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ASSESSMENT OF THE INFLUENCE OF BANDITRY AND KIDNAPPING ON PSYCHOSOCIAL HEALTH OF VICTIMS IN ZAMFARA STATE

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Abstract

The prevalence of banditry and kidnapping in Zamfara State has significantly influenced the psychosocial well-being of households. This study investigated the psychological impact of banditry and kidnapping on individuals' mental well-being in Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was employed, with data collected from 402 respondents using a structured questionnaire. Descriptive statistics and inferential analyses were conducted. Utilizing a chi-square analysis, the research revealed a significant association between exposure to these violent incidents and adverse mental health outcomes, Banditry and kidnapping indices including depression, anxiety, and post-indices traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The calculated chi-square value ($X^2 = 1661.2$) significantly exceeded the critical value ($X^2_crit = 51.0$) at 36 degrees of freedom, resulting in the rejection of the null hypotheses at a p-value of $0.000<0.05$ lead to the rejection of the three null hypotheses. These findings align with existing literature that highlights the detrimental effects of such traumatic events on psychosocial health. The study concluded that banditry and kidnapping have severe psychosocial impacts on households in Zamfara State. Affected families experience mental health issues, social disintegration, economic hardships and educational disruptions. It was recommended that government intervention and security enhancement is needed to strengthen security operations in bandit-prone areas through increased deployment of security personnel. There is need to implement community-based policing to enhance intelligence gathering to provide psychosocial support programmes that will provide mental health counseling and trauma therapy for victims.

Keywords: *Banditry, Kidnapping, Psychosocial Health, Mental Health, Zamfara State*

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INTRODUCTION

Security challenges, including violent crimes such as banditry and kidnapping, have emerged as global concerns affecting individuals, families, and communities. Across the world, violent crimes disrupt social order and contribute to psychological distress among affected populations (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2021). In conflict-prone regions, prolonged exposure to violence increases the prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and social disintegration (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). Studies from Latin America and parts of Asia have documented how violent crimes, including organized gang activities, contribute to significant emotional and social instability (Garcia et al., 2019).

In Africa, the menace of banditry and kidnapping has escalated, particularly in regions plagued by weak governance structures and economic instability. Countries such as Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and parts of the Sahel region have witnessed a rise in violent criminal activities, leading to mass displacement, economic downturns, and widespread mental health challenges (Achankeng, 2020). In West Africa, terrorism and transnational crimes have fueled insecurity, further exacerbating the psychosocial toll on affected communities (Ewi & Aning, 2021). The continuous

exposure to violence has resulted in heightened fear, community disintegration, and an increased burden on mental health services.

Nigeria, particularly the northern region, has been severely affected by the growing threat of banditry and kidnapping. Zamfara State, in particular, has become a hotspot for violent attacks, with communities experiencing loss of lives, destruction of property, and massive displacement of residents (Audu et al., 2021). These criminal activities have significantly impacted the psychosocial well-being of households, as victims and their families grapple with emotional trauma, social dislocation, and economic hardship. Studies have shown that affected individuals experience anxiety, depression, and difficulty reintegrating into society due to prolonged exposure to violence (Odeh & Alabi, 2021). The deteriorating security situation in Zamfara State has raised concerns about the effectiveness of government intervention strategies and the need for urgent mental health support programs.

Banditry and kidnapping have emerged as serious security threats globally, affecting the psychosocial well-being of individuals and communities. Across different regions, violent crimes such as organized armed conflicts, terrorism, and kidnapping have led to severe mental health crises, disrupting the lives of victims and their families (UNODC, 2021). In Latin America and parts of Asia, prolonged exposure to violent crimes has been linked to increased cases of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and social fragmentation (WHO, 2020). The psychological toll of these crimes often manifests in chronic stress, fear, and anxiety among affected populations (Garcia et al., 2019).

In Africa, insecurity resulting from banditry and kidnapping has continued to rise, particularly in regions with weak governance structures and economic instability. Countries such as Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Nigeria have witnessed an alarming increase in these criminal activities, leading to displacement, loss of livelihoods, and heightened mental health challenges (Achankeng, 2020). In the Sahel region, the activities of armed groups and bandits have intensified the vulnerability of civilians, exacerbating trauma, psychological distress, and social disintegration (Ewi & Aning, 2021). These challenges have significantly affected the quality of life in affected communities, making urgent interventions necessary.

In Nigeria, and particularly in Zamfara State, the menace of banditry and kidnapping has reached an unprecedented level. Armed groups frequently attack rural communities, leading to mass killings, abductions, and forced displacement. The psychological impact on victims and their families is profound, as they experience persistent fear, emotional distress, and social alienation (Audu et al., 2021). Studies have shown that individuals in affected communities suffer from PTSD, anxiety, depression, and difficulty reintegrating into society after traumatic events (Odeh & Alabi, 2021). The economic implications are equally severe, as many households lose their sources of livelihood, further worsening their psychosocial conditions.

Despite growing concerns about the psychosocial effects of banditry and kidnapping in Zamfara State, there is a lack of empirical studies assessing the extent of these impacts. Most existing studies have focused on the economic and security dimensions, neglecting the psychological and social well-being of affected individuals.

Given the increasing frequency of banditry and kidnapping in Zamfara State, there is a need for empirical studies to assess the psychosocial impacts on affected households. This study aims to evaluate the psychological, emotional, and social consequences of these crimes while suggesting strategies for mitigating their effects. Banditry and kidnapping have become pervasive security threats in Nigeria, particularly in Zamfara State. These criminal activities disrupt lives, cause displacement, and instill fear in communities. Apart from economic losses, the psychological and social consequences on affected households remain largely underexplored (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019). This study assessed the psychosocial impact of these crimes on households and propose solutions for mitigating their effects. This study seeks to bridge this gap by assessing the psychosocial health consequences of banditry and kidnapping on households in Zamfara State, with the goal of providing evidence-based recommendations for intervention and policy formulation.

Therefore, it has specifically aimed to establish:

The influence of banditry and kidnapping on the mental well-being of residents in Zamfara State; the influence of banditry and kidnapping on the emotional stability of residents in Zamfara State; the influence of banditry and kidnapping on social interactions of residents in Zamfara State.

RESEARCH QUESTION

1. What are the infleunce of banditry and kidnapping on the mental well-being of residents in Zamfara State?

2. How does banditry and kidnapping influence the emotional stability of residents in Zamfara State?

3. In what ways do banditry and kidnapping influence social interactions among residents in Zamfara State?

Research Hypotheses

1. Banditry and kidnapping have no significant influence on the mental well-being of residents in Zamfara State.

2. Banditry and kidnapping have no significant influence on the emotional stability of residents in Zamfara State.

3. Banditry and kidnapping have no significant influence on the social interactions of residents in Zamfara State.

METHOD

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design to assess the psychosocial influence of banditry and kidnapping in Zamfara State. According to Kothari, (2004), this design is suitable for examining attitudes, opinions, and experiences of individuals regarding the personal and environmental issues as it allows the use of structured questionnaire for a large population. Thus, the design is appropriate for gathering comprehensive data from a large number of participants on psychosocial effects of banditry and kidnapping in Zamfara State. The population comprised households in Zamfara State affected by banditry and kidnapping. The instrument used for data collection was a structured questionnaire containing 30 items which was validated by experts in the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria and College of Medical and Allied Health Sciences. To establish its reliability and internal consistency, the instrument was further pilot tested. A Cronbach Alpha analysis conducted revealed reliability index of 0.87. The sample size for this study was four hundred (402) respondents. Adams (2020) who asserted that for a population > one hundred thousand (100,000), three hundred and eighty-four (384) sample could be used. However, to take care of attrition 18 (5%) was added. **A** multistage sampling technique was used to select the study sample as follows: In stage 1**,** purposive sampling technique was used to select 8 out of 14 local government areas (LGAs) that are mostly affected by banditry and kidnapping in Zamfara State. In the second stage, simple random sampling technique was used to select two wards within the chosen L.G.As. This was done by writing the 10 wards in each of the selected LGA and using a lottery method two (2) wards were picked, (one at a time) without replacement. This was due to security situation in the area as picking many wards may increase the risk of insecurity for the researcher. Wards picked were used for this study. In Stage 3, proportionate sampling technique was used to determine the sample size for each ward. This was done, to cater for the disparity in the population across the selected wards. This was done by dividing the total population per ward by the total of the target population and multiplying the result by the sample size of the study as presented in Table 1. Lastly, purposive sampling was used to select one person per house, preferably, the head of the household irrespective of his/her gender.

Table 1: Sample Size for the Study based on Target Population

S/N	Local Government Area (LGA)	Wards	Population	Sample per ward
1	Gusau	Wanke	17,854	30
		Damba	19,784	33
2	Maradun	Maradun North	13,458	23
		Maradun South	16,374	28
3	Anka	Anka	12,646	21
		Gora	15,428	26
4	Shinkafi	Shinkafi Central	10,142	17
		Sabon gida	12,271	21
5	Tsafe	Tsafe	18,964	32
		Shadawanka	15,291	26
6	Kauran Namoda	Kaura Central	18,968	33
		Ruwan Daji	15,299	26
7	Gumi	Gumi	12,269	22
		Rafin Tsami	13,115	22
8	Bakura	Bakura Central	13,852	23
		Gidan Haki	11,526	19
	Total		**237,241**	**402**

Prior to administering the questionnaire, an introductory letter from the Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education was given to Zamfara State Ministry of Local Government and chieftaincy Affairs for the purpose of obtaining permission to collect data. To collect data from respondents, a total of four Hundred and two (402) copies of the questionnaire was purposively administered to the selected head of households. For security purpose the researcher transported himself using commercial vehicles, selected research assistants (from within each ward selected). A local guide and a company of local vigilantes assisted throughout the exercise. Where the head of the house hold cannot read, the research assistants helped to orally translate the content and allow him/her to choose appropriately. This exercise lasted for 4 weeks. The data collected from the field was analyzed using descriptive statistics of Mean and standard deviation to answer the research questions. Inferential statistics, specifically Chi-square was used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Answering the Research Questions

Table 2: The mean scores on the influence of banditry and kidnapping on the mental well-being of residents in Zamfara State.

SN	Influence of Banditry and Kidnapping on Mental Well-being	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Banditry and kidnapping have increased my levels of stress and anxiety.	3.98	1.402
2	I experience frequent fear and worry due to insecurity in my community.	3.54	1.254
3	The trauma from banditry and kidnapping has affected my ability to concentrate.	3.33	1.185
4	I have difficulty sleeping due to thoughts about banditry and kidnapping.	3.12	1.404
5	My mental health has worsened due to repeated exposure to insecurity.	3.14	1.453

SN	Influence of Banditry and Kidnapping on Mental Well-being	Mean	Std. Dev.
6	I feel helpless and hopeless about the security situation in my area.	3.27	1.311
7	The fear of being kidnapped has made me avoid outdoor activities.	3.48	1.245
8	I have had to seek medical or psychological help due to insecurity-related stress.	3.33	1.262
9	The insecurity in my environment has led to feelings of sadness and depression.	3.19	1.259
10	My overall mental well-being has been negatively impacted by banditry and kidnapping.	3.18	1.503
	Aggregate Mean	**3.36**	**0.105**

Table 2 presented the mean and standard deviation of respondents' perceptions regarding the influence of banditry and kidnapping on mental well-being. Given that the decision mean is 2.5, any mean score equal or above 2.5 indicates agreement with the statement, while a mean score below 2.5 suggests disagreement. Observed from the table was that high Levels of Stress and Anxiety with a mean score of 3.98, indicated that most respondents strongly agreed that banditry and kidnapping have significantly increased their stress and anxiety levels. Frequent fear and worry with mean score of 3.54, indicated that the respondents agreed that insecurity in their community causes them frequent fear and worry. The relatively high mean suggests that this is a common experience. Since the aggregate mean (3.36) is greater than the decision mean (2.5), it indicates that respondents agreed that banditry and kidnapping have a significant negative influence on their mental well-being. The low standard deviation (0.105 aggregate) suggests consistency in responses, meaning that the respondents largely share similar experiences regarding mental distress caused by insecurity.

Table 3: The mean scores on the influence of Banditry and Kidnapping on Emotional Stability

SN	Influence of Banditry and Kidnapping on Emotional Stability	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	I feel emotionally unstable due to the fear of banditry and kidnapping.	3.98	1.402
2	I often feel angry and frustrated about the security situation.	3.54	1.254
3	Banditry and kidnapping have made me more irritable and short-tempered.	3.33	1.185
4	I feel emotionally drained due to insecurity in my community.	3.12	1.404
5	The constant fear of abduction has reduced my ability to handle daily stress.	3.14	1.453
6	I find it difficult to trust others due to the risk of kidnapping.	3.27	1.311
7	Banditry and kidnapping have increased my feelings of loneliness and isolation.	3.48	1.245
8	I experience mood swings as a result of insecurity in my area.	3.33	1.262
9	I feel emotionally disconnected from my family and friends due to fear.	3.19	1.259
10	The emotional distress caused by banditry and kidnapping affects my productivity.	3.18	1.503
	Aggregate Mean	3.36	0.105

Table 3 presented the mean and standard deviation of respondents' perceptions regarding the influence of banditry and kidnapping on their emotional stability. Given that the decision mean is 2.5, any mean score equal or above 2.5 indicates agreement with the statement, while a mean below 2.5 suggests disagreement. Observed from the table was that emotional Instability due to fear with mean score of 3.98>2.5 has the highest mean, indicating that most respondents strongly agreed that the fear of banditry and kidnapping makes them feel emotionally unstable. Also, anger and frustration about security situation in their community with a mean score of 3.54>2.5 indicated that respondents report feeling angry and frustrated about the insecurity in their environment, showing a significant emotional toll. The aggregate mean (3.36) is greater than the decision mean (2.5), indicating that respondents agreed that banditry and kidnapping have significantly influence their

emotional stability. This implied that the emotional distress caused by insecurity has influence respondents' ability to be productive in their daily activities and that the low standard deviation (0.105 aggregate) suggests that responses were consistent, meaning that majority of respondents share similar opinion.

Table 4: The mean scores on the influence of Banditry and Kidnapping on Social Interactions

Sn	Influence of Banditry and Kidnapping on Social Interactions	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	I avoid social gatherings due to fear of banditry and kidnapping.	3.88	1.371
2	My movement is restricted because of the insecurity in my area.	3.74	1.169
3	I no longer feel safe interacting with people outside my immediate circle.	3.42	1.326
4	Banditry and kidnapping have led to a breakdown of community interactions.	3.30	1.429
5	Fear of insecurity has affected my ability to participate in social activities.	3.34	1.412
6	I have reduced visits to family and friends due to the risk of kidnapping.	3.46	1.354
7	Community trust and relationships have been weakened due to banditry.	3.45	1.359
8	I have lost social connections because of displacement caused by insecurity.	3.36	1.274
9	Social and religious events in my area have reduced due to insecurity.	3.44	1.350
10	The presence of bandits in my area has created fear and reduced social unity.	3.30	1.477
	Aggregate Mean	**3.47**	**0.085**

Table 4 above presented the mean and standard deviation of respondents' perceptions regarding the influence of banditry and kidnapping on their social interactions. Given that the decision mean is 2.5, any mean score equal or above 2.5 indicates agreement with the statement, while a mean score below 2.5 suggests disagreement. Observed from the table was that avoidance of social gatherings with mean score of 3.88>2.5 and SD = 1.371, has the highest mean score, indicating that a majority of respondents actively avoid social events due to fear of banditry and kidnapping. Restricted Movement Due to Insecurity has a mean score of 3.74>2.5, indicated that majority of the respondents agreed that insecurity has limited their movement, preventing them from engaging in regular social activities. Overall, since the aggregate mean (3.47) is greater than the decision mean (2.5), the findings confirm that banditry and kidnapping have significantly influenced social interactions. This implied that the presence of bandits has created division and fear, making it difficult for people to unite for common cause. However, the low standard deviation (0.085 aggregate) suggests that responses were consistent, meaning most respondents had similar experiences regarding reduced social interactions.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis I

Table 5: Chi-square analysis on the influence of Banditry and Kidnapping on Mental Well-being

Variable	X^2 Cal.	X^2 Crit.	Df	P-Value	Decision
Influence of Banditry and Kidnapping on Mental Well-being	1661.2	51.0	36	0.000	Null H_o Rejected

X^2 at 36 df and at 0.05 = 51.0 df= 36 P-value= 0.000 (P<0.05)

Table 5 shows chi squire analysis on the influence of Banditry and Kidnapping on Mental Well-being of household in Zamfara State, Nigeria. Observed from the table was that X^2 Cal. (Chi-Square Calculated Value) =1661.2 while X^2 Crit. (Chi-Square Critical Value) = 51.0, Degrees of Freedom= 36 – This represents the number of independent comparisons being made in the analysis. P-Value: 0.000 < 0.05. Since the calculated chi-square value (1661.2) is much greater than the critical value (51.0) and the p-value is the typical significance level of 0.05 the null hypothesis is rejected. The results indicated that banditry and kidnapping have a statistically significant influence on mental well-being of households in Zamfara State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis II.

Table 6: Chi-square analysis on the influence on the emotional stability of residents in Zamfara State

Variable	X^2 Cal.	X^2 Crit.	Df	P-Value	Decision
influence on the emotional stability of residents in Zamfara State	2097.6	51.0	36	0.000	Null H_o Rejected

X^2 at 36 df and at 0.05 = 51.0 df= 36 P-value= 0.000 (P<0.05)

Table 6 shows chi squire analysis on the influence of Banditry and Kidnapping on emotional wellbeing of household in Zamfara State, Nigeria. Observed from the table was that X^2 Cal. (Chi-Square Calculated Value) =2097.2 while X^2 Crit. (Chi-Square Critical Value) = 51.0, Degrees of Freedom= 36 – This represents the number of independent comparisons being made in the analysis. P-Value: 0.000 < 0.05. Since the calculated chi-square value (2097.2) is much greater than the critical value (51.0) and the p-value is below the significance level of 0.05 the null hypothesis is rejected. The results indicated that banditry and kidnapping have a statistically significant influence on mental well-being of households in Zamfara State Nigeria.

Hypothesis III.

Table 7: Chi-square analysis on the influence on the social interactions of residents in Zamfara State.

Variable	X^2 Cal.	X^2 Crit.	df	P-Value	Decision
influence on the social interactions of residents	730.1	51.0	36	0.000	Null H_o Rejected

X^2 at 36 df and at 0.05 = 51.0 df= 36 P-value= 0.000 (P<0.05)

Table 7 shows chi squire analysis on the influence of Banditry and Kidnapping on social interactions of residents in Zamfara State, Nigeria. Observed from the table was that X^2 Cal. (Chi-Square Calculated Value) =730.1 while X^2 Crit. (Chi-Square Critical Value) = 51.0, Degrees of Freedom= 36 and P-Value: 0.000 <0.05. Since the calculated chi-square value (730.1) is much greater than the critical value (51.0) and the p-value is also, below the significance level of 0.05 the null hypothesis is rejected. The results indicated that banditry and kidnapping have a statistically significant influence on social interactions of residents in Zamfara State, Nigeria.

DISCUSSION

The study's findings underscore the profound psychological influence of banditry and kidnapping on individuals' mental well-being. This discussion delves into the results, highlighting both corroborative and contrasting perspectives from existing literature.

Hypothesis I was on mental well-being of households affected. The study revealed that victims of banditry and kidnapping often experience significant psychological distress, manifesting as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). This aligns with Yakasai et al.'s (2022) research, which found that abducted school children in Kaduna State, Nigeria, suffered from severe psychological issues, including nightmares and persistent fear, adversely affecting their health and daily functioning.

Hypothesis II was on emotional well-being of victims found from the study found that distress resulting from such traumatic experiences adversely influence victims' health and daily functioning, leading to challenges in resuming normal life activities. This is consistent with findings from Yakasai et al. (2022), who observed that abducted individuals often struggle with reintegration into their daily routines due to lingering psychological effects.

Hypothesis III on social interaction of households in Zamfara State. Finding from the study was that banditry and Kidnapping has negative influence on social interaction of victims. The study's findings are consistent with existing literature that underscores the detrimental effects of banditry and kidnapping on mental well-being. While individual experiences can vary based on personal, social, and environmental factors, the overarching evidence points to the need for comprehensive mental health support systems for affected individuals.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that

Victims of banditry and kidnapping commonly suffer from severe psychological disorders such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which affect their mental stability and emotional well-being and social interactions. Traumatic distress from kidnapping and banditry negatively influence victims' overall health and impairs their ability to engage in routine activities, work, or education, thereby reducing their quality of life. Victims often experience a breakdown in social interactions and relationships due to fear, mistrust, and stigma, which leads to isolation and further emotional deterioration.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The study

1. Government and humanitarian organizations should establish trauma recovery programme that provide accessible psychological services including counseling and therapy for victims in conflict-affected areas.
2. Victims should be supported with structured rehabilitation and social reintegration initiatives to help restore their daily functioning, promote self-reliance, and rebuild confidence in community settings.
3. Health Educators in collaboration with government and NGO should organize awareness campaigns should be organized to reduce stigma and encourage community support for victims. This would help foster empathy, strengthen social bonds, and aid in victims' social and emotional recovery.

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