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The implications of armed banditry and cross-regional crimes for the educational development of upper-basic school students in the North Central zone of Nigeria

INEGBEDION, Juliet O.[1]
Department of Educational Foundation,
Faculty of Education
National Open University of Nigeria
Abuja-Nigeria

LIADI, Hakeem O.[2]
Department of Arts and Social Sciences
Faculty of Education
National Open University of Nigeria
Abuja-Nigeria

IBEBUNJO, Basil O.[3]
Department of Peace Studies and Conflict Resolution
Faculty of Social Sciences
National Open University of Nigeria
Abuja-Nigeria

OHADIUGHA, Mariam N.[4]
Department of Arts and Social Sciences
Faculty of Education
National Open University of Nigeria
Abuja-Nigeria;

Abstract

This study examined the implications of armed banditry and cross-regional crimes on the educational development of upper-basic school students in the North-Central Zone of Nigeria, with particular focus on Benue, Niger, and Nasarawa states. The study objectives were to: i. Examine the impact of armed banditry and cross-regional crimes on educational access and quality; and ii. Determine their effects on upper-basic education in the region. Anchored in Ecological Systems Theory and complemented by Human Security Theory, the study adopted a mixed-methods approach combining survey, interviews, focus group discussions, and documentary analysis to generate a comprehensive understanding of insecurity-induced educational disruptions. A total of 370 questionnaires were administered, of which 332 were valid for analysis. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations), alongside a thematic analysis of

[1] jinegbedion@noun.edu.ng
[2] holaniyi@noun.edu.ng
[3] bibebnjo@noun.edu.ng
[4] mohadiugha@noun.edu.ng

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qualitative responses. The findings revealed that respondents strongly perceive armed banditry as significantly undermining both access to and quality of education. Key disruptions include school closures, student absenteeism, teacher shortages, fear-induced learning challenges, displacement of families, and declining academic performance. Qualitative evidence further indicated the conversion of schools into temporary shelters, the collapse of boarding school systems in high-risk areas, and the relocation of students to safer urban centres due to persistent insecurity. The study concluded that armed banditry and cross-regional crimes constitute a major structural constraint to educational stability and human capital development in the region. In line with ecological and human security perspectives, the effects of insecurity extend beyond physical attacks to systemic disruptions across family, school, and institutional levels. The study recommended strengthened school protection systems, improved teacher retention incentives, psychosocial support for learners, and integrated community-based security and early-warning mechanisms to safeguard educational continuity in conflict-affected areas.

Keywords: Armed Banditry, Cross-Regional Crimes, Educational Development, Upper-Basic School, North Central Zone, Nigeria

Introduction

The growing incidence of armed banditry, insurgency, unemployment, and population displacement in parts of northern Nigeria has generated spillover effects that increasingly affect neighbouring regions. Consequently, the relatively stable north-central region has experienced rising levels of insecurity, with significant implications for social and educational development.

As Oluwole Ojewale noted, the North-Central zone, despite its historical role as a central educational hub in the northern region, now witnesses more community displacement and a decline in educational access and outcomes due to these security threats.[5] The consequences of these for upper-basic school students are particularly severe, as there are usually prolonged school closures due to insecurity and the psychological trauma of violence. These result in declining enrolment rates, increased dropout levels, and overall poor academic output for the once educationally proud region. Insecurity generates fear among students, teachers, and parents, while displacement into relatively safer communities contributes to overcrowding in schools and increased pressure on already limited educational resources.[6]

Cross-regional crimes and increasing armed banditry have severely hampered the educational progress of upper-basic school pupils in Nigeria's North Central Zone. School closures, lower enrolment rates, and general anxiety among children, parents, and instructors are the results of these crimes, which are marked by kidnappings, violent attacks, and forced relocations. Consistent

[5]Ojewale, Oluwole. "Learning on the Edge: Impacts of Banditry on Education and Strategic Options for Resilience in Northwest Nigeria." *African Security Review* 33, no. 2 (2024): 210–227. https://doi.org/10.1080/10246029.2024.2327314.

[6]Burde, Dana, Amy Kapit, Rachel L. Wahl, Ozen Guven, and Margaret I. Skarpeteig. "Education in Emergencies: A Review of Theory and Research." *Review of Educational Research* 87, no. 3 (2017): 619–658. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654316671594.

learning is practically impossible in this hostile environment, which has also damaged trust in the educational system. Academic performance has drastically decreased as a result, and many students are now unable to finish their coursework or obtain high-quality education.

Despite the array of significant research on the impacts of armed banditry and insecurity on various societal aspects in Nigeria, several gaps persist, particularly concerning education in the North-Central region. As an example, Idayat Hassan and James Barnett opined that many studies have focused on education in the North-West, where the activities of bandits have prevailed for longer periods.[7]

Additionally, pupils' mental and emotional health is severely hampered by the psychological trauma they experience as a result of being exposed to violence, which impairs their capacity to learn. There is a scarcity of qualified instructors as a result of the ongoing risks that teachers face, which reduce their willingness to serve in impacted areas. Many schools are now unable to function as a result of the devastation of educational infrastructure and the uprooting of entire populations.

A significant gap in existing research underpins the importance of this study. While current literature primarily examines the economic and security dimensions of armed banditry, the impact on education, particularly at the upper-basic level, remains largely unexplored. This project intends to bridge this gap by investigating both the direct and indirect effects of insecurity on educational development. For example, prolonged school closures not only hinder learning but also increase the likelihood of children falling into cycles of poverty and vulnerability, conditions that perpetuate banditry and other forms of criminality.

Objectives of the Study

i. Examine the impacts of armed banditry and cross-regional crimes on the accessibility and quality of education for upper-basic school students in the north-central region.

ii. Determine the effects of these vices on upper-basic schools and education in the region.

Literature review

This section presents a review of relevant literature (concepts, theoretical perspectives, and empirical studies) related to the implications of armed banditry and cross-regional crimes for the educational development of upper-basic school students in the North-Central Zone of Nigeria.

Conceptual Review

Banditry can be best understood as a fluid form of organised violence that evolves in response to shifting political economies, governance capacities, and security environments. Rather than being a static phenomenon, it reflects adaptive criminal strategies that exploit weak institutional structures and socio-

[7]Hassan, Idayat, and James Barnett. *Northwest Nigeria's Bandit Problem: Explaining the Conflict Drivers*. Centre for Democracy and Development, 2022. https://www.cddwestafrica.org/reports/northwest-nigeria-s-bandit-problem-explaining-the-conflict-drivers/

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economic vulnerabilities. Chukwuma Okoli and Francis Okpaleke explained that in contemporary Nigeria, banditry is commonly expressed through armed raids, kidnapping for ransom, cattle rustling, and coordinated attacks on rural settlements, all of which are driven largely by economic incentives and the erosion of effective state authority.[8]Collins, as cited by Suleiman Ladan and Bilkisu Matawalle, conceptualises banditry as the organised deployment of armed groups to target individuals, communities, and institutions for material gain.[9]

Beyond these definitional boundaries, banditry in Nigeria increasingly reflects a hybridisation of criminality and insurgent-like tactics, particularly in rural and peri-urban environments where the state presence is weak. This evolution underscores its significance as a human security challenge, with consequences extending beyond physical insecurity to include displacement, livelihood destruction, and institutional breakdown.

Closely related to this are cross-regional crimes, which refer to organised illicit activities that transcend administrative, state, or regional boundaries through coordinated networks of actors. These crimes are not confined to a single locality; rather, they operate across interconnected spaces, exploiting jurisdictional fragmentation and uneven enforcement capacity. Common manifestations include arms trafficking, human trafficking, drug smuggling, cattle rustling networks, and kidnapping syndicates. Conceptually, such activities fall within the broader framework of transnational organised crime, which Hauck and Peterkedefine as structured criminal enterprises operating across jurisdictions for sustained economic gain. Similarly, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crimeemphasises that these networks thrive when institutional coordination is weak, governance is fragmented, and enforcement systems are unable to respond collectively across borders and regions.

Closely related to this is the concept of cross-regional crime, which refers to organised illicit activities that transcend administrative, state, or regional boundaries through coordinated networks of actors. Such crimes are not confined to a single locality; rather, they operate across interconnected spaces, exploiting jurisdictional fragmentation and uneven enforcement capacities. Common manifestations include arms trafficking, human trafficking, drug smuggling, cattle-rustling networks, and kidnapping syndicates. Conceptually, these activities fall within the broader framework of organised crime, particularly where criminal networks operate across multiple jurisdictions for sustained economic gain. Pierre Hauck and Sven Peterke describe such criminal enterprises as structured organisations whose activities extend across jurisdictions and are sustained by economic interests.[10] Similarly, the United

[8]Okoli, Al Chukwuma, and Francis Okpaleke. "Banditry and Crisis of Public Safety in Nigeria: Issues in National Security Strategics." *European Scientific Journal* 10, no. 4 (2014): 350–362. https://doi.org/10.19044/esj.2014.v10n4p%

[9]Ladan, Suleiman Iguda, and Bilkisu Usman Matawalle. "Impacts of Banditry on Food Security in Katsina State, Nigeria." *Direct Research Journal of Agriculture and Food Sciences* 8, no. 12 (2020): 439–447. https://doi.org/10.26765/DRJAFS278190136.

[10]Hauck, Pierre, and Sven Peterke. *International Law and Transnational Organized Crime*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016. https://doi.org/10.1093/law/9780198733737.001.0001.

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Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) emphasises that organised criminal networks are facilitated by weak institutional coordination, fragmented governance, and limited capacity to mount coordinated enforcement responses across jurisdictions.[11]

In Nigeria, cross-regional criminal groups are particularly significant due to porous borders, weak inter-agency collaboration, and the mobility of armed groups across states in the North-Central corridor and adjoining regions. These conditions facilitate the circulation of weapons, financial resources, and criminal actors, thereby deepening insecurity and complicating conventional policing strategies. Importantly, these dynamics also blur the boundaries between localised crime and regionalised insecurity, making them a persistent structural challenge rather than isolated criminal events.

Educational development, in contrast, refers to the progressive expansion and qualitative improvement of an education system in terms of access, equity, learning outcomes, institutional capacity, and human capital formation. It is not limited to enrolment statistics but encompasses the stability and effectiveness of educational institutions in delivering continuous and meaningful learning experiences. In conflict-affected settings, however, educational development becomes highly vulnerable to disruption. Schools often serve as both symbolic and physical targets of violence, resulting in closures, teacher displacement, infrastructural decay, and interrupted learning trajectories.

Empirical observations confirm that insecurity generates a pervasive climate of fear that undermines educational participation and continuity. The West Africa Network for Peacebuilding (WANEP) notes that attacks on schools and the abduction of learners create sustained psychological fear among parents, students, and teachers, thereby weakening trust in formal education systems.[12]The effects of such insecurity are not evenly distributed; they disproportionately affect marginalised populations, particularly girls and rural learners, thereby deepening pre-existing structural inequalities in access to education.

In sum, banditry and cross-regional crimes exist as interconnected forms of insecurity that transcend local boundaries and manifest through organised violence and mobility-based criminal networks. Their interactions with educational systems produce cascading effects that destabilise school environments, disrupt learning continuity, and weaken the broader structure of educational development. In environments such as the North-Central Zone of Nigeria, these dynamics illustrate how insecurity becomes embedded within the educational ecosystem, reshaping not only access to schooling but also the quality, equity, and sustainability of education itself.

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[11]United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. *The Globalization of Crime: A Transnational Organized Crime Threat Assessment*. United Nations, 2010. https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/tocta/TOCTA_Report_2010_low_res.pdf.

[12]West Africa Network for Peacebuilding. *Annual Report 2024*. WANEP, 2025. https://wanep.org/wanep/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/WANEP-ENG_2024.pdf.

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Theoretical Framework

This study is primarily anchored on the Ecological Systems Theory, while the Human Security Theory is adopted as a complementary theoretical framework to explain the broader insecurity paradigm shaping educational outcomes.

Ecological Systems Theory

Ecological Systems Theory, developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner, explains human development as a product of continuous interaction between individuals and their layered environmental conditions. These conditions operate across interconnected levels, including the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem, each representing a distinct but interrelated sphere of influence on human development.[13][14] In this study, the theory provides a structured lens for examining how armed banditry and cross-regional crimes shape the educational development of upper-basic school students through their effects on the immediate, institutional, social, and broader environmental contexts within which students live and learn.

At the microsystem level, learners are directly affected through exposure to fear, trauma, displacement, and disruption of family stability, all of which interfere with concentration and learning processes. At the mesosystem level, weakened interactions between home, school, and community reduce parental engagement and diminish consistent educational support. The exosystem reflects broader institutional and environmental disruptions such as school closures, teacher shortages, and insecurity-driven relocation of educational personnel. At the macrosystem level, structural conditions such as governance deficits, socio-economic inequality, and regional insecurity shape the broader educational environment. Over time, the chronosystem captures cumulative exposure to insecurity, including repeated disruptions in schooling, interrupted educational trajectories, and long-term reductions in academic achievement and human capital development.[15]

Although Ecological Systems Theory provides a comprehensive developmental framework, it has been criticised for its limited explanatory focus on causal prioritisation and the complexity involved in disentangling interactions across multiple system levels. To address this limitation, this study focuses analytically on the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem levels, where the immediate educational consequences of insecurity are most observable.

Human Security Theory

[13]Bronfenbrenner, Urie. *The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.
[14]Bronfenbrenner, Urie, and Pamela A. Morris. "The Bioecological Model of Human Development." In *Handbook of Child Psychology*, 6th ed., vol. 1, edited by W. Damon and R. M. Lerner, 793–828. Wiley, 2006.
[15]Burde, Dana, Amy Kapit, Rachel L. Wahl, Ozen Guven, and Margaret I. Skarpeteig. "Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises: Toward Evidence-Based Programming." *Review of Educational Research* 93, no. 2 (2023): 245–284. https://doi.org/10.3102/00346543221133802.

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The United Nations Development Programme's 1994 formulation of human security marked an important shift from conventional, state-centred conceptions of security toward a people-centred understanding of security that emphasised protection from threats to human well-being and freedom from fear and want.[16] Building on this broader conception, the Commission on Human Security's 2003 formulation of Human Security Theory provides a complementary analytical framework for situating educational disruption within broader conditions of insecurity, vulnerability, and human deprivation. The theory shifts the focus from state-centred security concerns to the protection of individuals from critical threats to survival, dignity, and wellbeing, particularly in fragile and conflict-affected communities.[17]

In this study, armed banditry and cross-regional crimes are conceptualised not only as security threats but also as direct violations of human security that undermine access to essential services, especially education. Their effects are evident in recurrent school closures, displacement of families, teacher shortages, fear-induced absenteeism, and psychosocial trauma among learners. According to Ann Masten and Anna Narayan, these conditions reflect how insecurity extends beyond physical violence to disrupt human development processes and weaken long-term educational attainment and social stability.[18] Human Security Theory thus provides a macro-level explanatory bridge linking structural insecurity, governance deficits, and socio-economic vulnerability to educational disruption through complements to Ecological Systems Theory.

Empirical Review

Armed banditry has become a major destabilising factor for education across conflict-affected regions in northern Nigeria. The United Nations Children's Fund and the UNESCO Institute for Statistics both noted that recurrent attacks, particularly high-profile school abductions in states such as Katsina, Kaduna, and Niger, have generated widespread fear among students, parents, and teachers, resulting in intermittent school closures and significant disruption of learning continuity. Recent humanitarian assessments confirm that insecurity has severely reduced school attendance and increased the number of out-of-school children in affected regions, with Nigeria accounting for one of the highest global burdens of children outside formal education due to insecurity.[19][20]

[16]United Nations Development Programme. *Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security*. Oxford University Press, 1994. https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-1994.
[17]Commission on Human Security. *Human Security Now*. United Nations, 2003. https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/503749.
[18]Masten, Ann S., and Anna J. Narayan. "Child Development in the Context of Disaster, War, and Terrorism." *Annual Review of Psychology* 63 (2012): 227–257. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-120710-100356.
[19]United Nations Children's Fund. *Education in Emergencies: Nigeria Situation Report*. 2023. https://www.unicef.org/nigeria.
[20]UNESCO Institute for Statistics. *Out-of-School Children Data*. 2023. https://uis.unesco.org.

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Empirical evidence from John Ojo, Samuel Oyewole, and Folahanmi Aina further demonstrates a strong relationship between socio-economic deprivation and the persistence of violent non-state armed groups.[21] Contemporary conflict studies show that poverty, unemployment, weak governance, and limited state presence create enabling conditions for criminal networks to thrive, particularly in rural and peri-urban communities.[22] In turn, armed banditry reinforces these vulnerabilities by displacing households, destroying livelihoods, and restricting access to basic social services, including education. According to the World Bank, this cyclical relationship between insecurity and poverty has been widely described as a self-reinforcing "conflict trap" in fragile settings.[23]

Similarly, Musibae Oyebode, Aminu Umar, Ebele Udeoji, Basil Ibebunjo, and Abel Obaka found that displacement caused by insecurity has also produced significant educational spillover effects in urban receiving communities. Studies on forced migration in Nigeria indicate that influxes of internally displaced populations place additional pressure on already overstretched urban schools, resulting in overcrowded classrooms, strained infrastructure, and reduced learning quality.[24] These dynamics highlight how insecurity in one region reshapes educational demand and service delivery in relatively safer areas, thereby extending the educational impact of conflict beyond its immediate geographic location.

In North-Central Nigeria, emerging studies from Burde et al. further emphasise that insecurity has become a critical determinant of educational access and quality. Significant influences on both enrolment patterns and instructional continuity have emerged from school safety concerns, teacher mobility constraints, and community-level instability. These findings suggest that educational systems in conflict-affected regions are not only disrupted but structurally weakened, as insecurity reshapes institutional capacity and learning environments over time.[25]

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining survey and descriptive research designs, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the effects of armed banditry on educational development, with a focus on upper middle school education in Nigeria's north-central zone.

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[21]Ojo, John Sunday, Samuel Oyewole, and Folahanmi Aina. "Forces of Terror: Armed Banditry and Insecurity in North-west Nigeria." *Democracy and Security* 19, no. 4 (2023): 319–346. https://doi.org/10.1080/17419166.2023.2164924.
[22]International Crisis Group. *Violence in Nigeria's North-West and North-Central Regions: Drivers and Responses*. 2022. https://www.crisisgroup.org.
[23]World Bank. *Fragility, Conflict, and Violence: Overview*. 2020. https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/fragilityconflictviolence.
[24]Oyebode, Musibae O., Aminu Umar, Ebele A. Udeoji, Basil O. Ibebunjo, and Abel O. Obaka. "Forced Internal Migration, Proliferation of Urban Slums and Disquiet in Kano Metropolis, Nigeria." *International Journal of Migration and Global Studies* 4, no. 2 (2024): 1–21.
[25]Burde et al., "Education in Emergencies and Protracted Crises,"

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Area of Study

The study was conducted in Nigeria's North-Central geopolitical zone, specifically the Benue, Nasarawa, and Niger states, selected due to their growing exposure to armed banditry and cross-regional crimes. The area was also chosen because of observed disruptions in upper-basic education.

Population of the Study

The study targeted upper-basic school students (JSS1–JSS3) in conflict-affected LGAs of Benue, Niger, and Nasarawa States, with primary data obtained from teachers, school administrators, and parents/guardians due to their reliability and institutional roles. Students were included as secondary respondents through ethically approved and supervised methods, ensuring compliance with child protection standards while strengthening data triangulation.

Sampling Technique and Procedure

The study adopted a multistage sampling design involving purposive, stratified, and simple random techniques. Benue, Niger, and Nasarawa States were purposively selected, with three (3) conflict-affected LGAs chosen from each state, for a total of nine (9) LGAs. From each LGA, twelve (12) public upper-basic schools were randomly selected, resulting in a total of 108 schools.

At the respondent level, each school contributed approximately 10 teachers/administrators, 10 parents, and 120 students, yielding an estimated 1,080 teachers, 1,080 parents, and 12,960 students across the study. Selection within strata was done using simple random sampling for staff, purposive selection through PTA structures for parents, and systematic random sampling for students under strict ethical procedures. In conflict-sensitive situations, this design ensured broad coverage, representativeness, and methodological rigour.

Sample Size Determination

The sample size for this study was determined using Cochran's (1977) formula for large populations at a 95% confidence level (Z = 1.96), a 5% margin of error, and an assumed population proportion of 0.5, which yielded an initial estimate of 384 respondents. Given that the target population was finite (N = 5,040), the estimate was refined using the finite population correction formula, producing an adjusted sample size of approximately 357 respondents.

This result was further validated using Robert Krejcie and Daryle Morgan's (1970) table for determining sample size, which similarly indicates an optimal sample size of about 357 for populations of comparable magnitude.[26] To enhance representativeness across stakeholder categories and strengthen subgroup analysis, the sample size was increased to 370 respondents. The final sample comprised 250 students, 60 teachers/administrators, and 60 parents, ensuring statistical adequacy, proportional balance, and robust analytical coverage of key respondent groups.

Data Collection and Analyses

Primary data were collected using structured questionnaires, semi-structured interviews with teachers, parents, and community leaders, supervised focus

[26]Krejcie, Robert V., and Daryle W. Morgan. "Determining Sample Size for Research Activities." *Educational and Psychological Measurement* 30, no. 3 (1970): 607–610.

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group discussions with students, and documentary sources such as school records and reports on insecurity-related incidents. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistical tools, including frequency counts, means, and standard deviations, to summarise respondents' views on the impact of insecurity on educational access, quality, and development. Qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions was analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns, meanings, and lived experiences relating to armed banditry and educational disruptions. Documentary evidence was used to triangulate and validate findings from both quantitative and qualitative sources, ensuring consistency and depth of interpretation.

Data Presentation and Analyses

This section presents and interprets the data collected for the study, aligning it with the research objectives. Out of 370 copies of questionnaires administered, 332 were properly completed and returned, while 23 were invalid and 15 were not returned. Thus, a 332 sample size was the dataset used for analysis in this study.

Research Objective One: *Examination of the impacts of armed banditry and cross-regional crimes on the accessibility and quality of education for upper-basic school students in the north-central region*

Table 5: Impact of Armed Banditry on Students' Education (N = 332)

S/No	**Statement**	**Sample Size (N)**	Mean ($\bar{X}$)	**Std. Dev (σ)**	Decision
1	Reduced students' ability to attend school regularly	332	4.18	1.08	Agree
2	Closure of many upper-basic schools	332	4.09	1.10	Agree
3	Teachers avoid postings in unsafe areas.	332	4.18	1.02	Agree
4	Students experience fear affecting learning outcomes.	332	4.18	1.08	Agree
5	Armed attacks make school environments unsafe.	332	4.23	1.05	Agree

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6	Decline in quality of instruction due to disruptions	332	4.16	1.06	Agree
7	Families relocate/withdraw children due to insecurity.	332	4.09	1.14	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2026

In the first instance, the narrow range of mean scores (4.09–4.23), as can be seen above, suggests that respondents view the effects of armed banditry as interconnected rather than isolated educational challenges. Insecurity simultaneously affects school safety, teacher availability, student participation, instructional quality, and educational continuity.

The results in the table above indicate that respondents perceive armed banditry as having substantial and multidimensional impacts on the accessibility and quality of education. The highest mean score was recorded for armed attacks making school environments unsafe (M = 4.23, SD ≈ 1.05), followed closely by reduced students' ability to attend school regularly (M = 4.18, SD ≈ 1.08), teachers avoiding postings to unsafe areas (M = 4.18, SD ≈ 1.02), and students experiencing fear affecting learning outcomes (M = 4.18, SD ≈ 1.08). These high mean values suggest strong agreement that respondents strongly agree that insecurity disrupts both physical access to schooling and the psychological conditions necessary for effective learning. The relatively moderate standard deviations indicate a considerable level of consensus among respondents regarding these critical impacts.

The closure of many upper-basic schools (M = 4.09, SD ≈ 1.10) and families relocating or withdrawing children due to insecurity (M = 4.09, SD ≈ 1.14) also recorded high mean scores, underscoring the systemic nature of educational disruption. These findings suggest that insecurity not only affects individual learners but also destabilises educational institutions and community-level participation in schools. The decline in instructional quality due to disruptions (M = 4.16, SD ≈ 1.06) further highlights the indirect educational consequences of armed banditry. Frequent interruptions to schooling, teacher shortages, and unstable learning environments undermine instructional effectiveness and student achievement.

Respondents at Government Science College Kagara reported abduction incidents that resulted in school closures, examination disruptions, and the withdrawal of students by concerned parents. Reports indicate that Kagara schools also served as IDP shelters, prompting numerous families to move their children to safer areas like Minna. These experiences provide depth to the quantitative findings and illustrate how insecurity disrupts educational access, continuity, and learning outcomes.

The quantitative evidence of disruption is strongly reinforced by personal accounts of abductions, fear, displacement, and the breakdown of traditional

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schooling arrangements, thereby confirming the adverse effects of armed banditry on both educational access and instructional quality.

Research Objective Two: *Determination of the effects of these vices on upper-basic schools and education in the region*

Table 2: Effects on Upper-Basic Schools and Education

S/No	**Statement**	**Sample Size (N)**	**Mean** ($\overline{X}$)	**Std. Dev** (σ)	**Decision**
1	Shortage of qualified teachers	332	4.18	1.03	Agree
2	Damage to school facilities and infrastructure	332	4.12	1.09	Agree
3	High student absenteeism	332	4.18	1.08	Agree
4	Displacement of families disrupts students' education	332	4.20	1.06	Agree
5	More resources spent on security than teaching	332	4.07	1.12	Agree
6	Examination performance has dropped	332	4.11	1.10	Agree
7	Overall educational development declined	332	4.16	1.05	Agree

Source: Field Survey, 2026

The results indicate that respondents perceive armed banditry as having profound and systemic effects on upper-basic schools and overall educational development. The highest mean score was recorded for displacement of families disrupting students' education (M = 4.20, SD ≈ 1.06), followed closely by shortage of qualified teachers (M = 4.18, SD ≈ 1.03) and high student absenteeism (M = 4.18, SD ≈ 1.08). These high mean values suggest strong agreement that population displacement and human resource shortages are central mechanisms through which insecurity undermines schooling. The relatively moderate standard deviations indicate a high level of consensus among respondents regarding these disruptions.

Damage to school facilities and infrastructure (M = 4.12, SD ≈ 1.09) and examination performance decline (M = 4.11, SD ≈ 1.10) also recorded high

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mean scores, reinforcing the view that armed banditry affects both the physical and academic dimensions of education. These findings suggest that beyond access constraints, the quality and outcomes of education are significantly compromised. With regards to the test item, "More resources being spent on security than teaching" (M = 4.07, SD ≈ 1.12), although it recorded the lowest mean among the items, it still reflects strong agreement that insecurity affects resource allocation. This indicates agreement that insecurity distorts educational priorities and resource allocation, albeit with slightly more variation in perception among respondents.

In total, educational development declined (M = 4.16, SD ≈ 1.05), further capturing the cumulative effect of these disruptions, reflecting a broad consensus that the impact of armed banditry extends beyond immediate school-level challenges to affect the wider educational system.

Principals in Niger State reported repeated school invasions and consequently called for enhanced security presence in schools, including the deployment of armed protection personnel. They also suggested restructuring boarding schools into day-school systems to reduce vulnerability to attacks. Teachers similarly reported declining enrolment, academic instability, and disruptions to their teaching activities. The qualitative findings therefore complement the quantitative results by illustrating the operational realities of insecurity in schools, particularly in terms of human resource shortages, infrastructural vulnerability, and learning disruption. These narratives further explain how armed banditry translates into institutional weakening and adaptive coping strategies within the education system.

Discussion of Findings

In the section below, discussions on the findings from the tables above are carried out and synthesised against their alignment or divergence from past studies. The analysis is carried out under the two key objectives raised for the study.

Impact on accessibility and quality of education

The quantitative results show that armed banditry significantly affects school attendance, teacher deployment, learning outcomes, and psychological safety. High mean scores for fear, absenteeism, school closures, and teacher avoidance indicate that insecurity directly undermines both access and quality of education. These findings are consistent with UNESCO, which reports that attacks on education significantly disrupt learning systems globally[27], and UNICEF, which documents widespread school disruptions in northern Nigeria due to insecurity.[28]

AbrahamMaslow's (1943) hierarchy of needs further explains these findings, as learning cannot occur effectively in environments where physical safety is not guaranteed.[29]PatriciaJustino also argues that violent conflict reduces

[27]UNESCO Institute for Statistics. *Out-of-School Children Data*
[28] UNICEF, *Education in Emergencies: Nigeria Situation Report*.
[29]Maslow, Abraham H. "A Theory of Human Motivation." *Psychological Review* 50, no. 4 (1943): 370–396. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0054346.

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educational participation through displacement and insecurity-induced withdrawal.[30]

The qualitative data provide strong corroboration. At Government Science College Kagara, respondents reported that a 2021 attack resulted in student deaths and abductions, leading to prolonged school closure and widespread fear among parents. A teacher explained that parents began withdrawing children from school due to repeated invasions, particularly during examinations. This aligns with the quantitative evidence of reduced attendance and fear-driven learning disruption.

Further accounts from Kagara revealed that insecurity has led to the displacement of families and the conversion of schools into IDP shelters, significantly reducing classroom availability. One respondent further noted that many families relocated their children to safer urban centres, such as Minna. These narratives provide depth to the statistical finding that insecurity significantly disrupts educational access and quality.

In sum, findings for this study align with empirical evidence which shows that insecurity significantly reduces school attendance, increases dropout rates, and weakens learning outcomes in conflict-affected settings.[31] However, according to Mario Novelli, Mieke Lopes Cardozo, and Alan Smith,education in emergency literature has also suggested that the impact of insecurity is often mediated by deeper structural inequalities within education systems.[32]

Effects on upper-basic schools and educational development

Quantitative findings suggest that armed banditry contributes to teacher shortages, infrastructural damage, student absenteeism, declining academic performance, and overall educational deterioration. These results align with Burde et al., who argue that conflict undermines education systems through both physical destruction and human resource depletion.[33]Peter Bennell similarly highlights teacher attrition and low motivation in insecure environments.[34]

Ojewale further documents that banditry in north-west Nigeria has led to school closures, attacks on students, and systemic disruption of learning. These findings correspond with the observed decline in examination performance and institutional stability.[35]

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[30]Justino, Patricia. "Supply and Demand Restrictions to Education in Conflict-Affected Countries." *International Journal of Educational Development* 47 (2016): 76–85. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijedudev.2015.11.002.
[31]Burde, *et. al.*. "Education in Emergencies: A Review of Theory and Research."
[32]Novelli, Mario, Mieke T. A. Lopes Cardozo, and Alan Smith. "The 4Rs Framework: Analyzing Education's Contribution to Sustainable Peacebuilding with Social Justice in Conflict-Affected Contexts." *Journal on Education in Emergencies* 3, no. 1 (2017): 14–43. https://doi.org/10.17609/N8S94K.
[33]Burde, *et. al.*. "Education in Emergencies: A Review of Theory and Research."
[34]Bennell, Peter. *Teacher Motivation and Incentives in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Knowledge and Skills for Development, 2004.
[35]Ojewale. "Learning on the Edge: Impacts of Banditry on Education and Strategic Options for Resilience in Northwest Nigeria."

Qualitative evidence reinforces these conclusions. A principal from Niger State reported that schools require at least twenty security personnel for adequate protection, while another suggested permanent "school watch" systems operating 24 hours daily. Respondents also proposed converting boarding schools into day schools to reduce vulnerability to night attacks. These adaptive strategies reflect lived responses to institutional breakdown and insecurity.

In Kagara, repeated invasions during examination periods resulted in severe academic disruption and widespread fear among students and parents. A teacher described the situation as a "collapse of academic stability," reflecting the broader impact of insecurity on learning continuity. These narratives further reinforce the quantitative findings, demonstrating that armed banditry not only disrupts schooling structures but also undermines educational stability across surrounding communities through displacement, fear, and reduced participation.

Conclusion

This study examined the impact of armed banditry and cross-regional crimes on upper-basic education, focusing on their effects on educational accessibility, quality, and broader implications for schools. The findings revealed that respondents widely perceived insecurity as disrupting teaching and learning through school closures, student withdrawal, family displacement, teacher shortages, fear-induced learning challenges, and declining academic performance. The qualitative evidence additionally revealed the collapse of some boarding school systems, the conversion of schools into IDP shelters, and the increasing relocation of students to safer urban centres due to persistent attacks and abductions.

The study therefore concludes that armed banditry and cross-regional crimes constitute a major structural impediment to educational stability, learning continuity, and human capital development in affected communities. In line with human security and ecological systems perspectives, the disruption of education reflects both broader insecurity conditions and cascading effects across family, school, and institutional environments. Without coordinated interventions such as strengthened school protection systems, psychosocial support services, and flexible learning arrangements, the long-term consequences may deepen cycles of poverty, exclusion, and educational inequality in the region.

Recommendations

1. Government and relevant stakeholders should rehabilitate damaged educational infrastructure and provide incentives to retain qualified teachers in insecure areas to restore educational quality and stability.

2. An integrated response combining community participation, psychosocial support services, and flexible learning systems should be adopted to strengthen educational resilience in areas affected by armed banditry.

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3. Government at all levels, in collaboration with security agencies, should strengthen proactive school security mechanisms through the deployment of early-warning systems, improved intelligence gathering, and sustained protection of vulnerable school corridors to prevent attacks and reduce exposure of students and staff to armed banditry.

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