



Insecurity and Development: Assessing the Impact of Banditry on Rural Communities in Chikun Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

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Abstract

Banditry has emerged as one of the most serious security challenges confronting rural communities in Northwestern Nigeria, particularly in Kaduna State. This study examined the causes of banditry, its socio-economic impacts, and the measures adopted to address the menace in rural communities of Chikun Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria. The study adopted a survey research design and utilized structured questionnaires to collect data from 187 respondents selected from affected rural communities in the study area. Data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including frequency distribution, percentages, and mean scores. The findings revealed that poverty ($M = 4.18$), unemployment among youths ($M = 4.11$), weak security presence in rural communities ($M = 4.06$), proliferation of small arms and light weapons ($M = 4.02$), and poor governance ($M = 3.98$) were the major causes of banditry in the study area. The study further found that banditry has had severe socio-economic consequences, including reduction in agricultural production ($M = 4.31$), loss of lives and property ($M = 4.28$), displacement of residents ($M = 4.24$), decline in household income ($M = 4.19$), and increased poverty levels ($M = 4.15$). In terms of intervention measures, respondents identified increased deployment of security personnel ($M = 4.22$), community vigilance and vigilante groups ($M = 4.18$), intelligence gathering and information sharing ($M = 4.12$), and joint security operations ($M = 4.09$) as the most commonly adopted strategies for combating banditry. The study concluded that banditry has significantly undermined socio-economic development in rural communities of Chikun Local Government Area through its adverse effects on agriculture, livelihoods, security, and community well-being. The study recommends the implementation of sustainable poverty reduction and youth employment programmes, strengthening of security and intelligence mechanisms, and increased investment in rural development initiatives to address the root causes and consequences of banditry.

Keywords: Banditry, Insecurity, Socio-Economic Development, Rural Communities, Chikun Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria.



1.0 Introduction

Insecurity has become one of the greatest obstacles to sustainable development, particularly in developing countries where violent criminal activities undermine peace, economic growth, and human well-being. It weakens state institutions, disrupts livelihoods, discourages investment, and diverts resources from productive sectors to security management (Nwanegbo & Odigbo, 2013). Rural communities are especially vulnerable because of inadequate security infrastructure and limited government presence.

Among the manifestations of insecurity, banditry has emerged as one of the most persistent threats to rural populations. It encompasses organized crimes such as armed robbery, cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom, village raids, destruction of property, and attacks on farming communities (Okoli & Ogayi, 2018). Akinyetun (2021) describes banditry as organized violence employed by armed groups for economic gain, making it both a security and development challenge in regions characterized by poverty, weak governance, and poor security.

Across the Sahel and West Africa, the incidence of banditry has increased due to the proliferation of small arms, weak border control, environmental pressures, and limited state authority (Assanvo et al., 2019). According to the International Crisis Group (2020), these conditions have enabled armed groups to engage in kidnapping, extortion, cattle rustling, and attacks on rural communities, thereby disrupting economic and social activities.

In Nigeria, banditry has become one of the most serious internal security threats, particularly in the North-West. States such as Kaduna, Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto, Kebbi, and Niger have experienced recurrent attacks involving killings, kidnappings, and destruction of property (International Crisis Group, 2020). Data from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED, 2024) indicate that thousands of civilians were killed, abducted, or displaced between 2020 and 2024, with severe consequences for agriculture, trade, and rural livelihoods. The persistence of banditry has been linked to poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, weak security institutions, porous borders, and the proliferation of illicit firearms (Akinyetun, 2021; Okoli & Lenshie, 2023). Beyond the immediate loss of lives and property, bandit attacks have contributed to displacement, food insecurity, declining household income, disruption of



education and healthcare services, and reduced agricultural productivity (International Organization for Migration [IOM], 2024). In Kaduna State, particularly Chikun Local Government Area, frequent incidents of kidnapping, killings, and destruction of property have significantly undermined socio-economic activities and rural development (Kaduna State Government, 2024). Against this background, this study assesses the impact of banditry on rural communities in Chikun Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Despite sustained efforts by the Nigerian government through military operations, joint security task forces, community policing, intelligence gathering, and peacebuilding initiatives, banditry remains a major threat to rural communities across Northwestern Nigeria (International Crisis Group, 2020; Kaduna State Government, 2024). In Chikun Local Government Area of Kaduna State, persistent incidents of kidnapping, killings, cattle rustling, destruction of property, and attacks on farming communities continue to undermine livelihoods and socio-economic development.

Previous studies have examined the causes and consequences of banditry in Northwestern Nigeria. Akinyetun (2021) identified poverty, unemployment, weak governance, and the proliferation of small arms as major drivers of the menace, while Okoli and Lenshie (2023) found that banditry has significantly disrupted agricultural production and rural livelihoods. Similarly, Mustapha and Bashir (2023) reported that recurring attacks in Kaduna State have increased displacement and humanitarian challenges.

Although these studies have advanced understanding of banditry, they largely focus on its causes and security implications at regional or state levels. Limited empirical attention has been given to its socio-economic consequences within rural communities of Chikun Local Government Area, particularly regarding livelihoods, agricultural productivity, income generation, access to social services, and community development. This study addresses this gap by providing localized empirical evidence on how banditry affects socio-economic development in Chikun LGA, thereby offering insights that can support policy formulation and sustainable interventions for rural security and development.



1.2 Research Questions

The research questions are:

- i. What are the causes of banditry in rural communities of Chikun Local Government Area, Kaduna State?
- ii. What are the socio-economic impacts of banditry on rural communities in Chikun Local Government Area, Kaduna State?
- iii. What measures have been adopted to address banditry in rural communities of Chikun Local Government Area, Kaduna State?

1.3 Research Objectives

The research objectives are to:

- i. Determine the causes of banditry in rural communities of Chikun Local Government Area, Kaduna State.
- ii. Assess the socio-economic impacts of banditry on rural communities in Chikun Local Government Area, Kaduna State.
- iii. Evaluate the measures adopted to address banditry in rural communities of Chikun Local Government Area, Kaduna State.

1.4 Research Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no statistically significant relationship between banditry and socio-economic development in rural communities of Chikun Local Government Area, Kaduna State.

1.5 Conceptual Review

Social Media

Social media refers to internet-based platforms that enable users to create, share, and exchange information while interacting in virtual communities. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define it as internet applications built on user-generated content, whereas Kietzmann et al. (2011) emphasize its role in facilitating communication and collaboration. Boyd and Ellison (2007) describe social media as web-based services that allow users to establish profiles and social networks. Platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, X, Instagram, YouTube, and TikTok have



become important channels for communication. In this study, social media refers to digital platforms used for crime reporting, intelligence sharing, public awareness, and security communication in Nigeria.

Internal Security Management

Internal security management refers to the measures adopted by the state to maintain law, order, and public safety while protecting lives and property from internal threats. Nwolise (2006) defines it as efforts to safeguard citizens and institutions against domestic security challenges, while Imobighe (2003) views it as ensuring protection from internal dangers. Adejumo (2011) emphasizes the coordination of policies and institutions to address crime, terrorism, and other security threats. Effective internal security management involves intelligence gathering, law enforcement, crime prevention, and community participation. In this study, it refers to security strategies supported by social media to enhance crime prevention and public safety in Nigeria.

Crime Prevention

Crime prevention encompasses strategies and measures aimed at reducing criminal activities and minimizing opportunities for offending. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2010) defines it as actions addressing the causes of crime and reducing criminal opportunities. Similarly, Lab (2020) views it as efforts to reduce crime, victimization, and fear of crime, while Clarke (1997) emphasizes making crime more difficult and less rewarding. With advances in technology, social media has become an important tool for reporting suspicious activities, disseminating security information, and supporting law enforcement. In this study, crime prevention refers to using social media to detect, deter, and reduce crime in Nigeria.

1.6 Theoretical Review

Human Security Theory

Human Security Theory, popularized by the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1994)**, broadens the concept of security beyond the traditional focus on state sovereignty to emphasize the protection of individuals and communities. The theory argues



that genuine security encompasses economic, food, health, personal, community, environmental, and political security. It maintains that sustainable development cannot be achieved where people experience violence, poverty, displacement, and fear, as threats to human welfare constitute security challenges. Despite its influence, the theory has been criticized for its broad scope and conceptual ambiguity. Paris (2001) argues that its wide coverage makes empirical application difficult, while Newman (2010) contends that it blurs the distinction between security and development issues. Nevertheless, the theory is highly relevant to this study because banditry threatens lives, livelihoods, education, healthcare, and agricultural production in Chikun Local Government Area, thereby undermining socio-economic development and human well-being.

Strain Theory

Strain Theory was developed by **Robert K. Merton (1938)** to explain how societal structures influence criminal behaviour. The theory posits that societies encourage goals such as wealth and success, but unequal access to legitimate opportunities creates frustration or strain among disadvantaged individuals. Consequently, some resort to illegitimate means, including crime, to achieve socially valued objectives. Agnew (1992) expanded the theory by arguing that poverty, unemployment, social exclusion, and other adverse conditions generate pressures that increase the likelihood of criminal behaviour. However, the theory has been criticized for overemphasizing economic deprivation while overlooking cultural, psychological, and individual factors. Vold, Bernard, and Snipes (2002) note that not all deprived individuals become criminals, while Siegel (2018) argues that the theory inadequately explains organized crimes involving collective planning. Despite these criticisms, Strain Theory provides a useful framework for explaining how poverty, unemployment, and marginalization contribute to banditry in rural communities of Northwestern Nigeria.



1.7 Empirical Review

Causes of Banditry in Rural Communities

Studies have identified poverty as a major driver of banditry in rural Nigeria. According to Akinyetun (2021), widespread poverty and poor living conditions have encouraged the emergence and persistence of banditry in Northwestern Nigeria. Limited livelihood opportunities have also pushed many rural youths into criminal activities (Okoli & Lenshie, 2023). Yahaya and Aliyu (2022) further observed that the absence of sustainable income sources has increased involvement in cattle rustling and kidnapping. Youth unemployment has equally expanded the pool of recruits available to armed groups (Suleiman, 2020). The proliferation of small arms and light weapons has strengthened the operational capacity of bandits and intensified violence (International Crisis Group, 2020). Weak security institutions, inadequate logistics, and poor intelligence gathering further create security gaps that enable criminal groups to operate with little resistance (Achumba et al., 2013). These socio-economic and institutional factors collectively sustain banditry in rural communities.

Impact of Banditry on Rural Communities and Socio-Economic Development

Banditry has significantly undermined socio-economic development in rural communities across Northwestern Nigeria. Persistent attacks have forced many farmers to abandon their farmlands, leading to reduced agricultural production and declining household incomes (Okoli & Lenshie, 2023). The Food and Agriculture Organization (2023) also reported that insecurity has become a major threat to food production and food security in northern Nigeria. Violent attacks have displaced thousands of households and disrupted local economic activities (International Organization for Migration, 2024). According to ACLED (2024), banditry has caused widespread deaths and the destruction of homes, farms, and markets. Mustapha and Bashir (2023) further noted that repeated attacks have deepened poverty and weakened social stability. Insecurity has equally disrupted education and healthcare, resulting in school closures and reduced access to health services in affected communities (UNICEF, 2023). These consequences continue to hinder sustainable rural development.



Measures Adopted to Address Banditry and Their Effectiveness

The Nigerian government has adopted several measures to combat banditry, including military operations and joint security task forces. The International Crisis Group (2020) reported that these operations have dismantled several bandit camps and reduced attacks in some locations. Community-based initiatives such as vigilante groups and community policing have also strengthened intelligence gathering and improved local participation in security management (Okoli & Chukwuma, 2022). Danjibo (2021) observed that community security arrangements have enhanced early warning systems and crime prevention in rural communities. Beyond security operations, government and development partners have introduced youth empowerment, vocational training, and poverty reduction programmes to address the root causes of banditry (World Bank, 2024). However, Akinyetun (2021) argues that inadequate funding, poor coordination among security agencies, corruption, and weak implementation have limited the effectiveness of these interventions. Consequently, a comprehensive approach combining security and socio-economic development remains essential for lasting peace.

1.8 Research Methodology

This study adopted a survey research design to assess the impact of banditry on socio-economic development in rural communities of Chikun Local Government Area, Kaduna State. Four rural communities that experienced frequent bandit attacks between 2020 and 2024 were purposively selected based on the prevalence of kidnappings, killings, displacement, and destruction of property. A total of 200 questionnaires were administered to household heads, farmers, traders, artisans, and other adult residents, of which 187 were properly completed and used for analysis. The questionnaire comprised four sections covering respondents' socio-demographic characteristics, causes of banditry, socio-economic impacts, and measures adopted to address the menace. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). Data were analyzed using frequency distributions, percentages, and mean scores to examine the causes, impacts, and mitigation measures of banditry in the study area.



1.9 Results and Discussion of Findings

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 4.1: Response to Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

S/N	Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Gender	Male	116	62.0
		Female	71	38.0
		Total	187	100.0
2	Age (Years)	18–29	48	25.7
		30–39	69	36.9
		40–49	44	23.5
		50–59	18	9.6
		60 and above	8	4.3
		Total	187	100.0
3	Marital Status	Single	55	29.4
		Married	109	58.3
		Divorced/Widowed	23	12.3
		Total	187	100.0
4	Educational Qualification	Primary Education	28	15.0
		Secondary Education	65	34.8
		Tertiary Education	75	40.1
		Postgraduate	19	10.2
		Total	187	100.0
5	Occupation	Farming	74	39.6
		Trading	43	23.0
		Civil Service	28	15.0
		Artisan	25	13.4
		Others	17	9.1



		Total	187	100.0
6	Length of Residence	Below 5 years	22	11.8
		5–10 years	44	23.5
		Above 10 years	121	64.7
		Total	187	100.0

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The findings show that most respondents were male (62.0%) and within the economically active age group of 30–39 years (36.9%), indicating that they were well positioned to provide reliable information on the effects of banditry. A majority were married (58.3%) and had at least secondary education, suggesting adequate understanding of the issues investigated. Farming was the dominant occupation (39.6%), reflecting the agrarian nature of the study area. Furthermore, 64.7% had lived in their communities for over ten years, indicating that they possessed sufficient knowledge and experience of the security situation and socio-economic changes associated with banditry.

Causes of Banditry in Rural Communities of Chikun Local Government Area, Kaduna State

Table 4.2: Descriptive Statistics on the Response to Causes of Banditry in Chikun Local Government Area

Causes of Banditry	N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation
Poverty	187	4.18	0.76
Unemployment among youths	187	4.11	0.81
Weak security presence in rural communities	187	4.06	0.84
Proliferation of small arms and light weapons	187	4.02	0.79
Poor governance	187	3.98	0.88
Rural marginalization and neglect	187	3.94	0.83



Cattle rustling and farmer-herder conflicts	187	3.89	0.91
Porous borders and movement of criminals	187	3.84	0.87
Illiteracy and lack of education	187	3.79	0.85
Drug abuse among youths	187	3.72	0.89
Climate change and competition for resources	187	3.68	0.94
Corruption among security personnel	187	3.63	0.92
Valid N (Listwise)	187		

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The findings indicate that poverty ($M = 4.18$), youth unemployment ($M = 4.11$), and weak security presence ($M = 4.06$) were perceived as the major causes of banditry in Chikun Local Government Area. Respondents also identified the proliferation of small arms, poor governance, and rural marginalization as significant drivers of insecurity. Other factors, including cattle rustling, porous borders, illiteracy, drug abuse, climate-induced resource competition, and corruption among security personnel, all recorded mean scores above the acceptance benchmark of 2.50. Overall, the results suggest that banditry is driven by interconnected socio-economic, governance, environmental, and security challenges.

Socio-Economic Impacts of Banditry on Rural Communities in Chikun Local Government Area, Kaduna State

Table 4.3: Descriptive Statistics on the Response to Socio-Economic Impacts of Banditry in Chikun Local Government Area

Socio-Economic Impact of Banditry	N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation
Reduction in agricultural production	187	4.31	0.72
Loss of lives and property	187	4.28	0.76
Displacement of residents from communities	187	4.24	0.79



Decline in household income	187	4.19	0.81
Increase in poverty levels	187	4.15	0.84
Food insecurity and rising food prices	187	4.12	0.78
Disruption of educational activities	187	4.08	0.86
Reduced access to healthcare services	187	4.01	0.83
Decline in business and commercial activities	187	3.97	0.88
Increased rural–urban migration	187	3.91	0.90
Psychological trauma among residents	187	3.87	0.92
Reduction in community development projects	187	3.82	0.89
Valid N (Listwise)	187		

Source: Field Survey (2026)

The findings reveal that banditry has significantly affected socio-economic development in Chikun Local Government Area. Reduction in agricultural production ($M = 4.31$), loss of lives and property ($M = 4.28$), and displacement of residents ($M = 4.24$) were identified as the most severe impacts. Respondents also agreed that banditry has reduced household income, increased poverty and food insecurity, disrupted education, and limited access to healthcare services. Other notable effects include declining business activities, rural–urban migration, psychological trauma, and reduced community development projects. Overall, the results demonstrate that banditry has adversely affected livelihoods and sustainable rural development.

Measures Adopted to Address Banditry in Rural Communities of Chikun Local Government Area, Kaduna State

Table 4.4: Descriptive Statistics on Response to Measures Adopted to Address Banditry in Chikun Local Government Area

Measures Adopted to Address Banditry	N	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation
Increased deployment of security personnel	187	4.22	0.74



Community vigilance and vigilante groups	187	4.18	0.77
Intelligence gathering and information sharing	187	4.12	0.81
Joint security operations by military and police	187	4.09	0.84
Community policing initiatives	187	4.04	0.86
Establishment of security checkpoints	187	3.98	0.82
Youth empowerment and employment programmes	187	3.95	0.88
Provision of modern security equipment	187	3.91	0.85
Dialogue and peacebuilding initiatives	187	3.84	0.91
Strengthening border and forest surveillance	187	3.79	0.89
Poverty alleviation programmes	187	3.74	0.93
Improvement of rural infrastructure and governance	187	3.68	0.95
Valid N (Listwise)	187		

Source: Field Survey (2025)

The findings indicate that increased deployment of security personnel ($M = 4.22$), community vigilance groups ($M = 4.18$), intelligence gathering ($M = 4.12$), and joint military–police operations ($M = 4.09$) were perceived as the most effective measures adopted to address banditry. Community policing, security checkpoints, youth empowerment programmes, and improved security equipment were also acknowledged as important interventions. Although respondents recognized additional efforts such as peacebuilding, border surveillance, poverty alleviation, and rural development, the continued occurrence of bandit attacks suggests that existing measures require better coordination, sustained implementation, and stronger investment in both security and socio-economic development.

1.9 Discussion

The findings show that banditry in Chikun Local Government Area is driven by socio-economic, governance, and security-related factors. Poverty, unemployment, weak security presence, proliferation of small arms, poor governance, and rural marginalization emerged as



the major causes of banditry. This supports Okoli and Lenshie (2023), who argued that economic deprivation and weak state presence encourage the growth of armed groups. The study also found that banditry has significantly undermined socio-economic development through reduced agricultural production, loss of lives and property, displacement, declining household income, increased poverty, and food insecurity. These findings are consistent with the International Crisis Group (2020), which reported that insecurity has disrupted farming and rural livelihoods across Northern Nigeria. Furthermore, respondents identified increased security deployment, community vigilance, intelligence gathering, and community policing as the major interventions. However, the persistence of attacks indicates that sustainable socio-economic development, alongside improved security operations, is essential for effectively addressing banditry.

1.10 Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This study examined the causes of banditry, its socio-economic impacts, and the measures adopted to address the problem in rural communities of Chikun Local Government Area, Kaduna State. The findings revealed that poverty, unemployment, weak security presence, poor governance, and the proliferation of small arms are the major factors sustaining banditry. The study further established that banditry has adversely affected rural development by reducing agricultural productivity, destroying lives and property, displacing residents, increasing poverty and food insecurity, and disrupting education and healthcare services. Although interventions such as increased security deployment, community policing, intelligence gathering, and vigilante activities have contributed to efforts to curb the menace, banditry remains a major security challenge. The study therefore concludes that lasting peace and sustainable rural development require a comprehensive approach that integrates effective security operations with poverty reduction, employment creation, improved governance, and broader socio-economic development initiatives.



1.11 Recommendations

The study recommends that:

- i. Government at all levels should implement sustainable poverty reduction, youth empowerment, and employment programmes in rural communities of Chikun Local Government Area to address the socio-economic conditions that encourage participation in banditry.
- ii. Security agencies should strengthen intelligence gathering, increase security presence in vulnerable rural communities, and enhance collaboration with community vigilante groups and local leaders to improve crime prevention and response mechanisms.
- iii. Government and development partners should support agricultural recovery, rural infrastructure development, and the rehabilitation of affected communities in order to restore livelihoods, improve food security, and promote socio-economic development in areas affected by banditry.

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