



Analysis of the Causes and Psychosocial Trauma Associated with Banditry and Cattle Rustling in Maru LGA, Zamfara State, Nigeria

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KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the major causes and traumatic effects of banditry and cattle rustling among residents of Maru Local Government Area of Zamfara State, Nigeria with the aim of providing empirical evidence on the nature of these crimes and their psychological impact on residents. A mixed-methods approach was adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. The study covered five wards: Kanoma, Mayanchi, Dan Gulbi, Dan Sadau, and Dan Kurmi. Data were collected through structured questionnaires administered to 393 respondents and Key Informant Interviews with traditional leaders and security personnel, supplemented by direct observation. Findings revealed that lack of effective security and corruption (98%), availability of small and light weapons (97.5%), unemployment among youths (93.1%), farmers/herders clashes (89.8%), and displacement caused by civil wars in neighbouring countries (87.3%) were major causes of banditry and cattle rustling. Natural disasters such as drought and climate change were also identified by 74.8% of respondents as contributing factors. The study further revealed severe traumatic effects on residents. Rape-related stigmatization recorded the highest mean score (4.62), followed by psychological trauma caused by banditry (4.53), vulnerability of women and children (4.47), and high blood pressure among residents (4.41). The study concludes that insecurity in the area is largely driven by socio-economic hardship, weak security systems, and environmental pressures. It recommends improved security measures, youth empowerment programs, control of illegal arms, provision of basic amenities, and stronger collaboration between government, security agencies, and local communities to address the menace effectively.

CITATION

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INTRODUCTION

Banditry and cattle rustling have emerged as some of the most pressing security challenges confronting rural communities in Nigeria (Ojewale, 2024), particularly in the North-West geopolitical zone where Zamfara State is located. There are several reports of armed bandits raiding farms and herders' villages with automatic guns, machetes

and other fire arms in order to kidnap or kill people, rustle animals and steal other properties. The act of stealing grazing cattle is known as "cattle rustling" (Kassem & Yakubu, 2024). This phrase has a historical United States colloquial derivation, and it refers to a situation in which pioneer farmers lost livestock while grazing on vast ranges that were challenging to police (Adamu, 2020). In Nigeria

violence against people is now committed frequently enough to pose a serious threat to Nigeria's national security. These include banditry, kidnapping, militancy, and insurrection. Banditry involves kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, and livestock rustling (Enyinnaya & Olomajobi, 2022). The most severe type of banditry in Nigeria continues to be kidnapping, it has become the most prevalent and unsolvable violent crime in the nation.

Residents of Maru Local Government Area in Zamfara State have suffered significant losses due to banditry and cattle rustling over the years. A Zamfara State government report indicated that between 2011 and 2018, nearly 500 villages were devastated and 2,835 people were killed across the state, with Maru being one of the most affected LGAs. In Maru specifically, the Punch Newspaper reported attacks have led to repeated killings and mass displacement, with 16 people killed in Dangulbi and Kango communities in July 2022 after residents failed to pay a ₦5 million farming tax imposed by a bandit leader (Enyinnaya & Olomajobi, 2022). Cattle losses have also been substantial, according to Hannatu (2022) over 2,000 cows stolen in communities such as Maji, Fanda Haki, Matankari, Yar Katsina, and Bingi within Maru LGA over a four-year period. Across Zamfara State, official figures show 215,241 cows, 141,404 sheep, and 20,600 other animals were rustled, alongside 3,587 houses and 1,487 vehicles destroyed (Adamu, 2020). The violence has forced many farmers to abandon their lands, with villages like Madada, Bingi, Dandalla, and Kabaro in Maru deserted as residents flee for safety (Babajo, 2020).

Over the past decade, Maru Local Government Area in Zamfara State has experienced recurrent attacks characterized by armed banditry, kidnapping, cattle rustling, and destruction of livelihoods (Babajo, 2020; Abubakar, 2021; Umaru & Obajobi, 2022). These criminal activities have disrupted the social and economic life of residents in the area, undermining agricultural production, trade, education, and community cohesion. Cattle rustling, once regarded as a traditional form of stock theft, has evolved into a highly organized and violent enterprise involving sophisticated weapons and networks that often overlap with banditry. The persistence of these crimes has created an atmosphere of fear and instability, forcing many residents to abandon their farms and homes in search of safety. The socio-economic implications extend beyond immediate physical harm, as they affect food security, healthcare access, and the overall well-being of the population. In addition to tangible losses, victims and witnesses of such violent incidents frequently endure psychological distress, including anxiety, depression, post-traumatic stress, and a diminished sense of safety within their communities (Eliya et al., 2022).

Despite various government interventions and the deployment of security operatives, the problem continues to persist, suggesting that the underlying causes and

psychosocial consequences remain inadequately addressed. Most of these problems arises from the escalating frequency and severity of banditry and cattle rustling in Maru LGA, which have resulted in loss of lives, displacement, and economic hardship for the local population. While existing literature has documented the general prevalence of insecurity in Zamfara State (Babajo, 2020; Abubakar, 2021; Umaru & Obajobi, 2022), there is limited empirical research that specifically focuses on Maru LGA and that integrates both the causal factors and the psychosocial trauma experienced by victims. Most interventions have been security-oriented, with little attention given to the mental health burden imposed on survivors and communities. The absence of detailed analysis of the different forms of banditry and cattle rustling, their underlying drivers, and their psychological effects creates a gap in knowledge that hinders effective policy formulation and community recovery efforts. Without a clear understanding of how these crimes manifest and affect the social and mental health of the people, interventions risk being reactive rather than preventive. Furthermore, the trauma associated with repeated exposure to violence often goes unrecognized and untreated, leading to long-term consequences for individuals, families, and community resilience.

This gap is particularly significant in Maru LGA, where rural communities rely heavily on agriculture and livestock for survival, making them especially vulnerable to disruptions caused by these crimes. Consequently, there is a need for a comprehensive study that identifies the types and causes of banditry and cattle rustling in the area and assesses the extent of psychosocial trauma among residents. Such an analysis will provide evidence-based insights that can guide policymakers, security agencies, and humanitarian organizations in designing holistic responses that address both security and mental health needs. This study therefore seeks to analyse the nature, causes, and psychological impact of banditry and cattle rustling on the people of Maru LGA, Zamfara State.

The Study Area

Maru LGA lies within Latitude 12° 20' to 12° 36' North of the equator and Longitude 6° 24' to 6° 39' East of the Greenwich meridian. Located in the northwestern part of Zamfara State, Nigeria, spanning a significant landmass of approximately 6,654 km² (See Figure 1), it shares boundaries with Sokoto and Kebbi States to the west, Niger State to the south, and other Zamfara LGAs like Anka and Bungudu. The area is characterised by a mix of hilly terrains and valleys, with the town of Maru serving as its administrative headquarters. Economically, the LGA is predominantly agrarian, with over 80% of its population engaged in farming and livestock rearing. Major crops like millet, guinea corn, maize, and cotton, while cattle, sheep, and goats are reared extensively. The region also

possesses mineral deposits, particularly gold, which has attracted illegal mining activities that compound local

security challenges. The population, projected at 354,264 as of 2025, is primarily Hausa and Fulani.

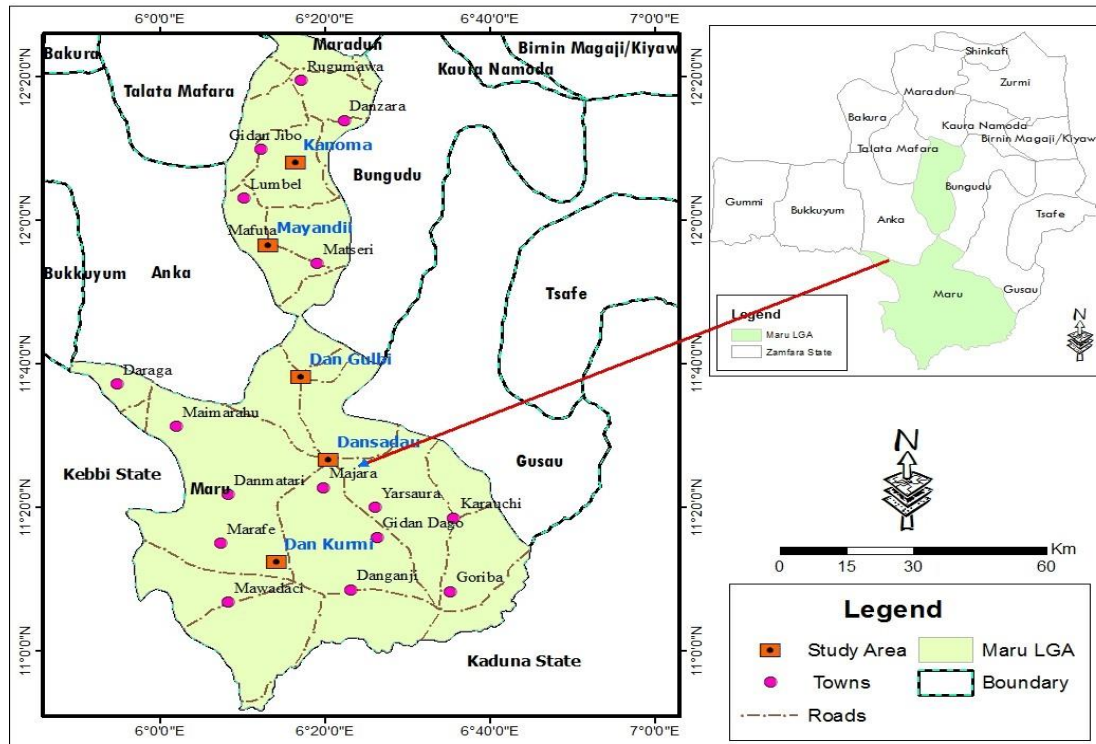


Figure 1: The Study Area with Sampled Locations
Source: Department of Geography A.B.U. Zaria

METHODOLOGY

Data Types and Sources

The study utilised both primary and secondary data to comprehensively assess the socio-economic consequences of banditry and cattle rustling on households in Maru Local Government Area. Primary data focused on the socio-demographic and economic characteristics of respondents, including age, sex, marital status, level of education, and occupation. It also gathered detailed information on the types and major causes of banditry and cattle rustling prevalent in the area. Structured questionnaires, key informant interviews, and direct field observations served as the main instruments for collecting primary data. Secondary sources, which were extensively used for the literature review, included academic journals, textbooks, newspapers, magazines, government official documents, theses, the internet, and other published and unpublished materials. This mixed-method approach ensured a robust triangulation of data, enhancing the reliability and depth of the findings.

Sample size and sampling techniques

The study focused on five wards in Maru Local Government Area, namely Kanoma, Mayanchi, Dan Gulbi, Dan Sadau, and Dan Kurmi, selected due to the high incidence of reported banditry attacks in these communities. To

determine the population for 2025, the 1991 census figures for each ward were projected using the Linear Growth Model with a 3.25 percent annual growth rate as outlined by Gokarna (2020), resulting in an estimated total population of 354,264. The sample size was calculated using Yamane's 1967 formula at a 95 percent confidence level and a 5 percent margin of error, resulting in approximately 400 respondents. This sample was then proportionally allocated across the five wards based on their respective projected populations to ensure representation, given the variation in ward population sizes. A simple random sampling technique was applied to select individual respondents within each ward, promoting fairness and reducing selection bias. Out of the 400 questionnaires distributed across Kanoma, Mayanchi, Dan Gulbi, Dan Sadau, and Dan Kurmi, 393 were completed and returned, reflecting a response rate of 98.25 percent. This high return rate enhances the reliability of the data collected and provides a solid basis for analysing the causes, and psychosocial trauma associated with banditry and cattle rustling in the area.

Instruments for Data collection

The study employed a mixed-methods approach using questionnaires, Key Informant Interviews (KII), and direct observation to collect comprehensive data on banditry

and cattle rustling in Maru LGA. The questionnaire served as the main quantitative tool, designed to gather standardized information from households across the area. It covered demographic characteristics, the types and frequency of banditry incidents, reported causes such as land disputes and unemployment, and the extent of psychosocial trauma experienced by victims, including symptoms of anxiety, depression, and displacement. Closed-ended questions facilitated statistical analysis, while Likert-scale items assessed respondents' perceptions of the severity of trauma and its impact on daily life. Trained enumerators were employed to administer the questionnaire in Hausa language to ensure clarity for respondents with varying literacy levels.

The KII provided qualitative depth by engaging traditional rulers, community leaders, security personnel, and representatives of farmers' and herders' associations. These semi-structured interviews explored the historical development of cattle rustling, underlying socio-economic and environmental drivers, and community-level psychological effects. This approach allowed for detailed narratives on how banditry has altered social relationships and mental well-being in Maru LGA. Triangulating household survey data with expert insights endured the study achieved a balanced understanding of both the measurable and lived dimensions of the crisis.

Method of Data Analysis

To identify the types and causes of banditry and/or cattle rustling in the area, responses from the questionnaire survey were analysed using frequency count and simple percentages and presented on tables. Moreover, in examining the extent to which the people of the area are traumatized, responses on the effect of banditry and cattle rustling on trauma among the people in the study area from the 5 - point Likert-scale format questions were analysed using the mean score. The decision mean of 2.5 was used; any mean of 2.5 and above was significant while a mean below 2.5 was considered insignificant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Major Causes of Banditry and Cattle Rustling in the Study Area

Nature of banditry and cattle rustling in the study area include information on factors that led to the formation of banditry and cattle rustling menace in the study area. Factors such as civil war in neighbouring countries, natural disaster, lack of basic amenities, unemployment, moral decadence, farmers/herders' clashes, availability of small and light arms as well as lack of effective security and corruption were analysed.

Displacement due to civil war in neighbouring countries

The responses on effect of civil war in neighbouring countries as a cause of banditry and cattle rustling is presented in Figure and the results presented in Figure 2.

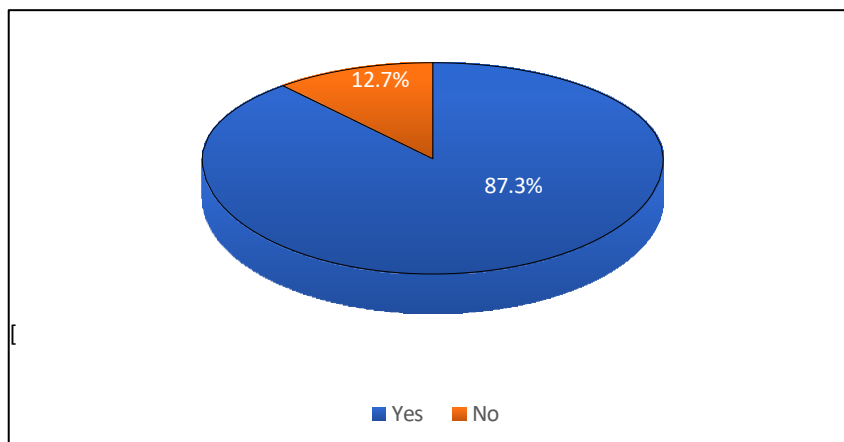


Figure 2: Civil war in neighbouring countries as a cause of banditry and cattle rustling
Source: Author's survey (2025)

Figure 2 shows that displacement of people from neighbouring countries such as Niger republic and Chad due to civil war has significant impacts on the causes and escalation of banditry and cattle rustling as 87.3% of the respondents believe that banditry and cattle rustling in their community may be caused by immigrants from those neighbouring countries where there are crises. Civil wars often result in a breakdown of law and order within the affected countries. The collapse of governance structures,

including security forces and judicial systems, creates a power vacuum that can be exploited by criminal elements. Bandits and cattle rustlers take advantage of this situation to engage in illegal activities, as they are less likely to be apprehended or punished. This finding corroborates the KII conducted where the secretary to the village head of Mayanchi stated that;

“From what we learnt from history, bandits came from neighbouring countries with their cows and weapons which they use for the criminal act”

It is therefore no doubt that the presence of civil war in neighbouring countries can create economic instability, displacement of people, and the proliferation of weapons, making it easier for bandits and cattle rustlers to operate. The breakdown of law and order in these countries can

spill over into the study area, providing an enabling environment for criminal activities.

Natural disaster as a cause of banditry and cattle rustling

Figure 3 presents responses on natural disaster as a cause of banditry and cattle rustling

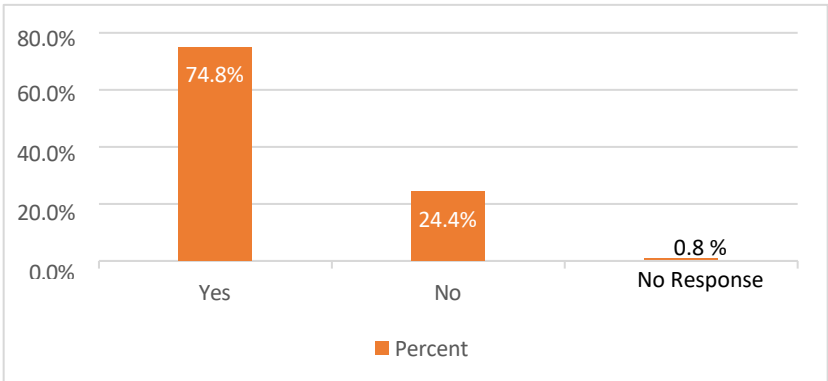


Figure 3: Natural disasters as a major cause of banditry and cattle rustling
Source: Author’s survey (2025)

As revealed in Figure 3 about 74.8% of the respondents believed that natural disasters such as droughts, desertification and climate change are major causes of banditry and cattle rustling, over 24% do not agree to the claim while 0.8% gave no response. Natural disasters can devastate the livelihoods of communities dependent on agriculture and livestock rearing. This can lead to increased poverty and desperation, pushing individuals towards criminal activities as a means of survival. This finding corroborates the work of Susan (2022) who expressed the same view in a Kenyan study where respondents agreed that natural disasters such as climate change and drought drive people into criminality. This is in line with KII conducted where the secretary to the village head of Mayanchi stated that;

“Climate change has made it difficult for us to farm due to shortage of rainfall, herders also cannot feed their

flock due to lack of grass, this may lead people to commit crime”

This shows that drought is a major natural disaster influencing criminal activities in the study area such as banditry and cattle rustling.

Lack of basic amenities

The absence of essential services like education, healthcare, and clean water can contribute to the frustration and disillusionment among the population. The lack of opportunities for economic growth and development can drive individuals towards illicit activities, including banditry and cattle rustling. Figure 4 shows the lack of basic amenities as a cause of banditry and cattle rustling.

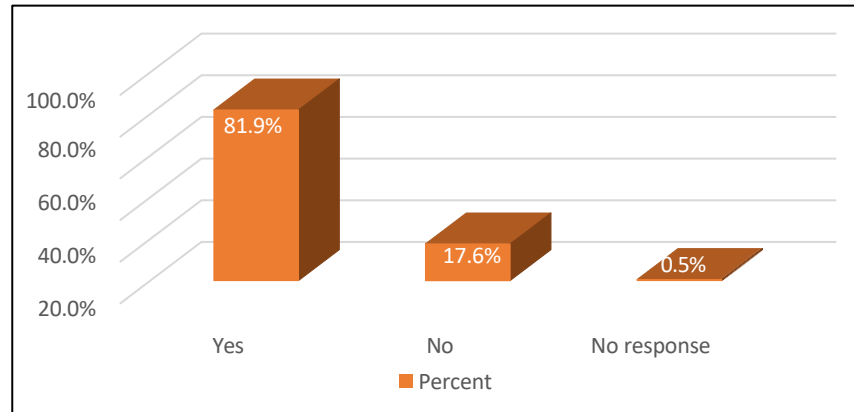


Figure 4: Lack of basic amenities as a cause of banditry and cattle rustling
Source: Author's survey (2025)

It is evident as shown in Figure 4 that this is the situation in the study area as 81.9% of the respondents believed that lack of basic amenities is a major cause of banditry and cattle rustling in the study area, only 17.6% disagree while 0.5% gave no response. The fact that a significant percentage of respondent's attribute banditry and cattle rustling to the absence of essential services suggests a consensus on the role of this factor in shaping the local socio-economic landscape. This finding agrees with Babajo (2020) who pointed out that under development of rural areas in terms of provision of basic amenities is a major cause of crime in Zamfara State. KII result also provides more information as the district head of Dan Gulbi stated that;

"Lack of basic amenities is a major concern for us here, we cannot call for help when we are been attacked due to lack of network coverage, our roads are bad, no hospital to treat victims of banditry and cattle rustling."

The district Head of Konama added that;

"Lack of roads for quick response by our security operative is another major problem, when the bandits attacked our village, the roads are bad for the security operatives to reach the affected villages on time so in most cases, the bandits/cattle rustlers might have left before the arrival of security personnel."

This shows that lack of basic amenities in the study area have worsen the security situation of the people. Lack of adequate health facilities in the area as stated by the interviewee can increase the level of trauma suffered by victims of the attack.

Unemployment among the youths

Whether or not youth unemployment is a major cause of banditry and cattle rustling in the area, the respondent's responses are summarized in Figure 5

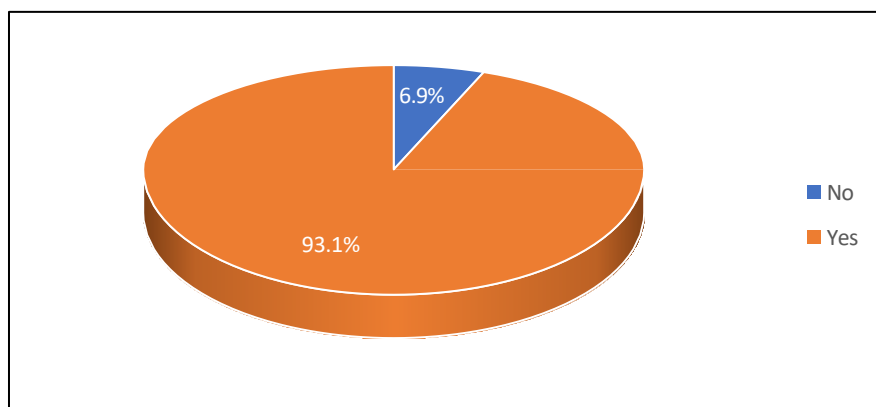


Figure 5: Unemployment among the youths as a cause of banditry and cattle rustling
Source: Author's survey (2025)

It is evident from Figure 5 that high level of unemployment, particularly among the youth creates a pool of individuals

susceptible to engaging in criminal activities. Without legitimate jobs, some individuals turn to banditry and

cattle rustling as a source of income. According to Figure 4.4, an overwhelming 93.1% of respondents agreed that unemployment among youth is a major cause of banditry and cattle rustling while only 6.9% disagreed. This implies that individuals facing a lack of job opportunities may be more inclined to turn to illicit activities as an alternative means of sustaining themselves economically potentially driven by desperation, lack of alternatives, or economic hardship. This finding agrees with Babajo (2020), Abubakar (2021) and Bashir and Mustapaha (2021) who all confirmed that unemployment is a root cause of banditry and cattle rustling. The district head of Mayanchi stated that;

“If most of the youths of this community are gainfully employed, the rate of banditry and cattle rustling in our communities will be reduced, most of them engage in such activities because of the high rate of unemployment in our communities”

Moral decadence as a cause of banditry and cattle rustling

The response on moral decadence as a cause of banditry and cattle rustling is presented in Figure 6.

It is obvious from Figure 6 that the respondents believe that a decline in moral values within a society contributes to the acceptance and normalization of criminal behaviour. About 94.1% agreed that moral decadence is a major cause

of banditry in the study while only 5.9% disagreed perhaps due to differing opinions on the root causes of criminal behaviour, alternative explanations, or scepticism about the extent of the relationship. When the community condones or tolerates immoral actions, it creates an environment conducive to crimes such as banditry and cattle rustling. This agrees with Dick, et al. (2020) identifies decline in parental authority and domestic values, influence of science and technology, media influence, materialism, poverty, and the collapse of discipline in schools as the major causes of moral decay in Nigeria. Hence, it is crucial to address the root causes of moral decay in order to tackle the issue of crime and insecurity in the country. KII result also provides more information as the district head of Dan Gulbi stated that;

“This generation of youth lacks moral values; they have no respect for their fellow human or even for the Almighty Allah. Our religious leaders need to do more to instill moral discipline into our youths.”

This suggest that without moral discipline, the youth may not internalize the importance of ethical behavior, leading to criminal tendencies. It implies that instilling moral discipline, both religiously motivated and otherwise, can play a crucial role in curbing the high rate of crime in the area.

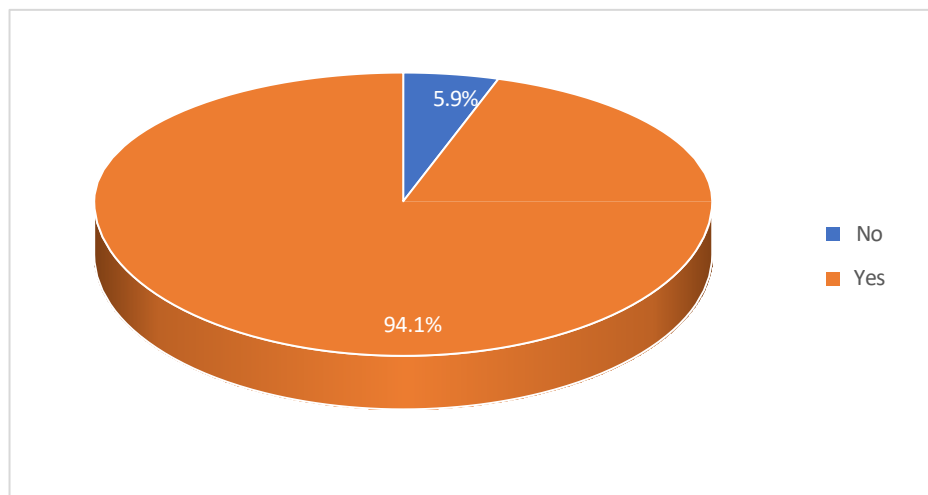


Figure 6: Moral decadence as a cause of banditry and cattle rustling.
Source: Author's survey (2025)

Farmers/ herdsman clashes

Figure 7 presents response on if conflicts between farmers and herders over access to land and resources, such as grazing areas, can escalate into violence, increasing the incidence of cattle rustling.

As revealed in Figure 7, a significant proportion (89.8%) of respondents confirmed that farmers/herders clash is a major cause of banditry and cattle rustling in the study area while about 10.2% disagreed. Conflicts between

farmers and herders over access to land and resources, such as grazing areas and water, can escalate into violence, increasing the incidence of cattle rustling. The result from KII also confirmed this assertion as all interviewees agreed that farmers/herders' clashes have escalated banditry and cattle rustling in the study area. For example, the district head of Kanoma ward stated that;

“The problem started from ages when they rustled like 1-5 cattle, unlike now that they rustle in mass, it also

started from land dispute on farmlands and grazing fields. The herdsmen forcefully took land that doesn't belong to them and used them as grazing field for their cattle which brought about fight and theft in the surrounding villages"

This means that when farmers and herders compete for scarce or degraded land and water sources, they may

resort to physical intimidation to secure their access. This can lead to more attacks on livestock or crops by either side, resulting in losses and damages. These clashes are often fuelled by competition for diminishing resources, exacerbating the issue.

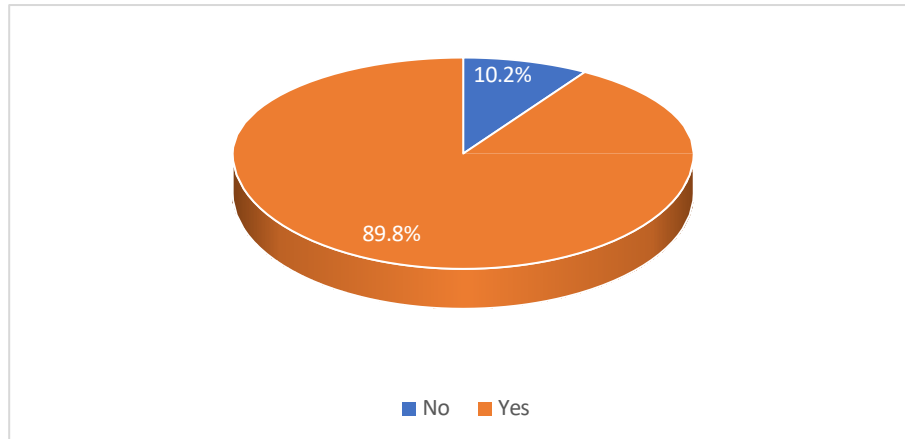


Figure 7: Farmers/ herdsmen clashes as a cause of banditry and cattle rustling.
Source: Author's survey (2025)

Availability of small and light weapons

Figure 8 shows responses on the availability of small and light weapons as a major cause Banditry and cattle rustling in the study area.

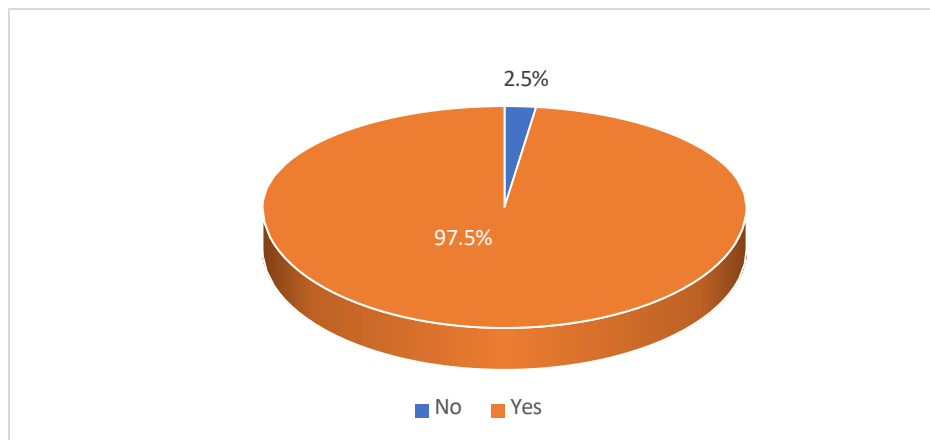


Figure 8: Availability of small and light weapons cause banditry and cattle rustling
Source: Author's survey (2025)

Findings revealed that 97.5% of the respondents agreed that the possession of small and light weapons by civilians is a major cause of banditry and cattle rustling while only 2.5% disagreed.

The ease of access to small and light weapons in the study area facilitates the execution of banditry and cattle rustling. These weapons provide the means to forcibly steal livestock and carry out other criminal activities. The proliferation of weapons in the region is through illegal

arms trade or looting of military stockpiles. These weapons find their way into the hands of bandits and cattle rustlers, enabling them to carry out their criminal activities more effectively and pose a greater threat to communities. The district head of Mayanchi stated that;

"On the process of migration from neighboring countries, Smugglers and bandits came with their guns and other weapons, we believe the weapons were smuggled in from those countries by the bandits

themselves, others were also acquired from our local blacksmiths who produce them here which they use to carry out their deadly act”

This finding corroborates Crosbie-Burnett *et al.*, (2009) and Usman and Hapsat (2022) who confirmed that weak security system, porosity of the borders, and arms proliferations are major causes of banditry and cattle

rustling in North central zone and Zamfara State respectively.

Lack of effective security and corruption

Figure 9 presents respondent’s responses on Lack of effective security and corruption as causes of banditry and cattle rustling.

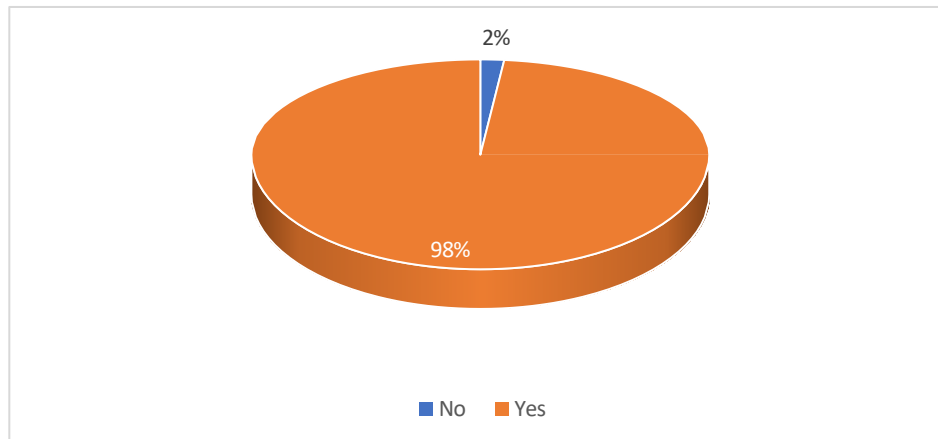


Figure 9: Lack of effective security and corruption
Source: Author’s survey (2025)

Figure 9 revealed that an overwhelming proportion of the respondents 98% view inadequate security measures, including a lack of law enforcement presence and surveillance as a major cause of the persistence of banditry and cattle rustling in the study area. Only a marginal number of about 2% disagree. Criminals operate with relative impunity, as their activities often go unchecked due to ineffective security measures. This finding is in line with the results of Bashir and Mustapaha (2021) and Momale *et al.*, (2019) who all concluded that security operative has come short in strategies to deal with the menace of banditry and insecurities in Zamfara State. For instance, the district head of Kanoma stated that;

“Security agencies help in reducing banditry and cattle rustling in our communities, however, there are sabotages among them”

This shows that corruption exist among security personnel and the authority who sabotage effective security plan to curb banditry and cattle rustling in the area. Some of them act as informant to the bandits and cattle rustlers by providing them with information about security personnel.

Stealing of cattle and moving them day and night without being caught

The responses on stealing of cattle and moving them day and night without being caught is presented in Figure 10.

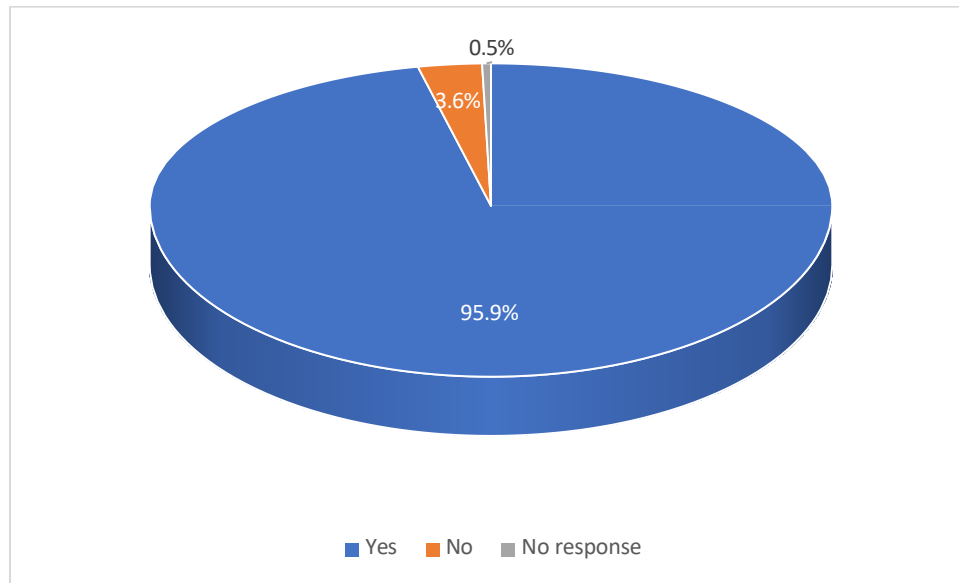


Figure 10: Stealing of cattle and moving them day and night without being caught
Source: Author's survey (2025)

According to Figure 10, about 95.9% of the respondents believe that the act of stealing cattle and moving them day and night without being caught is one of the major causes of cattle rustling and banditry in the study area which is made possible by several factors. One of the main factors is the vast and remote terrain in which many cattle are raised. This terrain provides ample hiding places for the rustlers to conceal themselves and their stolen cattle. Additionally, the lack of adequate security measures in many rural areas makes it easier for the rustlers to operate without being detected. This finding corroborates that of Rabi'u and Muhammad (2022) who found that the vast and remote terrain in which many cattle are raised, the lack of adequate security measures in many rural areas, and the high demand for beef are all factors that contribute to the problem of cattle rustling. KII result also provides more information as the district head of Dan Gulbi stated that;

"When the cattle rustlers gather like 400 to 500 cattle, sheep and ram, they move them into the bush and use available cattle routes to escape without being caught. They move both in the day time and night"

This implies that the ability of cattle rustlers to move huge number of livestock both at daytime and night freely without being is also a major reason influencing the criminal activities in the area and is not unconnected to the lack of effective security in the area.

Extent of Trauma from Banditry and Cattle Rustling Among Residents of Maru LGA

Banditry and cattle rustling are criminal activities that can have severe and far-reaching traumatic effects on the residents living in areas affected by such incidents. The extent of trauma resulting from banditry and cattle rustling

can be categorized into several aspects owing to the severity of the impact on the people. Table 1 presents the result from the Likert scale based on the perceived trauma suffered by the people of the study area.

The five-scale Likert rating of Strongly Agreed (5), Agreed (4), Undecided (3), Disagreed (2) and Strongly Disagreed (1) was adopted, it was revealed that all the five categories of trauma tested on the respondents such as high blood pressure, stigmatization of rape victim, loss of pregnancy, traumatization and victimization of women and children in the community have significant impact with a mean (greater than 3.5) in determining the extent of trauma from the effect of cattle rustling and banditry. However, the significance of each variable differs with each representing a distinct aspect of the aftermath. The mean scores for each category indicated the perceived severity of the consequences.

The result revealed that the highest mean score is attributed to Rape case which has created stigmatization among the victims of the attack (mean = 4.62) and was ranked first among the trauma suffered by victims of the attacks, suggesting a significant level of stigmatization experienced by the victims. In some communities, there is a tendency to blame and shame the victims of sexual assault, instead of holding the perpetrators accountable. This victim-blaming mentality often stems from societal misconceptions and prejudices regarding sexual violence. It can lead to the victims being stigmatized and ostracized by their own community, leaving them feeling isolated and unsupported. This finding agrees with Aloysius *et. al.*, (2023) who found that 90.2% sustained penetrating from civilian conflicts in rural Southeast Nigeria.

Table 1: Likert Scale Rating of the Extent of Trauma caused by Banditry among the People

Trauma Caused by Banditry	SD		D		U		A		SA		Total	%	Mean Rank
	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%	Frq	%			
The effect of the attack has caused high blood 5 pressure within the people of the community.	5	1.3%	13	3.3%	28	7.1%	115	29.3%	232	59.0%	393	100	4.41
Rape case has created stigmatization among 3 the victims of the attack.	3	0.8%	0	0.0%	2	0.5%	133	33.8%	255	64.9%	393	100	4.62
Pregnancies have been lost as a result of the 15 attacks in the community.	15	3.8%	5	1.3%	8	2.0%	188	48.1%	175	44.8%	391	100	4.29
Banditry has traumatized most of the people in 1 the community.	1	0.3%	7	1.8%	2	0.5%	155	39.8%	224	57.6%	389	100	4.53
Women and children are mostly vulnerable in 13 the community.	13	3.3%	8	2.0%	2	0.5%	130	33.1%	240	61.1%	393	100	4.47

SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, U = Undecided, A = Agree and SA = Strongly Agree Source: Author's Analysis (2025)

This is followed closely by "Banditry has traumatized most of the people in the community" with a (mean = 4.53) and was ranked second, indicating a notable degree of trauma within the community. This trauma is caused as a result of fear instilled in residents due to the constant threat of bandit attacks. For example, Farmers who have repeatedly lost their livestock to banditry may suffer from chronic stress, anxiety, and trauma due to the uncertainty of their economic future. The constant fear of losing their livelihood can have long-term psychological effects. This finding is similar to the findings of Nwachukwu et. al., (2022) who concluded that banditry posed a significant threat to human security and cause mental injury in Nigeria.

The fourth most significant trauma affected are women and children. The effect of the attack has caused high blood pressure among the people of the community. This is ranked fourth. Both have relatively high mean scores of 4.47 and 4.41 respectively, highlighting the serious impact on the physical and vulnerable members of the community. Hamza et. al., (2022) noted that Bandit attacks often target vulnerable groups within the community, including women and children. These individuals are more likely to face direct physical and sexual violence, along with the long-term psychological and emotional trauma associated with such experiences. Finally, loss of pregnancies as a result of the attacks in the community has a mean score of 4.29, indicating a substantial but slightly lower impact compared to the other categories. These findings agree with Ofoma (2023) who analysed the effect of banditry on socio-economic development of North-West geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

CONCLUSION

The study concludes that banditry and cattle rustling in the study area are driven by a complex interaction of socio-economic, environmental, and institutional factors. Key causes identified include displacement from neighbouring countries due to civil conflicts, natural disasters such as drought and climate change, lack of basic amenities, widespread youth unemployment, moral decadence, farmers–herders clashes, proliferation of small arms, and weak security systems compounded by corruption. These factors collectively create an enabling environment for criminal activities to thrive. Furthermore, the findings reveal that the consequences extend beyond economic loss to severe psychological and social trauma among residents, including stigmatization, fear, high blood pressure, and vulnerability of women and children. The persistence of these conditions indicates systemic failures in governance, security, and development. The study effectively established that without addressing these root causes, banditry and cattle rustling will continue to threaten community stability, livelihoods, and long-term development in the region.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the study recommends a multi-dimensional approach to addressing banditry and cattle rustling in the study area. Government should strengthen border security to control the influx of displaced persons and illegal arms from neighbouring countries. There is also a need for improved provision of basic amenities such as roads, healthcare, communication networks, and security infrastructure to enhance rapid response to attacks. Youth unemployment should be addressed through job creation programs, vocational training, and empowerment initiatives to reduce vulnerability to criminal recruitment. Efforts should be made to resolve farmers–herders' conflicts through effective land-use policies and dialogue mechanisms. Additionally, community-based sensitization programs involving religious and traditional leaders should be implemented to restore moral values and discourage criminal behaviour. Finally, security agencies must be reformed to eliminate corruption and improve operational efficiency, ensuring effective surveillance, intelligence gathering, and protection of lives and property.

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