

ASSESSMENT OF GOVERNMENT ROLES IN TACKLING THE MENACE OF CATTLE RUSTLING IN NORTH-WESTERN NIGERIA

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Abstract

Insecurity resulting from acts of cattle rustling have been more prominent which contributes to loss of lives, displacement of people and destruction of property in the country. Cattle rustling is a national calamity since it poses the same threat as Boko Haram which is always discussed in the media. The purpose of this research is to assess the roles of government in tackling the menace of cattle rustling North Western Nigeria. Two research questions were raised to guide the conduct of the study. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The study area is north-western Nigeria. The target population of the study consist of all the government officials, community leaders, and cattle farmers in North-Western Nigeria. Due to the large number of states in the North- Western Nigeria, the researchers will select and use three states namely: Kaduna, Katsina, and Zamfara as the sample states for the study. The researchers selected a sample of 300 respondents from the three states. These respondents comprise of 100 Government officials, 100 community leaders, and 100 cattle farmers in the three sampled states. The method of sampling used for this study is a multi-stage sampling technique. The various sampling techniques include; simple random sampling technique, purposive sampling technique, and proportional stratified random sampling technique. A structured questionnaire was designed by the researchers and titled “government roles in tackling the menace of Cattle Rustling Opinion Questionnaire” (GRiTMoCROQ). The data collected were analysed using the Mean score methods of data analysis was used to answer the research questions that were raised in this study. The findings of the study showed that cattle rustling is a major threat to the socio-economic development of Nigeria. The study concluded that cattle rustling has crippled most of the development advancements in North-western Nigeria. Based on the above conclusion the following recommendations were put forward; there is a need for instituting stronger legislation and empowering local traditional authorities who should be tasked with the mandate of stemming cattle rustling activities and existing laws and policies be reviewed and strengthened by the Federal Government, National Assembly, State Governments as well as State Houses of Assemblies.

Introduction

Insecurity resulting from acts of cattle rustling have been more prominent which further contributes to loss of lives, displacement of people and destruction of property in the country (Bashir, 2017; Abubakar, 2019). Consequent upon the prevalence of banditry in Nigeria, the country ranked sixth on the 2021 Global Terrorism Index, signifying increasing rate of insecurity in the country (Global Terrorism Index, 2021)

Nigeria's current and biggest security threat is cattle rustling, which has claimed many lives and properties in rural areas. Considering the aforementioned claims, Saleh (2015) noted that the nature and frequency of cattle rustling in Nigeria have made it a threat to the survival of rural communities throughout the country, especially in the northern regions. The four northern states of Kaduna, Katsina, Zamfara, and Niger are home to the most villages where cattle rustling occurs. Here, it has caused numerous fatalities, injuries, and population displacement in addition to the loss of livestock and agricultural products (Yusuf, 2015). According to Abubakar (2016), cattle rustling is a national calamity since it poses the same threat as Boko Haram which is always discussed in the media.

Cattle rustling refers to the stealing of grazing cattle. The term is of the historical United States colloquial etymology in which context pioneer farmers lost cattle while grazing on huge ranges that were difficult to patrol for policing (Microsoft Students Encarta, 2008 DVD). Traditionally, cattle rustling has been driven by the criminal intent to expropriate cow for meat or for sale. Pertinently, it must have served as a means of primitive accumulation of cow-herd in the contexts of subsistence and commercial pastoralism (Blench, 2004). Over the years, cattle rustling has evolved into a pattern of organized crime with immense criminal sophistication and efficiency. Hence, contemporary cattle rustlers operate with modern weaponry and their operations are marked by trans-locational and trans-national syndication (Alemika, 2013). This clearly underscores cattle rustling as a typical and prominent instance of 'underworld franchise' in contemporary societies (Okoli and Okpaleke, 2014).

Existing studies have shown different causes of insecurity (including Cattle rustling) across the geopolitical zones in Nigeria. For instance, evidence from Egwu (2016) and Abubakar (2019) affirmed that poor management of forest spaces as well as incessant herder-famer conflicts provide habitat and opportunity for insurgency, cattle rustling and kidnapping. For Ugwueze, Omenma, and Okwueze (2022), the complicity of the central government in Nigeria is one of the causes of increasing criminalities that have led to insecurity in the country.

Since the inception of cattle rustling in Nigeria, The Nigerian Government has adopted different measures to tackle rural banditry in north-western Nigeria. Some of these measures according to Lawson and Aide (2018) may include appeals for international support, the use of Dialogue, policing/specialized units, regulatory processes, amnesty, and disarmament programs, community response/community policing, judicial processes, use of modern technology for identification, establishment of ranches and branding of cattle and the use of military force against the cattle rustlers.

The issue persists despite the use of government institutions in Nigeria and the affected regions and states, such as the police, military and paramilitary groups, courts, community leaders, vigilante groups, etc., to deter criminal activity related to cattle rustling. In keeping with the foregoing, the purpose of this research is to assess the roles of government in tackling the menace of cattle rustling North Western Nigeria.

Objectives of the study

The general objectives of the study is to assess the roles of government in tackling the menace of cattle rustling North Western Nigeria. Specifically the study is designed to:

1. Assess the roles of government in tackling the menace of cattle rustling in North-western Nigeria.
2. Evaluate the challenges against government efforts in tackling the menace of cattle rustling in North-western Nigeria.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised to guide the conduct of the study.

1. What are the roles of government in tackling the menace of cattle rustling in North-western Nigeria?

2. What are the challenges against government efforts in tackling the menace of cattle rustling in North-western Nigeria?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Cattle Rustling

Cattle rustling is understood as an illegal and forceful collection of livestock from the owners or communities, using any available arm without minding the loss of lives and properties of the victims (Cheserek *et al.*, 2012). Okoli and Okpaleke (2014) opined that conceptually, the term “cattle rustling” appears to have evolved into a more or less standardized specialist nomenclature. Hence, the concept is almost universally applied to designate the act of stealing cattle from grazing herds notwithstanding the motivation, contextual specifics, or the method used.

Cattle rustling is a planned and organized crime involving the stealing of livestock forcefully from another person or from the grazing field by a group of individuals, and for the purpose of commercial gain (Behnke, 2008). Isabel (2014), viewed cattle rustling as involving the use of arms to steal households' entire livestock possession.

Government Roles in Tackling Cattle Rustling

According to Kufour (2012), solving rural banditry and insecurity issues in Nigeria is to hasten the pace of development. Development in such a way of creating an economy with relevant social, economic, and physical infrastructure for democratic sustainability and industrial growth, to provide gainful employment, high-level education facilities, and medical care for the people.

Other strategies include the mopping of illegal arms, deployment of more police officers, peace building and restoration, and cutting off illegal arms and livestock trade (Amene, 2009) and the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders, including, security agencies, traditional and religious leaders of the Hausa/Fulani community, Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN), Farmers Associations, and local vigilante groups have tended to give the process more credibility, with the seeming commitment of top political leadership towards inclusive processes (Momale *et al.*, 2019).

Oluwarotimi (2012), stated that good governance is another solution to cattle rustling and insecurity challenges in Nigeria. The war against insecurity would be won only by raising governance standards that is, promoting the culture of good governance where the government is responsible and accountable to the people.

Studies also show that cattle rustling can be protected with active border patrol, stiffer consequences for the offenders, and the improvement in rural community policing can also help in managing cattle rustling (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014). Various actions have been undertaken to deal with livestock raids such as community sensitization, meetings, community dialogue, and amnesty, while different members of the community are involved in peace initiatives to deal with this conflict (Shehu *et al.*, 2017).

Challenges militating against Government Roles in Tackling Cattle Rustling

In spite of the holistic approach that was adopted in tackling cattle rustling and other security challenges insurgency in Nigeria, the frequency of occurrence of the incidence of cattle rustling is still visible, this is because of the following Challenges militating against government efforts:

Conflict in pastoral areas which serves as impediments to government efforts at tackling the menace of cattle rustling and other security issues is often associated with their marginal location and weak state penetration. Pastoralists are seen as not only physically distant and occupying peripheral areas, but also politically and culturally marginalized. This marginal location is responsible for widespread violence in their areas. The non-reactive nature of the government and security agencies (Alao, Atere, & Alao, 2013) this is seen in their lack of response as they always come late and do not entirely address the longer-term security needs of pastoral communities.

Another factor is the nature of the pastoralist's way of lifestyle: since time immemorial, the nature of the pastoralist's way of lifestyle demanded that they be armed with some form of weapon for purposes of protection or self-defence both for themselves and their cattle from attacks by wild animals and theft. Bows and arrows were the weapons of choice. However, in the past three decades, there has been an escalation of

cattle rustling attacks which has been fuelled by the increase in small arms. This has led to the formation of heavily armed and militarized groups. It has further led to the rise of criminal gangs who engage in cattle rustling purely for commercial reasons.

The porous nature of Nigeria’s’ border, is making it quite hard to control the influx of Aliens into the country and control the penetration of sophisticated arms which are being used by the cattle rustlers. Other factors include Economic Corruption (Eme and Ibietan, 2013), Political Corruption (ICG, 2014), Underfunding (ICG 2014 & Blanchard 2014), Underpayment of Foot Soldiers and other security agencies (Blanchard, 2014), and the weakening state control over the pastoralists region (Ochieng and Maxon, 2012) which has resulted in the emergence of cattle warlords who run armed militias to protect their interests.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. This design was adopted because it uses a sample of an investigation to document, describe, and explain what is in existence or non-existence on the present status of the phenomena being investigated. The survey research design is suitable for this study since data will be collected through a questionnaire government roles in tackling the menace of Cattle Rustling in North-western, Nigeria. The study area is north-western Nigeria. The North West is one of the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria representing both a geographical and political region of the country,

The target population of the study consist of all the government officials, community leaders, and cattle farmers in North-Western Nigeria. Due to the large number of states in the North- Western Nigeria, the researchers selected and use three states namely: Kaduna, Katsina, and Zamfara as the sample states for the study. The researchers will select a sample of 300 respondents from the three states. These respondents comprises of 100 Government officials, 100 community leaders, and 100 cattle farmers in the three sampled states. The method of sampling used for this study is a multi-stage sampling technique. The various sampling techniques include; simple random sampling technique, purposive sampling technique, and proportional stratified random sampling technique.

A structured questionnaire was designed by the researchers and titled “government roles in tackling the menace of Cattle Rustling Opinion Questionnaire” (GRiTMoCROQ). The structured questionnaire was designed with Fourteen (14) items using the modified 4-point Likert scale of Strongly Agreed (SA4), Agreed (A3), Disagreed (D2), and Strongly Disagreed (SD1) respectively. Mean score methods of data analysis was used to answer the research questions that were raised in this study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Question One: What are the roles of government in tackling the menace of cattle rustling in North-western Nigeria?

Table 1: the roles of government in tackling the menace of cattle rustling in North-western Nigeria

S/N	ITEM	Mean	Decision
1	appeals for international support to tackle cattle rustling	2.84	Accepted
2	the use of Dialogue between government and cattle rustlers	2.76	Accepted
3	Establishment of ranches and branding of cattle routes.	2.95	Accepted
4	The use of regulatory processes	2.64	Accepted
5	amnesty, and disarmament programs,	2.57	Accepted
6	community response/community policing,	2.60	Accepted
7	Use of modern technology to fight cattle rustlers,	2.73	Accepted
8	use of military force against the cattle rustlers	3.03	Accepted
TOTAL		2.77	Accepted

Source: Survey, March, 2024

The findings of the study shows that the roles of government in tackling the menace of cattle rustling in North-western Nigeria include: appeals for international support, use of Dialogue, establishment of ranches and branding of cattle, regulatory processes, amnesty, and disarmament programs, community response/community policing, Use of modern technology for identification and use of military force against

the cattle rustlers. These assertions are supported with calculated mean scores of 2.54, 2.62, 2.65, 2.54, 2.57, 2.59, 2.53 and 3.00 respectively.

Research Question Two: what are the challenges against government efforts at tackling the menace of cattle rustling in North-western Nigeria?

Table 2: challenges against government efforts at tackling the menace of cattle rustling in North-western Nigeria

S/N	Items	Mean	Decision
1	Conflict in pastoral areas which serves as impediments to government efforts	2.51	Accepted
2	The non-reactive nature of the government and security agencies	2.59	Accepted
3	the nature of the pastoralist's way of lifestyle	2.64	Accepted
4	The porous nature of Nigeria's' border	2.77	Accepted
5	Economic Corruption	2.84	Accepted
6	Underpayment of Foot Soldiers and other security agencies	2.66	Accepted
TOTAL		2.67	Accepted

Source: Survey, March, 2024

The findings of the study shows that the challenges against government efforts at tackling the menace of cattle rustling in North-western Nigeria are: Conflict in pastoral areas which serves as impediments to government efforts, The non-reactive nature of the government and security agencies, the nature of the pastoralist's way of lifestyle, the porous nature of Nigeria's' border, economic Corruption and underpayment of Foot Soldiers and other security agencies. This assertion is supported with calculated mean scores of 2.63, 2.60, 2.77, 2.54, 2.57 and 2.59 respectively.

Discussion of the findings

The findings of the study shows that the roles of government in tackling the menace of cattle rustling in North-western Nigeria include: appeals for international support, use of Dialogue, establishment of ranches and branding of cattle, regulatory processes, amnesty, and disarmament programs, community response/community policing, Use of modern technology for identification and use of military force against the cattle rustlers. This finding agreed with the findings of Oluwarotimi (2012), Shehu et al., (2017) and Lawson and Aide (2018)

The findings of the study also shows that the challenges against government efforts at tackling the menace of cattle rustling in North-western Nigeria are: Conflict in pastoral areas which serves as impediments to government efforts, The non-reactive nature of the government and security agencies, the nature of the pastoralist's way of lifestyle, the porous nature of Nigeria's' border, economic Corruption and underpayment of Foot Soldiers and other security agencies. This finding agreed with the findings of Alao, Atere, & Alao (2013), Swift (2013), Markakis (2013), Blanchard (2014),

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of the study showed that cattle rustling is a major threat to the socio-economic development of Nigeria. The study concluded that cattle rustling has crippled most of the development advancements in North-western Nigeria. For instance It has resulted in conflict-related deaths, migration of cattle owners from the volatile environment, cattle rustling pose a major danger to the living standard of the pastoralists, cattle rustling pose a major danger to the living standard of those who rely on livestock for survival, Sexual assault, and rape have also increased, cattle raid has led to the reduction of income of the cattle owners and high level of hunger and poverty

Based on the above conclusion the following recommendations were put forward;

1. There is a need for instituting stronger legislation and empowering local traditional authorities who should be tasked with the mandate of stemming cattle rustling activities.
2. Existing laws and policies be reviewed and strengthened by the Federal Government, National Assembly, State Governments as well as State Houses of Assemblies.

3. Law enforcement agencies should be drafted to cover flashpoint areas particularly at night hours when rustlers usually take advantage of the peace and tranquillity to unleash terror and havoc on unsuspecting and innocent farmers.
4. The government should eradicate black markets for cattle so as to reduce cases of cattle rustling as this is brought about by the commercialization of the vice.
5. The study found that cattle rustling activities brought about loss of income to farmers, therefore, it is recommended that the Nigeria Agricultural Insurance Company (NAIC) and other similar institutions should provide enabling platforms for farmers to insure their cattle against possible theft and loss of income.
6. Finally, comprehensive disarmament of the communities including cattle camps and development of physical infrastructure would ameliorate and control cattle rustling.

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