

# Institutional Mitigation Strategies in Quitting Banditry: Pathways, Options and Way Forward

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## ABSTRACT

The challenges of insecurity are manifested in many ways ranging from kidnapping, banditry, cattle rustling, political thuggery and ethno-religious conflicts amongst many others. Banditry leads to unwarranted perturbations in victims of insecurity and requires urgent formulations of long-lasting solutions. The focus of this paper was banditry and institutional mitigation strategies towards ending the menace. The paper adopts a secondary data generation method, relying on empirical literature to gather information for analysis, as such, a survey of available literature was undertaken and the review of same done. The content analysis technique is employed to derive themes, aggregate scholarly viewpoints, and subsequently analyze the data. The findings revealed that different social institutions have an active role in the sustainability of banditry and hold a mitigative role in curbing and eradicating banditry in the count, it was also discovered that the family institution serves as a recruiting ground for bandits and intending bandits, failure of the family institution in instilling value orientation is the major reason for the banditry. Instilling value orientation in the family institution will help curb banditry in the country. In addition, the economic institution being a superstructure of all institutions is the backbone for the sustainability of banditry, and imposing an economic sanction in areas ravaged by banditry will curb banditry and its notorious activities. The paper recommended that youthful cohorts should be informed of death warrant should any culprit be convicted, this will instil value orientation in the heads of the family institution to extend the value orientation to each family, and will help curb banditry activities and techniques adopted by the bandits for logistics supplies.

**Keywords:** Banditry, Cattle Rustling, Institutional Strategies, Kidnapping, Security Agencies

## INTRODUCTION

While existing literature provides valuable insights into the multifaceted dimensions of banditry, a comprehensive analysis of the specific roles played by various institutions in either fostering or quelling this menace is conspicuously lacking. The family institution, as the foundational unit of societal structure, influences individual behavior and choices, often serving as a breeding ground for potential bandits. Similarly, economic disparities, coupled with institutional failures, contribute to the creation of conducive environments for the growth of banditry. Moreover, the role of political structures in either exacerbating or alleviating banditry remains underexplored, necessitating a focused investigation into the efficacy of institutional responses. The educational institution, envisioned as a bastion of enlightenment and character development, paradoxically finds itself entangled in contributing to the perpetuation of banditry through

certain systemic failures and oversights. Concurrently, the mass media, entrusted with the responsibility of disseminating information, wields a considerable influence in shaping public perceptions and narratives surrounding banditry.

This paper advocates for a comprehensive approach that delves into providing and integrating robust institutional mitigation strategies in ending the menace of banditry. Achieving this requires stakeholders to adopt institutional mitigative strategies aimed at addressing the underlying issues. In the realm of sociology, social institutions are enduring structures comprising values, norms, social statuses, roles, and groups designed to fulfil fundamental social needs. Sociologists commonly identify five major social institutions present in every society: family, education, religion, government, and the economy. These institutions, in conjunction with the government that controls the security forces (military and other armed law enforcement agencies), mass media, techno media, and traditional institutions, exert significant influence as social forces that mold and transform our social structure, impacting social interactions in our daily lives (Thompson & Hickey, 2005). An ill in the society is a resultant effect of the malfunction on any of the institutions identified

## METHODOLOGY

The paper adopted a content analysis technique where themes were generated, views of scholars aggregated, and data generated using secondary sources from peer-reviewed journals and books. Hence, the study is considered library research.



Figure 1

## Conceptual Framework Showing Institutional Mitigation Strategies in Quitting Banditry

The paper outlines a unique framework tailored to each institution, specifying the roles each institution should play to eradicate the menace of banditry in the northwest. In the context of the family institution, there is a critical need to focus on instilling and reinforcing positive values within families, cultivating a sense of responsibility, empathy, and ethical behavior. By promoting strong family values, we aim to foster an environment that discourages involvement in banditry. Additionally, the family institution should champion morality by advocating for and encouraging moral conduct and ethical principles within society. Moreover, it should concentrate on raising awareness and imparting knowledge within rural communities about the consequences and risks associated with banditry.

In the realm of the educational institution, the framework underscores the importance of reorientation programs. These programs involve the implementation of educational initiatives and campaigns designed to reshape individuals' perspectives and beliefs, steering them away from ideologies associated with banditry. The objective of reorientation programs is to alter mindsets, instill positive values, and provide alternative paths for personal and communal development. Furthermore, fostering understanding among diverse groups within society is crucial. This initiative aims to break down stereotypes, reduce prejudice (especially towards the Fulanis), and promote empathy. Creating an environment where individuals are less inclined to resort to banditry due to improved social understanding will result in enhanced tolerance and respect for differences among individuals and communities.

The educational institution can also take proactive steps, such as implementing campaigns and educational efforts to make individuals aware of the consequences and dangers associated with affiliating with banditry. Additionally, it can advocate for tribal harmony among different tribal or ethnic groups. This involves initiating policies and programs that promote solidarity, understanding, and collaboration among diverse communities, reducing the likelihood of inter-tribal conflicts that could lead to or exacerbate banditry.

The framework highlights the pivotal role of religious institutions, advocating for regular preachings and sermons by diverse religious groups on punishments explicitly outlined in various scriptures for banditry-related offenses. Additionally, there is a call for a robust campaign and reorientation regarding distant Almajiranci schooling to prevent the exploitation and radicalization of children.

In addressing the responsibilities of the traditional institution, the framework emphasizes the importance of integrity among traditional rulers irrespective of tribal affiliation. This integrity serves as the foundation for traditional rulers to function as peace custodians and advisors to state or federal governments, particularly in the realm of conflict redress mechanisms.

The government plays a crucial role in ensuring bandit repentance, particularly through joint state initiatives that involve collaborative efforts among federal and state governments, especially in the most affected states in the northwest. The framework advocates for joint agency intelligence, emphasizing improved intelligence gathering and surveillance by relevant security agencies involved in the fight against banditry.

Furthermore, the framework suggests the creation of a unified anti-banditry agency, comprising representatives from relevant security agencies, to facilitate information and idea sharing. It also recommends on-the-ground visits and assessments of equipment/machinery by senior officers and top government officials to boost morale among security agents on the battlefield.

The government should adopt a zero-dialogue approach, refraining from negotiations with bandits. The establishment of community defense groups, whose activities are coordinated by relevant security agents, is essential. Policies such as the inclusion of Hiraba punishment in the penal code for convicted individuals

affiliated with banditry are also advocated.

In conclusion, the government should ensure inclusive governance, guaranteeing that everyone enjoys the dividends of democracy.

The economic institution is integral to the comprehensive strategy, focusing on funds truncation by cutting off accessible means to funds and logistics for bandits. This involves freezing the accounts of suspected banditry financiers, criminalizing ransom payments, and implementing controls on the importation and supply of desert ultra-strong motorcycles. Additionally, monitoring petrol supply and imposing a ban on motorcycles in rural areas contribute to these efforts.

The mass media, as the societal watchdog, plays a crucial role, particularly through regular reporting of banditry activities. This serves to capture the government's attention. Furthermore, the mass media should actively participate in transparency by regularly publishing the names of convicted banditry financiers.

This integrated approach leverages economic measures and media influence to address the multifaceted challenges posed by banditry.

### **Institutional Mitigation Strategy for Family Institution in Tacking Banditry**

The family institution is widely acknowledged as the primary agent of socialization in society, serving as a child's initial exposure to the world. Consequently, it is anticipated that the child will internalize the values imparted by the family, influencing their behavior and attitude. When the family falls short in instilling moral values in a child, it often results in the child being sent to a distant location for *almajiranci* (pursuing Islamic knowledge away from home). In these external settings, the broader environment can impose negative influences on the child, reshaping their behavior.

The connection between *almajiranci* and the recruitment of numerous youths into activities like banditry and gun-running is evident, primarily because many youths are susceptible due to a lack of understanding regarding the motives behind recruitment. Even though religious clerics who receive these children in their Islamic schools generally focus on imparting moral values, it is both challenging and unfeasible for the instructors (*Mallams*) to closely monitor the behaviors and activities of the *almajirai* (students) beyond the classroom setting. Once the class session concludes, the students are left to fend for themselves, including providing for their basic needs such as food and clothing, with the specific activities they engage in often remaining unknown to the *Mallams*.

The process of sustaining criminal elements such as bandits involves recruiting *almajirai* by enticing them with monetary rewards and essential services for their survival. A few initiated students then become intermediaries, facilitating the recruitment of more *almajirai* who are often unaware of the criminal tasks they will be undertaking. Once initiated, escape is virtually impossible, and those attempting to do so are often tracked down and executed. Following initiation, recruits undergo training in weapon handling and are forcefully administered drugs, such as tramadol, before engaging in criminal operations.

To mitigate banditry activities, the family institution plays a crucial role, particularly in instilling values and promoting morality. Despite some children being coerced into joining banditry gangs for the safety of their lives and livestock, a comprehensive sensitization campaign is essential. This initiative, ideally led by the military in collaboration with relevant government agencies, should enlighten rural settlements, especially parents and youths, about the dangers of enrolling children in banditry gangs or joining such groups. The inclusion of the military in the campaign teams serves as a strong deterrent, conveying the message that joining any banditry gang is akin to signing one's death warrant.

Additionally, the sensitization campaign should extend to border communities responsible for either facilitating the flow of small arms and light weapons or aiding gun runners in bringing in sophisticated weaponry for future raids. Issuing a stern warning to these communities will deter many youths and women (often used in smuggling weapons) from participating, with the understanding that any culprits apprehended will face severe consequences. This approach aims to instil a values-based orientation within the family institution, fostering a broader societal shift to curb banditry activities and disrupt the logistical supply chains employed by the bandits.

### **Institutional Mitigation Strategy for Educational Institutions in Tackling Banditry**

The educational institution is a fundamental component of the primary agents of socialization, building upon the foundations laid by the family in shaping a child's character and behavior. To effectively counter the activities of bandits in society, the educational institution assumes a pivotal role. A comprehensive reorientation of the country's citizens is imperative, particularly regarding the tendency to attribute blame and tribal affiliations to bandits and their groups.

Even though testimonies from kidnapped victims, and accounts from violent escapees, may indicate that many bandits have connections to pastoralists and *Ful'be* or Fulani origins, it is crucial to recognize that not all Fulanis are bandits. Some Fulanis are victims themselves, falling prey to banditry attacks that result in their deaths and the seizure of their herds of cattle. Unfortunately, certain communities, such as Bena and Riba in Kebbi State, and others affected by banditry in Zamfara State, tend to perceive all Fulanis as either bandits or accomplices of bandits. Consequently, when a Fulani individual is identified in these communities, they often face violence, even death.

This misperception contributes significantly to the escalation of banditry and the formation of banditry gangs. Innocent Fulanis, unfairly associated with banditry, may find themselves compelled to join such gangs due to the negative stereotypes and dangers associated with their identity in these communities. To address this issue, educational institutions must play a vital role in dispelling stereotypes, fostering understanding, and promoting tolerance among the populace.

The International Crisis Group (2021) highlighted that pastoralist, particularly the Fulani, often face exclusion from self-defense groups and are unfairly suspected as instigators of violence. This exclusion drives them towards seeking protection from bandit groups, further alienating them from the state and its security forces, with whom relations are already strained. The under-representation of pastoralists in state institutions and political parties, largely due to their lower levels of education, means that their interests are frequently overlooked by policymakers.

To ameliorate the strained relationship, a comprehensive reorientation is essential in villages and communities affected by banditry. Prejudices against innocent Fulani individuals, wrongly associated with banditry and criminal gangs, must be addressed through intensified sensitization campaigns. Strengthening these campaigns is expected to significantly reduce the recruitment rate of cohorts by bandits engaging in criminal exploit.

Furthermore, there is a call for intellectuals to actively study the issue of banditry and propose solutions. Mohammed (2019) defines intellectuals as individuals whose ideas contribute to consequential decisions for society, advocating public policies. By declaring a state of emergency on the problem, intellectuals can explore various mitigative strategies and contribute to the formulation of policies aimed at eradicating banditry in the country.

## Institutional Mitigation Strategy for Religious Institution in Tacking Banditry

A connection can be drawn between the family institution and the teachings of the religious institution, particularly in the context of seeking knowledge. Parents who send their children for *almajiranci* to distant locations in pursuit of knowledge may misunderstand Islamic teachings regarding knowledge acquisition. Unfortunately, these children often end up as street urchins, sometimes remaining docile and unemployed, thus becoming susceptible to involvement in criminal activities, potentially serving as a breeding ground for bandits and criminal gangs. Despite many bandits claiming adherence to the Islamic faith, their actions often contradict Islamic teachings, as they proclaim themselves as Islamic jihadists seeking vengeance.

Given that most of the perpetrators of banditry proclaim and identify themselves as Muslims, Islamic rulings provide judgments for actions and their potential punishments or consequences. Bello (2021) consider *hirāba* offenses, such as maritime piracy, aircraft hijacking, armed banditry, kidnapping, and any act that destroys society. Banditry, by this operationalization, is considered a *hirāba* offense, given its destructive impact on society. Numerous communities and villages, including Sabon Birni, Isa, and Tureta in Sokoto State; Shinkafi, Maradun, and Tsafe in Zamfara State; Birnin Gwari, Katari, Audu Jangwam, and Rijana in Kaduna State; Shiroro, Gwada, Kagara, Munya, Bangi, Beri, Nasko, and Mariga in Niger State; and Faskari, Sheme, and Yankara in Katsina State, have been plundered and displaced.

Many individuals from these villages and communities have relocated to larger cities for safety, leaving women and children vulnerable. Men have been killed during raids, and numerous families have been displaced, seeking refuge in IDP camps. Against this backdrop, various eclectic religious groups and sects have unequivocally condemned pillage, providing for punishments to be meted out to culprits. In accordance with Islamic injunctions, the Quran explicitly outlines punishments for the crime of *hirāba*:

The reward of those who wage war against Allah and His messenger and strive to create disorder in the land is only that they are slain or crucified, or their hands and feet be cut off on alternate sides or expelled from the land. Quran, 5: 33-34 (Bello, 2021).

The article elaborates on the translation of a verse from the Glorious Qur'an, indicating that the prescribed punishments, including cutting off the hands and feet on alternate sides, serve the dual purpose of incapacitating the perpetrator from committing further acts of aggression while still leaving them capable of earning a living through work. This measure is designed to disable the offender from continuing criminal activities yet ensuring a degree of functional independence. It emphasizes that the severity of these measures is justified when the interests of the state or society necessitate eradicating a dangerous threat. The concept of crucifixion as a punishment for the crime of *hirāba* is presented as a deterrent or preventive measure. This aligns with the stance of the Kaduna State governor, who adamantly refuses to negotiate with bandits and advocates for crucifixion as a means of deterring potential wrongdoers. Zamfara State's shariah penal code has also incorporated crucifixion as a punishment for *hirāba*.

The article highlights instances where bandits in Zamfara State, after negotiating with the government, returned to criminal activities, terrorizing communities. This pattern suggests that bandits, having enjoyed the proceeds from criminal exploits, seek amnesty from state governors and accumulate more wealth before repeating the cycle of criminal exploit and seeking state pardon, leaving families of victims in despair and extreme poverty.

It argues that merely imprisoning declared terrorists, as per the Federal government's designation, will not fully address the issue of banditry. Instead, the paper advocates adopting the Islamic teachings of crucifixion in the penal code of Nigeria, thus rendering the offenders useless in society, followed by life imprisonment to separate these individuals from society and prevent the potential re-socialization of the younger

generation even within prison walls.

Additionally, the article emphasizes the role of religious leaders in sensitizing and preaching to the public about the implications of being a bandit and the potential repercussions or punishments on earth and in the hereafter as outlined by each eclectic religious group as each of these religious groups have offences which they also consider as *Hiraba* offences. This approach is seen as a means to minimize the growth and expansion of bandit forces, as people become aware of the consequences of becoming a bandit.

### **Institutional Mitigation Strategy for the Traditional Institution in Tacking Banditry**

The significance of traditional leaders in maintaining order in society cannot be overstated. In the pre-colonial era, traditional rulers were regarded as the custodians of society, responsible for policing, legislation, and judicial functions. Even today, certain communities accord higher respect to traditional rulers than to federal or state governments due to their perceived integrity and leadership roles (Hamza, Pandian, and Ramli, 2019).

A documentary conducted by Daily Trust Nigeria featured a bandit kingpin, Bello Turji, who terrorized Sokoto State and parts of Zamfara State. In the documentary, Bello Turji explicitly expressed respect for the Emir of Shinkafi, indicating that traditional leaders can have a positive impact on curbing banditry by addressing grievances and calling bandits to order.

Given that many grievances are directed towards the government and a few individuals, state governments should consider employing a system reminiscent of colonial-era indirect rule, allowing traditional rulers to serve as intermediaries for conflict mitigation and peace mediation. Bandit kingpins often lack trust in government officials, viewing them as untrustworthy, making the involvement of traditional rulers crucial in privately mitigating the activities of bandits.

Traditional rulers should play a proactive role in curbing banditry, intervening when necessary. If their mediation efforts persistently fail, traditional rulers can encourage the government to take stringent measures to eliminate the bandits. Traditional rulers must exercise caution in mediating with bandits who have previously surrendered but returned to criminal activities. Engaging in such mediation may inadvertently support the exploitation of people and their valuable assets by bandits.

### **Institutional Mitigation Strategy for Government and Security Agencies in Tacking Banditry**

The primary responsibility of any government is to safeguard the lives and properties of its citizens. Failure to fulfill this duty is considered incompetence, casting doubt on the legitimacy of the government's tenure. The government is expected to devise and implement policies aimed at addressing security challenges, primarily through its law enforcement agencies. Successfully managing the issue of banditry in a particular state becomes a model for other states to emulate. Banditry, being a multifaceted problem intertwined with economic, religious, and family issues, demands a political solution. The political institution, responsible for steering the affairs of the state, must ensure the protection of lives and properties.

One critical aspect often lacking in the efforts to counter banditry is intelligence gathering. Most security agencies in Nigeria face challenges in this regard. Even when intelligence is provided to relevant authorities, there is a failure to act upon it by the government. The Department of State Service (DSS) is primarily tasked with intelligence gathering, but the responsibility seems confined to this agency alone, while other security agencies remain reluctant and inactive. Data from the DSS in 2021 indicated a pervasive insecurity pandemic in Nigeria, with hundreds of citizens killed monthly by gunmen. Despite the DSS's intelligence efforts, proactive steps are not consistently taken to address the information gathered (Bukarti, 2021).

Achumba, Ighomereho, and Akpor-Robaro (2013) emphasize that overcoming insecurity requires robust intelligence gathering and surveillance. This proactive approach enables law enforcement agents to predict potential crimes with near-perfect accuracy rather than merely reacting to incidents. In summary, addressing the issue of banditry necessitates a comprehensive and collaborative effort by the government and its security agencies, with a particular focus on enhancing intelligence gathering capabilities and implementing proactive measures.

To further emphasize the point, the 2020 annual security reports from the Kaduna State Government revealed alarming figures: 937 people were killed, and 1,972 were kidnapped in various Local Government Areas (LGAs) of the state. It's crucial to note that these figures may actually be higher due to potential underreporting of cases (Yaba, 2021). The implications are staggering, suggesting that, on average, at least 78 people were killed by gunmen in Kaduna State every month, underscoring the brazen and unchecked operations of bandits in the state and beyond.

While statistics from other states affected by banditry are unavailable, if we extrapolate from the figures released by Kaduna State, making assumptions for the other five states, the total computation suggests that at least 5,622 Nigerians are killed yearly due to banditry. This estimate aligns with statistics released by the Department of State Service (DSS), considering that the computation focused on the perilous six northern states ravaged by banditry.

Moreover, there is a lack of consistent, clear, and comprehensive coordination between the federal and state governments in addressing the banditry crisis. Bulama (2021) pointed out the absence of a central "coordinating body" to effectively manage the efforts of the 17 security agencies involved in the fight against criminal activities. Different states have adopted varying approaches, with some supporting dialogues with bandits and others opting for a more aggressive stance. The lack of federal coordination has been a significant impediment in the fight against banditry, leading to confusion and inefficiencies. Bulama emphasized the need for leadership in the security framework.

Until recently, the federal government classified bandits as terrorist groups. This classification is seen as a significant step forward in the fight against banditry, enabling the deployment of sophisticated weapons and technologies to boost the military's capabilities. Prior to the proscription, restrictions on the types of weapons that could be used in fighting bandits hampered the effectiveness of security forces. The recent classification offers a promising avenue for a more robust response to eliminate bandits and their nefarious activities.

The statement by Bello (2021) highlights concerns about the lack of on-the-ground visits by senior military officers overseeing field operations, impacting the morale of troops fighting against bandits. The assertion suggests that these officers often stay in hotels and government guest houses, contributing to operational and technical challenges for personnel. While there have been claims of insufficient military personnel in the fight against banditry, the estimated 350,000 armed forces personnel in Nigeria seem substantial. Boko Haram fighters are estimated to be around 7,000, and bandits in the North-West and North Central regions are estimated to be around 30,000, totaling approximately 37,000 to 50,000 criminal elements. The argument presented questions why a well-equipped military force of 350,000 personnel, supported by sophisticated weapons and state backing, cannot effectively combat and eliminate a relatively smaller group of militants.

This perspective aligns with Coleman's idea of the Coordination model, emphasizing the importance of coordinated leadership in the military and the broader political landscape. The absence of such coordination may hinder the identification and resolution of problems on the ground. The author suggests that other state governors should follow Borno State's example in not negotiating with bandits, as a united stance against



negotiation may weaken the militants' position. In conclusion, the lack of coordination is seen as a factor contributing to the emergence of more criminal elements. The statement suggests that coordinated efforts, similar to Borno State's approach, may be crucial in achieving success in eliminating criminal elements.

To address the persistent attacks by bandits, it is recommended to establish community self-defense groups in each affected state, supported by the federal government and coordinated by the military. The proposed institutional framework involves recruiting individuals and volunteers to form civilian joint task force teams or Yan Sa Kai (voluntary guards), with the coordination of the military. These groups, composed of individuals familiar with the local terrain and potential informants to the bandits, can expedite efforts to curb banditry.

It is crucial to note that the establishment of such security outfits falls under the purview of the federal government, as specified by the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. State governors do not have the legal authority to create security outfits armed with sophisticated weapons. Therefore, the proposed community self-defense groups should operate within the framework of federal authority, coordinated by the military. To enhance the effectiveness of this approach, the workforce can be expanded by increasing the strength of the Nigerian Army. The recommendation by Mohammed (2019) suggests increasing the number of divisions from 10 to 37, totaling 740,000 active personnel. Each division, comprising 10,000 to 20,000 soldiers, would be located in each state and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). The divisions would be organized into brigades, with one brigade deployed to each of the three senatorial zones in each state. Each brigade, in turn, would consist of 3 to 5 battalions (1,500 to 4,000 soldiers), deployed based on the security threats in each state, particularly focusing on border areas.

This strategic deployment aims to boost efforts to end banditry in the country, with the police maintaining internal law and order. The military, being trained in sophisticated weapons similar to those used by bandits, can effectively counter the security threats posed by bandit's criminal elements. The proposed framework envisions a collaborative and coordinated approach between the federal government, the military, and community self-defense groups to tackle banditry comprehensively.

In addition to expanding the workforce, a comprehensive strategy is needed, emphasizing intelligence gathering and proactive tactics to prevent bandit activities rather than reacting to reprisal attacks. Once volunteer guards achieve their targeted objectives, they should be converted into full-time security personnel with advanced training. The herds of cattle seized from bandits could be sold, and the proceeds distributed to persons displaced by bandit activities, providing economic support to those affected.

To align with the classical school of criminology's principle of "punishment to fit the crime," capital punishment should be rigorously applied to convicted bandits if other mitigative strategies fail. Public prosecution by firing squad could serve as a strong deterrent, emphasizing the consequences for those who choose a path of violence and criminality. This approach echoes a precedent set by General Muhammadu Buhari during his military leadership, where he endorsed stringent measures to combat specific crimes that posed significant threats to society.

The suggestion is to adopt a "shoot on sight" policy for all bandits, criminals, and terrorists, particularly those armed with sophisticated weapons. This approach aims to swiftly neutralize imminent threats and prevent further loss of innocent lives. While implementing such measures, it is crucial for defense and security forces to respect human rights, as emphasized by the International Crisis Group (2021). Adhering to human rights principles in operations against armed individuals helps prevent backlash from groups and human rights organizations. Simultaneously, authorities should initiate measures to demobilize bandits, addressing the root causes of their actions.

This multi-faceted approach combines proactive security measures, stringent punishment for criminal

activities, and a commitment to respecting human rights, aiming to create a safer environment and eliminate the menace of banditry in affected regions. Addressing the root causes of banditry in the North-west, such as poverty, inequality, failures in the justice system, and corruption in the judicial sector, is imperative for effective mitigation. The government should implement strict policies to tackle these issues, aiming to reduce the prevalence of banditry in the country.

The assertion by Onifade, Imhonopi, and Urim (2013) underscores the impact of inequality, unfairness, and injustice, stating that these factors have hardened people and driven them to take matters into their own hands. This highlights the critical role of the justice system in shaping societal dynamics and preventing the emergence of criminal activities like banditry. The failures in the justice system are identified as a significant root cause of banditry in various parts of the country. To address these challenges, Achumba, Ighomereho, and Akpor-Robaro (2013) recommend bringing governance closer to the people. When the government is responsive, accountable, and addresses issues of deprivation and injustice, it can minimize the likelihood of people resorting to violence as a means of seeking redress. This perspective is reinforced by the case of Zamfara State, as narrated by Bello Turji in a documentary released by Trust TV, where grievances and perceptions of injustice contributed to the emergence of banditry.

In summary, the government's commitment to addressing poverty, inequality, and failures in the justice system through effective policies and governance can play a crucial role in mitigating the root causes of banditry in the North-west and beyond.

### **Institutional Framework for Economy Institution in Tacking Banditry**

The economic institution is the backbone or hub that holds a society firmly together. It is often said, despite the interconnection of all social institutions in the society, the economic institution is the superstructure of society, thus failure in the economic institution manifests in the whole structure leading to the breakdown and malfunction of the other institutions.

The major hub that keeps the activities of bandits and banditry sustainable is the free flow of logistics and funds in their coffers. Without available funds, the activities of bandits would cease. All-access to funds for bandits must be blocked and cut short. Many stakeholders, scholars, legislators and analysts have recommended that an important milestone towards ending banditry is to barricade all access to funds for bandits and logistics supplies. This is why stakeholders recommended payment of ransom to bandits be considered a crime, as the more citizens pay ransom to secure the release of their loved ones, the stronger and sophisticated the bandits become as such funds are used in procuring sophisticated weapons for advanced attacks.

In addition, accounts of suspected bandit's sponsors should be frozen strict monitoring of the economic activities of the suspected sponsors. It should be noted that three (3) major items are important for the survivability of the bandits; AK 47/49 and other sophisticated weapons, desert ultra-strong motorcycle used for bumpy desert and forest rides and petroleum products for transportation. All the aforementioned can be controlled with strict policies from the government. There is a need for the government (federal and states) to unite and have a central coordinating agency in metering economic sanctions on the importation of desert ultra-strong motorcycles, with this, the means of the transportation of the bandits will be crippled and the military will achieve great success. A typical example is the case of the North East as the ban on the motorcycle has drastically reduced incessant attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram terrorists using motorbikes. In addition to that, there is a need to revisit the policy of a strict ban on the sale of petroleum products to "black marketers" as they have been indicted as major suppliers of petroleum products to bandits, strict sanctions should be metered on anyone caught. The federal government should liaise with cross-border security agencies in curbing the influx of small arms and light weapons into the country; this will

improve the success recorded by the military agencies in tackling the menace of banditry.

### **Institutional Mitigation Strategy for the Mass-Media in Tacking Banditry**

The media, traditionally regarded as a watchdog of society, is expected to impartially monitor and report factual information on various activities, including instances of banditry. However, Bello (2021) reveals that both state and non-state institutions, including the Nigerian media, have contributed to the rise of rural banditry, particularly in states like Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Niger, Sokoto, and Kebbi. The media, in particular, has been criticized for polarization and bias in its reporting and coverage of rural banditry in the region.

Government-owned media outlets are often accused of downplaying or underreporting banditry activities to avoid portraying the government as a failure. On the other hand, private media outlets, driven by profit motives and a desire to attract viewers, may exaggerate details of banditry attacks for sensationalism. While some private media outlets excel in investigative journalism, the recommendation is made for these outlets to go further by publishing the names of bandit sponsors.

According to scholars, bandit sponsors often include elites who exploit banditry for political gains or to protect their business interests, such as gold mining in Zamfara State. Rufai (2021) links the rise of conflict to illicit mining, with foreign entities collaborating with local miners. The competition among these groups is fueled by allegations of arms supply, raiding, and killings. Traditional rulers involved in illicit mining may instigate attacks to displace rivals.

To address this issue, the recommendation is to publish the names of convicted sponsors regularly in national dailies, supported by factual evidence. This exposure can lead to investigations and legal proceedings, ensuring that perpetrators face the justice system. Okeshola (2011) further advocates for a persistent pursuit and prosecution of elites involved in large-scale corruption, with their ill-gotten assets seized as a deterrent. This dual approach not only helps curb banditry but also aligns with the media's role as a watchdog in society.

## **CONCLUSION**

The focus of the paper centered on institutional mitigation strategies as a means to curb banditry in the country. It underscores the active roles played by different social institutions in both sustaining and mitigating banditry. The family institution, for instance, was identified as a potential recruiting ground for bandits, emphasizing the crucial role of instilling value orientation within families to curb the phenomenon. Furthermore, the economic institution, viewed as a superstructure, was highlighted as a significant factor influencing the sustainability of banditry. The imposition of economic sanctions in areas affected by banditry was proposed as a means to counteract its detrimental activities. In conclusion, the paper asserted that banditry is fundamentally a political problem, necessitating a political solution. The government, therefore, was encouraged to proactively formulate and implement policies aimed at addressing and ending banditry in the country. Emphasizing the collective effort required to eradicate banditry and its associated activities, the paper concluded with a call for a united approach to combat this pressing issue.

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