





STRATEGIC MANAGEMENT OF CATTLE RUSTLING IN SOKOTO STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract:

A survey on the strategic management of cattle rustling in Sokoto State, Nigeria, was conducted, enrolling 400 respondents through a questionnaire. The sociodemographic data revealed that 55% of respondents were male and 45% female. The largest age group was 25-30 years (42.7%), while respondents aged ≥ 45 made up 9.7%. Most (53%) were married, with only 7% widowed. Farmers comprised 22.7% of the sample, and 37.2% had informal education. The strategies for managing cattle rustling received mean score indices ranging from 2.80 to 4.20, with reporting cases to Village Heads being the most effective. It is recommended that tracking the perpetrators' locations be prioritized as a key control measure. Additionally, government intervention through job creation is essential to reduce unemployment and related social issues.

Keywords:

cattle, rustling, strategy, management, Sokoto.

1. INTRODUCTION

Cattle rustling is one of the global menaces in many communities, which affects numerous factors of livelihood, especially in rural communities. For instance, Anas (2017) discovered that the scourge affected the psychological well-being of rural communities, causing sleepless nights, as well as fear and apprehension to the victims. It affected the peaceful coexistence among different neighboring villages, and many lives were lost as a result. Cattle rustling often traumatizes the victims. Research conducted in Sokoto State, Nigeria, confirms such complications, where farmers recorded higher vulnerability than traders and herdsman. Cattle rustling usually devastates the victims drastically and affects their occupational status negatively (Manu et al., 2014). Certain strategies are employed in managing cattle rustling in Nigeria, which involve community sensitization, meetings, and dialogue. Other methods are granting amnesty to perpetrators, and conflict resolution mechanisms as measures to minimize the number of attacks, and to recover stolen cattle. Nevertheless, cattle rustling often occurs and recurs as a vicious cycle (Habibu, 2016).

There are various programs set to sensitize inhabitants of the affected communities about the dangers and threats posed by bandits to the livelihood of the people. Various concerned bodies including both governmental and non-governmental organizations created awareness programs to sensitize and educate vulnerable citizens on preventive measures to prevent attacks by cattle rustlers through prompt reporting of suspicious activities to the appropriate authorities (Olaniyan and Aliyu, 2016). Peace dialogues and regulation in arms possession are the common

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management methods adopted by many communities (Habibu, 2016). This study evaluated the strategic management of cattle rustling in Sokoto State, Nigeria.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. DESCRIPTION OF STUDY AREA

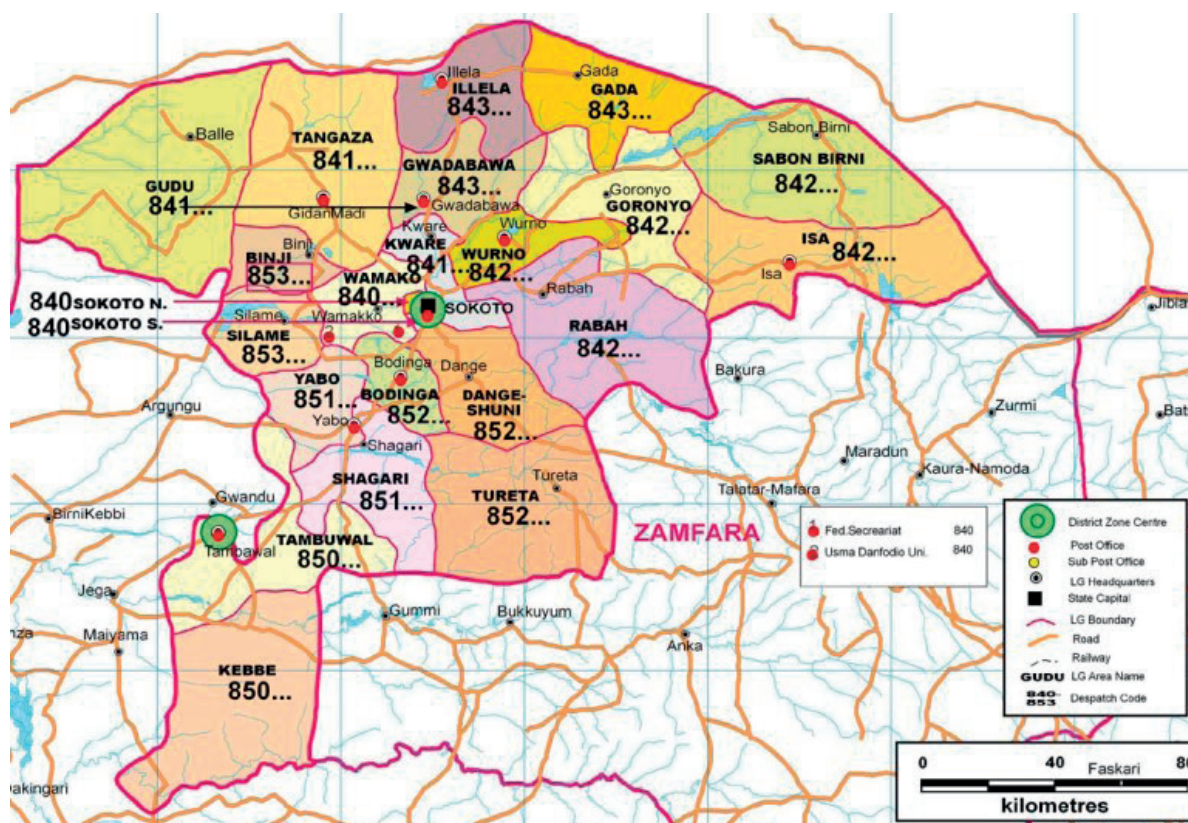
Sokoto is one of the states situated in Northwestern Nigeria. It borders with the Republic of Niger and Kebbi state. It shares a southeastern border with Zamfara state. The state covers an arid area of savanna vegetation and short grasses. The climate of the state has low rainfall from the middle of May to the middle of September with a transition of weather to harmattan from the months of November to March. The rain usually drains and channels to Sokoto (Kebbi) River and its tributaries. However, Sokoto is said to be a major tributary of the Niger River in Nigeria (McKenna, 2024) (Fig. 1).

Agriculture, which consists of crop production and pastoral nomadism is the mainstay of the economy in Sokoto state, and the cultivation of cash crops, peanuts (groundnuts), cotton, and rice. Other agricultural products such as sorghum, millet, cowpeas, and cassava are grown in Sokoto state. The state has a major water body called Sokoto River used for irrigation in the Sokoto-Rima

basin. The state has large grazing lands, as such the state is well known as a primary producer of hides and skin from cattle, goats, and sheepskins, thereby producing a large turnover of finished leather products for exports. The state possessed minerals such as limestone and kaolin. Sokoto has sparse settlements composed mainly of Fulani and Hausa as dominant ethnic groups. The majority of the population of the state is Muslim. There are several major roads, an airport, and game reserve popularly known as Kwiambana Game Reserve used for tourist attraction. The state's population during the census of 2006 revealed a population of 3,696,999 (NPC, 2009; McKenna, 2024).

The primary data were collected using a questionnaire designed for the management strategies adopted to curtail cattle rustling in Sokoto State, Nigeria. The questionnaire was structured in accordance with research objectives. A total number of four hundred respondents who volunteered to participate in the study were enrolled, and victims of cattle rustling were recruited for the study using a standard sampling technique (Ken, 2004). The questionnaire responses were compiled and analyzed. The data obtained was analyzed using descriptive statistics and the Mean Score Index (MSI) to examine the efficiency of the methods of controlling cattle rustling in rural communities. Management strategies adopted were analyzed using a 5-point Likert scale statistical tool as adopted by Norman (2010) and Richards et al. (2012).

Figure 1. The Map of Sokoto State Showing the Study Area.



Source: Utiya et al., 2020.



3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The findings show sociodemographic information of respondents in the study area (Table 1). Predominant 55.0% are males, the majority (42.7%) belonging to the 25-34 age group, and almost half of them (53.0%) are married.

The gender, age, and marital status in the study area records 55% males and 45% females. This indicates the victimization of both men and women. There is a frequency of 42.7% among people aged 25 to 34. There was the least frequency 9.7% among people of ≥ 45 years. The finding concurs with that of Abdullahi et al. (2017), a research conducted on the socio-economic repercussions of cattle rustling in Northern Nigeria. With regards to age distribution, 42.7% were between 25 - 34 years. This depicted the youthful participation in pastoral nomadism in particular, and the population's involvement in cattle rearing. Almost half 53.0% of them are married with a small percentage 7.0% claiming to be widowed, which conforms to 6.6% widow participation in pastoral nomadism as Sulaiman et al. (2023) reported. Some widows take over the investment of their late spouses after conflicts. Imo (2017) reported that herds of cattle belonging to the nomads are also killed. Also, some of the victims (young and old) are severely injured or maimed. This has reduced some women farmers to the status of widows.

There is a predominant lack of formal education among the people, most of them are farmers (22.7%), (33.7%) earn below N10,000 (6 USD) per month (Table 2).

It was observed that there is a high (37.2%) level of informal education possessed by the people, whereas those with formal education studied at the tertiary level (32.2%) with the highest percentage. Many are farmers (22.7%), who engage in pastoral farming, which probably results in conflicts with other herders from other clans, as reported by Moritz (2010), that the herdsmen and farmers clashes disrupt and threaten the sustainability of pastoral farming and crop production in West Africa. Other studies added that some farmers practicing mixed farming revealed that their animals have in one way, or another affected other farmers, likewise, sedentary pastoralists were in one way or the other affected by farmers (Nformi et al., 2014).

Most 27.5% of respondents reported monthly income of below NGN 10, 000 (equivalent to 6 USD as of September 2024). The finding concurs with that of Manu et al. (2014) and Sulaiman et al. (2023) in the neighboring state, Zamfara state, Nigeria, which recorded average monthly income of below N30,000 and N10,000, respectively. The majority of the states in Northern Nigeria are facing economic hardships that predispose them to various forms of social vices with cattle rustling inclusive. The phenomenon of cattle rustling, and banditry has become widespread across the Northern States and is probably among the

Table 1. Sociodemographic Information of Respondents.

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Males	220	55.0
Females	180	45.0
Total	400	100
Age	Frequency	Percent (%)
15-24	60	15.0
25-34	171	42.7
35-44	93	23.2
45-54	39	9.7
55 and above	39	9.7
Total	400	100
Marital Status	Frequency	Percent (%)
Single	126	31.5
Married	212	53.0
Divorced	35	8.7
Widowed	28	7.0
Total	400	100

Source: Authors' data.



list of top complex security challenges that are bedeviling Nigeria in the 21st Century. Virtually all of the states in the Northern region of Nigeria are affected by cattle rustling (Hamman, 2019).

Table 3 revealed management strategies for curtailing cattle rustling in the study area. The management strategies adopted include reporting, suspected cattle rustlers, adopting a counter-attack posture, surrendering money and other valuables to rustlers, and running to safe places among others as considered in this study. The strategies recorded a mean score range of 2.80 to 4.20, with the strategy of reporting cases of rustling to the village heads ranking as the best strategy.

Fig. 2 shows that the most adopted strategies for managing the effects of cattle rustling were reporting suspected rustlers to the village head and seeking refuge in safer places during attacks, with mean score indices of 4.10 and 3.90, respectively. Government compensating victims of cattle rustling was the least management strategy adopted

by the respondents as it accounts for 2.80 mean score and ranked eleventh. This agrees with the study of Habibu (2016), who reported that governments are against the concept of taking law at hand by the victims of cattle rustling, and also, the compensations promised by the government are not sufficient to cover for the victims' losses. In some cases, the promises end up being empty to score political achievements. Therefore, the appropriate measure is to vacate ravaged areas of rustling or simply avoid becoming victims. Another article culled from Nigerian National Daily reported that the Government has issued a communiqué after a security and reconciliation meeting with security agents and related stakeholders in Sokoto State, that no task force agent should attack or execute any herdsman (who are the predominant cattle rustlers), as sacrifice must be made by both sides to ensure that peace reigns. It was agreed that herdsmen and their families should be allowed to go about their normal businesses without stigmatization provided they are disarmed (Daily Trust, 2014).

Table 2. Socioeconomic Information of the Respondents.

Level of Education	Frequency	(%)
Primary School	118	29.5
Secondary School	100	25.0
Tertiary Institution	129	32.2
Informal education	149	37.2
Total	400	100
Occupation	Frequency	(%)
Farming	91	22.7
Livestock's rearing	24	6.0
Artisanal mining	51	12.7
Fish Farming	19	4.7
Trading	82	20.5
Transportation	5	1.2
Retail Business	9	2.2
Civil servants	43	10.7
Jobless/Unemployed	76	19.0
Total	400	100
Monthly Income (N)	Frequency	(%)
<10,000	135	33.7
11,000 - 15,000	61	15.2
16,000 - 20,000	48	12.0
21,000 - 25,000	72	18.0
≥26,000	84	21.0
Total	400	100

Source: Authors' data.



Those cattle rustlers were directed to immediately return the stolen animals to the government or mediators. Therefore, reporting the case to Village Heads where rustlers live, is the simplest way of redeeming rustled cattle, since rustlers still respect their elders and kinsmen, and, in some cases, they release the stolen animals without any terms or request of ransom as a result of their elders' intervention. Apkensuen and Foreman (2022) opined that once cattle are rustled in a community, the herders normally hire assassins to brutally retaliate irrespective of one's involvement in the crime. Therefore, to curb the problem of cattle rustling, negotiations between the groups at local levels are particularly important, to include all stakeholders to work together in solving the problem. In this way, everybody would feel included and accept the outcomes of negotiations.

Whereas other studies argued that herders are still protecting their cattle from rustling or theft. Olaniyan and Aliyu (2016), pointed out that traditionally, even child teenagers among pastoral communities are obliged to embrace not only skills and braveness required for pastoralism but also develop the courage and eagerness to aggressively, defend their herds from raids and attacks. Other studies pointed out modern technologies such as Chipsafer, which is a Uruguayan firm that has set up a platform which uses a remote tracking system to identify and geo-locate individual livestock, offering security against theft and disease, and demonstrating a growing trend toward the Internet of Things in agriculture (Dyllan, 2018); Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) RFID is an automatic identification technology that uses

electromagnetic waves to identify carriers of label objects (or tag) when they pass near an interrogator (or reader) (Ousmane et al., 2017); Sigfox's global IoT network, developed collars that give ranchers access to real-time information about each animal's speed, body temperature, stress level and have the power to greatly improve the health and safety of herds worldwide (Sigfox, 2017); and FarmIT developed by Reverbant IoT Company, which provides users with an intuitive, easy-to-use mobile app for tracking and managing their animals (Reverbant.com, 2018; Uwa et al., 2022). But most of these modern technologies are yet to be introduced into developing countries like Nigeria, as such, victims usually improvise on the measures to prevent themselves from being attacked or raided (Uwa et al., 2022).

4. CONCLUSION

The findings showed that reporting suspicious activities related to cattle rustling to Village Heads and people seeking refuge in safer places during attacks were the most commonly adopted and efficient strategies for managing the effects of cattle rustling in Sokoto State, with mean score indices of 4.10 and 3.90, respectively.

Based on these findings, it is recommended that the state's security forces be strengthened to better control such attacks. Additionally, conflict resolution agencies, in collaboration with traditional rulers, should intervene in affected areas to promote peaceful coexistence, as the rustlers remain responsive to the concerns of their elders.

Figure 2. Strategies Adopted in Managing the Effects of Cattle Rustling.



Source: Authors' data.



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