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EXPLORING CHALLENGES OF THE STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENTS IN TACKLING THE INSECURITY PROBLEMS OF CATTLE RUSTLING AND ARMED BANDITRY IN KATSINA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Cattle rustling and armed banditry have been a serious security concern in Katsina state since 2010. The state government has employed various policies, including collaboration with the federal government, to address the issues; however, attacks by rustlers/bandits remain unabated. This study aims to explore the challenges facing state and federal governments in addressing the security problems. The study adopted a mixed-methods approach. The primary data were gathered through a field survey. A sample size of 384 questionnaires, structured based on both open-ended and closed-ended questions, was administered as instruments for data collection in the eight local government areas that were purposely selected. Stakeholders from the state committee on cattle rustling, traditional and religious leaders, civil society organizations, academicians, and security personnel, including the military, police, and civil defense corps, were also interviewed. The study used content and descriptive analyses methods to present the findings through graphs and percentages. The results revealed that a weak security system (22%) stemmed from inadequate funding, outdated equipment, insufficient personnel, and unpatriotic attitudes among some officers. Poor governance (44%) was manifested in inadequate policy implementation, a lack of political will, corruption, and the politicization of insecurity. And, socio-economic challenges (27%), including poverty, unemployment, mistrust, and inadequate social amenities, are the major factors undermining the state and federal governments' efforts in tackling the insecurity problems. The study concluded that these issues have rendered their efforts ineffective and incapable of addressing the problems. Thus, it is recommended to adopt non-coercive strategies that must be all-inclusive as an alternative to resolving the insecurity challenges in Katsina State.

Keywords: Insecurity, cattle rustling, armed banditry, State and Federal Governments.

INTRODUCTION

Cattle rustling is as old as the pastoralist communities in Katsina state. It has been part of the Fulani ethnic traditions and practices for centuries, as a means of restocking the livestock lost during epidemics or droughts (Egwu, 2016). They also used it to test the braveness of the younger ones. (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016). For many years, farmers (mostly from the Hausa ethnic group) and herders (mostly Fulani ethnic group) who mostly shared the same geographical locations have fought over the space and resources within their communities, which later metamorphosed into ethnic rivalry (Igbini, 2022; Umar & Muhammad, 2022). Therefore, the re-emerging of violent or modern cattle rustling can be tied to the ethnic rivalry known as the farmers/herders' conflict in the state. According to the International Crisis Group (2020) cattle rustling has become more organized and rigorous in Katsina state since 2013. It is staged by large and well-armed criminal groups based in the Dajin Rugu forest stretching through Katsina, Kaduna, and Zamfara states. Besides, the Fulani ethnic formed militia groups called bandits that was smuggled into the state from neighbouring Zamfara state in 2010 (Ladan & Usman, 2020). Since then, cattle rustling and armed banditry have become the primary insecurity concerns in the state.

These insecurity threats have manifested through the continuous attacks on individuals, groups, livestock farms and communities by the rustlers/bandits. They have destabilized public safety, local business activities, and the state security system. Many people have lost their lives, cattle, and properties. It has been recorded that between June 2011 and May 2019, the rustlers/bandits have killed 2,000 people, displaced 35,000, and destroyed 500 communities in Katsina state (Garba, 2021). At October 2020, there were 80,115 displaced people in the state (UNHCR, 2021). Moreover, from July to October 2021 alone, 387 incidents of armed banditry were recorded, which affected over a thousand people, including the loss of 213 lives and injured 115 people. They rustled 2,788 livestock and razed several villages across the state (Ogalah, 2021). Farms are no longer accessible because of the high risk of social life. It has hindered many inter-communal and inter-state trade relationships, deepening poverty and hardship for individuals, communities, and the state as a whole (Abubakar, 2021; Attah et al., 2021; Ibrahim & Mutawalli, 2020; Rosenje & Adeniyi, 2021). It also led to the long time closure of many livestock markets, where local people bought and sold cattle and other farm products to cater for their families and sustain their livelihoods.

In addition, the high cost of managing insecurity problems has continued to be reflected in the state and federal governments' financial budgets over the years. The security institutions consume the highest chunk of the country's yearly expenditure. For example, between 2011 and 2015, the federal government allocated 4.62 trillion naira to the security sectors (Olufemi, 2015). And from 2015 to 2021, their budget rose to about 8 trillion. In fact, out of the N13.59 trillion budgeted for 2021, the defence and security sectors got N1.96 trillion, with another N722.53 billion added to the supplementary budget (Momoh-Jimoh et al., 2021; Olowonefa et al., 2022). In Katsina state, there was alleged mismanagement of N52.6 billion naira on security votes from 2015 to 2020 (Daniel & Asemota, 2020). Despite the huge amounts of money claimed to be spent on security matters by the governments, coupled with other strategies adopted by the state such as; dialogue, amnesty, promulgation of new laws, policies and collaborating with the federal government for military operations. Yet, the attacks by the rustlers/bandits remain unabated.

Hence, the objective of this study is to investigate the underpinning challenges facing the state and federal governments in tackling the insecurity problems. Some of the questions raised include: What are the key factors sustaining the insecurity challenges? How have they affects the state and federal governments' efforts in overcoming the insecurity challenges? It is imperative to note that this study is

very significant, as it aims to explore the nature and precise problems affecting the efforts of the state and federal government in resolving the challenges of insecurity. This will assist in determining the effective strategies to be used in addressing the rampant insecurity problems within the state. The study is organized into the following sections: literature review, methodology, results and discussions, conclusion, recommendations and acknowledgement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section examines the literature on the factors responsible, effects, as well as the state and federal governments efforts in tackling the insecurity problems of cattle rustling and armed banditry in Katsina state, Northwestern region and Nigeria.

Factors Responsible for Cattle Rustling and Armed Banditry

Many studies have examines the factors responsible for insecurity challenges of cattle rustling and armed banditry. For instance, Egwu (2016) found that the herders' familiarity with forest zones, loses of cattle to diseases, bad weather, and their perception as a marginalized group who lack political voice contributed to the insecurity challenges of cattle rustling and armed banditry in Nigeria. Olaniyan and Yahaya (2016) further identified the large forest reserves, potential collaborators, and corrupt security operatives as the causes of insecurity problems. Ladan (2015) discovered the conversion of forest reserves into the offices and houses of the rustlers/bandits as a contributing factor to insecurity problems in Katsina state. Similarly, Onwuzuruigbo (2021) in his studies, argued that the poor management of the forest reserves provides a conducive hideout for the rustlers/bandits to operate.

In examining the decades of infrastructural decay, Victor (2020) noted that insufficient access to roads, water, electricity, health facilities, education and other social amenities needed to sustain livelihoods have recently made many states to lost control over the pastoral communities. These serves as a critical foundation of insecurity challenges across the northern states. In contrast, Shehu et al. (2017) observed that the conflict over natural resources such as access to land and water, rampant drought and famine in the communities, commercialization of raids, district boundary crisis, and the refusal of authorities to share grazing land are the factors responsible for cattle rustling and armed banditry in Katsina state. And, most of the weapons used by rustlers/bandits were smuggled through the porous international borders of Nigeria.

Udosen and Uwak (2021) further established that the porous borders allow for the illegal entry of foreign criminals, hard drug dealers and weapons merchants, which contributes to the armed banditry activities. Nevertheless, Maigari et al. (2021) found recently that the victims' ransom payment plays a crucial role in sustaining the activities of rustlers/bandits, including acquiring more weapons, feeding, and sponsoring new operations. However, Abubakar and Ibrahim (2020) revealed that lack of morality is the major factor responsible for cattle rustling and armed banditry across North-western Nigeria.

Effects of Cattle Rustling and Armed Banditry

The effects of cattle rustling and armed banditry have dominated most of the literature in this area. In this light, Okoli and Okpaleke (2014a) discovered that rustling and banditry had destroyed people's lives, livelihoods, properties, investments, and socio-economic well-being, thereby affecting the public safety and sustainability of national security in Nigeria. In another study, Okoli and Okpaleke (2014b)

highlight that losing livestock by herding communities means damaging their household income as well as dropping the supply of organic protein and dairy. These would undoubtedly hinder herding enterprises' productivity and worsen poverty, unemployment and insecurity threats in Nigeria. Besides, Ladan (2015) argued that the rustlers/bandits had attacked neighbouring villages, raped women, kidnapped and killed many people, rustled cattle, and blocked road weekly.

In his studies, Saleh (2016) identifies visible and invisible effects of cattle rustling and armed banditry. He argued that it is visible because there is a high level of fundamental human rights abuse such as; sexual abuses, abductions, killing innocent lives, displacements, and destruction of properties. The invisible aspect involved high level of frustrations, anxieties, emotional and psychological disorders like high blood pressure, hypertension, and mental illnesses sustained by surviving victims. Likewise, Egwu (2016) observed that banditry is associated with rape, kidnapping, killing, displacement, organized attacks on villages, and looting of their properties. He noted that in 2013 alone, 60,000 cattle rustled, 300 people lost their lives, and many others were forcefully displaced internally and externally. By 2015, the rustled cattle reached 64,830 and 2,991 human casualties across Northern Nigeria. Oluyemi-Kusa and Salihu (2016) also found that cattle rustling and armed banditry had deterred women from the farms, forcing them to search for other surviving strategies to cater for the families after rustling their cattle and destroying their farm products. It also leaves them shocked of killing their sons and husbands, with the anxiety of nursing injured children, who suffer from the discomfort of raped, starvation, poverty, and feeling of neglect by the local, state, and federal authorities.

In addition, Ibrahim and Mutawalli (2020) discovered that the crimes committed by rustlers/bandits had affected the environment by impeding agricultural activities, degrading farmlands, preventing livestock rearing, and hampering hunting activities in Katsina state. In his decade of research on armed banditry, Ahmed (2021) argued that bandits in Zamfara state had killed over 12,000 people, stolen about 250,000 livestock, destroyed 120 villages, raped many women, and internally displaced 50,000 people or made them refugees in the neighbouring Niger Republic. Abdullahi (2021) also revealed that between 2011 and 2019, about 500 villages and 35 thousand hectares of land were destroyed by less than 10 thousand rustlers/bandits from eight (8) camps in Zamfara state. And there were 44 thousand orphans apart from thousands of people displaced, including teachers and health workers. Another dimensional implication was that the situation has intensified poverty, as many victims resorted to begging to survive. Diseases such as malaria, typhoid, kwashiorkor, and snake bites also persisted due to a lack of access to good water, food, and shelter.

Attah et al. (2021) discovered that within the government's enforced lockdown period, over 8,000 people lost their lives across Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara, Sokoto, Kebbi, Jigawa, and Kano states. And not fewer than 30,000 migrants, mostly women and children, crossed the border to the Niger Republic despite the Covid-19 lockdown. In April 2020, the bandits' attack claimed the lives of 50 individuals. In May 2020, armed bandits killed 18 people, including a village head and rustled cattle in Katsina state. In June 2020, six villages were attacked, robbed shops, raped women, killed over 60 people and rustled over 200 cattle. The operation took more than five (5) hours without interruption by any security agents in the state. Bandits demanded the foodstuff and other materials distributed to the community members as Covid-19 relief. Rosenje and Adeniyi (2021) found that armed banditry consumed the lives of over 1,100, 2,200, and 1,600 people in 2018, 2019, and 2020 in the North-western states, respectively.

The Role of States and Federal Governments in Tackling Insecurity Challenges

The literature examines most of the attempts by the states and federal governments to resolve the insecurity problems of cattle rustling and armed banditry in the affected states. However, the challenges facing their efforts have not received much attention. For example, Olaniyan and Yahaya (2016) argued that the affected state governors have refused to implement the agreement on funding a joint security forces operation. In spite of the task force launched by the Nigerian Police Force in 2014. In addition, the Kaduna state government's effort to adopt Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in dealing with cattle rustling and armed banditry remained at a proposal level. Nevertheless, they noted that the joint patrol of the same security operatives and the local vigilante group in 2015, organized by the Katsina and Niger state governments, achieved a substantial result as many arms and livestock were recovered.

Ladan (2019) pointed out that in the attempt to curb the insecurity problems, Katsina state government provides logistics and financial support for security operations. The government promulgated laws stipulating a death penalty for the rustlers/bandits, banned fuel sales in jerry cans and riding a motorcycle around forest areas. The state also took punitive action against the village heads and Division Police Officers (DPOs) accused of conspiring with the rustlers/bandits. The state has collaborated with the federal government in other security offensives actions such as Sharan Daji (sweeping the forest), Hadarin Daji (forest cloud), Dirar Mikiya (eagle landing), Harbin Kunama (scorpion sting), and Puff adder. Even though, corruption and lack of coordination among the various security agencies hindered the success of the operations. In the same vein, Yahaya and Bello (2020) found that the security forces have arrested many armed bandits in the communities of Batsari, Kankara, and Jibia local government areas during some of their operations in Katsina state.

Moreover, Maigari et al. (2021) observed that despite the peace accord in August 2019 between some armed bandits' leaders and the Katsina state government in conjunction with the Inspector General of Police as well as the neighbouring states of Sokoto and Zamfara, attacks on communities in Batsari, Safana, Danmusa, and Kankara local government areas still persist. Ladan and Usman (2020) further noted that the Katsina state government had made various efforts such as prayer sessions, dialogue, and joint military and police operations, including aerial attacks on bandits' bases. Besides, the state requested the federal government to provide agro-rangers security corps for the farmers. Usman and Ahmed (2021) also discovered that the Katsina state government had implemented many policy measures, apart from spending over N4.2 billion in converting the armed banditry.

From the reviewed literature above, it can be noted that most of the preceding studies have examined the causes, effects, and the role of the states and federal governments. However, negligible attention was given to the challenges facing the states and federal governments' efforts to address the insecurity problems. Besides, the nature of insecurity challenges and the actions taken may differ from one state to another based on its widespread, boundary configurations and other peculiar features of a state. This indicated the need to investigate the peculiar challenges confronting the state and federal governments in tackling the insecurity problems of cattle rustling and armed banditry in Katsina state.

METHODOLOGY

This study is anchored within a survey research design. The population size of eight (8) affected local government areas, purposely selected is 1,886,300 (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2018). The

reason for adopting a purposive sampling technique is to target participants directly from the affected study areas. Thus, a statistical formula [$S = X^2 NP (1 - P) \div d^2(N - 1) + X^2P(1 - P)$] developed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) was used to arrive at the accurate sample size ($S = 383.98$ equal to 384) required for questionnaire administration. The questionnaires were designed based on open and closed-ended questions and administered appropriately as instruments for data collection. Three Likert measurement scales (agree, disagree, and neutral) were used as options for the respondents on closed-ended questions. At the same time, space was provided for the respondents to write their opinions on the open-ended questions. See details in the table below:

Table 1

Summary of Required Sample Size, Retrieved and Un-Retrieved Questionnaires

| State | Senatorial Zone | Local Gov't Area | Population Size | Pop (%) | Sample Size | Retrieved | Un-Retrieved |
|---------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|---------|-------------|-----------|--------------|
| Katsina | Katsina Central | Batsari | 280, 600 | 15% | 58 | 54 | 4 |
| | | Dan-Musa | 152, 800 | 8% | 31 | 30 | 1 |
| | | Jibia | 226, 000 | 12% | 46 | 39 | 7 |
| | | Safana | 250, 000 | 13% | 50 | 50 | 0 |
| | Katsina South | Dan-Dume | 196, 200 | 10% | 38 | 34 | 4 |
| | | Faskari | 262, 400 | 14% | 54 | 47 | 7 |
| | | Kankara | 328, 400 | 18% | 69 | 58 | 11 |
| | | Sabuwa | 189, 900 | 10% | 38 | 36 | 2 |
| Total | Two (2) | Eight (8) | 1, 886, 300 | 100% | 384 | 348 | 36 |

Notes. Gov't = Government; Pop = Population; and, % = Percentages.

Source. Field Survey (2023).

In case of the in-depth interviews, structured interview guides were used to interview some of the major stakeholders in the state. These include; chairman of the committee on improving the relationship between farmers and herders and also a member of the state standing committee on cattle rustling; security personnel from the military, police, and Nigeria security and civil defense corps (NSCDC); traditional rulers, religious leaders, academicians, and civil society organizations (CSOs). The interview respondents were coded as IR for the analysis. See details in the Table 2.

Table 2

Stakeholders Interviewed and the Codes

| State | Stakeholders Interviewed | Number IR | Code |
|---------|--|-----------|-------------|
| Katsina | State Standing Committee on Cattle Rustling and Armed Banditry | 1 | IR1 |
| | Military Personnel | 1 | IR2 |
| | Police Officer | 1 | IR3 |
| | Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), Personnel. | 2 | IR4 & IR5 |
| | Academicians | 2 | IR6 & IR7 |
| | Traditional ruler | 1 | IR8 |
| | Religious Leader | 1 | IR9 |
| | Civil Society Organization (CSOs) | 2 | IR10 & IR11 |
| | Total | | 11 |

Source. Field Survey (2023).

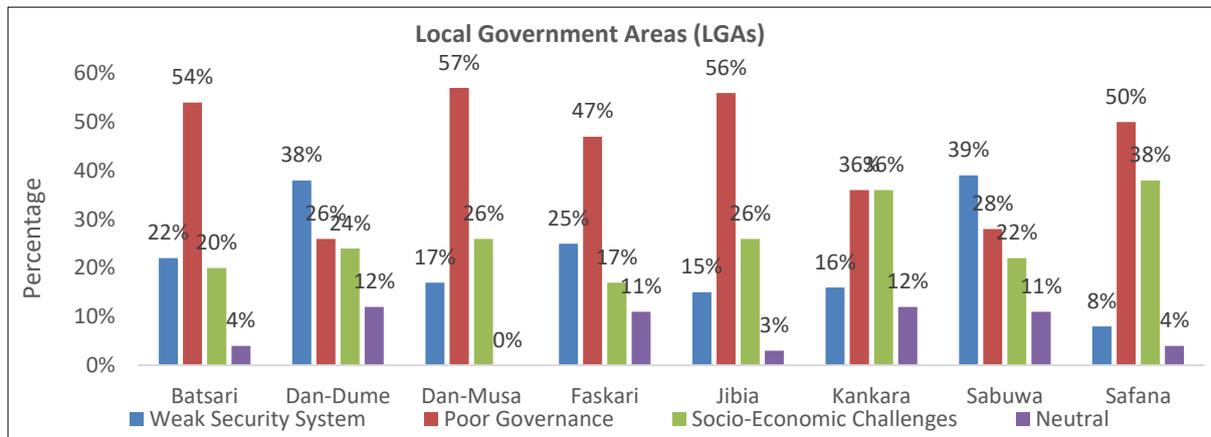
The qualitative data from interviews were transcribed and subjected to content analysis using themes. Data from the open-ended questions in the questionnaires were also analyzed thematically. The closed-ended questions were coded, analyzed and present the results through graphs and percentage distributions using microsoft excel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section examines the challenges facing the state and federal governments in tackling the insecurity problems of cattle rustling and armed banditry in Katsina state. The graphs below establish the percentages of respondents on the subject matter across the affected local government areas and Katsina state.

Figure 1

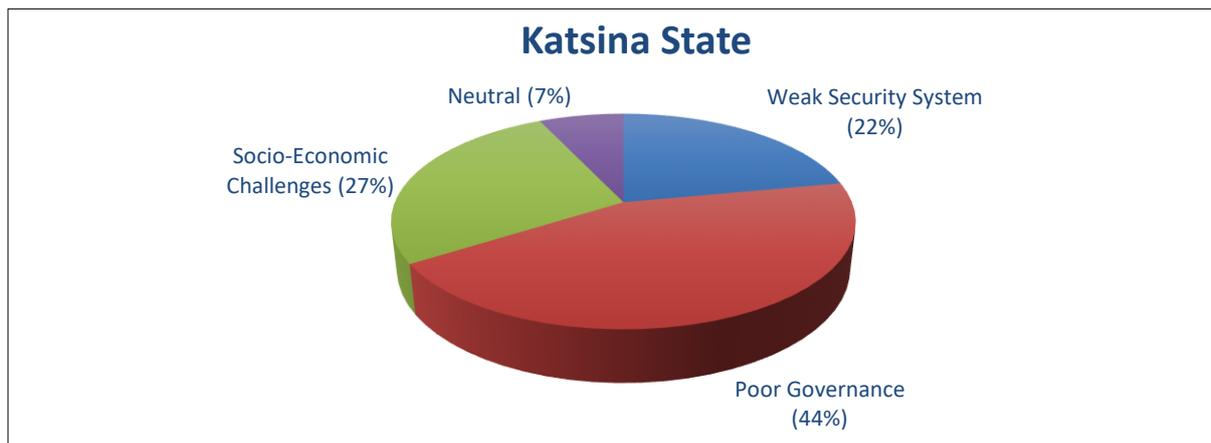
Respondents' Percentages on the State and Federal Governments' Challenges in Tackling Insecurity Problems at Local Government Area Levels



Source. Field Survey (2023).

Figure 2

Respondents' Percentages on the State and Federal Governments' Challenges in Tackling Insecurity Problems at State Level



Source. Field Survey (2023).

Figure 2 illustrated that 22% of the respondents in Katsina state pointed out weak security system is major the challenge confronting the state and federal government in tackling the insecurity problems, 44% indicated poor governance, 27% identified socio-economic challenges, while 7% were neutral.

Weak Security System

Respondents (22%) have expressed different opinions concerning the issue of a weak security system, even across the local government areas. For instance, in Batsari, Safana, and Faskari local government areas (LGAs) (see Figure 1), they observed that the shortage of human resources, inadequate remuneration, and lack of modern equipment and other facilities needed had demoralized many security personnel in the fight against insecurity challenges in the state. These submissions corresponded with the findings of Yahaya and Bello (2020) that the security operatives were inadequate, ill-equipped and ill-motivated in the fight against rustling and banditry in Katsina state. The same position was reiterated by one of the interviewees that:

“We are still far behind in terms of the provision of logistics, recruitment, and more personnel. The numbers are not enough if you look at all the security agencies. The United Nations requirement of 400 persons per 1 police officer has not been attained. I think it is more than one thousand per 1 police officer. In terms of logistics and allowances, the barracks accommodations for our personnel, offices, patrol vehicles, we need more. We need modern equipment for surveillance like drones, you know, the world has changed now. Security is now technologically driven. So, we need to have all these state-of-the-art equipment to progress because the sophistication in crimes has gone technological, and we also need to have that” (IR3).

Another respondent reiterated that:

“Let us have more police recruited. The police are not enough to take care of internal security. For example, in Jibia local government, the number of security police officers in the police station was not up to fifty. So how can fifty police officers confront five hundred rustlers/bandits coming from Zamfara state, for instance?” (IR6).

A key informant noted that:

“We are not recruiting enough. Some of the equipment we use are outdated and not enough. Even though, we have sophisticated weapons, they may not be enough. Even with one hundred and fifty, two hundred rounds per person, you will go out and see one rustler/bandit will be carrying one thousand rounds. Obviously, that is one riffle per four, one armour, four armour. You shoot one. He shoots four at you. So, how can you fight that person? So, there are a lot of reasons that this problem is persisting” (IR4).

A respondent said that:

“We don't have enough operational gadgets. We need new brand vehicles like the Hilux for operations. We need all the gadgets that every officer in the operation is supposed to have. But, we don't have. We also lack modern communication facilities” (IR5).

In that case, respondents in Kankara and Faskari LGAs (see Figure 1) noted that the security forces were acting in self-defence rather than confronting the rustlers/bandits, which led to the loss of many security agents in the affected areas. This has demonstrated a lack of motivation among the security personnel in tackling the insecurity problems. One of the key informants admitted that:

“You will use AK47, Arsenal AK57, G3, sometimes RFMG, etc. But when you meet the counterforce, you find out they have more than you. Then, you may be forced into defensive instead of attacking. You will start defending yourself. That is what we call shoot and retreat. So, we still need more equipment, even the vehicles we use. Hilux is not a war vehicle. When you shoot at it, it will just penetrate. But when you have at least a personnel carrier (APC) and other intelligent gadgets, because sometimes there are non-kinetic forces, those forces may not appear. We need credible intelligence and equipment like drones that can fly to check the area for ambush, night vision, and many other things” (IR4).

Respondents from Batsari and Safana LGAs (see Figure 1) argued that some security personnel were not sincere and diligent in discharging their duties due to corruption, lack of patriotism, and personal interests. Instead, they collaborated with the rustlers/bandits to their advantage. Some grasp the insecurity problems as opportunity to get money. An interviewee said that, “we also have our peculiar problems. We are not saying that we are not at fault. Okay, but we have other issues. We have personnel problems” (IR4). Another key informant narrated a practical scenario as follows:

“In the village called Santan Na Ade, police went and collected the weapons of all the vigilantes. Thirty minutes later, rustlers/bandits entered the village and killed many people, kidnapped some, and burnt the whole village. Again, people will call through phones or post on the social media that rustlers/bandits are coming to a particular area or village. Still, they would go there and operate for more than one, two, three, four, five, or even six hours without any intervention from the security personnel. You can only see the police after the operations. People were kidnapped for three to four months before their release after paying ransom. But the moment they kidnapped the Chinese people, it won't take up to three hours. They have to return them” (IR7).

The respondents also stated that the security personnel lack modern skills and professionalism. A good example was the misplacement of airstrike attacks on communities rather than the rustlers and bandits' hideouts. Besides, respondents (25%) in Faskari LGA argued that the security personnel prolonged the fight against rustling and banditry to maintain the security budgets of the various security agencies. That was the reason, the security personnel were not commanded to confront them. Hence, even when on duty in nearby communities, they hardly respond to the rustlers/bandits' attacks or respond carelessly after the perpetrators have fled. In Dan-Musa LGA, 17% of the respondents confirmed the allegation against the Military. The Military personnel complained of not being permitted by the high-ranking authority to attack the rustlers/bandits. Yahaya and Bello (2020) discovered similar findings that some security personnel were not responding to distress calls or sometimes arrived late after the rustlers/bandits had left to maintain the financial incentives, which would likely cease once the rustling and banditry ended. A respondent anxiously reiterated that:

“These things have been embarrassing. There was a time when rustlers/bandits attacked a village called Natsinta, just behind army barracks in Katsina. They kidnapped some people there without any reaction from the army barracks. Maybe because they did not

get or didn't receive the so-called directives we are discussing, you cannot wait for directives if you are dealing with this challenge, rustling and banditry" (IR6).

Similarly, 39% and 15% of the respondents in Sabuwa and Jibia LGAs, pointed out that the role of informants and the attitudes of some unpatriotic security personnel have made it difficult for the communities' members to provide valuable security information about the rustling and banditry activities in their areas. Even when the commoners took the risk, the security personnel would not respond to the information given to them. These have constituted another challenge to the state's efforts in combating the insecurity problems. One of the interviewees explained that "the issue of informants in the local community affects the handling of information by the security operatives. Locals are afraid of releasing the information to the military due to the fear of reprisal attacks" (IR2). Another respondent stated that:

"Sometimes, people don't even want to share the information. You will be looking for someone, but the local populace knows where this person is, and they would refuse to inform you, maybe because they are afraid of reprisal or were enticed by something. Sometimes, they know that there is an ambush, and they will let you work into that ambush. And there are informants, moving from one point to another. You will see people around you. Some are selling tea, some are shop owners, some are commercial vehicle riders, some are bus drivers, and some have different businesses. They live with us, and we cannot identify them" (IR4).

Research findings indicated that the rustlers/bandits relied heavily on intelligence information from their various informants to plan for attacks (Attah et al., 2021). In addition, the respondents from Jibia and Faskari LGAs (see Figure 1) argued that most security forces' operations against the rustlers/bandits lack synergy and proper coordination among the sister security agencies (the Army, Police, Air Force, and Civil Defence). This has enabled the rustlers/bandits to intensify their attacks on rural communities with impunity. Yahaya and Bello (2020) also noted that the security personnel lack coordination in the fight against rustlers/bandits. This has made the fight ineffective as the various security institutions work individually without the support or reinforcement from the sister agencies. A respondent observed that:

"The security agencies did not come together till recently. In the beginning, all of them were doing different things, which contributed to the lack of coordination to ensure that the rustlers/bandits were dealt with. There was no coordination and simultaneous attack from different states to come together and fight the rustlers/bandits" (IR6).

Contrary to their views, one of the key informants argued that:

"In Katsina state, we have fantastic synergy and collaboration among the security agencies. I cannot say they formed a union, but a kind of coalition where they consistently meet to discuss issues about security. They open a WhatsApp group where, at a glance, they can share intelligence. If there is a security breach in any part of Katsina state, somebody will just go there and put the information, and within a minute, everybody will see it. They have contact with each other and do everything together" (IR3).

In terms of funding the insecurity activities in the state, all the security personnel interviewed stated that their funds come directly from the federal government. However, the state government assists and collaborates to provide some logistics and allowances. One of them said, “our funds come from the federal government through the Ministry of Defence, but there are other operations funded by the state government, like Operation Mesa. However, if you are waiting for the funding to tackle the insecurity challenges, you will not do it, you will always work with the available resources” (IR2). Moreover, another interviewee explained that:

“You see, funding, we are not under the state. All the security agencies are under the federal government. They pay our salaries, emoluments, and other allowances. The state also assists by paying allowances, repairing our vehicles, and providing logistics. In fact, we cannot do it without the support of the state government. It is a key, and they play a significant role in assisting security agencies. Funds from the federal government are not enough to assist us. So, the state comes in several ways to help us” (IR3).

A key informants stated that:

“The NSCDC is a federal institution. The federal government provides most of the logistics for our work, and the state government also contributes a lot. The state government has been funding some of our activities. We have Operation Sharan Daji, a joint security operation that mainly involved the NSCDC, the Army, and the Police Force. The state government is responsible for paying them their allowances and other logistics. The federal government pays our salaries, the monthly AIE, etc. However, the funding is not enough. We have to be sincere. More needs to be done because security is an expensive business” (IR4).

The findings above concurred with those of Ladan (2019) and Yahaya and Bello (2020), who revealed that the Katsina state government is supporting security operations financially and logistically. Another challenge that further weakens the security operatives in tackling the insecurity challenges of cattle rustling and armed banditry is the large forest reserve and porous borders across the state. One of the respondents described that:

“The Rimi Kukar Jangare forest reserve started from the Niger Republic into Katsina, passing through down to Niger state. It is a huge forest. It borders Zamfara, Kaduna, Niger, Katsina, and Niger Republic. These people (rustlers/bandits) do not have a specific place, a barrack, or a base that you can attack them. They move from one point to another, and the terrain is challenging” (IR4).

Another respondent said that:

“Because of their hideout, you cannot go where they are. There is no access. We do not have access to them, such as a road in the forest. It is a thick forest, and some are on the hill. So, it can only be done by using the Jets. Yes, then after the Jets, artilleries can go. So that is why it worsens” (IR5).

A key informants acknowledged that:

“The border exists and entrances, un-governing space, international and local boundaries within the state gives the rustlers/bandits a safe heaven. Other challenges faced include: lack of disseminating information by the locals, bad road networks, insufficient network service and poor communication, informants and bandits’ collaborators, as well as porous border within the Niger Republic” (IR2).

Another interviewee further disclosed that:

“Some youths were abducted in Kankara local government area around Yar Dinya village and paid a ransom of 1 million before their released. They said a helicopter usually dropped food, meat, and weapons for the bandits and collected the money generated. And there were white people among them. So, our borders are porous, and our atmospheric areas have become so porous that one can enter from anywhere he wishes” (IR7).

Nevertheless, one of the respondents further identified legal loopholes within the judicial system as another significant factor affecting their efforts to combat insecurity challenges. He argued that:

“The law in Nigeria also does not help matters. The law protects criminals more than the security forces. You will arrest informants and take them to court, but the judge will say where is the evidence. Because the burden of providing proof lies with the securities. This person is using a phone, and they will say it is not permissible, so, you do not know. Eventually, that person will be released, and he will continue with his business. Sometimes, you arrest a rustler, a kidnapper, a bandit, you take him to the court, but lawyers will come, gang up, get money, and they will just fight you and release you on technicalities” (IR4).

It is important to note that all the security personnel who participated in the interview admitted that the use of force alone would not address the insecurity problems of cattle rustling and armed banditry in Katsina state.

Poor Governance

Majority of the affected communities’ members (44%) have identified poor governance as a significant factor that impedes the state and federal governments’ efforts in tackling the insecurity challenges. In Batsari, Jibia, Kankara, Safana, and Faskari local government areas (LGAs) (see Figure 1), the respondents highlighted that the government complicated the issues initially. It failed to believe the reality of the insecurity problems. The state government demonstrated a lack of political will, poor leadership, and negligence in handling the insecurity issues. One of the key informants also observed in the same vein that “there was a lackadaisical attitude of the government, right from the beginning. Because they took these people as nothing. The government refuses to listen to their grievances up to the level where it is today” (IR10). Another interviewee argued that:

“The government is not ready to address the insecurity issue because nothing can supersede the government except the power of God. It has the capacity and equipment to address it, regardless where it’s happening. If they also like, they can dialogue with

them peacefully. Because the government has all the tricks and strategies, any person comes, the government has a way of dealing with him, but refused” (IR8).

The respondents further argued that the government has not adequately prepared and planned to address the insecurity challenges. This was evident from the poor implementation and discontinuity of some critical policies. There was careless borders control, and the inability to disarm the rustlers/bandits or directed the security forces to infiltrate their hideouts. A respondent concurred that:

“The government lacks commitment. Why did I say this? There was a program called the Security Challenges Containment Order introduced in August/September 2021. These include; cutting down networks, not allowing more than two petrol stations to sell fuel, and trucks to go into the forest to bring firewood. Also, all cattle markets in the affected local governments were closed. The government further prohibits or makes it a crime to transport cattle out of the state. These measures nearly end the rustling/banditry, but unfortunately, it was not fully implemented and monitored” (IR6).

Besides, the respondents (44%) stated that some corrupt politicians and governmental officials have collaborated and made the insecurity issues a pursuit-making venture. Thus, corruption, discrimination, selfish interest of the politicians and governmental officials have politicized the insecurity challenges of cattle rustling and armed banditry in the state. Usman and Ahmed (2021) discovered similar findings that the politicization of insecurity is one of the challenges confronting the state’s efforts. Moreover, a key informant supported these views and explained that:

“A politician led the discussion and dialogue between the government and rustlers/bandits. The reason is that they allowed him to lead was not more than that of politics and politicians who surrounded him. Therefore, giving leadership of a sensitive issue like insecurity to politicians will only deteriorate the efforts. Because the politicians see rustlers and bandits as people who can potentially be useful for their political ambitions during elections” (IR10).

One of the respondents further confirmed that:

“There was a time when we took the dead bodies from here to the outgoing secretary of the state government. He said that we are complaining too much. We are always complaining. A car accident had happened, and we brought it to him. I will not fear saying this in his presence” (IR11).

Another respondent described that:

“The security committee under Governor Masari’s government was not composed of security experts. During the regime, the security committee's head or chairman was a former Secretary to the State Government (SSG) who was a historian and politician. He is never a security expert. This also applied to other members. The committee members considered their membership as a means of getting money, not solving the challenges of insecurity facing our dear state” (IR6).

In Batsari, Faskari, Kankara, and Jibia LGAs (see Figure 1), the respondents observed that the government had not taken legal action against the rustlers/bandits. The relevant authorities are not interested in punishing the arrested criminals. The perpetrators and their collaborators go back home freely without any punishment from all levels of authorities due to what is called “free-on-bail syndrome.” This had attracted many locals into the venture, including members of the vigilante groups serving as informants. Some of the traditional leaders conspired with rustlers/bandits for their safety or personal gain. In addition, respondents (28%) in Sabuwa LGA argued that the poor leadership styles of the local, state, and federal governments have kept them away from collaborating simultaneously to sustain the dialogues with the perpetrators. This has contributed to the collapse of the entire dialogue process. As a result, the political, socio-economic, and tribal maltreatment issues remained unaddressed, which were the root causes of insecurity problems in the state. One of the interviewees noted that:

“We went together with the former Governor of Katsina state, Alhaji Aminu Bello Masari, with his secretaries and the Katsina state police commissioner for the dialogue. However, the dialogue was a failure. Instead, the dialogue empowered the rustlers and bandits to come to the town and threatened us as they like” (IR11).

In explaining the poor leadership and governance at the local government level, one of the respondents stated that:

“After the local government reform, the Chairmen kept cutting bush and sharing lands to the people as they liked. Grazing lands were turned into farmlands. If a person came to the local government as a director, he might need a big land to farm. So, he would just clear the bush and block the grazing routes. If a Fulani man came to pass, he knew their grazing route because he had been passing through with his father throughout his teenage years. He will come to find out that the route has turned into somebody’s farmland and he has no other way to pass except through the farmland. So, the moment people arrested him, he will suffer all kinds of punishment. Some will tie him with rope, beat him up, and then take him to court. The court will seize and sell his cattle to pay the damages” (IR1).

In Dan-Musa and Jibia LGAs, 57% and 56% of the respondents maintained that poor governance had given illiterates access to sophisticated weapons, and the authorities were not ready to take the necessary action. The government has failed to engage all the stakeholders. Many stakeholders in the affected communities, such as the traditional and religious leaders, were not involved in the attempts to resolve the challenges of insecurity. This has demonstrated a lack of honesty and incompetence of the political leaders towards commitment to address the insecurity problem in the state. Okenna (2020) found similar findings that Nigeria has been struggling with corrupt leadership and bad governance from the federal down to the state and local government levels.

Socio-Economic Challenges

On the other hand, 27% of the respondents have identified many socio-economic factors as obstacles to the success of the state and federal governments’ efforts in tackling the insecurity problems. For example, respondents in Batsari, Safana, Dan-Dume, Dan-Musa, and Faskari local government areas (LGAs) (see Figure 1), argued that the widespread poverty, illiteracy (both Islamic and Western education), unemployment, and lack of social amenities in rural communities had left many villagers with no alternative than joining the rustling and banditry activities. A respondent added that:

“Because of illiteracy, the rustlers/bandits could not understand the issue of changing climate, which scientists have widely acknowledged. It is not only because the Hausas have taken over their cattle route and water points, making cattle rearing difficult, but we have the issue of global climate change. Some areas have become dry, some grasses are no longer nutritious for the cattle, and some rivers and streams are drying up. So, they should be informed that their predicaments are not only because of the Hausa people. In Northern Nigeria, the heat has increased, and in that process, the groundwater table has gone down, streams are drying up, and grasses do not grow luxuriantly. So, let them know that there is a natural factor, which cannot be fight by nobody” (IR6).

The respondents (27%) maintained that the affected communities lacked discipline mechanisms to deal with the issues of informants. Sometimes, even the local leaders conspired with the rustlers/bandits to perpetrate the crimes. This prevailing conditions across most communities have discouraged people from collaborating on communal security matters. It has damaged the intercommunal cooperation and interpersonal relationships among people. People were afraid to report suspected attack plans, movements, and locations of the perpetrators to the traditional rulers or security personnel. According to the respondents (26%) in Jibia LGA, this condition has broadened the communication gap between the people, community, security personnel, and the government. A similar finding was discovered by Ojo et al. (2023) about the dethroned of some influential traditional leaders who shared intelligence information with the rustlers/bandits.

In addition, respondents (26%) from Dan-Musa LGA argued that the perpetrators claimed to be neglected by the government regarding socio-economic and infrastructural facilities for communal development. Hence, they maintained rustling and banditry activities as an occupation and sources of their livelihood. Similarly, 36% and 26% of the respondents in Kankara and Jibia LGAs stated that the government had neglected the citizens’ rights and refused to deliver its responsibilities of providing basic social amenities to the communities. This include; schools, health facilities, water, electricity, and other infrastructure that would improve the living conditions of people and reduce the high rate of illiteracy and poverty in rural areas. One of Key informants narrated that:

“Use of the stick approach will never solve the problems. It has other aspects, such as economic, social, physical, psychological, and emotional. All these have to be addressed. Educational, yes, we need to bring a nomadic education and settle down these people so that they will not even like to go and stay in the forest. Shelter them, let them see electricity, pipe-born water, and veterinary doctors who would assist them in providing medications to their animals. Let them know about the modernization of herding and cattle rearing. It is not about taking military or police into the forest to wage war. If you killed all the rustlers/bandits, you have not solved the problem of rustling/banditry because other root causes have not been addressed” (IR3).

Moreover, the respondents from Kankara and Jibia LGAs (see Figure 1) observed that the measures taken by the government to curtail the insecurity problems of cattle rustling and armed banditry had not incorporated the affected people at the grassroots level. As a result, the government appears unjust and loses influence over many rural communities. The government also needs to resolve issues of grazing land, pasture, and natural deposit of resources in the areas. A respondent noted that:

“Rustling and banditry are linked to abundant solid mineral deposits in those areas. Do not be surprised when you hear that aircraft are coming to the Batsari forest, claiming that they were stealing cattle. What are they going to do with them? They are drilling, collecting whatever gold drilled, and dropping weapons for the bandits. That is the business” (IR7).

The submission above agreed with the finding of Ojo et al. (2023) that the security personnel had arrested many foreign nationals who were involved in illegal mining of solid mineral resources and sponsoring rustling, banditry, and kidnapping in Northwestern Nigeria. Besides, respondents (22%) in Sabuwa LGA stated that cattle rustling and armed banditry are lucrative businesses that engage many suppliers who benefit heavily from the activities. For instance, some individuals supplied weapons. There are bullet suppliers or smugglers. Some provided information, while others were drug dealers. There were also food, uniforms, and petrol suppliers, among others. Some were experts in negotiating ransom. These were the reasons behind the persistent attacks on communities that posed serious threats to the local, state, and federal governments in tackling the insecurity problems. A respondent reaffirmed that:

“The criminology aspect of it is that people are not even rustlers/bandits but are making a lot of money. Some people specialize in ransom negotiation, whether on a small or large scale. Some specialize in giving information. Others specialize in taking food items, petrol, and other logistics. Some people engage in the smuggling of firearms and ammunitions to the forest. Some people even collect the ransom and keep it in banks for the rustlers/bandits. Some specialize in taking drugs to them. These are ordinary people who are members of the community. Some even have high-profile eminent personalities within us” (IR3).

Another interviewee observed that:

“People in the forest (rustlers/bandits) are now used to money. Someone who cannot keep up to one thousand (N1,000) naira (less than 1 dollar) in his pocket, now, it has happened that he can get one million naira in one operation. Therefore, stopping these activities is not a small task” (IR1).

CONCLUSION

This study established that weak security system, poor governance, and other socio-economic factors have rendered the efforts of the state and federal government ineffective and incapable of addressing the insecurity challenges. Hence, the local, state and federal governments must explore other strategies that will address the insecurity problems of cattle rustling and armed banditry in Katsina state. There is need to shift focus from the excessive use of coercive to non-coercive strategies, which must be all-inclusive in nature as an alternative to resolve the challenges of insecurity in the state.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends that the traditional rulers, religious leaders, civil society organizations, affected communities, security personnel, the local, state, and federal governments must work as a team to

genuinely reconcile with the rustlers/bandits so that the insecurity problems can be addressed peacefully. It is necessary to highlight that each stakeholder has a clear role to play in resolving the insecurity challenges. Therefore, any discussion, dialogue, reconciliation and agreements must be all-inclusive to avoid repeating the mistakes of the previous administration.

The security personnel should be motivated towards peaceful resolution of the insecurity problems. This will assist in eliminating the pervasive corruption among them, minimize the government spending on the fight against rustling/banditry and entrench trust among the individuals, communities and the perpetrators on the entire resolution and transformation process.

The policy-makers must collaborate with the relevant stakeholders to manage the large forest reserves, maintain grazing lands, initiate reliable porous border control, address the solid mineral deposit issues and some of the judicial loopholes to enable the retribution of justice in cases where some issues require court referrals. The state government must tackle the rampant illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, and deficits in socio-economic infrastructures for the well-being of rural communities. This will assist in building a solid foundation for sustainable peace across the affected local government areas and the state.

In collaboration with the stakeholders, the policy-makers at the local and state government levels must disarm the rustlers, bandits, vigilantes, and community members with any weapon under their custody. The state and federal governments must take decisive action against the rampant circulation of arms, hard drugs, and their sources. This is necessary to maintain any agreement with the rustlers/bandits and the communities. It will also remove fear and ensure peaceful coexistence among individuals, communities, and the state as a whole.

Good governance is a key to all the plans, strategies, and agreements. The government at all levels, security personnel, traditional rulers, and all other stakeholders must be honest, sincere, remove corrupt tendencies, selfish interests, biases and politicization of the insecurity issues. They should genuinely concentrated efforts on resolving the insecurity challenges and improving the affected areas. This will enhance the public trust and confidence in supporting the strategies and programmes aims at promoting peace within the state.

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