Original Paper

From Classroom to the Streets: Assessment of the Implications of Banditry to the Disruption of Basic Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

Banditry continues to gain momentum and escalate the security conundrum in Nigeria whilst threatening to submerge the nation in a perpetual state of conflict. Security threats have heavily impacted basic education by creating a climate of fear and insecurity, which discourages school attendance and hinders schools' ability to function effectively. This study explores the constraints that banditry poses on school disruptions, paying particular attention to teachers and students' mental well-being. It also examines efforts made to mitigate the effects of menace. This study is pigeon-holed within the framework of Social Disorganization Theory and adopts a qualitative approach that relies on the use of secondary data sourced from peer-reviewed journal articles, government briefs, international organization reports, and the Internet. The study concludes that the constraints of banditry on basic education in Nigeria are enormous. This leads to the destruction of schools and other educational facilities; disruption of school schedules and attendance due to security concerns, threats, and violence against teachers and students; displacement of teachers and students due to insecurity; and a negative impact on the mental health and overall well-being of teachers and students. This paper recommends the improvement of security at schools, addressing the underlying social and economic issues that drive people to engage in banditry, and investing in economic development and job creation in areas where banditry is prevalent.

Keywords: banditry, basic education, displacement, insecurity, violence

Introduction

It is a maxim that insecurity is an existential threat undermining Nigeria's socioeconomic and sociopolitical development. The daily reporting of violence, bloodshed, agony, and kidnapping is a testament to the level of impunity of armed non-state actors and how they have permeated Nigerian social milieu. Extremist groups have established a culture of violence caught in the cyclic web of terrorism, insurgency, kidnap-for-ransom, unknown gunmen, militancy, farmer-herder conflict, armed robbery, secessionist agitation, and banditry. These multi-pronged security challenges – predominant in the various geopolitical regions of the country – are symptomatic of a nation in crisis, overwhelmed by recurring conflict and violence.

Banditry is acute in the northern parts of the country especially Zamfara, Kano, Kaduna, Sokoto, Kebbi, Niger, Kano and Jigawa states. Moreover, pockets of bandit attacks have been reported in other parts of the country, including the Ondo state (Sanchi et al. 2022). Banditry causes disruptions and security threats in the northern parts of the country. One sector that has been heavily impacted by menace is basic education, where an atmosphere of fear and insecurity has been created, thus discouraging students' school attendance and hindering the ability of schools to function effectively (Ngwoke & Akabike, 2022). Basic education refers to foundational or core educational levels (UNESCO 1994). All other forms of educational growth are based on this fundamental education. This determines the stability of all subsequent educational endeavors. This is an important foundation for children's overall development and future prospects. Therefore, the success or failure of all the other phases of education is largely determined by basic education, making this educational level essential (Amadioha & Akor, 2020). In the Nigerian context, basic education refers to the first nine years of schooling from primary to junior

secondary school (Uwaifo & Uddin, 2009).

There is a growing concern about the nexus between banditry and terrorism. The Goodluck Jonathan Foundation (2021) argues that "the gradual emergence of Islamist fundamentalist groups in the same geographical space that has been dominated by bandits alone" points to the operational convergence between bandits and terrorists. There is also increasing evidence of collaboration between bandits and terrorist groups to kidnap schoolchildren, perpetrate joint attacks, and exchange weapons. Onuoha and Akogwu (2022) contextualized that kidnapping and the deployment of arms establish a nexus between terrorism and banditry, showing that the former is thinly disguised as the latter. This view finds vivid expression in the Terrorism Prevention Act (2022), which designates anyone or group that solicits and supports a terrorist group as committing an act of terrorism.

The effectiveness of basic education has been hindered by several challenges, including banditry. According to Nextier Security, Peace, and Development [Nextier SPD] (2022a), there were 18.5 million out-of-school children in Nigeria in 2022. This is an exponential increase from the 10.5 million recorded in 2021. This is attributable to the terrorism in the northeast, banditry in the northwest and north-central areas of Nigeria and persistent stay-at-home order by the Independent People of Biafra (IPOB) in the southeast. Persistent attacks by these groups have contributed exponentially to the prevalence of out-of-school children in Nigeria.

Children who attend school in northern Nigeria face serious health hazards due to exposure to violence and kidnapping. For instance, in Plateau state, over eight schools were shut down in 2022 because of increasing bandit attacks and killings (Abraham, 2022). Banditry impedes learning and leaves children stranded. In the face of a protracted humanitarian catastrophe, educational services seem secondary (Nextier SPD 2022b). Kidnapping for ransom, which primarily targets schoolchildren, is a lucrative business for bandits, who use proceeds to support their activities. This strategy is similar to that previously used by Boko Haram when it abducted schoolgirls in Chibok and demanded ransom payments before some were released (Goodluck Jonathan Foundation, 2021). To sum up the author's view, "school kidnapping...has become the hallmark of banditry' (p. 7).

Although scholars have examined how banditry impedes educational development in Nigeria, the discourse remains underexplored and has attracted less attention. Considering the persistence of the scourge, it is appropriate for scholars and policymakers to continually explore the dynamism associated with imbroglio and its implications for education. However, the effect of scourge on teachers is largely glossed. To this end, the thematic analysis of this study seeks to fill a significant lacuna in the literature by exploring the effect of school disruptions on teachers' mental well-being. It pays equal attention to the role of civil society organizations in combating banditry to protect education.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical explanation that underpins this paper is Social Disorganization Theory [SDT] (Sampson & Groves, 1989). Social Disorganization Theory Developed by Robert J. Sampson and W. Byron Groves in 1989, is a criminological theory that explains the relationship between community structure and crime. According to this theory, crime and deviant behavior are more likely to occur in neighborhoods or communities that have a high degree of social disorganization or breakdown of social institutions and community networks. SDT suggests that social ties and community cohesion play a key role in regulating behavior and preventing crime. When these ties are strong and cohesive, individuals are more likely to conform to social norms and laws as they feel a sense of obligation to their community. By contrast, when social ties are weak and disorganized, individuals may feel less connected to their community and may be more likely to engage in criminal or deviant behavior.

According to the SDT, the breakdown of social institutions and community networks leads to an increase in crime and deviant behavior. In the context of basic education in Nigeria, banditry disrupts the normal functioning of schools and creates a climate of fear and insecurity that hinders the educational process in areas where there is a breakdown of norms in the community, as is prevalent in the face of growing insecurity.

Conceptual Clarification

Banditry is an organized crime that includes violence and robbery. The term used in the Nigerian context describes a variety of illegal crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, raiding, arson, armed militia, cattle rustling, and Fulani herdsmen attacks to acquire material profit (Akinyetun & Bakare, 2022). Banditry can be described as a crime of opportunity that takes advantage of the prevailing circumstances in a locality. Thus, the convergence of deprivation, exclusion, ungoverned space, weak state institutions, unemployment, poverty, bad governance, and farmer-herder crises in an environment gives a propensity for crime (Akinyetun, 2022). It is believed that the prevalence of inequality marginalization, multidimensional poverty, porous borders, and ungoverned spaces in Northern Nigeria drives banditry (West Africa Network for Peacebuilding [WANEP], 2021). Banditry has also been described as a situational crime that grows owing to the interaction of the person, setting, situation, and action. Banditry in Nigeria is the result of interactions among those affected by local socioeconomic situations. The environment is characterized by persistent societal malaise. Interaction with the environment leads to bad decisions, which inspires criminal behavior (Akinyetun, 2021).

Basic education plays a crucial role in both personal and societal development. It provides individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary to participate fully in their communities and lead fulfilling lives. Simultaneously, a well-educated population is essential to a country's economic and social progress. One of the most important benefits of basic education is its ability to empower individuals and give them the confidence and skills needed for success (UNESCO 1994). Basic quality education gives people the knowledge and skills to understand their rights and responsibilities as well as the tools to transform their own lives and those of their families and communities. This includes ideals such as literacy, numeracy, and problem-solving skills as well as knowledge about health and the environment (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2022).

Basic education is also closely linked to economic development. Studies have shown that countries with higher educational levels tend to have stronger economies and lower poverty rates. For example, China's two-decade aggressive spending to reduce illiteracy has increased productivity. Moreover, basic education helps reduce hunger and poverty through feeding programs initiated in schools. It is believed that increasing primary school enrolment will reduce poverty by 12 per cent (Grant, 2017). Education can lead to technological and scientific advances that drive economic growth because educated individuals are more likely to find good jobs and contribute to their communities. Basic education can have positive social and cultural effects. It can help promote social cohesion and reduce inequality as it provides opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to come together and learn from each other. Education can help preserve cultural traditions and values as it provides a way for communities to pass on important knowledge and skills to future generations (Amadioha & Akor, 2020).

Banditry and Education in Nigeria: Counting the cost of disruption

Basic education in Nigeria has long been fraught with numerous challenges such as widespread poverty, inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, low enrollment, and high dropout rates (Jokodola, 2021). Recent threats to education in northern Nigeria include banditry. An example of the impact of banditry on education in Nigeria occurred in 2019, when armed bandits abducted several teachers and students from the Government Girls Secondary School in Moriki, Zamfara State (Obiejesi, 2019).

School abductions have become recurring phenomena occurring in succession. Between April 2014 and June 2021, militants and bandits abducted 1548 pupils in 11 consecutive events in Northern Nigeria (Okafor, 2021). These mass kidnappings took place in primary, secondary, and higher institutions of learning in the Zamfara, Niger, Katsina, and Kaduna States. The majority of the instances occur at night, with the victims being carried into the forests (Onuoha & Akogwa, 2022). Table 1 presents selected incidents of bandit attacks on schools in Northern Nigeria.

Table 1. Selected incidents of bandit attacks on schools 2020-2023

SN	Date	Location	Incident
1	January, 20 2023	Doma, Nasarawa	6 primary school pupils of Alwaza Community School
2	April 13, 2022	Tsafe, Zamfara State	Five female students were abducted from College of Health Science and Technology
3	September 1, 2021	Maradun, Zamfara state	73 Students were abducted from Government Day Secondary school,
4	August 18, 2021	Faskari, Katsina	9 pupils and 1 staff were abducted from an Islamic school in Sakkai village
5	July 5, 2021	Chikun, Kaduna	121 students were abducted from Bethel Baptist High School
6	June 17,	Birnin Yauri, Kebbi state	80 students and 5 staff were abducted from Federal Government College
7	April 20, 2021	Chikun, Kaduna	20 students and 2 staff were kidnapped from Greenfield University
8	March 15, 2021	Birnin Gwari, Kaduna	Several pupils and teachers were abducted in LEA Primary School in Rama
9	March 11, 2021	Afaka, Kaduna	39 students were kidnapped from College of Forestry
10	February 26, 2021	Jangebe, Zamfara state,	317 girls were abducted from the Government Girls Secondary School
12	February 17, 2021	Kagara, Niger state	27 students and 15 staff were abducted from Government Science College
12	December 11, 2020	Kankara, Katsina state	344 boys were abducted from Government Science Secondary School

Source: Author compilation from dailies

The consequences of these attacks go beyond the immediate trauma experienced by the students and staff. The closure of schools due to banditry can have long-term effects on children's education and their future prospects. Research has shown that even a short period of disruption to schooling can negatively impact children's cognitive development and future academic achievement (Miller & Hui, 2022). Furthermore, fear of attack can prevent parents from sending their children to school, further exacerbating the problem.

Destruction of schools and other educational facilities

The impact of banditry on educational infrastructure has been extensively studied and documented (Miller and Hui 2022). In a report by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack [GCPEA] (2022), more than 5,000 recorded incidents of attacks on education and military usage of schools and colleges in 2020 and 2021 injured more than 9,000 students and teachers in at least 85 different nations (including Nigeria) and destroyed the infrastructure. The proliferation of armed groups and criminal organizations, including bandits, has had a devastating impact on education systems in conflict-affected areas. In many cases, schools have been destroyed or used as military bases, teachers have been targeted for attacks or recruitment, and students have been kidnapped or recruited as soldiers. This has resulted in the widespread disruption of education, with many children being unable to attend school or receive inadequate education due to the lack of trained teachers and resources. The GCPEA report estimates that, in conflict-affected countries, over 75% of schools are closed or only partially functioning, leading to a significant gap in education for children in these areas (GCPEA, 2022). The impact of banditry on

educational infrastructure is not limited to conflict-affected countries. In areas with high levels of criminal activity, schools may also be targeted for theft or extortion, leading to similar disruptions in education.

The Teacher's Registration Council of Nigeria notes that between 2009 and 2022, attacks on education by bandits and insurgent groups in northeast Nigeria led to the death of 2,295 teachers, closure of 1,500 schools, denial of 600,000 children's access to education, and the destruction of over 910 schools (Tyessi, 2022). This was substantiated by Salim Musa Umar, the chairman of Farmers Herders Initiative for Peace and Development Africa (FHIPD – AFRICA) in a report presented by Tribune Online (2022a), between 2014 and 2022, bandits destroyed 1,500 schools, killed over 2,000 teachers and displaced 19,000 school children in Nigeria.

Disruption of school schedules and attendance due to security concerns

Due to attacks on schools, student attendance and enrolment has been dismal (Federal Ministry of Education, 2021). Between 2017 and 2020, the enrolment of students in secondary schools was drastically reduced in Zamfara, Kaduna, and Katsina (Rosenje et al., 2022). To curtail such attacks, some state governments in Nigeria have shut down all schools. At some point, Borno State closed all the schools. In Tegina, Niger State, 136 students were abducted from Salihu Tanko Islamic School on May 30, 2021. Eleven students were later released, because they were too young to walk long distances. As a result of this attack, several primary, technical, and high schools were closed in neighbouring communities, including Wushishi, where bandits were reportedly planning an attack on a secondary school and polytechnic (Sevencan, 2021). In Kaduna, many primary and secondary school students have refused to resume school for fear of bandit attacks (Gabriel, 2022). In Katsina, over 19 primary schools were closed in 2022. It was reported that closure affected the learning activities of over 9,113 pupils made up of 4,294 girls and 4,819 boys. In most cases, pupils have been moved to neighbouring communities such as Kankara to continue their studies (Enna, 2022).

Children's education is compromised when schools are closed. Covering work and syllabi is impossible due to insecurity and school closures. Many schools have closed because of security concerns. Secondary schools prone to crises have been closed for several months. Many state authorities have mandated the closure of boarding schools in response to the recent wave of kidnappings by criminal organizations demanding ransom. To maintain security, the governors of six states in the area—Niger, Kano, Katsina, Jigawa, Zamfara, Sokoto, and Yobe in the North East—have shuttered some or all of the boarding schools in the most hazardous local government areas (Sancha et al., 2022).

Measures such as lockdowns and evacuations have disrupted traditional school schedules and attendance patterns, leading to negative effects on students' learning and development. School disruptions affect students' academic performance. Due to school closures, public schools in Zamfara and Sokoto states could not present candidates for the May/June West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) 2022, setting a bad precedent.

Lack of funding for education due to economic effects of banditry

The economic impact of banditry can have a detrimental effect on education funding. In regions where banditry are prevalent, government resources may divert from education, law enforcement, and security measures. Additionally, instability and insecurity caused by banditry can discourage foreign investment and aid, which are crucial sources of funding for education in developing countries. Furthermore, the direct and indirect costs of banditry on households, such as losses due to theft and damage to property, can also reduce families' ability to afford education for their children (Nextier SPD 2022b). Rosenje et al (2022) notes that in Kebbi, Zamfara, Kaduna, Sokoto and Katsina states where banditry has been prevalent, the government has diverted funds to ensure security in the affected communities by constructing fence around the school. Moreover, the payment of ransoms by the government and parents of abducted students meant that funds were diverted from developmental projects, while poverty increased. In Kafanchan, Kaduna state where 3 students were kidnapped, a ransom of N50 million was paid while N180 million was paid for the release of 107 students from 140 kidnapped from Bethel Baptist High School, Kaduna state. Parents of students kidnapped from Greenfield University paid N150 million and eight new motorcycles to secure the release of their wards from bandits. Five students whose parents

could not pay ransom were reportedly killed by bandits (Alagbe 2021).

Statistics on poverty worsened when access to education was restricted. The younger generation is denied educational opportunities, which affects their vulnerability, productivity, and level of independence. Recruits are required to fill in the ranks and files of non-state-armed groups because of their growth. Therefore, unemployed, unskilled, and underproductive groups are more susceptible to the antics of aggressive violent entrepreneurs (Nextier SPD, 2022b).

Threats and violence against teachers and students

Teachers face a range of challenges including physical violence, verbal abuse, and intimidation from students, parents, and community members. This type of violence can have serious consequences for the well-being and effectiveness of teachers as well as for the overall quality of education in the country. One of the main reasons for the high levels of violence against teachers in Nigeria is the lack of support and protection from school authorities and the government (Federal Ministry of Education 2021). Many teachers are vulnerable and unsupported in the face of violent incidents, which discourage them from reporting incidents or seeking help. This lack of support can also make it difficult for teachers to feel safe and secure in their workplaces, which can lead to high levels of absenteeism and turnover (Animba 2020; GCPEA 2022). The Academic Staff Union of Secondary Schools (ASUSS) reports that over 10 teachers have been killed by bandits in Kaduna by 2022 alone, while about 50 are still in their custody. This increases fear among teachers, leading to an inability to discharge their duties (Oyero, 2022).

Displacement of teachers and students due to insecurity

The displacement of teachers and students due to insecurity in Nigeria is a significant issue that has far-reaching consequences for the country's educational system. UNICEF (2021a) stresses that the ongoing conflict in the northeast region of Nigeria has resulted in the displacement of over two million children, many of whom have been unable to access education due to the disruption of schools and lack of educational infrastructure in displacement camps. An estimated 2,300 people died from the security situation in Nigeria in 2022, and a sizable number of people have been displaced. 1,222,977 people were displaced as of December 23, 2022, comprising 1,110,369 internally displaced people (91% of the total displaced population), 15,177 former internally displaced person returnees (1%), and 97,431 refugees (8% of the total displaced population). Ninety-nine percent of the displaced population (1,087,875 people) lived in Nigeria (International Organization for Migration 2022). Children in northern Nigeria are among the world's most afflicted by conflict and have some of the worst educational opportunities. In the northeast, a protracted conflict resulted in the destruction of nearly 1,400 schools and the death of 2,295 teachers since 2009. In addition to pushing the boundaries of existing school structures, armed group attacks on educational institutions and school infrastructure, the influx of families who have been internally displaced into major cities, and population growth have made it difficult for students to enroll, stay enrolled, or graduate from school (UNICEF 2021a).

Negative impact on mental health and overall well-being of teachers and students

Banditry can have a significant impact on the mental health and overall well-being of students and teachers who often live in constant fear of their safety. Students exposed to high levels of violence and crime may also be at risk of developing mental health issues, including depression and anxiety. Children who face school closures in Nigeria have significant rates of stress, anxiety, lower self-esteem, and depression, with some research suggesting that girls, adolescents, and those living in rural regions are especially prone to experiencing these issues. These negative mental health outcomes were more pronounced in students who experienced multiple lockdowns or had a history of trauma or mental health issues (Adejoro, 2022). Alagbe (2021) observes that students released by bandits experience anxiety and constant fear; which is made worse by the lack of access to medical care in most schools. Students are also unwilling to visit these centers because of fear of stigmatization. Coupled with depression, it makes it difficult for students to learn and harms their emotional and cognitive development (Federal Ministry of Education, 2021).

In addition to its direct impact on students, banditry also affects the ability of teachers to safely perform their duties. Many teachers are attacked or threatened by bandits, leading to absenteeism and a decrease in the number of educators available. This, in turn, leads to a reduction in the quality of education, as

class sizes may increase and there may be a lack of subject specialists (Hansen & Quitero, 2020). The prevalence of banditry in northern Nigeria has had a negative impact on education, leading to high levels of absenteeism among teachers and students. This is because teachers and students often fear their safety and are reluctant to travel to schools located in areas where banditry are common.

These mental health issues can negatively affect students' ability to learn and succeed in school. Teachers and students may experience symptoms of trauma, such as flashbacks, avoidance behaviors, and difficulty concentrating as a result of their exposure to terrorist events. These symptoms can have a negative impact on daily functioning, including the ability to work and learn (Hansen and Quitero 2020). Students who have witnessed or been directly affected by terrorist attacks have higher levels of fear, mistrust, and aggression. These psychological effects can have significant consequences for the educational environment. Teachers who struggle with their own mental health may have difficulty creating a safe and supportive learning environment for their students (Animba, 2020). Students who struggle with anxiety or trauma may find it difficult to focus on their studies, and may even act out in the classroom.

Other effects of banditry on basic education in Nigeria include brain-drain; discouragement of educational pursuit by children; educational wastage; encouragement of foreign education; increase in educational spending; internal displacement of learners; loss of manpower in educational institutions; poor quality of education; and reduction in private investment in education (Sanchi et al. 2022).

Efforts to mitigate the impact of banditry on education

In 2019, the Federal Government launched a national policy – the National Policy on Safety, Security, and Violence-Free Schools in Nigeria–to address the growing incidence of attacks on schools. The policy is rooted in the Safe School Declaration signed in May 2015 in Oslo, Norway, by countries with armed conflict around learning environments. The national policy that came into effect in 2019 was designed to set a standard for school safety and provide directions for early warnings at all school levels (Federal Ministry of Education). However, years after its adoption, the policy has failed to address the concerns of bandits against school attacks. Implementation is still largely hindered by the lack of a well-coordinated system to support security in schools and the ability to prevent or respond promptly to attacks on schools.

In 2021, the Kaduna State government launched the Kafin Zage-Zagi Community Development Initiative to combat banditry in the state. This initiative aims to leverage education and skill acquisition as sensitization tools for Almajiri children and unemployed youth against banditry. The initiative was designed to be jointly funded through development levies collected from every household in the community, while wealthy individuals in the community will target less privileged children to train them in professional fields such as engineering and medicine. The community has called on other communities across the northern states to replicate the initiative in the fight against banditry (Aodu, 2021).

The peace and reconciliation initiative launched by the Zamfara state government is another effort to curb banditry. The initiative advocates a peace process that grants amnesty and reintegrates repentant bandits into the system. In the case of refusal, the state invokes the 'Operation Hadarin Daji' against them. Through this operation, 12 abducted persons were rescued, 67 rustled cattle were recovered, 135 bandits were neutralized, several others were killed in an air raid in Tungar-Duba, and over 200 bandits were neutralized in Zurmi (Tribune Online, 2020).

Role of Civil Society Organizations

State governments have also involved traditional institutions and civil society organizations in the fight against banditry. This is done by acknowledging the important roles that non-state actors play in maintaining peace and promoting development, as well as in community policing, intelligence collection, and conflict resolution. In some of the affected communities in the northwest, non-governmental organizations and other peace constituencies, such as Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI), Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association (MACBAN), and Pastoral Resolve, have been actively involved in conflict prevention, community reconciliation, and resilience building. An education and mediation project was carried out by Pastoral Resolve (PARE) to reduce tensions in Birnin Magaji, Zamfara State. The stabilization of human security in the impacted communities has also been aided by humanitarian operations by the Nigerian Red Cross, Doctors Without Borders, national and state emergency

management agencies, and others. In addition to the organizations set up by the State Government to secure particular neighborhoods, communities also enlisted the help of youth in creating community watch groups.

Role of Non-Governmental Organizations

NGOs have played a vital role in filling the gap left by the government in providing access to education for marginalized and disadvantaged groups in Nigeria. One of the key ways NGOs have been able to provide alternative education in Nigeria is through the establishment of community-based schools. These schools, which are often run by NGOs in partnership with local communities, provide education to children who may not have access to formal schools because of financial constraints or other barriers. An example is the Educate a Child project carried out by UNICEF in conjunction with the government in the northwestern Nigerian States of Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara, to keep track of children who are not in school and to encourage their caregivers to send them there. The project, which is financed by the Education Above All (EAA) Foundation, provides students with basic needs, including textbooks, charts, posters, and other instructional materials, in addition to training for teachers (UNICEF, 2021b).

In Sokoto, an NGO called the North East Youth Initiative for Development was launched in 2022 to stem the tide of banditry. In addition to promoting alternative conflict resolution techniques, the initiative seeks to strengthen local capacity through community agency and prevent vulnerable youth from joining banditry (Tribune Online, 2022b).

Another example is the Sure For You Rescue & Resettlement Initiative (Sure4U) started by Muhammed Babandede, former Comptroller General of Immigration Service in August 2022. The initiative that recognizes the vulnerability of out-of-school children by banditry awarded full scholarships to 60 (30 primary and 30 junior secondary school) students in November 2022. In July 2022, the initiative established a Pilot Intervention Scheme at Tsangaya Almajiri School, Jahun, Jigawa State, and a fact-finding mission in three Tsangaya Almajiri Schools in Dakwa. It seeks to continuously collaborate with relevant institutions to help vulnerable children (Odita 2022).

Community mobilization against banditry

Community mobilization efforts have also been adopted to combat banditry in Nigeria. An example of such an effort is the community policing approach implemented by the Nigeria Police Force. This program involves the training of community members in basic policing skills, such as intelligence gathering and conflict resolution, and the establishment of policy–community committees at the local level. In addition to improving security, community policing has also been found to increase trust between community members and law enforcement as well as enhance the responsiveness of the police to the needs of the community (Akinyemi, 2021).

Other efforts to engage communities in the fight against banditry in Nigeria include the establishment of neighborhood watch groups and the promotion of community-based conflict-resolution mechanisms. These groups worked closely with law enforcement to identify and report potential threats. These groups have been trained on how to recognize and report signs of radicalization, and have been provided with the necessary resources and support to do so effectively (Akinyemi, 2021).

In addition to these efforts, there have been a number of initiatives aimed at educating and empowering communities to stand against banditry. This includes the development of educational materials and programs, as well as the creation of platforms for dialogue and engagement with community leaders and other stakeholders. An example of such an initiative is the Community Action and Response Team (CART) formed by Action Aid in Nigeria. The initiative comprises the elderly and youth selected from the community to provide an early warning response against conflict in the Kaduna state. This initiative is operational in communities such as Kudan, Igabi, Chikun, Turunku, Takau, Wusasa, and Nariya. It trains facilitators on peacebuilding approaches against radicalization, and the facilitators are, in turn, expected to train other members of their communities (Aodu, 2022).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Banditry has significantly affected education in Nigeria through the kidnapping of students, teachers, and school staff. The numerous reported cases of bandits targeting schools and abducting individuals for

ransom create a climate of fear and insecurity that deters parents from sending their children to school and disrupts the education of those who attend. In addition to the direct impact on the safety of students and school staff, banditry can have indirect effects on education. Attacking schools makes it difficult for students to physically access education. The diversion of resources towards security measures by the government and the payment of ransom by parents and the community removes funds that could be used for educational purposes. It is also necessary to address the underlying social and economic issues that drive people to engage in banditry in the first place. This could involve increasing access to education and job opportunities in affected areas as well as improving governance and the rule of law. Such efforts could help reduce poverty and unemployment, which are often cited as key drivers of banditry. Another potential solution is to invest in economic development and job creation in areas where banditry is prevalent. This could involve initiatives, such as agricultural development, vocational training, and microfinance programs. By providing people with alternative sources of income and a sense of purpose, it may be possible to reduce incentives for involvement in banditry. Finally, an improvement in the capacity of law enforcement agencies to combat banditry effectively is suggested. This could include strengthening intelligence gathering and analysis as well as providing resources and training to security personnel.

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