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Understanding the Root Causes and Impacts of Armed Banditry in Northwest Nigeria: Pathways to Sustainable Solutions

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the causes, impacts, remedies, and governance perceptions surrounding armed banditry in a conflict-prone region, employing exploratory factor analysis to uncover underlying patterns. Further, using a multi-stage sampling technique, a total of 354 affected households were randomly selected. Besides, a well-structured questionnaire coupled withan interview schedule, focus group discussion, key informants and desk review were used to elicit undated data in the year 2024. The results highlight socio-environmental, socio-cultural, political, economic, and governance challenges as key drivers, with poverty and distrust in government institutions significantly influencing perceptions. The impacts of banditry, including livelihood disruption and humanitarian crises, emphasize the urgent need for integrated, community-focused solutions. Recommendations include holistic strategies targeting poverty reduction, community empowerment, transparent governance, and equitable resource distribution to address the root causes and restore trust and stability in affected areas.

INTRODUCTION

Armed banditry is increasingly recognized as a significant security threat across sub-Saharan Africa (Sadiq *et al*., 2024a), deeply affecting socio-economic stability and governance in regions with weak institutional frameworks and high poverty levels (Abubakar & Musa, 2023). Initially limited to cattle rustling and small-scale criminal activities, armed banditry has transformed into a more organized and violent phenomenon (Sadiq *et al*., 2024b). This escalation has introduced new dimensions of insecurity, including large-scale kidnappings, destruction of infrastructure, and widespread displacement of communities. The impact of these activities extends beyond immediate security concerns, disrupting local economies, exacerbating poverty, and undermining state legitimacy. In northwest Nigeria, where rural communities depend heavily on agriculture and livestock, the effects of banditry are particularly severe, creating a humanitarian crisis that demands urgent attention (Sadiq *et al*., 2024b; Yusuf *et al*., 2022).

The northwest region of Nigeria is marked by vast rural landscapes, sparse state presence, and socio-economic vulnerabilities, making it a hotspot for armed banditry. Contributing factors include poor governance, widespread poverty, weak law enforcement, and the proliferation of small arms, which have created an environment conducive to criminal activities (Ahmed *et al*., 2023). These factors have allowed banditry to thrive, destabilizing the region and perpetuating cycles of violence. Farmers are forced to abandon their fields due to insecurity, schools and health centers are shut down, and entire villages are displaced, leaving residents without livelihoods or access to basic services. Despite military campaigns and development initiatives, banditry persists, highlighting the inadequacy of existing strategies to address its root causes (Sadiq *et al*., 2024b; Musa & Abdullahi, 2022).

The persistent nature of armed banditry in northwest Nigeria underscores the urgent need for a comprehensive understanding of its underlying causes, far-reaching impacts, and potential solutions. While previous research has shed light on the immediate consequences of banditry, there is a lack of studies that delve into systemic issues such as governance inefficiencies, socio-cultural factors, and economic vulnerabilities. This study addresses these gaps by employing exploratory factor analysis to uncover the multi-dimensional factors driving banditry in northwest Nigeria. By focusing on critical areas such as governance perceptions, community resilience, and socio-economic challenges, the research aims to provide a detailed framework for addressing the crisis.

The justification for this study lies in its potential to inform policy and intervention

strategies. Armed banditry has profound socio-economic and political implications, affecting not only the livelihoods of rural communities but also national stability and development (Sadiq *et al*., 2024c; Sadiq *et al*., 2024d). By analyzing the root causes and governance dimensions of banditry, this study seeks to provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers and stakeholders. These recommendations will be instrumental in designing holistic, sustainable solutions that address both the symptoms and root causes of the problem. Ultimately, the findings of this study will contribute to restoring security, fostering resilience, and promoting inclusive governance in the affected regions of northwest Nigeria. Consequently, this study is an attempt to understand the multifaceted dimensions of armed banditry in Northwest Nigeria. The specific objectives were to determine the rural households' perception on overall governance; determine the perceived causes of armed banditry; determine the impact of armed banditry-induced shocks on the livelihood of the rural households; and determine the perceived remedial measures of combating armed banditry in the study area.

Empirical Review

The phenomenon of armed banditry has received considerable scholarly attention, with recent studies exploring its root causes, impacts, and possible remedies. A growing body of evidence highlights the socio-economic underpinnings of banditry, particularly poverty, unemployment, and inequality, as key drivers. For instance, Ahmed *et al*. (2023) found that economic deprivation and lack of access to education were significant predictors of banditry in rural communities, emphasizing the need for targeted poverty alleviation programs. Similarly, Yusuf *et al*. (2022) argued that marginalization and limited livelihood opportunities drive individuals, especially youth, to participate in criminal activities as a survival strategy.

In terms of impacts, armed banditry has devastating consequences on livelihoods, displacing thousands and disrupting agricultural activities in affected areas. Sadiq *et al*.(2024b) and Bello *et al*. (2023) reported that banditry in northwest Nigeria had led to a 40% decline in crop production, exacerbating food insecurity and economic instability. Moreover, the psychological impacts, including trauma and fear, further weaken community resilience and trust in government institutions (Sadiq *et al*., 2024c; Abubakar & Musa, 2023).

Efforts to mitigate armed banditry have often centered on security interventions such as military campaigns. However, these strategies have yielded mixed results, with critics pointing to their limited ability to address the root causes of the problem (Musa & Abdullahi, 2023). Recent research emphasizes the importance of community-driven approaches and good governance as long-term solutions. For example, Sadiq *et al*. (2024d) highlighted the effectiveness of community policing and participatory governance in reducing crime rates in rural settings. Additionally, Ahmed & Bello (2023) underscored the role of equitable resource distribution and transparency in fostering trust and stability.

These empirical findings collectively underscore the multifaceted nature of armed banditry and the need for comprehensive strategies that integrate socio-economic development, governance reforms, and security measures to achieve sustainable peace in northwest Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The study of armed banditry in northwest Nigeria is anchored in three interrelated theoretical perspectives: the Routine Activity Theory (RAT)**,** the Structural Strain Theory, and the Governance Theory**.** Together, these frameworks provide a comprehensive understanding of the drivers, impacts, and potential remedies for banditry in the region.

The Routine Activity Theory (RAT) postulates that criminal activities occur when three elements converge: motivated offenders, suitable targets, and the absence of capable guardians (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Yusuf et al., 2022). In the northwest Nigerian context, poverty, weak law enforcement, and vast unpoliced rural areas create opportunities for banditry to thrive. This framework underscores the importance of improving security measures and addressing socio-economic vulnerabilities to disrupt the conditions enabling banditry.

The Structural Strain Theory suggests that societal pressures, such as poverty, inequality, and limited access to legitimate opportunities, lead individuals to engage in deviant behavior (Merton, 1968; Ahmed et al., 2023). Armed banditry in the region can be understood as a response to structural inequalities, where marginalized individuals resort to crime as a means of survival or resistance. This perspective highlights the need for inclusive development policies that reduce socio-economic disparities and provide alternative livelihoods.

The Governance Theory focuses on the role of institutional effectiveness, accountability, and trust in maintaining social order (Kaufmann et al., 1999; Musa & Abdullahi, 2023). In northwest Nigeria, weak governance structures, corruption, and a lack of accountability have eroded public trust and created a power vacuum exploited by bandits. This theory emphasizes the importance of strengthening governance, enhancing transparency, and fostering community participation in decision-making processes to build resilience against insecurity.

By integrating these theoretical perspectives, this study provides a nuanced understanding of armed

banditry as a socio-economic, political, and security phenomenon. It also informs evidence-based interventions targeting structural inequalities, improving security mechanisms, and fostering good governance to mitigate the impacts of banditry in northwest Nigeria.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study integrates key concepts related to the causes, impacts, and remedies of armed banditry, emphasizing the interplay between socio-economic, governance, and security dynamics. It is structured around three primary domains: causes of banditry, impacts of banditry, and remedies for banditry, with governance and socio-economic conditions serving as cross-cutting themes that influence all aspects.

1. **Causes of Armed Banditry**

The root causes of armed banditry in northwest Nigeria include socio-economic vulnerabilities (e.g., poverty, unemployment), governance deficits (e.g., weak institutional capacity, corruption), and socio-cultural factors (e.g., marginalization, intergroup conflicts). These factors create a conducive environment for crime and insecurity (Ahmed *et al*., 2023; Yusuf *et al*., 2022).

2. **Impacts of Armed Banditry**

Banditry severely disrupts livelihoods, particularly in agriculture-dependent communities, and exacerbates poverty and displacement. The humanitarian crises arising from banditry also strain local and national resources, while eroding trust in formal governance structures (Bello *et al*., 2023).

3. **Remedies for Armed Banditry**

Effective solutions include preventive strategies (e.g., improved security infrastructure, community policing), governance reforms (e.g., transparency, resource distribution), and socio-economic interventions (e.g., poverty alleviation programs, youth empowerment) (Sadiq et al., 2024).

Cross-Cutting Themes

- **Governance:** Weak governance is both a cause and a consequence of banditry. Transparent, accountable, and participatory governance is critical for addressing the root causes and rebuilding trust.
- **Socio-Economic Conditions:** Addressing socio-economic disparities is essential for breaking the cycle of poverty and insecurity that fuels banditry.

Diagram Representation

The conceptual framework can be visually represented as an interconnected system where socio-economic vulnerabilities and governance deficits influence both the causes and impacts of banditry. Remedies serve as interventions targeting these core issues to restore stability and resilience.

This framework provides a holistic approach to understanding armed banditry, ensuring that policy recommendations address the underlying causes, mitigate the impacts, and promote sustainable governance and development in northwest Nigeria.

1. **Socio-Economic Vulnerabilities and Governance Deficits (Root Causes)**

At the top of the framework, socio-economic vulnerabilities (e.g., poverty, unemployment, lack of education) and governance deficits (e.g., weak institutions, corruption, lack of accountability) are identified as primary drivers of banditry. These conditions create an environment where individuals, especially marginalized youth, may turn to criminal activities for survival (Ahmed *et al*., 2023). The absence of effective governance and economic opportunities further fuels grievances and weakens state authority.

2. **Causes of Banditry**

The convergence of socio-economic and governance challenges leads to the rise of armed banditry. Factors such as resource conflicts, lack of law enforcement, ethnic tensions, and political instability contribute to the proliferation of bandit groups (Yusuf *et al*., 2022). This stage emphasizes that banditry is not a random occurrence but a result of structural deficiencies.

3. **Impacts of Banditry**

Once established, banditry has far-reaching consequences: displacement of communities, livelihood disruption, food insecurity, economic collapse, and loss of trust in governance (Bello *et al*., 2023). The framework visually represents the feedback loop, where the impacts of banditry further deepen socio-economic vulnerabilities and governance deficits, creating a vicious cycle of insecurity. This explains why military interventions alone have not been sustainable in eradicating banditry.

4. **Remedies for Banditry**

To break the cycle, targeted interventions are required. The framework outlines three key solutions:

- **Preventive Strategies** - Strengthening security infrastructure, enhancing law enforcement, and intelligence-driven policing.
- **Governance Reforms** - Addressing corruption, improving transparency, and ensuring equitable resource distribution (Sadiq *et al*., 2024d).
- **Socio-Economic Interventions** - Investing in education, job creation, and community-driven development initiatives.

5. **Security and Stability (Final Outcome)**

The ultimate goal of these interventions is security and stability, achieved through a well-governed, economically empowered, and peaceful society. If properly implemented, these measures can disrupt the cycle of banditry and restore trust in governance, ensuring long-term peace in northwest Nigeria.

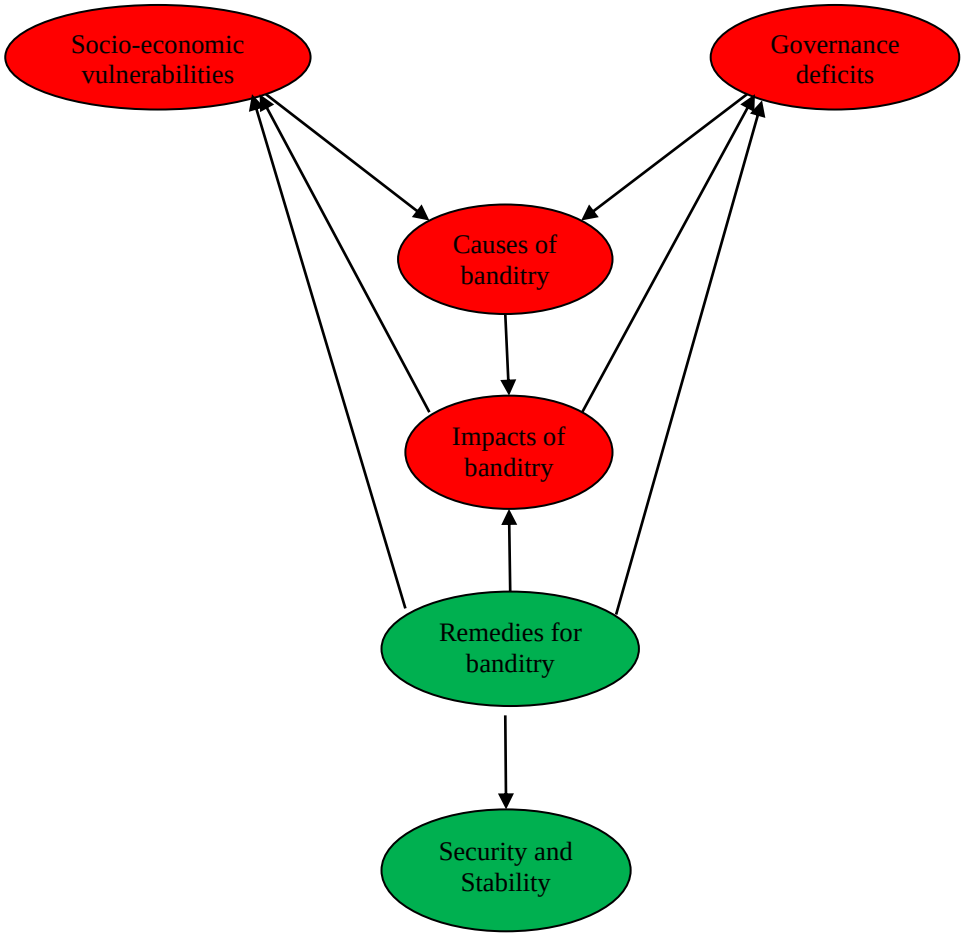

Figure 1: Conceptual framework of armed banditry in Northwest Nigeria

The conceptual framework highlights that addressing armed banditry requires a multi-dimensional approach, integrating security, governance, and socio-economic strategies. By tackling the root causes and not just the symptoms, policymakers can develop sustainable solutions that foster long-term peace and development in the region.

Research Methodology

The northwest region of Nigeria, including states like Kaduna, Zamfara, and Sokoto, is characterized by vast savanna landscapes interspersed with scattered hills and seasonal rivers, making it suitable for both rain-fed and irrigated agriculture (Abdullahi *et al*., 2023) (Figure 2). The region experiences a semi-arid climate with distinct wet (May to September) and dry seasons, receiving annual rainfall between 600 mm and 1200 mm, which supports crop cultivation but is highly vulnerable to erratic weather patterns and droughts (Usman *et al*., 2023). Agro-ecologically, it spans the Sudan and Sahel Savanna zones, where fertile soils support crops such as millet, sorghum, and rice, alongside extensive pastoralism, especially in the drier areas (Bello *et al*., 2023). Livestock rearing, a major activity in the region is vital to household income and contributes significantly to national GDP. Economically, the northwest is an agricultural powerhouse, but its potential is hindered by high poverty levels, inadequate infrastructure, and insecurity, including resource conflicts and armed banditry (Musa & Yusuf, 2023). These challenges disrupt farming and trade, exacerbate unemployment, and deepen socio-economic vulnerabilities. Targeted policies addressing these intertwined issues are essential for the region's sustainable development.

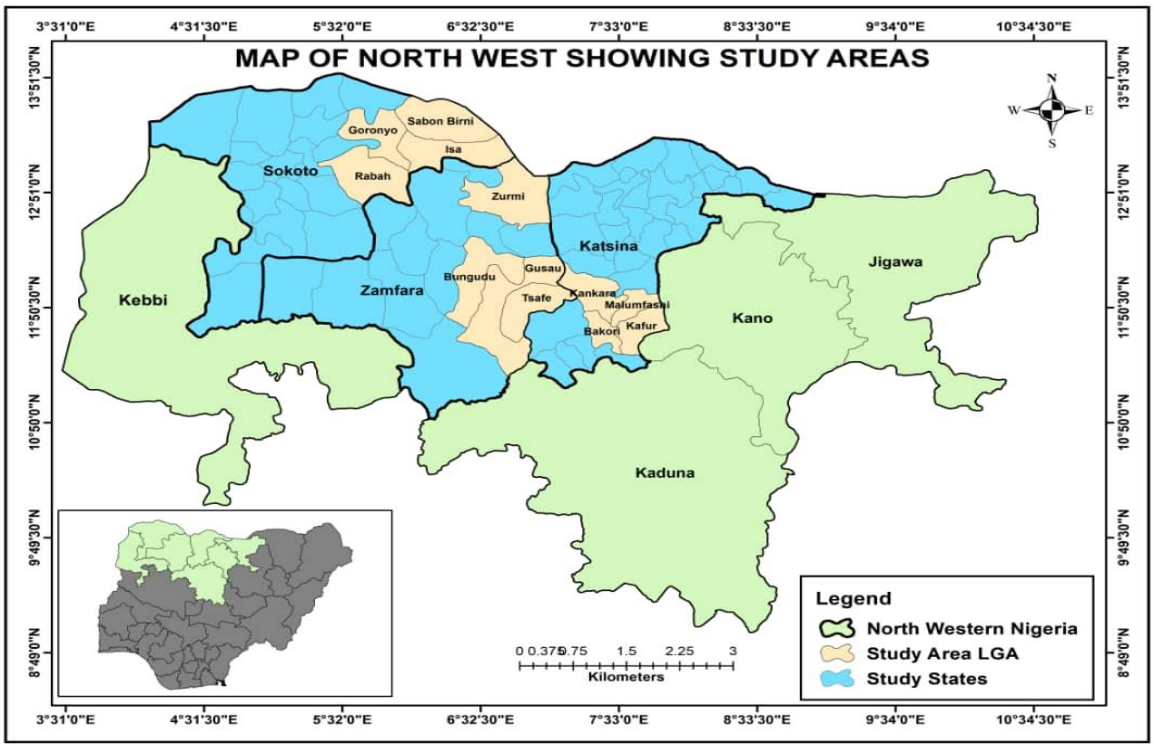

Figure 2: Map of the study area

Using a multi-stage sampling technique, a total of 354 affected households formed the sample size (Table 1). In the region, the worst affected states namely Katsina, Sokoto and Zamfara were purposively selected. Subsequently, based on temporary security stability of affected areas, four Local Government Areas (LGAs) were conveniently selected from each of the chosen states, thus gave a total of twelve (12) sampled LGAs. The high state of banditry activities necessitates the choice of majorly rural characterized LGAs against the urban and peri-urban characterized LGAs. Given the oscillating nature of security which impaired the quality of a finite sampling frame, as proposed by Bartlet *et al*.(2002) and adopted by Sadiq *et al*.(2020; 2023a & 2024e), the error margin formula was used to generate a representative sample size for the study. Sadiq *et al*.(2020; 2023a & 2024e) argued that in the absence of a finite population, Bartlet's sampling formula stands a better chance in dousing the ambiguity of deriving a scientific representative sample size. Except for two LGAs in Katsina state were 30 affected households each were randomly chosen, 29 affected households were randomly selected across each of the 10 LGAs, thus gave a total sample size of 350 households as recommended by the Bartlet's error margin formula.

Table 1: Sampling procedure and sample size of the affected households

States	LGAs	Sample size
Katsina	Bakori	30
	Kafur	30
	Kankara	29
	Malumfashi	29
Sokoto	Goronyo	29
	Isa	29
	Rabah	29
	Sabon-Birni	29
Zamfara	Bungudu	29
	Gusau	31
	Tsafe	29
	Zurmi	31
Total / 3	12	354

However, after the field survey, four (4) extra valid digital responses across two LGAs in Zamfara state were observed and given the insignificant number of the responses in introducing bias into the entire results, they were included in the analysis. Generally, the total sample size stands at 354 affected households.

Furthermore, in data elicitation, a well-structured questionnaire coupled with an interview schedule was used to collect unadated data from the affected households in the year 2024. Besides, using an easy-route cost approach, data collection lasted for a period of three months (October to December). Moreover, the collected data were analysed using exploratory factor analysis. Nevertheless, k-mean cluster hierarchy analysis was used to determine the population proportion in each of the clusters.

According to the Bartlett's formula, the sample size of the unknown can be generated using the following formula:

$$N_{nb} = Z^2 * P(1-P) / e^2 \quad \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots (1)$$

Where, N_{nb} is the sample size of the non-beneficiaries, *Z* is z-statistic at 5% probability level (1.96), *P* is the sample proportion (35%) and *e* is the error gap at 5%

Empirical model

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) is a statistical technique used to identify the underlying structure of a set of observed variables (Costello & Osborne,2005; Field, 2018; Tabachnick & Fidell,2019). It aims to uncover latent constructs (factors) that explain the patterns of correlations among variables. In Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), the relationship between observed variables and underlying latent factors is modeled mathematically. The fundamental equation representing this relationship is:

Where: $X = \Lambda F + \varepsilon$ ……. (2)

- **X** is a vector of observed variables (manifest variables).
- Λ (Lambda) is the factor loading matrix, indicating the influence of each factor on the observed variables.
- **F** is a vector of latent factors (unobserved variables) that account for the correlations among observed variables.
- ε (epsilon) is a vector of unique factors or errors, representing the variance in observed variables not explained by the common factors.

This model assumes that the observed variables can be expressed as linear combinations of the latent factors plus unique errors. The goal of EFA is to estimate the factor loading matrix (Λ) to understand the underlying structure of the data.

The covariance matrix (Σ) of the observed variables can be decomposed as:

$$\Sigma = \Lambda \Phi \Lambda' + \Psi \quad \ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots\ldots (3)$$

Where:

- Φ is the covariance matrix of the latent factors.
- Ψ is the diagonal matrix of unique variances (variances of ε).

This decomposition helps in understanding how much of the observed variance is due to common factors and how much is unique to each variable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Rural households' perceptions of governance

In identifying the common perception of overall governance prevalent in the study area, the 30 variables in Table 2 (columns 1-7) were subjected to exploratory factor analysis. Further, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.889 being greater than the threshold level of 0.80 recommended for social sciences (See Sadiq *et al*., 2018a&b; Abbasian *et al*., 2017; Mansourfar, 2006), implies relative compactability in the correlation patterns and the factor analysis yielded distinct and reliable factors. Also, the KMO value as postulated by Hutcheson Sofroniou (1999) attained the status termed 'great'. Besides, as reported by Sadiq *et al*.(2018a&b), the KMO value falls in the range of 'meritorious'. Moreso, the results showed that the rotation-matrix is not an identity matrix as evident by the significant of the Barlett's test of sphericity that is below the threshold value of 1% probability level (See Field, 2005; Sadiq *et al*., 2024f&g). Nevertheless, the diagnostic tests viz. RMSEA, TLI and Chi-square were within the acceptable threshold values recommended by various researchers (Table 4), thus imply that the model is fit for the specified equation.

Furthermore, six factors were identified to be the common perceptions of overall governance prevalent in the study area as revealed by their respective Eigen values that exceeds unity. Besides, the combined effect of these factors accounted for 65.58% of total variation of perception of overall governance in the study area. Moreso, within each of the six factors, there is internal consistency in their respective factor loadings as evident by their respective Cronbach's Alpha values that are above the recommended threshold value of 0.70 (See Nunnally, 1994; Sadiq et al., 2017; Sadiq *et al*., 2018a&b). Noteworthy, for efficiency and consistency, the factor loadings with an absolute value less than 0.40 were excluded from each of the extracted factors (See Bagheri & Shabanali Fami, 2016; Sadiq *et al*., 2023b; 2024f&g). Also, for a factor with not more than two loadings, the respective factor(s) bores the name of the factor

loading with the highest absolute value (See Sadiq *et al.*, 2023b; 2024f&g). Succinctly, the six extracted factors of the overall governance perceptions prevalent in the study area are labeled as "government trust", "community resilience", "security initiatives", "government support", "authority responsiveness", and "preventive measures".

The first factor, labeled "government trust", with eleven (11) factor variables' loading, and accounted for 33.47% of total variation, showed the affected households (i.e., 7.63% of the total population) concern over distrust and skepticism in government institutions to provide adequate security; ineffectiveness of security forces in combating banditry; widespread of corruption among government officials; non-accountability of officials for security failures; neglect by the government, particularly the country sides; and distrust between government and NGOs partnership, raising concerns about ulterior motives. The second factor, labeled "community resilience", loaded on nine (9) factors and responsible for 12.85% of total variation, expressed the study area (12.71% of the total population) concern over jettison of community inputs in governance decisions related to security/ or communities voices are not adequately represented in governance discussion; prioritization of interest(s) over community safety by the law enforcement agencies; uninformed about government initiatives aimed at combating banditry; community networks is more reliable than government in providing support and protection; prefer localized governance solutions in addressing their specific challenges; and, the need for more effective community policing for enhanced security. The third factor, labeled "security initiatives", loaded with five (5) factors and responsible for 6.54% of total variation, showed the concern of the study area (34.46%) over militarized responses to banditry, thus exacerbated/heightened tensions; marginalization and neglect of youths by both government and security forces; and bureaucratic processes that hinders timely responses to security threats.

The fourth factor, labeled "government support", loaded with two factors and accounted for 5.01% of the total variation, expressed the study area (27.97%) concern over inability of government to adequately address humanitarian needs arising from banditry; inequitable distribution of resources, leaving certain areas more exposed to banditry; and, skepticism of government-led development programmes aimed at containing poverty and violence. The fifth factor, labeled "authority responsiveness", loaded with one factor and accounted for 4.21% of total variation, depicted the study area (11.30%) concern over economic impact of insecurity and demand government action; viewed traditional institution to be more trustworthy than formal government structure; failure of government to address the root causes of banditry; fear of retaliation against those that reports banditry incidences to the authorities; crisis of government legitimacy due to its security failure; and government responses to banditry are inconsistent and poorly managed. The last factor, labeled "preventive measures", loaded with two factors, and responsible for 3.49% of total variation, showed the study area (5.93%) concern over addressing critical governance issues for restorations of safety and stability in the study area; and, the need for greater transparency in government actions related to security and development. Generally, these results emphasize the urgent need for inclusive, transparent, and community-focused governance reforms to restore trust and address the root causes of insecurity and banditry.

Perceived causes of armed banditry

A cursory review of the varimax rotation matrix identified five common factors that explained the causes of armed banditry in the study area evident by the parallel analysis (Table 2: columns 8-13). The mechanism of the parallel analysis was necessitated due to non-convergence of eigen based analysis. Unlike the eigen based analysis that relies on eigen thresholds, the parallel based analysis automatically sets the number of common factor(s) from the cumulative variables subjected to v-rotation. Further, a relative compactability in the correlation patterns of the variables was observed as evident by the KMO value (0.927, i,e, superb) that is within the acceptable margin. Besides, the R-matrix is not an identity matrix as evident by the plausibility of the Bartlett's test of sphericity at an error gap of 1% probability level. Also, all the extracted factors have an internal consistency between their factor loadings as shown by their respective Cronbach's Alpha values that are within the acceptable margin (>=0.70). Nevertheless, the RMSEA, TLI and Chi^2, a model fit tests, are within the recommended threshold (Table 4), thus imply that the exploratory factor analysis is fit for the specified equation.

Furthermore, a perusal of Table 3 showed that the extracted five common factors accounted for 58.4% of the total variation that explained the causes of armed banditry in the study area. Factor 1, labeled 'socio-environmental factor', accounted for 20.63% of the total variation and loaded with twelve (12) factors, showed the affected households (14.12%) concern over poor socio-environmental condition in the study area. Factor 2, loaded with ten (10) factors, labeled 'socio-cultural factor' and accounted for 17.66% of the total variation, showed the affected households (11.30%) concern over poor socio-cultural condition in the study area.

Table 2: Perceptions on governance and causes of banditry by affected households

Variable	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6	Variable	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5
A1		0.572					B1	0.518	0.464			
A2	0.557						B2				0.677	
A3		0.716					B3	0.608	0.459			
A4	0.695						B4			0.442	0.401	
A5		0.766					B5	0.518	0.549			
A6	0.765						B6			0.589		
A7		0.756					B7	0.479	0.549			
A8	0.732						B8			0.582		
A9		0.612		0.402			B9	0.569	0.424			
A10	0.748						B10			0.54		
A11		0.562		0.454			B11	0.592	0.423			
A12	0.668						B12			0.639		
A13		0.539					B13	0.625				
A14	0.448					0.652	B14		0.438	0.583		
A15		0.545				-0.444	B15	0.612				
A16	0.461					0.637	B16		0.515			
A17		0.48	0.563				B17	0.72				
A18	0.495						B18		0.55			
A19			0.718				B19	0.665				
A20	0.612						B20		0.584			
A21			0.715				B21	0.446				0.588
A22	0.66	0.417					B22		0.589			
A23			0.717				B23	0.561				
A24	0.632	0.401					B24		0.562			
A25			0.556		0.488		B25	0.64				
A26	0.646						B26		0.609			
A27					0.673		B27	0.644				
A28	0.459			0.532			B28		0.68			
A29		0.423		-0.466			B29	0.686		0.41		
A30	0.409			0.636			B30		0.635			
EV	10.041	3.855	1.962	1.504	1.264	1.046		6.19	5.299	3.479	1.578	0.978
Var (%)	33.469	12.851	6.54	5.013	4.214	3.488		20.63	17.66	11.6	5.26	3.26
CA	0.895	0.88	0.839	0.76	0.718	0		0.924	0.899	0.866	0	0
P (%)	7.63	12.71	34.46	27.97	11.3	5.93		14.12	11.3	9.61	39.27	25.7
KMO	0.889 (6281.97***)							0.927 (7280***)				

Source: Field survey, 2024; Note: EV= Eigen value, Var. = Variance, CA= Cronbach's Alpha, P = Population, value in parenthesis is Chi^2 of Bartlet's test of sphericity, *** means significant at 1% probability level.

Table 3: Impact and remedies of banditry

Variable	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	Variable	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6
C1		0.679				D1	0.686					
C2	0.619		0.433			D2				0.677		
C3		0.681				D3	0.711					
C4	0.553		0.509			D4			0.405	0.635		
C5		0.727				D5	0.758					
C6	0.529		0.611			D6		0.542		0.442		
C7		0.761				D7	0.735					
C8	0.665		0.451			D8		0.625				
C9		0.715				D9	0.777					
C10	0.639		0.447			D10			0.571			
C11		0.669				D11	0.658					
C12	0.502				0.568	D12			0.744			
C13		0.674				D13	0.558			0.457		
C14	0.566		0.44			D14			0.739			
C15		0.681				D15	0.64			0.418		
C16	0.71					D16			0.658			
C17		0.634	0.515			D17	0.648					
C18	0.72					D18		0.643				
C19		0.421	0.691			D19	0.623			0.435		
C20	0.719					D20		0.794				
C21		0.449	0.613			D21	0.593			0.483		
C22	0.721					D22		0.654			0.484	
C23			0.7			D23	0.711					
C24	0.71					D24		0.44			0.644	
C25		0.484	0.549			D25	0.685					
C26	0.645			0.433		D26					0.5	0.485
C27		0.424	0.54			D27	0.598	0.41				
C28	0.512			0.569		D28						0.653
C29		0.421	0.447			D29	0.537					-0.425
C30	0.524					D30						0.544
EV	14.318	2.383	1.535	1.136	1.034		14.988	2.428	1.327	1.195	1.154	1.004
Var (%)	47.725	7.942	5.116	3.787	3.446		49.961	8.094	4.425	3.984	3.847	3.346
CA	0.93	0.925	0.88				0.95	0.887	0.843	0.766	0.794	0.787
P (%)	24.86	40.4	10.17	14.4	10.17		15.54	39.26	6.78	3.39	4.52	30.51
KMO	0.927 (8350.61***)						0.940 (8996.86***)					

Source: Field survey, 2024

Factor 3, loaded with six (6) factors, labeled 'political factor' and accounted for 11.60% of the total variation, showed affected households (9.61%) concern over political instability and politicization of insecurity in the study area. Factor 4, loaded on one (1) variable, labeled 'poverty influence' and accounted for 5.26% of the total variation, showed the affected households (39.27%) concern over high state of poverty that ravaged the study area. The last factor, loaded on one (1) variable, labeled 'religious tension' and accounted for 3.26% of the total variation, showed the affected households (25.71%) concern over religious' sectarian crises in the study area.

Generally, the prominence of poverty and religious tensions, despite accounting for smaller variance, highlights the urgent need for interventions targeting economic stability and religious harmony. These insights emphasize the multifaceted nature of armed banditry, necessitating holistic policy measures addressing both structural and immediate triggers.

Impact of armed banditry-induced shocks on the rural households' livelihoods

The varimax rotation results of Table 3 (columns 1-6) identified five (5) interpretable factors of banditry impact on the livelihood of the study area as evident by its eigen values that are above unity. Collectively, these five common factors accounted for 68.02% of the total variation of impact of banditry on the livelihood of the study area. Moreover, the matrix didn't have a diffused pattern of correlation as evident by its KMO value (0.927, i.e., superb) that is above the recommended threshold. Besides, the matrix has no zero correlation as indicated by its Bartlett's test of sphericity that is different from zero at 1% error gap. Also, the model fit tests (RMSEA, TLI and Chi^2) showed that the exploratory factor analysis is fit for the specified equation as evident by their respective values that are within the acceptable threshold margins (Table 4). Nevertheless, the empirical evidence showed presence of internal consistency within each of the extracted factors as evident by their respective Cronbach's Alpha coefficients that are above the recommended threshold level (>=0.70).

Furthermore, factor 1, labeled 'humanitarian crises', loaded with twelve (12) items and accounted for 47.73% of the total variation, showed the affected households (i.e., 24.86%) concern over humanitarian crises in the study area. Factor 2, labeled 'economic impact', loaded on twelve (12) variables and accounted for 7.94% of the total variation, showed the affected households (40.40%) concern over poor economic condition in the study area. Factor 3, labeled 'livelihood disruption', loaded on nine (9) items and accounted for 5.12% of the total variation, showed the affected households (10.17%) concern over disruption of livelihood in the study area. Factor 4, labeled 'agricultural decline', loaded on one (1) item and accounted for 3.79% of the total variation, showed the affected households (14.41%) concern over collapse of the rural economy in the study area which is largely agricultural driven. The last factor, labeled 'forced displacement', loaded with one (1) item and accounted for 3.45% of the total variation, showed affected households (10.17%) concern over forceful displacements of the study area's residents/inhabitants.

Geneally, the prominence of agricultural decline and forced displacement underscores the fragility of rural economies and the severe social upheaval caused by banditry. These results emphasize the urgent need for multifaceted interventions addressing economic resilience, humanitarian aid, and security to mitigate the profound impacts on affected households. Put differently, the results provide crucial insights for policymakers and humanitarian organizations to develop targeted interventions that address the specific needs and vulnerabilities of the affected communities.

Perceived remedial measures of combating armed banditry

The results of the varimax rotation identified six (6) common factors that explain the remedies of armed banditry in the study area as indicated by their respective eigen values that are above 1 (Table 3: columns 7-13). Besides, these factors cumulatively accounted for 73.66% of total variation of the variables perceived as solutions to armed banditry in the study area. Moreover, the sum of the variables' partial correlation is small relative to the sum of their simple correlations as evident by the KMO value (0.940, i.e., superb) that is within the acceptable threshold margin, thus implies the reliability of the factor analysis. Besides, the plausibility of the Bartlett's test of sphericity at 1% implies that the r-matrix is not an identity matrix. Nevertheless, the tests of RMSEA, TLI and Chi^2 indicate that the exploratory model is fit for the specified equation (Table 4), thus suitable for future predictions with accuracy, efficiency and certainty. Noteworthy, the plausibility (>=0.70) of the Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of the extracted factors indicate presence of internal consistency within each extract.

Further, factor 1, labeled 'preventive strategies', loaded with fifteen (15) items and accounted for 49.96% of the total variation, showed the affected households (i.e., 15.54% of the population) concern over the use of preventive strategies, i.e., safety initiatives to tackle armed banditry in the study area.

Table 4: Model fit

Test	Governance	Causes	Impacts	Remedies	Recommended
RMSEA	0.0703	0.077	0.011	0.056	<0.08
TLI	0.983	0.925	0.979	0.933	>0.90
χ^2	1147	1006	1471	1145	
df	295	270	295	270	
p	< .001	< .001	< .001	< .001	<=0.05

Factor 2, labeled 'community solutions', loaded with five (5) items and accounted for 8.09% of the total variation, showed the affected households (i.e., 39.27%) concern over the use of community solutions, i.e., community resilience to tackle armed banditry in the study area. Factor 3, labeled 'justice strategies', loaded with four (4) items and accounted for 4.43% of the total variation, showed the affected households (i.e., 6.78%) concern over the use of justice strategies to tackle armed banditry in the study area. Factor 4, labeled 'security solutions', loaded with two (2) items and accounted for 3.98% of the total variation, showed the households (i.e., 3.39%) concern over the use of security solutions to tackle armed banditry in the study area. Factor 5, labeled 'deterrence strategies', loaded with two (2) items and accounted for 3.85% of the total variation, showed the affected households (i.e., 4.52%) concern over the use of deterrence strategies, i.e., carrot and stick approach to tackle banditry in the study area. Factor 6, labeled 'community empowerment', loaded with two (2) items and accounted for 3.35% of the total variation, showed the affected households (30.51%) concern over the use of community empowerment, i.e., social safety nets approach to tackle banditry in the study area.

Succinctly, the significant emphasis on community empowerment and justice strategies underscores the importance of involving local populations and ensuring fairness in addressing grievances. These findings call for integrated policies that prioritize prevention, community collaboration, and justice reforms to sustainably mitigate armed banditry.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The analyses collectively reveal that armed banditry and its impacts stem from multifaceted socio-economic, political, and governance challenges, highlighting pervasive distrust in government institutions, inadequate security measures, and deep socio-economic vulnerabilities. The factors influencing the causes, impacts, remedies, and governance perceptions emphasize the need for integrated approaches that address root causes, immediate triggers, and governance shortcomings. Succinctly, the study suggests the the following recommendations:

- To combat armed banditry effectively, policymakers should adopt holistic strategies that prioritize poverty alleviation, community empowerment, and inclusive governance reforms.
- Strengthening preventive strategies, enhancing transparency in governance, fostering community-driven solutions, and ensuring equitable resource distribution are critical.
- Additionally, fostering trust through government accountability, participatory decision-making, and improved security responses can create a sustainable path toward peace and development in affected areas.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Affected households' perceptions of governance

Statement (5 Likert scale: Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree)	Acronym
The government has provided adequate economic support for households affected by banditry.	A1
The government provides adequate compensation for losses caused by banditry.	A2
Efforts by local leaders have made my community safer from bandit attacks.	A3
Government communication about security measures is clear and timely.	A4
I feel comfortable reporting security concerns to government authorities.	A5
Government assistance has improved the economic situation in my community.	A6
Government authorities frequently consult with our community on security issues.	A7
I trust the government to act fairly in addressing banditry-related issues.	A8
The government has invested in programs to help us recover economically from bandit attacks.	A9
Public security forces are visibly present in our community.	A10
The government's security measures are sufficient to deter future bandit attacks.	A11
Government authorities are accessible when I need to report a security issue.	A12
I feel that my opinions are valued by local authorities.	A13
The government has implemented effective measures to protect our community from banditry.	A14
Government support has been beneficial in rebuilding our agricultural livelihoods.	A15
The government is working to create economic opportunities to prevent banditry.	A16
Corruption within local government affects the effectiveness of security measures.	A17
The government has established secure and reliable communication channels for reporting threats.	A18
Government programs to support education and skills development have improved security.	A19
Local government officials are committed to ending banditry in our area.	A20
Community policing initiatives supported by the government have improved our safety.	A21
The government provides psychological support for those affected by banditry incidents.	A22
The government is effectively addressing the root causes of banditry in our region.	A23
Security personnel respond promptly to banditry-related incidents in our community.	A24
Government programs have improved security in our area over the past year.	A25
The government prioritizes the needs of rural communities affected by banditry.	A26
Local authorities take our security concerns seriously.	A27
I feel confident in the government's ability to restore peace in our community.	A28
Government policies have strengthened our community's resilience to banditry.	A29
There is sufficient government support for families affected by banditry.	A30

Appendix B: Perceived causes of armed banditry

Statements on perceived causes of banditry	Acronyms
Unemployment among youth contributes to the rise of banditry in our area	B1
Poverty drives individuals in our community to join bandit groups.	B2
Lack of educational opportunities leads people to resort to banditry.	B3
Banditry in this region is influenced by weak law enforcement.	B4
Poor governance has fueled the increase in bandit activities.	B5
The lack of economic development in rural areas contributes to banditry.	B6
Banditry is driven by limited access to land and resources.	B7
Corruption within law enforcement allows banditry to continue.	B8
Political instability in the region has escalated bandit activity.	B9
Inadequate policing in rural communities encourages banditry.	B10
The proliferation of small arms has made banditry more common.	B11
Ethnic tensions are a significant factor in bandit-related violence.	B12
The struggle for control over natural resources contributes to banditry.	B13
Lack of opportunities for skill development pushes people toward banditry.	B14
Climate change and its impact on agriculture influence bandit activities.	B15
Inequality between urban and rural areas contributes to banditry	B16
The absence of community-based security measures promotes banditry.	B17
Revenge and retaliation among communities escalate bandit attacks.	B18
Political actors use bandit groups to gain influence.	B19
The presence of organized crime networks strengthens banditry.	B20
Religious conflicts in the region have aggravated banditry.	B21
Land disputes between farmers and herders lead to banditry.	B22
The lack of rehabilitation programs for offenders fosters repeat banditry.	B23
The inability to prosecute bandits effectively encourages others to join.	B24
Poor infrastructure in rural areas makes communities vulnerable to banditry.	B25
Inadequate support for law enforcement in rural areas contributes to banditry.	B26
Banditry is seen as a way to gain power and control over communities.	B27
Family and community pressures influence individuals to join bandit groups.	B28
Extreme poverty and food insecurity push individuals into banditry.	B29
Lack of mental health support and trauma from violence lead to cycles of banditry.	B30

Appendix C: Perceived impact of armed banditry on livelihoods

Statements	Acronyms
Bandit attacks have reduced my household’s income significantly.	C1
Due to banditry, my family has had to abandon our farmland.	C2
Banditry has made it difficult for me to access markets to sell my produce.	C3
The fear of bandit attacks has limited my ability to work and earn a living.	C4
Banditry has caused a rise in the cost of essential goods in my community.	C5
Bandit attacks have resulted in loss of livestock for my household.	C6
I have had to spend more on security measures due to the risk of bandit attacks.	C7
Banditry has negatively affected the education of my children.	C8
My family has suffered food shortages due to bandit-induced disruptions.	C9
My household's access to healthcare has worsened because of banditry.	C10
The presence of banditry has increased poverty levels in my community.	C11
My family has been displaced due to threats or attacks by bandits.	C12
Banditry has reduced the amount of land available for farming in my area.	C13
We face challenges in accessing water resources due to bandit activities.	C14
Our community has experienced significant migration due to bandit attacks.	C15
Banditry has created a sense of insecurity that affects my daily life.	C16
Bandit attacks have caused a loss of valuable assets in my household.	C17

Cont. Appendix C: Perceived impact of armed banditry on livelihoods

I am forced to sell farm produce at a lower price due to limited market access.	C18
The presence of banditry has reduced opportunities for employment in my area.	C19
Bandit attacks have led to psychological trauma for my family members.	C20
My household spends more on healthcare due to injuries from banditry incidents.	C21
The constant threat of banditry has led to reduced agricultural production.	C22
I have lost access to credit and financial support due to bandit attacks.	C23
The community's trust in each other has weakened due to bandit-induced conflicts.	C24
Banditry has decreased my family's access to social services and support networks.	C25
There is an increase in indebtedness among community members due to banditry.	C26
Bandit attacks have made it hard to maintain or invest in farm equipment.	C27
Banditry has led to a decrease in agricultural yields in my community.	C28
The fear of bandit attacks affects my ability to plan for the future.	C29
Banditry has restricted our movement, limiting our social and economic activities.	C30

Appendix D: Perceived remedies of armed banditry

Statements	**Acronyms**
Increasing job opportunities for youth would reduce the incidence of banditry.	D1
Providing more educational resources in rural areas can help prevent banditry.	D2
Improving agricultural support for farmers would reduce the appeal of banditry.	D3
Strengthening local law enforcement agencies would improve community safety.	D4
Reducing corruption within law enforcement would help curb banditry.	D5
Establishing community policing programs could effectively address banditry.	D6
Improving the infrastructure, such as roads, would help deter banditry in remote areas.	D7
Encouraging community engagement in security planning could reduce banditry.	D8
Providing skills training and vocational programs for youth can prevent them from joining bandit groups.	D9
Ensuring justice and fair prosecution of bandits would discourage future incidents.	D10
Enhanced border control could prevent the movement of arms that fuel banditry.	D11
Rehabilitating and reintegrating former bandits into society can reduce re-offense rates.	D12
Investing in mental health support for victims of banditry would aid in community recovery.	D13
Developing early warning systems can help communities better respond to bandit threats.	D14
Building strong partnerships between local leaders and government can improve security.	D15
Providing financial incentives for people to leave bandit groups could be effective.	D16
Increasing military presence in high-risk areas would help reduce banditry.	D17
Creating effective information channels to report bandit activities would improve security.	D18
Supporting local dispute resolution mechanisms would help address conflicts that lead to banditry.	D19
Encouraging inter-community dialogues can reduce ethnic and religious tensions that fuel banditry.	D20
Introducing sustainable income opportunities for rural households can reduce the risk of banditry.	D21
Reducing inequalities between urban and rural communities can prevent the rise of banditry.	D22
Providing affordable financial support to small-scale farmers would reduce banditry incentives.	D23
Increasing penalties for those involved in banditry could deter future activities.	D24
Raising public awareness on the impacts of banditry would encourage community cooperation in prevention.	D25
Providing reliable access to basic healthcare can improve community resilience against bandit-related disruptions.	D26
Strengthening anti-smuggling and anti-trafficking operations would reduce organized crime linked to banditry.	D27
Empowering traditional and local leaders to handle minor disputes can help reduce escalation to banditry.	D28
Encouraging religious and community leaders to speak against violence could reduce the spread of banditry.	D29
Offering sustainable agricultural practices and support can help reduce economic factors leading to banditry.	D30