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The Effects of Armed Banditry on Perpetrators, Victims and Law Enforcement Responses in Zamfara State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The rise of armed banditry in Zamfara State and across Northwestern Nigeria has significantly undermined socio-economic and political activities in the region. This study examines the effects of armed banditry on perpetrators, victims, and the responses of law enforcement agencies in Zamfara State. A total of 250 respondents participated in the study through questionnaire administration, while ten (10) in-depth interviews were conducted. The sample size was determined using a multistage sampling technique. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and qualitative data were transcribed and thematically interpreted. The findings reveal that armed banditry has severely disrupted farming, commercial activities, and social life, including festivals and school attendance. Additionally, residents, victims, and relatives of victims experience significant psychological trauma resulting from repeated incidents of banditry. The study further establishes that banditry negatively affects the supply and delivery of basic amenities within the affected communities. Strain-anomie theory served as the theoretical framework for the study. Based on these findings, the study recommends that government authorities address the underlying issues of unemployment, poverty, and the long-standing neglect of border communities. Improving socio-economic conditions in these areas would not only enhance residents' well-being but also reduce the likelihood of individuals turning to criminal activities as a means of survival.

Keywords: Armed banditry, Crime prevention, Insecurity, Law enforcement, Nigeria, Perpetrators, Victims, Zamfara State.

Introduction

The security system of Nigeria is threatened by the growth of insurgency in different parts of the country, be it Boko haram in the North East, militant groups in the Niger Delta, and armed banditry and cattle rustling in the North West region since Nigeria's return to democracy in 1999 (Mustapha, 2019). The rise of this criminality has a significant influence on the insecurity of this nation, which threatens the lives and property of the citizens. Without a question, all of these have slowed Nigeria's overall socioeconomic growth and development (Rufus & Ogbe, 2025). According to Zubairu (2020), the causes of insecurity in Nigeria are the threats of poverty and unemployment, elite exploitation, intolerance of religious difference, corruption, a weak security apparatus, a porous border, national inequality and marginalization, poor leadership, and bad governance. However, the borderless nature of Nigeria makes the people of neighboring border communities and their armed forces cross into the country from various locations across the porous borders. The majority of these individuals have been accused of being the masterminds behind the many armed banditry attacks in Nigeria (Momoh, 2024). These bandits operate freely in the state territory without intervention from security agencies, most especially the army and police, which have been suspected to be geared by some unpatriotic citizens for their own interest, Ojo et al (2023).

Armed banditry has become a major security concern in Zamfara State and Nigeria as a whole, disrupting once-peaceful agricultural communities through violence, kidnappings, and property destruction. Despite various government efforts, banditry has persisted and evolved, leading to declining food production and worsening poverty. This situation is exacerbated by weak governance, the proliferation of small arms, and communal tensions, yet there is a dearth in empirical research on its localized drivers and victims, especially in Zamfara. The ongoing insecurity raises important questions regarding the effectiveness of current counter-banditry strategies and their impact on community resilience. Therefore, the authors sought to close this gap by identifying the characteristics of the armed banditry perpetrators, victims and law enforcement responses in Zamfara State, Nigeria.

The specific objectives of the study were to;

i. Determine the socio-demographic attributes of identified perpetrators of armed banditry in Zamfara State.
ii. To examine the impacts of armed banditry on the individual victims and the affected communities.
iii. To find out what the law enforcement agencies are doing to curb armed banditry in Zamfara State.

LITERATURE DISCOURSE

Recent scholarship has increasingly focused on the evolving dynamics of armed banditry in Northwestern Nigeria, highlighting its multifaceted impacts on communities, education, and socio-economic activities. Research indicates that armed banditry not only threatens physical security but also imposes profound psychological, social, and

economic consequences.

Eze (2025) provides a detailed account of the psychosocial effects of banditry on Christian communities in Kaduna State. The study finds that repeated exposure to violent attacks has resulted in widespread trauma, anxiety, depression, and emotional distress, which compromise individuals' coping capacities. Beyond individual mental health, Eze notes broader societal disruptions, including the erosion of social cohesion, diminished participation in communal activities, and pervasive insecurity that affects daily living. These findings underscore the substantial psychosocial burden imposed by armed banditry on affected populations. Similarly, Bamaiyi and Aliero (2025) examine the impact of banditry-related trauma on secondary school students in Kebbi State, revealing a significant negative relationship between trauma and academic performance. Students experiencing higher levels of post-traumatic stress, fear, and chronic stress were found to underperform academically compared to their less-affected peers, illustrating how persistent insecurity undermines cognitive engagement, motivation, and learning outcomes.

The economic ramifications of armed banditry have also been well-documented. Faruk and Abdullahi (2025) analyze its effects on socio-economic activities across selected local governments in Katsina State. Their findings reveal that persistent insecurity disrupts trade, reduces household income, and undermines food security as farmers abandon farmland and supply chains weaken. Additionally, banditry contributes to deteriorating health conditions and overall declines in living standards due to restricted mobility, increased costs, and loss of livelihoods. Collectively, these studies highlight the deep socio-economic vulnerabilities resulting from prolonged insecurity.

Several scholars have explored the structural and environmental factors contributing to armed banditry. Haruna (2024) emphasizes the role of porous borders and regional security challenges in facilitating the spread of armed groups, including bandits, terrorists, and smugglers. Audu (2024) identifies cultural homogeneity between Nigeria and its neighbors as a factor enabling rural banditry in the Northwest, compounded by inadequate state presence and insufficient deployment of security personnel. Abdullahi and Muktar (2022) further highlight the role of uncontrolled border areas, weapon proliferation, and socioeconomic deprivation in sustaining bandit operations. Additionally, Ojewale (2025) examines the nexus between banditry and illicit gold mining, demonstrating how elite patronage and historical neglect of the solid minerals sector have enabled the manipulation of bandits to protect mining interests. Mustapha (2021) underscores that poverty, unemployment, and weak state presence exacerbate the human security consequences of banditry, manifesting as disrupted livelihoods, reduced food security, and weakened education and health systems.

The failure of state institutions to effectively manage armed banditry has further amplified its impacts. Abraham and Sakariyau (2023) attribute the Nigeria Police Force's (NPF) shortcomings to limited operational resources, inadequate manpower, poor police-community collaboration, and interagency coordination challenges. Ahmadu and Maliki (2025) evaluate the NPF's tactical responses in Katsina State between 2017 and 2022, noting the deployment of specialized units including the Intelligence Response Team, Force Intelligence Bureau,

Police Mobile Force, and Special Tactical Forces to high-risk areas. While these measures reflect institutional efforts to strengthen intelligence and rapid-response capabilities, significant challenges persist. These include insufficient operational capacity, outdated logistical and technological tools, mobility constraints, and limited surveillance infrastructure, which collectively hinder the effectiveness of preventive and reactive strategies.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Anomie-Strain Theory

The theory was first proposed by Emile Durkheim and then developed by Robert K. Merton in 1938 argued that the culture and structure of society causes criminality. According to Merton, anomie arises from a flawed interaction between cultural goals and the legitimate means for achieving them rather than from unregulated ideals alone. Even though everyone is taught to aspire to success, not everyone has the same chances to achieve it lead to deviance.
He outlines five possible ways people can react to the strain between their cultural goals and the opportunities at their disposal. These are called Merton's typology of individual adaptation. The acceptance or rejection of cultural goals, "financial success," and socially accepted means to attain them, such as high socioeconomic standing, education, or high-paying employment possibilities, characterize each type of individual adaptation. The following are some ways that individuals in society react as the pressure from the sociocultural system increases:

i. Conformity: Conformists have accepted the cultural goals of attaining success and accepted the legitimate means of achieving it. Example (University students who work hard to earn degrees and get jobs).
ii. Innovation: Here, individuals who have accepted the cultural goals of attaining success but are trying to achieve it via illegitimate means, which could include criminal behaviors. Example (drug dealers, robbers, and thieves).
iii. Ritualism: Here, individuals who have rejected or abandoned the cultural goals of attaining success but continue to use legitimate means to make their living.
iv. Retreatism: Here, individuals have rejected the cultural goals of attaining success and have also rejected the legitimate means of achieving it.
v. Rebellion: here individuals reject the cultural goals of attaining success and replace them with other primary goals, and have also rejected the legitimate means and replaced them with other legitimate or illegitimate means.

Robert K Merton's Deviance Typology

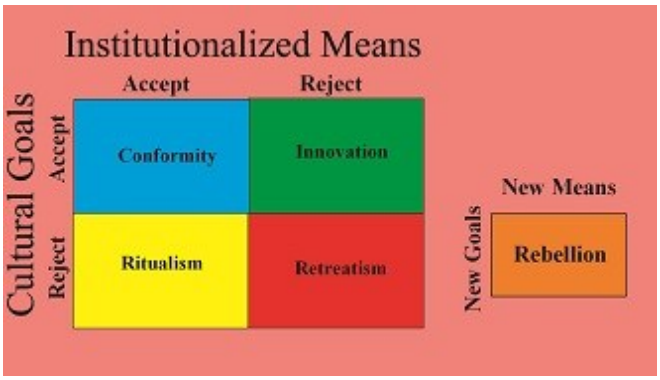


Figure 1: Strain-Anomie Theory

The sociocultural system of the society puts more pressure on the individual to react in a deviant way to achieve certain goals. The people who engage in armed banditry do so to conform to the achievement goals set by society while eschewing the institutionalized means of accomplishing the goals. There have been some social and financial costs to society as a result of these reactions to social goals through criminal activity like banditry. The nature of Nigeria society gives more privilege and attention to wealthy individuals as a social value and neglects those who are not wealthy. The economic status of the Nigeria state has been instability for decades, which has denied many people in the country from claiming the ladder of success goals set by the society through approved means. The widespread unemployment and poverty are increasingly linked with the emerging crime, such as armed banditry in Nigeria. The activities of these bandits include kidnapping, abduction of urban and rural settlers, students, and travelers in exchange for ransoms, massacre, rape, and cattle rustling. This may help to explain why armed banditry is becoming more common as people attempt to find their way.

The theory is criticized for overemphasizing the role that social class plays in crime and deviance. Additionally, it is also based on the notion that the theory is biased against the middle class, assuming that those from lower socio-economic classes commit crimes to get to middle-class status.

METHODOLOGY

This section provides an overview of the study area, including its historical background and study population. It also outlines the research methodology, detailing the sample size, sampling techniques, data collection methods, and the procedures employed for data analysis.

History of the Study Area

Zamfara State is one of the seven constituent states of the Northwest geopolitical zone of Nigeria. The state was created in 1996 following its separation from the former Sokoto State.

Geographically, Zamfara shares an international boundary with the Republic of Niger to the north, and is bordered by Katsina State to the east, Sokoto State to the west, and Kebbi, Niger, and Kaduna States to the south. Administratively, the state comprises fourteen Local Government Areas (LGAs), namely: Gusau, Tsafe, Bungudu, Maru, Kaura-Namoda, Zurmi, Shinkafi, Birnin-Magaji, Talata-Mafara, Bakura, Maradun, Anka, Bukkuyum, and Gummi. Zamfara covers a land area of approximately 39,762 square kilometres. According to the projected population in 2025, the state has an approximate population of 6.51 million and is predominantly agrarian. The Hausa constitute the major ethnic group, while the Fulani population accounts for an estimated 20–30 percent of the total population, with 15–20 percent identified as pastoralists. Zamfara State is endowed with extensive forested areas, including thirty established grazing reserves. These reserves cover approximately 2,225,648 hectares, providing a conducive environment for pastoral activities. The state also possesses an estimated livestock population of about six million, comprising cattle, sheep, goats, camels, horses, and donkeys.

Study Population

The study population of this research comprised male and female residents of the study area, as well as political and Traditional/Religious leaders, youth leaders and security agencies such as the military, police, civil defense, and vigilante groups, which are responsible for protecting lives and properties and combating the menace of armed banditry in Zamfara State. The respondents consisted of males and females aged 18 years and above at the time of data collection. Also, persons who have been victims of incidents of armed banditry are part of the selected respondents for this study.

Sample Size and Sampling Method

A total sample size of two hundred and ninety (290) respondents was selected for the study. Out of the total sample size, 280 respondents were designated for the collection of quantitative data, while ten (10) participants were selected for the qualitative data. Out of the 280 questionnaires administered, 250 were duly completed and returned, and were therefore considered suitable for data analysis.

The study employed a combination of probability and non-probability sampling techniques, specifically multistage cluster sampling and purposive sampling. Multistage cluster sampling, a probability method, groups the population into clusters for systematic selection, while purposive sampling involves selecting participants based on the researcher's knowledge of the population and the purpose of the study. In Stage One: A Purposive sampling was used to select five (5) Local Government Areas (LGAs): Birnin Magaji, Bukkuyum, Maru, Shinkafi, and Zurmi. These LGAs were chosen because they are believed to be the most affected by armed banditry, justifying the purposive approach at this stage. In Stage two: In each of the selected five (5) LGAs, the population was divided into clusters based on political wards. From each LGA, two (2) political wards were selected through simple random sampling using the lottery method, resulting in ten (10) political wards overall. Simple random sampling was

used to ensure that all wards had an equal chance of being selected and to reduce selection bias. In Stage Three: From each selected political ward, two (2) streets were chosen purposively, yielding a total of twenty (20) streets. Purposive sampling was applied at this stage because certain streets were known to be more directly affected by armed banditry or to contain more residents with relevant experiences. In Stage Four: Within each of the twenty (20) streets, fourteen (14) respondents were selected through accidental (convenience) sampling, producing a total of 280 respondents. Accidental sampling was considered appropriate because the sensitivity of the topic made many potential respondents hesitant to speak, rendering probability methods such as simple random sampling impractical.

For the qualitative data, ten (10) respondents were selected purposively two (2) from each of the five LGAs. These included: 2 traditional/Religious leaders, 2 political leaders, 2 youth leaders, 2 vigilante group members, 2 Divisional Police Officers (DPOs).

Purposive sampling was appropriate for the in-depth interviews (IDIs) because the participants were chosen as key informants with specialized knowledge related to armed banditry. They also represented diverse segments of society, including traditional institutions, political leadership, and law enforcement.

Data Collection Instrument

The data collection instruments employed are a questionnaire and an in-depth interview. The questionnaire was utilised for data collection due to its efficiency and cost-effectiveness in gathering information from the study population. It also instills a significant degree of confidence in respondents regarding the anonymity of their views. Furthermore, the comprehensive interview guide was employed to collect qualitative data from the chosen respondents for added insights.

Method of Data Collection and Analysis

The study drew its data from two categories of sources: primary and secondary. Primary data were gathered using a questionnaire and a series of in-depth interviews (IDIs). The questionnaire, administered to residents within the study area, included both open- and closed-ended questions. This combination enabled respondents to choose from predetermined options while also allowing them the freedom to articulate their opinions in their own words.

In addition, in-depth interviews (IDIs) were conducted to gain comprehensive insights into the study topic. The interviews targeted political leaders, traditional/religious leaders, youth leaders and as well as security agencies such as the Nigeria Police, Army, Civil Defence and vigilante groups who are tasked with addressing the issue of armed banditry in the state. Participants were purposively selected based on their expertise and experience relevant to the subject matter. The interviews were conducted in person, audio-recorded, and subsequently transcribed by the researcher for analysis. Secondary data were also collected from authoritative sources, including textbooks, peer-reviewed journals, scholarly articles, and reliable online resources. Care was taken to ensure that the materials consulted were current and pertinent to the research focus.

Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22. The results were presented in frequency distribution tables with simple percentages based on the responses to the questions. Qualitative data obtained from the interview sessions were transcribed verbatim and systematically analyzed to complement and provide deeper insight into the quantitative results.

RESULTS/FINDINGS

This deals specifically with the presentation, statistical analysis, and discussion of the data obtained by the researchers.

The Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

This section presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents. Thus, data on status in the society, age, marital status, educational attainment, and religion of the respondents are presented.

Table 1: Socio-demographic characteristics of the Respondents

Socio-Demographic Variables	**Frequency (%)**
Status in society	
Political leaders	25 (10)
Traditional/Religious leaders	30 (12)
Vigilante group members	50 (20)
Victims	40 (16)
Law enforcement agents	50 (20)
Local government staff	25 (10)
Businessmen/women	30 (12)
Age	
18-30 years	48 (19.2)
31-40 years	68 (27.2)
41-50 years	70 (28)
51-60 years	40 (16)
61 years and above	24 (9.6)
Marital status	
Single	60 (24)
Married	141 (56.4)
widowed	35 (14)
Divorced/separated	14 (5.6)
Education attainment	
Primary	53 (21.2)
Secondary	112 (44.8)
Tertiary	70 (28)
None	15 (6)

Religious	
Muslim	202 (80.8)
Christian	35 (14)
Others	13 (5.2)
Total	**250 (100%)**

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 shows the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, such as respondents' status in the society, age, marital status, educational attainment, and religion. It revealed that 10% (25) of the respondents were political leaders, 12% (30) of the respondents were Traditional/Religious leaders, also 20% (50) of the respondents were vigilante groups members, 16% (40) of the respondents were victims of the armed banditry in the study areas, while 20% (50) of the respondents were law enforcement agents, 10% (25) of the respondents were staff of local government areas and 20% (30) of the respondents were Businessmen and women. This indicates that a significant percentage of the respondents were law enforcement agents and vigilante group members.

The table also revealed that 19.2% (48) of the respondents were between the age 18-30 years, 27.2 (68) were between the age of 31-40 years, also 28% (70) were between the age of 41-50 years of age, whereas 16% (40) were between 51-60 years of age, thereby leaving 9.6% (24) respondents as those above 60 years. This indicates that many of the respondents fell under the age category of 41-50 years; as such, they are at their peak age.

Analysis of the marital status of the respondents in Table 1 indicates that 24% (60) were single, married respondents were 56.4% (141), widowed respondents were 14% (35), while those divorced/separated were 5.6% (14). This indicates that two-thirds of the respondents were married. This can be attributed to the fact that the majority of them were adults.

On the educational attainment of the respondents, 21.2% (53) of the respondents had primary level education, 44.8% (112) had secondary education, and 28% (70) had tertiary education, while 6% (15) had none. This indicates that close to two-thirds of the respondents had obtained a secondary school certificate.

The table also revealed that 80.8% (202) of the respondents were Muslims, 14% (35) of the respondents were Christians, while others were 5.2% (13). This indicates that the majority of the respondents were Muslim. It is hardly unexpected that the majority were Muslims because Muslims predominate in Zamfara State.

Qualitative Analysis

Interviews on the socio-demographic attributes of the identified perpetrators of armed banditry in Zamfara State.

The socio-demographic attributes of interest to this study include age, sex, estimated number of bandits that operate in a group, and the languages that the bandits speak. These were obtained through an in-depth interview because responses from the survey were mostly hearsay.

The in-depth interview indicated that the ages of the bandits range between 25 and 45 years. They are mostly former combatants from neighboring Chad or Niger who infiltrate this country through our porous borders. This finding seems to suggest that, at that age, the armed bandits are agile, adventurous, and fit to engage in activities that require a lot of energy, tact, and agility.

On the sex of the armed bandits, the in-depth interview indicated that the bandits are usually all males. Victims of armed banditry, vigilante groups, traditional leaders, and law enforcement officers unanimously agreed that they are all males, no females. It was revealed that the bandits are usually all males with isolated involvement of females who are mostly Nigerian, who collaborate with the bandits to carry out these cross-border raids.

As regards the estimated number of bandits that operate in a group, respondents during the in-depth interview revealed that there are always many. From the reports, the researcher could not have a definite number. However, on average, they operate in groups of between 10 and 25 bandits. The finding suggests that there was no consensus as to the number of bandits that usually operate, and that the victims may not have been able to count the number of armed bandits because they were always asked to lie face down, and also due to fear. The bandits may also operate in large numbers to overwhelm their victims and resist any attempt to deter them by both security agents and the vigilantes.

Considering the languages spoken by the armed bandits, the in-depth interview revealed that the bandits usually speak Nigerian languages such as Hausa and Fulfulde. The researcher observed that Fulfulde, Hausa, and French are spoken by some residents of the border communities on both sides of the divide, giving room for speculation that most of the armed bandits must have been former fighters from our then war-torn neighboring countries, with Nigerian collaboration. While Fulfulde and Hausa could be seen as other Nigerian languages, French is a foreign language.

The researcher tried to find out from the relevant authorities why the number of arrested armed bandits was low and was informed that it was because most armed bandits escaped into the hills and forests, some were killed during an exchange of fire with the police or by joint patrol teams, and that only the injured are usually apprehended.

Quantitative Analysis

1. Questionnaire analysis of the impacts of armed banditry on the individual victims and the affected communities?

Table 2: Respondents' Perception of the Impact of Armed Banditry

S/N	Impact of armed	Strongly agree		Agree		Strongly disagree		Disagree		Total	
	Banditry	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	Freq.	(%)	**Freq.**	**(%)**
1	Disruption of farming Activities	9	3.6	27	10.8	62	24.8	152	60.8	**250**	**100**
2	Disruption of commercial Activities	198	79.2	44	17.6	-	-	8	3.2	**250**	**100**
3	Psychological trauma suffered by residents, victims and relatives of victims of armed banditry.	212	84.8	25	10.0	9	3.6	4	1.6	**250**	**100**
4	Negative impact on supply/delivery of basic amenities	74	29.6	129	51.6	13	5.2	34	13.6	**250**	**100**
5	Disruption of social activities, e.g., festivals, school attendance, etc.	159	63.6	38	15.2	10	4.0	43	17.2	**250**	**100**

Source: Researcher's field Survey, 2025

S/N 1 of Table 2 shows that 60.8% of the respondents disagree that armed banditry disrupts farming activities, 3.6% strongly agree, 10.8% agree, while 24.8% strongly disagree.
S/N 2 of Table 2 shows that 79.2% of the respondents strongly agreed that armed banditry disrupts commercial activities, 17.6% agreed with it, nil respondent was recorded for strongly disagreed, while 3.2 of % respondents disagreed that armed banditry disrupts commercial activities.
S/N 3 of Table 2 shows that 84.8% of the respondents strongly agreed that residents, victims, and relatives of victims suffer psychological trauma as a result of such incidents of armed banditry. The data further shows that 10% of the respondents agreed, 3.6% of the respondents strongly disagreed, and 1.6% of the respondents disagreed.
S/N 4 of Table 2 Shows that 51.6% of the respondents agree that there is a negative impact on the supply and delivery of basic amenities due to the incidents of armed banditry, 29.6% strongly agree with the assertion, 5.2% strongly disagree, while 13.6% disagree.
S/N 5 of Table 2 shows that 63.6% strongly agree that armed banditry disrupts social activities such as festivals and school attendance, 15.2% agree with the assertion, 5.2% strongly disagree, while 13.6% disagree that armed banditry disrupts social activities.

Quantitative Analysis

2. Questionnaire analysis of the law-enforcement agencies doing to curb armed banditry

Table 3: Preventive measures by community and law enforcement agents against armed Banditry

Control measure	Frequency	Percent
Control of movement	121	48.4
Setting Vigilante	40	16.0
Carry of charms	15	6.0
Travel with less money or valuables	65	26.0
Leave everything to God	9	3.6
Total	**250**	**100.0**

Source: Researcher's field Survey, 2025

Table 3 shows that 48% of the respondents controlled their movements in a bid to reduce the risk of being victims of armed banditry, 16% of the respondents advocated for the setting up of vigilante groups, and 6% of the respondents opined on carrying charms as a form of protection. Another 26% of the respondents alluded to travelling with less money or valuables, while 3.6% chose to submit everything to God. This indicates that two-thirds of the respondents said the control of movement is the preventive measure adopted by the community and law enforcement agencies to curb armed banditry.

Table 4: Public perception on the Effectiveness of the preventive measure

Effectiveness of control measures	Frequency	Percent
Very effective	88	35.2
Fairly effective	110	44.0
Not effective	52	20.8
Total	**250**	**100.0**

Source: Researcher's field Survey, 2025

Table 4 shows the public perception of the effectiveness of the preventive measures to tackle armed banditry. The study revealed that 44% of the respondents said that the measures adopted were fairly effective, 35.2% stressed that the measures were very effective, while 20.8% asserted that the measures were not effective. This indicates that two-thirds of the respondents said the preventive measures adopted were fairly effective.

Table 5: Responses on Effectiveness of Law Enforcement Agents' Preventive Measures

Effectiveness of control measures	Frequency	Percent
Very effective	43	17.2
Fairly effective	80	32.0
Not effective	127	50.8
Total	**250**	**100.0**

Source: Researcher's field Survey, 2025

Table 5 shows the effectiveness of law enforcement agents' preventive measures to tackle armed banditry. The study revealed that 50.8 % of the respondents said that the measures were not effective, 17.2% opined that it was very effective, while 32% averred that it was fairly effective. It is suggested here that, while the government law enforcement agents and some respondents believed that the measures put in place were effective, most people believed that the vigilantes were more effective because they pursue the armed bandits into the hills and bushes and also use their local charms to engage the armed bandits while the government law enforcement agents only operate along the public highways. Judging from the way the various patrol teams operate and the nature of the terrain, it is difficult to prevent and control acts of armed banditry in those border communities. To effectively control and prevent acts of banditry, it is necessary to involve aerial patrols to be able to monitor the movement of these bandits during and after their attacks.

DISCUSSIONS

The collected data revealed that law enforcement officers and members of vigilante groups are the majority responders in the study area, with most of them being between the ages of 41 and 50, which suggests that they are married and have obtained a secondary school certificate. The qualitative findings on the socio-demographic attributes of the identified perpetrators of armed banditry in the study area revealed that the age of the bandits ranges between 25 and 45 years; they are all males, and they operate in groups of 10-25 bandits. The findings reveal that Fulfulde, Hausa, and French are spoken by the bandits. The finding supported by Mustapha (2021), who notes that some of the armed bandits in Nigeria speak French, Hausa and Fulfulde and have had some form of military training.

The quantitative findings on the impacts of armed banditry on the individual victims and the affected community in the study area revealed that a significant percentage of the respondents stated that individual victims suffered psychological trauma, as well as residents and relatives of victims of armed banditry. This finding aligns with the study by Eze (2025) documents elevated levels of trauma, anxiety, depression, and emotional distress in communities affected by bandit violence. While significant respondents in the affected community state that there is a disruption of commercial and social activities, such as festivities and school attendance. This is consistent with Faruk and Abdullahi's (2025) analysis, who found a strong negative correlation between armed banditry and economic activities like trade and income generation in affected local governments.

The quantitative findings on the law enforcement agencies' doing to curb armed banditry in the study area revealed that controlling the movement of people within the affected community is the major preventive measure adopted. This aligns with a hard control approach often adopted in high-risk zones. The findings on public perception of the effectiveness of the preventive measures reveal that a significant percentage of the respondents stated that the preventive measures adopted were fairly effective. Lastly, findings towards responses on the effectiveness of law enforcement agents' preventive measures reveal that the preventive measures put in place by law enforcement agents were not effective. In contrast, Ahmadu and

Maliki (2025) document that police in rely on specialized tactical forces and intelligence units, but they also argue that the lack of adequate logistics and modern technology undermines long-term effectiveness.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the effect of armed banditry on the perpetrators, victims, and law enforcement responses in Zamfara State of Nigeria. The findings reveal that the age of the bandits ranges between 25-45 years, and they are all male and operate in groups of 10-25 majority of them are Fulani speaking in Fulfulde, Hausa, and French. Furthermore, the study reveals that victims and their relatives suffered psychological trauma due to armed banditry, and also the affected communities suffered disruption of commercial, social activities, and school attendance. It also reveals that law enforcement agencies adopted preventive measures to curb armed banditry by controlling the movement of people within the affected community. The study found that public perceives the effectiveness of preventive measures as fairly effective.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The government should strengthen the border security arrangements through enhanced intra-and inter-state collaboration among security and intelligence agencies to ensure effective tracking of traffickers.
2. The government should address the issues of unemployment, poverty, and neglect of the border communities to improve the socio-economic conditions of the residents and also reduce the tendency to turn to crime as an alternative to survival.
3. Efforts must therefore be made to control the flow of illegal trafficking, circulation, and use of small arms and light weapons within the borders.
4. The government should recognize vigilante and hunter groups in tackling armed banditry while also resuscitating local community monitoring systems.

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