Web of Scholars: Multidimensional Research Journal
ISSN: 2751-7543
Volume 05 Number 04 (2026)
https://journals.innoscie.com/index.php/wos

Article

Effect of organized criminal groups activities on farming in Nasarawa state, Nigeria

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Abstract. One of the dangerous and serious crime that is affecting people in Nigeria today is organized crime. The effects and consequences in the society is spreading like while fire across board, hardly a single day passes by without one hearing about the incident of organized criminal groups on radio, television or newspaper. The study basically made use of secondary data to examined the effect of organized criminal groups activities on farming in Nasarawa state, Nigeria. The activities of organized criminal groups that was sited and reviewed in this study are banditry, boko haram and Fulani herdsmen. At the end of the study it was discovered that their activities affect farming in Nasarawa, Nigeria and so, the study recommended that the situation need to be checked, government should address the root cause of organized criminal groups, government should beef up security to control the activities of organized criminal groups, the welfare of citizens should be taken seriously to discourage youth from forming and joining organized criminal groups, there should be a consistent change in security strategic and technical efforts by government, community, private security agencies in tackling insecurity in the society

Keywords: effect, organized crime, organized criminal groups and farming

Citation: Shuhrat o'g'li T. U. Effect of organized criminal groups activities on farming in Nasarawa state, Nigeria 2026, 5(4), 105-113.

Received: 10th Jun 2026
Revised: 21th Jul 2026
Accepted: 10th Aug 2026
Published: 20th Sep 2026

Introduction

There are several types of organized criminal activities and operatives in West Africa. These activities include drug trafficking, advanced fee and internet fraud, human trafficking, diamond smuggling, forgery, cigarette smuggling, money laundering, arms manufacture, arm trafficking, and arm robbery as well as oil bunkering. These organized criminals are not only national but also transnational organized criminals. Their activities often involve collaboration among local and foreign criminal groups. They can infiltrate governments, businesses, political and economic system. Their focus is to undermine the effectiveness of the socio-political system through corruption, use of deceptive means and violence [1].

Nigeria has been plaque by a number of insecurity issues, arising from different militia groups these include the militant groups formed in the Niger- Delta region to protest exploitation and environmental degradation due to oil exploration, the Boko Haram insurgency in the North Eastern part of the country, the Fulani militia group that is spread like wild fire across the country to mention but few. All these have been posing a variety of security threats to the country.

No state in the country is immune from the activities of organized criminal gang. For instance, Zamfara State has become a center of Bandits in the North western region, while kidnapping which started in the south-south region is now widely practiced in the Northern States of Niger and Kaduna. Nasarawa State is having her fair share of organized criminal activities [2].

The Boko Haram and ISWAP that have operated through stealing, looting of stores of local farmers and villages as well as robbing banks and businesses organizations especially in the North Eastern part of Nigeria, are relocating to Nasarawa State due to successful destabilization of their base in Sambisa forest by the Military. The group is fast regrouping and infiltrating into the local population. It is providing governance at fringes and forest borders between Nasarawa State and Benue State, Nasarawa State and Taraba State; and Nasarawa State and FCT, Abuja. It is creating illegal routes and link for arms and drugs trafficking contrary to official claims therefore that Boko Haram terrorists have been restricted to the North-East part of Nigeria, the group is said to have successfully infiltrated into Nasarawa State, North central Nigeria, and has been carrying on several attacks in the State. While briefing President Buhari on Boko Haram infiltration into Nasarawa State, the State Governor, Engr. Abdulahi Sule, observed that "members of the Boko Haram have relocated to a place called Utu in Toto Local Government Area" and that in attempt by the special Task Force to dislodge them, nine hundred (900) members of the group were captured including children and wives [3], [4].

In the findings of Attah, the Boko Haram terrorist group is living in Nasarawa State as organized criminal group and is using Nasarawa as a base to attack their targets and also exploit the local economy. The terrorist group is regrouping in communities that cut across four local Government Areas of Nasarawa State. These include Karu, Wamba, Nasarawa Toto and Awe. These Local Government Areas share boundaries and Localities with the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), Kaduna, Plateau, Benue and Taraba States.

It is in the above light that this paper deem it fit to look at the effect of organized criminal groups activities on farming in Nasarawa state Nigeria [5].

Methodology

Conceptual Clarification

Effects: These are consequences associated with the action of organized criminal gang.

Organized Crime: Abadinsky. Described Organized crime as a non-ideological enterprise involving a number of persons in close social interaction, organized on a hierarchical basis, with at least three levels/ranks, for the purpose of securing profit and power by engaging in illegal and legal activities. Positions in the hierarchy and positions involving functional specialization may be assigned on the basis of kinship or friendship, or rationally assigned according to skill. The positions are not dependent on the individuals occupying them at any particular time. Permanency is assumed by the members who strive to keep the enterprise integral and active in pursuit of its goals. It eschews competition and strives for monopoly on an industry or territorial basis. There is a willingness to use violence and/or bribery to achieve ends or to maintain discipline. Membership is restricted, although non-members may be involved on a contingency basis. There are explicit rules, oral or written, which are enforced by sanctions that include murder.

Farming: refers to the practice of cultivating land, growing crops and raising animal to produce food, fiber and other useful products. Farming can also be defined as the practice of cultivating the land or raising stock. Farming is a great way to describe the lifestyle and occupation of people whose job are in the agriculture industry. In Nasarawa state, the major occupation of people is farming.

Organized criminal group: United Nation. Defined organized criminal group as a structured group of three or more person existing for a period of time and acting in concert with the aim of committing one or more crime or offences established in accordance with this convention in order to obtain directly or indirectly financial or other material benefit.

History of organized criminal gang

The history of the underworld and of organized crime is much less opaque. Charting the early roots of modern organized crime, Mary McIntosh was one of the earliest theorists of organized crime to attempt to historicize the underworld, its hierarchies and practices. McIntosh, like many historians and criminologists since, looked back to the role of bandit, brigands, and outlaws in early modern peasant society, an approach shaped by the work of Eric Hobsbawm, seminal text on Bandits, published in the late 1960s, attempted to explain the role of separate societies or counter-societies that emerged as a means of protecting local interests against the authorities (the gentry, clergy, or state), stated that the bandit was faced with a choice and had to decide whether to become a criminal or a revolutionary. Thus, the two could not coexist: "The underworld (as its name implies) is an anti-society, which exists by reversing the values of the straight world. It is in its own phrase, 'bent' but is otherwise parasitic on it" In an earlier book had characterized the Mafia as developing from the antipathy to feudalism in rural Italy.

More recently, from 2003-2006 accounts of the development of groups such as the Sicilian Mafia have been much more nuanced. In his useful summary Howard Abadinsky describes the evolution of four Italian criminal organizations: the Sicilian Mafia, the Neapolitan Camorra, the 'Ndrangheta "Brotherhood" of Calabria, and the Sacra Corona Unita of the Puglia region. The most well-known of these, the Mafia and the Camorra, had very different roots, according to Abadinsky, argued that the Mafia developed from the emergence of middlemen called Gabelloti, who ruled over the estates that had previously been controlled by the aristocracy. This aristocracy had increasingly come under attack during the nineteenth century, and ultimately, the land was freed through the campaigns of Giuseppe Garibaldi. As Alan Wright notes, "the collapse of the feudal system after the rise and fall of Napoleon in the early nineteenth century marked the emergence of the Mafia into a società (society) of families that mediated between the landowners and the masses". The Camorra, according to Abadinsky, was deliberately structured as a secret society and was more organized and disciplined than the Mafia. In other European countries, organizations or groups with similar profiles to the Italian societies are likely to have existed. In Germany there was increasing reference to societies or gangs of crooks from the eighteenth century on. Katrin Lange has stressed that the contemporary debates about such gangs were vague and often arbitrary, allowing the authorities to target offenders variously labeled as beggars, tramps, gypsies, cheats, robbers, and bandits, or using the term Gauner (crooks).

Küther, 1976 argues that the problem of gangs and bandits was one of poor control. The eighteenth-century judicial system was not well equipped to deal with the sub-cultural nature of such groups, he argues, the state failed to deal effectively with them. To some extent this may have been due to the lack of unification in German territories that left borders permeable and law enforcement structures far from centralized. Arguably, it was only after the Napoleonic wars and the adoption of the Napoleonic Code in some parts of Germany (such as the regions of the west bank of the Rhine and the Grand Duchy of Baden), that the judicial system was to become more effective.

Egmond, 1993 has researched organized crime in the Netherlands, focusing on various marginal groups in the early modern Dutch republic. Egmond's particularly notes the role of ethnic groups such as Jews and gypsies, as well as their links with organized crime by the late eighteenth century and the rise of vagrancy and dearth from the 1740s.

Similarly, Danker's studies of gangs of robbers in eighteenth century Coburg found that the gangs there included a significant number of Jewish vagrants. On the other hand, Danker also found groups that were made up of farmers and artisans from the local area. While the eighteenth century seems to have been crucial in the Dutch and German examples, Egmond, suggests that it would be unwise to impose any neat chronology onto the development of organized crime in the Netherlands: "To put it briefly: Organized rural crime did not become more (or less) professional in the period 1650–1800".

Evans's discussion of the underworld in nineteenth century Germany demonstrates how "criminal careers" unraveled and the ways in which German commentators increasingly portrayed such individuals as members of an organized criminal underworld (Evans, 1998). Here Evans draws attention to the important role of the social commentators and reformers of the nineteenth century, who would use the burgeoning print culture of newspapers, periodicals, pamphlets, and books to "discover" the underworld. Moreover, while many of the accounts of gangs in continental Europe stress the disorganized, marginal, and fluid nature of the groups, it may be that in nineteenth century Europe, the underworld becomes more anchored to growing urban spaces. In Britain the relationship between print culture and representations of organized crime flourished in the early to mid-eighteenth century.

Howson. Wild's activities in controlling crime in early eighteenth-century London, and his collusion with the authorities, have been well documented. Perhaps in common with some of the later European incarnations of organized crime,

Wild, was notable for seizing opportunities created by the authorities. In this case, the rise of a statutory award system from the 1690s facilitated the creation of a significant crime culture in the early eighteenth century. Other historians of the eighteenth-century metropolis have drawn attention to criminal gangs and networks that seem to have come into being at least in part as a result of "moral panics" Ward.

The extent to which any pervasive organized crime networks actually existed in eighteenth century Britain is debatable. Once illegal markets are accessed for the disposal of stolen goods, such criminal activity becomes inherently organized. However, it would take the modernizing aspects of society for more recognizable models of organized crime to evolve; the creation and circulation of financial instruments, new technologies in firearms, safes and transport infrastructures; the development of a strong surveillance culture that legislated the "habitual criminal" into being; the growth of global networks via colonialism; and the creation of the "underworld" in texts and literatures that could be accessed by a wide range of readers Shore.

A history of Nigeria organized crime is an astoundingly ambitious piece of work provided by Ellis's,. The author offered an account of the history of "organized crime" in Nigeria based on the empirical research. According to, him, from the beginning of the country, it was obvious that Nigeria could present conditions comfortable for the organized crime. He observed that on account of presentation endemic corruption that lack of nationalism and ethnic division was making politics a game for personal gain. According to him, by early 1960s, politicians were involved in business in one way or another and had started to enthrone corruption in the place of business ethics. The entrenchment of corruption but subsequent military regime provides the need material foundation for organized criminality to strive. Nigerian organized crime from the 1980s onward has been promoted by lack of sound leadership and politics of corruption. The perpetration of tribalism and religion created room for emergence of home breed terrorism and proliferation arms, small and light weapons as well as drugs are needed in the operation of organized criminals. It is in this context, that Ellis, observed the emergence of different type of organized crime group in Nigeria including the drug trade, a business context in which perceived or real qualities that Nigerians possess are sought after; advanced fee scams also known as "419" frauds after the section of the Nigerian penal code addressing fraud, that Nigerians are often identified with internationally; sex trafficking; and oil fraud and smuggling involving the participation of significant "upper world" figures including senior government officials.

Structure of the Nigeria organized criminal groups

An analysis of literature on Nigerian criminality worldwide revealed that the main characteristic emphasized is its great flexibility and ability to adapt to the national context in which it is operating. Whether it is some countries of the European Union, USA or generically foreign countries, Nigerian criminal groups seem to be based on loose and fluid organizations rather than hierarchical structures. According to the Europol, report on trafficking in human beings, Nigerian criminal groups are highly flexible in nature; they conduct operations in cells active in several EU member States, transferring victims easily from one country to another.

In this regards, Phil Williams claims that many Nigerian criminal organizations are relatively small, and are based around bonds created by family membership, tribal affinity, or personal friendship. Often these groups operate within a larger network that resembles trade association rather than traditional mafia hierarchies. The fluid network provides support, structure, and potential connections that can be activated when it is convenient or beneficial to those involved.

Following a similar interpretative line, Stephen Ellis. Points out like legitimate businessmen, they conduct themselves as independent small traders, using family connections scattered around the globe to pursue criminal enterprise.

Nigerian law-breakers are also involved in organized criminality. Their involvement is seen as lose and fluid alliances driven by specific criminal objective through the associations always remain and can be drawn upon at any time, the actual work of completing a specific criminal project leads to the development of temporary relationships to complete the project at hand. Thereafter, the business alliances often dissolve as each criminal task is completed for the most part; Nigerian criminals remain opportunists per excellence. Their flexibility is a big part of their success. Ellis.

The interpretation of the Nigerian criminality above points out the existence of small loose organized groups. It seems that at times Nigerian criminal players share ad hoc criminal projects. When the criminal goal is accomplished, the alliance network could end leaving each criminal player to establish new relationships with other groups. In addition, Nigerian criminal groups have 'ethnic' ties related to the family, clan, or the shared cultural background/nationality. For criminal players to relying on some extra resources such as ethnic or other kind of bounds, means compensating for a structural problem of trust regarding illegal markets Smith.

Nigerian criminal groups have been able to spread worldwide: according to Williams. They are present in 60 countries Williams. For instance, in Italy, the initial research on Nigerian criminal groups dates back to early 2000. Some researches depict them as horizontal and no vertical groups when it comes to generically organized crime rather than mafia associations specifically because they would not have the capability to threaten or intimidate people in the Italian social environment where they are settled, Gustincich.

At the same time, a report by the Anti-Mafia Investigation Directorate Dia described the national scenario of Nigerian criminal groups. Mainly focusing on drug trafficking and sexual exploitation, from the recruitment of victims to exploitation in Italy by the so-called mamas, the institutional report provides little knowledge about forms of organizations. Limited to drug trafficking Nigerian criminal groups generically present a severe characterization based on the tribal origins of their members. They have a vertical structure in which the one or two strictly Nigerian criminal leaders emerged. These leaders manage the international drug trafficking and do not have contact with floor members, the drug couriers.

More recently, a report by the Italian Ministry of Interior claimed that Nigerian criminal groups acting in Italy have the capability to manage, even at the same time, a variety of illegal sectors, and parcelling out of operative cellules as well, which do not constitute a solely hierarchical association but rather a wider intercontinental network in which local criminal groups, despite sharing greater transnational designs, operate autonomously. In these terms, the report points out the versatility, flexibility and autonomy of Nigerian criminal groups acting in Italy. A recent report endorsed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs pointed out the mafia type characteristics of Nigerian criminal groups. The latter are based on secrecy, unity, an oligarchic structure, initial rituals, familism or tribalism/clannism and territorial control.

Result and Discussion

Factors that causes organized criminal group in Nigeria

Organized criminal groups in Nigeria before 1990s was not pronounced are rarely mentioned in the trend of crime Obarisiagbon and Aderinto. However, the current trend of organized criminal groups activities in Nigeria could be trace to February 25 2000 with the abduction of oil company employee in the Niger Delta region to express their grievances, exploitation and underdevelopment. Akpan in Yusuf and Abdullahi [6], [7], [8].

Organized criminal group are complex phenomena influenced by various factors, some key factors contributing to their existence and persistence include:

Poverty: Nigeria has been tagged a poor country, and consistently, the level of poverty has risen since 2015. Poverty is presumed to have compelled unemployed youths to take up arms as well as display behaviours found to be inconsistent with morality and civil norms. In the same vein, harsh socio-economic conditions further aggravated by rising prices, food shortage and poor welfare standards combine with other factors to trigger banditry among able-bodied youths. Findings have also revealed that successive governments in Nigeria's northern states have not demonstrated any significant political will to address the welfare of the youths [9], [10]. Concern for youth development is at the lowest ebb on most governments' agenda. Subsequently, the welfare inadequacy has promoted youth unemployment, leaving the youths to seek solace in violence as a reactionary response to form organized criminal group [11].

Illiteracy: Idle hands and idle minds need survival for which they find expression at any slight opportunity. This analogy is supported by the causal factors which drive banditry. In the first instance, it has been theorized that ignorance gives birth to banditry [12]. All bandits are male of school age by educational classification. Being out of school or not being exposed to formal education breeds uncomplimentary social vices among the youths who constitute membership of bandit groups [13], [14], [15]. This phenomenon is thus the product of high level of illiteracy among the northern youths. Numerous other factors have been found to exacerbate banditry in the North-West of Nigeria. For one, the weak security architecture in the region gives space to bandits to regroup and operate unchecked, thereby beating all state security operatives to intelligence [16]. It has been found also that Nigeria's borders are porous thus allowing foreign bandits to penetrate into the country unsuspectingly [17].

Corruption and lack of economic opportunity: in environments with limited economic opportunities and corrupt institution, organized crime can strive.

Social exclusion and marginalization: groups or individual who fell excluded or marginalized may turn to organized crime as away to gain power, status or revenge.

Weak governance and law enforcement: in areas with weak or corrupt law enforcement, organized crime can flourish.

Furthermore, evidence has equally shown that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons gives impetus to violence and banditry [18], [19], [20]. Unemployed youths effortlessly gain access to small arms, owing to weak security checks by law enforcement agents. Consequently, illegal trade in arms and unchecked entry of arms at Nigeria's borders could be adduced as factors which further trigger formation of organized criminal group in Nigeria [21], [22].

Evidently, a weak judicial system that delays justice such as is observable in Nigeria is a contributory factor. In certain cases, arrested bandits escape justice even while awaiting trial. Such escape could not have been without connivance with some law enforcement agents on the solidarity platform of ethnicity, religion or the political influence of some indigenes. Observers have reported also that ungoverned spaces such the forests and mass lands which characterize most parts of the North-West and North-East of Nigeria provide hideouts and facilitate free movement for bandits [23], [24]. While ungoverned spaces may be difficult to man, by means of technology through adequate investment, bandits' hideouts could be discovered. Nevertheless, complicity among law enforcement officers and behaviour that reflects sabotage tend to complicate government's efforts at combatting banditry effectively.

Effect of organized criminal groups activities on farming

Nasarawa State is Nigeria's home of solid mineral. Surprisingly, organized criminality by Boko Haram or banditry in the State is not associated with solid mineral for now, unlike the situation in Zamfara State [25], [26]. The topography (mountain, hills etc.) and vegetation (forests) in the state is key factor that provided natural hideout for criminals.

Organized criminal groups activities have effects on farming study revealed various ways in which organized criminal groups' activities affects farming. The first is that organized criminal groups activities affects ability to access farms. This is a setback on agricultural activities and it will surely have effect on the quantity of produce thereby having effect on food prices [27], [28]. This was supported by an IDI respondent who asserted that:

"Organized criminal groups activities have made it difficult for me to access my farm. I cannot even remember the number of times I have been attacked and threatened. This has made me to reduce the number of times I go to the farm."

The inability to access farms caused by the activities of organized criminal groups in the study area post untold hardships on the community members which further result to stress, people face with stress turn to criminal activities in order to survive [29]. This assertion is in line with Agnew, on general strain theory that was reviewed and adopted in this study that postulated that negative experience can lead to stress, people face with stress can easily be seduce with the situation or effects and turn to crime as an alternative way to survive [30].

It was also discovered that another way organized criminal groups activities affect farming activities is that farm crops are stolen at will. This influences decision to invest in farming. It is a known fact that the quantity of food will be greatly affected if crops are stolen. This affect decision to invest on farming and this poses a great danger on food security. This is because the amount of food that will be available will be small or minimal owing to the theft of crops in the farms by organized criminal groups. This founding is also in line with [31], [32]. This was also corroborated by an IDI respondent who affirmed that:

Recently, I do not even think of how I will invest on farming because it will amount to a waste since after investing activities of organized criminal groups won't let one make adequate use of the crops. In fact, sometimes we are even robbed of the farm inputs so investing in it is a loss. Regrettably, the effect of this unfortunate situation is that food insecurity emerges in such kind of unfortunate situation.

organized criminal groups activities affect farming activities through destruction of farms by cattle [33]. This has negative impact on food production. Food production refers to the amount or quantity of harvest or quantity of food made available. Once cattle destroy farms, the effect on farming activities is largely in the area of food production.

The extortion of farm produce by the organized criminal groups after harvest from the farm causes frustration on the community member.

Also, it was discovered that organized criminal groups activities in many instances enforce levies to many communities in the rural areas. This however has great negative effects on the cost of farming in the affected community [34]. The above finding is in line with.

Mohammed. Argued that Boko Haram terrorist attacks evidenced by abduction and killing of people; destruction of homes, classrooms, health centres, churches, mosques, and farms has

plunged the nation into a persistent state of insecurity. Onuoha reported of the looting of farmland stealing from farms and forcing the local communities to pay for protection fee [35].

the protracted crises between Herders or Pastoralists and Natives of North Central Nigeria, especially in Benue, Nasarawa, Plateau, Kogi, Niger and Abuja have resonated a feeling of insecurity in North central Nigeria. During these ethnic clashes that bother on land usage between Herdsmen and Farmers, many of those that are displaced by these clashes tend to flee to the city centres for protection from warring militias. Akan. As integral outcomes of banditry are plundering, destruction of farms, and residential houses, all of which have rendered thousands of indigenes homeless and in deep poverty [36].

Theoritical Framework

General strain theory

General strain theory is a theory of criminology developed by Robert Agnew in 1992. Agnew recognized that strain theory originally put forward by Robert K Merton was limited in terms of fully conceptualizing the range of possible sources of strain in the society, especially among youth. Merton had hypothesized that innovation occurs when society emphasizes socially desirable and approved goals but at the same time provide inadequate opportunity to achieved these goals with the legitimate institutionalized means [37]. In other words, those members of society, who find themselves in a position of financial strain yet wish to achieve material success, resort to crime in order to achieve socially desirable goals. Agnew supports this assumption but he also believes dealing with youth, there are other factors that incite criminal behaviour. He suggests that negative experiences can lead to stress not only that but also financial induced. Agnew went further to highlight three categories of strain which include the inability to achieve positively valued goals, the removal or threat to remove, positively valued stimuli, to present a threat to one with noxious or negatively valued stimuli. Going by the tenet of general strain theory one says that Boko Haram organized criminal group and banditry in Nigeria and Nasarawa state in particular is not only a function of financial inducement but exist and persist because of other negative experiences [38].

Boko Haram, Fulani militia organized criminal group and banditry flourish because of certain factor that produces strain on them. Just like the argument in Agnew's first category of strain, Boko Haram organized criminal group were not able to achieve positively valued goals instead they try to replace the wider societal goals with their own by creating a new form of society that will be run based on sharia law.

Conclusion

The concern of this paper is to examined the effects of organized criminal groups activities on farming in Nasarawa state Nigeria. The paper established that organized criminal group activities affects farming in the areas of land accessibility, extortion of farm produce, destruction of farm by cattle and imposition of levies on communities' members. These however have great negative effects on the cost of farming in the affected community, Nasarawa state and Nigeria at large

However, the paper recommended that the situation need to be checked, government should address the root cause of organized criminal groups, government should beef up security to control the activities of organized criminal groups, the welfare of citizens should be taken seriously to discourage youth from forming and joining organized criminal groups, there should be a consistent change in security strategic and technical efforts by government, community, private security agencies in tackling insecurity in the society.

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