

ENHANCING INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE PRACTICES FOR CURBING BANDITRY BY COMMUNITY MEMBERS IN SABON – GARI LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

Jimoh, Amina Oiza

Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Tijjani Abubakar

Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Mohammed Habibu

Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Hayatu Musa Muhammad

Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

Abstract

This study was all about enhancing the indigenous knowledge practices in curbing Banditry by community members in Sabon-gari Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria. One research objective was raised; to determine the indigenous knowledge practices in curbing banditry by community members in Sabon-Gari Local Government Area, Kaduna State. Qualitative research methodology and a case study research design were employed. Data was collected using in – depth semi – structured interview. Purposive sampling was used for the selection of 10 participants as study sample. The data was analyzed using grounded theory analysis. Findings revealed that the indigenous knowledge practices in curbing banditry are: elders’ involvement, respect for culture and religion, visitor scrutiny, community child upbringing and community policing. The study concluded that the indigenous knowledge practices used for curbing banditry in the past are still relevant. These practices do not only address the immediate security concerns, but also contribute to the overall well-being and resilience of the community. The study recommends that community Heads should revive, preserve, and integrate indigenous knowledge practices into modern practices for the benefit of the community and society at large.

Keywords: Indigenous Knowledge Practices, Indigenous Knowledge, Indigenous Knowledge Practices, Curb Crime, Insecurity

Introduction

Indigenous knowledge (IK) is an embodiment of the way of life and cultural norms of groups of people. It is the rejuvenation of ancestral wisdom to contemporary knowledge creation and sense making. Indigenous knowledge is a knowledge system held by the traditional community that is based on experiences and adaptation to a local culture and environment that is relevant to development, especially in agriculture, arts, science and technology, crafts, security, medicine, music, acts of war/defence, natural resources management, and theatre (Makinde & Oludare, 2013). Indigenous knowledge is the understanding, skills, and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings as a means of

survival, passed orally from generation to generation by elderly knowledgeable people, which is significant for understanding livelihoods, security, well-being, and solving complex issues (Oroma & Gumi, 2018; Linus, Fagbemi & Kersha, 2020).

Indigenous knowledge cannot be separated from the people inextricably connected to that knowledge. Through indigenous knowledge, community members in Sabon - Gari Local Government Area, Kaduna State are able to adapt and develop a way of life. They have continued to do so based on evidence acquired through direct contact with the environment, long-term experiences, extensive observations, lessons, and skill. These arrays of knowledge, know-how, representation that guide human societies in their innumerable interactions with the natural milieu forms the practices expected so that securing lives and properties could be enhanced that will support curbing banditry.

Indigenous knowledge practices are skills that are developed and passed down through generations within a particular indigenous community or culture. Knowledge that is unique to a particular indigenous group is deeply rooted in their cultural, spiritual, and ecological traditions. Indigenous knowledge practices encompass several fields, including agriculture, medicine, astronomy, ecology, and storytelling. These practices are often characterised by a holistic approach that recognises the interconnections of all aspects of life and the importance of maintaining balance and harmony with the natural world.

For many centuries, indigenous knowledge practices have been developed and refined. These practices have proven to be effective in handling the challenges and opportunities of life in specific environments like Sabon- Gari Local Government Area, Kaduna State. They are important resources for the community as they work to maintain their cultural identity and address the social, security, economic, and environmental challenges they face. An indigenous knowledge practice is usually based on a deep understanding of the local environment and the relationship between human beings and the natural world. It is passed down through oral traditions, stories and ceremonies and is closely tied to spiritual beliefs and practices (Tihuwai, 2012). Some examples of indigenous knowledge practices include traditional land management techniques, such as controlled burning and rotational grazing, which help to maintain biodiversity and prevent wildfires. Traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) encompasses the complex relationships between living organisms and the environment, as well as the ways in which human communities can interact with and manage natural resources sustainably (Kortweweg & Rossiter, 2019). Other areas of life include traditional medicine, language, culture, and social organisation and security. In curbing banditry by community members, certain indigenous knowledge practices were put in place.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria is undergoing a turbulent time in terms of security. No part of the country is spared as insecurity has permeated every nook and cranny in different forms. (All parts of the country are saddled by different form of insecurity). From the militancy in the Niger Delta, ethno- religious crisis in the Plateau, Boko Haram, cattle rustling and banditry have taken over many states in the North (Timipa, Igoli, Saturday & Bomo, 2023); and the gradually deteriorating problem of the activity of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in the South-

East. Likewise, another dimension added to the insecurity that is bedevilling the country is kidnapping for ransom. People are abducted from their homes; so also, on the road and money are demanded before they are freed. Failure to pay the ransom result in loss of life.

Kaduna State is one of the states in the North that is facing serious security challenges, especially in the area of banditry where people are kidnapped for ransom. For instance, Sabon – Gari Local Government in Kaduna State has experienced more than 15 kidnapping cases. On November 10, 2021, thirteen employees of Zaria Local Government were abducted by bandits while travelling by road from Zaria to Giwa to condole one of their colleagues who lost his father. (Lere, 2021). Similarly, on 27th August, 2021, bandits stormed Zango Shanu village in Sabon Gari Local Government kidnapping six people. Barely a month later, the National Tuberculosis and Leprosy Training Centre and Nuhu Bamali Polytechnic, Zaria, was attacked leading to the abduction of many people (Habib, 2021). Also, another senior academic was also kidnapped in Area BZ, Ahmadu Bello University Quarters on November 2021.

Despite several measures by the government, which include deploying police and military operations, providing necessary arms, ammunition, and communication equipment, suspension of all weekly markets across the states, and banning the use of motorcycles and tricycles from dawn to dusk to resolve the threat to the wellbeing of the people, it has not yielded the desired result. Thus, it has become necessary to involve community members with particular reference to indigenous knowledge practices to curb banditry.

Objective of the study

The objective of this study is to:

1. Determine how to enhance indigenous knowledge practices in curbing banditry in the Sabon- Gari Local Government Area of Kaduna State.

Literature Review

Scholars have explored indigenous practices for the protection of human lives and prevention of conflicts. To that effect, Obidiegwu and Elekwa (2020) Protection of lives, properties and welfare of citizens is a crucial matter in every society because it plays an important role in the overall wellbeing and development of any society. It is regarded as foremost in the developmental strides in any progressive society because a country which is devoid of security and safety will eventually be doomed and may go into extinction. For existence to be meaningful, lives and properties have to be valued and secure. Every individual has the right to life and property as contained in the fundamental human right.

Nigerian pre-colonial societies depended solely on informal methods of crime control in combating crime and criminals'. For example, Dambazau 1994; Adejoh 2013 and Tade and Olaitan 2015; posit that, before the advent of formal crime control structures in Nigeria, among the Igbo, Yoruba, and Hausa societies/nations, crime control was achieved using informal means such as, age grade system, secret societies, dogarai, and community watch groups that may be subsumed generally into vigilante groups in today's parlance. This was also true in Benue province where community watch groups such as "Mbakwav-age grade" and "Mbayev Kyaior-youth" among the Tiv, and "Olode-community policing group" among the Idoma were used as a

means for both social and crime control before the advent of colonial rule. They policed community members' behaviour; imposed sanctions against those who violated the course for maintenance of law and order, defended their communities against external aggression, performed peace making function, and control of crime (Zumve, & Anyo 2020).

Community security has the objective of protecting people from the loss of traditional relationships and values, and from sectarian and ethnic violence. The culture of vigilante/community guards can account for personal security in Africa, and Igbo in particular. The community guards and other self-defense groups are formed by the age-grade in the local communities, to defend their people and community against any threat or attack from other areas. Village guards have lived with the Igbo right from the onset, and the aim is to safeguard the people (Nkedirim, 2020).

Methodology

This study adopted qualitative research methodology, and case study design was adopted. The case study design provides tools for researchers to study complex phenomena within their context. Elderly members of the community were considered as study participants. 10 participants used as sample for this study were selected through purposive sampling. Semi structured interview was conducted with the aid of an interview guide. Tape recorder was used to record the interview which lasted for 35 – 40 minutes. The interview was analysed using the grounded theory data analysis.

Result and Discussion

Enhancement of Indigenous Knowledge Practices in curbing Banditry by Community Members in Sabon-Gari Local Government Area

This objective sought to identify how to enhance the indigenous knowledge practices in curbing banditry by community members in Sabon- Gari Local Government Area, Kaduna State. Five categories emerged from the narratives of the participants in this study setting. These are; youth obedience, respect for culture and religion, scrutiny of visitors', community child upbringing, and community policing.

Table 1 Indigenous knowledge Practices in curbing Banditry by Community Members in Sabon – Gari Local Government Area

Objectives	Categories	Sub- categories
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Indigenous Knowledge Practices to curb Banditry by Community Members in Sabon-Gari Local Government Area of Kaduna State	1. Elders' involvement	1.1 Youth Obedience 1.2 Elders were vigilant 1.3 Elders as role model
	2. Respect for Culture and Religion	2.1 Co - habitation 2.2 Togetherness
	3. Visitor Scrutiny	3.1 Integration
	4. Community Child Upbringing	4.1 Youth engagement 4.2 A child belongs to every member of the community 4.3 Youth orientation 4.4 Wealth accountability
	5. Community Policing	5.1 Community protection 5.2 Public punishment of offender 5.3 Traditional method of protection 5.4 Commitment of security workers

Source, Interview Analysis, 2023

Discussion of Findings

The indigenous knowledge practices to curb banditry by community members in Sabon-gari Local Government Area are five. These are; Elders' involvement, Respect for culture and religion, Community child upbringing, Visitor scrutiny, and Community policing.

Elders' involvement

Elders' involvement refers to the participation of older members in community activities for making change or control of societal vices. In this study setting, the indigenous knowledge practices relating to elders' involvement as opined by participants relates to youths obeying elders, elders being vigilant, and elders serving as role models. It was noted that elders play an important role in the community. They always lead by example by doing the right thing because they believe that the younger generation is looking up to them, so they serve as role models to the younger generations. Elders are very vigilant of any suspicious activities in the community; they took note of who came and went out of the community. The elders normally have a strategic place in the community, where they sit and discuss among themselves; they keep watch on the community.

Elders' involvement can be aligned to the social capital theory, introduced by Bourdieu in 1985 which suggest that elders possess valuable social resources, including knowledge, experience, and networks, which can benefit both individuals and communities. Their involvement in various social activities, such as volunteering, mentoring, and community leadership, can contribute to the overall well-being and cohesion of society. Additionally, elders' engagement can provide them with a sense of purpose, fulfillment, and continued social connection, promoting healthy aging and reducing social isolation.

Elders' involvement in Nigerian setting is not something new, this is because elders hold essential wisdom and knowledge for the community and they sustain it by the respect and trust they gain and the practical value of their experiences (Jain, 2021). Because of their role in the community, they are well respected, if they speak, no one dares to go against them. If there is any conflict in another community, if the elders ask the youths not to get involved, they obey the elders. A quote by Melchor Lim as stated in Jain (2021) says "Listen to your elder's advice. Not because they are always right but because they have more experience of being wrong". This implies that elders are the bedrock of any community because of their long-time experience and extensive observation of the community.

Respect for Culture and Religion

Similarly, respect for culture and religion encompasses how to live harmoniously with people of different faiths and cultures in the community. In this study setting, participants remarked that culture and religion has taught us how to live among ourselves, irrespective of which God you worship. Moreover, there was peaceful co-existence because people interact well in the community; they lived like one family, irrespective of ethnicity or religion. For unity, youths of the same age grade were fed in one bowl.

Respect for culture and religion can be attributed to the "cultural relativism theory", this theory emphasizes the importance of understanding and respecting cultural differences without judgment or prejudice. It suggests that cultures and religions have their own unique values, beliefs, and practices that should be appreciated within their respective contexts. Cultural relativism acknowledges that what may be considered normal or acceptable in one culture or religion may not be perceived the same way in another. Therefore, it advocates for tolerance and acceptance of diverse cultural and religious practices, even if they differ from one's own beliefs or values.

This is in line with the opinion of Esehain (2023) that to ensure progress and prosperity for all, it is essential to work together in harmony and promote peace. This shows that culture and religion played a significant role in the community. It promoted unity and harmony which united and made community members work together in one voice and with this, the community members were able to fight any security threat to the community, just like the popular saying that "United we stand, divided we fall".

Community Child Upbringing

Furthermore, community child upbringing as asserted by participants in this setting includes, a child belonging to every member of the community, youth engagement, youth orientation, and wealth accountability. Participants remarked that a child belongs to every member of the community where he or she can be punished by elders if he or she goes wrong or misbehaves. The upbringing of a child is not for their parents alone; all members of the community work together to discipline a child and show them the correct ways. A child is also disciplined in the *Islamiyya* school. Thus, youths were also given orientation on the importance of education because if they are educated, it can prevent them from engaging in crimes. Youth are not left ideal in the community; they are always engaged just to keep their minds busy. They

are involved in both wet and dry seasoning farming; they learn different trades and are also involved in house chores. If a child is seen with anything new or money and the parents know that he cannot afford it, the child must account for where and how the money was gotten.

Community child upbringing can be associated with the theory of “Collective Socialization” This theory suggest that children are socialized not only by their immediate caregivers but also by the collective values, norms, and practices of the community as a whole. In communities where there is a strong sense of collective responsibility for child rearing, individuals beyond the nuclear family may play significant roles in shaping children's development. This could involve informal mentoring, guidance, and supervision by other adults in the community.

In Nigerian society, community child upbringing is a typical characteristic of a community, where indigenous parenting practices are believed to provide opportunities for societies to instil children with disciplinary disposition which reflect the value of society and people residing in it (Muzingil & Muntanza, 2020). This implies that to have a community where crime can be reduced to the dearest minimum, all hands must be put on desk to make sure that good moral values are instilled in children.

Visitor Scrutiny

So also, in this study setting, visitor scrutiny as asserted by participants’ means in the past, a visitor must be accepted by the traditional heads (villages and ward heads) including members of the community, before they are allowed to settle in the community. The visitor will be investigated to ensure that he is a reliable person before a house can be rented to him. If a community member has a visitor, he must present him to the village head and other members of the community. This is done to safeguard the community from harm and threats.

Visitors’ scrutiny can be related to “Contact theory” proposed by Gordon Allport in the 1950s and further developed by Thomas Pettigrew in the 1970s, suggests that intergroup contact under certain conditions can reduce prejudice and promote positive attitudes and acceptance between different social groups. According to contact theory, positive interactions between members of different groups, such as visitors and residents in a community, can lead to greater understanding, empathy, and acceptance.

In a typical African setting, traditional heads are given due respect as they are involved in the maintenance of security in the community (Ezeani, Akov & Okeye, 2023). It implies that in the past, community members were familiar with each other, they knew who was who, what your occupation is and where you come from, which is not the case now because it is every man to himself and this is threatening the security situation of the country.

Community Policing

Furthermore, community policing encompasses community protection, public punishment of the offender, traditional method of protection, and commitment of security workers. Participants in this setting remarked that community members put their hands together to protect the community by forming groups where they go out to protect the community,

especially at night and at times secretly. Weapons are acquired to perform the watch. To keep the community safe, whoever is caught in the act of banditry or crime is punished publicly to serve as a deterrent to others. Participants revealed that some members of the community engage in diabolic ways, such as the use of charms and amulets to protect themselves from harm or attack. The community was also able to curb crime because the security workers were committed to their job. They were sincere and never collected bribes. They punish whoever commits a crime irrespective class or ethnicity.

This can also be related to the “defensible theory” that was advanced by Newman (1973). The theory holds that there are some areas in the community that are impenetrable to the formal security structure. Even if they are accessible to them, they are quite dangerous to their safety because they may lack understanding of the terrains and dangerous hideouts of criminal dens. Thus, the members of the neighborhood who are security conscious take the responsibility upon themselves to secure their own space and rid them of criminals. Embracing community policing as an indigenous knowledge practice can be a powerful tool for curbing banditry while promoting cultural sensitivity, community empowerment, and collaboration.

Community policing is like the vigilante group, where certain community members keep careful watch for possible dangers or difficulties (Yahaya, 2019). This implies that the security of the community was a joint effort, where hands were put together to see that no harm comes to the community.

Looking at the indigenous knowledge practices to curb banditry in Sabon-gari Local Government, it has some characteristic of a community. The theory of “Community” and “Society” introduced by Ferdinand Tonnies in 1887 stated that, a community is characterized by strong personal ties, shared values, and a sense of community spirit. Interactions in a community are based on personal relationships, kinships, and mutual obligations. People in such communities often know each other personally, and social boundaries are deeply rooted in tradition and shared history. Social control is primarily informal and is maintained through shared norms, customs, and collective conscience.

A Community is an entity within which people live together in harmony, love, peace, transparency, tranquility, and intimacy and share common social, economic, and cultural characteristics or objectives (Momanu & Assant, 2021; Ocheni, 2010). Indigenous communities are connected through their worldview or commonly held way of seeing everyday life (Roy & Shiroma, 2021). However, during interaction with the participants, the researcher was made to understand that visitors’ scrutiny and community child upbringing is no longer invoked in this contemporary era, because community members don’t care who the next door neighbour is and parents don’t want their wards to be scolded when the child goes wrong.

Conclusion

Indigenous knowledge practices to curb banditry are undertaken to create awareness on the use of knowledge in society. The study concluded that the indigenous knowledge practices used to curb banditry in the past are still relevant. These practices not only address the immediate security concerns but also contribute to the overall well-being and resilience of the community.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendation was made:

This study recommends that community heads should revive, preserve, and integrate indigenous knowledge practices into modern practices for the benefit of the community and society at large.

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