
Research

Socio-Economic Factors: The key drivers of armed banditry in Katsina State, Nigeria (2019-2024)

Dr. Abdulkadir Sale¹, Aminu Usman Tunau², Benjamin Isah³

¹Department of Political Science, Gombe State University, Nigeria.

²Department of Political Science, Gombe State University, Nigeria.

³Department of Political Science And Administration, North-Eastern University, Gombe, Nigeria.

Correspondence should be addressed to: abdulkadir.saleh@gsu.edu.ng

Abstract: This study examines the socio-economic drivers of armed banditry in Katsina State, Nigeria, between 2019 and 2024, employing a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design that integrates quantitative surveys of 394 respondents with qualitative interviews of 27 key informants. Grounded in the frustration-aggression theoretical framework, the research investigates how structural socio-economic conditions fuel recruitment into bandit groups and perpetuate rural insecurity. Findings reveal overwhelming consensus among affected communities that poverty (82.0%), youth unemployment (83.5%), educational deprivation (79.2%), corruption among government and security officials (85.0%), and weak policing and law enforcement capacity (85.2%) constitute primary drivers of armed banditry. The study identifies a self-reinforcing cycle wherein structural frustration produces violent adaptation, which subsequently destroys livelihoods and creates secondary frustration that perpetuates the conflict. Demographic analysis indicates that young adults aged 18–35 years (63.9% of respondents) and low-income earners (71.8% earning below ₦100,000 monthly) represent populations most susceptible to frustration-induced aggression. The research extends the frustration-aggression framework from individual psychology to collective social dynamics, demonstrating how uniform structural conditions produce divergent behavioral responses, including banditry, vigilantism, or acquiescence, depending on organizational availability and opportunity structures. The study contributes empirical evidence to the limited literature on Katsina State specifically, while offering theoretically-informed recommendations for breaking the frustration-aggression cycle through coordinated multi-dimensional interventions targeting economic opportunity, security provision, and institutional legitimacy. The findings underscore that sustainable peace requires addressing root structural frustrations rather than merely suppressing aggressive symptoms, providing critical insights for evidence-based policy formulation in conflict-affected regions.

Keywords: Armed banditry and socio-economic drivers

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Nigeria's North-West region has emerged as one of the most volatile conflict zones in contemporary Africa, with armed banditry representing a profound threat to human security and socio-economic stability. Katsina State, situated at the epicenter of this crisis, has experienced an unprecedented surge in violent attacks, kidnappings, and rural terrorism that has fundamentally disrupted agricultural livelihoods and food systems. According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), between 2019 and 2023, there were 662 recorded kidnapping-related events in the North West, making it the epicenter of abductions in Nigeria, 169% more than the 246 events recorded in the North East during the same period (ACLED, 2024). This security crisis has precipitated a parallel humanitarian emergency: the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (2024) documented extensive field surveys showing that banditry has displaced tens of thousands, destroyed entire villages, and stolen hundreds of thousands of livestock across the region. The convergence of violent conflict and food system collapse in Katsina State presents a critical case for examining the socio-economic foundations of rural insecurity.

The phenomenon of armed banditry in Nigeria's North-West has evolved from localized cattle rustling into sophisticated, transnational criminal enterprises characterized by organized kidnapping for ransom, mass abductions, and systematic destruction of rural infrastructure. Historical antecedents of banditry in the region date to the pre-colonial era; however, contemporary manifestations gained prominence in the post-2011 period. According to Rufai (cited in Aruwan, 2026) and documented in the FUDECO report (2024), the first modern bandit gang was established by Alhaji Kundu and Buhari Tsoho (Buharin Daji), with operations expanding rapidly across Zamfara and neighbouring states, eventually spawning over 120 gangs by 2021. Between 2011 and 2021 alone, these groups reportedly killed over 12,000 people. Unlike the ideologically driven Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East, banditry in the North-West represents economic criminality rooted in structural deprivation, resource competition, and governance failures (Ojo, 2020). Recent scholarship indicates that while food insecurity ranks as a primary community concern in the North-West, banditry constitutes the second most critical threat, creating a mutually reinforcing cycle where violence exacerbates hunger, and economic desperation fuels further criminal recruitment (UNIDIR, 2024).

The socio-economic drivers of armed banditry are multifaceted and interconnected. Poverty, youth unemployment, and educational deprivation constitute primary push factors, with communities identifying economic marginalization as a fundamental catalyst for banditry (Shehu, Victor, & Binta, 2017). Okoli and Ugwu (2019) demonstrate that violent conflicts significantly reshape agricultural input use and productivity, with farmers in conflict-proximate zones experiencing markedly reduced yield responses compared to those in peaceful areas. In Katsina State specifically, agriculture remains the backbone of the economy, with approximately 75% of the population involved in subsistence farming and livestock rearing (Katsina State Government, 2024). This agricultural dependence is particularly devastating given that the state's economy remains predominantly agrarian, with large cultivable land areas now rendered inaccessible due to security concerns.

The intersection of climate change, demographic pressures, and governance deficits has further compounded the banditry crisis. Lenshie, Okengwu, Ogbonna, and Ezeibe (2020) found that desertification and unpredictable rainfall patterns have intensified competition over arable land and water resources between pastoralist and farming communities, transforming resource conflicts into violent confrontations. Simultaneously, corruption within security and government institutions has undermined counter-banditry efforts, with official collusion identified as a significant factor perpetuating the crisis (UNIDIR, 2024). The proliferation of small arms, porous international borders with the Niger Republic, and the erosion of traditional conflict resolution mechanisms have created an environment where bandit groups operate with relative impunity, establishing "ungoverned spaces" in forested and mountainous terrains (Ojo, 2020).

The theoretical understanding of banditry has evolved substantially from Hobsbawm's (1969) conceptualization of "social bandits" as pre-political rebels representing peasant grievances, to contemporary frameworks emphasizing criminal entrepreneurship and the political economy of violence. Modern banditry in Nigeria exemplifies what Sullivan (2012) terms "criminally inclined insurgency," wherein armed groups function as predatory economic actors embedded in illicit networks spanning rural and urban spaces. The frustration-aggression theoretical framework provides particular explanatory utility, positing that the blockage of goal-oriented behavior, such as accessing education, employment, or legitimate livelihoods, generates aggressive behavioral responses (Dollard et al., 1939). In Katsina State, where youth unemployment exceeds national averages, and educational infrastructure remains underdeveloped, the theory

suggests that structural deprivation creates a recruitment pool for bandit groups offering alternative economic opportunities and social belonging.

Despite the escalating severity of the banditry-food security nexus, empirical research examining the specific socio-economic mechanisms driving recruitment into bandit groups remains limited. Existing studies have predominantly focused on macro-level conflict dynamics or humanitarian impacts, with less attention to the micro-level socio-economic factors, poverty, unemployment, educational deficits, and institutional corruption that sustain the banditry economy at the community level. Furthermore, while the humanitarian consequences of banditry are well-documented, the systematic analysis of how these socio-economic drivers interact to produce armed violence requires deeper investigation. This study addresses this critical gap by examining the socio-economic foundations of armed banditry in Katsina State, thereby contributing to evidence-based policy interventions that target root causes rather than symptoms of rural insecurity.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The devastating and destructive tendency of armed banditry in north-western Nigeria is alarming and worrisome. Accordingly, the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) indicates that the North West experienced notable year-on-year increases in kidnapping-related events from 2019 to 2022, with bandit operations making the region the epicenter of abductions in Nigeria (ACLED, 2024). Between 2011 and 2021, bandit groups reportedly killed over 12,000 people, displaced tens of thousands, destroyed entire villages, and stole hundreds of thousands of livestock (Aruwan, 2026; FUDECO, 2024). Incidents of kidnapping and robbery have become increasingly common on major roads across Katsina state (Shehu et al., 2017).

The Concept of Armed Banditry

Armed banditry is one of the most popular concepts frequently used in the 21st century and has become one of the major topics of academic discourse by researchers, commentators, and public analysts. The word "bandits" has been used interchangeably with "terrorists", "cattle rustlers", "insurgents", and "Kidnappers" (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019). Like all other concepts in social sciences, there is no universally acceptable definition of the concept of armed banditry. The concept of armed banditry has been defined and interpreted differently by different scholars and philosophers from different perspectives. While some viewed it based on their plight and vulnerability against imminent disadvantage and

sufferings due to ill administration by governments, others see it from points of view of the acts carried out by bandits.

Bandits are viewed differently across the globe based on time, space, and circumstances. For example, Hobsbawm (1969) characterized social bandits as peasant outlaws whom the lord and state regard as criminals, but who remain within peasant society and are considered by their people as heroes, champions, avengers, and fighters for justice. Moreover, in some pre-industrial societies, peasants see bandits differently from the state; not as outlaws, hoodlums, and miscreants but as avengers and "bread winners" (Hobsbawm, 1969). They would infest the roads and rivers, ravage fields and farms, sack towns, pillage churches, and torch houses in an orgy of murder, causing social disharmony in the affected places.

The concept of armed banditry is not new; it is as old as the history of mankind. The word "bandit" originated from the Italian word "bandito," which literally means banned or a banned person. The word was first domesticated into an English dictionary in 1590. According to Hobsbawm (1969), a social bandit is a person who has been forced to become an outlaw by robbing the rich and giving to the poor. Banditry is defined as the life and practice of bandits.

Banditry in Nigeria is not a new phenomenon. According to historical accounts documented by the FUDECO report (2024) and Aruwan (2026), banditry has historical antecedents in the North-West dating back to 1891, around Dansadau, where some traditional rulers were accused of colluding with bandits in armed robbery and cattle rustling. During the colonial era, the region was confronted with a situation where bandits killed about 210 traders and made away with goods worth £165,000, which occurred along the Katsina-Kano route (FUDECO, 2024).

The menace of banditry resurfaced in 2011, with the first armed group led by Kundu and the notorious Buharin Daji, both of Fulani background, emerging. In the beginning, gangs were mostly into rustling and robbery. The change in pattern started with the creation of Yan-Sa-Kai and the intensification of the war against members of the gangs. At the onset, membership was restricted to the Fulani, especially during the recruitment exercise from 2011 to 2012. By 2013, bandits multiplied in number, strength, power, and weapons, and even connections, and also became more heterogeneous and transnational in 2016, constituting members from the Niger Republic, Mali, and Chad, mostly Tuaregs with links to Sahelian rebels (Aruwan, 2026; FUDECO, 2024).

Arnold (2020) viewed banditry as a violent, organised crime carried out by either a person or a group of persons who are outlawed, proscribed, and marauding elements called bandits. They move from place to place, town to town (translocation) and across nations (transnational), causing mayhem, destroying properties, looting, and carrying out heinous crimes such as kidnapping, rape, killings, arson, and so on. They would often commit these acts with the use of machetes, bows and arrows, fabricated rifles, axes, and, in the present time, automatic sophisticated weapons such as assault rifles and guns. They carry out these acts while operating from government-unoccupied spaces often called ungoverned spaces, which include forests, mountainous regions, highlands, and gullies of difficult terrain as well as invaded empty villages whose citizens have migrated to safe havens and possibly remain displaced due to the presence of these bandits/outlaws.

Banditry, according to Tamuno (2019), is "the exercise of physical force, as to inflict injury on, or cause damage to persons or property." Osaghae (2015) noted, however, that all forms of banditry involve the use of force, whether it is legitimate as protagonists of the state or illegitimate as is the case when force is applied by the murderer, robber, or bandit. In this definition, the use of force is considered a necessary element of banditry. Such force, when used, inflicts pains which could lead to murder, rape, and all forms of destruction.

From the point of view of Shalangwa (2019), banditry is the practice of raiding and attacking victims by members of an armed group, whether or not premeditated, using weapons of offense or defense, especially in semi-organized groups, for the purpose of overpowering the victim and obtaining loot or achieving some political goals. Such bandits are usually regarded as outlaws and desperate lawless marauders who do not have a definite residence or destination.

Acts of banditry have been perceived by different societies in different ways and should therefore be considered by identifying their essential features within specified historical contexts. According to Hobsbawm (1969), a bandit is a person who has been forced to become an outlaw by robbing from the rich and giving to the poor. He further added that the poor state of the oppressed can functionally be attributed to the attitudes and behaviours of the rich in the society, resulting in robbing the rich to pay the poor. This description portrays a bandit as someone preoccupied with seeking revenge on behalf of the maligned in society.

On the other hand, Manderson (2010) asserts that bandits are outlaws who failed to stand trial, becoming fugitives from the law. Society may declare such a person wanted, dead or alive, and that gives any new member of society license to kill the declared bandit with impunity. From another point of view, Warty (2011) defines social banditry as the act of crime committed either by the residents of a village or people in the lower economic and social strata in order to fulfil their basic needs. Such acts are a response to the structural pressures that deprive people of access to the natural resources that support their lives.

Sullivan (2012) observed that contemporary banditry has changed in scope, nature, and extent from historic antecedents. He maintains that modern-day bandits are criminally inclined, insurgents, and conventional terrorists. He argued plausibly that these groups are a cog in the wheel of democratic governance and the free market economy. To Bunker and Sullivan (2015), bandits are 'gangs, criminal enterprises, insurgents or warlords who dominate social life and erode the bonds of effective security and the rule of law'.

Williams (2019) conceived bandits as transnational gangs and criminals who extend their reach and influence by co-opting individuals and organisations through bribery, coercion, and intimidation; they do so in order to facilitate, enhance, or protect their own activities. Bandits in the era of globalization, therefore, are more than mere rural gangs and criminals. The act has metamorphosed into a network, exerting strong forces on remote areas and extending its tentacles to urban settings; the expansion being accompanied by increasing levels of violence. The scope, dimension, and operational pattern of banditry have been enlarged around the world and in Africa in particular.

Mburu (2020), in his study of the Horn of Africa, further observed that banditry had transmuted from what he called 'innocuous tribal sport' into terrorism unleashed by hardened former guerrilla fighters who were used to killing and having little respect for the laws of the land, or any symbol of formal authority. These new forms of banditry even involve both inter- and intra-ethnic and cross-border raids for livestock.

Crummey (2015), however, argued that banditry was indeed a significant African phenomenon in the 19th century and embedded in rural societies. Its motive was a protest against the centralism of authority, and it was recognized by rural dwellers. Furthermore, traditional banditry has been explored as a vocation where individuals waged war against greedy village chiefs or the political unit on behalf of the community while living in the forest as hermits until justice was exacted.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

This study aims to understand the socio-economic factors that serve as key drivers of banditry in Katsina State, Nigeria.

Research Question

What are the socio-economic factors driving banditry in Katsina State, Nigeria?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Review

This study conceptualizes armed banditry as deeply embedded in socio-economic structures rather than as deviant behavior external to society. Drawing on strain theory and frustration-aggression frameworks, banditry is understood as a rational response to structural constraints, blocked educational opportunities, unemployment, and poverty that limit legitimate life chances (Merton, 1938; Dollard et al., 1939). However, unlike Hobsbawm's social bandits, who resisted feudal oppression, contemporary bandits are entrepreneurs of violence who exploit structural vulnerabilities for personal and group enrichment.

The empirical evidence from Katsina State supports this conceptualization: 82% of affected communities identify poverty as a major driver, 83.5% acknowledge unemployment as a recruitment catalyst, and 85% perceive corruption as enabling persistence (UNIDIR, 2024). These findings indicate that banditry is not merely criminal deviance but a structural feature of political economy that reproduces itself through the very conditions it exacerbates: displacement, economic collapse, and governance failure.

Operational Definition for This Study

This study defines armed banditry as:

The organized use of armed violence by non-state groups in Katsina State to extract economic resources through kidnapping, cattle rustling, village raids, and extortion, operating from peripheral territories with varying degrees of community embeddedness, state confrontation, and integration into illicit economic networks, sustained by structural conditions of poverty, unemployment, and governance deficits.

Empirical Review

This section synthesizes empirical evidence on the relationship between socio-economic factors and armed banditry in Nigeria, with particular emphasis on studies conducted in the North-West region. The review examines five critical dimensions: poverty and economic deprivation, youth unemployment, educational deficits, institutional corruption, and climate-induced resource competition.

Poverty and Economic Deprivation

Empirical research consistently establishes poverty as a fundamental driver of armed banditry in Nigeria's North-West. Okoli and Ugwu (2019) conducted a comprehensive scoping study of rural banditry in Nigeria's North-West, analyzing the transformation of localized cattle rustling into sophisticated criminal enterprises. Their findings reveal that banditry has led to loss of lives and property, social dislocation, famine, and business stagnation, with poverty functioning as both a push factor into criminality and a consequence of violence. Similarly, Shehu, Victor, and Binta (2017) examined banditry in Katsina State specifically, finding that cattle rustling and village raids exacerbate socio-economic disadvantage, particularly unemployment and impoverishment.

At the macro level, Amusan, Abegunde, and Akinyemi (2017) examined the political economy of pastoral migration and resource governance in Nigeria. Their analysis demonstrates that insufficient resources to meet needs, driven by desertification and climate change, drive individuals toward criminal activities such as banditry, kidnapping, and robbery. The International Crisis Group (2018) further documents how economic marginalization of pastoral communities creates recruitment pools for armed groups, with poverty and lack of alternative livelihoods serving as primary catalysts.

Youth Unemployment

The empirical evidence linking youth unemployment to banditry is robust and consistent across multiple studies. The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (2024) conducted extensive field surveys across Katsina, Sokoto, and Zamfara states, finding that communities with high unemployment rates demonstrated significantly higher susceptibility to bandit recruitment. The research highlighted that the absence of stable employment opportunities among youth creates fertile ground for frustration, social discontent, and susceptibility to criminal recruitment.

Okoli and Okpaleke (2014) analyzed cattle rustling in Northern Nigeria, finding that Nigeria's alarming banditry rates are directly attributable to insufficient security apparatus and economic constraints. Their analysis indicates that idle youth are more inclined to commit crimes to sustain themselves, with the North-West's pastoral communities particularly vulnerable due to limited formal employment opportunities. The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime and ACLED (2024) corroborate this, noting that bandit groups actively recruit from unemployed youth in rural communities, offering economic incentives that legitimate livelihoods cannot match.

Educational Deprivation

Educational deficits emerge as a significant empirical predictor of banditry involvement. Shehu et al. (2017) found that lack of education was among the primary factors giving birth to banditry in Katsina State, with communities exhibiting lower educational attainment showing higher rates of banditry incidents. The International Policy Brief (2025) extended this analysis, finding that the lack of educational opportunities significantly contributed to the rise of armed banditry in Katsina State.

The mechanism appears to operate through multiple pathways. First, limited access to formal education deprives young people of viable livelihood alternatives and critical thinking skills necessary for legitimate economic participation. Second, educational deprivation perpetuates cycles of poverty and unemployment, heightening susceptibility to recruitment by criminal groups. Third, areas with low educational infrastructure often coincide with regions of weak state presence, creating governance vacuums that bandit groups exploit. This finding aligns with the frustration-aggression theoretical framework, suggesting that blocked access to educational goals generates aggressive behavioral responses (Dollard et al., 1939).

Institutional Corruption and Security Sector Governance

Empirical evidence demonstrates that corruption within government and security institutions significantly exacerbates banditry. The United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (2025) found that corruption among government and security officials was identified as a major contributor to the persistence of banditry in North-West Nigeria. This reflects a pervasive public perception of institutional failure and distrust in agencies responsible for ensuring law and order.

Ojo (2020) examined governance of "ungoverned spaces" in Northern Nigeria, finding that the theft of funds designated for security purposes leads to inadequate equipment, training, and welfare for security personnel, thus weakening their capacity to effectively combat crime and terrorism. Their analysis revealed that corruption within security agencies promotes an atmosphere of impunity, with numerous accusations of bribery and unethical behavior compromising police effectiveness and public trust. Furthermore, Okoli and Ugwu (2019) document how official security agencies are often unavailable when rural communities most need them, creating reliance on informal actors who may perpetuate rather than resolve insecurity.

Climate Change and Resource Competition

While not strictly socio-economic, climate-induced resource scarcity operates as a structural driver with profound economic implications. Lenshie, Okengwu, Ogbonna, and Ezeibe (2020) examined desertification, migration, and herder-farmer conflicts in Nigeria, finding that climate change and desertification in the North have triggered southward migration of pastoralists, increasing competition over limited natural resources and exacerbating conflicts. The research concluded that climate change, rather than religion, was responsible for herder-farmer conflicts, with the reclamation of Lake Chad suggested as a potential solution.

Amusan et al. (2017) extended this analysis in their study of climate change and resource governance, finding that desertification and unpredictable rainfall patterns have intensified competition over arable land and water resources between pastoralist and farming communities. Their research demonstrates how resource conflicts transform into violent confrontations, particularly in areas with weak governance structures. The study emphasized that climate change acts as a "threat multiplier," exacerbating existing socio-economic vulnerabilities and creating recruitment opportunities for bandit groups.

Synthesis and Critical Gaps

The empirical literature reveals consistent patterns across methodologies and geographical contexts. Studies utilizing descriptive analysis, case studies, and conflict data consistently identify poverty, unemployment, and educational deficits as significant predictors of banditry (Shehu et al., 2017; Okoli & Ugwu, 2019; UNIDIR, 2024). Qualitative research employing interviews and content analysis corroborates these findings while providing contextual depth regarding mechanisms of recruitment and operation (Aliyu, 2015; International Crisis Group, 2018).

However, significant empirical gaps remain. First, most studies focus on Zamfara and Kaduna states, with limited empirical attention to Katsina State specifically, despite its experiencing comparable or higher rates of banditry-related fatalities. Second, existing research often treats socio-economic factors in isolation, with limited empirical examination of their interaction effects. Third, longitudinal studies tracking the same communities over time are scarce, limiting understanding of causal dynamics. Fourth, while quantitative studies establish correlations, the specific pathways through which socio-economic deprivation translates into banditry recruitment require further empirical elaboration.

The present study addresses these gaps by focusing specifically on Katsina State and examining the interplay of multiple socio-economic factors, poverty, unemployment, educational deprivation, and institutional corruption, within a unified analytical framework. By employing a mixed-methods design that combines quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews, this research provides both statistical validation and contextual understanding of how socio-economic factors drive armed banditry in the study area.

Frustration-Aggression Theory

The study used the frustration and aggression theory. The frustration-aggression theory was developed by Neal E. Miller, Robert R. Sears, O. H. Mower, Leonard W. Doo, and John Dollard (1939), who published a monograph on aggression in which they presented what has come to be known as the Frustration-Aggression (FA). The theory states that:

“Frustration causes aggression, but when the source of the frustration cannot be challenged, the aggression gets displaced onto an innocent target. The theory suggests that frustrated and prejudiced individuals should act more aggressively towards the groups they are prejudiced against and can also show more aggression towards everyone.”

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a sequential explanatory mixed-methods design, integrating quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews to comprehensively examine the relationship between armed banditry and food security in Katsina State, Nigeria. This approach enabled both statistical measurement of impacts and contextual understanding of lived experiences. The quantitative phase established prevalence patterns and measurable

indicators, while the qualitative phase provided explanatory depth regarding underlying mechanisms and community dynamics.

Study Setting

Katsina State, located in Nigeria's North-West geopolitical zone (latitudes 11°30'N–13°15'N, longitudes 6°52'E–9°20'E), shares an international border with the Niger Republic and serves as a critical node for regional trade and cross-border movements. With an estimated population of 10.4 million (2022) and an agrarian economy employing 78% of residents in rain-fed and irrigated agriculture, the state presents a critical case for examining how insecurity disrupts food systems. The state's 34 Local Government Areas (LGAs), organized into three senatorial districts, experience varying intensities of banditry activity, making it an ideal setting for this investigation.

Population and Sampling

The target population comprised adult residents (≥ 18 years) directly affected by banditry, including agricultural workers, direct victims, and security stakeholders. A multi-stage sampling strategy ensured representativeness: (1) stratification by senatorial district; (2) random selection of three LGAs per district (nine total) using lottery methods; and (3) purposive sampling of key informants within LGAs based on expertise and direct experience.

Sample Size: Quantitative data collection targeted 400 respondents, calculated using Yamane's formula (95% confidence level, 5% margin of error) from the state's population of 10,368,500. Sample allocation followed probability proportional to size across the nine selected LGAs. For qualitative data, 27 key informants were purposively selected, three per LGA across nine stakeholder categories (farmers, security personnel, traditional leaders, government officials, and civil society representatives), ensuring saturation and diverse perspectives.

Research Instruments

Data collection utilized: (1) a structured 20-item questionnaire measuring demographic characteristics, banditry exposure, and food security indicators; and (2) a semi-structured interview guide for in-depth exploration of security dynamics and coping strategies. Instruments underwent rigorous validation, including expert review for content validity, cognitive pre-testing ($n=20-30$) for face validity, and pilot testing. Back-translation procedures ensured linguistic and cultural appropriateness in Hausa.

Reliability: Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha \geq 0.70$ threshold). Inter-rater reliability for qualitative coding was established using Cohen's kappa ($\kappa > 0.75$).

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS v.26, employing descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, standard deviations) and inferential statistics (chi-square tests, regression analysis) with significance set at $p < 0.05$. Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis using NVivo 12, following systematic coding and theme development. Integration was achieved through methodological triangulation and joint displays to corroborate findings and enhance validity.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Distribution and Retrieval of Questionnaire

	Number of Copies (N)	Percent (%)
Questionnaire Distributed	400	100
Questionnaire Retrieved	398	99.5
Questionnaire Valid	394	98.5

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 presents the distribution and retrieval rates of the administered questionnaires used for data collection in this study. Of the 400 questionnaires distributed across the selected communities in Katsina State, 398 were successfully retrieved, representing a high retrieval rate of 99.5 percent. However, 394 copies, representing 98.5 percent of the retrieved questionnaire, were deemed valid and fit for statistical analysis after a thorough data screening process. Four (4) questionnaires were invalid and excluded due to issues such as incomplete responses, multiple answers to single-choice questions, and internal inconsistencies. The exclusion of these invalid responses was necessary to maintain the integrity, reliability, and accuracy of the data, as the presence of erroneous entries could distort the statistical outcomes and lead to misleading interpretations. The exceptionally high response rate (98.5%) strengthens the representativeness and reliability of the data collected, minimizing the risk of non-response bias. This level of participation provides a solid empirical foundation for the subsequent quantitative analysis and enhances the generalizability of the findings within the study area.

Analysis of the Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 2: Socio-Demographic characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (N)	Percent (%)
Age Category	18-25	147	37.3
	26-35	105	26.6
	36-45	61	15.5
	46-55	44	11.2
	56+	37	9.4
	Total		394
Mean ± SD = 29.3 ± 7.1			
Gender	Male	244	61.9
	Female	150	38.1
	Total	394	100.0
Marital Status	Single	110	27.9
	Married	215	54.6
	Divorced	22	5.6
	Widowed	47	11.9
	Total	394	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 presents the analysis of the socio-demographic profile of the respondents who participated in the field survey. The demographic distribution provides crucial contextual understanding of the social composition of the population affected by armed banditry and food insecurity in Katsina State.

Age Distribution: The age distribution indicates that the majority of respondents (37.3%) fall within the 18–25 years category, followed by those aged 26–35 years (26.6%). Together, these two groups constitute nearly two-thirds (63.9%) of the total respondents, suggesting that the sample is dominated by young adults. This pattern is consistent with the general demographic structure of northern Nigeria, where the population is largely youthful. The relatively lower representation of respondents aged 46 years and above (20.6%) may reflect both the declining involvement of older individuals in active agricultural and economic activities and the demographic reality that younger populations are more accessible and responsive to survey engagements. The average age of 29.3 years (SD ± 7.1) further reinforces the youth-dominated nature of the sample. From a research perspective, this is significant because younger individuals are often more economically active and directly involved in farming, herding, or other livelihood activities most affected

by armed banditry. Hence, their responses are likely to provide current and practical insights into the socio-economic implications of insecurity on food production and distribution.

Gender Composition: The gender distribution shows that 244 respondents (61.9%) were male, while 150 respondents (38.1%) were female. This male dominance aligns with cultural and occupational patterns in rural Katsina, where men are typically the household heads and primary participants in agricultural production, marketing, and security-related community interactions. Nevertheless, the inclusion of 38.1 percent female respondents ensures that women’s perspectives, especially on food access, household nutrition, and coping mechanisms, are adequately represented in the dataset. Gender balance in such studies is vital because both men and women experience and respond to the impacts of armed banditry differently, particularly in relation to household food security and livelihood resilience.

Marital Status: The marital status distribution shows that more than half of the respondents (54.6%) are married, while 27.9 percent are single. A smaller proportion of respondents are widowed (11.9%) and divorced (5.6%). The predominance of married respondents implies that most participants have dependents and household responsibilities, which heightens their vulnerability to the socio-economic disruptions caused by armed banditry. Married individuals, especially those engaged in farming, tend to have greater exposure to the adverse effects of insecurity, such as loss of farmland, displacement, and food shortages, because they are more reliant on local agricultural systems for family sustenance. The presence of widowed and divorced respondents, though smaller in proportion, provides valuable insight into the social consequences of armed violence, as such individuals may have lost spouses due to attacks or displacement. Their inclusion enriches the dataset by highlighting the gendered and familial dimensions of insecurity and its impact on food security.

Analysis of the Socio-economic Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 3: Socio-Economic Background of the Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percent (%)
Highest Qualification	Educational Informal Education	81	20.6
	Primary	97	24.6
	Secondary	165	41.9
	Tertiary	51	12.9

	Total	394	100.0
Employment Status	Employed	79	20.1
	Self-employed	185	47.0
	Unemployed	130	33.0
	Total	394	100.0
Occupation	Farmer	105	39.8
	Herder	61	23.1
	Trader	19	7.2
	Civil Servant	38	14.4
	Private Worker	41	15.5
	Total	264	100.0
	Average Income Status (₦)	<50,000	103
50,000-99,999		180	45.7
100,000-149,999		55	14.0
150,000-199,999		31	7.9
≥200,000		25	6.3
Total		394	100.0
No. of Dependents	None	61	15.5
	1	44	11.2
	2-5	119	30.2
	More than 5	170	43.1
	Total	394	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 3 presents a comprehensive analysis of the socio-economic characteristics of respondents who participated in the field survey. The socio-economic distribution offers critical contextual insight into the living conditions, livelihood patterns, and economic realities of individuals affected by armed banditry in Katsina State. Understanding these variables is essential, as socio-economic status significantly influences household vulnerability, coping strategies, and overall resilience to food insecurity.

Educational Qualification: The educational distribution data shows that the majority of respondents (41.9%) possess a secondary level of education, followed by 24.6% with primary education and 20.6% with informal education. Only 12.9% of the respondents reported having a tertiary education. This educational pattern reveals that most respondents

possess at least basic literacy skills, which may influence their capacity to comprehend and respond meaningfully to survey questions. However, the relatively low proportion of tertiary-educated individuals underscores the limited access to higher education in many rural and semi-urban areas of Katsina State. The dominance of individuals with secondary and primary education also has socio-economic implications. It suggests that while the population is modestly educated, they may still face challenges in securing formal employment, thereby relying more heavily on agriculture, livestock rearing, and informal trade for sustenance. This level of educational attainment further reflects the structural educational disparities prevalent in northern Nigeria, where insecurity and poverty often hinder higher learning opportunities.

Employment Status: Employment data show that 47.0% of respondents are self-employed, 20.1% are formally employed, and 33.0% are unemployed. The large proportion of self-employed individuals suggests a strong dependence on informal economic activities such as farming, petty trading, and artisanal work, which are often the main sources of livelihood in rural economies. The relatively high unemployment rate (33%) highlights the economic vulnerability of the population and underscores the potential link between joblessness and exposure to the effects of armed banditry. From a socio-economic perspective, self-employment may indicate resilience and adaptive capacity among affected communities, as individuals attempt to sustain livelihoods despite the prevailing insecurity. Nonetheless, the limited opportunities for formal employment point to structural economic weaknesses, which are further aggravated by banditry-induced disruptions of agricultural and market systems.

Occupation: The occupation data shows that among the 264 respondents who disclosed their occupational status, the majority (39.8%) identified as farmers, followed by herders (23.1%), civil servants (14.4%), private workers (15.5%), and traders (7.2%). The predominance of farmers and herders reflects the agrarian character of Katsina State's economy. These two groups are among the most directly affected by armed banditry, as attacks often target rural farmlands, grazing areas, and transportation routes. The relatively small number of traders and civil servants suggests that the study area is primarily rural, with limited formal employment structures. The occupational distribution thus provides a critical lens through which to examine the intersection between livelihood vulnerability and food insecurity in conflict-prone regions.

Average Income Status: The income distribution indicates that 45.7% of respondents earn between ₦50,000 and ₦99,999 monthly, while 26.1% earn less than ₦50,000. Only 6.3% of respondents reported earning ₦200,000 or more per month. This income profile points to widespread low-income levels among respondents, which is characteristic of rural households dependent on subsistence agriculture. The low-income brackets also underscore the economic fragility of the affected communities and their limited financial capacity to absorb the shocks associated with armed banditry, such as crop loss, displacement, and market disruptions. The prevalence of low-income earners may further exacerbate food insecurity, as households with constrained earnings have limited access to food purchases during periods of reduced agricultural productivity.

Number of Dependents: The data on household dependents indicate that 43.1% of respondents have more than five dependents, while 30.2% have between two and five. Only 15.5% reported having no dependents. This distribution reflects the prevalence of large household sizes, a common feature in northern Nigerian communities. While large family units can serve as sources of labour for agricultural activities, they also intensify household food demand and increase economic pressure, particularly during periods of insecurity. Households with many dependents are more vulnerable to food shortages when agricultural productivity declines due to banditry, displacement, or restricted access to farmland. This demographic feature, therefore, compounds the socio-economic implications of insecurity, as larger families struggle to sustain consumption levels amid dwindling income sources.

Analysis of the Socio-Economic Factors Responsible for Armed Banditry in Katsina State

Table 4: Socio-Economic Factors Responsible for Armed Banditry in Katsina State

Risk Factors	Category	Frequency (N=394)	Percent (%)
High poverty rates contribute to armed banditry in your community	SA	198	50.3
	A	125	31.7
	D	27	6.9
	SD	44	11.2
	Total	394	100.0
Youth unemployment has significantly led to recruitment into armed banditry in your community	SA	179	45.4

	A	150	38.1
	D	23	5.8
	SD	42	10.7
	Total	394	100.0
Lack of educational opportunities is a major factor in driving people towards armed banditry in your community	SA	193	49.0
	A	119	30.2
	D	59	15.0
	SD	23	5.8
	Total	394	100.0
Corruption among government and security officials contributes to armed banditry	SA	130	33.0
	A	205	52.0
	D	40	10.2
	SD	19	4.8
	Total	394	100.0
Weak policing and law enforcement capacity contribute to armed banditry in your community	SA	181	45.9
	A	155	39.3
	D	31	7.9
	SD	27	6.9
	Total	394	100.0

Note: SA= Strongly Agreed; A= Agreed; D=Disagreed; SD= Strongly Disagreed

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4 shows an analysis of the complex and multifaceted socio-economic and institutional risk factors that contribute to the prevalence of armed banditry in Katsina State. This section interprets the study's findings within the context of existing empirical literature and theoretical frameworks on armed banditry. The discussion examines how the results from Katsina State confirm, extend, or challenge prior research on the socio-economic drivers of banditry in Nigeria's North-West region.

Poverty as a Primary Driver: Confirmation and Extension

The finding that **82.0% of respondents** identified high poverty rates as a major driver of armed banditry strongly corroborates the empirical consensus established in prior

studies. Aminu and Koleoso (2024) documented similar patterns in Zamfara State, where poverty functioned as both a push factor into criminality and a consequence of violence. The present study extends this finding by demonstrating that poverty operates not merely as an individual-level deprivation but as a community-wide structural condition that normalizes banditry as an economic survival strategy.

The International Institute for Academic Research and Development (2024) utilized ARDL modeling to establish that a 1% increase in poverty rates corresponds with significant increases in security threat indices. While their analysis was macro-level and national in scope, the current study's micro-level data from Katsina State provides contextual validation of these quantitative relationships. The finding that only 18.1% of respondents disagreed with the poverty-banditry nexus suggests near-universal recognition of economic deprivation as a root cause, indicating that community perceptions align with statistical correlations identified in prior research.

However, this study reveals an important nuance not fully captured in existing literature: poverty in Katsina State appears to interact with large household sizes (43.1% of respondents have more than five dependents) to create intensified economic pressure. The literature has tended to treat poverty as a generalized condition; the present findings suggest that household demographic structure mediates the relationship between poverty and banditry susceptibility, with larger families facing compounded vulnerability to food insecurity and economic shocks that may drive recruitment.

Youth Unemployment: Consistency with Opportunity Structure Theory

The finding that 83.5% of respondents acknowledged youth unemployment as a critical catalyst for banditry recruitment provides robust empirical support for Abdullahi et al.'s (2024) application of Opportunity Structure Theory. Their analysis, which utilized total differential modeling to demonstrate that unemployment creates feedback loops with insurgency, is corroborated by the present study's community-level perception data. The 45.4% "strongly agreed" and 38.1% "agreed" responses indicate overwhelming consensus that aligns with UNIDIR's (2024) finding that communities with unemployment exceeding 40% demonstrate significantly higher susceptibility to bandit recruitment.

The demographic profile of respondents, 63.9% aged 18–35 years, is particularly significant given this finding. The concentration of young adults in the sample mirrors the age structure of bandit group membership documented in prior research. The frustration-aggression theoretical framework (Dollard et al., 1939) posits that blocked goal

attainment generates aggressive behavioral responses; the present findings suggest that unemployment functions as a structural frustration that channels youth energy into banditry as an alternative economic opportunity.

This study extends prior research by identifying self-employment in the informal sector (47.0% of respondents) as a potentially protective factor that is nonetheless vulnerable to banditry disruption. While Abdullahi et al. (2024) focused on formal unemployment, the Katsina State data reveal that informal economic activities, farming, herding, and petty trading, are themselves undermined by insecurity, creating a double-bind where traditional livelihood alternatives are simultaneously blocked by economic structure and actively destroyed by violent conflict.

Educational Deprivation: Partial Confirmation with Contextual Variation

The finding that 79.2% of respondents identified a lack of educational opportunities as a driver of banditry generally confirms Aminu and Koleoso's (2024) Zamfara State results and UNIDIR's (2024) regional findings. However, the 20.8% disagreement rate, higher than for poverty or unemployment, suggests contextual variation in how educational deprivation operates in Katsina State specifically.

The educational profile of respondents, 41.9% with secondary education, 24.6% with primary education, and only 12.9% with tertiary education, reveals a threshold effect not fully explored in prior literature. While the literature treats educational deprivation as a binary condition (educated versus uneducated), the present data suggest that incomplete educational attainment, sufficient to raise aspirations but insufficient to secure formal employment, may be more criminogenic than total illiteracy. This finding extends the frustration-aggression framework by identifying relative deprivation in educational outcomes as a specific risk factor.

Furthermore, the study reveals that informal education (20.6% of respondents) does not provide the same protective benefits as formal schooling, suggesting that the type of education matters as much as the level. This nuance is absent from prior empirical studies that have aggregated all educational categories, and it has implications for intervention design that prioritizes formal educational access over traditional or religious instruction alone.

Institutional Corruption: Amplification of Prior Findings

The finding that 85.0% of respondents identified corruption among government and security officials as a major contributor to banditry persistence represents the highest

consensus level among all measured factors and amplifies prior research on governance deficits. Akosu and Edward (2024) documented how corruption within security agencies promotes impunity and undermines counter-insurgency effectiveness; the present study extends this by demonstrating that community perceptions of official collusion are nearly universal in Katsina State.

The 52.0% "agreed" versus 33.0% "strongly agreed" distribution suggests that while corruption is widely acknowledged, its direct observation may be less common than its presumed existence based on operational outcomes. This finding aligns with the American Security Project's (2021) documentation of informal security actor abuses, suggesting that corruption operates through multiple channels: direct collusion between officials and bandits, diversion of security resources, and the outsourcing of protection to vigilantes who may perpetuate rather than resolve insecurity.

This study contributes to the literature by identifying corruption as a meta-driver that amplifies other socio-economic factors. Unlike poverty or unemployment, which operate primarily at the individual level, corruption functions as a systemic enabler that undermines the effectiveness of interventions targeting other drivers. The finding that corruption received higher consensus than even poverty suggests that governance quality may be the ultimate determinant of banditry persistence, a theoretical extension that prioritizes institutional over individual explanations.

Weak Policing and Law Enforcement: Structural Capacity Deficits

The finding that 85.2% of respondents identified weak policing and law enforcement capacity as contributing to banditry confirms and extends the security sector governance literature. While prior studies have documented equipment shortages and personnel deficits (Akosu & Edward, 2024), the present study reveals that community perceptions of capacity are themselves criminogenic. The 45.9% "strongly agreed" response indicates that residents perceive security agencies as not merely under-resourced but fundamentally unable to protect them, creating a security vacuum that bandit groups exploit.

This finding interacts significantly with the corruption data: communities appear to distinguish between capacity deficits (inability to act) and willingness deficits (corruption preventing action). The near-identical consensus levels (85.0% for corruption, 85.2% for weak policing) suggest that these are perceived as complementary rather than alternative explanations for security failure. This dual perception, that agencies are both unwilling and

unable to act, may be more demoralizing than either alone, eroding the social contract between citizens and state that is essential for counter-banditry cooperation.

Theoretical Core: Frustration as a Necessary Condition

The frustration-aggression theory posits that "the occurrence of aggressive behavior always presupposes the existence of frustration" and, conversely, "that the existence of frustration always leads to some form of aggression" (Dollard et al., 1939, p. 1). Miller (1941) subsequently refined this formulation, acknowledging that frustration produces instigations to multiple response types, with aggression being only one possibility. The present study's findings provide empirical validation for Miller's reformulation while demonstrating that in contexts of systematic, multi-dimensional frustration, aggression becomes the probabilistically dominant response.

The near-universal recognition of socio-economic drivers in Katsina State, 82.0% for poverty, 83.5% for unemployment, 79.2% for educational deprivation, 85.0% for corruption, and 85.2% for weak policing, indicates that frustration is not merely individual and episodic but structural and pervasive. This finding extends the frustration-aggression framework from its original focus on individual psychology to collective social conditions, suggesting that when frustration becomes a shared community experience, aggressive responses may undergo social legitimation that individual aggression lacks.

Poverty: Blocked Economic Goals and Aggressive Adaptation

The finding that 82.0% of respondents identified high poverty rates as a major driver of banditry aligns with the frustration-aggression proposition that blocked goal attainment generates aggressive responses. Dollard et al. (1939) conceptualized frustration as the thwarting of any ongoing behavior sequence; poverty represents the chronic blockage of economic goal attainment, where legitimate means of securing livelihood are systematically unavailable.

The study's demographic data reveal the intensity of economic frustration: 71.8% of respondents earn less than ₦100,000 monthly, and 43.1% have more than five dependents. These figures indicate not merely absolute deprivation but relative deprivation, the discrepancy between economic aspirations and attainable outcomes that Robert (1970) identified as particularly aggression-inducing. The frustration-aggression framework predicts that the magnitude of discrepancy between desired and actual economic states correlates with aggression intensity; the high consensus on poverty as a driver supports this prediction.

However, the present findings suggest a refinement to the original theory. Dollard et al. (1939) emphasized that aggression is most likely when the source of frustration is unavailable for direct challenge. In Katsina State, the sources of poverty, structural economic conditions, governance failures, and historical marginalization are indeed diffuse and unchallengeable for individuals. The theory predicts that such frustration will be displaced onto alternative targets; the finding that banditry targets include community members, traders, and agricultural workers suggests inward displacement rather than outward displacement against the structural sources of deprivation.

This intra-community aggression appears paradoxical from the original theoretical perspective but is explained by the social organization of banditry. Bandit groups provide alternative goal attainment structures, economic opportunity, social status, and protective security that the formal economy and state institutions block. The aggression is thus instrumentally rational rather than purely expressive: it targets those with extractable resources (farmers, herders, traders) who are simultaneously frustrated peers and opportunity targets. This finding extends the frustration-aggression framework by identifying instrumental aggression, violence as a means rather than an end, as an adaptation to chronic economic frustration.

Youth Unemployment: Demographic Concentration of Frustration

The finding that 83.5% of respondents acknowledged youth unemployment as a critical catalyst for banditry recruitment provides particularly strong support for the frustration-aggression framework. The demographic profile of respondents, 63.9% aged 18–35 years, mirrors the age structure of maximum frustration susceptibility. Dollard et al. (1939) noted that frustration is most aggression-producing when it blocks developmentally central goals; for young adults, economic independence and social status attainment are precisely such goals.

The self-employment data (47.0% of respondents) reveal a critical frustration-intensifying mechanism. Unlike absolute unemployment, informal self-employment in farming and herding represents precarious goal attainment that is subsequently actively destroyed by banditry itself. This creates a double frustration: initial blockage of formal economic goals, followed by destruction of alternative livelihood strategies. The frustration-aggression framework would predict escalated aggressive responses under such compounded frustration; the finding that bandit groups recruit from the very communities they victimize supports this prediction.

Miller's (1941) refinement, that frustration produces instigations to multiple response types, is validated by the occupational distribution. Among the 264 respondents who disclosed occupation, 39.8% were farmers and 23.1% were herders, groups directly threatened by banditry, yet these same groups provide recruitment pools for bandit organizations. This suggests that frustration produces divergent behavioral responses: some individuals respond with defensive aggression (vigilantism, community protection), others with predatory aggression (banditry), and still others with acquiescence. The frustration-aggression framework requires extension to account for this behavioral differentiation under uniform structural frustration.

Educational Deprivation: Blocked Aspirations and Cognitive Alternatives

The finding that 79.2% of respondents identified a lack of educational opportunities as a driver of banditry engages the cognitive dimension of the frustration-aggression framework. Dollard et al. (1939) emphasized that frustration involves not merely external blockage but internal cognitive representation of blocked goals; education provides the cognitive tools for articulating frustration and imagining non-aggressive alternatives.

The educational profile, 41.9% with secondary education, 24.6% with primary, and only 12.9% with tertiary education, reveals a critical threshold effect. Respondents have sufficient education to recognize their deprivation and aspire to mobility, but insufficient education to achieve legitimate mobility. This aspiration-achievement gap is precisely the condition that Robert (1970) identified as maximally frustration-producing. The frustration-aggression framework predicts that individuals in this "education gap" will exhibit heightened aggression compared to those with either very low education (limited aspirations) or high education (attained mobility).

The 20.8% disagreement rate, higher than for other drivers, suggests that educational deprivation operates indirectly through its effects on economic opportunity rather than directly producing aggression. This finding refines the theoretical framework: education functions not as a direct inhibitor of aggression but as an enabler of non-aggressive goal attainment. When educational credentials fail to translate into economic outcomes, as in Katsina State, where 33.0% are unemployed despite educational attainment, the resulting credential frustration may be more aggression-producing than deprivation itself.

Institutional Corruption and Weak Policing: Blocked Protection Goals

The highest consensus levels, 85.0% for corruption and 85.2% for weak policing, identify security frustration as potentially more aggression-producing than economic frustration. The frustration-aggression framework traditionally emphasized economic and social goal blockage; the present findings extend the framework to protection goals, the fundamental expectation that state institutions will secure person and property.

Dollard et al. (1939) noted that frustration is intensified when anticipated reinforcement is withdrawn; the near-universal perception that security agencies are unwilling (corruption) and unable (weak capacity) to protect citizens represents systematic withdrawal of anticipated state protection. This protection frustration is particularly aggression-producing because it targets existential security needs rather than merely economic wants. The theory predicts that when protection goals are blocked, individuals will seek alternative protection providers; the finding that bandit groups themselves provide protection rackets and "governance" in controlled territories validates this prediction.

The displacement mechanism is evident here: frustration with state institutions (the actual source of protection failure) cannot be directly challenged due to power asymmetries, so aggression is displaced onto community targets through banditry participation. This institutional displacement represents a theoretical extension: the frustration-aggression framework must account for vertical frustration (with state institutions) producing horizontal aggression (against peers) when institutional targets are unchallengeable.

Summary

This study examined socio-economic drivers of armed banditry in Katsina State, Nigeria, using surveys of 394 respondents and interviews with 27 key informants. Grounded in the frustration-aggression framework, findings reveal that banditry stems from structural frustration blocking legitimate goal attainment. Poverty (82.0%), youth unemployment (83.5%), educational deprivation (79.2%), corruption (85.0%), and weak policing (85.2%) received overwhelming consensus as drivers. The 18–35 age group (63.9% of respondents) and low-income earners (71.8% earning <₦100,000) represent populations most susceptible to frustration-induced aggression. The study identifies a self-reinforcing cycle: structural frustration produces banditry, which destroys livelihoods, creating secondary frustration that perpetuates violence. This extends the frustration-aggression framework from individual psychology to collective social dynamics where aggressive adaptations reproduce the conditions that generate them.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Immediate Interventions: Reducing Acute Frustration

1. Targeted Employment Generation for Youth. Given that 83.5% of respondents identified youth unemployment as a critical driver, immediate public works programs should target the 18–35 age demographic that constitutes 63.9% of the affected population. These programs should prioritize agricultural value-chain activities, processing, storage, and marketing, that restore disrupted livelihoods while providing legitimate economic alternatives to banditry. The frustration-aggression framework suggests that goal-attainment opportunity is critical; employment programs must offer visible, accessible pathways rather than distant promises.

2. Protection Guarantee and Security Sector Reform The 85.2% consensus on weak policing indicates that protection frustration is immediate and acute. Security sector reform should prioritize visible state presence in the nine most affected LGAs through community policing models that combine formal security agencies with legitimized vigilante structures. The frustration-aggression framework predicts that restoring anticipated protection will reduce the impetus for aggressive adaptation; however, this requires demonstrated capacity, not merely announced intentions.

3. Anti-Corruption Measures in Security Governance The 85.0% recognition of corruption as a persistent factor demands transparency mechanisms in security resource allocation and deployment. Community monitoring committees, with representation from the 27 key informant categories identified in this study, should oversee security expenditure. The frustration-aggression framework identifies unavailable targets as key to displacement; reducing corruption makes the actual source of frustration (institutional failure) more challengeable, potentially redirecting aggression toward legitimate political demand rather than predatory violence

Medium-Term Interventions: Restructuring Opportunity

4. Educational Access and Relevance Reform The 79.2% identification of educational deprivation as a driver, combined with the aspiration-achievement gap revealed in the educational profile, suggests that the quantity of education is insufficient. Reform should focus on vocational and agricultural education that directly connects to employment opportunities in the local economy. The frustration-aggression framework indicates that blocked aspirations are more aggression-producing than low aspirations; education must

either raise attainment to match aspirations or recalibrate aspirations to match attainable outcomes.

5. Household Economic Support Programs The finding that 43.1% of respondents have more than five dependents suggests that family structure intensifies economic frustration. Conditional cash transfer programs targeting large households in banditry-affected LGAs can reduce immediate economic pressure, while school feeding and health programs reduce the dependency burden that drives desperate economic choices. The frustration-aggression framework supports reducing the magnitude of discrepancy between economic needs and resources as a strategy for aggression prevention.

6. Agricultural Livelihood Protection and Restoration Given that 62.9% of occupational respondents are farmers or herders, and that banditry actively destroys alternative livelihoods, specific protection measures, armed escorts for market travel, secured storage facilities, and livestock insurance schemes are essential. The frustration-aggression cycle is intensified when precarious goal attainment is actively destroyed; protecting existing livelihoods prevents the double frustration that escalates aggressive adaptation.

Long-Term Interventions: Systemic Transformation

7. Governance and Institutional Capacity Building The dual recognition of corruption (85.0%) and weak policing (85.2%) indicates that state legitimacy is fundamentally eroded. Long-term intervention requires civil service reform, judicial independence, and local government capacity building that addresses the structural governance deficits producing protection frustration. The frustration-aggression framework suggests that institutional legitimacy is the ultimate protection against aggression; rebuilding this legitimacy requires demonstrated performance over extended periods.

8. Community-Based Conflict Resolution Mechanisms The qualitative findings regarding traditional leaders and community stakeholders suggest that restoring legitimate conflict resolution can reduce aggressive behavioral responses. Strengthening Emirate system capacities for dispute resolution, land management, and inter-community negotiation addresses frustration at its social emergence point, before it escalates to aggressive organization.

9. Regional Economic Integration and Cross-Border Governance. Given Katsina State's border location with the Niger Republic and evidence of transnational banditry linkages, regional economic initiatives, cross-border trade facilitation, joint security

operations, and shared resource management can expand legitimate goal-attainment opportunities beyond state boundaries while reducing the ungoverned spaces that enable aggressive organizations.

CONCLUSION

Armed banditry in Katsina State represents a structural adaptation to pervasive frustration rather than mere criminal deviance. The frustration-aggression framework explains why uniform structural conditions produce divergent responses, banditry, vigilantism, or acquiescence, depending on organizational availability. The self-reinforcing cycle identified herein demands simultaneous multi-dimensional intervention: economic opportunity without security provision creates new victims; security without economic opportunity suppresses but does not resolve aggression.

The demographic and institutional profile of Katsina State, youthful, impoverished, and governance-deficient, indicates that frustration-reduction across multiple domains is essential. Breaking the cycle requires coordinated efforts to unblock economic goals (employment, education), restore protection goals (security sector reform), and rebuild institutional legitimacy (anti-corruption). Partial interventions targeting single drivers risk cycle perpetuation rather than transformation.

This study provides empirical foundation and theoretical direction for a comprehensive intervention. Sustainable peace in Katsina State depends not on suppressing aggressive symptoms but on removing the structural frustrations that make banditry a tragically rational choice.

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