



IMPACT OF BANDITRY ON STUDENTS' PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AND SCHOOL ATTENDANCE ON CURRICULUM DELIVERY IN UPPER BASIC SCHOOLS IN NORTH-WEST NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the impact of banditry on students' psychological well-being and school attendance and its implications for curriculum delivery in upper basic schools in North-West Nigeria. The study was guided by two objectives, two research questions and two hypotheses. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised 1,265,457 teachers, students and Quality Assurance officials, from which a sample of 384 respondents was selected using a multi-stage sampling technique. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.819. Mean and standard deviation were used to answer research questions, while the Kruskal–Wallis H test was employed to test hypotheses at the 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed that banditry significantly affects students' psychological well-being, resulting in fear, anxiety, trauma and reduced concentration in learning. It also significantly disrupts school attendance due to insecurity, fear of attacks and school closures. The results further showed significant differences in perceptions among respondent groups. The study concluded that the combined effects of psychological distress and irregular attendance undermine effective curriculum delivery. It recommends that; psychosocial support services, improved school security, attendance recovery programmes, and strengthened policy implementation to ensure continuity of education in conflict-affected areas.

Keywords: Banditry, psychological wellbeing, School attendance, Upper Basic Schools.

Introduction

Education is widely recognised as a fundamental human right and a critical driver of individual empowerment, socio-economic development, and national progress. At the upper basic school level, effective teaching and learning depend not only on the availability of qualified teachers and instructional materials but also on students' regular school attendance and psychological well-being. Regular attendance ensures consistent exposure to structured curriculum content, while psychological stability enhances learners' capacity to concentrate, actively engage, and achieve meaningful learning outcomes (Fatai et al., 2021). The Federal Republic of Nigeria emphasises that access to quality education remains central to national development and social cohesion (FRN, 2014).

In recent years, the educational system in North-West Nigeria has been increasingly disrupted by persistent insecurity, particularly banditry. Banditry, characterised by armed attacks, kidnapping, killings, and destruction of property, has become widespread in states such as Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Kebbi, and Sokoto (Akorede et al., 2022). These incidents have created an atmosphere of fear and instability, significantly undermining social and educational activities. Reports from UNICEF Nigeria indicate that insecurity has led to recurrent school closures, displacement of students and teachers, and disruptions in curriculum delivery (UNICEF Nigeria, 2025). High-profile cases of mass abduction of students have further highlighted the vulnerability of schools and the fragility of educational systems in conflict-affected regions (Reuters, 2026; AP News, 2025).

One of the most immediate consequences of banditry is its adverse effect on school attendance. In many affected communities, parents are reluctant to send their children to school due to safety concerns, while others are displaced or forced to abandon schooling entirely. Empirical evidence supports this trend. For example, Danjuma, Aliyu and Aliero (2025) found that fear, anxiety, and trauma associated with banditry significantly reduce students' regular attendance in Kebbi State. Similarly, Adetunji (2025) reported that insecurity contributes to declining attendance, disrupted enrolment patterns, and irregular academic activities across affected regions. These disruptions limit students' exposure to curriculum content and undermine effective curriculum implementation.

Beyond physical access to schooling, banditry also exerts profound psychological effects on learners. Exposure to violence, fear of abduction, and prolonged insecurity can lead to emotional and behavioural challenges such as anxiety, stress, and trauma. Research shows that psychological distress negatively affects students' cognitive functioning, attention span, and academic engagement. According to UNESCO, learners in conflict-affected environments often experience trauma-related challenges that significantly impair academic performance and participation (UNESCO, 2019). This implies that even where schools remain open, effective curriculum delivery may still be compromised by students' psychological instability (Akorede et al., 2021).

Although existing studies have examined the impact of insecurity on education in Nigeria, most have focused on isolated variables such as school attendance or access to education. Limited empirical attention has been given to the combined effects of banditry on students' psychological well-being and school attendance, and how these factors interact to influence curriculum delivery. Furthermore, few studies have specifically examined upper basic schools in North-West Nigeria, where the effects of insecurity are particularly severe.

This study therefore seeks to address this gap by examining the impact of banditry on students' psychological well-being and school attendance, and their implications for curriculum delivery in upper basic schools in North-West Nigeria. The findings are expected to provide evidence-based insights for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in designing integrated interventions that address both the psychological and structural challenges affecting education in conflict-affected environments.

Conceptual Review

Banditry has been conceptualised differently by scholars, reflecting its evolving nature. Abdullahi (2019) described bandits as rural outlaws engaged in criminal activities such as village raids, kidnapping, and cattle rustling for economic gain. Similarly, Anka (2017) defined banditry as armed attacks carried out by organised groups with the aim of overpowering victims and acquiring resources or achieving specific objectives. Adeniyi (2018) narrowed the concept to cattle rustling and raids on herders.

In the context of North-West Nigeria, banditry has assumed a more violent and complex dimension, involving school attacks, abduction of students and teachers, and destruction of educational infrastructure. Operationally, this study defines banditry as organised violent attacks on communities and schools by armed groups, resulting in insecurity, disruption of schooling, and threats to lives and property.

Psychological well-being refers to an individual's emotional stability, ability to cope with stress, and capacity to function effectively in daily activities. In educational settings, students' psychological well-being is critical for concentration, participation, and academic performance. Exposure to violence and insecurity has been linked to psychological distress, including anxiety, fear, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). According to studies supported by organizations such as UNESCO, children in conflict-affected areas often experience trauma that impairs cognitive functioning and learning outcomes. Psychological instability can therefore reduce students' engagement in classroom activities and hinder effective curriculum delivery.

School attendance refers to the regular presence of students in school for instructional activities. It is a key determinant of academic success, as consistent attendance allows students to access structured learning experiences and curriculum content. In conflict-affected regions, attendance is often disrupted by fear, displacement and safety concerns. Reports by UNHCR indicate that insecurity significantly contributes to absenteeism and school dropout, particularly among vulnerable populations. In North-West Nigeria, banditry has led to irregular attendance as students and parents prioritise safety over education.

A curriculum consists of the road map or guideline of any given discipline. Offorma (2015) defined curriculum as a document, plan or blueprint for instructional guide that is used for teaching and learning to bring about positive and desirable change in behaviour. Curriculum could be viewed as a series of purposefully planned learning activities, a means to create learning opportunities for students in a qualified structure, involving all activities, experiences, materials and methods, knowledge, values, attitudes and skills that are consciously designed to achieve well-defined goals with a specific group of students. In his own view, Apsari, (2018) stated that curriculum is the most fundamental element of whole education, since it acts as a guide to reach targeted education which connotes curriculum as an element that determines the quality and impact of the education

system. As a substantial element, it includes knowledge and skills students must know in that specific field. To fully achieve these, it is necessary to prepare a curriculum that fits students perfectly.

Curriculum implementation refers to the process of translating planned educational programmes into actual teaching and learning experiences. Obilo and Saugoleye (2015) defined it as the interaction between learners and instructional content under the guidance of teachers to achieve desired educational outcomes. Effective curriculum implementation requires: Regular attendance, psychological readiness of learners, availability of instructional resources. Disruptions in any of these factors, particularly in insecure environments, can lead to incomplete content coverage and poor learning outcomes.

The Queer Ladder Theory, associated with Daniel Bell, explains how individuals engage in organised crime as a means of socio-economic advancement. The theory suggests that criminal activities may serve as alternative pathways for economic mobility in contexts characterised by poverty and limited opportunities.

In North-West Nigeria, widespread poverty and unemployment create conditions that encourage involvement in banditry as a means of economic survival. These criminal activities, in turn, generate insecurity that disrupts educational systems. Consequently, students' school attendance is reduced, and their psychological well-being is negatively affected, ultimately hindering curriculum implementation.

The Frustration–Aggression Theory was developed by scholars including Dollard et al. (1939) and later expanded by Leonard Berkowitz. The theory posits that frustration arising from unmet needs or blocked goals can lead to aggressive behaviour. Persistent insecurity and exposure to violence create frustration and fear among students, which may manifest as anxiety, withdrawal, or behavioural challenges. These psychological responses reduce students' ability to concentrate and actively participate in learning. As a result, even when schools are open, effective curriculum delivery is compromised due to reduced student engagement.

A substantial body of literature highlights the impact of conflict on education globally. Organizations such as Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies emphasise that armed conflicts lead to school closures, displacement, and learning disruptions. Studies by Nicolai and Triplehorn demonstrate that conflict-affected countries experience significant declines in school enrolment and attendance. Similarly, Burde and Linden found that insecurity reduces access to schooling and negatively affects learning outcomes. Novelli et al. further argue that violent conflicts weaken educational systems by disrupting infrastructure, teaching processes, and policy implementation. These global findings provide a framework for understanding how insecurity in North-West Nigeria may similarly affect education.

Research indicates that exposure to violence has significant psychological consequences for students. Trauma-related conditions such as anxiety and PTSD impair memory, attention, and cognitive processing, which are essential for learning. Studies in conflict settings show that psychologically distressed students often exhibit reduced classroom participation and poor academic performance. Reports from UNESCO highlight that trauma-sensitive educational approaches are necessary to support affected learners. This suggests that in areas affected by banditry, psychological well-being is a critical factor influencing students' ability to benefit from curriculum delivery.

Empirical studies in Nigeria confirm that insecurity negatively affects school attendance. Danjuma, Aliyu, and Aliero (2025) found that fear and trauma significantly reduce students' willingness to attend school in Kebbi State. Similarly, Adetunji (2025) reported that insecurity disrupts attendance, enrolment, and examination processes. While these studies highlight attendance challenges, they primarily focus on access to schooling without fully examining how attendance interacts with psychological factors to influence curriculum delivery.

Research shows that conflict disrupts curriculum implementation by causing irregular teaching schedules, inadequate content coverage, and lack of instructional materials. According to UNESCO, education systems in fragile contexts often struggle to maintain curriculum continuity. However, limited studies specifically examine how insecurity affects curriculum delivery through both attendance and psychological pathways, particularly in the context of upper basic education in Nigeria. There is a lack of integrated research examining how banditry simultaneously affects students' psychological well-being and school attendance and how these jointly influence curriculum implementation. Furthermore, most existing studies focus on general education systems or primary/secondary levels without specific attention to upper basic schools in North-West Nigeria. This gap

necessitates the present study, which seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of the combined effects of banditry on psychological well-being, school attendance, and curriculum delivery.

Statement of the Problem

The increasing prevalence of banditry in North-West Nigeria has created a serious threat to the sustainability of educational development, particularly at the upper basic school level. Despite the recognition of education as a fundamental human right and a key driver of national development, persistent insecurity has significantly disrupted teaching and learning processes in affected states such as Zamfara State, Katsina State, Kaduna State, Kebbi State, and Sokoto State. Reports from UNICEF Nigeria indicate that school closures, displacement of learners, and interruptions in academic activities have become increasingly common in these areas (UNICEF Nigeria, 2025).

One of the major consequences of banditry is the disruption of students' school attendance. Many students in affected communities are unable to attend school regularly due to fear of attacks, abduction, and general insecurity. Empirical studies have established that insecurity contributes to irregular attendance, reduced enrolment, and learning interruptions (Danjuma, Aliyu, & Aliero, 2025; Adetunji, 2025). However, while these studies highlight attendance challenges, they often treat attendance as an isolated factor without adequately examining its broader implications for curriculum delivery.

In addition to attendance challenges, banditry also exposes students to traumatic experiences that negatively affect their psychological well-being. Exposure to violence, fear, and instability has been associated with anxiety, stress, and trauma among school-aged children. According to UNESCO, psychological distress in conflict-affected environments significantly impairs students' cognitive functioning, classroom participation, and academic performance (UNESCO, 2019). Despite this, limited attention has been given to how such psychological factors influence learning outcomes within the context of curriculum implementation.

Furthermore, effective curriculum delivery depends on both consistent attendance and students' psychological readiness to learn. Insecurity disrupts these two critical conditions simultaneously, thereby undermining the achievement of educational objectives. However, existing studies in Nigeria have largely focused on the general effects of insecurity on education, without providing a comprehensive analysis of how banditry jointly affects students' psychological well-being and school attendance, and how these, in turn, influence curriculum implementation particularly at the upper basic school level.

This gap in the literature creates a critical need for empirical investigation. Therefore, the problem of this study is to determine the extent to which banditry affects students' psychological well-being and school attendance, and how these factors collectively influence curriculum delivery in upper basic schools in North-West Nigeria.

Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

1. ascertain the impact of banditry on students' psychological well-being on curriculum delivery in Upper Basic Schools in North-west, Nigeria; and
2. examine the impact of banditry on students' school attendance on curriculum delivery in Upper Basic Schools in North-west, Nigeria.

Research Questions

The followings constitute research questions of this study:

1. What is the impact of banditry on students' psychological well-being on curriculum delivery in upper basic schools in North-West Nigeria?
2. How does banditry affect students' school attendance in upper basic schools on curriculum delivery in North-West Nigeria?

Hypotheses

Following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: Banditry has no significant impact on students' psychological well-being on curriculum delivery in upper basic schools in North-West Nigeria.

H₀₂: Banditry has no significant impact on students' school attendance on curriculum delivery in upper basic schools in North-West Nigeria.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The design is appropriate because it enables the collection of data from a large and diverse population in order to describe existing conditions and examine relationships among variables (Akorede et al., 2022). It is particularly suitable for studies involving attitudes, perceptions, and social phenomena such as the impact of banditry on education. The population of the study consisted of teachers, students, and Quality Assurance officials in Upper Basic Schools across the seven North-West states of Nigeria, namely: Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, Sokoto, and Zamfara. The population comprised 36,939 teachers, 1,206,963 students, and 21,555 Quality Assurance officials, giving a total population of 1,265,457 (Universal Basic Education Commission, UBEC, 2023).

The sample size for the study was 384 respondents, determined using the sample size table by Research Advisors (2006) for a population of over one million at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted as follows: However, due to persistent insecurity and accessibility challenges associated with banditry, the study focused on three states out of the seven North-West states, namely Kaduna, Katsina, and Zamfara. These states were selected purposively because they have recorded higher incidences of banditry attacks and educational disruptions. Within each selected state, Upper Basic Schools that had experienced or were vulnerable to banditry-related disruptions were also selected purposively. Simple random sampling was used to select students from the selected schools to ensure equal representation. Accidental (convenience) sampling was used to select available teachers and Quality Assurance officials due to their professional schedules and accessibility during data collection. The final sample consisted of 384 respondents, distributed proportionately across the selected groups.

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire titled: "Impact of Banditry on Students' Psychological Well-being and School Attendance on Curriculum Delivery Questionnaire (IBSPWSACDQ)". The instrument was designed in line with the study's objectives, research questions, and hypotheses. It consisted of two sections: Section A: Items measuring the impact of banditry on students' psychological well-being. Section B: Items measuring the impact of banditry on school attendance and curriculum delivery. The questionnaire contained 20 items, with 10 items in each section. It was structured using a four-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD).

The instrument was validated by experts in educational research and measurement to ensure clarity, relevance, and adequacy of items. A pilot test was conducted, and the reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha, which yielded a coefficient of 0.819, indicating that the instrument is reliable for data collection. The questionnaire was administered directly to respondents in the selected schools with the assistance of trained research assistants. Adequate instructions were given to ensure proper completion and retrieval of the instrument. Data collected were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Mean and Standard Deviation were used to answer the research questions. Kruskal–Wallis H test was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The Kruskal–Wallis test was considered appropriate because the study involved three independent groups (students, teachers, and Quality Assurance officials) and the data were measured on an ordinal scale (Likert format), making the test suitable for non-parametric analysis.

Ethical considerations were observed in the conduct of the study. Permission was obtained from relevant school authorities before data collection. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the study and informed consent was obtained from all participants. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. Special care was taken with student participants to ensure that no harm, pressure, or coercion was involved in the data collection process.

Results

Research Question One: What is the impact of banditry on students' psychological well-being on curriculum delivery in upper basic schools in North-West Nigeria?

Table 1: Impact of Banditry on students' psychological well-being on Curriculum Delivery

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std
1.	Banditry incidents have negatively affected the psychological wellbeing of students in my school.	304	44	15	3	3.77	0.55
2.	The fear or threat of incidents of banditry has caused psychological distress among students in my school.	137	219	9	1	3.34	0.54
3.	Banditry incidents have led to increased anxiety and fear among students in my school.	194	156	16	0	3.49	0.58
4.	Thoughts of banditry incidents affect my ability to concentrate during teaching and learning process in my school.	177	143	32	14	3.32	0.79
5.	I have been traumatized because of banditry activities thereby finding it difficult to learn in the school.	162	140	44	20	3.21	0.86
6.	Killing of teachers and students by bandits have created fear, thereby affecting my ability to concentrate during lesson presentation.	250	85	31	0	3.60	0.64
7.	I find it difficult and discouraging to go to school for fear of being killed or kidnapped by bandits.	301	25	38	2	3.71	0.67
8.	Students' psychological wellbeing has been negatively affected by the traumatic experiences related to banditry incidents in my school.	103	189	53	21	3.02	0.81
9.	Fear, anxiety and trauma created by banditry incidents are affecting my academic performance in my school.	229	113	19	5	3.55	0.66
10.	There is need for increased government support and intervention to address the psychological impact of banditry on students in my school.	93	200	60	13	3.02	0.75
Cumulative						3.40	0.69

Decision Mean = 2.500

Table 1 presents the responses of teachers, students, and Quality Assurance Officials on the impact of banditry on students' psychological well-being and its implication for curriculum delivery in upper basic schools in North-West Nigeria. The results show that respondents generally agreed that banditry has a strong negative impact on students' psychological well-being. This is indicated by a cumulative mean score of 3.40, which is higher than the decision mean of 2.50. This implies that students experience significant levels of fear, anxiety, trauma, and reduced concentration as a result of banditry incidents.

The findings further reveal that students are afraid of attending school due to threats of kidnapping and attacks, while exposure to violence and destruction of lives and property contributes to psychological distress. These emotional challenges negatively affect classroom engagement and reduce learners' ability to concentrate during teaching and learning processes. Consequently, curriculum delivery is significantly disrupted as both teaching effectiveness and student participation are undermined. Overall, the findings indicate that psychological distress caused by banditry plays a major role in limiting effective curriculum implementation in upper basic schools in North-West Nigeria.

Research Question Two: How does banditry affect students' school attendance in upper basic schools on curriculum delivery in North-West Nigeria?

Table 2: Impact of Banditry on students' school attendance on curriculum delivery in North-West Nigeria

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std
11.	Banditry incidents have negatively affected my attendance in school.	138	186	36	6	3.25	0.69
12.	Closure of schools due to acts of banditry has negatively impacted on my attendance to classwork in my school.	155	167	34	10	3.28	0.74
13.	Banditry incidents create fear, anxiety and trauma affecting my attendance to classwork.	247	79	32	8	3.54	0.75
14.	Fear of unexpected attack by bandits in my school is responsible for my inability to attend to class work.	230	52	72	12	3.37	0.91
15.	Destruction of classes, chairs, tables by bandits has a negative effect on my desire to attend to class work.	74	209	44	39	2.87	0.86
16.	Fear of being kidnapped in school has affected my attendance to class work.	129	216	21	0	3.30	0.57
17.	Killing of teachers and students by bandits in my school creates fear and trauma in me thereby affecting my attendance to class work.	216	102	41	7	3.44	0.77
18.	Banditry creates an unconducive learning environment that affects my attendance to class work in my school.	164	149	36	17	3.26	0.82
19.	Unconducive learning environment created by bandits affect my ability to understand what the teacher is teaching thereby affecting my ability to attend to class work.	305	18	18	25	3.65	0.86
20.	The general atmosphere of insecurity created by bandits has affected my attendance to class work in my school.	255	54	42	15	3.50	0.85
Cumulative						3.34	0.78

Decision Mean = 2.500

Table 2 shows that respondents generally agreed that banditry significantly affects students' school attendance in upper basic schools in North-West Nigeria. This is reflected in the cumulative mean score of 3.34, which is above the decision mean of 2.50. The findings indicate that insecurity, fear of attacks, kidnapping incidents, and closure of schools contribute to irregular attendance and absenteeism. The destruction of school facilities and the presence of an unconducive learning environment further discourage students from attending school regularly. These disruptions reduce instructional time, interfere with syllabus coverage, and weaken curriculum implementation. Therefore, the study establishes that banditry significantly undermines school attendance, which in turn affects effective curriculum delivery.

Hypotheses

H₀₁: Banditry has no significant impact on students' psychological well-being on curriculum delivery in upper basic schools in North-West Nigeria.

Table 3: Kruskal-Wallis test on impact of banditry on students' psychological well-being on curriculum delivery in upper basic schools in North-West Nigeria

Group	N	Mean Rank	H-Test	Df	@	P-Value	Decision
Teachers	126	148.33					
Students	189	231.01	107.909	2	0.05	.000	Rejected
QAO	51	94.32					

$P = .000 < 0.05$, at $df\ 2$

The analysis revealed a statistically significant difference among the three groups, $H(2) = 107.909$, $p < .05$. Given that the observed p-value ($p = .000$) was lower than the 0.05 significance threshold, the null hypothesis stating that banditry has no significant impact on students' psychological well-being and curriculum delivery was

rejected. This result indicates that banditry exerts a significant influence on students' psychological well-being with consequential effects on curriculum delivery in the study area.

The mean rank scores further demonstrate variations in perception across respondent groups. Students recorded the highest mean rank (231.01), suggesting that they experience and perceive the psychological effects of banditry most intensely. Teachers followed with a mean rank of 148.33, reflecting their classroom-level observation of students' fear, anxiety, and reduced engagement during instructional activities. Quality Assurance Officers had the lowest mean rank (94.32), possibly due to less direct exposure to daily classroom realities.

H₀₂: Banditry has no significant impact on students' school attendance on curriculum delivery in upper basic schools in North-West Nigeria.

Table 4: Kruskal-Wallis test on impact of banditry on students' school attendance on curriculum delivery in upper basic schools in North-West Nigeria

Group	N	Mean Rank	H-Test	Df	@	P-Value	Decision
Teachers	126	224.02					
Students	189	175.57	47.627	2	0.05	.000	Rejected
QAO	51	112.76					

P = .000 < 0.05, at df 2

The results indicate a statistically significant difference among the three groups, $H(2) = 47.627$, $p < .05$. The p-value obtained ($p = .000$) was lower than the 0.05 significance level, leading to the rejection of the null hypothesis. This confirms that banditry has a significant impact on students' school attendance, with consequential effects on curriculum delivery in upper basic schools in North-West Nigeria.

Analysis of the mean rank scores shows that teachers recorded the highest mean rank (224.02), followed by students (175.57), while Quality Assurance Officers (112.76) had the lowest mean rank. The higher mean rank among teachers suggests heightened awareness of attendance disruptions, including persistent absenteeism, irregular class participation, and shortened instructional periods, all of which hinder effective curriculum implementation. Students' responses further highlight how fear of attacks, kidnappings and general insecurity discourages regular school attendance.

Discussion of Findings

Firstly, finding number one of the study revealed that banditry significantly impacted on students' psychological well-being, particularly by instilling fear and making school attendance challenging. This finding agreed with the assertion of Nicholas and Shuaibu (2019) that the presence of violence and instability in educational settings can lead to severe psychological distress among students. When students are exposed to the constant threat of banditry, they experience heightened levels of fear and anxiety. This fear not only affected their emotional well-being but also hindered their ability to focus on their studies and engage fully in the learning process. The study highlighted that the fear of being attacked, kidnapped, or killed on the way to or within the school premises significantly discouraged students from attending school regularly. These disruptions in attendance resulted in missed educational opportunities and a fragmented learning experience. Consistent absenteeism can lead to falling behind in coursework, lower academic performance, and, ultimately, higher dropout rates. The psychological toll of living in a constant state of fear undermines students' motivation and ability to succeed academically.

The findings of this study align with reports by Human Rights Watch (2018), which reveal that children exposed to conflict are susceptible to multiple forms of psychological, cognitive, emotional, and physical distress, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, displacement, bereavement, disease, and malnutrition. These conditions significantly undermine students' learning capacity, cognitive functioning, and academic performance (Akorede et al., 2022). The findings of this study confirmed the postulation of Iweze (2019), that due to armed banditry in Northern Nigeria, many students who had been exposed to this conflict exhibited some forms of psychological problems such as depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms that are inimical to learning. Alexander and Klein (2009), found out that students who are victims of kidnapping by bandits are likely to suffer physical and mental torture which causes traumatic depression, anxiety, fear and most times Post-Traumatic Stress Syndrome which may last a life time and may have negative impact on students' learning.

The implication of this finding is that psychological well-being is a critical determinant of effective curriculum delivery. Students experiencing trauma and emotional distress are less able to concentrate, process information, and actively participate in classroom activities. This supports the assumptions of the Frustration–Aggression Theory, which posits that exposure to adverse and threatening conditions can generate psychological stress responses that hinder productive behaviour. In the context of this study, the persistent insecurity associated with banditry creates frustration and fear among learners, thereby reducing their academic engagement and limiting the effectiveness of curriculum implementation.

The finding number two of the study further revealed that banditry significantly reduced students' attendance to school, mainly due to the unconducive learning environment and the fear, anxiety, and trauma it causes. This finding agreed with the assertion of Iweze (2019), that violence and instability in educational settings created significant barriers to students' engagement and academic performance. In environments where banditry is prevalent, the constant threat of violence creates an atmosphere of fear that discourages regular school attendance. Students were often afraid to travel to and from school, fearing potential attacks or kidnappings. This fear led to irregular attendance, which disrupted the continuity of their education and hindered their ability to keep up with class work. Moreover, the study highlighted that the psychological effects of banditry such as anxiety and trauma, further exacerbated the challenges students face in completing their class work. The mental strain caused by living in a violent environment affected students' concentration and cognitive functions, making it difficult for them to focus on their studies. This psychological burden resulted in reduced academic performance, as students struggled to retain information and complete assignments. The trauma associated with witnessing or experiencing violent events led to long-term mental health issues, further impeding their academic progress.

This finding is also inline with the position of Chabal (2018), which stated that the impact of banditry on students' attendance is significant and multifaceted, often creating barriers to learning and hindering academic progress. Banditry casts a long shadow over the educational landscape, instigating pervasive fear and safety concerns among students and parents alike. The specter of violence and abduction looms large, particularly in regions besieged by the menace of banditry as parents grappled with the agonizing decision of whether to send their children to school, acutely aware of the perilous journey they must undertake. In such precarious environments, the sanctuary of the classrooms transformed into a battle ground for safety, with students navigating the treacherous terrain of fear and apprehension. This scenario affects students' attendance and participation in classroom activities which had a significant negative impact on the quality of teaching and learning in schools.

This finding can also be explained using the Queer Ladder Theory associated with Daniel Bell, which suggests that socio-economic pressures may drive individuals into criminal activities such as banditry. The resulting insecurity disrupts social institutions, including education. In this study, banditry not only creates physical barriers to schooling but also generates psychological and emotional challenges that collectively weaken curriculum delivery processes.

Overall, the findings of this study are consistent with both national and international literature, which emphasise that conflict affects education through multiple pathways, including psychological trauma and restricted access to schooling. However, this study extends existing knowledge by demonstrating that these factors do not operate in isolation but interact to produce compounded effects on curriculum implementation, particularly at the upper basic school level in North-West Nigeria.

Conclusion

This study established that banditry poses a significant barrier to effective education in North-West Nigeria by negatively affecting students' psychological well-being and school attendance. Exposure to insecurity was found to induce fear, anxiety and trauma, which reduce students' concentration, participation, and overall engagement in learning. At the same time, safety concerns and school disruptions contribute to irregular attendance and, in some cases, withdrawal from schooling. The combined effect of these factors leads to fragmented and ineffective curriculum delivery.

The study further demonstrated that psychological well-being and school attendance interact to influence educational outcomes, rather than operating independently. It concludes that improving curriculum delivery in conflict-affected areas requires integrated interventions that address both security challenges and students'

psychological needs. Without such coordinated efforts, achieving sustainable educational outcomes in banditry-affected regions will remain difficult.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, this study recommends a multi-level response to mitigate the impact of banditry on education in North-West Nigeria.

1. First, schools should institutionalise psychosocial support services, including counselling units, trauma-informed teaching, and early mental health screening, with support from agencies such as UNICEF Nigeria and UNESCO. Second, attendance recovery strategies such as catch-up classes, accelerated learning, and incentive-based programmes should be implemented to restore learning continuity.
2. Government should also strengthen school security through collaborative protection systems and initiatives like the Safe Schools Programme. In addition, damaged infrastructure should be rehabilitated to create conducive learning environments. Teacher welfare must be prioritised through incentives, safety provisions, and training in trauma-informed pedagogy.
3. Furthermore, stronger policy implementation by Universal Basic Education Commission and State agencies is required, alongside increased funding for education in conflict-affected areas. Community and traditional leaders should be actively engaged in safeguarding schools. Finally, flexible learning approaches aligned with Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies guidelines should be adopted to ensure continuity of education during periods of insecurity.

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