



Role of Tree Loggers in Promoting Insecurity in Sabon Birni Local Government Area, Sokoto State: A Review

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between tree logging, deforestation, and insecurity in Sabon Birini, Sokoto State, Nigeria. The paper reviews existing literature on the environmental and socio-economic impacts of logging and deforestation, highlighting their contributions to insecurity in the region. The findings reveal that illegal logging and deforestation have led to environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, and increased greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, the study shows that the socio-economic drivers of insecurity, including poverty and unemployment, are exacerbated by the loss of forest resources. The study recommends localized research, community-based approaches, education and awareness programs, policy reforms, and support for alternative livelihoods to address the dual challenges of deforestation and insecurity in Sabon Birini. The paper concludes that addressing the dual challenges of deforestation and insecurity requires a multi-faceted approach that involves localized research, community-based interventions, and education and awareness programs

Keywords: *tree loggers, deforestation, insecurity, Environment, and Sabon Birni Local Government*

Introduction

Deforestation is caused by a host of issues including economic, cultural, political, and demographic phenomenon globally (Chakravarty et al., 2012), the logging of wood for the satisfaction of human needs or greed is a central-contributory factor to forest degradation/deforestation by smallholders in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa (Amare et al., 2017).



Sadly, deforestation results in the release of approximately two billion tons of carbon (in the form of CO₂) into the atmosphere each year (Houghton, 2005 in Ibrahim 2021). Forests act as carbon sinks, and when they are cleared, higher levels of greenhouse gases (GHG) are emitted, leading to a rise in global average temperatures (Sambe et al., 2018). It therefore upsets the global carbon cycle and plays a notable part in global warming. Deforestation causes soil erosion and flood; half of the topsoil has been lost in the last one and a half century (Jamal et al., 2018).

The environment in Nigeria is governed by various laws that guarantee its protection and conservation (Act 2007; Environmental Impact Assessment Act 1992 ;). A key characteristic of a developing country like Nigeria is that human and economic activities primarily focus on basic production. This primarily involves the extraction of natural resources, such as logging and wildlife hunting. It also encompasses livestock grazing and crop cultivation. In this context, the sustainability of the environment's quality and productivity relies heavily on maintaining a balance between natural resources, where forests play a crucial role, population density, and production methods. In Nigeria, this balance was preserved until the last century. The low population density and the restriction on population movements due to the insecurity caused by inter-tribal wars. These combined to limit the extent of man's occupation of the land and thereby to tamper his impact on the environment (Oriole 2022).

Illegal tree logging has become a major environmental and social issue in northern Nigeria, including Sabon Birni LGA in Sokoto State. While logging offers short-term economic benefits, it has long-term consequences for both the environment and security. The widespread removal of trees has led to the degradation of forests, which play a crucial role in maintaining ecological balance and supporting rural livelihoods. As forests disappear, communities are deprived of essential resources, which has led to conflicts, displacement, and increased criminal activities such as banditry.

The pervasive banditry and its associated threats to security, which have enveloped the Northwest region of Nigeria, particularly, Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Sokoto and Niger States, have become a worrisome national security issue of public concern (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016).



The northwestern region of Nigeria encompasses seven states namely Kano, Jigawa, Katsina, Kaduna, Zamfara, Sokoto and Kebbi. Five of these states, which are Katsina, Kaduna, Zamfara, Sokoto and Kebbi have been mostly affected by the scourge of banditry. Of these five states, Kaduna, Katsina and Zamfara have been the most critical hot spots. It is however, pertinent to note that the incidences of banditry are not limited to northwestern Nigeria. In fact, it is also prevalent in some parts of north-central region, in states like Niger, Nasarawa, Benue and Plateau which are equally regarded as hotbeds (Kuna & Jibrin 2016).

The term security has not till date been accorded a universal conceptual outlook due to the fact that it has been considered from different perspectives. According to Francis, (2005: p.22 in Ochoga 2023) ‘security is accepted to be about the ‘condition or feeling of safety from fear, anxiety, danger, poverty and oppression, the defiance, protection and preservation of core values and absence of threats to these values.’. It is conceived as to be secure and free from both fear of physical, psychological abuse, violence, persecution, or death and from want such as food, health and good job (Asmau & Abdurashed, 2020).

This paper seeks to review existing literature on tree logging, deforestation, and insecurity in Sabon Birni and similar regions and synthesize key findings on the link between illegal logging and insecurity.

Method of the review

Method of the review of existing literature reveals that tree loggers have been implicated in promoting insecurity in several studies (Garba, 2020; Abdullahi, 2019; Mohammed, 2018), with their activities often linked to increased rates of banditry, kidnapping, and cattle rustling in affected areas and Abdullahi, A. (2020). The Impact of Tree Logging on Insecurity in Nigeria

The Link between Logging and Environmental Degradation

This is to explore how logging activities contribute to environmental degradation, focusing on its immediate and long-term effects on the ecosystem in Sabon Birni. By understanding this link, it becomes clearer how the depletion of forests can lead to a cascade of environmental problems, which, in turn, have socio-economic and security implications for the region. The loss of forest



cover also reduces the availability of non-timber forest products that many local communities rely on for their livelihoods (Kaimowitz, 2003).

Overview of Logging in Northern Nigeria

Several studies have documented the extent of logging activities in northern Nigeria. Logging is often driven by the demand for timber and firewood, particularly in areas where alternative energy sources are scarce (Olagunju, 2019). Illegal Logging and Its Environmental Concerns in Nigeria: by (Justice Ezech 2020) The paper aimed at examining some concerns of illegal logging such as: causes, effects, regulatory regime, and enforcement against illegal logging and The Challenges of Deforestation and Management in Nigeria: Suggestions for Improvement by Yusuf Alapata Ahmed and Razaq Abolaji Olaitan (2024) The main goal is centred on the pressures on the forest population leading to a number of causes like; urbanization, overpopulation and over expansion of agricultural lands. (Adediran et al 2016) on Criminality: Illegal Logging of Woods in Nigeria's South-West Forest Belt was discovered that a strong network of syndicates often (local and foreign) capitalized on the prevailing surge of unemployment in the country to lure young, unemployed and able-bodied men and women into criminal survival strategies and environmental crime of illegal logging of precious woods.

Sabon Birni, like many rural regions, relies heavily on its forest resources for energy and income generation. However, much of the logging in the region is conducted illegally, with little regulation or oversight.

Environmental Impacts of Logging

The environmental consequences of logging are well documented in various scientific studies, reports, and publications. In addition to deforestation, logging leads to soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, and changes in local climate patterns (Bello, 2015). The removal of trees also reduces the capacity of forests to act as carbon sinks, contributing to global climate change. The potential for soil erosion increases if the soil has no or very little vegetative cover of plants and/or crop residues, Plant and residue cover protects the soil from raindrop impact and splash, tends to slow down the movement of runoff water and allows excess surface water to infiltrate (Balasubramanian



2017). The initial and first impact of land degradation is the abandonment by members of the communities, forcing automatic or emergency migration on the dwellers or their means of livelihood (.Obaisi and Olokuntoye 2018). Environmental degradation through human activities has depleted Nigeria's natural resources such as land, air, water, wildlife, soil, forest etc. pushing people into poverty. (Nwokoro and Chima 2017) stated that poor people are the agents of environmental degradation and also they are the main victims of a depleted environment meaning that they are forced to over exploit areas for farming and shelter for their livelihood. In Sabon Birni, deforestation has left the land vulnerable to desertification, which further threatens the livelihoods of local populations.

Logging in Sabon Birni

In Sabon Birni Local Government Area, illegal and unregulated logging has not only led to environmental degradation but has also exacerbated local security challenges. Logging: Cooking at homes and heating of metal or iron all around the tropical regions use these resources and half of the illegal removal of forests is used as fuel wood. Large areas are also cleared to construct roads in order for large trucks to have entry into logging sites. As forests are depleted, the livelihoods of many rural residents are threatened, leading to increased poverty and social unrest. The loss of forest resources has intensified competition over remaining land and resources, fueling conflicts and displacement. This section explores how logging activities are intertwined with rising insecurity in Sabon Birni, highlighting the critical link between environmental exploitation and social instability.

The Rise of Insecurity

Insecurity in northern Nigeria, particularly banditry, has been linked to environmental degradation. As forested areas are destroyed, they provide less cover for rural populations and more opportunities for criminals to operate undetected. Banditry is one of the critical forms of insecurity that has affected the northwest geopolitical zone for the past ten years. Banditry has affected all surfaces of human life, among which is food security in the States affected, including Sokoto State (Yusuf 2022) In Sabon Birni, the disappearance of forests has contributed to the rise of banditry, as degraded areas become hotspots for illegal activities (Abah & Tukur, 2021). In recent years,



however, the terrible activities of bandits and kidnappers have turned contemporary Nigeria in to a theater of genocide, slaughter, and instability. These gangs and camps wreak disorder on Nigerians, causing national security and public worry (Dami,2021). As a result of Banditry, kidnapping, and ethno religious violence spreading from and across Local Governments in Sokoto, North Western states (Sabon birnin), citizens barely sleep with two eyes closed. Due to an increase in everyday kidnappings of motorists, including security officers, the Abuja-Kaduna route has been dubbed "the road to death" in recent years (Yusuf 2022).

Socio-Economic Drivers of insecurity

Insecurity is often driven by socio-economic factors, including poverty and unemployment, which have been exacerbated by the loss of forest resources. Studies have found that communities in northern Nigeria that experience high levels of environmental degradation are more likely to experience violence and insecurity (Bello, 2015). As forest resources diminish, communities face limited economic options, increasing their susceptibility to criminal recruitment and engagement in unlawful activities. While it is an undeniable fact that the reliance of millions on forests contributes to degradation and deforestation, there are multiple advantages arising from this loss (in terms of livelihoods, income, and employment) that support the sustenance of indigenous populations. Nevertheless, through the exploitation and trade of forest resources, the strong connections built through partnerships have paved the way for the development of social services like better roads, educational institutions, reliable electricity, and access to clean water in communities bordering the forest (Obiri and Damnyag, 2011). On the other hand, illegal logging undermines the economy of the government and exposes the nation to a perilous shortage and diminished quality of lumber (Tunde, 2017). Numerous researchers have pointed out that insecurity in Nigeria is a significant factor contributing to the country's ongoing under-development (Ali, 2013; Ezeoba, 2011). In the Global Peace Index (GPI, 2020), Nigeria is placed 148th out of 163 sovereign nations on the peace scale. Even more concerning is Nigeria's status as the 3rd Most Terrorized Nation in the world, trailing only Iraq and Afghanistan (GPI, 2020). Okolie-Osemene (2019) argues that security is essential for the sustainability of any modern nation within the international political framework. This stems from the necessity for states recognized as independent to preserve their territorial integrity without interference from other states.



Insecurity in Nigeria has escalated to a concerning level, manifesting itself in multiple aspects of our national life. Daily, lives are lost, communities are diminished, businesses are left in distress, investments are plummeting, multinational companies are shutting down and departing the country, unemployment is rising, and citizens are living in constant fear (Onime, 2018). Despite the government's increasing spending on internal security at both National and State levels, individuals in their respective rights, workplaces, and homes invest heavily to ensure safety for themselves and their properties.

Conclusion

Tree logging has been identified as a significant contributor to both environmental degradation and insecurity in Sabon Birni LGA, Sokoto State. While the economic activities of loggers provide short-term financial benefits, they have long-term consequences for the environment and local communities. This review highlights the need for more localized research and community-based interventions to address the dual challenges of deforestation and insecurity in the region. Sabon Birni can mitigate the negative impacts of illegal logging and promote stability and security.

Recommendations

1. **Localized Studies:** Conduct more research to investigate the specific role of tree loggers in promoting insecurity in Sabon Birini, including fieldwork and data collection.
2. **Community-Based Approaches:** Explore how local communities can be involved in managing forest resources and preventing illegal logging.
3. **Education and Awareness:** Educate local communities about the environmental impacts of logging and deforestation.
4. **Policy Reforms:** Advocate for policy reforms to strengthen forest governance and regulation in Nigeria.
5. **Alternative Livelihoods:** Support the development of alternative livelihoods for communities that depend on logging and deforestation for their income.



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