshow the activities of informants is posing a serious challenge in the ongoing fight against armed banditry in the north-western region and Zamfara State in particular, and called for the support of all stakeholders to win the war. The activities of the informants are largely responsible for the lingering security challenges in Zamfara State. Thus, the paperrecommends that severe punsihments should be meted out to informants and the punishment should be publicized by media to serve as deterrent to others. There should be concerted effort by

all stakeholders to enlighten the citizens on the consequences ofproviding information to criminals to earned living and its consequences in the society.

1.1 Introduction

The Nigeria state has indeed witnessed a lot of security challenges and threats particularly in the northern part of the country that badly seems to challenge and overwhelmed its security system and sovereignty in recent decades. These security threats are said to be largely driven by neglectful leadership that characterized the nation at all levels. Prominent amongst these security threats engulfing the nation include; Boko Haram insurgency in the north-eastern part of the country, ethno-religious crises, communal clashes and farmers-herders clashes in the north-central part of the country, kidnapping, cattle rustling and armed banditry in the north-western part of the country, oil theft and pipeline vandalism in the Niger-Delta, secessionist threats in south-western and south-eastern part of the country.

North-western region of Nigeria has been hit by an unprecedented wave of security challenges such as kidnapping for ransom, cattle rustling and armed banditry which has led to maiming, killings, displacements of people and disruption of socio-economic activities due to the havoc wreaked by armed bandits in the region. These events have created a climate of uncertainty that has become a cause for concern for the government and the citizenry. Okoli and Ugwu (2019) observed that the menace of rural banditry in north-western Nigeria has asymmetrically threatened the region to a dangerous degree. They argued that banditry has attained a level that now rivaled Boko Haram insurgency in terms of lethality and humanitarian consequences; and assuming a state they describe as "complex emergency", surpassing the Boko Haram attacks. The tragedy of the situation is that the criminality obtains an organic socio-existential context that makes it not only burgeoning in scope but also pervasive in its pattern of operation. It has badly spread to most of the states of the north-western region, with ripples effects in the north-central region. Apart from the attendant loss of lives and the destruction of properties, the crisis has engendered frosty inter-group relations in the affected areas.

Of the seven states in the north-western region, Kaduna, Katsina and Zamfara have been identified as the hot spots, hosting the most dangerous act of banditry. The activities of the bandits which have become a major source of security threats and challenge particularly in the rural areas of these states, has remained a menace to the rural dwellers; subjecting most rural communities in the region to frequent attacks, killings, destruction of properties, looting, cattle rustling and kidnapping. Incessant bandits' attacks have caused a great deal of havoc in the rural areas of these states that has paralyzed life and economic activities in the region. Important rural economic activities like farming which is the major means of livelihood in the region, has been badly crippled by the activities of bandits in no small measure, with the fear of hunger occasioned by imminent famine dangerously rising in the region. However, it is important to note that the incidences of armed banditry are not limited to north-western region. It has also spread and became prevalent in some parts of north-central region, in states like Niger, Nasarawa, Benue and Plateau which are equally regarded as flash points.

Armed banditry is one of the major threats undermining the peace and security of Zamfara State. It is usually accompanied with killings, wanton destruction of properties, looting, assaults, kidnapping and cattle rustling. Zamfara State in the last decade has been bedeviled by the rising incidents of cattle rustling and armed banditry. Armed banditry has become a major problem in Zamfara state. The outcome of this criminality which is bloody has always claimed thousands of lives with properties worth billions of naira destroyed in the process.

Government at the local, state and federal levels have been making efforts to tackle the menace of armed banditry in the north-west since it assumed a national dimension. The federal government in its efforts to address the menace of armed banditry came up with different measures such as deployment of security forces to dangerous flash points, placing of ban on all forms of gold mining in Zamfara State amongst others. The state governments in the north-west region while complementing the efforts put in place by the federal government, also led several negotiations and dialogues with the bandit groups with the view to getting them to lay down their arms and embrace a peaceful path, the local governments engages the service of local hunters and vigilante groups to complement the state governments. However, some criminally-minded individuals in the state are crippling the efforts by providing information and

other logistics to the armed bandits. This development is a threat to national security and the effort to combat banditry in north-western region and Zamfara State in particular. Even though a lot has been written on armed banditry in north-western Nigeria, most of the literature do not analyse and explore the role of the bandits' informants in the accentuation of armed banditry in north-western Nigeria, with specific reference to Zamfara State. This formed a serious academic gap in the studies of armed banditry in north-western Nigeria and Nigeria at large. It is against this background that this study seeks to make significant contribution to scholarship by lookingat the role of informants in the accentuation of armed banditry in north-western Nigeria, with specific reference to Zamfara State.

1.2 Methodology

The method used in the gathering of data is mainly secondary source of data collection. This research is a topical issue; the secondary method of sourcing was adequate, this include gathering materials or information from textbooks, journals, Internet material, seminars, debates and seminars publications, newspapers etc.

1.3 Literature Review

1.3.1 Conceptual Review

There is no escaping the fact that the concept of banditry has been changing over time, space and circumstances. For instance, a bandit in the 19th century Europe and Americas was a freedom fighter whose aim was partly to ensure the emancipation of the downtrodden from the grip of the upper class or colonized by the colonizer (Rufai 2018 cited Warto 1994). Furthermore, bandits like Chucho el Roto, HerachioBernel and Santanon were often celebrated as heroes of Mexican independence. Therefore, Mexicans have warm regards and respect for those social workers termed bandits, while on the contrary, the state often considered them as nuisance and outlaws that need to be eradicated (Rufai 2018 cited Michael, 1987:8). In essence, bandits before the twentieth century were seen as heroes not as outlaws in some pre-industrial peasants' societies.

However, activities of armed banditry have been perceived by different societies in different ways. In his study of social banditry in the rural areas of Rembang by the end of the 19th Century and at the beginning of the 20th Century, Warto (2011) explained that social banditry was an act of crime committed by the residents of a village or the people in the low economic and social stratum in order to fulfill their basic needs. Such acts of crime are usually driven by structural pressures and injustices which alienate the people from accessing the natural resources that support their lives.

Warto's work is contradicting because he claims that Rembang has limited natural resources which was one of the reasons that pushed the people of Rembang into banditry but on the other hand he claims that Rembang has abundant natural resources in its forests. The abundant resources of the forests in Rembang region did not always give contribution to overcome the condition of being underdeveloped. That was the irony the people of Rembang faced when the thick forests of high value which became the source of living for some of the urban people started to come under the preoccupation of the foreign country in a way that prevent the people access to exploit the forests (Warto, 2011).

From the historical perspectives, armed banditry is not something novel or worthwhile to West Africa. Its origin, trajectory and development are as old as the sub-region itself dating back to inter-tribal periods characterized by conflicts and wars over scarce economic resources and territorial expansion for political influence. Most parts of Africa for instance, experienced these forms of conflicts during the slave trading, colonial, and post-colonial periods. Even though there have been remarkable changes in the nature and pattern of rural banditry and other forms of conflicts in West Africa, yet socio-economic and political reasons remain significant in explaining the prevalence of the phenomenon in the sub-region. However, this explains why the struggle for political independence and the subsequent establishment of the post-colonial states in West Africa were considered as some of the major events which shaped and changed the pattern of rural banditry in the sub-region. The socio-economic and political realities and conditions of the West Africa could be used to explain the intensity, prevalence, and the dynamics of rural banditry as evident in different parts the African sub region (Abdullahi, 2019). In essence, socio-economic and political conditions such as poverty, inequality, unemployment, religious crises, ethnic crises, communal clashes, election violence, sit-tight-syndrome, political instability, bad governance, corruption, injustice among others partly contribute to the prevalence of the menace of banditry in the West Africa region.

Armed banditry in Nigeria has a long history dating back to as far as the pre-colonial period. In his study of armed banditry in Borgu, Akinwumi

noted that, in pre-colonial Borgu in Kwara state, Nigeria, 'BakinJaki', one of the notorious raiders in the nineteenth century, had a gang made up of about 400 robbers on foot and 60 horsemen. When they attacked, they did so to loot the traders of their goods. They even captured the traders who they later sold into slavery. The weapons of attack are the horses, spears, bows and poisoned arrows. This affected the main source of Borgu's economy, the caravan trade, and consequently led to the fall of many of the Borgu pre-colonial states (Shalangwa 2013 cited Akinwumi 1994).

However, the phenomenon of armed banditry, which recently gained currency in Nigeria's public discourse, is direct fallout of persistent violence in rural communities within the last ten years, producing deadly outcomes. There had always been massive loss of lives, forced displacement of locals and devastation of properties and farm produce of monumental proportions in States like Benue, Kaduna, Plateau, Zamfara, Taraba, Enugu and others across the southern Nigeria. Although rural banditry is usually reflected in criminal activities, like cattle rustling, kidnapping, armed robbery, drug abuse, arson, rape and other forms of violence, the gruesome massacre of farmers in agrarian communities by suspected herdsmen and reprisal attacks from surviving victims have assumed a national security dimension (Iwuamadi and Uche, 2018).

In understanding the trajectory of armed banditry in Nigeria's North West region, it would require a close and careful examination of the historical dimensions of the crime as well as the conflict dynamics resulting from the interplay of farmer-herder relations as it pertains to access to land resources. While ecological condition and climate-induced pressures have increased tendencies for conflicts in the agro-pastoral sector, the phenomenon also has linkages to banditry and governance challenges. Factors that encourages banditry in the region such as cattle rustling, illicit artisanal gold mining, proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SALW), youth unemployment, inequality and poverty, indicates a serious failure in governance and security capabilities across the States. The situation is further worsened by poor regulation of forest areas in the region, some of which are located in under-policed border areas between Nigeria and neighboring countries. The porosity of these borders aid cross-border criminality and banditry as has been seen with the Boko Haram insurgency. Data obtained from WANEP National Early Warning System (NEWS) indicates that armed banditry recorded a death toll of over 1058 people in Zamfara, Kaduna, Katsina, Sokoto and Niger States between January and December, 2019, (WANEP, 2020).

A serious humanitarian crisis is said to be emerging in Nigeria's northwest with the ongoing activities of the bandits in six states, namely; Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto, Kaduna, Niger and Kebbi. The attacks which are mostly deadly include; shooting and killing, cattle rustling, kidnapping, rape, wiping of villages, and looting of valuables, with the numbers of fatalities and refugees on the rise. The act of banditry in the region has saw careless killing of civilians, depleting population, and the disruption of agricultural livelihoods of affected communities (ACAPS, 2020). With an estimated 1,100 people killed in 2018 in the six states, over 2,200 were killed in 2019, and more than 1,600 fatalities were recorded between January – June 2020 (ACAPS 2020 cited Council on Foreign Relations 2020).

In spite of the potentials of the north-west, the zone has since the return of democracy has been hard-pressed by devastating effect of rural banditry which has claims hundreds of lives and properties. It began as localized disputes between headers and farmers over access to land and water resources. Poor handling of the security problem has largely contributed to its transformation into a deadly conflict posing major threat to national and regional security and integration. The pattern and intensity of rural banditry in the Northwest are connected to socio-economic, environmental, and political forces which shape the development of the geo-political zone (Abdullahi, 2019).

Zamfara State has remained the epicenter of armed banditry hosting the highest number and frequency of killings and carnage associated with the criminal act of banditry in the Northwest. From 2011 to date, over 4000 lives were reported to have been lost to the activities of the bandits, with about five hundred and thirty-five (535) people (reported cases) were kidnapped and over 15,000 cattle and other livestock were rustled by bandits in Zamfara state. In addition, no fewer than 36 communities along Dansadau, Zurmi, Shinkafi, Bakura, Maradun, BirninMagaji, Anka, Gusau, Bukkuyum and Tsafe towns were overran, with their inhabitants displaced to various neighbouring states and Niger Republic (Nadama 2019 cited FMOIAC 2018).

According to Rufai (2018), the problem of cattle rustling and rural armed banditry were under rated at its inception about a decade ago in Zamfara state. Most of the security operatives showed little concern about the existential threat of the problem posed by the activities of the bandits, until it became a serious nightmare in 2014. The common

man in Zamfara now relied on the vigilante group who are ill-equipped for security, due to the failure of the state to protect their lives and properties. He further observed that rural banditry and cattle rustling in Zamfara state are quite different from other state, because of the active involvement of the vigilante groups in the conflict. In some states, according to him, the vigilante contributed meaningfully in checking the menace of banditry while in Zamfara, some of the vigilante members compromised the fight against banditry by taking advantage of their involvement as security outfits in witch-hunting their old foes, thereby complicating the war against banditry in the state. Moreover, with the increase in the spate of the conflict in 2014, the vigilante group was divided on how to approach the menace. While some were of the view that the bandits should be violently fought, others advocated for a peaceful approach. This divided opinion amongst the vigilante groups led to the emergence of a parallel vigilante groups in the state: the militant and non- militant wings. This division and violent approach to the bandits further aggravated the conflict to a dangerous degree. This has led to bad outcomes like extra judicial killings and an egregious circle of reprisal attacks and counter attacks amongst factions of the vigilante groups which has complicated the conflicts in the state.

The failure of government at the local and state levels has created the enabling environment for the emergence of a complex informal security sector in Zamfara leading to competing and rivaled armed and criminal groups operating freely in the state under the guise of vigilantism. The groups are said to lack proper security training and are accused of criminal acts ranging from violent robbery, unlawful confiscation of properties of both bandits and their victims, and human rights abuses (Suleiman, 2019).

1.4 State Response in Addressing the Menace of Armed Banditry in Nigeria

Government at the local, state and federal levels have been making efforts to tackle the menace of banditry in the north-west since it assumed a national dimension. The Federal Government in its efforts to address the menace of armed banditry came up with different measures such as deployment of security forces to dangerous flash points, placing of ban on all forms of gold mining in Zamfara state amongst others. The state governments in the northwest region while complementing the efforts put in place by the federal government, also led several negotiations and dialogues with the bandit groups with the view to getting them to lay down their arms and embrace a peaceful path, the local governments engages the service of local hunters and vigilante groups to complement the state governments. Despite all these efforts put in place at all level of government in tackling the problem of banditry, rural banditry has continued unabated.

Government efforts at all levels are said to be inadequate and have only served to emboldened the bandits the more. The situation was also further aggravated by the total failure of an amnesty programme and peace deal inaugurated by the governors of Katsina and Zamfara states (ACAPS, 2020). The Federal Government also moved against illegal mining believed to have contributed to the banditry by suspending all mining activities in the Zamfara state and in the northwestern zone at large. There were allegations of bandits being sponsored by illegal mining cabals to divert government attention away, by creating insecurity in the region for the purpose of exploiting the rich mineral resources in the state (Okoli, 2019).

Between January and April 2019, a number of operations were carried out by various security operatives in Northwestern Nigeria including Operation Harbin Kunama, Operation DiranMikiya and Operation Puff Adder, with both the state and federal government spending billions of naira in funding these security operatives (Suleiman, 2019). The most surprising aspect of the Federal Government's military response towards mitigating banditry in Northwestern Nigeria is that while some of the attacks were ward off successfully while others were blocked, still, the bandits' attacks in Zamfara, Sokoto, Katsina and Kaduna continue. This phenomenon raised several questions on the effectiveness of the responses. Many villages, farmlands and settlements remained deserted even with the presence of military operations in the region. Other measures taken included the ban on the use of motorbikes in the Northwestern states as it was discovered to be used by bandits for their criminal operations (Sambo and Sule, 2021).

In an attempt to stop the continues violent attacks by bandits, following Federal Government failures in ending the criminality of banditry, the state governments of Katsina, Sokoto, and Zamfara initiated direct negotiations with some of the criminal groups. Part of the negotiations, was granting the criminal groups amnesties and other incentives to denounce violence. So far, these agreements have failed for a number of reasons: First, the criminal groups are divided and have no substantive leaders to reach for dialogue, so it was difficult to achieve a common negotiation, as the groups are fragmented. Moreover, agreements made with one group are not binding on others. Second, the dialogues excluded the local

communities that bear the brunt of violence and expect the state to provide compensation, justice, and protection as a condition for lasting peace. The collapsed of the negotiations have led to renewed attacks by the criminal groups, while the farmers and vigilantes acting on their behalf have also remained completely unaccountable. Beyond these negotiations is the problem of lack of political will by the government to enforce the agreements reached (Ojewale, 2021).

In September 2019, the Katsina State Government initiated a dialogue with the bandits with the State Governor himself visiting the village harboring the forest where the bandits have made their hideouts. These dialogue sessions with the bandits led to an amnesty programme for the bandits by the state government which brought relative peace and security for about three months after which there was resurgence in December, 2019 which resulted to daily attacks in Dutsinma LGA during that month. Following protest against the rising insecurity in Katsina, the state capital on 16th July 2020, the federal government sent to Katsina top national security officials including Inspector General of Police (IGP), National Security Adviser (NSA), Chief of Defense Intelligence, Director General National Intelligence Agency (NIA) and Director Department of State Services (DSS) to discuss with the State Government and other relevant stakeholders on how to map out strategies on the way forward in providing solution to the problem of banditry in the state (Ladan and Matawalli, 2020).

State governments also in their efforts to counter attacks by bandit groups empowered vigilante groups to protect communities, a practice that proved to be largely counterproductive. The Zamfara State Government provides allowances to the vigilantes and also participates in the appointment of leaders for the groups. The sum of ₦2,250.000 is usually given to the vigilante asmonthly allowance by the state for the 14 local government areas. However, in 2018, the State Government donated 18 Toyota Hilux Jeeps and 1,700 motorcycles to the vigilante groups for their logistics and operations. The monthly allowance was partly meant to fuel and maintain the vehicles and purchase working tools, such as uniforms, raincoats, sticks, flashlights, whistles, knives, machetes and locally made guns (Rufai, 2018).

1.5 The Role of Informants in the Accentuation of Armed Banditry in North-Western Nigeria

Nigeria is presently faced with several security challenges and experts say that informants who collaborate with these criminal gangs continue to hinder success in the fight against terrorism. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), there are four types of informants: a member of the public, a victim of a crime, a member of an organized criminal group, and police officers themselves. In Nigeria currently, the word informant is used to depict collaborators of criminal gangs especially the terrorist group, Boko Haram in the north east and criminal gangs locally referred to as bandits in the northwest. Recently, the Commissioner of Police in Katsina State, SanusiBuba in an interview with Daily Trust described these informants as not only those who provide criminal gangs with information but also other essential commodities like motorbikes, fuel, food stuff, recharge cards, and many others. CP Buba said dealing with such people has been difficult and continues to undermine the fight against banditry in the northwest. Alleging that most informants reside in communities where criminal atrocities are committed, the CP said information from previously arrested suspects reveal that most, if not all the information available to bandits and terrorists before they invade villages to abduct people, are predicated on information they secure from people living within the communities (Sadiq, 2021).

Nwannah (2021) cited in (Ezirim, Haruna, Humbe and Paul, 2023) argued thatinformants are the most dangerous people in banditry, as they live within. Therefore, the incessant war against bandits and its persistence in Zamfara state and its beyond is not unconnected with the role of their informants within the society in which they operate. It has been alleged that bandits operate and acts base on the information's they gathered from and within the society, most especially on the issues kidnapping, rustling, retaliations and other related militia operations. It is evident in the series of arrest by the security operatives within and outside the state of both the bandits and their informants. Several measures were put in place to curtail the conflict, ranging from community effort by establishing Yan-Sakai, to the use of police and civil-defense and lastly, the military; using land army and air force. Yet the result was not encouraging as it was not able to contain armed banditry in the state.

Premium Times reports thatthe Zamfara State Government says over 2,000 suspected informants of bandits have been arrested since it cut telecommunication services ban and the military launched an offensive in the state.The state's Commissioner for Information, Ibrahim Dosara, stated this at a press conference in Kaduna on Thursday. The official said the suspects have provided vital information on their activities and how they were allegedly supported by highly placed individuals. "The government has set up a situation

room where complaints are being received to ensure prompt action," Mr Dosara said (Premium Times, 2021).

However, the bandits-informants mostly engaged with the bandits through supply of women for sex, information suppliers like, "vigilante plans to attack bandits at their hide out" movement of vigilante and security forces, conspired with bandits against their community information and other alliances such as (witchcraft alliance), information supplier to bandits on troops' movement and identifying persons to be kidnapped for ransom in, selling bandits stole properties, transporting stole animals (goats and sheep), given rented houses for hiding weapons and its suppliers, supplying fueled and other logistics to bandits like 'arms and ammunition', conspired against their community and provide the bandits with information on wealthy targets, buying items to bandits such as food, cloths, and other logistics, sex hawking, among other dubious act by the informants.Furthermore, when bandits are informed on raids by the security agents or the vigilante, the (bandits) will device a means to repel the attacks, prepare for it, hide or run, depend on the gravity of the informed raids. However, the bandits informants generate money to the bandits by selling their rustle cows, goats, sheep's, camels, etc., they are also for buying them necessities like foods, cloths, and women at their hideouts, these undermined security efforts in the fights against banditry seriously(Ezirim, Haruna, Humbe and Paul, 2023).

Another perspective includes the traditional rulers and citizens' complicities. Some highly placed traditional rulers were deposed due to their involvement in armed banditry, with some of the prominent local rulers often playing the important role of intelligence gathering for the armed bandits. A recent report claims that some unpatriotic persons, including highly placed traditional rulers in the areas, were identified as helping the bandits with intelligence to perpetrate their nefarious actions or to compromise military operations. The case of two prominent individuals from Zamfara and Kaduna who attempted to smuggle weapons into the north-west using their connections in the Sahel region through porous Nigerian borders. In addition to these prominent Nigerians, many middlemen and vendors were also involved in the weapons transfer to forests inhabited by armed bandits. In addition, it was reported that weapons suppliers receive more cash than field fighters. Moreover, the role of informants cannot be jettisoned. There were several instances of informants being arrested who disguised as community members so that they could assist the armed bandits with necessary information (Aina, Ojo and Oyewole, 2023)

A study conducted by Umar (2022) titled "The Role of Operation Sharan Daji in Combating Rural Banditry in Northern Senatorial Zone of Zamfara State (2015-2019) reveals how residents of the affected communities and security personnel play the role of informants. The residents of the area did not help matters too as data gotten from the field reveals that sabotage from the people in form of withholding information from the security personnel and compromising the security personnel by giving out information on their operation to the bandits is another major challenged faced by Operation Sharan Daji. One of the security personnel said the bandits persuade the locals not to give sensitive information to them and out of fear of reprisal they withhold it from us. Another security personnel that participated in the operation said as a result of informant from the people, the bandits use to ambush us and they have specialized in laying ambush. He went further to say that the bandits know them but they don't know the bandits and this has led to many casualties including him who sustained an injury in the operation. Giving out information to the bandits by some of the greedy security personnel is another reason why the menace of the rural banditry persisted. Two of the interviewees who are security personnel said some security personnel use to give military uniform and information to the bandits.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

For the purpose of this study, the queer ladder theory will be adopted. The queer ladder theory was influenced by an American Sociologist, Daniel Bell (1919- 2011), who coined the idea of "queer ladder" in an attempt to explain the functional significance of organized crime as a desperate tactic for socio-economic empowerment and social climbing. This analytical construct has since fertilized into a popular theoretical framework widely used in contemporary crime studies (Amah, Assi and Edeke, 2016). The queer ladder theory argues that organized crime is an instrumental behaviour, it is a means to end and it is an instrument of social climbing, fame and socio-economic advancement. It is also a means to accumulate wealth and build power. (Mallory, 2007 cited in Amah, Assi and Edeke, 2016). Often ascribed to this theory is the notion that organized crime thrives in contexts where the government's capacity to dictate, sanction and deter crime is poor; where public corruption is endemic; and where prospects for legitimate livelihood opportunities are slim (Nwoye, 2000; Lyman, 2007;

Okoli & Orinya, 2013 cited in Ezirim, Haruna, Humbe and Paul, 2023).

The Queer Ladder theory assumes that organized crime thrives in context where the government's capacity to dictate and sanction abnormality and crime is poor, where public corruption is endemic and where legitimate livelihood opportunities are slim (Nwoye, 2000; Lyman,2007 cited in Amah, Assi and Edeke, 2016).

The theory enables us to situate the prevalence of informants activities in Zamfara State. In this regard, it is noted that the prevalent of the acitivies of the informants is driven by the quest for material aggrandizement at the detriment of the development and well being of the people. This has been worsen by bad governance and worsening socio-economic conditions of the people in the state. The adoption of this theory for this study is informed by its analytical utility in providing insights into the foundations of organized crime in developing nations.

1.7 Discussion of Findings

From the foregoing presentation and analysis of relevant data on the subject under investigation, the following findings or deductions can be drawn:

The study reveals that informants pose a serious threat to the security of the people of ZamfaraState and their activities complicate the fight against banditry in the State.

The study reveals that residents of the affected areas, traditional rulers, security personnel and highly place individuals are among those identified as bandits informants.

The study reveals that informants in Zamfara State, Nigeria supply information on security raids, attacks or counter attacks, women for sex, hard drugs, food items, fuel, sale of stolen properties, arms and ammunitions supply, information revealing wealthy targets.

The study reveals that government at the local, state and federal levels have been making efforts to tackle the menace banditry in the northwest since it assumed a national dimension. The Federal Government in its efforts to address the menace of rural banditry came up with different measures such as deployment of security forces to dangerous flash points, placing of ban on all forms of gold mining in Zamfara state amongst others. The state governments in the northwest region while complementing the efforts put in place by the federal government, also led several negotiations and dialogues with the bandit groups with the view to getting them to lay down their arms and embrace a peaceful path, the local governments engages the service of local hunters and vigilante groups to complement the state governments. Despite all these efforts put in place at all level of government in tackling the problem of banditry, rural banditry has continued unabated due to the activities of bandits-informants that are complicating ongoing efforts to combat banditary in Zamfara State, Nigeria.

1.8 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study brings to light how the activities of informants is posing a serious challenge in the ongoing fight against banditry in the northwestern region and Zamfara State in particular and called for the support of all stakeholders to win the war. The activities of the informants are largely responsible for the lingering security challenges in Zamfara State. Thus, the paper recommends that severe punsihments should be meted out toinformants and the punishment should be publicized by media to serve as deterrent to others. There should be concerted effort by all stakeholders to enlighten the citizens on the consequences ofproviding information to criminals to earned living and its consequences in the society.

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