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**RURAL BANDITRY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN
SOUTHWEST NIGERIA (2017-2022): A STUDY OF OYO
AND ONDO STATES**

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ABSTRACT

Government in an ideal society strives to promptly crush security challenges like banditry with a view to safeguarding human rights of the people but regrettably the reverse is the case in Nigeria. This study investigated the effect of rural banditry on human rights in Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive survey research design and quantitative method using self-structured questionnaire to collect data. A total of 400 respondents were sampled adopting stratified random sampling technique while ANOVA analysis was used to test the research hypotheses of the study. The study revealed that rural banditry activities violated the freedom of movement, rights to privacy, property, human dignity, liberty and security of life, among other civil and political rights of the people in Oyo and Ondo States. It also disclosed that rural banditry grossly violated the freedom of religion, rights to education, property as well as social and cultural

rights of the people in Oyo and Ondo States. The study concluded that rural banditry activities like kidnapping, robbery, village raids, hostage and ransom taking, maiming and murder, among others severely impacted on the rights of people in both Oyo and Ondo States. The study recommended that government should establish special court to try and swiftly deal with the cases of banditry while Amotekun security outfit, which was established to confront the menace should be empowered through intensive training and supply of adequate and modern weapons and equipment.

Keywords: Bandits, Human rights, Rural banditry, Southwest Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Suffice it to say that Africa and other Third World nations are bedeviled by an array of security threats of various dimensions and dreadful magnitude. Such security threats range from terrorists' insurgency and herder-farmer crisis to banditry, among others. Scholars like Okoli (2021), Rufai (2021), Ahmed (2021) and Rosenje and Adeniyi (2021) posited that rural banditry is fast becoming a menacing challenge in contemporary Nigeria. The security of lives and property, with particular attention to protecting human rights and dignity, which forms the core of government responsibility in any organised community worldwide (Udosen & Uyo, 2021) is becoming elusive. The perceptible collapse of security in Nigeria in recent times has threatened the conducive environment required for the promotion of human rights.

In recent times in Nigeria, one of the security threats afflicting the nation is banditry, which is armed violence or violent crimes that involve the use of force or its threat to intimidate a person with the intent to rob, rape, kidnap, or kill (Ahmed, 2021). Banditry, thus, varies in types, scopes and place of operations, as there are armed bandits, highway bandits and rural bandits, among others (Udosen & Uyo, 2021).

Rural banditry has become a magnified and terrifying security challenge ravaging the nation, threatening the enjoyment of human rights, which are inalienable privileges and entitlements of the people.

To underscore the magnitude of how rural banditry undermines human rights in Nigeria, available data revealed that about 330 bandits' attacks and 1,460 deaths were recorded between January and July, 2019 in Nigeria, majorly in Northwest region (Abdullahi, 2019). Also, between November 2019 and May 2020, rural banditry resulted in the death of 1,058 people, the rustling of over 10,000 cattle, and destruction of 2,688 hectares of farmlands and 10,000 houses, respectively. It equally brought about loss of 147,800 vehicles and motorcycles and displacement of hundreds of thousands of persons (Abraham & Auwalu, 2022, p. 2).

Likewise, about 4,566 persons were killed while about 2,860 individuals were abducted across the country in 2020 (Ogundele et al., 2021). Between January and December 2021, bandits killed no fewer than 1,192 people. They abducted about 3,348 others across Kaduna State alone (Ibrahim, 2022) while not less than 7,222 Nigerians have been killed and 3,823 abducted as the country witnessed 2,840 incidents of insecurity between January 1 and July 29, 2022 (Odeniyi, 2022, p. 14). These foregoing incidences of bandits' attacks with the accompanying staggering statistics constitute a gross abuse on the rights of the people. This characteristic security challenge, which began in Nigeria's Northwest, has surreptitiously crept across state boundaries into the Southwest Nigeria.

The prevalence of rural banditry in Southwest Nigeria has inundated both print and electronic media and online media outlets. The unabated bandits' attacks have blatantly violated the human rights of the people because it has resulted in the abduction and loss of many lives, stealing and destruction of properties, displacement of people and growing numbers of widows; widowers and orphans. Also, it has placed the whole nation under the siege of tension, fear and uncertainty, which consequently affects the rights to free movement, liberty, life and other human rights of Nigerian citizens.

Though, governments at both the federal and state levels have made somewhat concerted efforts, which encompass the development of military, legislations of different types and the introduction of regional policing like the Amotekun security outfit collectively established by the government of Southwest states, among others. However, most of the government's efforts have not made a significant impact in curbing

the activities of rural banditry in the country. Against this background, this study examined the effects of rural banditry on human rights in Southwest Nigeria (2017-2022), focusing on Oyo and Ondo States.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Worldwide, especially in the developed climes, the security of the lives and properties of the people and the protection of their human rights are grand norms that cannot be toyed with by anybody. The reverse is. However, the case in Nigeria as banditry and the league of other security challenges ravage the nation, especially the Southwest region. The federal and state governments need to pay attention to the level at which rural bandits operate within the Southwest region (Adegoke, 2020). Many people have been attacked by rural bandits on several occasions, resulting in the vandalization and looting of their properties, abductions, and loss of lives in the Southwest region of the country. It has equally led to general and complex social violence and insecurity threatening the enjoyment of human rights in the region recently (Rosenje & Adeniyi, 2021).

Some of the numerous attacks of bandits in the region include the bandits' invasion of the Igangan Community in Oyo State on the 5th of June, 2021, where about eleven (11) people lost their lives while some vehicles, buildings, and petrol-filling stations were vandalized (Adejumo, 2021). Also, on the 5th of June, 2022, the media reported that gunmen stormed a church in Owo, Ondo State, and discretely opened fire on the congregation, reportedly killing about 40 people while more than 80 people were injured (Akinlotan, 2022). In a nutshell, between January 1 and July 29, 2022, Southwest recorded 420 incidents of insecurity, which led to the death of 386 individuals and the abduction of 195 people (Odeniyi, 2022, p. 14).

This situation of bandits' attacks has become highly prevalent and worrisome to the public, the government, and scholars. For instance, the federal government has adopted the development of the military, while regional and state governments have enacted different bills and introduced regional policing, among others. However, most of the efforts made by the government yielded minimal results in curbing the activities of rural banditry in the country. This has, however, prompted several scholarly attempts to address the alarming incidents

of banditry and a host of other security crises in Nigeria. For instance, scholars like Abraham and Auwalu (2022), Rufai (2021), Ahmed (2021), Okoli (2021) and Udosen and Uyo (2021) have directed their focus on this challenge, while others like Rosenje and Adeniyi (2021), Adegoke (2020); Okoli and Ugwu, (2019) and Abdullahi (2019) have equally analyzed the causes and effects of banditry on the economy, human security, food security, education, health, general security, public stability and development, among others, with the intention of finding a lasting solution to it. Yet, the scourge persists in a gargantuan manner.

However, despite the abundance of extant scholarly studies on rural banditry and insecurity in the nation, it is observed that little seemed to have been done as regards the effect of rural banditry on the exercise and enjoyment of human rights in Nigeria. This research intends to fill this knowledge gap by examining rural banditry's effects on human rights in Southwest Nigeria (2017-2022), with a specific focus on Oyo and Ondo States. Therefore, the research's main objective is to examine rural banditry's effects on human rights in Southwest Nigeria between 2017 and 2022, with reference to Oyo and Ondo States. Other specific objectives of the research are to:

- i. Examine how rural banditry infringes on people's civil and political rights in Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria.
- ii. Analyze how rural banditry impacts people's socio-economic and cultural rights in Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria.

HYPOTHESES

- H₀₁:** Rural banditry does not significantly infringe on civil and political rights of people in Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria
- H₀₂:** Rural banditry does not significantly impact people's socio-economic and cultural rights in Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria.

CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

The concepts of rural banditry and human rights were reviewed for this study.

Rural Banditry

Banditry has been examined from a variety of viewpoints. Its application has evolved with time, the environment, and the situation. In 19th-century Europe and America, the bandit was viewed as a freedom warrior whose goal was to free the oppressed from the predatory claws of the elite (Ahmed, 2021). However, in the current dispensation, banditry is defined as an unauthorized armed group's use of force or the threat of use of force to terrorize, rob, and deprive individuals of their property (Abraham & Auwalu, 2022; Rosenje & Adeniyi, 2021; Okoli & Egwu, 2019).

However, when the word - banditry is associated with the rural setting, it denotes a group of rural outlaws engaged in criminal actions, including raiding villages, kidnapping, and cattle rustling for the purpose of rudimentary wealth gain. Therefore, rural bandits are gangs that terrorize the locals or tourists to steal their valuables, including goods, cash, livestock, camels, sheep, and other animals. Banditry is also reflected in other criminal activities like cattle rustling, kidnapping, armed robbery, drug abuse, arson, rape, and other forms of violence (Rosenje et al., 2022; Uche & Iwuamadi, 2018).

With the support of their local partners, sometimes including state agents deployed to work for the population's safety and security, they operate within and along rural borders (Udosen & Uyo, 2021; Abdullahi, 2019). For this study, rural banditry is perceived as criminal activities orchestrated by outlaws using threats or violence. People who orchestrate this act are called bandits, and they primarily commit crimes such as extortion, robbery, kidnapping for ransom, and murder. Thus, rural banditry in this context is a form of criminality synonymous with gangsterism, brigandage, and marauding.

Human Rights

Contending perspectives abound on the idea of human rights. Human rights are universal principles and legal protections that shield individuals and groups against state agents' violations of fundamental rights, entitlements, and human dignity. Respect for, protection of, and fulfillment of civil, cultural, economic, political, and social rights, as well as the right to development, are all part of the complete range of human rights (Agbonika, 2017; Onwuazombe, 2017; Bantekas &

Oette, 2016; Donnelly, 2013). Human rights are the very nature of every human person; hence, they define and affirm their humanity. Therefore, they ensure that human rights remain sacred, and that inhumanity and injustice are prevented or reduced. Since these rights are inalienable, they are not to be taken away or given up, and also they are indivisible; there is no hierarchy among rights, and no right can be suppressed to promote another right (Agbonika, 2017; United Nations Human Rights, 2015; Aduba, 2012).

In Nigeria, these rights are known as fundamental human rights, entrenched in the constitution and are protected under Sections 33 to 42 of the Federal Republic of Nigeria's 1999 Constitution. They include the rights to gender, religion, life, liberty, and speech. According to the concept of human rights, if a common moral language is used in public discourse in a peaceful global society, it is that of human rights. Even today, discussions concerning the nature, meaning, and justifications of human rights continue to be sparked by the strong assertions made by the doctrine of human rights (Agbonika, 2017). However, in this study, human rights are perceived as an individual's unalienable principles and rights, which are upheld by the nation's constitution and cannot be violated except under certain legal circumstances.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopted collective violence theory as its framework of analysis. The origin of the theory was traced to Émile Durkheim (1895) while John S. Rankin (2014) has also contributed to the theory. The theory outlines the method by which a group gathers tangible and immaterial resources and puts them under collective control to achieve a group's objectives by collective action. Resources must be mobilized and collected (Isyaku, 2013). Even if a group is successful, it may not be a challenge for power. Failure and failing states have the potential to lead to collective violence. For example, in certain nations, the rulers could not create a powerful and stable political system, just like in Nigeria, where there is high unemployment, poverty, and insecurity due to leadership's inefficiency. As a result, organizations such as bandit groups that wanted to use violence to raise their economic power rose to the fore. They seriously disrupted law and order and violated people's human rights (Johari, 2015).

Therefore, the result of a failed state failing to uphold the fundamental duties of protecting life and property and maintaining rules and order will encourage individual and group acts of collective violence to defend their lives and property as well as to improve their social and economic well-being (Baylis & Smith, 2018). According to Rand (as cited in Johari, 2015), a failed state or ungovernable state has four characteristics. These characteristics include lack of state penetration, which is demonstrated by corruption, the prevalence of the informal economy, and the absence of effective state institutions; a lack of the use of force monopoly, which is demonstrated by illegal armed groups, criminal networks, and a population with access to weapons; a lack of border controls; and external interference. The combined influence of these characteristics may be seen in the frequent occurrences of group violence as well as the alarmingly high rate of rural banditry in Nigeria (Rosenje et al., 2022).

Also, the uncontrollable movement of militants, particularly from nearby countries experiencing conflicts like Mali, Niger Republic, and Libya, with light and heavy weapons, had infiltrated the ranks of criminals, leading to a geometric increase in bandit attacks in the nation (Mohammed, 2018). Additionally, if an individual or group's interests, including power, status, resources, position, and landed properties, are jeopardized, marginalized, or violated, collective violence like rural banditry may be its aftermath (Oke & Olawale, 2019). A certain person or group's act of collective violence can also be explained by violent behavior that results from frustration, which generates rage, which then results in aggressive behavior like banditry (Albert, 2005). As a result, a mismatch between life's expectations and actual accomplishments may lead to violence.

In the same vein, failure on the part of the government to safeguard the lives and property of its citizens through enabling laws and enforcement agencies may result in the emergence of collective violence as occasioned by various bandits' groups in Nigeria. As a result, if the government fails to create an enabling environment for people to prosper or is unable to defend the people, they may decide to take laws into their hands by engaging in criminal acts like banditry with aim of realising the desires or aims. Such can be likened to Nigeria's case or rural bandits (Oke & Olawale, 2019).

In application to this study, the bandits' groups perceive that the government has not created an enabling environment for them to

actualize their dreams. There is, therefore, the need for them to embark on collective violence against the people to protect and defend their vested interests or desires, which snowballs to endanger the exercise of human rights.

INCIDENCES OF RURAL BANDITRY ATTACKS AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATION IN SOUTHWEST NIGERIA

The practice of raiding and attacking victims by members of an armed group, whether or not premeditatedly, using weapons of offense or defense, particularly in semi-organized groups, with the intention of overpowering the victim and obtaining loot or achieving some political goals is referred to as rural banditry (Yusuf, 2021). These bandits are typically viewed as desperate, lawless marauders and outlaws that prowl throughout the forest and mountains in an effort to avoid being discovered or apprehended. The prevalent rural banditry and the threats it poses to human insecurity and rural poverty have drawn attention from the public and raised concerns about national security. Rural banditry poses a threat to respect for human rights in the affected states due to the complexity of the criminal activity involved and the intensity and frequency with which it occurs (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019).

Though the menace of rural banditry started in the north-western region of the nation, it has recently surreptitiously crept into all over the country, including the Southwestern region of the country (Rosenje & Peju-Rosejne, 2022). The situation has been made worse by the growth of dangerous criminal gangs, which are thriving in an area that is overrun with weapons and that state security services are unable to control (Yusuf, 2021). The activities of these rural bandits have consequently been violating the human rights in the nation. Table 1 presents the selected incidences of rural banditry attacks and human rights violations in Southwest Nigeria between 2017 and 2022.

Table 1*Incidences of Rural Banditry Attacks and Human Right Violation in Southwest Nigeria (March 9, 2017 to December 3, 2022)*

S/N	Nature of Attack	Date of Attack	Place of Attack	Human Rights Violated
1	Residents fled their homes due to incessant attacks by hoodlums	March 9, 2017	Okerisa, Okitipupa LGA, Ondo State	Violation of right to life, liberty, security and right to privacy
2	Engaged couple were abducted by gunmen on their way to engagement ceremony	September 10, 2017	Akunnu, Akoko North East LGA, Ondo State	Violation of right to life, liberty, security and freedom of movement
3	Gunmen abducted Dayo Adewole in his farm	June 18, 2019	Iroko, near Fiditi, Atiba LGA, Oyo State	Violation of right to life, personal liberty, security, privacy and work
4	Three person were abducted by gunmen in Ogun State	July 23, 2019	Ajébo, Lagos-Ibadan expressway, Ogun State	Violation of right to liberty, security and freedom of movement
5	10 passengers were abducted in Osun	September 22, 2019	Ajaoku Village between Otan Ile and Imesi, Obokun LGA, Osun State	Violation of right to liberty, security, and freedom of movement
6	Three Chinese miners were kidnapped at mining site	November 26, 2019	Ijoka Village, Atakumosa, Osun State	Violation of right to liberty, security and work
7	Bandits attacked an old generation bank where about four people were killed	February 5, 2020	Ilu-Oluji Town, Oluji/Okeigbo LGA, Ondo State	Violation of right to life, liberty, security and work

(continued)

S/N	Nature of Attack	Date of Attack	Place of Attack	Human Rights Violated
8	Gunmen kidnapped two people	August 1, 2020	Ikun-Oba Akoko Road, Akoko South West LGA, Ondo State	Violation of right to liberty, security, and freedom of movement
9	Armed bandits attack commercial bank and cart away several millions	October 2, 2020	Wema Bank in Iyin-Ekiti, Irepodun/Ifeledun LGA, Ekiti State	Violation of right to life, security and work
10	Two nine-years cousins were killed while a businesswomen was kidnapped	January 2, 2021	Subawah Oil Filling Station, along Idere Road, Igboora, Ibarapa, Oyo State	Violation of right to life, right to personal liberty and security and right to be free unlawful detention
11	Abduction of a medical doctor in his hospital	January 2, 2021	Tapa, Ibarapa North LGA, Oyo State	Violation of right to personal liberty and security, right to work and right to privacy
12	Three farmers were killed during bandit's attack on a community	February 13, 2021	Ijugbere axis of Owo LGA, Ondo State	Violation of right to life, liberty, security and right to work
13	Bandits attacked Fulani settlement in Oyo where about five people were injured	March 2, 2021	IdigbaOlomi Village, Ogbomoso, Surelere North LGA, Oyo State	Violation of right to human dignity
14	Six people were killed by gunmen during an attack	March 14, 2021	Wasinni Village, Ayedire LGA, Osun State	Violation of right to liberty, security and residence
15	Bandits attacked and shot traditional ruler	April 9, 2021	Ewu-Ekiti, Ilejemeje LGA, Ekiti State	Violation of right to life, security, social life and freedom of movement
16	Bandits attack Amotekun and kill one person	April 20, 2021	Living Farms, Fiditi, Atiba LGA, Oyo State	Violation of right to life, personal liberty and work

(continued)

S/N	Nature of Attack	Date of Attack	Place of Attack	Human Rights Violated
17	Gunmen kidnapped a pastor inside the church	May 10, 2021	Onigari area of Shagari village, Akure, Akure-South, LGA, Ondo State	Violation of right to life, liberty, security, work and freedom of religion
18	Eight Christians were abducted by bandits in an attack on church bus	June 1, 2021	Akure-Ilesha Road, Ondo State	Violation of right to liberty, security, freedom of movement and religion
19	Night attack on a Igangan town leaving several persons dead and properties razed	June 6, 2021	Igangan town, Iwajowa LGA, Oyo State	Violation of right to life, personal liberty, security and privacy
20	Gunmen killed three people in an attack on a village in Ogun State	June 8, 2021	Amule Kanji Village, Imeko/Afon LGA, Ogun State	Violation of right to liberty, security, freedom of movement and right to own property
21	Bandit attack travelers, kill man and abduct wife and daughter	August 5, 2021	Between Ewu-Ekiti and Aiyetoro-Ekiti, Ido/Osi LGA, Ekiti State	Violation of right to life, security, social life and freedom of movement
22	Bandits killed five farmers on their way to farm	August 19, 2021	Ile-Ife, Osun State	Violation of right to liberty, security, work and freedom of movement
23	Bandits abducted five travelers	September 8, 2021	IdoAni-Ifra Expressway, Ondo State	Violation of right to liberty, security and freedom of movement
24	Gunmen abducted couple at Osun farm settlement	December 1, 2021	Orit-Omipupa Village via Agric area, Obokun LGA, Osun State	Violation of right to liberty, security, privacy and residence
25	Unknown gunmen abducted two men on Christmas day	December 25, 2021	Ijan-Ekiti, Gbonyino LGA, Ekiti State	Violation of right to life, security, social life and freedom of movement

(continued)

S/N	Nature of Attack	Date of Attack	Place of Attack	Human Rights Violated
26	Bandits stormed the village and beat up and injured some villagers and also stole valuables	March 10, 2022	Araromi Orita, Ado-Odo, Ota LGA, Ogun State	Violation of right to liberty, security, privacy and residence
27	Gunmen abducted a middle-aged man	March 21, 2022	Ikole-Ijesalsu road, Ikole LGA, Ekiti State	Violation of right to be free from unlawful detention and freedom of movement
28	Bandits opened fire on worshipers at St. Francis Catholic Church and killed about 50 people	June 5, 2022	Owa-luwa Street, Owo Council Area, Ondo State	Violation of right to life, liberty, security, freedom of association and religion.
29	Gunmen shot a man and abduct a housewife in Ogun	June 9, 2022	Oke-Okoko Comm., Ewokoro LGA, Ogun State	Violation of right to liberty and security
30	Gunmen strike, killed six persons and robbed residents	June 10, 2022	Sabo Area, Ondo Town, Ondo West LGA, Ondo State	Violation of right to life, liberty, security and property
31	Gunmen attacked Owo Community and injured several people	July 27, 2022	Craneburg Construction Comp, Folahammi, Owo LGA, Ondo State	Violation of right to life, liberty, security and right to work
32	Gunmen abducted and killed a hotelier and a staff member	July 28, 2022	Aba Area, Ogbomosho, Oyo State	Violation of right to life, personal liberty, security and work
33	Bandits kidnapped traditional ruler and four other people	August 4, 2022	Ago Panu on Owo-Ikare road, Owo LGA, Ondo State	Violation of right to life, security, free movement and cultural right

(continued)

S/N	Nature of Attack	Date of Attack	Place of Attack	Human Rights Violated
34	Gunmen attacked bus conveying travellers and abducted 11 people	September 3, 2022	Benin-Owo Expressway, Ifon, Ose LGA, Ondo State	Violation of right to liberty, security and freedom of movement
35	Bandits kill NSCDC Officer and kidnapped three other people	September 3, 2022	OkeAko-Ajowa road, Ikole LGA, Ekiti State	Violation of right to liberty, security and freedom of movement
36	Gunmen attacked Police station and DCO and one other person	September 27, 2022	Igangan town, Iwajowa LGA, Oyo State	Violation of right to life and right to work
37	Gunmen attack farm settlement and abducted four farmers	October 9, 2022	Iseyin-Ipapo-Saki Road, Oyo State	Violation of right to life, personal liberty, security, privacy and work
38	Gunmen kidnapped four commuters	October 30, 2022	Irele-Ekiti, Ajoni LCDA, Ekiti State	Violation of right to liberty, security and freedom of movement
39	Gunmen attacked community and killed two security guards	November 26, 2022	Ikare Akoko, Akoko North-East LGA, Ondo State	Abuse of right to life, personal liberty, security, privacy and work
40	Gunmen shot three residents	December 3, 2022	Abule-Okole, Olaogun and Ijojo communities, Ifo LGA, Ogun State	Violation of right to life, liberty and security

Source: Authors' Compilation from Nigerian Dailies.

IMPACT OF RURAL BANDITRY ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN NIGERIA

The persistent rural banditry threatens the enjoyment of human rights in the country. It has endangered people's mental health, led to ongoing violations of human rights, and threatened the lives and property of countless people across the country (Ignatius, 2020). The tragedy of killings, death, damage, and displacement brought about by rural banditry has spread throughout the rural villages of Nigeria and placed the country under siege. A flagrant infringement of the rights to property ownership, privacy and life is when rural bandits evict individuals from their houses and steal their belongings. This is true since deaths occur during the process and the rights of the nation's most vulnerable groups, such as women and children, are violated, in violation of Chapter 4, Section 33-41 of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria (Yusuf, 2021).

Property and lives have been destroyed as a result of the rural bandits' kidnapping, maiming, killing, and suicide attacks. They only want to undermine established authority in order to impose an ideological, political, or religious agenda that compromises the nation's security system (Omilusi, 2016). The rising frequency of rural bandit attacks has led to thousands of deaths and the forced eviction of over 2.3 million people, making Nigeria the third-most frightened nation in the world (*Sahara Reporters*, 2018).

Additionally, because of the problems with rural banditry, many of people have been forced to leave their ancestral homes and live in Internally Displaced Persons Camps (IDPCs), losing their crops and means of support. According to the International Organisation for Migration, in North Central and North Western Nigeria, several IDPs have fled due to rural banditry. The overview of IDPs in North-Central and North-Western Nigeria is provided in Table 2:

Table 2

Overview of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in North-Central and North-Western Nigeria as at March 2022

S/N	State	No. of IDPs	% of Total IDPs Population
NORTH CENTRAL			
1	Benue	404,622	42%
2	Plateau	69,605	7%
3	Nasarawa	20,786	2%
	Sub-Total	495,013	51%
NORTH WESTERN			
1	Katsina	173,856	18%
2	Zamfara	123,102	13%
3	Kaduna	81,080	8%
4	Sokoto	72,106	7%
5	Kano	24,600	3%
	Sub-Total	474,744	49%
	GRAND TOTAL	969,757	100%

Source: International Organisation for Migration, March, 2022

The bandit attacks on these states had an impact. These attacks come in many forms, including the kidnapping of travelers along major thoroughfares and bandit raids on villages where they forcefully steal cattle, seize property, and burn down villagers’ homes. Villagers who refuse to comply are frequently killed. Large communities have been displaced because of the scary rate of rural banditry, which is a flagrant violation of human rights, as indicated in the aforementioned portion of Nigeria’s constitution (Yusuf, 2021).

Also, rural banditry has increased the level of food insecurity. It has shown a significant capacity to make things worse for the poor in Nigeria by stealing their livestock, crops, and properties (Adisa & Adenkule, 2019). The damage by armed groups, according to Wegh (2017), has led to a substantial decline in crop production because of the murder, maiming, and eviction of farmers from their farms and homes. This will result in low income and a rise in crop farmers’ poverty levels. These attacks have resulted in the destruction of several social and physical facilities in addition to the loss of hundreds of lives and crops. These include markets, hospitals, churches, and educational institutions. This implies that thousands of

kids have not attended school for a long time due to school closure by the government because of rural banditry, thus depriving them of their right to education (Wegh, 2017).

In addition to the foregoing, rural banditry frequently infringes on people's socio-economic rights in ways like disrupting business operations, interfering with social activities like marriages, festivals and school attendance, having a negative impact on the supply and delivery of necessities, and causing psychological trauma to locals, victims, and relatives of victims. The killings, dislocation, and poverty are merely the beginning of the story of a danger to many Nigerians' human rights brought on by rural banditry (Yusuf, 2021; Shalangwa, 2013).

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The objectives informed the choice of the design of the study. The target populations for this study are the residents of Oyo and Ondo States of the Southwest region of Nigeria. The population comprises two (2) States with a population size of 5,580,940 and 3,460,877, respectively, making a total of 9,041,817 according to the 2006 population census of Nigeria (NPC, 2006). Oyo and Ondo States were selected because of the prevalence of rural banditry, that is, the menace is more pronounced in these states of the Southwest region of the country. The sample size for the study was determined by adopting the Miller and Dillman (2011) Sample Size formula. This formula was adopted because of its propensity towards objectivity, accuracy, and currency compared to other formulae. The calculated sample size is 369.8 but it was approximated to 400 to accommodate non-response and missing copies of the questionnaire (Miller & Dillman, 2011). A stratified random sampling technique was adopted in selecting the respondents because the study population is in strata.

The study used a self-structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was divided into two sections (Sections A and B); section A contains the personal data of the respondents, while Section B contains a list of items that are carefully constructed and in an ordered manner to elicit the required data for the study. The test of internal consistency of the instrument and by extension, the reliability of the instrument

was determined by conducting a pilot study. Cronbach Alpha formula was used to analyze the reliability of the questionnaire. This gave a reliability coefficient of 0.85, which implies that the instrument is reliable for data gathering for this study. The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 20. ANOVA analysis was adopted to test the research hypotheses of the study. The ANOVA analysis was adopted because it shows how one variable affects another or changes in a variable that trigger changes in another.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The results obtained from the analysis of data collected from research participants are presented thus:

Analysis of Hypotheses

H₀₁: Rural banditry does not significantly infringe on civil and political rights of people in Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria

Table 3

ANOVA Test on the Impact of Rural Banditry on Civil and Political Rights of People in Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Violates freedom of movement through highway abduction	Between Groups	60.884	4	15.221	22.663	.000
	Within Groups	257.229	383	.672		
	Total	318.113	387			
Abuses the right to privacy and property through village raids	Between Groups	76.531	4	19.133	22.415	.000
	Within Groups	326.912	383	.854		
	Total	403.443	387			
Violates right to human dignity through sexual molestation	Between Groups	330.957	4	82.739	59.379	.000
	Within Groups	533.672	383	1.393		
	Total	864.629	387			
Abuses right to human liberty and security through kidnapping	Between Groups	30.878	4	7.720	10.981	.000
	Within Groups	269.235	383	.703		
	Total	300.113	387			
Violates right of work by preventing people from pursuing their occupation	Between Groups	140.698	4	35.175	28.329	.000
	Within Groups	475.549	383	1.242		
	Total	616.247	387			

(continued)

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Abuses right to property through destruction of houses and farms	Between Groups	30.863	4	7.716	8.731	.000
	Within Groups	338.444	383	.884		
	Total	369.307	387			
Abuses right to unlawful detention and torture through kidnapping	Between Groups	270.201	4	67.550	56.207	.000
	Within Groups	460.293	383	1.202		
	Total	730.495	387			
Violates right to liberty and human dignity through maiming	Between Groups	131.721	4	32.930	26.146	.000
	Within Groups	482.372	383	1.259		
	Total	614.093	387			
Abuses right to life through unlawful murder	Between Groups	46.639	4	11.660	15.581	.000
	Within Groups	286.608	383	.748		
	Total	333.247	387			

Source: Researchers' Field Data Analysis, 2023.

Results in Table 3 reveal the impact of rural banditry on civil and political rights of people in Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria. The table reveals that rural banditry significantly infringed on civil and political rights of people in Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria in many ways. It violates freedom of movement through highway abduction ($F = 22.663$, $P < .05$), abuses the right to privacy and property through village raids ($F = 22.415$, $p < .05$), violates right to human dignity through sexual molestation ($F = 59.379$, $p < .05$), abuses right to human liberty and security through kidnapping ($F = 10.981$, $p < .05$), violates right of work by preventing people from their occupation ($F = 28.329$, $p < .05$), abuses right to property through destruction of houses and farms ($F = 8.731$, $p < .05$), Abuses right to unlawful detention and torture through kidnapping ($F = 56.207$, $p < .05$), Violates right to liberty and human dignity through maiming ($F = 26.146$, $p < .05$), and abuses right to life through unlawful murder ($F = 15.581$, $p < .05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that rural banditry does not significantly infringe on civil and political rights of people in Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria is rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis. This implies that rural banditry significantly infringed on the civil and political rights of people in Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria.

H₀₂: Rural banditry does not significantly impact on the socio-economic and cultural rights of people in Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria.

Table 4

ANOVA Test on the Impact of Rural Banditry on Socio-economic and Cultural Rights of People in Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Violates freedom of religion through attacks on religious gatherings	Between Groups	41.062	4	10.265	19.080	.000
	Within Groups	206.059	383	.538		
	Total	247.121	387			
Abuses right to education through attacks on schools and kidnapping of students	Between Groups	117.075	4	29.269	17.168	.000
	Within Groups	652.956	383	1.705		
	Total	770.031	387			
Violates freedom to acquire property through vandalisation	Between Groups	33.676	4	8.419	9.372	.000
	Within Groups	344.043	383	.898		
	Total	377.719	387			
Abuses economic rights disrupting business operations	Between Groups	40.107	4	10.027	5.087	.001
	Within Groups	754.873	383	1.971		
	Total	794.979	387			
Breaches rights to property through ransom taking	Between Groups	48.111	4	12.028	14.397	.000
	Within Groups	319.971	383	.835		
	Total	368.082	387			
Abuses social rights through attacks on social and ceremonial gatherings	Between Groups	68.287	4	17.072	9.004	.000
	Within Groups	726.208	383	1.896		
	Total	794.495	387			
Violates cultural rights by attacks on cultural and festive gatherings	Between Groups	58.434	4	14.609	18.539	.000
	Within Groups	301.800	383	.788		
	Total	360.235	387			
Abuses right to religion through attacks on religious places like church and mosques	Between Groups	48.086	4	12.022	6.648	.000
	Within Groups	692.540	383	1.808		
	Total	740.626	387			
Abuse the socio-economic and cultural rights through social insecurity	Between Groups	46.786	4	11.696	13.797	.000
	Within Groups	324.686	383	.848		
	Total	371.472	387			

Source: Researchers' Field Data Analysis, 2023.

Results in Table 4 reveal the impact of rural banditry on the socio-economic and cultural rights of people in Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria. The table shows that rural banditry significantly impacted the socio-economic and cultural rights of people in Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria, in many ways. It violates freedom of religion through attacks on religious gatherings ($F = 19.080$, $P < .05$), abuses right to education through attacks on schools and kidnapping of students ($F = 17.168$, $p < .05$), violates freedom to acquire property through vandalisation ($F = 9.372$, $p < .05$), abuses economic rights disrupting

business operations ($F = 5.087, p < .05$), breaches rights to property through ransom taking ($F = 14.397, p < .05$), abuses social rights through attacks on social and ceremonial gatherings ($F = 9.004, p < .05$), violates cultural rights by attacks cultural and festive gathering ($F = 18.539, p < .05$), abuses right to religion through attacks on religious places like church and mosques ($F = 6.648, p < .05$), and abuse the socio-economic and cultural rights through social insecurity ($F = 13.797, p < .05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis, which states that rural banditry does not significantly impact on the socio-economic and cultural rights of people in Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria is rejected in favour of the alternative hypothesis. This implies that rural banditry significantly impacted negatively on the socio-economic and cultural rights of people in Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The data gathered on the impact of rural banditry on the civil and political rights of people in Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria, revealed that rural banditry has significantly infringed on the civil and political rights of people in Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria, in many ways. As revealed by the data, rural banditry violates freedom of movement through highway abduction, abuses the right to privacy and property through village raids, violates the right to human dignity through sexual molestation, abuses the right to human liberty and security of life through kidnapping, and abuses the right to property through destruction of houses and farms. The findings also disclosed that rural banditry abuses the rights to unlawful detention and torture, liberty, human dignity and security of life through kidnapping, maiming and unlawful murder. These findings agree and complement the assertions of Ignatius (2020) and Omilusi (2016), who, in their studies, expressed that rural banditry endangered people's mental health as well as threatened the lives and property of countless people across the country.

The data gathered on the impact of rural banditry on the socio-economic and cultural rights of people in Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria, disclosed that rural banditry significantly impacted the socio-economic and cultural rights of people in Oyo and Ondo States, Nigeria. It was revealed from the findings that rural banditry violates freedom of religion through attacks on religious gatherings, abuses

the right to education through attacks on schools and kidnapping of students, and violates rights to acquire property through vandalization and ransom-taking. It further revealed the menace of abuses of economic rights, disrupting business operations, abusing social rights through attacks on social and ceremonial gatherings, violating cultural rights by attacking cultural and festive gatherings, and abusing the socio-economic and cultural rights through social insecurity of lives. These findings advance the assertion of Yusuf (2021) and Adisa and Adekunle (2019), who expressed that rural banditry frequently infringed on people's socioeconomic rights through disruption of business operations and religious gatherings as well as by interfering with social and festive activities among others. The above findings suggest that rural bandits' activities grossly violated the enjoyment of civil, political, socio-economic, and cultural rights by the people of Oyo and Ondo States.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The reoccurring activities of rural banditry have become perilous in the Southwest region of Nigeria, and these acts have blatantly violated the human rights of the people in this region, particularly the people of Oyo and Ondo States. Also, the study, through its findings, concludes that the activities of rural banditry like kidnapping, highway robbery, village raids, hostage taking, ransom taking, maiming, and murder, among others, negatively affect the civil, political, socio-economic, and cultural rights of the people in the study area. This implies that rural banditry grossly violated human rights in the Oyo and Ondo States. Based on the findings of this study and to curb blatant violations of human rights through the activities of rural banditry in Oyo and Ondo States, the following recommendations were offered:

- i. The government should establish a special court to prosecute arrested bandits in accordance with the country's laws. This will serve as a deterrent to others, curb the menace, and protect human rights.
- ii. The governments in the Southwest region should invest more in the Amotekun security outfit through intensive training and the supply of adequate weapons and equipment required to enhance the effectiveness of its operations.
- iii. There should be a synergy of efforts between the Amotekun security outfit and other community security agencies, such

- as the vigilantes and local hunters, to fight rural banditry and protect human rights.
- iv. The government, through its relevant agencies, should effectively monitor the land borders and ungoverned spaces by deploying modern surveillance technology like techno-based drones, CCTV cameras, satellites, and GPS. This will curb the influx of illegal migrants and small arms and light weapons from the neighboring countries into Nigeria, thereby curbing banditry and protecting human rights.
 - v. Traditional rulers, religious leaders, and the National Orientation Agency should intensify their contributions to the fight against banditry by inculcating moral values into young minds and society. This will address moral decadence and prevent the “die-hard” search for wealth, which can encourage banditry in society.

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