

Human Security and Islamic Criminal Justice: Evaluating the Response to Kidnapping and Rural Banditry in North-West and North-Central Nigeria.

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ABSTRACT

Kidnapping and rural banditry have become major threats to human security in North West and North Central Nigeria, causing widespread socio-economic disruption, displacement, and psychological trauma (Human Rights Watch, 2026; Reuters, 2025). Despite intensified military operations and state security interventions, insecurity persists, highlighting the limitations of predominantly militarized responses that neglect underlying socio-economic and governance challenges. This study examines the relationship between human security and Islamic criminal justice in addressing kidnapping and rural banditry in the affected regions. Anchored on the Human Security Framework and Islamic Criminal Justice Theory, the study adopts a qualitative approach based on content analysis of secondary sources, including academic literature, policy reports, and media publications. Findings reveal that state-led security responses have achieved limited success because they inadequately address structural causes of violence and community trust deficits. The study further finds that Islamic criminal justice principles such as sulh (reconciliation), adl (justice), and restorative mediation continue to shape local conflict resolution practices, although they remain weakly integrated into formal security frameworks. The article concludes that sustainable responses to insecurity require a multidimensional approach that combines statutory law enforcement with community-based and culturally legitimate justice mechanisms. It recommends stronger collaboration between state institutions, religious leaders, and local communities to enhance human security, peacebuilding, and long-term stability in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Human security, Islamic criminal justice, kidnapping, rural banditry, peacebuilding.*

INTRODUCTION

Human security is considered one of the most relevant approaches in contemporary security studies, emerging as an alternative to the traditional state-centric understanding of security. Unlike earlier security

paradigms that focused primarily on military strength and territorial protection of the state, human security places individuals and communities at the center of security considerations and seeks to protect them from threats that endanger lives, livelihoods, dignity, and social well-being. Since its introduction by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), human security has emerged as a central framework for analysing threats to human well-being, as introduced by the concept of Human Development Report 1994. The report identified seven interconnected dimensions of human security economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security which continue to inform contemporary human security policy and research (UNDP, 2022). Under the human security framework, insecurity does not simply refer to threats against the state; rather, it denotes conditions that prevent individuals and communities from living free from fear, violence, deprivation, and social disorder.

In Nigeria, particularly in the North West and North Central regions, kidnapping and rural banditry have increasingly become major threats to human security. Over the last decade, the country has witnessed a rapid increase in violent crimes involving rural banditry, cattle rustling, mass abductions, and kidnapping for ransom. These criminal activities have become deeply rooted in states such as Zamfara, Kaduna, Katsina, Sokoto, Kebbi, Niger, Plateau, and Benue. Initially characterized by localized rural conflicts involving herders, farmers, and armed groups, the violence has evolved into highly organized criminal networks operating across forests and border communities. Armed groups frequently attack villages, raid markets, destroy farmlands, rustle cattle, abduct schoolchildren, and ambush travelers along highways (International Crisis Group, 2020). Consequently, many rural communities have become zones of prolonged fear, instability, and insecurity.

Kidnapping for ransom has particularly emerged as one of the most lucrative forms of organized crime in Nigeria. Victims include schoolchildren, traditional rulers, travelers, religious leaders, health workers, and farmers. The commercialization of kidnapping has created substantial financial incentives for criminal groups and contributed to the increasing spread of armed violence across northern Nigeria (Human Rights Watch, 2026). Several high-profile incidents involving the abduction of schoolchildren in Katsina, Kaduna, Niger, and Zamfara States have attracted national and international concern. According to UNICEF (2024), repeated attacks on schools and abductions have severely disrupted education in northern Nigeria, forcing many schools to shut down temporarily and causing thousands of children to drop out of school. Beyond threats to physical safety, kidnapping and banditry have also generated serious humanitarian consequences, including internal displacement, psychological trauma, food insecurity, and the destruction of rural livelihoods and local economies.

The vulnerability of the North West and North Central regions to these security challenges is largely linked to deep socio-economic and governance deficiencies. Scholars have associated the rise of banditry with widespread poverty, illiteracy, youth unemployment, environmental degradation, weak governance structures, porous borders, and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons across the Sahel region (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014; Hassan, 2019). Competition over grazing land, diminishing agricultural resources, and the collapse of rural economies have further intensified tensions and created fertile ground for the recruitment of unemployed youths into criminal groups (Idris & Shuaibu, 2022). In many rural communities across northern Nigeria, the absence of effective state security institutions has created security vacuums that armed groups exploit. Public confidence in security agencies has also declined because state security institutions are often perceived as ineffective, inaccessible, and corrupt (Abdullahi, 2019).

The Nigerian government has responded to these crises largely through militarized and securitized measures, including the deployment of military personnel, joint security task forces, aerial bombardments, intelligence-led operations, and anti-kidnapping campaigns across affected states. Although these security operations have achieved some success in rescuing abductees and eliminating criminal leaders, insecurity in the affected regions continues to persist (AP News, 2025). Critics argue that force-based approaches to

combating insecurity have failed to address the underlying causes of banditry and kidnapping, such as poverty, marginalization, unemployment, corruption, and governance failures (International Crisis Group, 2020). Furthermore, allegations of human rights abuses, civilian casualties, and arbitrary arrests have contributed to public distrust toward state security institutions.

Given the persistence of insecurity despite repeated military interventions, there has been growing interest in alternative approaches to peacebuilding, justice administration, and conflict resolution. In many Muslim communities across northern Nigeria, Islamic criminal justice traditions and local customs continue to play important roles in regulating social behavior and resolving communal disputes. Islamic criminal justice is guided by principles such as *adl* (justice), *sulh* (reconciliation), *amanah* (trust), and *maslahah* (public interest), which emphasize justice, reconciliation, rehabilitation, and the protection of society. Through mediation, dialogue, and community-based justice mechanisms, Islamic criminal justice seeks to restore social harmony and strengthen communal trust. Despite its relevance in addressing interpersonal and communal conflicts, Islamic criminal justice remains largely marginalized within Nigeria's formal legal and security architecture.

Contemporary counter-banditry operations in Nigeria are still predominantly characterized by centralized, military-driven responses with little incorporation of community-based or religious justice mechanisms. The exclusion of Islamic criminal justice principles from broader security and peacebuilding strategies has created a significant gap in Nigeria's response to insecurity. Existing security interventions rely heavily on armed force and reactive operations, which often produce only short-term tactical gains without addressing the deeper social, economic, religious, and governance-related drivers of insecurity. Consequently, insecurity continues to persist across many rural communities in northern Nigeria.

Several studies have examined the causes and consequences of banditry and kidnapping in northern Nigeria. Babangida, Haruna, and Mohammed (2025), in a study involving 700 incarcerated bandits in Katsina and Zamfara States, found that unemployment, dysfunctional family structures, poor educational backgrounds, and drug abuse significantly contribute to criminal behavior in the region. Similarly, studies conducted in Katsina State between 2010 and 2024 revealed that banditry poses severe physical, economic, psychological, environmental, and political threats to local communities (Author, 2025). Danjuma and Caleb (2025) further observed that armed banditry has negatively affected agriculture, transportation systems, and commercial activities across northern Nigeria, thereby worsening poverty and food insecurity. However, despite these scholarly contributions, limited attention has been paid to how human security can be strengthened through the integration of Islamic criminal justice mechanisms in addressing kidnapping and rural banditry in northern Nigeria. As a result, security interventions remain largely top-down, reactive, and insufficiently connected to community participation and culturally grounded justice systems.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Human Security and Violent Crime in Nigeria

The concept of human security places the protection of individuals and their dignity at the centre of security policy by emphasizing freedom from fear, freedom from want, and the ability to live in dignity despite threats such as violence, displacement, economic insecurity, and social exclusion (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2022).. In the Nigerian context, scholars note that kidnapping and rural banditry have escalated from isolated criminal activity to systemic threats, affecting millions of rural inhabitants' access to education, farming, and social services (Akande & Ume, 2023; Danjuma, 2021).

Kidnapping for ransom has become a lucrative business model for criminal networks in the North-West, as ransoms inject substantial financial resources into bandit economies and further fuel violence cycles (Shehu, Ismail, & Hassan, 2024). High-profile abductions such as the mass kidnapping of schoolchildren

in Kaduna and Niger states have revealed vulnerabilities in law enforcement and highlighted broader governance challenges (Reuters, 2025).

Rural banditry encompasses a range of violent acts, including livestock theft, village attacks, and large-scale abductions. These acts are often linked to wider socio-economic grievances, coupled with weak state presence, porous borders, and proliferation of light weapons (Bukar & Abdullahi, 2022). Victims experience not only direct physical harm but also long-term psychological trauma, loss of income, and disruption of inter-communal relations.

Islamic Criminal Justice and Local Norms

Islamic criminal justice is grounded in principles of **hudud** (fixed punishments), *qisas* (equitable retaliation), *diyyah* (compensation), and *tazir* (discretionary punishment), and emphasizes restoration and reconciliation where possible (Saeed, 2021). While Nigeria's formal legal framework is secular, several Northern states apply aspects of Shari'a law in personal status and criminal cases, reflecting the region's predominantly Muslim populations. The jurisprudential emphasis on restorative practices holds potential for mediation and community reintegration in crime situations (Abubakar, 2024).

Research on the application of Islamic justice to contemporary violent crime in Nigeria remains emergent. However, studies from other Muslim contexts show that integrating restorative justice principles can enhance community trust and participation in justice processes (Hassan & Omar, 2022). In Nigeria, local religious leaders frequently mediate disputes, negotiate return of stolen property, or broker release of captives when banditry incidents involve personal or communal relationships (Usman, 2023).

State Security Responses

The Nigerian state's response to rising banditry and kidnapping has overwhelmingly relied on militarised approaches. Joint Task Forces, Army operations, and airstrikes have targeted known bandit camps and facilitated rescue operations for abductees (AP News, 2025). While these operations have achieved tactical successes, scholars critique their sustainability and limited attention to root causes (Olawale, 2022; Ibrahim, 2023). Moreover, seizures of assets and arrests have been sporadic, and allegations of civilian harm sometimes erode public trust.

Policy reports highlight the proliferation of community defence groups and vigilantes as supplemental security providers. While they offer immediate localized protection, such groups often lack training, oversight, and alignment with formal justice mechanisms, creating accountability challenges (Human Rights Watch, 2026).

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts the Human Security Framework and Islamic Criminal Justice Theory as the major theoretical foundations for analyzing insecurity, justice administration, and the protection of human welfare in North West and North Central Nigeria. These theories are relevant because they provide comprehensive explanations of the causes, consequences, and possible solutions to kidnapping and rural banditry within the Nigerian context. While the Human Security Framework explains how insecurity threatens human survival and community well-being, Islamic Criminal Justice Theory provides insight into how Islamic principles of justice, reconciliation, and communal responsibility can contribute to addressing insecurity in predominantly Muslim communities in northern Nigeria.

Human Security Framework

The Human Security Framework gained international prominence through the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Report, which advanced a people-centered approach to

security by emphasizing the protection of individuals rather than focusing solely on the security of states. Drawing on the ideas of Mahbub ul Haq and Amartya Sen, the framework argues that security should encompass the protection of human lives, livelihoods, and dignity from multiple and interconnected threats (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2022; United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security [UNTFHS], 2024).. Before the emergence of this framework, security studies mainly concentrated on state security, territorial integrity, military strength, and national sovereignty. However, the Human Security Framework challenged this traditional state-centered approach by emphasizing that individuals and communities could also face serious threats capable of undermining their survival and dignity even in the absence of interstate conflicts.

The framework identifies seven major dimensions of security, namely economic security, food security, health security, environmental security, personal security, community security, and political security (UNDP, 1994). According to the theory, true security exists when people can live free from fear, free from want, and free from indignity. The framework, therefore, advocates a people-centered approach to security rather than an overreliance on military force as the primary means of achieving security.

The Human Security Framework assumes that threats to human lives and welfare are as important as threats to state security. It argues that insecurity is multidimensional and cannot be effectively addressed through military approaches alone. Conditions such as poverty, unemployment, hunger, displacement, marginalization, weak institutions, and unjust socio-political structures are regarded as major drivers of insecurity that require comprehensive and inclusive solutions.

The relevance of the Human Security Framework to this study is highly significant considering the prevailing security challenges in North West and North Central Nigeria. Kidnapping and rural banditry have become major threats to human lives and communal well-being in the affected regions, leading to loss of lives, destruction of property, displacement of communities, disruption of farming and trading activities, school closures, food insecurity, and psychological trauma. The framework helps explain the multidimensional effects of insecurity not only on the Nigerian state but also on ordinary citizens and rural communities.

The theory is also relevant because it exposes the limitations of the predominantly militarized approach adopted by the Nigerian government in combating banditry and kidnapping. Despite the deployment of troops, joint task forces, and aerial bombardments, insecurity continues to persist in many rural communities. This suggests that military responses alone are insufficient because they often neglect deeper socio-economic and political factors such as poverty, unemployment, corruption, marginalization, and weak governance institutions that contribute to insecurity in northern Nigeria (International Crisis Group, 2020). The framework, therefore, supports the argument that sustainable peace and security can only be achieved through broader approaches that include justice, economic empowerment, political participation, social inclusion, and protection of human rights.

Furthermore, the Human Security Framework is directly connected to the objectives of this study because it provides a basis for evaluating how state-led security responses affect human welfare in the affected regions. It also helps in examining how alternative justice mechanisms, including Islamic criminal justice, can contribute to improving human security outcomes in Nigeria.

Islamic Criminal Justice Theory

Islamic Criminal Justice Theory originates from Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) and derives its foundational principles from the Qur'an, Hadith (sayings and actions of Prophet Muhammad), ijma (consensus of Islamic scholars), and qiyas (analogical reasoning). The theory developed through the contributions of notable

Islamic jurists such as Imam Abu Hanifa (699–767 CE), Imam Malik ibn Anas (711–795 CE), Imam Al-Shafi'i (767–820 CE), and Imam Ahmad ibn Hanbal (780–855 CE), who made significant contributions to Islamic legal principles concerning crime, punishment, justice, and social order. Contemporary scholars such as Abdullah Saeed (2021) and Mohammad Hashim Kamali (2019) have also contributed to modern discussions on Islamic criminal justice and its relevance in contemporary societies.

Islamic Criminal Justice Theory is founded on the belief that justice is essential for peace, stability, and moral order in society. The theory emphasizes accountability, fairness, deterrence, reconciliation, social responsibility, and protection of public welfare. In Islamic criminal justice, punishments are generally classified into hudud (fixed punishments prescribed by Islamic law), qisas (retaliatory justice), and tazir (discretionary punishments determined by judges or authorities based on societal circumstances). However, Islamic criminal justice extends beyond punishment to include restorative justice, mediation, reconciliation, restitution, and rehabilitation (Kamali, 2019).

The theory is guided by important principles such as adl (justice), sulh (reconciliation), amanah (trust), and maslahah (public interest), which encourage fairness, peaceful dispute resolution, and harmonious community life. It assumes that crime is not merely a legal issue but also a moral and social problem that requires collective responsibility and ethical solutions. Consequently, mediation, dialogue, reconciliation, restitution, and rehabilitation are considered essential alongside punishment.

The relevance of Islamic Criminal Justice Theory to this study is highly significant because many of the communities affected by kidnapping and rural banditry in North West and North Central Nigeria are predominantly Muslim societies where Islamic principles and traditional institutions strongly influence social behavior and conflict resolution. In many northern Nigerian communities, religious leaders, Islamic scholars, and traditional institutions play major roles in maintaining peace, resolving disputes, and promoting communal harmony. The theory, therefore, provides valuable insight into how local communities seek culturally acceptable solutions to insecurity and conflict.

Islamic Criminal Justice Theory is also relevant because it offers an alternative perspective to the dominant militarized response adopted by the Nigerian government in addressing insecurity. Rather than focusing solely on punishment and military force, the theory emphasizes reconciliation, moral reform, community participation, rehabilitation, and restoration of social harmony. This makes it particularly relevant in addressing mistrust between local communities and formal state security institutions in northern Nigeria.

Additionally, the theory supports the objectives of this study by providing a framework for assessing how Islamic justice mechanisms can complement statutory legal systems in combating kidnapping and rural banditry. Religion and traditional customs continue to shape individual behavior and socio-political life in many northern Nigerian communities. Consequently, Islamic Criminal Justice Theory is important in understanding how cultural and religious values influence criminal behavior and how these values can be integrated into broader security and peacebuilding strategies aimed at improving human security and communal stability in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative research design in exploring the relationships between human security and Islamic criminal justice in relation to kidnapping and rural banditry in North West and North Central Nigeria. This design is critically dependent on secondary data collected in the form of academic articles, books, governmental reports, policy papers, international organization reports, newspapers, and human rights records from 2021 to 2026.

The principal research tool employed in this study is content analysis, enabling a systematic examination and explanation of literature, policy papers, and security reports regarding insecurity, human security in Nigeria, and the Islamic criminal justice system in Nigeria. Both descriptive and interpretive analysis are employed to isolate key themes, patterns, and gaps in issues related to banditry's causes, the state's efficacy in security provisioning, and implementation of Islamic criminal justice principles of 'Adl' (justice), 'Sulh' (reconciliation), and 'Amanah' (trust) in peace building and in dealing with banditry in general.

Content analysis is used in this study because of its theoretical and policy-based approach to analysis. It gives a foundation for the critical analysis of the state-based security responses, community-based justice approaches, for policy based approach to the enhancement of human security and the establishment of lasting peace in northern Nigeria.

FINDINGS

These findings were obtained through qualitative content analysis of academic literature, policy reports, security documents, media reports and human rights documents related to Kidnapping, Rural Banditry, Human Security and Islamic Criminal Justice in North West and North Central Nigeria.

1. Increasing Incidence of Kidnapping and Rural Banditry

The analysis has shown that there is an escalating rate of kidnapping and rural banditry in North West and North Central Nigeria from 2021 to 2026. There are overwhelming empirical accounts that armed perpetrators typically raid schools, highways, farmlands, markets and rural settlements (International Crisis Group, 2020; Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014). The states of Zamfara, Kaduna, Katsina, Niger, Plateau, and Benue are the epicentres of these phenomena in North West and North Central Nigeria. In the researched literature, kidnapping for ransom has become highly commodified, encouraging the expansion of the criminal network across the region (Hassan, 2019).

2. Human Security Impacts of Insecurity

From the reviewed materials, it is clear that kidnapping and banditry are significant human security concerns. The research has found that widespread violation of personal security occurs through killings, abductions, sexual abuse, and forced displacement of rural inhabitants (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 1994; Danjuma & Caleb, 2025). The findings have shown that economic security has been badly impacted by the abandonment of farmlands due to insecurity, decline of local businesses and low turn-up to markets due to insecurity (Idris & Shuaibu, 2022).

Moreover, the findings revealed that the security of education and communities has been undermined by frequent raids on schools and rural areas, where schools have been temporarily closed due to insecurity and where social dislocation, psychological distress, and loss of social trust remain endemic (UNICEF, 2024).

3. Limitations of State-Centred Security Responses

It is evident that the government of Nigeria has mainly been adopting military solutions to tackle rural banditry and kidnapping such as military deployment, formation of joint task forces, air surveillance and anti-banditry operations. Although the reviewed articles recognize some limited tactical gains, this has not addressed the persistence of insecurity in these regions (International Crisis Group, 2020).

From the analysis, the state security approach focuses more on force-based tactics and neglect deeper structural factors that perpetuate insecurities such as poverty, unemployment, weak governance, corruption, and marginalization (Abdullahi, 2019; Hassan, 2019). Moreover, distrust between local communities and state security agencies limits the capacity of the agencies to collect adequate information from the populace and involve communities in peacebuilding.

4. Relevance of Islamic Criminal Justice Approaches

From the literature, it is evident that the relevance of Islamic criminal justice practices continue to play crucial roles in conflict resolution and peacebuilding in the Muslim communities in Northern Nigeria. These include *adl* (justice), *sulh* (reconciliation), *amanah* (trust), and mediation in resolving disputes and building consensus in communities (Kamali, 2019). The findings also show that religious scholars and local mediators have mediated some conflicts and mediated successful negotiations and resolution between victims and perpetrators (Usman, 2023), however, it remains mostly an informal practice and does not seem integrated into the state legal system.

5. Absence of Integrated Security and Justice Frameworks

The study found that there is a weak link between formal state security structures and informal local Islamic justice institutions. The former adopts punitive and military approach while the latter focuses on reconciliation and restorative mediation as means of dispute resolution. This dual approach, has made conflict resolution and peacebuilding inefficient (Akande & Ume, 2023). Also, community based security groups often lack legal framework and are susceptible to human rights violations and intercommunal violence, hindering sustainable response to kidnapping and banditry.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study has demonstrated that Kidnapping and Rural Banditry in North West and North Central Nigeria are more of human security threats beyond mere criminal activities. In tandem with Human Security Framework, this study has provided an in-depth account that the insecurities prevalent in the regions have affected personal security, economic well-being, education, psyche and community structures of people living in North West and North Central Nigeria (UNDP, 1994). Persistent insecurities in these areas suggest that state centered, militarized security response alone cannot tackle the underlying factors perpetuating them.

Moreover, findings from this research aligns with argument in studies of political economy and security that economic marginalization, poor governance, unemployment and institutional decay has paved way for organized crimes in northern Nigeria (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014; Hassan, 2019). In the face of limited success of state's militarized operations to curb banditry and kidnapping (International Crisis Group, 2020), this research argues that it failed to adequately tackle structural issues through social and community-based development interventions. In context of Islamic Criminal Justice Theory, this study has found that concepts and practices of Islamic criminal justice are still relevant in the quest to resolve conflict and bring back social order in majority Muslim communities in northern Nigeria (Kamali, 2019).

The study highlighted the importance of Islamic approaches to conflict resolution in areas such as *sulh* (reconciliation) and mediation in healing intercommunal relationship, building consensus and regaining community trust. Integrating local justice mechanisms, especially Islamic based ones, in official state security strategy would enhance cooperation and legitimacy of security responses in conflict areas. However, lack of formality and formal recognition for Islamic based justice approaches in official law enforcement have made these initiatives inadequate in the face of large scale organised banditry. The gaps between state legal justice and local Islamic based justice institution could be used in coordinated approaches.

CONCLUSION

This thesis discusses the nexus between human security and Islamic criminal justice in dealing with kidnapping and rural banditry in North West and North Central Nigeria. Kidnapping and rural banditry have become serious human security issues and have affected personal safety, the livelihood of people in rural and urban areas, their education, and well-being. Despite repeated military operations and state

responses to the menace, the insecurity has continued to thrive as the security mechanisms are still primarily militarized, and are failing to address the underlying causes of violence and crime in both areas-the socio-economic, political, and governance factors.

The thesis also demonstrates that principles such as *adl*, *sulh*, *amanah*, restorative mediation are still relevant in most Muslim communities of Northern Nigeria to achieve conciliation, harmony and social cohesion among the various stakeholders. However, the limitations of such informal community-based mechanisms have significantly impacted their overall effectiveness in combating organized rural banditry and kidnapping in the regions due to their lack of integration with Nigeria's formal legal and security system. The thesis therefore asserts that sustained security and peace in North West and North Central Nigeria are unattainable through an approach of force-based responses only. Instead, security will only prevail through the creation of a human security-based approach that includes effective law enforcement, social and economic development, community participation, as well as justice mechanisms that are socially and culturally acceptable to communities and are thus legitimate.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Nigerian government should establish human security policies which will emphasize protection of human life, liberty, and well-being of communities instead of solely on militarized responses to conflicts and crime; there should also be an emphasis on factors that generate security challenges such as poverty, employment, displacement, social marginalization etc.
2. Relevant Islamic criminal justice processes such as mediation, reconciliation and restorative practices should be integrated into broad mechanisms of conflict resolution and peace-building in Nigerian constitutions and human rights frameworks.
3. Local participation and community policing should be strengthened through increased collaboration between security agencies, traditional rulers and other stakeholders in communities to achieve improved intelligence gathering, build trust, and enable community contribution to local security management.
4. Government must prioritize social and economic development programmes and schemes such as youth employment opportunities and better access to education in rural communities, as it is assumed that these will reduce youth involvement in criminality.
5. Formal and institutional support should be provided to community and religious mediators, as they are the key actors that have historically facilitated peace building and mediation in conflict zones, and there should be adequate training for them on conflict resolution and restorative justice-based peace building.
6. There should be efforts by the government to enact legal and policy frameworks for cooperation between formal security agencies and community-based justice mechanisms, while upholding the rule of law, accountability, and protection of human rights.
7. The government must endeavor to strengthen its governance institutions, fight against corruption, enhance public trust in security agencies, and ensure efficient delivery of public services to affected communities.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- i. The use of solely secondary data did not permit of detailed research into victim's accounts of experiences, responses by security operatives and affected communities. This also means that the findings in this paper are contingent on the accuracy, accessibility and reliability of available materials.
- ii. The study also lacked the required geographical scope and this means that not all states affected in these regions had their unique predicaments sufficiently accounted for given the diverse nature of insecurity in northern and central Nigeria and a disparity in the security climate in Zamfara, Kaduna, Niger, Katsina and Benue for example.
- iii. Accessibility problems due to ongoing violent conflicts also did not give room for any field studies especially in remote communities prone to attacks.

- iv. Existing literature on Islamic criminal justice, human rights, and rural banditry in Nigeria is limited and often overlaps in broader studies. A direct empirically established link between the applications of Islamic criminal justice to banditry in particular remains rather obscure.
- v. Kidnapping and banditry are dynamic fields, and research findings may be dated with new strategies by perpetrators and state responses. The limitation of data sources and the nature of these data, particularly from media and policy documents, cannot rule out institutional or political biases that might affect the representation of state actions or the nature of insecurity and armed actors' methods.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

On the basis of the results and constraints of this study, the following directions are suggested for future studies:

- i. Grassroots Field Research among the Victims: Future studies should utilize qualitative methods of primary field-based research using interviews, focus groups, and surveys involving victims of Kidnapping and Banditry, community leaders, security agents, and scholars (both local and foreign) to gather original empirical evidence on kidnapping and banditry.
- ii. Comparative Studies of Justice Delivery Mechanisms: Further research is recommended for comparative analyses on the effectiveness of statutory justice, Islamic criminal justice, and traditional means of dispute resolution in enhancing peace, ensuring accountability, and promoting reconciliation.
- iii. Gender Dimensions of Banditry and Kidnapping: This research ought to investigate gender perspectives of banditry and kidnapping, specifically on impacts on female children, and vulnerable groups concerning trauma, education, livelihood disruption, among others.
- iv. The role of Vigilante groups in Combating Rural insecurity: Additional studies are necessary to establish the legality, efficiency, and accountability of vigilantism and the effectiveness of community defense organizations in curbing insecurity.
- v. Effectiveness of deradicalisation and rehabilitation: Future studies should address possibilities of incorporating Islamic restorative justice principles into the deradicalisation and rehabilitation process for bandits and ex-offenders.
- vi. Use of Technology and Security governance: Researchers should continue research into the use of surveillance technology, intelligence generation, digital communication systems, and early warning signals in ameliorating kidnapping and banditry problems.
- vii. Trans-border and Sahelian insecurity: Future studies should explore international perspectives by looking at the nature of cross-border relations and Sahelian security issues since the proliferation of arms and the existence of criminal networks appear linked to regional instability.
- viii. Policy-oriented quantitative studies: More quantitative and mixed methods studies are recommended that investigate using statistics on variables such as poverty, unemployment, and the perceived failures of governance in relation to kidnapping and banditry in Northern Nigeria.
- ix. Human Rights implications of Counter Banditry Campaigns: Future studies should scrutinize how counter banditry operations affect the civil populace; protect human rights and public confidence on security agents.
- x. Harmony between Human Security and Islamic Justice Framework: Future researchers ought to provide a framework for a synthesis of human security elements and the Islamic criminal justice mechanism within the Nigerian constitutional and legal system.

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