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BANDITRY AND PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS' ENROLMENT IN KANKARA AND DAN-MUSA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS OF KATSINA STATE, NIGERIA (2015–2022)

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the relationship between armed banditry and enrolment in public secondary schools in Kankara and Dan-Musa Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Katsina State, Nigeria, between 2015 and 2022. The study is motivated by the expansion of rural insecurity in North-Western Nigeria and the structural threat it poses to children's fundamental access to education. It evaluates the pathways through which direct attacks, kidnapping, threats, displacement, school disruptions, household income losses, and parental fear influence decisions to enroll or maintain children in school. Adopting a qualitative documentary-review design, the study synthesizes published empirical literature, official reports, and institutional statements on insecurity and education in Katsina State. The abduction of over 300 students from Government Science Secondary School, Kankara, in December 2020 underscores the acute vulnerability of academic institutions to armed violence. However, because publicly accessible administrative records lack a complete, continuous annual enrolment series for all public secondary schools across both LGAs from 2015 to 2022, this study avoids speculative quantitative modelling. Instead, it provides a systematic conceptual and analytical framework demonstrating how banditry acts as a severe constraint on enrolment through physical threats and socio-economic deprivation. The paper recommends linking school admission registers with security incident logs, enhancing safe-school infrastructure, supporting displaced learners and educators, and establishing transparent local education-security monitoring systems.

Keywords: Armed banditry; School enrolment; Public secondary schools; Kankara; Dan-Musa; Katsina State; Educational access; Human security.

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1.0 Introduction

Education serves as both a basic human right and a pivotal catalyst for social and economic development. Public secondary schools provide adolescents with vital opportunities to acquire literacy, numeracy, civic awareness, and vocational competencies required for higher education and labour market integration. However, school enrolment depends not merely on physical infrastructure, but on whether households perceive school attendance to be safe, affordable, and sustainable. Where rural armed violence becomes pervasive, the physical existence of a school does not guarantee functional educational access.

In North-Western Nigeria, armed banditry has evolved into a persistent security crisis characterized by violent raids on rural communities, widespread kidnapping for ransom, cattle rustling, mass casualty attacks, extortion, and forced displacement. These activities severely erode agrarian livelihoods and dismantle public trust in state security apparatuses. Katsina State has experienced recurring violence across its rural spaces, with profound disruptions to agricultural production, community cohesion, and basic social service delivery. Kankara LGA gained global attention following the armed attack and mass abduction at Government Science Secondary School on 11 December 2020. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (2020) vigorously condemned the abduction of over 300 male students, while official reports later confirmed the release of 344 boys on 18 December 2020 (Federal Ministry of Information and Culture, 2020).

The Kankara attack represents a critical juncture, illustrating how educational facilities can be targeted directly, thereby rendering the journey to and presence at school an existential hazard. Similarly, Dan-Musa LGA—another area severely afflicted by rural banditry demonstrates how persistent violence in surrounding hinterlands systematically destabilizes education even in institutions that avoid direct armed raids. Educational disruption manifests as reduced baseline admissions, erratic attendance patterns, elevated dropout rates, delayed transitions from junior to senior secondary levels, and forced household relocation to safer urban centers.

This study covers the timeline from 2015 to 2022, capturing the pre-escalation environment, the intensification of rural insecurity, the pivotal 2020 Kankara attack, and the subsequent institutional and community responses through 2022. The central objective is to analyze the complex interactions between armed banditry and public secondary school enrolment in Kankara and Dan-Musa LGAs.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Rural armed banditry threatens to reverse decades of progress in widening access to public secondary education across Northern Nigeria. While educational enrolment is fundamentally conditioned by factors such as demographic structure, school proximity, household poverty, gender dynamics, and pedagogical quality, persistent insecurity introduces compound hazards. Fear of abduction, temporary or indefinite school closures,

population displacement, and additional financial burdens associated with safer transport or relocation interact directly with traditional barriers to schooling.

A critical challenge in evaluating this crisis lies in the asymmetry between highly publicized security events and systematic, disaggregated school-level data. Media coverage frequently records violent incidents or emergency school closures, yet rarely documents the longitudinal impact on enrolment metrics, age-cohort distributions, or gender-specific retention rates. Conversely, an observed decline in school enrolment within a specific jurisdiction cannot be attributed solely to banditry without controlling for broader demographic shifts, internal migration, economic shocks, institutional policy alterations, and the nationwide COVID-19 academic disruptions of 2020.

Consequently, the core research problem is twofold: first, to establish the causal mechanisms through which armed banditry degrades public secondary school enrolment; and second, to define the empirical parameters and administrative data required to evaluate this relationship accurately in high-risk local contexts.

1.2 Research Objectives

The primary objective of this study is to examine the impact of armed banditry on public secondary school enrolment in Kankara and Dan-Musa LGAs of Katsina State from 2015 to 2022. Specifically, the study seeks to:

i. Contextualize the patterns and educational relevance of armed banditry in Kankara and Dan-Musa LGAs during the 2015–2022 period.
ii. Delineate the direct and indirect mechanisms through which banditry conditions household schooling and enrolment decisions.
iii. Review existing empirical literature regarding insecurity, enrolment, attendance, and student retention within Katsina State.
iv. Identify differential vulnerabilities and educational consequences across distinct communities, genders, and student populations.
v. Formulate policy interventions to safeguard educational access and improve data monitoring in conflict-affected zones.

1.3 Research Questions

i. What forms of banditry and insecurity directly impacted public secondary education in Kankara and Dan-Musa LGAs between 2015 and 2022?
ii. Through what structural mechanisms does armed banditry depress school enrolment across the two LGAs?

iii. What does current empirical literature reveal regarding the relationship between insecurity and educational outcomes in Katsina State

iv. What administrative and school-level data are necessary to rigorously measure enrolment fluctuations during the study period?

v. What actionable interventions can maintain safe and equitable access to public secondary education in insecure environments?

1.4 Conceptual Clarification

Armed Banditry

In this analysis, *armed banditry* refers to organized or semi-organized criminal violence involving armed raids, kidnapping for ransom, extortion, cattle rustling, armed robbery, and systematic community intimidation. The term is applied analytically and does not imply that all violent actors maintain uniform ideological motivations or organizational structures. Banditry may overlap with other forms of violence, but it should not automatically be treated as synonymous with insurgency or terrorism.

Public secondary school enrolment

Enrolment refers to the formal registration of eligible learners in public junior or senior secondary schools. It is distinct from attendance, retention and completion. Enrolment measures entry or registration at a point in time; attendance measures participation in school activities; retention concerns whether learners remain in the system; and completion concerns finishing a cycle. These indicators are related but cannot be used interchangeably. A school may maintain its registered enrolment while attendance declines, or enrolment may fall when families transfer children elsewhere.

Educational access and insecurity

Educational access is understood as the practical ability to enter and participate in schooling. Insecurity can restrict access even where school buildings remain open. Threats may increase the perceived risks of travelling to school, reduce teacher availability, interrupt school calendars, damage household resources and lead families to move. The effect may be uneven: households with more resources may transfer children to safer locations, while poorer households may leave children out of school.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Banditry and the wider education environment

Research on insecurity and education in Nigeria identifies several ways violence can disrupt schooling: direct attacks on institutions, threats to learners and teachers, displacement, interrupted academic calendars and the diversion of public resources towards emergency security. In areas where violence is recurrent, parents may reassess whether the expected benefits of education outweigh immediate safety concerns. These decisions are not necessarily a rejection of education; they may represent an attempt to protect children under conditions of uncertainty.

The consequences may extend beyond the period of an attack. Families may be reluctant to send children back to school if they believe that a school or route remains exposed. Teachers may request transfers, avoid rural postings or be absent because of insecurity. Schools may lose instructional time and confidence among parents. Where household livelihoods are damaged by theft, extortion or displacement, families may also struggle to pay for uniforms, transport, books and other costs associated with schooling.

Evidence from Katsina State

Ayinla, Belloh and Kankia (2023) studied enrolment, attendance and retention in secondary schools in Katsina State for 2017-2022. Their mixed-methods study used questionnaires and admission-register analysis involving education officials, principals and teachers. The authors reported negative effects of insecurity, including banditry, cattle rustling and abduction, on the three educational indicators. This is directly relevant to the present study, although its geographic coverage and sampling should be checked against the specific Kankara–Dan-Musa focus before transferring its findings to every school in the two LGAs.

Ademola, Iyoboyi, Veronica and Abdurraheem (2025) examined educational outcomes in affected rural communities in Jibia, Batsari and Dan-Musa. Using cross-sectional data from 450 respondents and ordinary least squares regression, the authors reported a negative effect of armed banditry on enrolment, attendance, academic performance and teacher effectiveness. The inclusion of Dan-Musa provides particularly relevant corroborative evidence. Nevertheless, the study's

cross-sectional design and broader outcome measures should not be mistaken for a verified annual enrolment series for 2015-2022.

Olomola, Olutola and Adamu (2024) examined senior secondary school enrolment and attitudes towards formal education in banditry-affected areas of Katsina State. Their study used student questionnaires and school enrolment records and reported low enrolment and negative attitudes towards formal education in the surveyed settings. This work reinforces the importance of combining enrolment records with evidence on students' perceptions and experiences.

The Kankara school abduction as a critical event

On 11 December 2020, armed men attacked Government Science Secondary School in Kankara and abducted hundreds of students. The African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights issued a statement on 16 December 2020 condemning the abduction of more than 300 students. On 18 December, Nigeria's Federal Ministry of Information and Culture reported that 344 schoolboys had been released. These official accounts establish the seriousness of the event and its direct connection to school safety.

The event offers a critical case through which to understand the potential educational consequences of violence. It may affect enrolment through fear of future attacks, concerns about boarding-school safety, pressure on parents to move children to day schools or other locations, and a loss of confidence in the ability of authorities to protect learners. However, an event's severity does not independently quantify its impact on enrolment. That requires comparison of school registers before and after the incident and careful consideration of other factors.

The literature establishes that insecurity is associated with negative educational outcomes in affected parts of Katsina State, and one recent study includes Dan-Musa. The remaining gap for the present topic is a focused, comparative account of public secondary school enrolment in Kankara and Dan-Musa across each year from 2015 to 2022. A robust study should identify school-by-school enrolment, distinguish junior and senior secondary levels, disaggregate data by sex where available, and relate these figures to verified incidents and school disruptions. Without these records, the most defensible contribution is an analytical explanation of likely pathways and a clear empirical framework rather than a fabricated statistical conclusion.

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2.1 Theoretical Framework

Human Security Approach

The paper adopts the human security approach as its main analytical lens. Human security shifts attention from the protection of state institutions alone to the safety and well-being of individuals and communities. In the educational context, physical safety, freedom from fear, livelihood security and access to essential services are interdependent. Armed banditry undermines human security when it exposes children to kidnapping or injury, forces families to relocate, damages livelihoods and weakens access to schools.

The approach is appropriate because enrolment is not simply an administrative decision. Parents assess whether children can travel to school safely and whether the family can sustain the costs of schooling. If the perceived risk becomes unacceptable, parents may delay enrolment or withdraw children even when a school is formally functioning. The framework therefore connects violence at community level to household decision-making and educational access.

Analytical proposition

The central proposition is that higher exposure to banditry is likely to be associated with lower new enrolment and weaker continuation in school, particularly where attacks are frequent, school routes are unsafe, households are displaced or school security is inadequate. The relationship is expected to be mediated by fear, school closures, teacher disruption, livelihood loss and displacement. It may be moderated by school security, community trust, family resources, access to alternative schools and the speed of government response. This is a proposition to be tested, not a statistical result established by this documentary review.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research design

This draft uses a qualitative documentary-review design. It synthesises peer-reviewed or journal-published studies, official statements and publicly available reports relevant to banditry and education in Katsina State. It is suitable for mapping the issue, developing an explanatory framework and identifying gaps in the evidence. It does not claim to have conducted interviews, administered questionnaires or inspected original admission registers.

3.2 Study area and period

The geographical focus is Kankara and Dan-Musa LGAs in Katsina State, north-western Nigeria. The study period is 2015–2022. The years are treated as an analytical window rather than as proof that the same intensity of violence occurred in every year. The Kankara school abduction in December 2020 is a documented critical event within the period.

3.3 Sources and selection

Sources were selected for direct relevance to armed banditry, school enrolment, school attendance, retention and school safety in Katsina State. Priority was given to official statements and research that explicitly identifies its study area, sample and method. Studies with wider geographic coverage are used as contextual evidence and are not assumed to provide school-specific findings for both LGAs.

3.4 Analytical procedure

The documents were examined thematically under five categories: (1) direct attacks and threats to schools; (2) fear and parental enrolment decisions; (3) displacement and household economic disruption; (4) school operations, teacher availability and attendance; and (5) policy and protection responses. The analysis compares the themes with the available research findings and identifies where evidence is direct, where it is suggestive, and where local data remain unavailable.

3.5 Limitations and data needed for a full empirical article

A documentary review cannot determine the exact magnitude of enrolment change in Kankara and Dan-Musa. Publicly accessible sources reviewed for this draft do not provide a complete annual dataset for all public secondary schools in both LGAs from 2015 through 2022. Before submission as an original empirical article, the author should obtain annual admission registers or Education Management Information System (EMIS) data from the Katsina State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, the relevant zonal education offices and the schools. Incident dates and school closure records should be triangulated with official security records, local government education departments and credible reports.

A stronger quantitative design would calculate annual enrolment by school, class level and sex; compare changes before and after major incidents; and, if data permit, compare affected schools

with similar schools less exposed to violence. It should account for population movement, school transfers, COVID-19 closures, school openings or mergers and changes in admission policy. Interviews with principals, teachers, parents and students could explain why enrolment changed. Ethical safeguards are essential when collecting testimony from children or survivors of violence.

4.0 DISCUSSION

Direct threats and the perceived safety of schooling

The Kankara abduction illustrates how violence can turn a school into a perceived site of danger. When students are abducted from a school, families may question the safety of boarding arrangements, school premises and routes to education. The immediate response may include temporary withdrawal or transfer; longer-term effects may include delayed admission, preference for schools closer to home or reluctance to enrol children in settings considered exposed. These are plausible mechanisms supported by the wider literature on insecurity and education, but their scale in Kankara must be established through school-level records.

Fear, parental decisions and unequal access

Fear can affect enrolment even where no attack has occurred at a particular school. Parents may respond to rumours, nearby incidents, threats along transport routes or reports of kidnappings in neighbouring communities. Families with sufficient resources may send children to relatives in safer areas or pay for alternative schooling. Families with fewer resources may have no realistic alternative and may keep children at home. In this way, insecurity can deepen existing inequalities in access to secondary education.

Gender may shape the form of the response. Parents may impose additional restrictions on girls' movement or become concerned about sexual violence and abduction. Boys may face risks associated with travel, recruitment pressure, or being perceived as potential targets. These possibilities should be examined rather than assumed: the direction and magnitude of gender differences need to be demonstrated through disaggregated enrolment and interview data.

Displacement and household economic pressure

Banditry can damage the material conditions that make schooling possible. Extortion, theft of livestock, interrupted farming and displacement can reduce household income and make transport,

uniforms, learning materials and examination costs harder to afford. When families flee, children may leave their registered schools, enroll elsewhere, or remain out of school if records and placement cannot be transferred easily. School-level enrolment can therefore fall because of out-migration even if affected students continue their education elsewhere.

For Dan-Musa, the 2025 study by Ademola et al. includes affected rural communities in the LGA and reports negative educational outcomes associated with armed banditry. This is a relevant indication that the problem extends beyond the single high-profile Kankara incident. Nevertheless, the study's cross-sectional results do not supply a year-by-year causal estimate for the 2015-2022 period.

School closure, teacher availability and continuity

Authorities may close schools temporarily when threats become severe, while teachers may be absent, request transfers or avoid schools perceived to be unsafe. Such disruption can reduce confidence in the value of enrolling a child if learning is frequently interrupted. Enrolment and attendance must nevertheless be measured separately: a registered student may be absent for long periods, and a school may remain open while its actual participation rate declines.

Education authorities should record not only whether a school is open or closed, but also the duration of closures, the number of instructional days lost, teacher attendance, transfers and the return of students after a disruption. These measures would make it possible to distinguish a short-lived shock from a persistent decline in access.

Interpreting enrolment trends cautiously

A credible analysis must avoid attributing every decline to banditry. The study period includes the COVID-19 pandemic and related school disruptions in 2020, as well as possible changes in population, school capacity, household finances and education policy. An increase in enrolment would not necessarily mean insecurity had no effect: new school openings, demographic growth or transfers from other locations could offset losses. Similarly, a decline does not establish causation without corroborating evidence.

The most reliable approach is triangulation. Annual admission registers can show the direction and scale of enrolment changes; incident records can identify when and where threats occurred;

interviews can explain family decisions; and comparison schools can help indicate whether changes were specific to high-exposure communities or part of a broader trend. This is particularly important if the article is intended for a peer-reviewed journal.

5.0 CONCLUSION

Armed banditry presents a serious threat to the conditions required for public secondary school enrolment in Kankara and Dan-Musa LGAs of Katsina State. The mechanisms are both direct and indirect: attacks and kidnapping can undermine confidence in school safety, while fear, displacement, livelihood loss, teacher disruption and school closures can make enrolment difficult or unattractive. The Kankara school abduction in December 2020 provides clear evidence of the direct vulnerability of students to armed violence. Research covering Katsina State, including a study with Dan-Musa in its sample, also reports negative relationships between insecurity and educational outcomes.

The evidence supports the conclusion that banditry is a serious constraint on educational access, but it does not justify inventing a precise percentage decline in enrolment in the two LGAs between 2015 and 2022. A definitive empirical conclusion requires annual school-level data, verified incident timelines and a design that accounts for other factors affecting enrolment. The value of this paper is to synthesise the available evidence, clarify the causal pathways to investigate and set out a practical framework for a stronger local study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Create a school-level enrolment and security database for Kankara and Dan-Musa, covering annual admissions, transfers, withdrawals, attendance, school closures and verified security incidents.

Strengthen safe-school planning through locally appropriate risk assessments, secure communication channels, emergency procedures and coordination among school leaders, communities and responsible security agencies.

Establish rapid-response and early-warning arrangements that allow schools and communities to report credible threats without exposing informants to retaliation.

Provide continuity-of-learning arrangements during disruption, including temporary learning sites, catch-up programs and flexible placement for displaced learners.

Support affected households through targeted assistance with learning materials, transport, uniforms and re-enrolment costs, with particular attention to displaced and economically vulnerable students.

Protect teacher welfare by improving security communication, psychosocial support and transparent procedures for safe deployment or temporary reassignment.

Use sex-disaggregated data and consult students, parents and school staff to understand whether risks and enrolment responses differ by gender, age, disability or distance from school.

Conduct a follow-up mixed-methods study using official admission registers for every year from 2015 to 2022 and interviews with education officials, principals, teachers, parents and learners, subject to ethical approval and informed consent.

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