

Socio-political Consequences of Banditry in Alkaleri Local Government Area of Bauchi State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Globally, insecurity and violent crimes have become issues of serious concern, particularly in Africa and Northern Nigeria. This phenomenon has continued to generate far-reaching sociopolitical challenges in many societies, including threats to peace, stability, and community development. This study explores the socio-political consequences of banditry in Alkaleri Local Government Area of Bauchi State, Nigeria. To achieve the study objectives, a qualitative research methodology using a phenomenological design was adopted and guided by Structural State Fragility Theory. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with eighteen purposively selected informants. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data. Findings of the study revealed that banditry in the study area has resulted in loss of lives, displacement, humanitarian challenges, breakdown of social cohesion, and increased fear and insecurity among residents. The study further found that banditry has contributed to declining trust in government institutions and reduced political participation among community members. Based on the findings, the study recommends strengthening community-based security structures, addressing the root causes of banditry such as unemployment and poverty, improving government responsiveness, and promoting peacebuilding and civic engagement to restore stability in the area.

Keywords: Banditry, Insecurity, Socio-political Consequences, Displacement, Social Cohesion, Alkaleri LGA, Bauchi State, Nigeria

I. Introduction

Globally, banditry remains a significant security challenge with implications for peace, security, and development. Across different regions of the world, bandit groups engage in armed robbery, kidnapping, extortion, and attacks on rural communities, posing serious threats to human security and social stability (De La Sierra, 2020). Consequently, banditry continues to undermine state authority and development efforts.

Within this global context, Africa has experienced a growing incidence of banditry, particularly in rural and marginalized communities where state presence is often limited. While historically associated with the survival strategies of some peasant and pastoral groups, contemporary banditry has evolved into organized criminal activities with significant implications for security and governance (Fuoli, 2024). Countries such as South Sudan and Uganda have experienced the adverse effects of banditry on public safety, state authority, and socio-economic development (Okuj, 2022).

Similarly, banditry has become one of the major security challenges confronting Nigeria, particularly in the northern region (Adiele & Uvere, 2025). Armed bandit groups engage in cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom, village raids, and attacks on rural settlements, thereby threatening security and development (Etian & Bemgba, 2025). Although initially concentrated in North-West Nigeria, banditry has gradually spread to parts of the North-East, including Bauchi State.

In recent years, Alkaleri Local Government Area of Bauchi State has experienced recurrent attacks by armed bandits, raising concerns among government authorities and local communities. According to Oyewole (2026), over 10,000-armed bandits were reported to be operating in communities within the area, highlighting the severity of the security challenge.

Despite the growing incidence of banditry in Alkaleri Local Government Area, existing studies have largely focused on its security and economic dimensions, with limited attention to its socio-

political consequences. This study therefore explores the socio-political consequences of banditry in Alkaleri Local Government Area, Bauchi State, Nigeria.

II. Literature Review

A. Concept of Banditry

Banditry is a form of organised armed violence involving structured groups engaged in systematic attacks against individuals and communities. Accordingly, Fishchenko (2024), defines it as coordinated criminal activity by stable armed groups that use violence against people and institutions. Similarly, Okoli and Okpaleke (2014), describe banditry as violent crime involving the use or threat of force for robbery, rape, or homicide.

In Nigeria, banditry has evolved from sporadic criminality into a structured and adaptive system with socio-economic and quasi-political characteristics (Ameh & Aliyu, 2023). It includes kidnapping, cattle rustling, armed robbery, rape, and rural raids, particularly in Northern Nigeria where it has historical roots (Obadare, 2026). This phenomenon reflects both criminal enterprise and governance fragility in rural areas.

B. Socio-Political Consequences of Banditry

Banditry generates significant socio-political consequences that extend beyond immediate security concerns. Socially, it is associated with rising insecurity and frequent incidents of kidnapping, violent conflict, and displacement, which in turn disrupt social stability and community cohesion (Ekuerhare & Odokuma, 2026).

Politically, banditry undermines public confidence in state institutions and weakens democratic governance. Persistent insecurity reduces trust in government capacity to maintain law and order. In contexts of weak state presence, armed groups may also exercise informal control through taxation, regulation of economic activities, and territorial dominance. Ejiofor (2022), links this development to limited state capacity in peripheral regions, noting that the socio-economic environment sustaining such activities remains insufficiently explored.

Dickson et al. (2024), further argue that rural banditry and cattle rustling intersect with broader political economy dynamics, including human security concerns, evolving state-society relations, climate-related pressures on agriculture, food insecurity, agricultural change, and declining social cohesion in diverse societies.

From a historical perspective, Abdullahi (2019), observes that while patterns of banditry in West Africa have changed over time, its persistence is rooted in long-standing socio-economic and political structures shaped by post-colonial state formation processes. Similarly, Thaddaeus and Albert (2025), conceptualize banditry as more than a criminal activity, viewing it as an outcome of weak governance structures reinforced by institutional fragility and elite interests.

C. Empirical Review

Various studies have examined the causes, manifestations, and consequences of banditry in different contexts. Accordingly, the study conducted by Hamaloğlu and Özgün (2026), investigated the influence of geographical factors on banditry in nineteenth-century Smyrna (Izmir), Turkey. The study found that mountainous terrain provided strategic advantages and refuge for bandits, while fertile lowlands offered opportunities for raids and economic exploitation. The study concluded that geographical conditions played a significant role in sustaining banditry and shaping state responses.

Studies on the Ming Empire of China revealed that banditry was deeply integrated into coastal societies and persisted partly because government officials failed to fully understand the social dynamics that sustained it. The study demonstrated that inadequate policy responses often contribute to the persistence of banditry. Ban examined the consequences of armed conflict in Sudan and reported that violence between the Sudanese Army and the Rapid Support Forces resulted in the displacement of nearly fourteen million people, widespread humanitarian crises, famine, disease outbreaks, and ethnic violence.

Similarly, Atem et al. (2022), discovered that banditry in northern Kenya was driven by the availability of illegal firearms, weak governance, poverty, poor infrastructure, and limited security presence. The study also documented widespread violence, cattle rustling, and loss of lives associated with bandit attacks.

In Nigeria, Olapeju et al. (2024), observed that banditry had not only severely disrupted the economic and agricultural activities of the people, brought about untold hardship, wanton killing and loss of lives and unquantifiable properties but has equally become wealth accumulation mechanism to the bandits' warlords through ransom-taking, market levies and taxes collected from 'subjugated communities' thereby initiating the emergence of a new social structure.

In another study, Ufana et al. (2026), reported that structural poverty, youth unemployment, weak state presence, poor governance, and institutional fragility contribute significantly to banditry in Northern Nigeria. Their study revealed that banditry has resulted in farmland abandonment, displacement of farmers, disruption of agricultural value chains, loss of livelihoods, and worsening food insecurity.

Furthermore, the study carried out by Valentine (2023), investigated the impact of banditry on socio-economic development in Northwestern Nigeria. The study employed both descriptive and analytical research designs to collect and analyze data. The study found that banditry negatively affected household income, food security, and the dignity of affected populations, particularly women. The study further recommended greater involvement of local governments and traditional institutions in addressing insecurity.

Garba et al. (2025), examined bandit taxation in Northwestern Nigeria. The study argued that bandits often impose levies on farmers, traders, and transporters, thereby creating alternative systems of governance in areas characterized by weak state presence. The study further argued that banditry should be understood as a manifestation of governance failure rather than merely a criminal activity.

Additionally, Bello (2022), study assessed the impact of armed banditry on internal security in Zamfara State. Findings of the study revealed that bandit activities resulted in deaths, destruction of property, displacement, and growing numbers of widows and orphans. The study further identified unemployment, poverty, drug abuse, weak border security, and proliferation of firearms as major drivers of banditry.

Kenku and Obochi (2026), examined the psychosocial dimensions of banditry and found that repeated exposure to violent environments contributes to trauma, psychological desensitization, and the normalization of aggression. The study concluded that banditry is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by structural inequalities, identity dynamics, and traumatic experiences.

D. Research Gap

Although existing studies have examined the causes, economic implications, security dimensions, and humanitarian consequences of banditry in Nigeria and other parts of the world, limited attention has been given to its socio-political consequences at the local government level. Most studies focus on the North-West region of Nigeria, particularly Zamfara, Katsina, and Sokoto States, while little empirical evidence exists on the socio-political consequences of banditry in Alkaleri Local Government Area of Bauchi State. Furthermore, previous studies have largely employed quantitative approaches, leaving limited qualitative understanding of how banditry affects social cohesion, public trust in government, political participation, and community relations. This study therefore fills this gap by exploring the socio-political consequences of banditry in Alkaleri Local Government Area of Bauchi State through a qualitative phenomenological approach.

E. Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on State Fragility Theory, as advanced by Robert I. Rotberg (2003; 2004). The theory explains the capacity of states to perform essential governance functions, particularly the provision of security, rule of law, political legitimacy, and basic public services.

Rotberg classifies states along a continuum of strength, ranging from strong, weak, failed, to collapsed states, depending on their level of institutional effectiveness and control over violence.

According to Rotberg (2004), a strong state successfully maintains security, enforces laws, and ensures political stability and development. A weak or fragile state is characterized by declining institutional capacity, growing insecurity, and inability to adequately provide public goods. A failed state occurs when the state loses effective control over parts of its territory and non-state actors begin to challenge or replace state authority. In extreme cases, a collapsed state is one where central government authority is virtually absent.

This theory is relevant to the present study because banditry in Alkalari Local Government Area reflects clear indicators of state fragility. The persistent attacks by armed groups, displacement of communities, and insecurity in rural areas demonstrate weakened state capacity to guarantee safety and maintain monopoly over the use of force. The presence and operation of bandit groups in several communities further reflect the erosion of state authority, a key feature of fragile and semi-failed states. Furthermore, the socio-political consequences identified in this study such as breakdown of social cohesion, declining trust in government, increased fear among residents, and reduced political participation are consistent with Rotberg argument that state fragility leads to loss of legitimacy and weakened citizen confidence in governance structures. In such contexts, citizens often disengage from political processes and rely on informal survival systems due to lack of trust in the state.

Thus, State Fragility Theory provides a strong analytical framework for understanding banditry in Alkalari LGA as not only a security challenge but also a manifestation of weakened governance structures and declining state legitimacy.

III. Methodology

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a phenomenological design to explore the lived experiences, perceptions, and meanings individuals attach to banditry and its socio-political consequences. The study was conducted in Alkalari Local Government Area of Bauchi State, Nigeria, an area characterized by recurrent incidents of banditry and persistent insecurity. The population comprised community leaders, local government officials, and residents of affected communities, particularly individuals with direct experience of bandit-related violence.

In line with the objective of the study, twelve (12) key informants were selected through a combination of purposive and snowball sampling techniques. Initially, purposive sampling was adopted to identify participants with relevant knowledge and lived experience of the phenomenon. Subsequently, snowball sampling was employed to reach additional participants through referrals, particularly those who were difficult to access due to insecurity and displacement.

Furthermore, data was collected through semi-structured face-to-face interviews, which allowed participants to provide detailed accounts of their experiences while ensuring alignment with the research objectives. All interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of participants and, thereafter, transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy and completeness.

In addition, the data were analyzed using thematic analysis, involving systematic coding, categorization, and interpretation of recurring patterns within the dataset. Consequently, the analysis generated key themes, including loss of lives and displacement, breakdown of social cohesion, increased fear and insecurity, declining trust in government, and reduced political participation.

IV. Results and Discussion

A. Loss of Lives, Displacement and Humanitarian Challenges

One of the most significant consequences of banditry identified by participants was the widespread loss of lives, forced displacement, and the emergence of severe humanitarian challenges. Findings revealed that recurrent attacks by bandits have compelled residents to abandon their communities in search of safety, often under life-threatening circumstances. The displacement has not only disrupted livelihoods but has also exposed affected populations to food insecurity, inadequate shelter, poor healthcare services, and limited access to education. Participants emphasized that many

families have lost relatives during attacks, while others continue to struggle with the psychological and economic effects of displacement. The findings suggest that banditry has created a prolonged humanitarian crisis that has weakened community resilience and placed immense pressure on local support systems. For instance, informants I, III, VII, X and XII shared that:

“The situation in most affected communities is extremely severe because repeated attacks have forced entire villages to be abandoned. People left suddenly without taking anything with them, and many families were separated during the process. Some lost their loved ones during the attacks, while others escaped but are now living in very harsh conditions without homes, farms, or any form of stable income. Their entire way of life has been destroyed, and they are now struggling daily for survival.”

Sharing similar views, informants II, V, and IX collectively lamented that:

“Displacement has become a continuous reality in these communities because whenever there is an attack, people immediately flee to safer areas. This has created a serious humanitarian situation where affected persons no longer have access to basic needs such as food, healthcare, shelter, or education. Most of them now depend on relatives or informal support networks, which are also overstretched.”

Another informant VI said:

“From both administrative and security perspectives, the scale of displacement has overwhelmed local structures. Communities are no longer stable, and service delivery has been disrupted because people are constantly moving and settlements are no longer fixed.”

B. Breakdown of Social Cohesion

The findings revealed that banditry has significantly weakened social cohesion in Alkaleri LGA. Informants across all categories agreed that trust, unity, and communal solidarity have been severely eroded due to insecurity, fear, and repeated displacement. Informants explained that in the past, communities were characterized by strong social bonds, mutual assistance, and collective participation in farming, ceremonies, and cultural activities. However, the emergence of insecurity has led to fragmentation of these relationships, as people now live in fear and suspicion of one another. Social interactions have declined significantly, and communal gatherings are no longer frequent or fully attended. Responding to this, informant IX says:

“In the past, life in our communities was built on unity, trust, and cooperation where people supported each other in farming, ceremonies, and daily survival activities. However, the situation has changed drastically because of insecurity. People no longer trust each other easily, and even simple social interactions are now done with caution and suspicion. The strong communal bond that once existed has been greatly weakened.”

To corroborate this, informants I, IV, VI, X, and XI added that:

“Social activities that once brought people together such as weddings, communal farming, religious gatherings, and village meetings have drastically reduced because people are afraid of attacks or insecurity during gatherings. This has led to isolation among residents, where individuals now focus more on personal safety than community relationships.”

In similar vein, informants II, VI, and XII noted that:

“Even communication and cooperation among residents have declined significantly because people are no longer certain about who to trust. Fear and suspicion now dominate social relationships, replacing the unity that once defined these communities.”

C. Increased Fear and Insecurity Among Residents

The findings showed that banditry has created a persistent and widespread atmosphere of fear and insecurity in Alkalari LGA. Informants collectively described fear as a constant experience that shapes daily life, movement, economic activities, and social interaction in affected communities. Participants explained that residents now live under continuous psychological stress due to the unpredictability of attacks. Movement to rural areas has significantly reduced, farming activities have been abandoned or restricted, and social engagements are increasingly avoided. This has had a direct impact on agricultural productivity and household income. Corroborating this, informants III, VII, VIII, and X lamented that:

"Fear has become part of everyday life in these communities because people are no longer certain of their safety at any time of the day or night. Movement has reduced drastically, farming activities have been abandoned in many areas, and even normal social interactions are now limited because everyone is constantly worried about possible attacks."

To validate this, informants V, VI, and XII added that:

"Many residents who previously depended on farming now avoid going to distant farms because of the risk of attack. Those who still attempt farming do so with extreme caution, often leaving early and returning quickly, which has significantly reduced food production and household income in the area."

Informants I, IV, VII, and IX says:

"The psychological impact is very deep because even in safe locations, people still live in fear and anxiety. Any unusual sound or movement creates panic because of past experiences of attacks, making normal life very difficult to sustain."

D. Declining Trust in Government

The findings revealed a general decline in trust in government due to continued insecurity and perceived inadequate response to bandit attacks. Informants across all categories expressed frustration over the persistence of violence despite repeated calls for intervention.

Participants collectively noted that while government and security efforts exist, they are perceived as insufficient to address the scale of insecurity in rural communities. This has created a sense of abandonment among residents and weakened confidence in public institutions. Commenting on this, informants V, IV, and VI stated that:

"There is growing frustration among the people because of the banditry attacks they encountered. Many residents feel that government response is not strong enough, and this has led to declining trust and confidence in public authorities."

Supporting this view, informants III, VII, and XII explained that:

"Even though security personnel and local authorities are making efforts, the challenges are too much compared to available resources, and this gap between expectation and reality has made people feel unprotected and neglected."

Another informants I, II, V, X and XI expressed that:

"The insecurity has created a perception that rural communities are not adequately prioritized, which has weakened the relationship between citizens and government institutions."

E. Reduced Political Participation

The findings showed that banditry has significantly reduced political participation in Alkalari LGA. Informants collectively reported that insecurity has discouraged citizens from participating in political gatherings, discussions, and other civic engagements. Fears of violence, displacement, and survival concerns have shifted attention away from political involvement. Many residents are either

unable to access polling units or unwilling to participate due to fear of insecurity during political activities. Buttressing on this, informants II, XI and XII stated:

“Political participation has reduced significantly because many people are either displaced or afraid of attending political gatherings or discussions due to insecurity. Survival has now become more important than political engagement in most communities.”

To further substantiate these claims, informants I, III, V, V, IX and XII shared that:

“Insecurity has made residents apprehensive about participating in upcoming political activities due to concerns about insecurity and potential violence.”

Similarly, informant VIII and X underscore that:

“Insecurity has shifted people’s priorities away from politics because most individuals are now focused on daily survival needs such as safety, food, and shelter rather than civic participation.”

F. Discussion of Findings

(a) Loss of Lives, Displacement, and Humanitarian Challenges

Findings of the study revealed that banditry in Alkalari Local Government Area has resulted in loss of lives, displacement of people, and severe humanitarian challenges. Respondents explained that repeated attacks by armed groups have forced households to abandon their homes and farmlands, leading to widespread displacement and increased vulnerability. This situation has also worsened poverty levels and reduced access to basic social services.

This finding is consistent with previous study which observed that banditry in Northern Nigeria has not only resulted in the loss of lives and properties but has also forced thousands of individuals and families to flee their homes in search of safety, creating a growing population of internally displaced persons (IDPs) (Abdu & Umar, 2020). Accordingly, prior study carried out by Muhammad et al. (2024) note that Banditry, characterized by violent attacks, kidnapping, and widespread insecurity, has led to mass displacement in the region, disrupting livelihoods, causing economic hardships, and creating profound psychological distress among affected population.

(b) Breakdown of Social Cohesion

The study further found that banditry has significantly weakened social cohesion in the study area. Respondents reported declining trust among community members, reduced cooperation, and the weakening of traditional support systems that previously sustained communal life. Fear and suspicion have reduced participation in collective activities such as farming groups, community meetings, and local development initiatives.

This finding aligns with the study of Ahmad and Abdulkadir (2024), who reported that insecurity has significant social consequences, including the erosion of community structures, weakened social trust, increased social fragmentation, and reduced community engagement. In the same vein, Auwal (2021) added that communities once marked by strong social cohesion now experience fragmentation as families are displaced and communal bonds weaken.

(c) Increased Fear and Insecurity Among Residents

The findings showed that banditry has created a persistent and widespread atmosphere of fear and insecurity in Alkalari LGA. Informants collectively described fear as a constant experience that shapes daily life, movement, economic activities, and social interaction in affected communities. Participants explained that residents now live under continuous psychological stress due to the unpredictability of attacks. Movement to rural areas has significantly reduced, farming activities have been abandoned or restricted, and social engagements are increasingly avoided.

Supporting these findings, Durowaiye et al. (2025), states that banditry adversely affects the psychological well-being of residents, fosters fear and stigmatization of victims, and disrupts social institutions and community activities. Similarly, the study by Olaniyan et al. (2021) found that banditry

has severe psychological effects on individuals and communities, resulting in high levels of trauma, fear, and stress

(d) Declining Trust in Government

Findings of the study revealed a growing decline in trust in government institutions as a result of persistent bandit attacks. Respondents expressed dissatisfaction with the perceived inability of security agencies to effectively protect lives and property. This perception has created feelings of neglect and weakened confidence in state authority.

These results are supported by previous study conducted by Tarasa et al. (2025), which argued that government responses to banditry, particularly negotiated agreements with armed groups, often undermined public trust in state institutions by conferring legitimacy on criminal actors and reinforcing perceptions of state fragility and institutional failure. However, this finding contradicts the report of Mohammed (2026), which documented that coordinated security operations involving military and intelligence agencies led to the neutralisation of thousands of bandits, the destruction of criminal enclaves, and a notable improvement in security a cross affected area of Bauchi State.

(e) Reduced Political Participation

The study established that banditry has negatively affected political participation in Alkaleri LGA, particularly in relation to political activities. Respondents indicated that fear of attacks during political gatherings, campaigns, and other civic engagements has discouraged participation. Consequently, many residents are apprehensive about taking part in upcoming political activities due to concerns about insecurity and potential violence.

This finding is in line with the study conducted by Yusufu (2022), who revealed that armed banditry poses a threat to the security of lives and property of the people in the State, which in turn has negative implications on voter turnout at elections. Similarly, literature indicated that armed banditry could be considered as criminal activities that are driven by personal interests and triggered by multifaceted challenges in state-society relations, including weak state institutions, political alienation, poverty, unemployment, inequality, corruption, and ethno-communal grievances (Ekuerhare & Odokuma, 2026).

V. Conclusion and Recommendations

A. Conclusion

The study concludes that banditry in Alkaleri Local Government Area has generated far-reaching socio-political consequences that extend beyond physical insecurity. The findings demonstrate that persistent bandit attacks have resulted in loss of lives, displacement of people, and worsening humanitarian conditions, thereby weakening community stability and social welfare. In addition, the study established that banditry has significantly disrupted social cohesion by eroding trust among community members and weakening traditional support systems that sustain collective life.

Furthermore, the study concludes that banditry has contributed to declining trust in government institutions, as many residents perceive state security responses as inadequate in addressing persistent insecurity. This perceived governance gap has weakened state legitimacy and encouraged reliance on informal survival mechanisms. The findings also reveal that banditry has negatively affected political participation by discouraging voter turnout and limiting citizens' engagement in democratic processes due to fear of violence. Overall, the study concludes that banditry in Alkaleri LGA is not only a security challenge but also a major socio-political problem that undermines governance, community cohesion, and democratic participation.

B. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. There is need for government to intensify efforts in addressing the root causes of banditry, particularly unemployment, poverty, and social exclusion, through expanded youth empowerment, skills acquisition, and sustainable livelihood programmes in Alkaleri LGA and surrounding communities.

- ii. There is need for the strengthening of community-based security structures and social cohesion mechanisms through increased collaboration between traditional leaders, community stakeholders, and formal security agencies to rebuild trust and enhance local resilience against insecurity.
- iii. There is need for government and relevant stakeholders to rebuild public confidence in state institutions by improving the effectiveness, responsiveness, and visibility of security interventions in affected communities.
- iv. There is need for continuous civic education and peacebuilding campaigns aimed at encouraging political participation, reducing fear of electoral violence, and promoting peaceful engagement in democratic processes.
- v. There is need for integrated security and socio-economic development strategies that combine military responses with long-term socio-political interventions to ensure sustainable peace and stability in Alkaleri Local Government Area.

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