



Effect of Banditry on Management of Kainji Lake National Park, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: Banditry is fast becoming alarming in Nigeria to the extent that it poses serious challenges on wildlife management. This study therefore examined the effects of banditry on the management of Kainji Lake National Park. To obtain information, questionnaires were prepared to correspond with some basic ideas regarding banditry impacts. Randomization as strictly ensured in the distribution of fifty (50) questionnaires to the staff of Kainji Lake National Park. The result revealed that majority of the respondents are male (72.0%) with age group 35-44 years recorded the highest with 70.0%, followed by 25-34 years with 16.0 while age group 45 and above were the least with 14.0%. Majority of the respondents were married (82.0%) and most of the respondents had tertiary education (58.0%). Also, majority (36.0%) had served the Park for 11-20 years. All the respondents are aware of banditry activities in the Park. The effects of banditry on wildlife conservation were change in some biodiversity species status and illegal hunting/fishing recorded the highest observation of 32.0% and 24.0% each, followed by illegal logging and habitat destruction with 18.0% and 14.0% while looting of Park infrastructure is the least with 12.0%. The strategies adopted to reduce the effects of banditry on wildlife conservation showed that joint military operation scores 34.0%, adequate field equipment like guns and vehicle (24.0%), formation of peace committees (18.0%), conflicts with the local communities are resolved fairly and efficiently (16.0%), boundary demarcation (6.0%) and adequate staff and financial resources (2.0%). The study concludes that the effects of banditry on wildlife conservation are had to estimate, yet there are some striking environmental effects.

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Human beings have seriously encroached into many wildlife habitats and permanently occupied lands formally inhabited by wild animals (Ijeomah and Aiyeloja, 2010). This has led to wanton destruction and emigration of wildlife species (part of our national heritage) to more stable ecosystems. Through creation of wildlife refuges in form of game reserves and National Parks rural inhabitants were forced to vacate part of their 'acquired life –dependent' land and other parts of environment for wildlife species, in many cases without compensation (Adetoro *et al.*, 2011). But even inside the National Parks created purposely for protection of species, game populations still appear to be under threat which can be caused by poaching or intense banditry activities. Banditry may undercut or

destroy environmental, physical, human and social capital, diminishing available opportunities for sustainable development (UNEP, 2004). Banditry is usually viewed as a matter of sovereignty as a result of this; environmental damages occur most of the time unchecked by international environmental organizations (Otive, 2011). Aggravated armed internal rift or crisis involves the use of weapons such as gun, rocket launcher, bullets and bombs, which have lethal chemical components. This has the potential to wreak unprecedented environmental havoc, the full consequences of which we have not known yet. This situation calls for sober reflection on the Park management and man who form critical niche in the ecosystem. It is hard to estimate the exact

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environmental impact of Banditry on biodiversity resources yet there are some striking environmental effects (habitat destruction, refugees, hunting and poaching, unauthorised fishing and guerrilla base or camping among others)(Ijeomah and Ogbara, 2013). Otive, (2011) ascertain that there are several factors for the cause and prevalence of banditry in Nigeria. Some of the factors they argued include the fragility of Nigerian state, weak state institutions, especially the security agencies, availability of grossly ungoverned spaces, porosity of Nigeria's borders with its neighbouring countries and arms proliferation, weak leadership, corruption, unemployment and mass poverty. Biodiversity and its ecosystem components form the basis of conservation target and what ecotourist want to visit. The continuous insurgences caused by banditry are inimical to sustainable conservation of biodiversity and continuous ecotourism patronage. All these have unprecedented negative impacts on the nation biodiversity resources. Establishment of National Parks and institution of various conservation laws and regulations, has systematically, through time, alienated the local people from the right to utilize and manage natural resources (Ogogo *et al.*, 2014). Most indigenous people, however, tend to continue utilising these resources illegally. So far, the impact of banditry on wildlife conservation in the study area has not received scholarly attention. This implies that there is a lacuna or gap in present knowledge of impact of banditry

activities on wildlife conservation. This work seeks to narrow the gap by looking at the impact of banditry on wildlife conservation in Kainji Lake National Park, Nieria.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study area: Kainji Lake National Park (KLNP) is located approximately 560km north of Lagos, and 385km southwest of Abuja, Federal Capital of Nigeria. It covers a total area of 5,340.82km². The two sectors of KLNP lie approximately between latitudes 9° 40'N and 10° 30'N and longitudes 3° 30'E and 5° 50'E. It is made up of two non-contiguous sectors; the Borgu Sector and the Zugerma Sector. The Borgu Sector of KLNP (Bs-KLNP) is situated on the land area shared between Borgu Local Government Area (LGA) in Niger State and Kaiama as well as Baruten LGAs, Kwara State. It is bordered on the east by the Kainji Lake, popular for the National Electric Power Authority's (now Power Holding Company of Nigeria's) Hydro-electricity Generation Station and supply of freshwater fish. Its western border is contiguous with inter-national boundary of Nigeria and the Republic of Benin. The Zugerma Sector (Zs-KLNP) is situated in the land area shared between Magama and Mashegu LGAs of Niger State. The tributary of Kontagora River on the Northwest side and River Manyara on the north borders the Zugerma Sector (Ayeni, 2007).

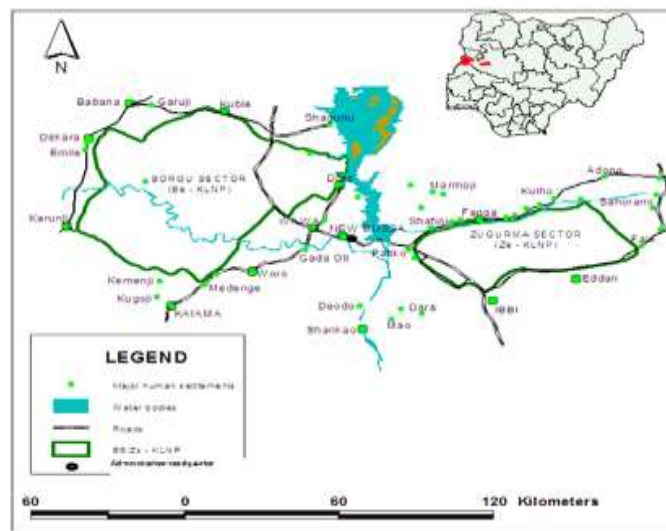


Fig 1: Kainji Lake National Park Showing its Administrative Headquarter and Surrounding Villages.

Data collection: Structured questionnaires were used for this work. The respondents were staff in the conservation and ecotourism departments of the Kainji Lake National Park. A total of fifty (50) questionnaires were administered to the identified staff using simple random sampling technique.

Data Analysis: The data collected was analyzed through descriptive statistics in form of table and bar using Microsoft excel.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the respondents, it was observed that majority of the respondents were male (72.0%) while female recorded 28.0%. Also age group 35-44 years recorded the highest with 70.0%, followed by 25-34 years with 16.0 while age group 45 and above were the least with 14.0%. The table further revealed that 62.0% of the respondents were Muslim while 38.0% were Christian. It can equally be noted from the table that majority of the respondents are married (82.0%). Also majority of the respondents tertiary education (58.0%), followed by secondary education with 32.0% while primary education was the least with 10.0%. It was also shown that majority (36.0%) had served the Park for 11-20 years. Figure 1 showed the awareness of banditry activities in the Park, in all the respondents

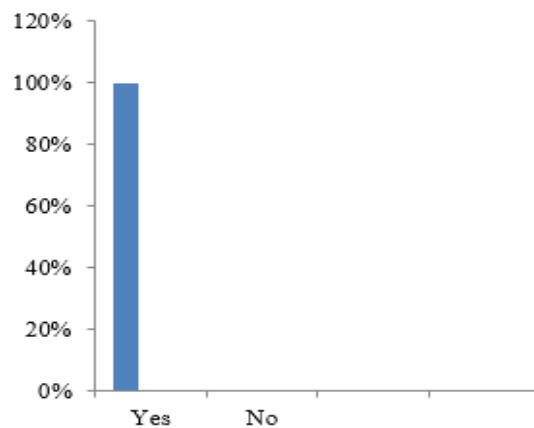
agrees that banditry is going on within the Park. The effects of banditry on wildlife conservation are presented (Table 2), it was observed that change in some biodiversity species status and illegal hunting/fishing recorded the highest observation of 32.0% and 24.0% each, followed by illegal logging and habitat destruction with 18.0% and 14.0% while looting of Park infrastructure is the least with 12.0%. Table 3 showed the strategies adopted to reduce the effects of banditry on wildlife conservation in the study area, in which joint military operation scores 34.0%, adequate field equipment like guns and vehicle (24.0%), formation of peace committees (18.0%), conflicts with the local communities were resolved fairly and efficiently (16.0%), boundary demarcation (6.0%) and adequate staff and financial resources (2.0%).

Table 1: Demographic Characteristic of the Respondents

Demographic	Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	36	72.0
	Female	14	28.0
Age Group (Years)	25-34	8	16.0
	35-44	35	70.0
	45 and Above	7	14.0
Religion	Muslim	31	62.0
	Christianity	19	38.0
Marital Status	Married	41	82.0
	Single	9	18.0
Level of Education	Primary education	5	10.0
	Secondary education	16	32.0
	Tertiary education	29	58.0
Years in service (Years)	≤10	26	52.0
	11-20	18	36.0
	≥21	6	12.0
Total		50.0	100.0

Recently Nigeria has been plagued with different degree of banditry. There are different causes of armed conflict in Nigeria which includes rivalry between communities, religious, political problems and Poor management of endowed natural resources leads to agitation in different quarters of the country (Lawal, 2019). The hostility in the country has its negative effects not only on human and infrastructures but also biodiversity resources of the nation. The effects could be devastating and long-lasting on the environment. Armed conflict may have multiple, long- and short-term impacts on development, and on environmental and human well-being. Banditry may undercut or destroy environmental, physical, human and social capital, diminishing available opportunities for sustainable development (UNEP, 2004). The finding of this study indicates that there were presence of banditry activities in Kainji Lake National Park. This corroborates with finding of Landan, (2019) that most Nigeria Game reserve in the Northern part of Nigeria witnessed different activities of banditry. The effects

of the banditry activities as reported in this study includes; changes in some biodiversity species status, illegal hunting/fishing, illegal logging and looting of Park infrastructure.



Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Fig 1: Awareness of Banditry Activities in the Park

Table 2: Effects of Banditry on Wildlife Conservation in Kainji Lake National Park, Nigeria

Effects	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Habitat Destruction	7	14.0
Change in some biodiversity species status	16	32.0
Illegal hunting and Fishing	12	24.0
Illegal Logging	9	18.0
Looting of Park infrastructure	6	12.0
Total	50.0	100.0

Table 3: Strategies Adopted to reduce the Effects of Banditry on Wildlife Conservation in the Study Area

Strategies	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Joint Military Operation	17	34.0
Formation of Peace committees	9	18.0
Adequate staff and financial resources	1	2.0
Conflicts with the local communities are resolved fairly and efficiently	8	16.0
Boundary Demarcation	3	6.0
Adequate field equipment like guns and vehicle	12	24.0
Total	50.0	100.0

Biodiversity species have different status in their natural environment. Some species could become endangered, critically endangered, rare, vulnerable and even extinct among others depending on the already status of the species before the crisis. Banditry could lead to local populations of biodiversity resources being utilized beyond carrying capacity (Landan, 2019). At this critical period any biodiversity resource of consumptive value is worth consuming irrespective of its classification status. Effort of conservation programme in these protected areas will be brought to nil. In the 1994 internal armed conflict of Rwanda much of the country's Akagera National Park was opened up as a result animals like the roan antelope and the eland became extinct (Percival *et al.*, 1995). Hunting and Poaching of wild and exotic species are common occurrence in the time of major internal armed conflict. Plumtre *et al.*, (2001) reported that all sorts of illegal ammunition flow around and this is the weapon of poachers. At this critical stage, conservation laws are broken at will because of the chaos in the land. This has tragic effects on bush animal populations in the protected areas (Plumtre *et al.*, 2001). Different species of fish are overexploited for consumption and economic benefits during this period. This work was in accordance with UNEP (2004), which stated that there was general

breakdown of orders during Liberia internal armed conflict, the resultant effects of this crisis on environment are massive depletion of natural resources and water resources were critically depleted for there was no compliances to set environmental regulations. The fact that forest has tree canopy with vast reserved landmass, makes it an easy target for escape or hideout for the bandits which in turns leads to habitat destruction. This unauthorized entry does not have regard to conserve ecological composition of the protected areas. The illegal entrants cause a lot of damages to the biodiversity resources of protected areas through their unfriendly environmental behaviour in the protected areas. A case in mind was the Vietnam War, where large chemical warfare which main constituent is dioxin a carcinogenic compound, that had lethal damage on soil constituents, water resources and vegetation of the affected areas. This chemical warfare was sprayed on forests reserves/mangrove swamps in other to flush out the enemy soldiers. The consequence of this action is the ecological devastation of the forest which has given rise to the use of new vocabulary in environmental issue called ecocide (Pearce, 2004). The strategies adopted to reduce the effects of banditry on wildlife conservation in the study area are joint military operation, adequate field equipment like guns and vehicle, formation of peace committees, conflicts with the local communities are resolved fairly and efficiently, boundary demarcation and adequate staff and financial resources. This finding support the report of Channels TV (2016), in spite of the seeming failure of the attempts in the foregoing explication, the initiative was effectively put into practice by the Niger State government when it established its own joint patrol which brings together the military, police, security service, civil defence corps, and local vigilante groups works by proactively engaging with the bandits in the forests. Also, Niger State government opted for negotiations with the armed bandits with a view to surrendering their weapons to the State government as the best option for ensuring sustainable peace (Tangaza, 2014).

Conclusions: This study confirms that Kainji Lake National Park is witnessing banditry activities. Although the exact effects of banditry on wildlife conservation are hard to estimate, yet there are some striking environmental effects. These include changes in status of biodiversity species, illegal hunting/fishing, habitat destruction etc. The hope is that many of the most prevalent and serious pressures and threats could be prevented, mitigated or reversed through sustained national and international cooperation.

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