



Banditry Implications on Socio-Economic Development in Baringo South Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract

Banditry incidents affect people in various ways like displacement from homes, cause poor health, disrupt education, increase poverty, and create unfavourable business environment. At Baringo South Sub-County in Kenya, many lives have been lost and several injured in banditry incidents. National and County governments have invested in measures to enhance security and contain livestock theft, but challenges still exist. In this study, purposive and stratified random sampling techniques were used. The sample size was 364 residents. Mixed research methods of quantitative and qualitative were used in the study, with instruments for data collection being closed-ended question questionnaires and open-ended structured interview schedules. The study found that banditry negatively affects the average income levels of locals through its outstanding effects on aspects such as poverty, destruction of business activities, displacements from homes, creating an unfavorable climate for investors, unemployment, and professionals' avoidance of banditry-prone areas due to insecurity. Further, the findings of this study demonstrated that banditry has notable implications on literacy levels through its serious impact on the closure of schools, instilling fear in learners and teachers besides being one of the causes of school dropouts.

Introduction

Banditry is a global problem. In the United States of America (USA), bank robberies are the commonly reported type of banditry, notably in North Carolina and Tennessee. Armed assailants often attack several banks and steal money (Jouvenal, 2016). In the United Kingdom (UK), banditry is found mostly in London, Manchester, and Liverpool. Other banditry-affected locations are the West Midlands, South Coast and Northern England. According to Grierson (2016), the crime involves robbery that targets high-value goods. Bandits steal from warehouses, banks, jewellery shops, safe deposit boxes and homes. Kidnappings of family members is also part of the organised criminal's strategy. Organised crime is a concern in Athens, Greece. Assailants target valuables, especially in public places, taking advantage of foreign visitors in tourist attraction areas. The following items can easily be stolen in concentrated tourist locations: bags, passports, and wallets. One of the hotspot areas is on the metro in the Central part of Athens. Sexual assaults and bodily severe injuries may also occur (Pappas, 2016).



Boko Haram in North-West Nigeria have attacked residents of Zamfara, Kaduna, Niger, Sokoto, Kebbi and Katsina. Ofoma (2023) points out that banditry negatively impacts socioeconomic development. They added that bandits have a strong capability to confront government security forces. In July 2019, the bandits shot at one of its military aircraft, but the pilot was able to eject safely (Akinyetun, 2004). Another incident occurred in 2019 when bandits breached the safety and security of the Nigerian Defence Academy in Kaduna, killing soldiers (Ofoma, 2023). In efforts to contain banditry, the governments of South Africa and Lesotho deployed Police officers at Maseru (the border of South Africa and Lesotho) to control insecurity, but banditry continued. Similarly, at Nabilatuk District in Uganda, suspected Karamoja bandits steal livestock, kill, and seriously injure people including Police officers (Akinyetun, 2004).

In Kenya, there are Counties affected by instability because of banditry incidents. These are Marsabit, West Pokot, Isiolo, Baringo, Samburu, Laikipia and Turkana. All of them have slow development growths mainly due to crime. According to Koech (2023), in six months, 100 civilians and 16 Police officers were killed in the banditry-prone areas of Kenya. Cattle rustling, a form of banditry, is vice-supported by some communities' cultural practices. Akeno (2020) explains that most bandits dropped out of school in lower primary classes to join this illegal practice. The assailants use sophisticated weapons (Melil, 2018), like Assault rifles, including AK-47, M16 and G3 amongst others. These weapons find their way to civilian hands because of the proliferation of small arms through porous borders, which ensures the supply of firearms and ammunition to bandits.

It is important to note that bandits have cultural support from some communities (Rutto, 2022). They receive blessings from ordained elders who guide them on the best routes to use during raids. For the mission to be successful, they follow instructions from respected elders, including community seers and magicians (Akeno, 2020). Women from these groups adored the practice by praising boys who had conducted successful raids and brought livestock home. On the contrary, unsuccessful bandits are ridiculed (Akeno, 2020).

Baringo South Sub-County is one of the six sub-counties of Baringo County. Others are Baringo Central, Baringo North, Mogotio, Tiaty and Eldama Ravine. The Sub-County is rich in natural resources and has a high potential for development because of its geographic positioning. It is home to Ilchamus, Tugen, Turkana, Ndooris, Pokot and other communities of Kenya. Livestock husbandry, crop farming and beekeeping are key economic activities. Banditry in Baringo South has been a prolonged problem. Attacks between pastoralist communities often occur in the area. Livestock theft is the main cause of inter-communal attacks. Others are competition for pasture, water, and boundary disputes. Community land border dispute has also been the salient issue contributing to insecurity in this area (Mulu& Ichani, 2023). The rapid increase of small arms and cattle rustling for trade and profit has resulted to deadly conflicts, causing death, serious injuries, and livestock theft.

Reports indicate that in 2016, Baringo had a total of 505,771 cattle. Residents use livestock and their products for food and get money from selling them. Koech (2023) and Kiptoo (2015) agree that socially, camels, cows, goats, and sheep are indicators of riches and are used to pay the bride's price in marriage. Violent livestock raids occur during daytime or at night and are perpetrated by armed assailants who, besides robbing victims of their livestock, kill or inflict serious bodily injuries.

It is important to understand that banditry has evolved over time. Kaprom (2013) points out that in the 1980s and 1990s, motivation for banditry used to be mainly livestock for dowry, and killings by bandits were rare. The other major change in banditry dynamics is the use of sophisticated weapons



like assault rifles (Kaprom, 2013), in contrast to ancient bandits who are known to use traditional weapons, including spears, bows, and arrows.

There is high insecurity in Baringo South Sub-County due to banditry incidents. The crime has existed for more than two decades. Many households were displaced in Baringo South following cattle rustling situations. In July 2014 in Marigat, bandits torched several houses in Ramacha village. In February 2022, five people were killed and two injured at Arabal, Yatia, Mochongoi, Bartabwa and Kapndasim villages in Baringo County. Banditry attacks cumulatively left more than 50 people dead and thousands displaced from their homes in the County. This problem denies children social protection such as basic education, food, and healthcare necessary to reach their full potential. During banditry incidents, teachers, students, and parents are attacked.

Livestock robbery had negatively impacted development, slowing economic and social development. Due to insecurity, various schools closed, malnutrition increased, and infrastructural development was hampered in banditry-prone areas. Leaders, churches, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have conducted several peace meetings to promote cohesion, integration, and peaceful co-existence in the region. The government of Kenya (GOK) deployed Police officers and Military personnel in March 2023 to restrain insecurity. Parts of Baringo South Sub-County were mapped out for a security operation dubbed 'Operation Maliza Uhalifu North Rift' by the Government of Kenya to tame banditry. Some areas were put under dawn to dusk curfew and declared disturbed with no authorisation to civilian access. Selected roads had roadblocks manned by security personnel in the operation, including the recovery of stolen livestock. However, banditry incidents continued to be reported in Baringo. There are areas of the Sub-County that are in an escarpment and deep valley, hence difficult to access. The study can help to identify the social and economic implications of banditry on communities and assist the government in preventing and mitigating its impact.

Empirical Literature Review

Banditry interrupts economic activities. Through economic activities like livestock keeping, people get their income. Communities in Baringo South depend on livestock for food and money. Consequently, the average income of people is significantly affected when they lose livestock through banditry. Following banditry incidents, victims are impoverished and underprivileged (Melil 2018). Livestock is the main source of food, wealth reserve and means of marriage through dowry payment for pastoralists. In the affected areas, the material bases of pastoralists are disrupted (Osamba, 2010).

Banditry Implications on Income Levels

Banditry in Baringo South Sub-County has had a negative economic impact on the residents. Evidence from earlier studies shows that many victims of banditry are psychologically affected while others suffer permanent injuries and, hence, cannot get involved anymore in economically productive activities, resulting in loss of income. Talents and human potential are lost through horrific banditry incidents. Livestock robbery has led to constant and recurring tribal violence among communities. Traditional livestock robbery groups have deep-rooted cultural practices in cattle rustling, poaching, and human killing as a ceremony marking childhood to adulthood for young men and symbolising bravery and pride (Kaprom, 2013).

Melil (2018) and Kaprom (2013) agree that the higher rates of violence and lethality are attributed to the smuggling of Small and Light Weapons (SAWL) linked with the commercialisation of livestock raids. This indicates that as vulnerable victims of banditry are thrown into poverty, the beneficiaries of banditry proceeds make a killing from illegal gains. Bandits commit crimes including robbery, murder, assault, rape, abduction, and arson. They do these either as individuals or in groups.



Banditry incidents make affected people relocate from their homes to other locations. This is to avoid being attacked again. They leave their homes, businesses and neighbours to migrate for their life's safety. Besides dislocation, these unfortunate situations harm the victim's health and economy. People's lives and the infrastructure built to support them often is limited. Environmental health problems from harsh weather and disasters threaten human health (Adams & Wisner, 2002). The most affected communities are children, women, and the elderly. The common trend is once assailants attack a place, they are likely to repeat after some time when people begin to re-settle, exposing victims to endless cycles of suffering.

In new settlement areas, internally displaced persons (IDPs) find it difficult to quickly settle and run businesses they are used to. At times, it may not be easy to start a new business. The impact is worse on women and people living with disability (PWDs). This directly disrupts their employment activities, rendering many jobless (Behera, 2006). Sexual Assault victims end up facing stigmatisation in the workplace, affecting their productivity. Rape cases occur directly or indirectly during banditry incidents (Stevens & Cloete, 1996). Coppola (2015) points out that heinous crimes can be committed by assailants in the process of robbing victims of their property.

Banditry implications on Literacy Levels

Banditry has affected education. Murder cases resulting from banditry negatively impact educational institutions. Anyango et al. (2017) posit that household breadwinners who lose their lives in banditry incidents meant discontinuation of school fees source for their dependent learners, hence dropping out of school due to lack of school fees. Additionally, loss of manpower occurs when teachers are victims or tutors avoid working in banditry-prone locations. This translates to a low teacher-to-learner ratio in schools. Destruction of infrastructure facilities like classrooms, closure of educational institutions and wastage of learners' academic calendar time are consequences of banditry. Learners often get discouraged on educational pursuits due to constant attacks targeting schools.

According to Sanchi et al. (2022), the displacement of learners geographically disconnects them from their schools. Insecurity caused by banditry discourages private investors from building more schools, hence overcrowding in the few available institutions, leading to poor quality education. Consequently, learners walk for long distances to access basic education. This research discovered that some learners drop out of school following banditry displacement, hence low primary school enrolment in banditry-affected areas. After GOK started the free public primary school initiative, some pastoralist in North-Rift areas kept their children at home due to banditry incidents. For instance, cattle rustlers vandalised schools at Mukutani and Rugus in Baringo South. Due to intimidation caused by banditry incidents, there is an environment of fear which makes learners miss school and teachers fail to attend their duties in schools for fear of being attacked. School support staff fear reporting to their duty stations due to banditry threats.

Literacy levels drop through disruption of learning caused by the displacement of families (Sanchi et al., 2022). Increased dropouts occur following banditry owing to the loss of breadwinners and school fees. Learning is affected due to cultural attachment to livestock. Boys mostly prefer to engage in banditry to acquire wealth in the form of livestock, which is customarily valued. On the other hand, households prefer to marry off the girls in exchange for cattle rather than educating them.

Theoretical Framework

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs philosophy states that people are motivated to acquire the next higher level of needs after low-level needs are met first (McLeod 2018). This theory is appropriate to this study because it means that if people are struggling to meet needs pertinent to their own survival,



such as security and safety, they are unlikely to prioritise development, belongingness, love, esteem, and self-actualisation needs at that point. One must achieve basic needs foremost before thinking about development. This is one reason to explain why people struggling with insecurity challenge may not be able to prosper in socio-economic development. The theory is in harmony with this research findings, which show that banditry negatively affects people's income and literacy levels.

Research Methodology

Quantitative and qualitative research methods were employed, with the dominant method being quantitative methodology. Primary and Secondary data collection methods were used to collect data. For Primary data collection, a close-ended questionnaire was used, while secondary data was sourced from other researchers' work relevant to the topic. A quantitative method was used to test causal relationships through averages. The data was analysed using descriptive statistics through SPSS (Version 26.0), and the results obtained were expressed as Mean plus or Minus (+/-) Standard Deviation. The chi-square test for association was used to see if there was a link between banditry and the Socioeconomic status of the study sample. Where $p > 0.05$, the result was considered statistically significant.

Discussion of Findings

The Chi-square test of association was used to evaluate whether banditry significantly affected income activities in Baringo South Sub-County. Banditry was a significant cause of poverty (chi-square=32.490, p -value=0.001). Banditry was also found to be significantly associated with the destruction of business activities (39.665, p -value<0.00001). Further, banditry was also found to be significantly related to creating an unfavourable climate for investors (57.280, p -value<0.00001).

Evidence from the interviews shows that banditry affects the income levels of the community through the destruction of businesses and property, the creation of an inconducive environment for doing business by investors, loss of livelihoods in the form of livestock, loss of lives, injuries, and displacement of persons to other areas. Through banditry, the interviews demonstrated that injuries suffered hinder people from engaging in income-generating activities. Income level is also affected by the loss of breadwinners and energetic persons in the community/family. This finding is in harmony with Melil (2018), who states that banditry harms people's income levels.

As noted from the interview responses, banditry also affects literacy levels through population displacement and the destruction of school infrastructure. This research's findings agree with Kaprom (2013), who points out that banditry has contributed to high illiteracy levels and general underdevelopment in parts of Kenya.

Conclusion

The study reveals that banditry has significant consequences on residents' income levels. Banditry affects average income levels of residents through its significant effect on aspects such as poverty, destruction of business activities, creating an unfavorable climate for investors, unemployment, and employees' willingness to work in banditry-prone areas. This aligns with existing literature that incomes are impacted by banditry.

Furthermore, banditry has significant implications for literacy levels through its significant effect on school closures, instilling fear in teachers, parents, and learners, school dropouts, learners walking long distances to access schools, and children's late entry to schools.

Based on the findings of this study, diversification of livelihoods is necessary to tame banditry. Communities should be mobilized and engaged in the need to diversify livelihoods, especially from



livestock keeping to the uptake of high-value crops through irrigated agriculture. Pastoralists should be empowered to diversify their economic activities. This will provide alternative sources of income and will stop overreliance on livestock, which is a major cause of banditry. Diversification of income activities will improve the income of households.

Enhancement of infrastructure is key in containing banditry. Existing roads should be improved, while new access roads should be opened up by development stakeholders to ease the movement of people and their produce and quicken the response time by security agencies in the event of a security incident.

Disarmament operations by government security actors are useful. The study shows that accessibility to small arms and light weapons is a significant cause of banditry. The national government should, therefore, ensure that full disarmament operations target all banditry-affected areas.

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