Mineral Resources Development and the Fight against Banditry in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects

By

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Abstract

The upsurge in banditry in Nigeria, especially in states such as Zamfara, Niger, Kaduna, and Katsina, has been linked to competition over control of mineral sites, profits from illegal mining, and the proliferation of arms financed through illicit mineral trade. The central objective of the paper is to examine the impact of mineral resources development on the fight against banditry in Nigeria. Secondary method of data collection was adopted in this study. The theoretical framework utilized is the frustration-aggression theory. The study found that the rise of banditry in Nigeria presents profound security challenges with widespread implications for the country's stability, socio-economic development, and human security. The rampant violence has not only devastated local communities but has also strained the capacity of security forces, disrupted agricultural activities, and deepened the humanitarian crisis. At its core, the banditry crisis is fueled by a complex web of socio-economic, governance, and intercommunal factors, including poverty, youth unemployment, weak state presence, and unresolved conflicts between farmers and pastoralists. The study recommended that overcoming the banditry crisis will require a multi-pronged strategy that integrates security measures, socio-economic development, and peacebuilding initiatives. Some of the approaches will lead to reducing ungoverned spaces, disrupting illegal funding networks, strengthening state community relations, and generating public revenue, the sector offers a

sustainable path to address some of the socioeconomic and structural conditions that fuel insecurity. By addressing both the symptoms and the underlying causes of insecurity, Nigeria can chart a path towards stability, ensuring long-term peace and sustainable development.

Key Words: Mineral Resources, Development, Banditry, Economy, Security

Introduction

Nigeria is richly endowed with a wide range of mineral resources, including solid minerals such as gold, limestone, tantalite, coal, and gemstones, alongside vast deposits of oil and gas. These resources have long been regarded as critical assets capable of stimulating industrial development, job creation, and broad-based economic growth (Rufai, 2021). However, despite this natural wealth, the minerals sector, especially solid minerals, remains underdeveloped, poorly regulated, and largely dominated by informal and artisanal mining activities. In recent years, the sector has become increasingly intertwined with the challenge of banditry, particularly in the northern regions of the country. Criminal groups have exploited weaknesses in the governance of mineral-rich areas, leading to illegal mining, resource theft, violent attacks, and growing insecurity.

Uche & Iwuamadi (2021) assert that the upsurge in banditry in Nigeria, especially in states such as Zamfara, Niger, Kaduna, and Katsina, has been linked to competition over control of mineral sites, profits from illegal mining, and the proliferation of arms financed through illicit mineral trade. The inability of government agencies to effectively secure mining communities or regulate activities within them has enabled criminal networks to entrench themselves, posing serious threats to national security and economic stability. As bandits take advantage of porous borders, weak law enforcement, and inadequate monitoring of mining sites, mineral-rich regions have increasingly become hotspots for violence, kidnapping, and extortion.

At the same time, mineral resources development, if effectively managed, has the potential to mitigate insecurity by providing economic alternatives, strengthening local governance, and reducing the financial incentives that sustain banditry. The formalization of mining operations, improved community participation,

transparent revenue management, and sustainable development initiatives can redirect mineral wealth toward local empowerment rather than criminal exploitation. Consequently, a strategic link emerges between mineral resources development and security: robust governance of mineral assets may diminish the socio-economic conditions that allow banditry to flourish.

However, Nigeria continues to struggle with policy inconsistencies, limited institutional capacity, corruption, and overlapping regulatory mandates, all of which impede efforts to integrate mineral resources development into broader security strategies. Recent government interventions including bans on artisanal mining in conflict-prone states and joint military operations to secure mining zones, have produced mixed outcomes. While some successes have been recorded, banditry persists, suggesting that military action alone cannot address the deeper structural issues connecting resource governance and insecurity.

The central objective of the paper is to examine the impact of mineral resources development on the fight against banditry in Nigeria. The specific objectives are: To examine the impact of the minerals resources development on the fight against banditry in Nigeria; To analyze how the Nigerian government can take full control of the industry and inject massive resources in the sector in order develop the industry to attract FDI; To assess the challenges and prospects of minerals resources development in relation to sustainable economic growth in Nigeria. The research questions are: What is the impact of the minerals resources development on the fight against banditry in Nigeria? Should the Nigerian government take full control of the industry and inject massive resources in the sector in order develop the industry to attract FDI? What are challenges and prospects of minerals resources development in relation to the fight against banditry in Nigeria?

Statement of the Problem

The study is an analysis of the challenges and prospects of mineral resources development and the fight against banditry in Nigeria. Nigeria is endowed with abundant mineral resources, yet the country continues to grapple with widespread banditry that threatens national security, economic stability, and rural livelihoods. Despite successive governments' efforts to harness mineral resources for economic development, the sector remains largely underdeveloped, poorly

regulated, and vulnerable to criminal exploitation. In many resource-rich regions, weak governance structures, inadequate state presence, and insufficient security have created an enabling environment for bandit groups to thrive. These groups exploit unregulated mining sites for revenue, control, and territorial dominance, thereby fueling further violence and instability.

Zabadi (2021) argues that the persistence of illegal mining across states such as Zamfara, Niger, Kaduna, and Plateau underscores the failure to effectively align mineral resources development with national security priorities. Instead of serving as a catalyst for economic growth, mineral deposits have become a driver of conflict, as bandit groups engage in extortion of miners, control of mining pits, illicit trade in minerals, and violent competition over resource sites. This situation is further compounded by the government's limited capacity to monitor mining activities, enforce mining regulations, and curb the proliferation of arms among criminal networks in mining communities.

Moreover, current mineral development policies do not sufficiently integrate security frameworks capable of preventing criminal infiltration into the mining sector. The absence of coordinated strategies between mineral development agencies, security institutions, and local authorities has weakened efforts to curb banditry. As a result, communities in mineral-rich areas experience displacement, loss of livelihoods, destruction of infrastructure, and a climate of fear that hinders legitimate mining investments.

The central problem, therefore, lies in the disconnect between mineral resources development and security governance in Nigeria. Without an effective system that links mineral wealth management to robust crime-prevention mechanisms, banditry will continue to undermine the economic potential of the mining sector. This study seeks to address this gap by examining how mineral resources development can be strategically leveraged to combat banditry, and why previous approaches have failed to achieve sustainable peace and economic benefits.

Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

Mineral Resources

Curott & Fink (2020) submit that a mineral is a naturally occurring substance of definite chemical composition and recognizable physical properties. Almost every area of human activity depends on minerals. However, in the view of this study, almost all industries viz. construction, manufacturing, transportation, medical technology, science and electronics utilize minerals.

Okoli & Ugwu (2021) enthuse that mineral resources are naturally occurring chemical and compounds that are formed from inorganic and organic substances. Mineral resources include oil and natural gas, and commercially viable minerals and aggregate resources, including areas suitable for the drilling for and production of oil and natural gas, and surface mining activities.

Owen (2024) submits that minerals are formed over a period of millions of years in the earth's crust. Iron, aluminium, zinc, manganese and copper are important raw materials for industrial use. There are two types of minerals; 1. Metallic and 2. Non-metalic. About 3500 minerals are known to man. The need and consumption of minerals has increased due to faster industrialisation and development of newer technologies with passing time. This study is of the view that mining and processing of minerals/ores involve major environmental problems, disturbance of land, air pollution from dust and smelter emission, water pollution from disrupted aquifers.

Abdullahi (2019) asserts that important non-metal resources include coal, salt, clay, limestone and silica. Stone used for building material, such as granite, marble, limestone, constitute another category of minerals. Minerals with special properties that humans value for their aesthetic and ornamental value are gems such as diamonds, emeralds, rubies. The lustre of gold, silver and platinum is used for ornaments. The major non-metal resources are: coal, petroleum, limestone, bauxite, hematite, marble, asbestos, granite, mica, phosphate, potash, sand and gravel etc.

Development

Nadama (2021) argues that development is a multifaceted concept that goes beyond economic growth to encompass improvements in the overall well-being and quality of life of individuals and societies. At its core, according to this study, development refers to the process through which societies enhance their capacity to meet human needs, expand opportunities, and create conditions for people to lead productive, creative, and dignified lives. Abdullahi (2019) argues that traditionally, development was measured primarily in terms of economic indicators such as income levels, industrial growth, and the accumulation of material resources. However, modern understandings recognize that development also includes social, political, cultural, and environmental dimensions, reflecting a holistic transformation of society.

Aina, Ojo & Oyewole (2023) assert that a key element of development is human well-being. This involves access to essential services such as education, healthcare, clean water, food security, and adequate shelter. When individuals are empowered through education and good health, they become more productive and capable of contributing to national progress. Thus, human development focuses on expanding people's choices and opportunities rather than solely increasing economic output. The Human Development Index (HDI), for example, captures this broader view by combining indicators of life expectancy, education, and income.

Olapeju & Peter (2021) submit that development also involves promoting equality and reducing disparities within a society. This includes addressing issues such as poverty, unemployment, gender inequality, and social exclusion. A society cannot be considered truly developed if a significant portion of its population lacks access to basic resources or is marginalized from participating in economic and political processes. Inclusive development ensures that progress benefits all groups, particularly vulnerable populations, and that wealth and opportunities are equitably distributed.

Okoli & Ugwu (2021) argue that political stability, good governance, and effective institutions are essential components of development. Transparent leadership, rule of law, accountability, and participatory decision-making create a conducive

environment for economic and social advancement. When institutions function efficiently, they support innovation, investment, and the equitable provision of public goods. Conversely, corruption, political instability, and weak institutions can undermine development by discouraging investment and eroding public trust.

Mineral Resources Development

Nadama (2021) submits that mineral resources development refers to the processes through which a country identifies, explores, extracts, processes, and manages its natural mineral endowments for economic and social advancement. It embodies both the technical and governance dimensions of utilizing mineral wealth to stimulate broader national growth. As a concept, mineral resources development is rooted in the understanding that minerals, such as gold, limestone, coal, gemstones, oil, and various metallic ores are not inherently valuable until they are transformed into productive assets through efficient management, technological application, human expertise, and sound institutional frameworks.

At its core, according to Shalangwa (2023), mineral resources development begins with geological surveys and exploration activities that determine the quantity and quality of mineral deposits. This stage is crucial because accurate information about a country's mineral potential shapes policy direction, investment decisions, and long-term planning. Once deposits are confirmed, extraction and processing follow through mining operations that may involve both surface and underground techniques. However, development extends beyond mere extraction; it involves value addition through refining, beneficiation, and local content strategies that ensure minerals contribute meaningfully to industrialization.

Uche & Iwuamadi (2021) assert that mineral resources development also encompasses social and environmental sustainability. Mining activities can cause significant ecological damage, including land degradation, water pollution, and deforestation. Sustainable development therefore requires environmental impact assessments, rehabilitation plans, responsible mining technologies, and continuous monitoring. Additionally, strong engagement with host communities, through compensation, employment, social investment, and respect for land rights helps create positive relationships and reduces conflict.

Banditry

Banditry is simply used to refer to acts of robbery, pillage, and violence in areas where the rule of law has broken down. It is synonymous with lawlessness, thieving, robbery, and pillage (Thompson, Awange, Obi, Aina, Adeosun and Jinadu 2024). Banditry, as a social and security phenomenon, is often defined as organized criminal activities carried out by armed groups or individuals who engage in violent acts such as robbery, kidnapping, extortion, and cattle rustling, typically in rural and semi-urban areas. Unlike other forms of criminality, banditry is characterized by its systematic nature and its ability to destabilize large regions, often targeting vulnerable populations such as farmers, travelers and local communities.

Conceptually, banditry is a derivative of the term bandit, meaning an unlawful armed group terrorizing people and confisticating their properties. It is synonymous with the establishment of gang groups who use SALWs to carry out attacks against people. In this regard, banditry could mean a set-up criminal activity deliberately designed and carried out for personal gains (Olapeju and Peter, 2021). Bandits are armed robbers, kidnappers, and linked with virtually all types of organized crimes. They characteristically maim, destroy lives and pillage properties (Curott and Fink, 2020).

Given the complex nature of bandit activities, Egwu (2021), in a restricted manner described banditry as a practice of stealing cattle and animals from herders or raiding of cattle from their ranches. In the same vein, banditry is reflected in criminal escapades like cattle rustling, kidnapping, armed robbery, drug abuse, arson, rape, and the brazen and gruesome massacre of people of mostly agrarian communities with sophisticated weapons by suspected herdsmen and reprisal attacks from surviving victims, a development that has been brought to the front burner of national security discourse (Uche and Iwuamadi, 2021). Similarly, Rufai (2021), linked banditry to herdsmen, as banditry was traced back to acts of cattle rustling, carried out against sedentary farmers herds in particular. Nadama (2021), equally reinforced the fast that banditry is at the root of the conflict between Fulani herders and farmers; and are due to struggle for ownership of farmland and grazing reserves.

Theoretical Framework: Frustration-Aggression Theory

The study is anchored on the frustration-aggression theory. Frustration–aggression theory, originally proposed by Dollard (1939), posits that aggression is often a direct result of frustration that individuals or groups experience when they are prevented from achieving their goals or accessing desired resources. When applied to the Nigerian context, particularly the relationship between mineral resources development and the rise of banditry, the theory provides a useful framework for understanding how socio-economic and political grievances can escalate into violent behaviour.

According to Mustapha (2021), in many mineral-rich regions of Nigeria, communities experience deep frustration due to their continued exclusion from the wealth generated by natural resources. Despite the presence of valuable minerals such as gold in Zamfara, gemstones in Kaduna, and other solid minerals across the North-West and North-Central regions, local communities remain impoverished, unemployed, and underdeveloped. This disconnect between resource wealth and human development produces a sense of marginalization and injustice. As the frustration–aggression theory suggests, when legitimate expectations, such as employment opportunities, fair resource distribution, and improved living conditions are persistently blocked, affected groups may resort to aggression as a means of expressing their grievances or securing alternative livelihoods.

Okoli & Ochim (2021) posit that the lack of effective mineral resource development policies further amplifies the problem. When government interventions fail to provide infrastructure, regulate mining activities, or guarantee security, communities experience deeper frustration due to the state's apparent inability or unwillingness to address their needs. The resulting breakdown in trust between citizens and government institutions reduces the legitimacy of state authority, making bandit groups appear as alternative power structures that can offer income, protection, or a sense of belonging.

By applying the frustration–aggression theory, it becomes clearer that combating banditry in Nigeria requires more than military operations. Addressing the root

causes of frustration, such as poverty, unemployment, exclusion from resource benefits, and lack of transparent mineral governance is central to reducing aggression. Sustainable mineral resource development that includes community participation, equitable distribution of mining benefits, formalization of artisanal mining, and investment in social amenities can reduce the frustrations that drive young people toward banditry. Thus, the fight against banditry is inseparable from broader efforts to ensure that mineral resource development becomes a tool for empowerment rather than a source of grievance.

Mineral Resources Development and the Fight against Banditry in Nigeria

Nadama (2021) asserts that mineral resources development plays a critical role in shaping Nigeria's security landscape, and its impact on the fight against banditry has become increasingly significant. As the country intensifies efforts to harness its abundant natural endowments for economic growth, the relationship between resource development, community livelihoods, governance structures, and insecurity becomes more complex. Abdullahi (2019) argues that the dynamics of mineral exploitation, particularly in rural and mineral-rich regions, influence the conditions under which banditry emerges, thrives, or declines. In this context, mineral resources development can serve either as a catalyst for peace and stability or, when poorly managed, as a driver of conflict and criminality.

Aina, Ojo & Oyewole (2023) argue that one major impact of mineral resources development on the fight against banditry in Nigeria is its potential to address the structural economic drivers of insecurity. Banditry in Nigeria is partly rooted in widespread poverty, unemployment, and economic exclusion, especially in the northern regions where mineral deposits such as gold, limestone, and gemstones are common. When mineral resources are properly developed, they generate job opportunities, stimulate local enterprises, and improve income levels. These economic benefits can help weaken the incentives for youths to engage in banditry, which often becomes an attractive alternative in contexts where legitimate livelihoods are scarce. Thus, resource development can function as a preventive strategy by reducing the socio-economic vulnerabilities that criminal groups exploit.

Moreover, according to Egwu (2021), the formalization of mining activities, particularly artisanal and small-scale mining, enhances state presence and regulation in remote areas that have historically served as safe havens for bandits. Illegal mining sites have long provided both cover and revenue sources for criminal groups, who exploit weak regulation to tax miners, smuggle minerals, or use mining camps as operational bases. By bringing mining activities under proper governance and licensing frameworks, the government not only increases revenue but also reduces the ability of bandits to control or profit from mineral-rich territories. Strengthened regulation also encourages the presence of law enforcement agencies, environmental inspectors, and mining officers, thereby expanding state authority into previously ungoverned spaces.

Mustapha (2021) posits that mineral resources development can also enhance the fight against banditry through improved infrastructure. Mining investments often require roads, communication networks, energy supply, and water systems, and their development benefits host communities as well as security agencies. Better road networks, for instance, aid rapid troop deployment and surveillance in rural areas, making it more difficult for bandits to operate with impunity. Similarly, improved telecommunications infrastructure facilitates intelligence gathering, early warning systems, and coordination between communities and security operatives. As investors collaborate with government to improve extractive zones, these security-enhancing spillover effects become essential tools in reducing the operational advantage enjoyed by bandits.

However, Okoli & Ochim (2021) assert that the impact of mineral resources development is not uniformly positive. Poorly managed mineral wealth can exacerbate the same insecurity it seeks to reduce. When communities feel excluded from the benefits of mineral exploitation, grievances arise, which bandits and other non-state actors can exploit. Nadama (2021) argues that environmental degradation, displacement without adequate compensation, and corrupt allocation of mining licenses can deepen distrust between local populations and the government. Such conditions can push affected individuals toward cooperation with bandit groups or even active participation in criminal activities. Thus, how mineral resources development is governed determines whether it fosters stability or fuels further conflict.

Okoli & Ugwu (2021) submit that revenue from mineral development also shapes the state's capacity to fight banditry. Increased earnings from solid minerals can supplement the national budget, enabling the procurement of advanced security equipment, training, and technology. Enhanced fiscal capacity strengthens the government's ability to implement comprehensive security reforms and community-based policing initiatives. Yet, this positive impact depends on transparency and accountability. If mineral revenues are mismanaged or diverted through corruption, the potential for improved security capacity is undermined, and communities may perceive the sector as yet another source of elite enrichment. Olaniyan & Yahaya (2021) point out that the social impact of mineral resources development also intersects with efforts to combat banditry. Mining companies often implement corporate social responsibility (CSR) projects schools, health centers, water systems, and skill acquisition programs that improve community well-being and reduce social tensions. Such interventions can strengthen community resilience against recruitment by bandit groups. When communities see tangible improvements in their quality of life, they are more likely to cooperate with security forces by sharing intelligence and resisting the influence of criminal groups. In contrast, the absence of meaningful community benefits creates an enabling environment for insecurity.

Olapeju & Peter (2021) observe that mineral resources development significantly influences the fight against banditry in Nigeria, offering both opportunities and challenges. When managed effectively, it addresses the economic, infrastructural, and governance deficits that enable criminality, thereby contributing to long-term security. However, if mismanaged, it can deepen grievances, empower criminal networks, and intensify territorial competition. The extent to which mineral resources development contributes to the fight against banditry ultimately depends on political will, institutional capacity, community engagement, and accountability mechanisms that ensure mineral wealth becomes a source of national stability rather than conflict.

Challenges of Minerals Resources Development and the Fight against Banditry in Nigeria

Mineral resources development presents significant opportunities for addressing insecurity in Nigeria, but its use as a tool for combating banditry also faces

numerous challenges that undermine its effectiveness. Rufai (2021) asserts that one of the foremost challenges is the deep-rooted governance deficit surrounding resource management. For decades, the mining sector has been characterized by weak regulatory oversight, corruption, and inadequate institutional capacity. These gaps create an enabling environment for illegal mining operations, many of which are directly linked to the financing of banditry and armed groups. Instead of strengthening state authority, poorly managed mineral development often emboldens criminal networks that exploit minerals as a revenue source. As long as regulatory institutions are weak, any effort to leverage mineral development for security purposes remains limited.

Another major challenge according to Shalangwa (2023) is the lack of equitable distribution of benefits from mineral exploitation. Many resource-rich communities, particularly in the North-West and North-Central regions, experience severe poverty, unemployment, and environmental degradation despite the presence of valuable mineral deposits. When communities feel excluded from the economic gains associated with mining, grievances deepen, creating fertile ground for bandit recruitment. Bandits often exploit these frustrations to gain local support or passive acceptance. Therefore, mineral development that fails to address local socio-economic needs can inadvertently worsen insecurity rather than resolve it.

Thompson, Awange, Obi, Aina, Adeosun & Jinadu (2024) observe that infrastructure deficits further undermine the use of mineral resources development in combating banditry. Many mining areas are located in remote regions with limited road networks, weak security presence, and poor communication systems. These conditions make it difficult for the government to enforce mining regulations or protect mining sites from criminal attacks. Bandits often operate freely in these isolated spaces, extorting miners, controlling access routes, and sabotaging mining operations. Without adequate infrastructure and security architecture, mineral development cannot achieve the economic impacts needed to weaken banditry.

Additionally, according to Uche & Iwuamadi (2021) land ownership conflicts and weak community engagement complicate mineral resource development.

Disputes between host communities, mining companies, traditional rulers, and government agencies frequently arise over compensation, land rights, and environmental impacts. These conflicts sometimes escalate into violence, creating instability that bandits exploit. The absence of transparent and inclusive decision-making processes reduces community trust in government initiatives, making it difficult to build the cooperation necessary for effective security interventions.

Zabadi (2021) argues that environmental degradation also poses a challenge. Mining activities often result in soil erosion, water pollution, and loss of agricultural land. For rural communities that rely heavily on farming and cattle rearing, these environmental impacts can threaten livelihoods, thereby increasing poverty and social tension. In such contexts, banditry becomes both a coping mechanism and a means of retaliation for perceived injustice. When mineral development harms rather than improves community welfare, it undermines any potential contribution to reducing insecurity.

Another challenge according to Abdullahi (2019), lies in the proliferation of arms and the entrenched operations of armed groups in mineral-rich zones. These actors see mining as a lucrative enterprise and resist any government effort to regulate or formalize the sector. Even when mineral development projects are introduced, the presence of heavily armed groups limits implementation and increases violence. Efforts to secure mining sites sometimes escalate into confrontations that worsen insecurity.

Again, Aina, Ojo & Oyewole (2023) observe that policy inconsistency and lack of coordination across governmental bodies hinder effective use of mineral development in combating banditry. Many initiatives fail due to overlapping mandates between federal, state, and local authorities, as well as conflicting interests between security agencies and mining regulators. The absence of a unified strategy reduces the impact of development projects and weakens the potential security dividends of the mineral sector.

Prospects of Minerals Resources Development and the Fight against Banditry in Nigeria

The prospects of using mineral resources development to fight against banditry in Nigeria rest on the potential of the sector to address some of the structural drivers of insecurity, especially unemployment, poverty, weak state presence, and the proliferation of unregulated mining spaces. Egwu (2021) submits that Nigeria is endowed with vast mineral deposits scattered across many states, including gold, limestone, coal, barite, tantalite, gemstones, and others. For many years, these resources have remained underexploited or poorly managed, creating gaps that criminal groups and bandits exploit. By reforming and expanding the mineral resources sector, Nigeria can convert zones of vulnerability into centres of economic productivity, thus reducing the incentives and opportunities for banditry.

Mustapha (2021) observes that one key prospect lies in the capacity of mineral resources development to generate employment for youths who are often recruited by bandit groups due to idleness and deprivation. When mining activities are formalized and linked to local economies, they create direct jobs in extraction, processing, transportation, and support services. The multiplier effects also stimulate small businesses and community markets. Providing alternative livelihoods can significantly weaken the supply chain of manpower that sustains bandit groups, particularly in rural and mining communities where economic options are limited.

Another important prospect according to Nadama (2021), is the potential of mineral sector reforms to increase government presence in remote regions where bandits currently operate with little resistance. Properly regulated mining requires administrative structures, monitoring teams, security personnel, and infrastructural development such as roads, power, and communication networks. These forms of state penetration not only support the mining industry but also deter bandit activities by reducing ungoverned spaces. A stronger state footprint diminishes the sense of abandonment experienced by many communities and enhances cooperation between residents and security agencies.

Okoli & Ochim (2021) assert that the formalization of artisanal and small-scale mining also presents an opportunity to curb the resource-related funding of banditry. Unregulated mining sites have been used by criminal groups to extract and sell minerals, generating revenue to buy arms and sustain operations. When the government enforces licensing systems, establishes mineral buying centres, and ensures transparent value chains, it disrupts the financial networks that support bandit activities. Legalizing artisanal mining not only improves state revenue but also cuts off a major source of illegal financing.

Okoli & Ugwu (2021) argue that mineral resources development also creates prospects for stronger community–government partnerships. When host communities benefit from mining through social responsibility projects, royalties, skill acquisition programmes, and improved local infrastructure, they are more likely to collaborate with the government in securing their environment. A sense of ownership reduces grievances that bandits often exploit. Empowered communities can participate in surveillance, report suspicious activities, and support broader security frameworks aimed at protecting mining investments.

Furthermore, according to Olaniyan & Yahaya (2021), the increase in government revenue from a properly managed mineral sector can enhance the capacity to fund security operations, modernize equipment, expand intelligence gathering, and implement long-term development programmes in vulnerable regions. Banditry thrives where the state lacks adequate resources to enforce law and order, and mineral development can contribute to bridging this gap by diversifying national income and reducing overdependence on oil.

Conclusion/Findings

The study found that the rise of banditry in Nigeria presents profound security challenges with widespread implications for the region's stability, socio-economic development, and human security. The rampant violence has not only devastated local communities but has also strained the capacity of security forces, disrupted agricultural activities, and deepened the humanitarian crisis. At its core, the banditry crisis is fueled by a complex web of socio-economic, governance, and intercommunal factors, including poverty, youth unemployment, weak state presence, and unresolved conflicts between farmers and pastoralists.

Again, while mineral resources development holds promise for addressing socio-economic drivers of banditry, the challenges including governance weaknesses, inequitable benefits, poor infrastructure, community conflicts, environmental impacts, armed group resistance, and policy inconsistency significantly limit its effectiveness. Addressing these obstacles is essential for transforming mineral development into a meaningful tool in Nigeria's fight against banditry.

Recommendations

Addressing the security implications requires a comprehensive approach that goes beyond military action. The paper recommends:

i. Socio-economic reforms, such as job creation, education, and conflict resolution programs, are essential to addressing the root causes of banditry. Additionally, improving governance, promoting justice, and tackling corruption are vital to restoring confidence in state institutions.

ii. Overcoming the banditry crisis will require a multi-pronged strategy that integrates security measures, socio-economic development, and peacebuilding initiatives. Some of the approaches will lead to reducing ungoverned spaces, disrupting illegal funding networks, strengthening state community relations, and generating public revenue, the sector offers a sustainable path to address some of the socioeconomic and structural conditions that fuel insecurity. By addressing both the symptoms and the underlying causes of insecurity, Nigeria can chart a path towards stability, ensuring long-term peace and sustainable development.

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