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## **Traumatic and Psychological Implications of Armed Herdsmen Invasion of Southern Kaduna, Nigeria**

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**ABSTRACT:** *The research is on traumatic and psychological implications of armed herdsmen invasion of southern Kaduna, Nigeria: A sample of 90 respondents drawn from the five local government areas affected by the activities of armed herdsmen was used for the study. The questionnaire was used as a major instrument for the collection of primary data from respondents; in-depth interviews were conducted to stimulate further information from respondents. Secondary data was sourced from books, journals, newspapers, and online peer-reviewed documents. The routine activity theory was adopted to explain armed herdsmen activities in the Southern Kaduna region of Kaduna State. Findings suggested that armed herdsmen activities have created traumatic and psychological implications on the people of Southern Kaduna who have now been found to live in perpetual fear. The study recommends that government be proactive in curbing the menace of armed herdsmen brigandage in Southern Kaduna and provide a more robust security network through the establishment of more military bases along the borders of the three local governments faced with the challenge of armed herdsmen invasion.*

**KEYWORDS:** armed-herdsmen, traumatic, psychological, fear.

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## INTRODUCTION

Nigeria today can be best described as a country under distress; the security challenges facing the Nigerian state has become both psychological and traumatic in nature. For instance, within the space of two months, Deborah Samuel, a 200 level student of Federal College of Education Sokoto was killed by Muslim Mob on an alleged offence of blasphemy. Sokoto state was turned into a semi-war zone with Muslims destroying structures and shops of Christians which resulted in the penetration by hoodlums into the Rectory of the Catholic Bishop of Sokoto State, Bishop Hassan Mathew Kukah but for the intervention of security agencies and the Sultan, the situation would have been more disastrous (Musa, 2022).

Two weeks later, a Christian lady in Bauchi State, Nigeria, narrowly escaped lynching on an alleged offence of blasphemy, but due to the prompt intervention of security agencies, the ugly incident was abated. Musa (2022) during the world communication retreat 2022, further revealed that a vigilante security officer in Lugbe, Abuja, Nigeria was burnt to death on another alleged report of blasphemy. A day after the Lugbe incident, Gbadamasi, a journalist with Nigerian Tribune Newspaper reported on the 5<sup>th</sup> of June, 2022 that a group of terrorists attacked a St. Francis Catholic Church Owo, Ogun State, Nigeria which killed over fifty parishioners in cold blood and till date none of the perpetrators has been brought to book people death and several people injured. The country's pathetic situation is more worrisome considering the spate of continuous armed violence and criminalities of all sorts taking place in the country. Consequently, the state in this direction is assisted by a government as a body. There has been the tendency right from independence to view National Security in Nigeria as an exclusive domain of the coercive agencies of the government, therefore, in the assessment of security arrangements, greater focus has always been on internal security which has become the main thrust of security in Nigeria.

This approach to national security is premised on the fact that insecurity is always seen not from its causes but its effects. Hence insecurity has always come to be viewed from the criminality of the people and not what turns them into criminals. Okoli (2017) and Zenn (2018) submitted that Northern Nigeria and particularly the North-East is still under the pillage of Boko Haram, amidst the precarious counter-insurgency endeavours of the government, while the North-Central has been afflicted by herdsmen brigandage which has ravaged the region with the serious humanitarian and economic crisis, the North-West region has only recently been engaged in the rapid upsurge of armed-marauders along its borderlines and forested interior communities.

The inability to use the appropriate tools in analyzing Nigeria's national security problems right from the colonial period to date is the reason for the difficulties faced by the present security organizations in the country. Nigeria has in the last two decades been turned into what Merton (1955) may wish to refer to as a state of 'Anomie', for Merton, it is a state of normlessness. Hardly had the country recovered from the civil war, military dictatorship, and some ethnic uprisings and

reprisal attacks that other new forms of normless behaviours started showing their capacities for criminalities.

Bagu and Smith (2017) noted that though organized research on armed herdsmen killing activities is still at its nascent stage, however, there have been some scholarly works on the subject matter, (Kunn and Jibrin (2016), CDD,( 2015), all contended that the activities of armed herdsmen have become reasonably most prevalent in some parts of the North-western and North-central regions, with states like Kaduna, Niger, Nasarawa, Plateau and Benue becoming more affected by the phenomenon. What then is criminal armed marauding? How frequent are these attacks? What are their methods of attacks? Weapons of attacks and consequences of attacks in the five most affected local government areas of Southern Kaduna in Kaduna State? And what measures have the operatives of the various security agencies put in place to check the excesses of these armed herdsmen scavengers of human blood and destruction agents?

Okpaleke (2014), maintains that armed herdsmen's activities have to do with armed violence perpetrated by criminal opportunists and syndicates along the country's borderlines and rural interiors. He was of the view that acts of criminality by these armed herdsmen are targeted at human lives or property; armed robbery, kidnapping, cattle rustling, and allied violence. But McGregor (2014), believes that the criminality of armed nomad aggressors has always been motivated wholly by criminal intentions.

Crime mapping has been suggested to be a good way to reduce criminal activities rampaging Nigeria Bewul et al, (2022). Yet, such method have not yet been considered even with the daily upsurge like those of the armed herdsmen attacks on villages. In any case, the researchers of this study see the phenomenon as alarming and very worrisome, as its penchant for destruction has continued daily in various Nigerian communities, highways, and even major local government headquarters without corresponding onslaught by the various security agencies.

Beyond the conflicting and contending definitions, dimensions, and perspectives of armed herdsmen and brigands in Nigeria, it has been noted that the phenomenon is not a new one in Nigeria. Ja'afar (2018) opines that there is a scholarly discourse that contends that the activities of these armed marauders in Nigeria predate the country's emergence as a politically sovereign nation. In this direction, Ja'afar (2018) is of the view that there were records of instances of armed herdsmen brigandage in colonial Nigeria, as far back as the 1930s. According to him, in those days, wayfarers and merchants travelling on the local shallow feeder roads were sometimes faced with an ambush by criminal herdsmen who were targeting goods carried on donkeys, camels, and ox carts. Such armed herdsmen at that time forcefully took away goods and disappeared into the bush, or at some other times, the bandits raided villages and carted away valuable properties and produce.

The Humanitarian (2018), also reported that the first case of armed herdsmen brigandage was documented around 1901, and the incidence was said to have occurred somewhere between

Western Hausa land and the border of the Republic of Niger. But the disturbing development is captured by Egwu (2016), who reported that armed marauding has moved from its rudimentary phase to a more complex and complicated pattern of criminality.

Kaduna State with 46,053 square kilometres of overstretched forest hinterland mass in the country is viewed by this researcher as one of the states that are open to the activities of armed herdsmen challenges. Adeniyi (2018) explained further that, even though Lagos State is known to be super populous, its landmass is only 4,000 square kilometres compared to states like Kaduna and Zamfara with 46,053 and 39,762 square kilometres respectively, all the above states according to Adeniyi (2018), have the same type of ecological foundation adorned by hills, extended wet forests, mountains and caves which unfortunately have become new bandit recruitment bases and potential hideouts after attacks.

### **Statement of Research Problem**

Certain socio-existential conditions have been opined to be sufficient reasons why rural armed herdsmen activities have successfully thrived in Nigeria. Some of these characteristic conditions have been identified to be both in the interior communities of the hinterlands and neighbouring borderline geological challenges. Gaye (2018) maintained that prominent among these conditions is the scarcely governed hinterlands and forestlands. According to him the North West and North Central regions of the Nigerian hinterlands are marked by extremely dispersed normal settlements, which have been separated by rangelands and farmlands with extreme gaps susceptible for illegal occupations by predator-armed brigands.

Okoh and Ugwu (2019), were of the view that these forestlands are vast, rugged, and hazardous, and are highly under-policed to the point that it makes them conducive to all forms of jungle criminality. The FATF-GIABA-GABAC (2016) report, maintained that most attacks in the remote interior villages have become successful because of their closeness to the forest regions with little or no security presence. Armed herdsmen activities, therefore, have become profitable to the criminally minded who find it very easy to always terrorize the local population and deprive them of their food and livelihoods.

Unfortunately, the government's position on this heinous crime of armed herdsmen has left citizens wondering whether government exists for the protection of lives and properties. (Okoli and Achim, (2016; Azad, Crawford, and Kaila,( 2018) were of the view that the near-non-action of the state's functionality concerning security and territorial governance has grossly demonstrated a pathological ground for its incapacity to govern its citizens. This is so because governments at all levels, according to the above writers have exhibited a woeful lethargy in dealing with national security emergencies. Accordingly, the government has persistently failed to muster the requisite political will and commitment to tackle the situation. They concluded.

Jaafar (2019) puts it better when he submitted that "what we are seeing today is not historically unprecedented. Okoli (2017) however pointed out that, sometimes "the lethality of the attacks is

merely reprisals, designed to showdown communities, which have hitherto challenged or resisted the armed herdsmen' onslaught through vigilantism". Therefore, armed herdsmen operate by cruising into the closest villages and towns typically flaunting their arms and shooting in a commando-style, riding freely on a three-up-in a motorbike, unchecked, unhindered and become ruthless, plundering and overcoming communities, carting away valuables, animals, raping women and kidnapping persons without confrontation of any kind.

The closeness of the extended thick forest region which spans from the Birnin-Gwari axis of Kaduna State linking through its borders with Kebbi and Zangari is believed to have contributed to guaranteeing criminal marauders the desired hiding places in the forest regions. Little wonder Amnesty International, (2018:22) maintained that the Birnin-Gwari Local Government Area of Kaduna State has continued to face security challenges similar to those of Zamfara State.

The precarious security situation in the Southern Kaduna region has reached an alarming rate. One Simon Akhaine, a journalist with the Guardian Newspapers reported on August 1st, 2020 that "life is beginning to be meaningless, and cruel for residents of Gidan-masara village of Zango-kataf, the journalist quoted one Mrs Naomi Boka who had this to say: "I never knew I would wake up someday to be chased away from my ancestral home by Fulani whom we have lived with for decades. According to the same Guardian Newspaper, one Mallam Musa of Kaura village also had this to say: "the attackers invaded our village and started shooting and burning down our houses at exactly 11:20 pm, unknown to me, my wife, my brother's wife, my stepmother and three siblings were burnt by the attackers who also burnt down my cousin's house and slaughtered my cousin's wife and her baby".

The Chairman of the vigilante group in Kasuwan masara who was interviewed confirmed that the gunmen invaded the community on no fewer than 52 motorcycles, carrying sophisticated weapons killing, kidnapping, and burning down houses. From all the above developments, the researcher of this study arrived at the following objectives of the study: (i) To find out the traumatic implications of armed herdsmen attacks in the Southern Kaduna region of Kaduna State, Nigeria. (ii) To establish the psychological implications of armed herdsmen attacks on the people of southern Kaduna, Nigeria. Consequently, the following research questions served as the guide for the study: (i) What are the traumatic implications of the attacks by armed herdsmen in the affected communities of Southern Kaduna? (ii) What are the actual psychological implications of armed herdsmen in attacking Southern Kaduna communities?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

National security has been viewed by Ogbonnaya and Ehigiamusoe (2013) to cut across many disciplines covering military protection, surveillance, and protection of human rights. While Romm (1993), in providing an implicit explanation further holds the view that National Security is the ability of a nation to preserve its internal values from external threats. Hence, this implies the appropriation and deployment of state apparatus of coercive forces.

Smith and Bagu (2017) seem to be more concerned with the new developments in armed brigandage, they, therefore, defined armed brigandage as gangs of criminals, often youth from farming and herding communities who have left their domains and have internalized new values and habits of robbing people, these robberies now take place at the highways, they are also involved in cattle rustling and all of these are for personal gains. The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD, 2015) has also asserted that armed marauders have increased their penchants for criminality by laying siege on local markets and killing unarmed innocent Nigerians.

Akhakpe (2012) on the other hand says that security could mean different things at different times to different people. As a follow-up to the above, Gaye (2018) tries to locate reasons why criminal armed herdsmen activities thrives, in his view, the northern region, particularly the North Western and North Central hinterlands are very porous, therefore he concluded that the porosity of the borderlines which are already, ill-delineated and ungoverned has become a very conducive environment for the facilitation of illicit activities such as smuggling of both human and substance (including drugs) and all manners of trafficking unhindered.

The Humanitarian (2018) on the other hand reported that some armed herdsmen groups have gone to the extent of kidnapping foreign miners and demanding payments of appropriate ransoms before their releases. To this effect Olaniyan and Yahaya (2016), Okoli and Lenshie (2018) pointed out that the Federal Government of Nigeria in a bid to curtail illegal mining and banditry suspended all forms of mining in Zamfara State in early April, (2019). In all these very disturbing developments, the researchers of this study wonder why the security agencies which possess the major responsibility of curbing the menace of rural armed marauders are yet to do so.

A document from, the West Africa Network of Peace Building (WANEP, 2019) reported that 1,000 civilian deaths were recorded from January to December, (2019), all from the North West region through the activities of armed criminals in the region. With this alarming development, the same source maintained that a committee was set up, headed by Mohammed Abubakar, a former Inspector General of Police to negotiate with armed militias in Zamfara State between June 2011 and May 2012. The committee discovered that 4,983 women were widowed; 25,000 children were orphaned, and more than 190,000 people were displaced as a result of armed marauding activities in the State.

However, John Campbell in his blog recorded in a broadcast on July 23rd, 2020, in the programme “Africa in Transition and Nigeria on the brink”, suggested that though the army introduced several military operations in the country to quash armed criminal activities, operations like the “Operation Puff Adder”, “DiranMikya”, SharanDaji”, “HadarinDaji”, “Thunder Strike”, “Exercise Harbin Kunama III”, they have only created mixed feelings for the people, the operations only succeeded in pushing back the criminals and destroyed some of their hideouts while some were killed, however according to Campbell, attacks have continued without any sign of stoppage. And accordingly, the agreements did not last.

This is because only recently, on the 24th of August, 2020, the Nigerian Tribune Newspaper published a document written by LanreAdewole, a journalist, suggesting that 1,126 persons were killed, 380 were abducted in the seven northern states as declared by Amnesty International through its Country Director in Nigeria, Mr OsaiOjigho. Again on August 16, 2020, another journalist Adebayo Oladeji reported in Thisday Newspapers that the umbrella Christian body of Nigeria, The Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) observed that crime and armed militia activities were becoming worrisome and have subsequently directed its members to resort to self-help as the precarious situation in the country was becoming dangerous.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Routine Activity Theory: This theory which is rather a recent approach to the explanation of crime falls within the social-structural perspective. The main exponents of the theory are Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson (1979), the theory arose in an attempt to explain predatory criminal activities. Its three main postulations are (i) crime is likely to occur where there is a motivated potential offender, (ii) which, where there are suitable or attractive targets, and (iii) where there is the absence of capable guards or persons who can prevent crime from taking place.

Therefore, the theory is more concerned with how normal routine activity takes place and which in effect adds to the probability of commission of a crime. Crime therefore can be perpetrated in terms of capability and availability of suitable and unprotected targets without the necessary physical guards. Adopting this theory to armed herdsmen activities in Kaduna State, therefore, the presence and prevalence of large, stretched forestlands, borderlands, and unregulated hinterlands which are mostly under-policed or protected by the various social control agencies provide sufficient opportunity for armed herdsmen activities to thrive since criminally-minded armed herdsmen often on routine basis conduct movements in these unguarded village environments and interacting without hindrances with their chosen suitable targets who they kill, maim and destroy houses and farmlands.

Furthermore, the presence of very viably rich rural communities provides suitable targets in cattle, cash, treasures, and other community valuables to these armed herdsmen since communities are left helpless with virtually non-existing governmental security agencies to monitor and enforce obedience to the law as capable guards.

### **METHODOLOGY**

The research design for the study is a descriptive survey, which was used to determine armed herdsmen activities and the traumatic and psychological implications of their attacks in the Southern Kaduna region of Kaduna State, Nigeria. A triangulation, which combined the use of quantitative and qualitative techniques, using the questionnaire for qualitative data and the in-depth interviews and secondary sources for qualitative data. The open and closed ordered questionnaires were used as instruments for the collection of primary data from respondents, while secondary data was sourced from journals, books, newspapers, and online-peer reviewed works.

A sample size of 90 respondents was drawn from the affected local governments. 30 questionnaires were administered in each local government area, the justification for the above was the accessibility of respondents who have either had direct contacts with the armed herdsmen as victims or relations who participated in the negotiations for payment of ransom or others whose relations were killed and their life savings, properties, businesses and houses destroyed by the ravaging killer herdsmen. In-depth interviews were also conducted by the researchers to elicit deeper information that the questionnaires couldn't explore in detail. The SPSS package was used to analyze the collated data accordingly.

### Presentation of Data and Analysis

#### *Descriptive Statistics*

Discussing the traumatic and psychological implications of the armed herdsmen attacks on the respondents, their responses are here presented below in tables, frequencies and percentages.

**Table 1: Traumatic implications of attacks**

	<b>Traumatic implications of attacks</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Valid	Deaths	69	77.5
	Hospitalizations	5	5.6
	Loss of properties and farmlands	15	16.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2021.

Table 1 above is an indication of the traumatic implications of attacks by armed herdsmen with their destructive tendencies. Deaths accounts for 77.5%, which is the highest traumatic implication by percentage.

**Table 2: Psychological implications of attacks**

<b>Psychological implications</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Psychological devastation due to shock	55	61.1%
Hospitalization due to shock	12	13.3%
Living in perpetual horrific fear	23	25.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2021.

Table 2 above indicate that members of the community live in a state of psychological devastation due to shock, this is represented by 61.1% of the respondent's submission.

**Table 3: Affirmation of constant fear in the communities**

Affirmation of fear in the community	Frequency	Percent
Yes	82	97.6%
No	2	2.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2021.

Table 3 above implies that 82 (97.6%) respondents reported that they are still in the state of fear.

**Table 4: Reasons for fear in the communities**

Reasons for fear in the communities	Frequency	Percent
Fear of another attack	55	68.8%
Fear because herdsmen outnumber the security agencies around them	7	8.7%
Fear of being kidnapped a second time	18	22.5%
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Source:** Field Survey, 2021.

Table 4 above implies that majority of the respondents see fear as their major psychological problem with 68.8% suggesting the possible fear of another attack as one of their reasons for fear in the communities.

### **Analysis of in-depth interviews on activities of armed herdsmen in Southern Kaduna Region of Kaduna State.**

In order to stimulate further reactions to support arrears not properly covered by the questionnaire, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with some respondents. The following were recorded, transcribed and documented.

Asked to further expatiate on the general feelings of the people in his local government area, Respondents 1 from Anguwan Masara in Zangon Kataf Local Government Area had this say, *"The level of sophistication of the arms and ammunition used by these killer herdsmen is very fearful. Every day and every week we lose our members to the cruelty of death, they start by shooting us in the middle of the night, burn our houses and farmlands and rape our daughters and wives without help coming our way from government, and we are told not to carry any form of defence arm. But how do these armed herdsmen get theirs to attack us?"*

Respondent 2 from Katchia Village in his response, had this to say?

*“Yes these our enemies, the herdsmen carry very dangerous arms and government has left us unprotected and defenseless even after many appeals have been made by our rulers to the government. We now live in perpetual fear psychologically, not able to sleep in our houses. At night we move out to the tops of the tree and find angles where to sleep while we hide our wives in the next safe villages or the city centre at Kafanchan. Psychologically I am not myself you know they can come and rape your wife or daughter in your presence and they don’t care. One must have to live with this trauma and psychological worries, once they are raped it is difficult for one to inform a third party.”*

As if all these were not enough, respondents 3 who is from Kaura Village had this to say;  
*“I have since stopped discussing the issue of armed herdsmen and have left it to my creator to judge. I have been separated from my wife and children who have been moved to Kaduna town for safety, it is difficult to live alone and to survive. I have lost brothers, sisters and close relations and now homeless”.*

From the above in-depth interviews, it has become obvious that there is a huge lack of security presence in the border forests and hinterlands of the local government areas under review and to some degree a lack of reactivity of government to tackle the menace of these ravaging armed herdsmen attackers.

## **DISCUSSION ON FINDINGS**

Findings from this study have suggested that the attacks by armed herdsmen have caused untold traumatic experiences on the people of Southern Kaduna. The respondents maintained that death is one of the major factors which had caused them so many traumas. (77.5) per cent of the respondents attested to this finding as one of the causes of trauma. This finding has answered objective one of this research which sought to find out major traumatic implications of herdsmen attacks in Southern Kaduna. It was also revealed by a higher percentage (61.10) that these attacking herdsmen have caused psychological torture and undue fears on the people of Southern Kaduna Nigeria. This finding has therefore attempted to answer objective two of the study which sought to examine the psychological implications of armed herdsmen attack in southern Kaduna. The researchers wonder that Nigeria is a nation full of great potential and a well-trained army that has fought wars and won medals at international peacekeeping missions in Africa and outside Africa. The researchers also wonder why it has become difficult for security agencies in Nigeria including the army to curb the incessant attacks and killings of the people of Southern Kaduna, Nigeria.

## **CONCLUSION**

From the foregoing, the findings of this research which have explored parameters including the traumatic and psychological implications of armed herdsmen incursion into Southern Kaduna territories has become a worrisome phenomenon.

The study so far has been able to establish the traumatic and psychological implications of armed herdsmen's exploits and conquest of Southern Kaduna.

### **Recommendations**

The traumatic and psychological implications of armed herdsmen's conquest of Southern Kaduna cannot be overemphasized, therefore, the need for government to be more proactive in the detection of these armed herdsmen who flock daily into Southern Kaduna communities through ungarded territorial boundaries. In this direction, the government may wish to establish new command bases along all borders and territories of Southern Kaduna. This action is capable of restraining the entrants of illegal and unapproved armed herdsmen into both Nigerian territories and those of Southern Kaduna.

It is also recommended that government makes efforts to compensate victims of the carnage of houses burnt and farmlands destruction by alleviating their plights to the provision of food and other items from government reserves.

Government should also as a matter of urgency declare the establishment of ranches, particularly in the northern parts of Nigeria where armed herdsmen are predominantly located. This will curb unnecessary movements to territories that do not belong to them.

It is further recommended that government provide security agencies with drones and other sophisticated arms and ammunition for purposes of protecting its citizens and counter-terrorism movement for its residents in Southern Kaduna Nigeria.

It is also recommended that the porous forest lands be carefully delineated to identify flashpoints for effective surveillance by government security agencies.

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