



SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION IN AFRICA

Peer Reviewed Book Chapter



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BANDITRY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR ACCESS, SAFETY, AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

Banditry has emerged as a major security challenge in Nigeria, with far-reaching consequences for the education sector. This chapter examines the effects of banditry on access to education, safety within school environments, and overall educational development. It highlights how persistent insecurity leads to school closures, reduced enrollment and attendance, increased dropout rates, and disruption of academic activities, particularly in banditry-prone regions. The study further explores the safety risks faced by learners and educators, including fear, psychological trauma, and threats to life, which undermine effective teaching and learning. Additionally, the chapter analyzes how banditry damages educational infrastructure, discourages teacher retention, diverts educational resources toward security concerns, and widens regional and socio-economic inequalities. The chapter underscores that banditry poses a serious threat to human capital development and national growth, emphasizing the need for coordinated security, educational, and community-based interventions to protect education and ensure learning continuity in Nigeria.

Keywords: Banditry, Education, Educational Development, Schools



1.0 Introduction

Banditry has emerged as one of the most serious security challenges confronting Nigeria in recent years, with profound consequences for social and economic development. Characterized by armed attacks, kidnappings, cattle rustling, and violent disruptions of rural and semi-urban communities, banditry has particularly affected northern regions of the country. Beyond the immediate loss of lives and property, the persistence of banditry poses a significant threat to the education sector by undermining access to schooling, compromising the safety of learners and teachers, and weakening the overall development of educational institutions.

The increasing incidence of school attacks, abductions of students and staff, and destruction of school infrastructure has generated widespread fear among parents, educators, and communities. As a result, many schools have been forced to close temporarily or permanently, while others operate under severe constraints. Parents often withdraw their children from school due to safety concerns, leading to reduced enrollment, increased dropout rates, and disrupted academic calendars. These challenges have negatively affected learning continuity and educational outcomes, particularly in banditry-prone areas.

Banditry also places additional financial and administrative burdens on governments and educational authorities. Resources that could be invested in improving teaching quality, infrastructure, and learning materials are redirected toward security measures such as fencing, surveillance, and armed escorts. Teachers and education personnel are increasingly reluctant to accept postings in high-risk areas, resulting in staff shortages and declining instructional quality. Consequently, educational inequalities between secure and insecure regions continue to widen.

This chapter examines the phenomenon of banditry in Nigeria and critically analyzes its implications for access, safety, and educational development. It explores how persistent insecurity disrupts schooling, deepens educational inequality, and threatens national efforts toward inclusive and sustainable education. By highlighting the educational dimensions of banditry, the chapter underscores the urgent need for coordinated security, community, and policy interventions to protect education and ensure that learning continues even in the face of insecurity.

2.0 Conceptual Terms

2.1 Concept of Banditry

Banditry refers to organized criminal activities carried out by armed groups or individuals who engage in violent acts such as kidnapping, armed robbery, cattle rustling, extortion, village raids, and destruction of property. It is a form of insecurity that thrives in environments characterized by weak governance, poor law enforcement, economic deprivation, and limited state presence. In Nigeria, banditry has become a major security concern, particularly in the North-West and parts of



the North-Central regions, where it has severely disrupted social, economic, and institutional life. Banditry is a derivative of the term bandit meaning an unlawful armed group terrorising people and confiscating their properties. It is synonymous with the establishment of gang groups that use small and light weapons to carry out attacks against people. In this regard, banditry could mean a set-up of criminal activity deliberately designed and carried out for personal gains (Rosenje, & Peter, n.d). Banditry refers to acts of armed robbery, kidnapping, cattle rustling, village raids, and violent criminality typically carried out by loosely organised armed groups. In Nigeria, banditry has become prominent in the Northwest and North-Central regions, where armed groups target rural communities, kidnap for ransom, and destroy farmlands (Akinola, 2022). The phenomenon is driven by factors such as poverty, weak security institutions, proliferation of small arms, farmer–herder conflicts, and unemployment. Banditry has evolved into a serious internal security threat, disrupting agriculture, internal trade, education, and community stability (International Crisis Group. 2021).

Shalangwa (2013) defined banditry as the practice of raiding and attacking victims by members of an armed group, whether or not premeditated, using weapons of offence or defence, especially in semi-organised groups to overpower the victim and obtain loot or achieving some political goals. Such bandits are usually perceived as outlaws, desperate and lawless marauders who do not have a definite residence or destination but roam around the forest and mountains to avoid being identified, detected and arrested. Egwu (2016) viewed banditry as a practice of stealing cattle and animals from herders or raiding cattle from their ranches. From the above, banditry can be seen as the application of force to raid cattle from their ranches and intimidatating owners with weapons. Banditry is organized criminal activities carried out by people with weapons that involve raping, cattle rustling, and killing, kidnapping and armed robbery in rural areas or cities. Banditry is also the use of force and weapons to abduct people, raid cattle, destroy farmlands, kill, rape and cart away foodstuffs in rural areas. Banditry affects teachers, students and the entire education process in the rural communities. Banditry in Nigeria is driven by a combination of factors, including poverty, unemployment, proliferation of small arms, porous borders, weak security architecture, and long-standing socio-economic inequalities. Many bandit groups exploit fragile rural communities, forest reserves, and poorly policed areas to carry out attacks and evade security forces. The activities of these groups have resulted in loss of lives, displacement of communities, destruction of livelihoods, and widespread fear among the population.

Beyond its immediate security implications, banditry has significant social and developmental consequences. Communities affected by banditry experience disruption of economic activities such as farming, trading, and transportation, leading to food insecurity and deepening poverty. Public infrastructure, including schools, healthcare facilities, and roads, is often destroyed or abandoned, reducing access to essential services and weakening local development. Banditry also



poses a serious threat to education and human capital development. Attacks on schools, abduction of students and teachers, and general insecurity force school closures and discourage enrollment, particularly in rural areas. Teachers are often unwilling to accept or remain in postings within high-risk zones, resulting in staff shortages and declining educational quality. The long-term effect is a generation of learners whose education is disrupted, thereby limiting future economic opportunities and national development (Ogunode, 2024).

3.0 Banditry and Its Effects on Access to Education, Safety, and Educational Development in Nigeria

A) Effects of Banditry on Access to Education

School Closures and Disruption of Academic Activities

One of the most direct effects of banditry on education is the closure of schools in affected areas. Repeated attacks, threats, and fear of abductions have forced government authorities and school administrators to shut down schools temporarily or permanently. These closures interrupt academic calendars, delay examinations, and prevent learners from completing syllabi, thereby limiting consistent access to education (Ogunode & Ndubuisi, 2021; Ogunode & Kolo, 2021).

Decline in Enrollment and Attendance

Banditry discourages school enrollment and regular attendance, particularly in rural and semi-urban communities. Parents often withdraw their children from school due to fear for their safety, long travel distances through insecure routes, and uncertainty about school protection. As a result, many children especially at the basic and secondary education levels—remain out of school in banditry-prone regions (Ogunode & Ahaotu, 2021; Voanews 2020)..

Increased Dropout Rates

Persistent insecurity contributes to high dropout rates. Learners who experience repeated school disruptions or displacement may permanently abandon schooling. Adolescents are often pushed into farming, trading, or menial labor to support household survival, while girls are more likely to face early marriage as families seek perceived protection and economic relief. These trends reduce completion rates and weaken educational participation (Umar, 2022; UNICEF 2017; Udoh, 2015; Ogunode, Umeora, & Olatunde-Aiyedun, 2022).

Displacement and Loss of Educational Continuity

Banditry has displaced many families from their communities, creating large populations of internally displaced persons (IDPs). Displaced children often lack access to formal schooling due to overcrowded host communities, limited educational facilities, or lack of documentation. This



displacement results in prolonged learning gaps and exclusion from the education system (Ogunode, & Chijindu, 2022; Timothy 2021; Tribune 2021)).

B) Effects of Banditry on Safety in Education

Threats to Learners and Teachers

Banditry poses serious safety risks to students, teachers, and school administrators. Fear of attacks or abductions creates a climate of anxiety within school environments. Teachers may avoid schools in high-risk areas, while learners attend classes under constant fear, negatively affecting psychological well-being and learning engagement (Sadiq et al 2021; Ogunode & Ukozor 2022b).

Militarization of School Environments

In response to banditry, some schools operate under heavy security measures such as armed escorts, fencing, or military presence. While intended to improve safety, these measures often create an atmosphere of tension and fear that is not conducive to effective teaching and learning. Schools become perceived as unsafe spaces rather than centers of growth and development (Sadiq Ahmadu, Yaba, Saidu, Oloyede, Bashir, Okeke, & Ibrahim 2021).

Psychological Impact on Learners and Staff

Exposure to insecurity has lasting psychological effects on learners and educators. Fear, trauma, stress, and anxiety reduce concentration, motivation, and academic performance. Teachers working under unsafe conditions may experience burnout and reduced effectiveness, further weakening the educational process (Oluwa, 2014; Olofin, & Udoma, 2019).

D) Effects of Banditry on Educational Development

Shortage of Qualified Teachers

Banditry discourages qualified teachers from accepting postings or remaining in affected areas. Many educators seek transfers to safer locations, leading to acute shortages of skilled personnel. This imbalance results in overcrowded classrooms in secure areas and under-staffed schools in insecure regions, lowering instructional quality (Adeleke, 2020; Beland, 2005).

Damage to Educational Infrastructure

Schools in banditry-affected communities often suffer damage or abandonment. Classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and hostels may be destroyed or left unused due to insecurity. The loss of infrastructure limits the capacity of the education system to deliver effective instruction and support learning (Achumba, Ighomereho, & Akpor-Robaro, 2013).



Diversion of Educational Resources

Significant financial resources that could be used for teacher development, learning materials, and infrastructure are redirected toward security-related expenses. This diversion reduces investment in innovation, curriculum improvement, and technology integration, slowing educational development (Ewetan, & Urhie, 2014; Ogunode Godwin & Unoaku, 2021).

Widening Educational Inequality

Banditry deepens regional and socio-economic inequalities in education. Learners in secure urban areas continue schooling with minimal disruption, while those in conflict-affected regions face prolonged interruptions. This disparity creates unequal educational outcomes and limits national cohesion and workforce competitiveness (Ogunode, & Adanna, 2022; Oladipo. Awoyinfa, & Adefarakan, 2018).

4.0 Conclusion

Banditry has a profound and disruptive impact on access to education, safety, and educational development in Nigeria. The persistent threat of violence and abductions has forced school closures, reduced enrollment, increased dropout rates, and displaced thousands of learners, denying many children their fundamental right to education. The unsafe learning environment created by banditry exposes students and teachers to fear, trauma, and psychological stress, which negatively affects academic engagement and performance. Moreover, the destruction of school infrastructure, shortage of qualified teachers, and diversion of resources toward security measures have weakened the overall development and quality of the education system.

If not adequately addressed, the educational consequences of banditry will continue to undermine Nigeria's human capital formation and long-term national development. Ensuring safe and uninterrupted access to education in the face of insecurity requires sustained government commitment, improved security architecture, community participation, and targeted educational policies that prioritize school safety and learning continuity. Protecting education from the effects of banditry is essential for promoting social stability, reducing inequality, and securing Nigeria's future development trajectory.

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Concluding Synthesis

This edited volume, *Sustainable Education in Africa*, presents a robust and multidimensional exploration of the evolving dynamics shaping educational systems across Nigeria and the broader African context. The contributions collectively interrogate critical issues such as digital transformation, artificial intelligence in educational planning, gender inclusivity, economic constraints, institutional effectiveness, and the intersection of education with national development priorities.

A synthesis of the chapters reveals that sustainable education in Africa is inherently complex and requires an integrated, systems-oriented approach. While technological advancements offer transformative potential for improving educational access, quality, and administration, their successful implementation is dependent on enabling environments characterized by adequate infrastructure, policy coherence, and human capacity development.

Furthermore, the persistence of structural barriers—including underfunding, inequality, insecurity, and governance challenges—continues to impede progress. The contributors consistently emphasize that achieving sustainability in education necessitates deliberate, inclusive, and context-sensitive policy interventions that address both systemic inefficiencies and emerging global trends.

Importantly, this volume reinforces the position of education as a strategic instrument for sustainable development, aligning with global development priorities while responding to local realities. The insights generated herein contribute meaningfully to scholarly discourse and provide actionable knowledge for stakeholders across the education sector.

Implications for Practice

Drawing from the collective contributions of this volume, several practical implications emerge for policymakers, educational leaders, and practitioners:

- **Policy and Governance:** Governments should prioritize coherent and forward-looking educational policies that integrate technology, inclusivity, and sustainability into national development agendas.
- **Investment in Infrastructure:** There is a critical need for sustained investment in digital infrastructure, learning facilities, and instructional resources to support modern educational delivery systems.
- **Capacity Building:** Continuous professional development for educators and administrators is essential, particularly in the areas of digital literacy, data-driven decision-making, and innovative pedagogy.
- **Equity and Inclusion:** Educational interventions must intentionally address gender disparities, socio-economic inequalities, and access challenges affecting marginalized populations.
- **Research and Innovation:** Institutions should foster a culture of research and innovation to generate context-relevant solutions and inform evidence-based practices.
- **Collaboration:** Stronger partnerships among governments, private sector actors, development agencies, and academic institutions are necessary to drive sustainable educational transformation.

Editors' Note

The editors of this volume express profound appreciation to all contributing authors for their scholarly rigor, intellectual depth, and commitment to advancing knowledge in the field of education. The diversity of perspectives represented in this work reflects the complexity of educational challenges and opportunities within Africa.

We also acknowledge the invaluable contributions of peer reviewers, editorial board members, and institutional supporters whose efforts ensured the academic quality and integrity of this publication.

This volume is conceived not only as a scholarly resource but also as a catalyst for dialogue, policy reform, and practical innovation. It is our expectation that the ideas presented herein will inspire further research and contribute to the ongoing transformation of education systems across the continent.