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Cattle Rustling and Insecurity in Rural Communities of Kaduna State, Nigeria: An Empirical Study

ABUBAKAR, Mohammed Bashir¹

¹Department of Sociology, Ahmadu Bello University Zaria, Nigeria

Prof. Dr. Rohana Bt Yusof² and Dr. Talib, Azlizan³

^{1,2, &3}School of Government,

College of Law, Government and International Studies

Universiti Utara, Malaysia

Corresponding Address: mohbash2003@gmail.com +2348036866154

Abstract

Existing data on the level and magnitudes of insecurity in rural communities, Nigeria discloses an increase over time, which creates serious threat to lives and properties, hampers business activities. This rising upsurge of insecurity led by cattle rustling has remained unabated nonetheless has assumed a dangerous dimension which is threatening the corporate being of the country as one geographical entity. This study is on the nature of cattle rustling and its consequences on security in the rural communities of Kaduna State. The study was empirical in nature, qualitative data were collected using in-depth interviews. Findings shows that cattle rustling has caused serious havoc in the rural communities in terms of loss of lives, psychological fear migration, and organised crime which culminated to insecurity. The study recommends that government responsiveness and co-opting community members in the security of the area will go a long way in solving the lingering insecurity in the study area.

Keywords: cattle rustling, herdsmen, Insecurity, organised crime

Introduction

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria specifically states that “The security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government”. Regrettably, government on this constitutional responsibility has not live up to expectations. The government has failed to secure a safe atmosphere for lives, properties and the conduct of economic activities. The disturbing state of insecurity in Nigeria has pave ways to an increase in crime rate in the country. The most disturbing and apparent security threatened crimes are terrorism, kidnapping, cattle rustling, conflict etc.

Cattle rustling which is the focus of this research have become one of the major security threats affecting Nigeria today, because of the prevalents of the menace there is hardly a week or month without information on the Nigerian newspapers on an attack(s) made by cattle rustlers. For this reason, Saleh (2015) opined that cattle rustling has developed to a threat to the existence of rural

communities in Nigeria, and Kaduna State in particular because of its frequency. Furthermore, Uji, (2016) relates the activities of cattle rustlers to that of the dreaded terrorist groups like the Boko-haram, Taliban, and Al-Shabaab. Furthermore, the threat is also associated with rising upsurge of violence in northern parts of the Nigeria, as established in the phenomenon of herder/farmer conflicts (Okoli, and Atelhe, 2014). This shows that the level of the insecurity post by cattle rustling is enormous in Nigeria and Kaduna State to be specific.

Recently, the menace of cattle rustling in Nigeria has become a form of substantial village raids, whereby rural communities are recurrently attacked, raped and steal any available items that go beyond stock theft. These types of attack have become prevalent in the three geo-political zones of the northern parts of country (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014).

Insecurity in Nigeria has reached a level were even those who are shouldered with the responsibility of protecting lives and properties of Nigerians find it difficult to sleep with all their eyes closed. This is obvious with the number of Nigerian security personnel killed day in day out by criminals nationwide. For instance, on the 5th of April 2018 armed robbers attacked banks in Offa, Kwara State killing 17 people including nine police officers (Babalola & Yahaya, 2018). This has insecurity has clearly showed lack of responsiveness from the part of government.

According to Attah (2014), insecurity is “the state of anxiety or fear stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection.” It refers to lack or inadequate freedom from danger. This definition reflects physical insecurity which is the most visible form of insecurity, and it feeds into many other forms of insecurity such as economic and social security. In this paper, insecurity is conceived as a situation where human and national security of a state is compromised and exacerbated by weak or poor economic, military and/or human resource development conditions.

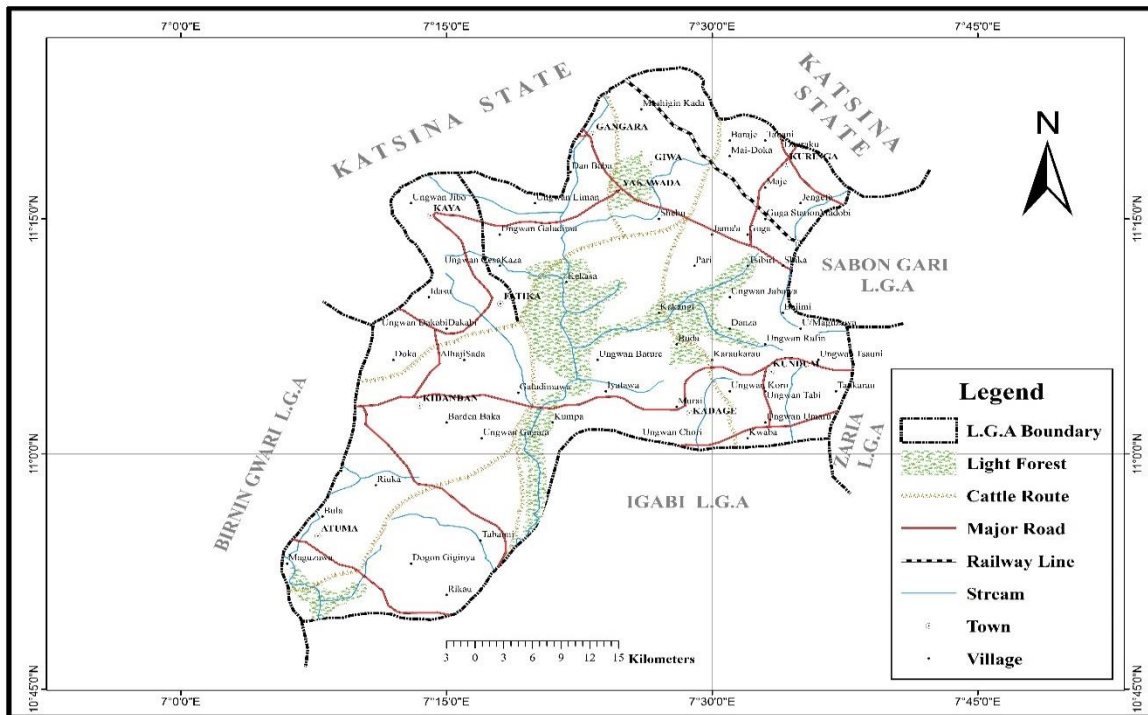


There is no data base showing the level of insecurity in Nigeria, however, some literature reported instances across the country. For instance, Godwin (2014), reported that, some yet to be identified heavily armed gunmen invaded a village in Sokoto, killing two persons and carting away over 8, 000 livestock. Furthermore, herdsman in number attacked Janduikula village in Wukari local government, Taraba State of Nigeria at about 6pm killing 25 people and many injured (Ihyongo, 2018). Again, risen nature of the insecurity is still a major concern in the north, for instance, in Benue State, on the 1st January 2018 two local government were attacked herdsman leaving 73 persons death and many sustained different degrees of injuries In a related development, another fresh attack by suspect herdsman on the 6th of March 2018 caused the lives of 26 in Omusu village, Okpoku local of government of the same state (Duru, 2018)

To crown it all, United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) explained that the insecurity has caused damage on schools and 2,295 teachers killed while over 1000 school children abducted. Furthermore, despite the government commitment, north east is not still secured. The recent attacked and kidnapping of secondary school girls in Dapchi, Yobe State indicated that there are few safe places in the north east and Nigeria in general (Shittu,2018).

Kaduna State is presently under the treats of these criminals and it has severely affected the corporate being of the State (Abubakar, 2014). People no longer live in the rural communities of the State because of the level of insecurity. This study therefore, focused on the nature of cattle rustling and how it affects security of lives and properties in the study area.

Research Methodology



Map of Giwa Local government

Giwa local government of Kaduna State is on of the local governments affected by the activities of cattle rustlers. The local government is bordered with Katsina State, to the north, Zaria and Igabi local governments to the south and Birnin Gwari to the west.

To fully understand cattle rustling and its effects on security in rural communities of Kaduna State, a case study research design was employed. Research

design is a usual qualitative technique used to discover a limited system in-depth (Clark and Creswell, 2015). The case study research design is usually conducted in a place limited in term of place, time, or some physical boundaries

In-depth interview as a significant tool for data collection was used. Interview assist the researcher to realise the task set out to achieve, such as explaining the phenomenon, or measuring them, identifying the specific problem of the research question (Sekaran, & Bougie, 2013). For these





reasons, semi structured in-depth interview guide was designed and administered to 6 community and 4 vigilante leaders in some selected communities prone to cattle rustling in Giwa Local Government of Kaduna State. The data for this research was collected during a Ph.D. field work between 20 December 2017 to 26, February 2018.

Research Findings

The study dwelt on cattle rustling and its effects on the security of rural communities in Kaduna State. As a result, the study was divided in to sub-themes that captured and addresses the insecurity situation of the study area. The sub themes are as follows: understanding of cattle rustling, loss of lives, psychological fear and migration, and organised crime.

The informants were asked to give their explanations on what cattle rustling is. This is to ascertain their familiarity with the concept.

Informants understanding of Cattle rustling

Findings shows that all the informants have agreement on the explanations of cattle rustling. Again, they have good knowledge of the concept. One of the key informants has this to say, “cattle rustling is the forceful collection of cattle from the owners” (R5). Other informants explained it as “robbery of livestock from herdsmen” (R2). Furthermore, it was described by a different informant as “Cattle rustling is an act of violent confiscation of animals often with the use of arms against the livestock owners” (R4). This definition has corroborated the one made by Okoli and Okpaleke, (2014) and Cheserek, Omondi & Odenyi, (2012), they define cattle rustling as and unlawful and forceful seizing of livestock from the herdsmen, using any obtainable arm without caring what damage it might cause on the lives and properties of the people. This therefore shows that the informants have a good understanding of what cattle rustling is all about.

Nature of Cattle Rustling and its Effects on Security of Rural Communities

Many arguments were raised by participants on the nature and how it constitutes security problems in the rural communities. The sub-themes are explained as follows:

Loss of Lives: Human lives are expected to be protected in accordance of the law. The 1999 constitution of Nigeria clearly stated that the individuals have right to live. However, most of the informants interviewed submits that cattle rustlers kill them the way they want. For instance, one of the informants and a victim revealed his experience

as follows: “I was affected, my son was killed because he dragged with them”, (R6). Other informants also agreed with what the first participant said, “the last time they came to our village more than 8 people were killed, including a woman”, (R8). Furthermore, an informant said that “they have arms they use, you cannot confront them, they have killed many in our village. God will punish them since we are helpless” (R5).

Again, it was further explained on how cattle rustlers operate. The informant has this to say:

They are bunch of criminals, who are mostly youths from Fulani extraction. They come in group of 20 to 40 fully armed with AK 47 and so on. They are mostly operating under the influence of drugs. Sometimes if you refused them what they demanded they kill you. They killed my younger brother because he tried to refuse them from raping his wife (R7).

The findings show that cattle rustling is prevalent in Giwa Local Government of Kaduna State, since all the informants attest to have experienced the menace. This is therefore, in agreement with many literatures on the effects of cattle rustling. For instance, for Okoli and Okpaleke, (2014), the incidence of cattle rustling claimed the lives of forty-four herdsmen, houses worth millions of naira were burnt into ashes (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014) . Again, Bello, (2018) reported that suspected herdsmen numbering about ten with army uniform fully armed killed six in Jama ‘a local government of Kaduna State. This shows the level of insecurity and lack of responsiveness in the part of the government.

Cattle Theft: The economy of rural communities has been in jeopardy because of the activities of cattle rustlers. The rural communities are no longer safe. All the key informants interviewed agreed with the existence of cattle rustling in their communities and no one’s cattle are spared. For instance, an informant has this to say, “we cannot keep cattle because of cattle rustling, our community is not safe, they come whenever they feel like to force us and collect our livestock”, (R1). In another development, a community leader, and one of the key informants says that “cattle theft has been in this community since the beginning of this democracy 1999, however, it has never reached the stage it is now”, (R7).

Another key informant who was also a victim of the phenomenon argued as follows:



Cattle rustling is no longer a news in our communities. It is taking place in almost all parts of the state. The last time they came to our community was 2013, they seized my twenty -seven cattle and many families were affected. To be frank with you they collected more than 200 cattle before leaving the community (R8).

The above submission has corroborated researches conducted. Hence, rustling activities have been a serious threat to security in Nigeria. The menace has led to colossal loss of lives, serious human injury, migrations, as well as loss of many cattle (Shehu, Victor & Binta, 2017). This situation goes with consequences that do not signify well for the general wellbeing of the rural communities. The occurrence of cattle rustling has been widespread, particularly in the northern part of Nigeria where cattle rearing gains as a leading agricultural practice. Recent developments tend to link cattle rustling with the rising wave of insecurity in northern Nigeria (Okoli and Atelhe, 2014).

Psychological fear and Migration:

Another serious security challenge caused by cattle rustling which led many youths to desert rural communities for the fear of insecurity. A key informant has this to say, “we cannot sleep with our two eyes close, we always afraid of the next attack” (R9). Furthermore, R4 corroborated with the above submission, “these people have better arms than us and the government are afraid of confronting them”. Again, in the same vein another informant added to the above submission as follows:

Fear, and trauma has besieged members of our community. this has led most of our youths to migrate to the city. The rustlers can come at anytime of the day to start killing us. We have lost more than twenty people in this community. some were raped, and this leads to trauma among us, (R9).

The findings of the study show that youths in rural communities of Kaduna State migrates to urban centres because of the fear of cattle rustlers. This shows that there is no security in rural communities of Kaduna State and anyone stand to be killed.

Organised Crime: Key informants gave mix arguments on the nature of organisations of cattle rustling. For instance, one of the key informants has this to say, “they operate in group, I don’t think they are that organised as people always think, they are all illiterates coming together to get money” (R10). However, majority of the informants agreed that the act is organised. Another informant has this to say, “they always rustle in group so that shows they are organised” (R6). Other informant also agreed with the above statement “one can say they are organised because they have informants within us that they give money to if their operation is successful” (R 4).

Another informant gave a breakdown on those involved and how they organised in the criminal act, his argument is as follows:

Cattle rustling is a sophisticated crime that is highly organised by different ethnic and economic groups. It’s unfortunate, people attribute the crime to only herdsmen, that is not true, however, they constitute the foot soldiers in cattle rustling. In fact, they do the act and get less when it comes to monetary aspect. Cattle involves different ethnic groups, but herdsmen are more in number. The organisation involved the drivers that take the cattle to the market, dealers who take the stolen product to the market and those providing the herdsmen with arms who are mostly living in towns. Again, security personnel and traditional leaders also take part in the organisation of the act (R5).

The findings corroborated scholar’s arguments on cattle rustling as organised crime. For instance, Alemika (2013) found that contemporary livestock rustling functions as a system of organised crime, driven by affluence accumulation because the proceeds are not subjected to taxation. This





therefore, shows that cattle rustling is an organised crime and a reason that make it very difficult for government to control. Cattle rustling will be curtailed if the State and Federal government become more responsive by reclaiming the ungovernable rural communities from rustlers.

Conclusion

The paper concludes that cattle rustling has led to insecurity in the study area and Nigeria in general.

The prevalence of killings, kidnapping, cattle raids by the criminals confirmed the assertion. Furthermore, it was also discovered that the crime is organised by people from different ethnic groups debunking the believe that it was only herdsmen who are involved in the heinous act. The study recommends that government responsiveness and co-opting community members in the security of the area will go a long way in solving the lingering insecurity in the study area.

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