

A Systematic Literature Review: The Socio-Economic Impact of Banditry and Kidnapping in Kaduna State, Nigeria. 2015 – 2025

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Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<i>Over the past decade, armed banditry and kidnapping have posed serious threats to lives, property, and livelihoods in Kaduna State, resulting in fear, displacement, and severe socio-economic disruptions across rural and urban communities. This study explored the prevalence and trends of banditry and kidnapping in Kaduna within a broader national and regional context, while also examining their socio-economic impacts. The analysis was guided by frustration-aggression theory and social disorganization theory, which explain how structural breakdown and unmet needs can fuel violent crime. The study adopted an interpretivist research philosophy with a qualitative design. Secondary data was drawn from credible sources, including policy briefs and reports from UNDP, FAO, International Crisis Group, and Human Rights Watch, alongside books and peer-reviewed journal articles. These materials provided the basis for thematic content analysis, which helped identify recurring patterns, themes, and gaps in the literature. Findings revealed that banditry and kidnapping have worsened poverty, heightened food insecurity, caused school closures, disrupted businesses, and forced large-scale population displacement in Kaduna State. To address these challenges, the study recommends prioritizing interventions in high-risk communities through job creation, vocational training, and access to microcredit for young people. It further highlights the need for stronger legal and institutional frameworks to support local security services, as well as enhanced border patrols to curb the spread of illegal arms and ammunition. Lastly, the study calls for the creation of a consolidated national dataset on banditry and kidnapping to guide policy and intervention.</i> Keywords: Banditry, Kidnapping, Socio-economic.
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Copyright © 2025 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited. Citation: METHODIUS KARFE, DR. ASMAU BENZIES LEO, YUSUF BENEDICT GARBA. (2025). A Systematic Literature Review: The Socio-Economic Impact of Banditry and Kidnapping in Kaduna State, Nigeria. 2015 – 2025. UKR Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies (UKRJMS), volume 1(9), 92-104.	

Introduction

Banditry and kidnapping, once localized threats, have metastasized into global security challenges that transcend national borders and evolve in complexity and scale. Historically associated with conflict zones or politically motivated rebellions, these crimes have increasingly become a dominant form of organized violence, primarily driven by economic incentives (UNODC, 2021). Nations across different continents, from Colombia and Mexico to Afghanistan, have witnessed the devastating capacity of these criminal enterprises to not only inflict immense human suffering but also destabilize national economies, dismantle local trade networks, and trigger mass internal

displacement (González & Rodríguez, 2016). The global kidnapping-for-ransom industry generates billions of dollars annually, creating a powerful illicit economy that directly undermines state authority, particularly in regions where government presence is tenuous and institutional capacity is weak (Bello-Schünemann & Moyer, 2018).

In Africa, this phenomenon presents an equally alarming picture. Countries within the Sahel and central Africa, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Central African Republic, and Somalia have long grappled with armed groups involved in rural banditry, kidnapping, and cattle rustling. These criminal activities have severely

hampered agricultural production, disrupted local economies, and forced entire communities to flee their homes (OECD, 2020). In Somalia, for instance, pirate kidnappings in the 2000s extended to land-based abductions, targeting aid workers and businesspeople. In the DRC, armed militias routinely kidnap civilians for ransom, leading to food insecurity and poverty in rural provinces (Human Rights Watch, 2021). These patterns of violence have found strong roots in West Africa, where porous borders, weak institutions, and ethnic tensions have enabled armed groups to thrive. Countries like Niger, Burkina Faso, and Mali have seen an increase in kidnapping incidents, often linked to bandit groups or extremist insurgents (ECOWAS, 2019).

In Nigeria, the problem has taken a disturbing dimension. What started as isolated cases of abductions in the Niger Delta in the early 2000s has spread across the country. Today, northern Nigeria, particularly the northwest, has become a hotspot for banditry and kidnapping. The crimes are most intense in states such as Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto, and Kaduna, where criminal gangs operate from forested areas, often beyond the reach of security forces (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019). The socio-economic cost of this violence is immense: farmers abandon their lands due to fear of attacks, schools are shut down after mass abductions of students, and road transport is frequently disrupted by kidnappings along highways. Ransom payments have become a booming underground economy, fueling further violence and undermining public confidence in the government.

Kaduna State, located in Nigeria's northwest region, has become one of the worst-affected by these criminal activities. According to the Kaduna State Government's security report, over 3,000 people were kidnapped between 2020 and 2023 alone, with several communities, such as Birnin Gwari, Giwa, Igabi, Chikun, and Kajuru, repeatedly targeted (Kaduna State Government, 2023). Villages like Unguwan Gimbiya, Gwagwada, Kakau, and Kuriga have experienced attacks that led to loss of lives, massive displacement, destruction of farmlands, and school closures. For instance, the abduction of over 280 students in Kuriga in March 2024 brought global attention to the depth of insecurity in the region (Amnesty International, 2024). Economic activities, particularly farming and petty trading, have drastically declined in affected communities as residents flee to safer areas, leading to rising unemployment and food insecurity. This systematic review is therefore dedicated to examining the profound and multi-dimensional socio-economic consequences of this unabating insecurity in Kaduna State.

Statement of the Research Problem

Over the past decade, Kaduna State in Nigeria has witnessed an alarming rise in incidents of banditry and

kidnapping, with devastating consequences on its socio-economic development. These security threats have not only led to significant loss of lives and properties but have also resulted in the displacement of thousands of residents, disrupted agricultural activities, hindered education, and strained local economies. The persistent insecurity has particularly affected rural communities where farming and small-scale trading, which are the mainstay of livelihoods, have become dangerous and unsustainable (International Crisis Group, 2020).

While national and state governments have implemented various security interventions, such as deploying military and police forces to high-risk areas, these efforts have not yielded lasting results. Instead, the violence has spread to previously safe zones, undermining economic stability and weakening social trust. According to Amnesty International (2021), the trauma from repeated attacks and abductions has left deep psychological scars on victims and community members, further affecting productivity and societal cohesion.

Existing literature on insecurity in Nigeria has largely focused on Boko Haram insurgency in the Northeast, with limited comprehensive attention paid to banditry and kidnapping in the Northwest, particularly in Kaduna State. Although some studies have examined the causes and patterns of these crimes (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019), there is insufficient empirical research on how these insecurities specifically impact the socio-economic well-being of local populations over time. There is also a lack of longitudinal analysis capturing the trend and implications of these criminal activities from 2015 to 2025.

This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by providing a detailed examination of the socio-economic impact of banditry and kidnapping in Kaduna State over a ten-year period. It will assess not only the economic losses but also the broader effects on education, agriculture, social infrastructure, and livelihoods. By adopting a holistic and evidence-based approach, the study will offer insights that can inform policy and community-level responses.

Aim and Objectives of the Study

The aim of the study is to critically examine the socio-economic impact of banditry and kidnapping in Kaduna State, Nigeria, between 2015 and 2025, by analyzing their prevalence, root causes, effects on development, and the effectiveness of existing interventions.

The objectives of the study include the following:

1. To explore the prevalence and trends of banditry and kidnapping in Kaduna State within a broader national or regional context.
2. To examine the socio-economic impact of banditry and kidnapping in Kaduna State.

3. To identify and analyze the causes of banditry and kidnapping in Kaduna State.
4. To evaluate the conceptual frameworks on the socio-economic implications of insecurity in Northern Nigeria.

Methodology

This study is guided by an interpretivist research philosophy, which is qualitative in nature. The interpretivist approach is suitable because the focus is on how these security challenges shape socio-economic realities in Kaduna State. By examining multiple perspectives from existing studies, reports, and policy documents, this philosophy helps capture the complexity of poverty, displacement, and livelihood collapse linked to insecurity.

Secondary data source from credible institutions including Policy briefs and reports from UNDP, FAO, International Crisis Group, and Human Rights Watch were also consulted. Books and peer-reviewed journal articles provided historical and regional perspectives on the socio-economic impact of banditry and kidnapping were consulted. These materials formed the evidence base for identifying key themes and drawing conclusions. Thematic content analysis was used to identify key patterns, gaps and themes from previously published works.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted both frustration-Aggression theory and Social Disorganization theory, which are considered to be relevant to this research.

Frustration-Aggression Theory, originally proposed by John Dollard et al. (1939) and further expanded by Leonard Berkowitz (1989). The theory argues that aggression is often the result of frustration caused by blocked goals or unmet needs. In the context of Kaduna State, rising unemployment, poverty, inequality, and lack of access to basic services may generate frustrations that fuel violent crimes like banditry and kidnapping. Many perpetrators in Northern Nigeria are reportedly young men with limited education or economic opportunities, aligning with the idea that socio-economic frustration can result in aggression against others or society (Aghedo & Osumah, 2012). This theory helps explain how structural socio-economic conditions such as neglect, corruption, and marginalization create a fertile ground for violent acts. It also provides insight into why certain areas with chronic poverty and weak governance tend to experience more security challenges. Thus, the Frustration-Aggression Theory is relevant in analyzing how socio-economic factors escalate insecurity in Kaduna State.

Critique: Frustration-Aggression Theory has been criticized for being too simplistic and psychological in its

approach. Ted Robert Gurr (1970) argued that not all frustration leads to aggression, he therefore, critique the theory for its lack of attention to political, social, and cultural motivation. Critics also note it ignores the role of rational planning in crimes like kidnapping and organized banditry (Berkowitz, 1989; Gurr, 1970).

While Social Disorganization Theory, developed by Clifford R. Shaw and Henry D. McKay (1942). This theory suggests that crime rates are higher in communities with weak social institutions, poor housing, economic deprivation, and low social cohesion. In Kaduna State, especially in rural and semi-urban areas affected by banditry, weakened community structures and a lack of government presence have contributed to insecurity and lawlessness. The breakdown of traditional authority, inadequate policing, and distrust in the justice system provide an enabling environment for criminal networks to thrive (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019). Social Disorganization Theory helps us understand how environmental and institutional weaknesses contribute to the rise and persistence of banditry and kidnapping.

Critique: Social Disorganization Theory is often criticized for overemphasizing environmental factors and underestimating personal agency and cultural values. Robert Sampson (1993) he notes that Social Disorganization Theory may overlook cultural factors and individual agency in crime. It also tends to generalize urban poverty without considering resilience or community efforts at control.

Thematic Review of Literature

Prevalence and Trends of Banditry and Kidnapping in Kaduna State within a Broader National and Regional Context

Banditry and kidnapping for profit have long historical roots. In 19th-century Europe, especially in southern Italy, brigandage emerged prominently after Italian unification. Dispossessed peasants, ex-soldiers and displaced rural workers formed bands that carried out raids, extortion and kidnappings of wealthy landowners for ransom (Ginsborg, 1990). These activities thrived amid weak state presence, land reforms and social inequality. In Asia, similar patterns appeared in border zones of Imperial China and British India: armed groups in remote or poorly governed areas abducted travelers or officials, exploiting geographic isolation and social fragmentation (Jones & Smith, 2004). Common drivers globally were, weak governance or state absence in rural or border regions; poverty, unemployment and landlessness; proliferation of small arms; and lucrative ransom markets. Banditry was often seasonal or opportunistic, but organized groups could sustain kidnapping economies over years when ransom demand

rose steadily (Collins, 2015). However, The Italian government declared a state of siege and deployed tens of thousands of troops to the south to suppress brigands. Between 1861–1865, over 100,000 soldiers were mobilized in what became known as the “war on brigandage” (Clark, 1984). This is in contrast to a present-day troop capacity deployed for a fight against insecurity in region in Nigeria. Figure 1 below clearly justified this argument.

In Africa, colonial and post-colonial state formation left many regions—especially in the Sahel and forest borders under-policed. Banditry and kidnapping, initially local and informal, escalated into organized crime in areas where cattle theft, mining and ransom became viable incomes (Olaniyan & Aliyu, 2016). Arms proliferation after Libyan collapse in 2011 magnified these trends across Sahel and West Africa (Global Initiative, 2023; The Guardian, 2024).

In West Africa Mali, Niger, Burkina Faso and Nigeria have seen a sharp rise in bandit-driven abductions and rustling. In the Chad–Cameroon–CAR “triangle of death,” ransoms rose from 43 million CFA in 2022 to 52 million CFA in 2023, as criminal networks combined cattle theft, kidnapping and arms trafficking (The Guardian, 2024).

Banditry in Nigeria, particularly in the northwest and north-central regions, intensified after 2011. Research by Okoli and Ugwu (2019) documents how ungoverned forest zones, border porosity and high youth unemployment enabled gangs to grow into territorial enclaves. ACLED data show over 2,600 civilian deaths in 2021 from bandit violence, and hundreds of thousands displaced across states like Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna and Niger (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019; ACLED in Banditry & Captive Population Syndrome, 2024). Kidnapping evolved into a systematic revenue stream: between 2011 and 2020, Nigerians paid at least ₦18 billion in ransoms (Aleyomi and Olajubu, 2024).

Livelihoods suffered dramatically, Faruk and Abdullahi (2022) document in Katsina State how agriculture, schooling, market activity and food security collapsed in affected local governments, with rising unemployment and poverty. Women, especially, bore disproportionate socio-economic costs in frontier LGAs (Abdul rasheed & Mumuni, 2024).

Kaduna was among the earliest and most severely affected states. Mass abductions from schools such as the April 2021 Greenfield University kidnapping of 20 students and the July 2021 Bethel Baptist Secondary School kidnapping of 140 students have highlighted bandit group boldness and ransom-driven targeting (AP News, 2025; search source on Greenfield University). The Kuriga School kidnapping in March 2024 involved over 200 pupils, with eventual releases of 130 hostages after ransom arrangements (Financial Times, 2024).

Several factors explain the persistence, Kaduna’s large forested, remote terrains and porous borders create safe havens, bandit groups have developed strong loyalty networks with access to gold and cattle revenues, enabling financing of arms and operations (Banditry & Captive Population Syndrome, 2024). Ransoms create powerful incentives mass abductions yield large returns, schools are soft targets, and weak law enforcement enables continued profitability.

States have deployed security forces, formed local vigilante units, declared amnesties, banned motorcycles, and negotiated with bandit leaders. However, Ndubuisi et al. (2024) criticize Nigerian security responses as reactionary, fragmented, poorly funded, and undermined by corruption. Amnesty deals often reintegrated bandits who returned to crime; anti-motorcycle bans disrupted rural transport but failed to restrict movement through bush paths. Economic and social root causes youth unemployment, poverty, land scarcity remains unaddressed (Mbam, Jacob & Amiara, 2024).

Socio-Economic Implication of Insecurity in Northern Nigerian

Insecurity in Northern Nigeria spanning banditry, kidnappings, farmer-herder clashes, and insurgency is commonly interpreted through the lens of human security, which places individuals’ safety at the centre of development analysis. Ioryue et al. (2024) applied this framework to explore how violent conflict disrupts agricultural livelihoods, food access, and economic welfare in states like Benue, analogous to Kaduna State (Ioryue et al., 2024). Similarly, studies of rural banditry in Northern Nigeria highlight economic deprivation, unemployment, and identity-based tensions as core drivers of insecurity (Mikail et al., 2025). These frameworks help conceptualize how poverty, youth marginalization, and inter-communal identity dynamics fuel violence and inhibit socio-economic development.

Empirical literature consistently shows strong negative socio-economic impacts of insecurity in Northern Nigeria. For example, Birat Usman (2022) found that 96.4 percent of insecurity incidents in Igabi LGA were tied to banditry and kidnappings, resulting in food shortages, sharp increases in food prices, and extreme poverty among farmers (66.3 percent in extreme poverty) (Usman, 2022). Cross-regional studies of North-West Nigeria indicate that violent bandit encounters disrupt agriculture, displace communities, halt weekly markets, and reduce access to social services particularly affecting Chikun and Igabi areas of Kaduna (Cross-border migration, banditry & development study, 2024). At the national level, Yusuf and Mohd (2022) used time-series analysis to demonstrate that insecurity depresses foreign direct investment, government

revenue, employment, and capital formation thereby retarding growth and deepening poverty (Yusuf & Mohd, 2022). These findings align with qualitative evidence that widespread kidnappings (e.g. of schoolchildren) have disrupted educational attainment, reduced school enrolment rates, and created long-term human capital deficits in Northern Nigeria (AP, 2024).

Policy-oriented analyses emphasize that military responses alone are insufficient. Air Force Institute of Technology researchers (Mikail et al., 2025) argue for community policing and grassroots intelligence to protect rural dwellers. Reports by the Africa Center and others highlight that Kaduna's high unemployment (40 percent) and poverty (44 percent below national poverty line) facilitate criminal recruitment, and that violence around land access and grazing rights is exacerbated by governance failures over environmental policy (Africa Center, 2024). The Kafanchan Peace Declaration (2016) exemplifies multi-stakeholder community dialogue mechanisms, encouraging local and state governments to invest in grazing infrastructure, school security, and conflict-prevention frameworks (Kafanchan Declaration, 2016). A holistic policy view emerging from this literature stresses that inclusive governance, livelihood diversification, education continuity, social capital building, and resilience-focused development not just force is crucial to restoring stability and enabling sustainable growth in fragile regions like Kaduna.

Causes of Banditry and Kidnapping in Kaduna State

In recent years, scholars have consistently identified poverty, unemployment, economic hardship, and weak governance as key-root causes of banditry and kidnapping in Nigeria's North-West region. Onabanjo and Kugbayi (2024) link poor governance and endemic poverty with the upsurge of armed banditry across rural Nigeria. Baduku (2024) likewise stresses that kidnapping in Nigeria is largely driven by socioeconomic deprivation and greed individuals motivated by material gain amid poverty and joblessness. Together, these studies argue that without improving governance and expanding economic opportunity, banditry remains an economically rational activity for disenfranchised youth.

Abdussalam et al. (2022) document that banditry significantly disrupted rural livelihoods in Kaduna, halting weekly markets, displacing farmers, and curtailing access to social services effects tied directly to pervasive poverty and unemployment. Yunusa and Dawakin Tofa's (2024) sociological investigation among 1,000 residents across affected communities finds that drug abuse and peer influence correlate strongly with youth involvement in armed banditry: factor loadings of 0.92 and 0.91 respectively, and governance lapses such as weakened

traditional institutions score 0.79. A geospatial analysis of kidnapping in Igabi LGA reveals a rising trend about 44.3 additional kidnapping cases per year and identifies the leading social causes as lack of education, religious/ethnic intolerance, poverty/unemployment, and infrastructural decay. Together, these state-level data provide clear statistical evidence linking poverty, governance failures, education gaps, and institutional vacuum to banditry in Kaduna.

Some scholars caution against overly simplistic causality. For example, wider structural factors such as cross-border porosity and environmental degradation also play enabling roles: porous borders facilitate arms smuggling and movement of criminal groups, while desertification and farmer-herder conflict widen competition for scarce resources (Okorie et al., 2023; Erundu & Nwakanma, 2018; Garba, 2021). These elements suggest that even where poverty is addressed, geopolitical environment and ecological stress may sustain violence.

Despite heavy security deployment, many authors note that military and reactive strategies alone have had limited success, partly because they ignore root socioeconomic drivers. Nchom (2024) and Ojem et al. (2024) argue that heavy-handed tactics without community engagement and development planning explain persistent insecurity in Southern Kaduna and neighbouring areas. This critique implies that unless banditry is addressed in conjunction with poverty reduction, education, infrastructure, and inter-communal dialogue, arrests or force will offer short-lived impact.

Nevertheless, proponents of the socioeconomic thesis answer that holistic interventions combining governance reform, youth employment, education, local dialogue, and poverty alleviation have shown promise. Onabanjo and Kugbayi (2024) urge governance reforms and poverty reduction are central to national development and security policy.

The literature supports a multi-causal model: in Kaduna State and North-West Nigeria, poverty, unemployment, education exclusion, weak governance, drug abuse, and peer influence function as primary drivers of youth participation in kidnapping and banditry. Empirical trends in Kaduna especially Igabi's annual rise of 44 cases/year underscore the urgency. But cross-border dynamics and environmental stressors play enabling roles, and critiques of militarized approaches remind policymakers that only integrated socio-economic strategies are likely to generate durable peace.

Socio-Economic Impact of Banditry and Kidnapping in Kaduna State

Banditry and kidnapping inflict major economic damage. Researchers in Katsina-Ala report that commercial and agricultural activities are severely disrupted markets shut down, farmers abandon their fields, and rural families migrate away, leading to widespread loss of income and decrease in food production (Usu et al., 2024). In Zamfara and neighboring states, FAO-related data show food production fell by over 40 % due to violence and cattle rustling, worsening food insecurity and diminishing livelihoods (Hendrix & Brinkman, 2020; FAO, 2022). Furthermore, kidnapping generates illicit revenues for perpetrators but drains victim families and communities ransom payments deplete savings and divert funds away from investments, reducing agricultural output and discouraging investment in these regions (Sani & Mohammed, 2025). In Benue State, insecurity led to statistically significant declines in crop and livestock output: a 1 % rise in insecurity correlates with 0.211 % and 0.311 % reductions in crop and livestock yields, respectively (Ijirshar et al., 2025).

Abdussalam, Olayiwola & Akinniyi-Duyile (2022) stated suspension of weekly markets, abandonment of farms, and severe loss of rural income between 2016 and 2021. Their regression analysis demonstrated that insecurity significantly stunted rural economic growth in the state (Abdussalam et al., 2022). Further, business leaders confirm that bandit fear has caused widespread abandonment of farmland in Birnin Gwari, Giwa, and Chikun LGAs, disrupting food supply chains and raising food prices (Vanguard, 2021). Farmers have reportedly paid ₦70,000 ₦100,000 “fees” to bandits just to access their land, a cost often greater than crop profit on the other hand, Studies show schools are regularly attacked, academic calendars suspended, and teachers and students displaced, undermining educational systems in affected states (Omuya, 2023). UNICEF warns that following mass abductions including over 780 children in 2021 more than one million children may remain out of school due to insecurity (Africa at LSE, 2022). Women and girls suffer particularly: many are abducted, raped, or forced into exploitative situations when communities refuse to pay “levies,” and women’s livelihood sources markets and farms are frequently raided (Africa at LSE, 2022).

In Chikun LGA, studies reveal that victims and families experience long absences, dropouts, and reduced academic performance; psychological trauma undermines educational continuity (Matthias, Usman & Ishaya, 2024). School calendars are frequently interrupted, and enrolment declines as parents fear sending children to school (Ekene, 2015 as cited in Ekene et al., 2022). Most strikingly, over 287 pupils were abducted in March 2024 from Kuriga,

Kaduna one of the worst mass kidnappings since Chibok instilling new fear among parents and disrupting schooling.

On one hand, scholars argue that root causes such as poverty, youth unemployment, drug abuse, weak institutions and governance failures drive youth into banditry in Kaduna (Yunusa & Dawakin Tofa, 2024). Indeed, Kaduna Governor affirms that over 85 % of North-West residents are uneducated or financially excluded, fueling criminal recruitment (Sabi, 2024). Critics, however, caution against reducing banditry solely to economic motives; some contend that heavy reliance on non-kinetic or dialogue approaches may appear “soft on crime” and delay urgent security responses (The Nation editorial, 2024). They argue that immediate military or police action remains necessary for protecting lives and restoring order.

The trauma of abduction and violence extends deeply into psychological wellbeing. A qualitative study of female undergraduates in Zamfara State who’d survived captivity found symptoms of PTSD, depression, anxiety, memory loss, poor concentration, social alienation, and stigma, all of which impeded reintegration and academic performance (Isma’il & Ibrahim, 2024). Another broader survey of students across multiple states found that over 65 % suffered concentration problems and disruptions to schoolwork, while 70 % experienced heightened anxiety and fear, significantly undermining learning and motivation (Damilola & Omojemite, 2025)

Interventions and Responses to Banditry and Kidnapping in Nigeria

Banditry and kidnapping have become persistent threats to security and development in Nigeria, prompting a range of interventions by government and non-government actors. Federal responses include military operations such as Operation Harbin Kunama, Operation Safe Haven, and Operation Puff Adder, which are deployed in affected northern states like Zamfara, Katsina, Niger, and Kaduna (ACLED, 2023). These operations aim to dismantle armed groups, restore public confidence, and secure rural communities. Additionally, the Nigerian Police Force has intensified intelligence gathering and deployed special tactical squads to flashpoints, while the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) supports community protection initiatives (CLEEN Foundation, 2021). At the policy level, the National Security Strategy (2019) emphasizes collaboration among security agencies, improved border surveillance, and addressing root causes like poverty and unemployment.

Some states have also implemented localized strategies. In Zamfara and Katsina, peace dialogues and amnesty programmes were initiated to disarm repentant bandits,

although with mixed results due to lack of coordination and trust (Okoli & Ugwu, 2020). Niger State has adopted the Community Policing model, empowering vigilante groups under legal frameworks. Meanwhile, Borno and Yobe though more known for insurgency have adapted multi-sectoral responses involving youth empowerment and psychological support for victims of violence, helping reduce community vulnerability (International Crisis Group, 2021). Despite these measures, operational challenges like poor funding, weak intelligence networks, and corruption limit the impact of these interventions across the northern region.

Kaduna State remains one of the worst-hit by banditry and kidnapping, especially in local government areas like Birnin Gwari, Giwa, and Chikun. The state government launched the *Kaduna State Security Operations Room* to monitor security activities in real-time and support rapid response (Kaduna State Government, 2022). Also, Operation Forest Sanity, launched in 2022, targets criminal hideouts in forests bordering Kaduna, Katsina, and Niger states. However, despite such efforts, attacks continue due to porous forest routes, inadequate coordination among security forces, and the absence of strong community engagement. For meaningful progress, there is a need to strengthen civilian-military cooperation and integrate development-oriented strategies that address local grievances (ACLED, 2023; CLEEN Foundation, 2021).

Gaps in the Literature

Most publications document incident trends and humanitarian impacts at national or zonal level, but give limited Kaduna-specific, socio-economic estimation for 2015–2025. Data on kidnappings are also incomplete: several studies note systematic under-reporting, making it hard to quantify household losses, market disruptions, or longer-run poverty effects in Kaduna. Evidence on education shocks often highlights headline abductions, yet there is little rigorous follow-up on enrollment, learning loss, or costs for Kaduna households. Program reports describe peacebuilding activities, but few provide robust impact evaluations linking security responses to socio-economic recovery. Finally, health and mental-health consequences are discussed qualitatively, with limited Kaduna-level prevalence data tied to insecurity access constraints.

This review filled these gaps by synthesizing Kaduna-specific evidence across 2015–2025 from peer-reviewed work, ACLED-based analyses, and credible reports to build a coherent socio-economic picture; triangulating outcomes food security, displacement, education, and household finance across sources to infer plausible magnitudes despite under-reporting; mapping sub-state hotspots and pathways (agriculture, markets, schooling, health access); and

proposing a transparent indicator set and research agenda for future primary studies focused on Kaduna.

Thematic Analysis of the Findings from the Literature Review

Theme 1: Agricultural Disruption and Livelihood Collapse

A major theme that emerges strongly from the literature is the severe disruption of agricultural activities and rural livelihoods. Kaduna State, particularly Birnin Gwari and Giwa local government areas, has witnessed a sharp decline in farming output due to persistent attacks by armed groups (UNDP, 2023). Farmers are unable to access their lands for cultivation and harvest, and insecurity along roads has cut off markets for selling produce. These disruptions have led to higher food prices, increased rural poverty, and a growing dependency on humanitarian assistance. The situation is not unique to Kaduna, as similar patterns are observed in Zamfara and Katsina states, pointing to a regional collapse in agrarian productivity (FAO, 2022). Moreover, the loss of access to grazing fields and trade routes has significantly impacted livestock farming, leading to livelihood losses for herders and traders alike.

Theme 2: Internal Displacement and Urban Strain

Another important theme is forced displacement and the resulting social and economic strain on urban areas. Thousands of rural dwellers have fled their homes to escape attacks and kidnappings, leading to rising populations in urban slums and informal settlements. Displacement often comes with the loss of property, farmland, and access to social services, placing an extra burden on receiving communities. The influx of displaced persons also overstretchers basic infrastructure and worsens unemployment, especially among youth who were previously engaged in farming or local businesses. This pattern of internal displacement contributes to urban insecurity, youth vulnerability, and increased social inequality (UNDP, 2023).

Theme 3: Social Breakdown and Erosion of Communal Trust

From the literature it was revealed that Banditry has caused deep inter-communal clashes, especially between herders and farmers, and between local vigilante groups and suspected collaborators. The rise in kidnappings for ransom has led to widespread fear and distrust, affecting social cohesion (International Crisis Group, 2021). Many schools, especially in rural Kaduna, have shut down due to repeated abductions, as seen in the 2021 Afaka and Bethel Baptist incidents, which disrupted education for thousands of students (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Additionally, many families are forced to sell assets or incur debts to pay ransoms, thereby worsening household poverty and inequality.

Theme 4: Household Poverty and Economic Burden

A closely related theme is the increasing financial pressure on households. Families of kidnapped victims often resort to selling land, withdrawing children from school, or taking high-interest loans to pay ransoms. This not only deepens existing poverty but also reduces household resilience to future shocks. For low-income households, such sudden costs mean losing long-term assets and falling into chronic poverty. Banditry also discourages both local and foreign investment in agriculture and rural industries, further undercutting efforts for economic recovery and inclusive development (International Crisis Group, 2021).

Theme 5: Psychological Trauma and Mental Health Crisis

The long-term psychological effects of banditry form a significant and often under-reported theme. Survivors, especially women and children, report experiencing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression (UNDP, 2023). These mental health burdens are worsened by the lack of psychosocial support, particularly in rural

areas of Kaduna where healthcare facilities are limited or non-existent. As communities live under constant fear, many individuals experience reduced productivity, avoidance of public spaces, and poor school attendance. The mental scars left behind not only affect individual well-being but also hinder community healing and national development.

Theme 6: Security Gaps and Weak Governance

An additional and crucial theme found across the literature is the failure of governance and inadequate security responses. Many affected communities’ express frustration with delayed or absent state interventions. The inability of security forces to protect rural areas or respond promptly to attacks has led to a loss of trust in government institutions. This vacuum is sometimes filled by non-state actors, including vigilante groups and criminal gangs, which further complicates the security landscape and promotes cycles of violence (International Crisis Group, 2021). Weak institutional presence also limits efforts at reconstruction, reconciliation, and reintegration for displaced persons and affected communities.

Table 1: Finding from the Comparative Troop Deployment – Italy (1861–65) vs. Nigeria (Contemporary)

Country / Context	Troop Strength	Scope of Operation	Analytical Note	Source(s)
Italy’s Anti-Brigandage Campaign (1861–1865)	120,000 troops (deployed in Southern Italy)	A nationwide and centralized military campaign aimed at crushing post-unification brigandage in Southern Italy	Highly focused, large-scale mobilization solely dedicated to anti-brigandage efforts. Coordinated state response in a single region over multiple years.	Wikipedia (accessed 2025)
Typical Nigerian Army Division	10,000–15,000 troops (range: 7,000–22,000)	Divisional structure applies to general national defense and operations. Only a portion of these forces are allocated to internal security per division.	Nigerian divisions are not deployed wholly; a fraction supports internal operations. Deployment is not solely focused on anti-banditry.	MilitaryJist, GlobalSecurity.org, NigerianFinder
Nigeria’s Internal Security Operations (2025)	50,000+ troops (combined total)	Multi-regional deployment: Northeast (Boko Haram/ISWAP), Southeast (IPOB), Northwest (Banditry), South-South (Oil theft)	Security personnel are spread thin across multiple threat zones. Banditry receives partial attention; there is no dedicated large-scale force for one threat.	allAfrica.com; Independent Nigeria; Premium Times (COAS Lagbaja Interview, Dec. 26, 2025)

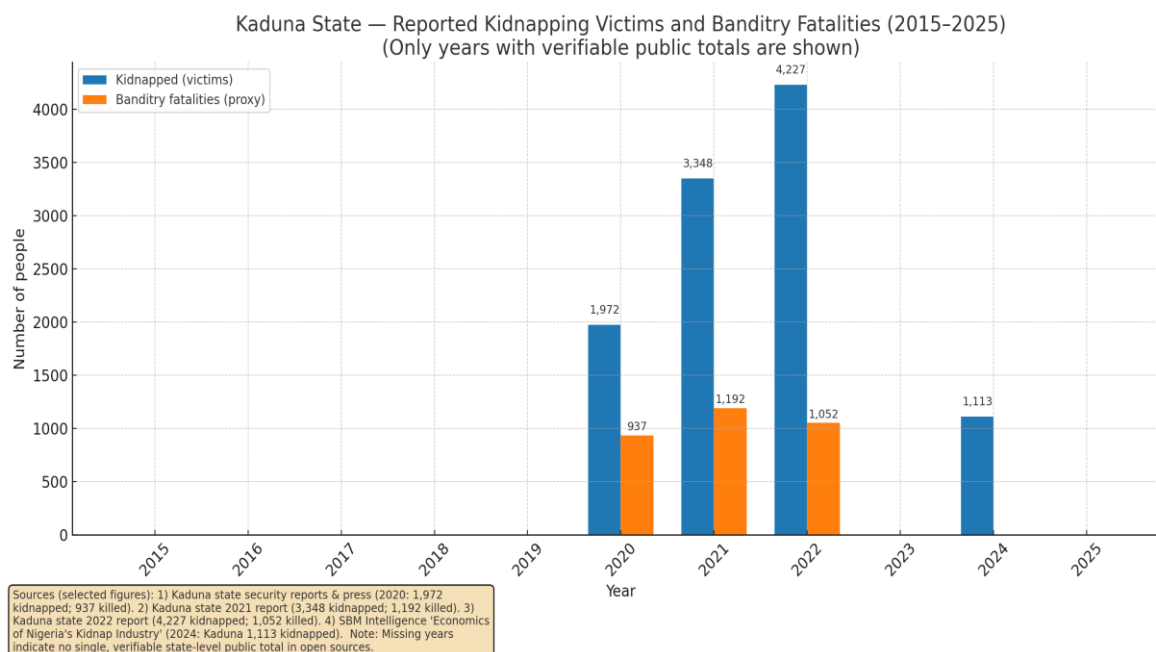
The comparison between Italy’s anti-brigandage campaign (1861–1865) and Nigeria’s contemporary internal security operations reveals a significant scale and strategic gap. Italy deployed over 120,000 troops in a concentrated, state-backed military campaign focused solely on suppressing brigandage in Southern Italy. This singular focus enabled a coordinated and intensive operation within a clearly defined

geographical area. By contrast, Nigeria’s internal security efforts, though involving over 50,000 troops, are dispersed across multiple conflict zones, including terrorism in the Northeast, separatist movements in the Southeast, and oil theft in the South-South. Banditry in the Northwest receives only a fraction of these forces, meaning there is no dedicated or unified military response to the crisis.

Strategically, Italy's success was rooted in centralized planning, clear objectives, and the deployment of maximum force to a single issue. Nigeria's approach, however, is fragmented and multitargeted, with different military units addressing various internal threats simultaneously. This diffusion of resources weakens operational efficiency and hampers the ability to decisively combat banditry.

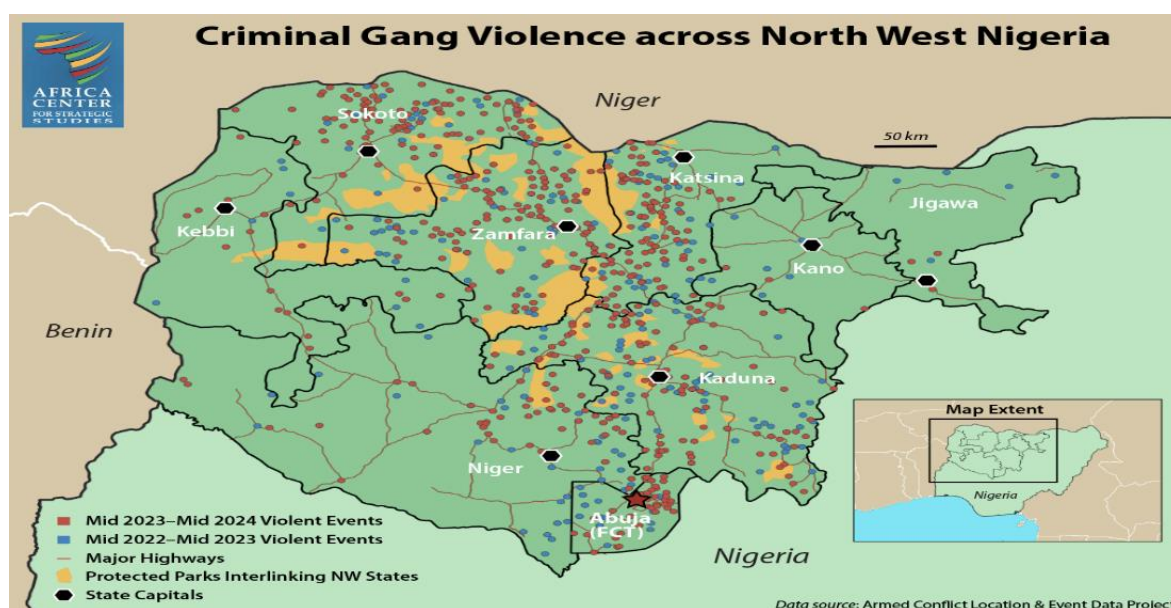
Moreover, the absence of a dedicated command structure for anti-banditry operations limits Nigeria's capacity to replicate Italy's effectiveness. Bridging this gap would require Nigeria to adopt a focused, well-resourced, and territorially concentrated strategy, prioritizing regions most affected by banditry, such as Kaduna, Zamfara, and Katsina (table 1).

Figure 1: reported incidents of banditry and kidnapping in kaduna state.



Kaduna State's available public totals show a sharp escalation in kidnappings and deadly bandit attacks from 2020 through 2022: kidnapped victims rose from 1,972 in 2020 to 4,227 in 2022, while reported fatalities from banditry remained high (937 in 2020; 1,192 in 2021; 1,052 in 2022). SBM Intelligence's 2024 review confirms continued high kidnapping levels (1,113 victims in Kaduna during the year-under-review). Gaps in the timeline reflect the absence of a consistent, official annual dataset; the chart therefore presents a verified, lower-bound picture of the crisis rather than a full, continuous series (**figure 1**).

Figure 2: Map of Hotspots of Banditry and Kidnapping Across North Western Nigeria



The North-West of Nigeria (the seven states: Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, Zamfara) has become the national epicentre of banditry-related kidnappings since roughly 2019. ACLED records show a strong, steady rise in kidnapping events across the region. Primary hotspots are Zamfara, Katsina and Kaduna, these three states account for the majority of fatalities and large-scale abductions in the region. Multiple analyses and maps (ACLED, Africa Center, UNIDIR, GI-TOC) identify those states as the worst-affected (figure 2).

Recommendations and Conclusion

The study recommends that, restoring agricultural livelihoods should be a top priority. Many farming and herding communities have lost access to their land and markets (FAO, 2022). Government and humanitarian agencies should work together to provide security escorts during planting and harvest seasons, while also supporting farmers with improved seedlings, tools, and livestock restocking programs. This will not only improve food security but also reduce rural poverty.

Second, support for displaced persons is urgent. Displacement has worsened urban poverty and stretched services. Providing housing, access to schools, healthcare, and vocational training for displaced families can ease pressure on host communities and help young people rebuild their lives.

Third, tackling household poverty caused by ransom payments requires stronger safety nets. Micro-credit schemes, livelihood grants, and social protection programs can help families recover lost assets and avoid long-term debt traps.

Fourth, attention must be given to the hidden crisis of mental health. Expanding psychosocial support through community health centers and mobile clinics will help survivors and families cope with trauma and restore productivity.

Finally, rebuilding trust in governance is crucial. Strengthening security presence in rural areas, ensuring faster response to attacks, and involving local leaders in peacebuilding can help restore confidence. A multi-sector approach that combines security, livelihood recovery, and social services offers the best path toward reducing the socio-economic burden of banditry and kidnapping in Kaduna State. It further highlights the need for stronger legal and institutional frameworks to support local security services, as well as enhanced border patrols to curb the spread of illegal arms and ammunition. Lastly, the study calls for the creation of a consolidated national dataset on banditry and kidnapping to guide policy and intervention.

Conclusion

In summary, banditry and kidnapping have caused serious socio-economic damage in Kaduna State. Farming and herding activities have collapsed, pushing many households into poverty and food insecurity (UNDP, 2023; FAO, 2022). Displacement has strained urban services and worsened unemployment, especially among youth (UNDP, 2023). Families are further impoverished by ransom payments, often losing long-term assets (International Crisis Group, 2021). Beyond the economic toll, trauma and fear continue to weaken social ties and productivity. Addressing these challenges requires urgent action to restore livelihoods, strengthen governance, and support affected communities to rebuild resilience.

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