

ARMED BANDITRY AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN ZAMFARA STATE, NIGERIA

BENUE JOURNAL OF SOCIOLOGY
Volume 9 Issue 2
ISSN: ISSN: 0386
Department of Sociology
Benue State University, Makurdi
Pg: 38 - 59

Ahmed Rufa'i Usman

Federal University, Dutse, Jigawa State

Yusuf BalaRibah

Federal University, Gusau, Zamfara State

Geno Ardo

Sokoto State University, Sokoto State

Abstract

The paper examined armed banditry and sexual violence against women in Zamfara state. Armed bandits are into sexual violence against women in Zamfara state. Women suffer from the activities of armed bandits operating across the state. The objectives of the study include: to find out how armed banditry subjected women to sexual violence in Zamfara state, to find out crimes committed and women's rights infringed by the armed bandits in Zamfara state and to proffer possible solutions to the challenges face by displaced women in Zamfara. The study adopted Radical feminism in the theoretical explanation. The study adopted qualitative technique of data collection. In-depth interview (IDI) was used as the source of primary date. The study was conducted in Gusau, the Zamfara state capital. The study population includes: displaced women, security agents, traditional and religious leaders, staff of the ministries of Women Affairs as well as Humanitarian Affairs. Purposive sampling technique was adopted and a sample of twenty (20) participants were selected for the study. Data collected were transcribed thematically. The findings of the study revealed that women were displaced, raped, molested and subjected to degrading

Corresponding Author:

Ahmed Rufa'i Usman

Email: arusman2015@gmail.com

treatment by the bandits. This has led to psychological trauma, social, physical and economic effects. The paper recommends among others, that government should provide medical facilities, drugs and personnel with aim of given special treatment and counselling to the victims of sexual violence. Perpetrators of sexual violence should be severely punished when caught to serve as deterrence to the larger society.

Key words: Armed banditry, Displacement, Insecurity, Sexual violence, Women

Introduction

According to Campbell and Soeken (2000), sexual violence is a serious problem affecting millions of women each year globally. The highest cases of sexual violence are found in nations suffering from insecurity. Sexual violence has impact on physical and mental health of the victims. Sexual violence is associated with the use of force, threats of weapons or coercion against the victims. Sexual violence has been a weapon of war and has been documented in many conflicts in Algeria, Bosnia Herzegovina, Liberia, Rwanda, Central Africa, Sierra Leone, Southern Sudan, Mali, Nigeria, Libya, Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria (Amnesty International, 2011).

According to Usman and Abubakar (2017), the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, the African Charter and the Nigerian Constitution protect human rights against infringement. Sexual violence is perpetrated along with acts like unlawful killings, injury, and coercion. Sexual violence leads to physical, psychological, social and economic consequences. Sexual violence is absolutely prohibited under the International Humanitarian Law. International Criminal Law has also criminalized sexual violence at the international level. Women are often vulnerable to sexual violence including rape, sexual assault, forced prostitution, sexual slavery and other abuses.

Armed banditry is one of the major forms of insecurity affecting northern Nigeria and has affected all facets of human life. Most affected states include: Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Niger, Sokoto and Kebbi states respectively. Zamfara state is the epicenter of banditry in the country. Most of the bandits' leaders based in Zamfara state forests. Banditry is a crime

against humanity and has caused violence in Nigeria. Bandits engage in heinous crimes like kidnapping for ransom, indiscriminate assassination, rape, setting houses ablaze, cattle rustling and armed robbery (Abdullah, 2019). According to Usman (2021), large forests linking almost the entire Northern Nigeria and some neighbouring countries are governed by bandits and terrorists. This includes *Sambisa, Alagarno, Kamuku, Kudaru, Dansadau, Kuyambana, Burwaye, Ajja* and *DajinRugu*, they are red zones and no-go areas

According to Rufa'i (2021), bandits are believed to come in to Zamfara state from within and outside the country. Whereas, some of them were born and brought in Nigeria and Zamfara state. Some are believed to come from Sahel region and other West African countries. The Tuaregs and Fulani formed the major culprits, and that communities around Kwatarkwashi, Tsafe, Dansadau and Mada are directed accomplices to this crime. Some of the popular bandit leaders in Zamfara state include late BuharinDaji, Kandu, Daudawa, AdamuAleru, BelloTurji, AlhajiAuta, Kachalla, Dogo Gide, Manjagara and Karami. The operation of armed bandits has affected socioeconomic activities leading to a threat to security in the state.

Armed bandits are into sexual violence against women in Zamfara state. Women suffer from the activities of armed bandits operating across the state. Women are facing sexual violence and degrading treatments from the bandits. They are raped, molested and subjected to inhuman treatment. Thousands of women were displaced, facing social problems in different communities they found themselves. Against this background, the study examined armed banditry and sexual violence against women in Zamfara state, Nigeria.

Statement of the research problem

Armed banditry is one of the major forms of insecurity affecting Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Niger, Sokoto and Kebbi. Zamfara state is the epicenter of banditry in the country, most of the bandit's leaders base in Zamfara state forests. They move riding motor cycles to other states such as Katsina, Kaduna and Niger to operate and return to their forests (Abdullahi, 2019).

Women are facing consequences of the armed bandits in Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Niger, Kebbi and Sokoto states. Women are vulnerable and are always attacked by the bandits, this subjected many women to serious

social, health and mental problems in Nigeria. Many of the women and girls abducted or attacked in their communities by the armed bandits suffer from sexual violence. Girls who are not up to puberty stage are raped, and face health challenges. Many women are sexually abused, brutalized and exposed to Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS (Human Right Watch,2021).

About 4,983 women were widowed, 25,050 orphaned and 190,340 others internally displaced between June, 2011 and May, 2019 in Zamfara State. Also, over 10,000 cattle were lost, while 2,688 hectares of farmlands and 10,000 houses destroyed from 2011 and mid-2018 in Zamfara State. The state recorded the loss of 147,800 vehicles and motor cycles between 2011 to May 2019. Over 45 miners were killed by the bandits in Maru in November, 2016 and carried away their precious stones (West Africa Early Warning and Response Network,2019).

Women are the most displaced population suffering from hunger, health challenges, shelter, human right violation and insecurity. Women who are into various Socioeconomic activities are finding it difficult to sustain their livelihood in most of the affected communities in Zamfara state. Sexual abuse, rape, molestation, degrading treatment by the bandits become new normal and order of the day against women in Zamfara state. Against this background, the study examined armed banditry and sexual violence against women in Zamfara state, Nigeria.

Research Objectives

The study examined armed banditry and sexual violence against women in Zamfara state, Nigeria. Other specific objectives include:

1. To find out how armed banditry subjected women to sexual violence in Zamfara state
2. To find out crimes committed and women's rights infringed by the armed bandits in Zamfara state
3. To proffer possible solutions to the challenges face by displaced women in Zamfara.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

According to John (1998), sexual violence is any form of sexual activity where consent is not obtained from the partner. It occurs when the victim is

coerced or forced into sexual activity without her/his consent, or engaging in sexual relationship with a victim who cannot resist based on the age, illness, disability or under the influence of drugs/substance. Sexual violence includes forced kissing, forced breast and genital fondling, attempted rape and forced exposure to pornography, child sexual assault, sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, forced abortion and rape.

According to World Health Organization (2001) rape is a heinous crime, a worrisome epidemic being problematic in contemporary Nigeria. Rape is a crime of forcing someone to have sex using violence. It is an act of sexual violence that involves intercourse without consent or against someone's willingness. Rape is associated with the use of threat, force, duress, torture and coercion for sexual gratification. It involves any unlawful sexual behavior such as fondling breast and body, one's private parts or genital organs to derive sexual pleasure. Rape is an aggressive act against women mostly during wars, against slave girls, inmates and groups who lack power or status. The perpetrators use it as a means of humiliating the victims. Rape as a sexual assault involve penetration i.e. vaginal, oral, or anal due to force or threat of force, lack of consent or inability of the victim to provide consent due to age, intoxication or mental status (Achunikeet *al*, 2014).

World Health Organization (1995) defined rape as physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration, even if slight-of the vulva or anus, using penis, other body parts or an object. Section 375 of the Criminal Code applies to Southern Nigeria defined rape as

any person who has unlawful carnal knowledge of a woman or girl, without her consent or with her consent, if the consent is obtained by force or by means of threats or intimidation of any kind, or by fear of harm, or by means of false and fraudulent representation as to the nature of the act, or in the case of married woman, by personating her husband is guilty of an offence which is called rape.

Section 282 of the Penal Code applies to Northern Nigeria defined rape as

1. A man is said to commit rape who has sexual intercourse with a woman in any of the

following: (a) against her will (b) without her consent (c) with her consent, when her consent has been obtained by putting her in fear of death or of hurt (d) with her consent, when the man knows that he is not her husband and that her consent is given because she believes that he is the man to whom she is or believes herself to be lawfully married (e) with or without her consent when she is under fourteen years of age or of unsound mind. 2. Sexual intercourse by a man with his own wife is not rape, if she has attained to puberty.

The 1949 Geneva Conventions classify sexual violence as a violation of the law of war. A number of perpetrators were prosecuted in International Criminal Court (ICC) for sexual violence committed in armed conflicts across the globe. Under the International Humanitarian Law, International Criminal Law and Human Rights Laws, sexual violence is torture, inhuman and degrading treatment on the victims. Rape and other forms of sexual violence are prohibited in war or peace time. This violate Article 3 and 5 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions and crimes against humanity that is punishable by the International Criminal Court. Sexual violence in form of rape committed in peacetime or in war transgressed Article1 of the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women of 1993. The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) of 2003 prohibit violence against women and contain a number of provisions aimed at protecting women from sexual violence (Gaggioli, 2014).

The International Conference for the Protection of War Victims, held in Geneva in August, 1993 declared that sexual violence directed against women and children constitute grave breaches of International Humanitarian Law. Rape is a torture and prosecuted under the grave breaches' provisions. The Rome Statute, adopted by states in 1998, provides that rape, sexual slavery, enforced prostitution, forced pregnancy or any other form of sexual violence constitute a grave breach of the Geneva Conventions and a serious violation of Article3 and defined as international crime (Harmen, 2012).

The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended) section 34 provides right to dignity of human person and stated that:

No person shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment. No person shall be held in slavery or servitude and no person shall be required to perform forced or compulsory labour.

Various legislations criminalized sexual violence either at peacetime or in armed conflict. The punishment for rape as a form of sexual violence in Nigeria depends on states, it may be life imprisonment maximum but it may be less.

Radical Feminist Theory

The study adopted radical feminist theory in the theoretical explanation. Radical feminist ideology and movement emerged in 1960s with Kate Millet, Andrea Dworkin, Catherine Mackinnon, Valerie Solanas and Alice Walker. Radical feminist theory has been founded on the principle of Marxism. Radical feminism beliefs are based on the idea that the main cause of women's oppression originates from social roles and institutional structures being constructed from male supremacy and patriarchy. Radical feminism seeks to abolish the patriarchy and to liberate unjust treatment against women in the society. Radical Feminists reacted on why women have been oppressed and unjustly treated in the society (Lobber, 1999).

According to Evans (1995), Radical feminism emphasized on the study of women's daily lives such as housework, serving men's emotional and sexual needs, pregnancy and childbirth. They disregard patriarchy and women's exploitation found both in private and public spheres. The theory argued that patriarchy is very hard to eradicate because of its belief that women are inferior. Radical feminism blames male for all problems in the society such as war, poverty, rape and violence against women. Men have the potential to use physical violence against women.

According to Reid (2006), the theory has been criticized on the ground that, despite it originated from Marxism, the theory neglected that,

men too suffer from the oppression, exploitation and subjugation institutionalized in the system's mode of production. The theory only emphasized on oppression and unjust treatment of women along. The social roles and institutional structures being constructed in the system affects both men and women of the working class.

Despite the criticisms against the theory, radical feminism is relevant in explaining the hardship face by women due to armed banditry. Women suffer violence in the society because of their inferiority. Women are viewed as servants who provide sexual satisfaction for the men. Because of their inferiority, women are exploited and subjugated. They are powerless and become target of violent crimes in most societies. Women mostly suffered from the consequences of armed bandits in Zamfara state. Women are molested, rape, tortured and subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment. They suffer from post-traumatic disorder, phobia, injuries, rape and sexual assault. Women attracts the bandits as sexual symbols that gratify the sex instinct whenever they are attack in their communities.

Research methodology

The study was conducted in Gusau, the Zamfara state capital. The population of the study include: displaced women, religious and traditional leaders, security agents and staff from the Ministry of Women Affairs and Ministry for Humanitarian Affairs. The study adopted qualitative technique of data collection. In-depth interview (IDI) was used as the source of primary data. Purposive sampling technique was adopted and a sample size of twenty (20) participants were selected for the study. English and Hausa languages were used in interaction with the participants. Data collected using Hausa language was translated into English. Data collected were transcribed thematically based on the objectives of the study.

Findings of the study

This section discussed the findings of the study based on the objectives that guided the study

How armed banditry subjected women to sexual violence

Armed banditry is disastrous to the affected communities, especially women and children. In an in-depth interview on how armed banditry subjected

women to sexual violence, a woman revealed that:

Armed banditry has affected me and my family negatively. I and my family became displaced, our communities became displaced, we lost our properties and my husband as the bread winner of the family. The bandits attack women, they subjected women and young girls to sexual violence. Women are raped, attacked and molested by the bandits. Rape become prevalence in our communities. This is why we became displaced and move to Gusau for rescue. Many women were raped before their family, those in captivity suffer different sort of sexual violence from the bandits. Even those who were raped do not received any medical attention before our displacement. Many women are now battling on how to survive here in the state capital. We don't receive any support here, and this put us in disastrous condition (IDI, with a displaced woman, Age, 34, Gusau, Zamfara state, 2021).

Armed banditry has affected women from all angles, we are displaced, suffering from hunger, malnutrition, lack of shelter with poor condition of living. The most disturbing part of the armed banditry is sexual violence against women. Sometimes when the bandits attack our communities, they loot our food stuff and rape women before they leave. Women become symbol of sexual satisfaction to the bandits in rural areas of Zamfara state. Many women were raped but they don't want to narrate the story of what happened to them because of shame. I have never seen a disaster like armed banditry in my life. It affects us negatively and we are suffering from its consequences here (IDI, with a displaced woman, Age, 41, Gusau, Zamfara state, 2021).

Women are the worst affected by armed banditry as they the one that take care of the children. No one suffer the evil

of armed banditry like women. My husband died in 2020 of gunshot. They attack our husbands and rape women. Many of the women who suffered from sexual violence are suffering from different diseases. They can contract STDs and HIV/AIDS because you don't know the health status of the bandits that raped women. There are pregnant women who were raped in our community by the bandits. The bandits raped anyone without taking cognizance of married women, teenage girls, pregnant women or aged women. Many women left their communities and become displaced due to frequent sexual violence by the bandits (IDI, with a displaced woman, Age 37, Gusau, Zamfara state, 2021).

In an in-depth interview with Security agents on how armed banditry subjected women to sexual violence revealed that:

Women are badly affected by armed bandits; they are always at the receiving end. Many of them lose their husbands and are left with children to care for. The lives of women are threatened by the bandits as women are vulnerable and defenseless whenever the bandits attack their communities. No one can render support to the women whenever the bandits attack them apart from the security agents. Women suffer from different atrocities committed by the armed bandits. They are killed, raped, molested and lose their bread winners, many of the women in the affected communities are now found in Gusau the state capital for rescue. Sexual violence against women become rampant, the bandits raped anyone they come across. Women of different status and age become victims of rape in the affected communities. Some women were in captivity and suffer sexual violence from the bandits (IDI with Security Agent, Age 31, Gusau, Zamfara state, 2021).

The bandits use terrorist tactics such as shooting, ambush, and poisonous weapons against the civilian population especially women. The bandits have violated human rights, heinous crimes have also been committed by the armed bandits in the affected communities. They rape, kill women, children and displaced larger populations. Usually the bandits attack villages in mass they brutalized men in front of their families, burned houses, shops and raped girls/women, carry away food stuff. Rape become serious (IDI with Security Agent, Age 29, Gusau, Zamfara state, 2021).

In an in-depth interview with a religious leader on how armed banditry subjected women to sexual violence revealed that:

Many women lost their husbands, they became widow and their children become orphans. This forced them to street begging. It throws some of them into adultery and other social vices that are forbidden. Many of the women that moved from their villages as a result of armed banditry to Gusau are helpless. Before their displacement, women suffered different atrocities from the bandits. They are raped and subjected to bad treatment; rape is one of the serious crimes committed by the bandits. In most of the affected communities' women become victims of sexual violence. All religious groups respected women in armed conflict, but bandits don't take cognizance of that. They are into indiscriminate sex with women and teenage girls. In the process many of the victims conceived pregnancy (IDI with Religious Leader, Age 52, Gusau, Zamfara state, 2021).

Women suffer most with the act of armed bandits in Zamfara state. They are molested, harassed and raped in their communities. Banditry has affected the lives of everyone especially women. Many of the women lost their

bread winners and this subjected them to hardship, they have no food, shelter or engages in anything that can sustain their lives. The atrocities committed by the bandits against women is disheartening and pathetic. If you listen to their narrations, one must cry and sympathize with them. Many of the women now become bread winners because their lost their husbands. Rape and other sexual violence become serious in the affected villages. Most of the time bandits attack, they go with intention of committing rape against women (IDI with Religious Leader, Age, 64, Gusau, Zamfara state, 2021).

In an in-depth interview with traditional leader on how armed banditry subjected women to sexual violence revealed that:

Women are seen with little children in desperate and terrible condition begging for what to feed their children. Most of them have their husbands and bread winners killed by the armed bandits. I pity their situation because many of them are helpless. The condition they found themselves as a result of armed banditry is very disastrous, when you move around most of those on the street begging are women who were displaced by the bandits from their villages and moved to Gusau. They suffer different crimes from the bandits before their displacement. Rape become serious and one of the disturbing crimes in most of the communities attacked by the bandits. Many women who were raped are helpless with no medical attention. This situation can aggravate their health condition in the future. Many of them who suffer from psychological trauma as a result of sexual violence were neglected in the communities, they found themselves (IDI with Traditional Leader, Age, 61, Gusau, Zamfara state, 2021).

In an in-depth interview with Director Women Affairs in the Ministry of Women Affairs (MOWA) on how armed banditry subjected women to sexual violence revealed that:

Women are affected quite negatively by armed banditry in Zamfara state. Women are seriously affected by the current insecurity that engulfed the state. Everyone knows that, women are affected by this phenomenon more than any other person. Sexual violence is always in the increase both in peace time and in armed conflict. The armed bandits capitalized on the insecurity and commit serious crimes against women and teenage girls in the affected villages. The ministry received cases of sexual violence against women. The ministry of Women and Children Affairs in Zamfara state is aware of the problem, and very much concerned about the situation in which women are in Zamfara state. The Ministries of Women Affairs and Humanitarian Affairs are working hard to cater for the needs of the displaced women in the state (IDI with Director Women Affairs, Age 51, Gusau, Zamfara state, 2021)

In an in-depth interview with a Director in the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs on how armed banditry subjected women to sexual violence revealed that:

In any conflicting situation women and children usually suffered the consequences. Women are vulnerable and they can be subjected to any ill and degrading treatment at any time. Armed banditry has affected many people in our state especially women and children. We received report of displacement, killings, rape and harassment against women. Many of the displaced women and teenage girls were raped, abandoned and become symbol of sexual satisfaction to the armed bandits. Most of the women and girls are brutalized and threatened by the armed bandits in their villages. Armed bandits have embarked on deliberate use of sexual violence against women in the affected communities. This violates the International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Laws in armed conflict. Sexual violence by the armed bandits on women

leads to psychological and physical consequences. The ministry is seriously concerned with this situation and the state government is rendering assistance to the victims (IDI with Director Ministry of Humanitarian and Disaster Management, Age 53, Gusau, Zamfara state, 2021)

Criminal activities and women's rights infringed by the armed bandits

Armed banditry has violated women's rights and perpetrated many crimes against women. One of the affected women revealed that:

The bandits violated our rights and committed heinous crimes against everyone in our villages especially women. The bandits committed arson, stealing of food items, kidnapping, cattle rustling, raiding villages and killings especially male who are bread winners of the family. Women mostly suffered from rape and those in captivity are forced to work for the bandits. Serious crimes and human rights violations were committed against women in most of the villages suffering from armed banditry in Zamfara state (IDI, with a displaced woman, Age, 28, Gusau, Zamfara state, 2021).

Displacement and sexual violence against women and teenage girls are the serious criminal offences committed by the bandits in our locality. Married women including those who were pregnant were raped by the bandits. Teenage girls were raped and taken away for captivity. Most of them suffer from sexual abuse, torture and degrading treatment in the hands of bandits. Our husbands were killed and this create a serious problem to us. Still, some women are in captivity, those who were released narrated a very bad experience on the hand of the bandits (IDI, with a displaced woman, Age, 37, Gusau, Zamfara state, 2021).

In an in-depth interview with a security agent on the women's right violation and criminal activities perpetrated by the bandits revealed that:

Serious criminal activities are perpetrated by the bandits. The bandits engage in crimes like kidnapping for ransom, burning and raiding grains, indiscriminate assassination, rape, setting houses ablaze, theft of livestock and armed robbery. They kidnap and collect ransom from the families of the victim. Women mostly suffer from rape and molestation, sometimes they rape young girls in presence of their families. Food item were looted by the bandits living women and small children in hunger and poverty (IDI with Security Agent, Age 34, Gusau, Zamfara state, 2021).

In fact, armed banditry is a crime against humanity associated with killings, rape, and arson, theft of livestock, armed robbery, extortion, displacement and kidnapping for ransom. Armed bandits use sophisticated and local weapons in carrying out criminal offences against humanity. Armed banditry is a crime against International Humanitarian Law and a violation of fundamental human rights. Women are subjected to sexual violence and harassment by the bandits, in most of the affected communities, women were raped and this can affect their health status. Most of the acts committed by the bandits are crimes against humanity (IDI with Security Agent, Age 30, Gusau, Zamfara state, 2021).

Possible solutions to the challenges face by the women

On the possible solutions to the challenge women are facing especially sexual abuses due to armed banditry in Zamfara state a woman revealed that:

Peace and security are no more in Zamfara state. There is the need for government at the state and at federal levels to work hard in returning peace in our rural areas.

Government need to liaise with security forces from Niger Republic because in most cases we that came from border communities whenever there is attack by the armed bandits, sometime soldiers from the Niger Republic came to our aids. Here that we stay, we have no shelter, government need to provide shelter for we, the displaced women. Our children are not going to school, government and the host communities should please look into this problem. Diseases and lack of food are also affecting us, philanthropists in Nigeria should please come to Zamfara especially rural areas and see how we survive. We want Zamfara state government to please build a permanent IDPs camp for us, because many women were displaced with no place to leave Gusau (IDI, with a displaced woman, Age, 56, Gusau, Zamfara state, 2021).

We are facing serious challenges due to displacement by the bandits. Some of our children, husbands and teenage girls are still with the bandits in captivity, we want government to help us and rescue them. Government should please reinforce the security agents to restore peace so that we can go back to our communities. We suffered here with nothing to do, government and the host communities should help us with capital to start small scale business in order to take care of our children and send them to school. Our husbands too, are not doing anything here, members of the community should please help them to start something in order to become self-reliance. We have no school here, government should please take us to permanent camp where we can get access to schools, water and health facilities (IDI, with a displaced woman, Age, 48, Gusau, Zamfara state, 2021).

In an in-depth interview with a Director Ministry of women Affairs on how they respond to the challenges faced by displaced women due to armed banditry in Zamfara state revealed that:

Government is doing everything possible to put the situation under control. It has explored all avenues and still taking appropriate measures to contained the situation. Security of lives and property is a collective responsibility of all of us. It is not only government that has the responsibility of securing the communities. Everyone is stakeholder in the issue that border on security. The previous administration put a lot of measures in place, including negotiation, involvement of informal sector to bring the situation to an end. Government is still adopting practicable measures to restore normalcy in the state. Government is working hard and doing its best to improve the lives of the displaced women, their children and husbands (IDI with Director Women Affairs, Age, 53, Gusau, Zamfara state, 2021)

The ministry of Humanitarian Affairs came at a better time in taking care of the needy especially those who were displaced by the armed bandits in the state. The ministry through the state government is doing its best in improving the lives and conditions of the displaced women and their children. We have limited resources at our disposal, we still request the federal government, NGOs and philanthropists to help our people that were displaced by the bandits. Government always assist them with food, shelter, medical treatment and ensure that they are protected where they live. Most of our attention is now on the people who were displaced and left their communities for rescue. All necessary assistant to improve their lives is given to them by the government. But we still appeal to the philanthropist to help in improving the lives of the displaced persons especially the women (IDI with Director Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Age, 50, Gusau, Zamfara state, 2021)

Security agents are playing significant role in the fight against armed banditry. This could be achieved only if government can give security agents necessary supports financially and in terms of modern gadgets. Security agents need to be well equipped in the fight against armed banditry in Zamfara state. In many occasions, the security agents repel attacks from the bandits and rescued many abductees including women, teenage girls and children. Security agents also provides security in the IDPs camps. There is the for the public to support security agents through community policing, this can help in supplying information to the security on the bandits and their informants. Government need to cater for the needs of the displaced persons, especially women and children. If government can do the needful, security agents can eliminate the bandits for the displaced communities to go back to their places (IDI with Security Agent, Age, 39, Gusau, Zamfara state, 2021).

Government need to include community/traditional leaders in policies regarding security and welfare of the people. Traditional leaders engage in soliciting accommodation and financial assistance to the displaced persons, especially women, aged and children who are vulnerable. There is the need for the government to intensify its role in finding solution to the problem of insecurity. Security agents should be supported by the government and the public in the fight against banditry in the state. Philanthropists should please come to the aids of the displaced women, in most cases, the traditional leaders shoulder their responsibilities of shelter and food. Traditional leaders are closer to the displaced women, as such, we know much about their problems than any other person. They require food, shelter, medical facilities, schools for their children and capital to start petty

business in order to take care of themselves (IDI with Traditional Leader, Age, 64, Gusau, Zamfara state, 2021).

There is the need for the stakeholders to come and see how women and little children are suffering as a result of displacement by the bandits. Most of the time we preach and sermon to the members of the public especial those who are reach to please assist the displaced persons. Government and security forces need to double their efforts in the fight against armed banditry. There is the need also to incorporate the religious and traditional leaders through enlightenment at the grass root for the members of the society to shun away from any immoral and criminal act in our societies. The displaced persons require serious assistance, most of their children move on the street and beg, this can lead to moral decadence and insecurity in future if nothing is done. Im calling the attention of the federal government and rich people to please come Zamfara and see how the affected communities are surviving (IDI with Religious Leader, Age, 67, Gusau, Zamfara state, 2021).

Discussion of the major findings

The findings of the study revealed that armed banditry has subjected women to sexual violence leading to physical, psychological, social and economic consequences. This rendered them displaced and helpless in the communities they found themselves. The finding is in line with the work of Usman and Abubakar (2017), observed that, women are often vulnerable to sexual violence including rape, sexual assault, sexual slavery and other abuses in armed banditry.

The findings of the study also revealed that armed bandits have committed crimes and infringed women's rights in Zamfara state. The bandits tortured, molested, displaced, killed and injured women in their communities. This finding is in line with the work of Human Right Watch (2021), observed that, girls who are not up to puberty stage are raped, and

face health challenges. Many women are sexually abused, brutalized and exposed to Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs) and HIV/AIDS. Many were killed, injured and displaced from their communities by the armed bandits.

Conclusion and recommendations

Armed bandits have perpetrated sexual violence against women and young girls in Zamfara state. They adopt this tactic through attack of villages and abduction of hundreds of women and girls. Armed bandits have committed number of sexual violence which violates International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law. Most of the affected communities in Zamfara state become avenues for sexual violence against women and teenage girls. Many crimes were committed against women in most of the affected communities across Zamfara state. The paper proffers the following recommendations:

- Findings of the study revealed that women suffered from sexual violence and attacks by the bandits. The paper recommend that perpetrators of sexual violence should be severely punished when caught to serve as deterrence to larger society. Severe punishment should be applied to anyone caught committing rape.
- The findings of the study revealed that women were displaced, killed, injured and violation of human rights. The study recommend that government should establish an independent commission of inquiry to investigate general allegations of violation of human rights by the armed bandits. This can serve as deterrence to the larger society.
- The findings of the study revealed that women and children were displaced from their communities and are facing hardship in the host communities. The study recommends that government should increase funding for relief and emergency operations to be able to care for the increasing number of IDPs. Government at all levels and philanthropists should assist in providing social amenities such as shelter, food, water, medical care, schools and security to the displaced women. This can address the challenges face by the displaced women in the communities they found themselves.
- The findings of the study revealed that, there exist shortage medical facilities that can cater for the needs of the women, especially who are

suffering from trauma as a result of sexual violence. Government should provide medical facilities, drugs and personnel in the IDPs camp with aim of given special treatment and counselling to victims of sexual violence in the camp.

References

- Achunike, H.C., & Kitause, R.A. (2014). Rape epidemic in Nigeria: cases, causes, consequences and response to the epidemic. *International Journal of Research in Applied Natural and Social Sciences (IJRANSS)*, 2(1), 31-44
- Abdullahi, A. (2019). Rural banditry, regional security and integration in West Africa. *Journal of Social and Political Sciences*, 2(3), 654-664
- Amnesty International (2011). Rape and sexual violence: human rights law and standards in the international criminal court.
- Campbell, T.C., & Soeken, K.L. (2000). Forced sex and violence against women's health. *Journal of Anxiety Disorder*, 11(3): 28-41
- Evans, J. (1995). *Feminist theory today: an introduction to second-wave feminism*. Newbury Park: Sage Publication
- Gaggioli, G. (2014). Sexual violence in armed conflict: a violation of international humanitarian law and human rights law. International review of the red cross
- Harmen, V.W. (2012). War crimes and women in armed conflict. *International Journal of Criminal Justice*, 10(5), 113-128
- John, S. (1998). Violence against women during the Liberian civil conflict. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 14(10), 106-121
- Lobber, J. (1999). *The Variety of feminism and their contribution to gender equality*. New York: Longman Publication
- Human Rights Watch (2021). Human rights violation against women in armed conflict: an experience of Nigeria. Retrieved from www.sexualviolence/nigeriaofficials/hrw.org on 22/12/2021
- The 1999 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria (as amended).
- Reid, S. T. (2006). *Crime and criminology*. Eleventh edition. USA, Florida: McGraw Hill Publishers
- Rufa'i, M. A. (2021). I am a bandit: A decade of research in Zamfara state. Bandit's den. A Paper Presented at the Usmanu Danfodiyo University, Sokoto, 15th Seminar Series. Held on 9th September, 2021

- Usman, A. R. (2021). Armed banditry in Northern Nigeria: causes and implications. *Jalingo Journal of Peace Science and Conflict Management*, 1(2), 1-14.
- Usman, A. R., & Abubakar, I. (2017). Sexual violence against women in armed conflict: A case study of *Boko Haram* insurgency in North Eastern Nigeria. *Taraba State Journal of Sociology*, 2(2), 199-211
- West Africa Early Warning and Response Network WARN (2019), Nigeria: Addressing Armed Banditry in the North-West Region of Nigeria. WARN Reports 2019
- World Health Organization (2001). Prevalence rate of sexual violence and its effect on women Retrieved from www.who.sexualviolence.org on 13/12/2021
- World Health Organization (1995). The critical condition of women and teenage girls in armed conflict. Retrieved from [www.http//who.violence/women/girls](http://www.who.violence/women/girls) on 04/01/2022