NIU Journal of Health Sciences Copyright©2026
Nexus International University ISSN: 3136-6449; 12(3) 181-187

Exposure to Banditry and Mental Health Outcomes among Residents of Banditry-Affected Communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria

JOSEPH OLUWASEYI ADIGUN
Department of Educational Foundations, Health Education Unit,
Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria
adigunjoseph12@gmail.com

ISAAC OPEYEMI OGUNTUNJI
Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education,
Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo, Nigeria

JUSTINA TUBOKUN OMOTAYO
Department of Educational Foundations, Guidance and Counseling Unit,
Federal University of Lafia, Nasarawa State, Nigeria

GRACE ABIODUN ADESOKAN
Department of Human Kinetics and Health Education,
Emmanuel Alayande University of Education, Oyo, Nigeria

AWEDA ABDULLAHI SALAUDEEN
Department of Public Health (Community Health),
Rivers State University, Port Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria

FAITH YEMIOLADAPO OGUNTUNJI
Department of Public Health, Atiba University, Oyo, Oyo State, Nigeria

Abstract. The outcome of banditry in the banditry-affected communities has been identified as a contributing leading factor to mental health problems. This study examined the exposure to banditry and mental health outcomes among residents of banditry-affected communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria. The objectives of this study were to assess the relationship between exposure to banditry attacks and depression, anxiety, and post traumatic-stress disorders (PTSD). A descriptive research design of the survey type was employed for the study. A sample size of four hundred was determined using Taro Yamane's formula, and a convenient sampling technique was used select the respondents involved in the study. Data were collected using a validated structured questionnaire. The instrument was found reliable at of 0.73r. The three null hypotheses were tested using Pearson Product Moment Correlation at 0.05 level of significance. The results of the findings revealed that, there was a significant relationship between exposure to banditry and depression, anxiety and PTSD among residents of banditry-affected communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo

State. The study recommended that, government at all levels and non-governmental organizations inclusive should provide accessible mental health supports and care in banditry-affected communities so as to improve people's psychological health status. Also, mental health counselling and stress management should be integrated into primary health care services and community outreach activities so as to help victims of banditry to cope with the traumatic situation already experienced.

Keywords: Exposure to Banditry, Depression, Anxiety, PTSD, Banditry-affected Communities.

1. Introduction

In Oyo State, Nigeria, the issue of banditry has become a community threat ravaging multiple communities with loss of lives. Banditry is defined as the practice of raiding and attacking victims by members of an armed group, whether or not premeditated, using weapons of offense or defense, especially in semi-organized groups for the purpose of overpowering the victim and obtaining loot or achieving some political goals (Shalangwa, 2013). According to Abdullahi (2019), bandits operate within and along rural borders with the assistance of their local collaborators including in some cases, state agents deployed to work for the society and security of the people.

Banditry is a serious crime that poses a security challenge to democratic governance and peaceful coexistence in Nigeria. Bandits often terrorise mostly communities in the Northwest region of Nigeria, but has gradually become a daily threat in Southwestern region in which Ogbomoso is inclusive. Their activities include kidnapping, arson, shooting, raping, cattle rustling, killing and looting (ACAPS, 2020; Akinyetun, 2021). According to Odunkalu (2018), bandits have emerged as the new bogeyman for insecurity in Nigeria, joining a long growing list which includes boko haram, cultists, herdsmen, kidnappers and militants. In different parts of Nigeria, banditry is used to described different variants of outlawry. In reality, the usage conflates two underlying problems, ineffective law enforcement in Southern Nigeria and the crisis of ungoverned spaces in Northern Nigeria. Since independence, successive governments have had to confront variants of these trends. The evidence, over time suggests a link between governance, its failure and banditry.

The prevalence of under-governed spaces where the government's control is ineffective and limited has been given rise to banditry (Ojo, 2020). Such areas are characterized by bad governance, weak legitimacy, protracted conflicts and poor leadership which makes citizens vulnerable to exploitation by terrorist groups, traffickers and other criminal elements. Such areas are not generally entirely devoid of the government's control but are governed poorly and differently from larger communities. These poorly governed areas are plagued by bandits and other criminal gangs due to their remoteness, which allows for the perpetuation of illegal business activities such as human trafficking and mining. The under-governed spaces with the country's porous borders have increased the influx of small arms and light weapons from the Sahel region, thus increasing the opportunities for crime. This is facilitated by vast forests which allow the illegal arms trade to fester. It is further complicated by the socio-economic conditions prevalent in the country which leave the youths vulnerable to recruitment for criminal activities. Another factor that increased the incidence of banditry has been traced to the complex relationship between pastoralists and farmers (Uche & Iwuaniadi, 2018).

Bandit attack has increased the incidence of forced migration, food insecurity, cattle rustling, destruction of property, health challenges, displacement, poor humanitarian conditions, health crises and death. For example, between 2018 and 2020, an estimated 4,900 people lost their lives to bandit attacks, while 309,000 were internally displaced and 60,000 became refugees (ACAPS, 2020).

In Southern Nigeria, which comprises a about 29% of Nigeria's nearly 924,000km^2 of landmass, urban banditry ensued. Unsurprisingly, armed robbery in built-up areas of the country was an early manifestation. An early exponent of this was Ishola Oyenusi, a high-school drop-out who chose to be called "the Doctor" and terrorised Lagos at the end of the Civil War. In response, the military government introduced mandatory death by firing squad for convicted armed robbers. The first set of public executions took place in front of Bar Beach in Victoria Island, Lagos April 26, 1971. Less than four and half months later, on September 8, 1971, Oyenusi was executed at the same location (Odinkalu, 2018).

Researches have shown a link between banditry and mental health conditions, with survivors experiencing conditions such as depression, anxiety (which involves excessive nervousness, fear, apprehension and worry (Ifeanyi, 2024;

Adigun 2025) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (United Nations International Children Education Fund (UNICEF, 2019). The aftermath of banditry in the banditry-affected communities has been identified as a significant contributor to mental health issues (Yalwa, 2023). One in every eleven individuals in banditry-affected communities experience moderate or severe mental illnesses (World Health Organisation (WHO, 2019). Health interventions often overlook psychological assessments, leaving victims/survivors of banditry with mental issues such as sadness, hopelessness and suicidal tendencies (Daramola, 2019).

The banditry attack in Nigeria has led to a lot of problems for instance, the banditry attack in Benue State in January 2018, where 70 farmers lost their lives and in Zamfara, where over 500 people died between 2011 and 2012, the trauma experienced by affected populations including both physical and mental domain (Yalwa, 2023). Victims of banditry experience flashbacks, fear, anxiety, insomnia and depression (Hillary, Umeh & Kuchaks, 2025).

Situation Action Theory (SAT) attempts to explain what moves people to action such as crime by incorporating ecological, criminological, sociological and behavioural sciences. SAT posits that crime is motivated by an individual's morality and the actions, but the causes of their actions are situational. Therefore, an act of crime is the product of a choice made after considering various alternative scenarios and stimuli presented by a particular situation. SAT is relevant in addressing banditry in Nigeria because it stresses the need to remove the situational factors that warrant crime, such as poorly governed spaces, transhumance, the proliferation of arms, illegal mining activities and other poor socio-economic conditions (Wikstrom, 2019).

Conspiracy theory postulates that bandits are foreigners who had been imported into the country from Libya, Niger, Chad and Benin Republic to win election for Buhari or foment trouble in the alternative or to implement the open agenda of Islamization and Fulanization of Nigerians space; an agenda that was blew into the open by former president Obasanjo and General Theophilus Danjuma. Although Buhari had given flint to the credibility of the conspiracy theory when he was nominated by Boko Haram as its chief negotiator with the Jonathan administration (Okwelum, 2022).
Statement of the Problem

On May 15, 2026, the gunmen who disguised as military personnel mounted a coordinated, large-scale invasion of three schools in Ahoro-Esiele, Yawota axis in Ogbomoso, Oyo State. The affected schools were Community High School Ahoro-Esiele, L.A Primary School Esiele and Yawota Baptist Nursery and Primary School saw scores of learners, staff abducted and murder of three persons. The attack left the entire residents of Ogbomoso depressed, panic and traumatized. The incidence further prompted Oyo State Government to shut all Public Primary and Secondary Schools indefinitely (Oyedeji, 2026). It is observed that victims of bandit-attack experience trauma, fear, grief and displacement which has led to increasing cases of depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. Many victims live with the persistent fear of renewed attack and loss of loved ones.

There has been alarming rate of bandit-attack in Nigeria, for instance, on June 11, 2026, the schools were hurriedly shut down following an attack by the bandits on the UBE Primary and Secondary school, Iluke, Kogi State at a threat of possible invasion at learning institutions in Edo and Niger State which occurred a few weeks after the banditry-attack in Ogbomoso fueling national and international condemnation of the worsening security in the country (Yakubu et al., 2026).

It is also observed that victims/survivors and people in the banditry-affected areas usually report of repeated flashback and risk of sexual assaults. Many women already suffered from severe mental health conditions after witnessing the murder of their spouses and children or being kidnapped (The New Humanitarian, 2026). World Health Organization (2019) stressed that there was a correlation between banditry and mental health disorders including depression, anxiety and post-traumatic disorder (PTSD). Despite the prevalence of banditry, a notable gap exists in understanding the relationship between exposure to banditry and mental health outcomes. On this note, the study examined the exposure to banditry and mental health outcomes among residents of banditry-affected communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria.

1.1 Objective of the Study

The general objective of this study was to examine the exposure to banditry and mental health outcomes among residents of banditry-affected communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to:

- determine the relationship between exposure to banditry attacks and depression among residents of banditry-affected communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria.
- assess the relationship between exposure to banditry attacks and anxiety among residents of banditry-affected communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria.
- evaluate the relationship between exposure to banditry attacks and PTSD among residents of banditry-affected communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria.

1.2 Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested in the course of the study:

- There is no significant relationship between exposure to banditry attacks and depression among residents of banditry-affected communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria.
- There is no significant relationship between exposure to banditry attacks and anxiety among residents of banditry-affected communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria.
- There is no significant relationship between exposure to banditry attacks and PTSD among residents of banditry-affected communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria.

2. Research Methodology

A descriptive research design of the survey type was employed in this study. The population of this study comprised all residents in the five local government areas (Ogbomoso South, Ogbomoso North, Ogo-Oluwa, Oriire and Surulere) that make up Ogbomoso, Oyo State totalling 654,183 (National Population Commission, 2026). Four hundred (400) was the sample size for the study which was determined with the use of Taro Yamane's formula. The study excludes children below 18 years, while consented adults across the local government areas were included in the study using convenient sampling technique. A structured questionnaire validated by three experts in the field of Health Education was used for data collection via google form strictly restricted to Ogbomoso. The consent of each respondent was sought with the filling of respondent(s) consent form and confidentiality pledged for maximum co-operation. Six trained research assistants were engaged to aid the administration (sharing) of the instrument to different platforms within the Ogbomoso zone. Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistical analysis was used to test the three null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

3. Results

Hypotheses Testing

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between exposure to banditry attacks and depression among residents of banditry-affected communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Table 1: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis Investigating Relationship between exposure to banditry attacks and depression among residents of banditry-affected communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria

Variable	N	Mean	SD	DF	Cal. r-value	Crit. Value	Decision
EBA	400	54.850	4.407	398	0.801	0.098	H0 Rejected
Depression		18.105	1.538				

EBA: Exposure to Banditry Attacks

Table 1 shows that the calculated r-value of 0.801, while the critical value is 0.098 at a 0.05 level of significance with the degree of freedom 398. Since the calculated r-value of 0.801 is greater than the critical value of 0.098, the null hypothesis is rejected. This means that there was a significant relationship between exposure to banditry attacks and depression among residents of banditry-affected communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Ngeria

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant relationship between exposure to banditry attacks and anxiety among residentsof banditry-affected communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis Investigating Relationship between exposure to banditry attacks and anxiety among residents of banditry-affected communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria

Variable	N	Mean	SD	DF	Cal. r-value	Crit. Value	Decision
EBA	400	54.850	4.407	398	0.890	0.098	H0 Rejected
Anxiety		18.563	1.649				

EBA: Exposure to Banditry Attacks

Table 2 shows that the calculated r-value is 0.890 while the critical value is 0.098 at a 0.05 alpha level with the degree of freedom of 398. Since the calculated r-value of 0.890 is greater than the critical value of 0.098, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that, there was a significant relationship between exposure to banditry attacks and anxiety among residents of banditry-affected communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant relationship between exposure to banditry attacks and PTSD among residents of banditry-affected communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria.

Table 3: Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis Investigating Relationship between exposure to banditry attacks and PTSD among residents of banditry-affected communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria

Variable	N	Mean	SD	DF	Cal. r-value	Crit. Value	Decision
EBA		54.850	4.407	398	0.884	0.098	H0 Rejected
PTSD	400	18.183	1.934				

EBA: Exposure to Banditry Attacks; PTSD: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder

Table 4 shows that the calculated r-value is 0.884 while the critical value is 0.098 at a 0.05 alpha level with the degree of freedom of 398. Since the calculated r-value of 0.884 is greater than the critical value of 0.098, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there was a significant relationship between exposure to banditry attacks and PTSD among residents of banditry-affected communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria.

4. Discussion of Findings

The testing of hypothesis one shows that there was a significant relationship between exposure to banditry attacks and depression among residents of banditry-affected communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria. The finding suggests that residents of banditry-affected communities and victims/survivors of banditry may experience difficulty in falling asleep, withdrawal from social activities, reduced appetite, persistent low mood and suicidal thought. The finding corroborates the assertion of Oduwole (2020) who affirmed that victims of banditry in Benue State reported a loss of hope, diminished self-worth and social withdrawal. The finding is also in alignment with Hillary, Umeh and Kuchaks (2025) who emphasized that there are always heightened levels of hopelessness and emotional isolation among people of banditry-affected communities.

The result obtained from hypothesis two testing shows that there was a significant relationship between exposure to banditry attacks and anxiety among residents of banditry-affected communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria. The finding implies that intense fear, excessive worries, restlessness, panic attack, hopelessness about the future, farming and children's safety are common among residents of banditry-affected communities. The finding further corroborates the submission of Musa and Ahmed (2021) who reported that residents of banditry-attack communities experience heightened psychological distress, exacerbated by poor living conditions in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps and suffer a lack of access to mental services. The finding equally confirmed the report of Olayemi (2017) who established that banditry has created an environment of insecurity and intense fear.

The testing of hypothesis three shows that there was a significant relationship between exposure to banditry attacks and PTSD among residents of banditry-affected communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria. The finding suggests that residents of banditry-affected communities could be over-vigilant, experiencing nightmares and flashback of the attack. The finding further confirmed UNICEF (2019) that members of banditry-affected communities suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder. The finding is also in agreement with Hillary, Umeh and Kuchaks (2025) who asserted that victims of bandit attack experience flashbacks, fear, anxiety, insomnia and depression. Muhammad, Abdulmalik and Jobe (2023) equally confirmed that banditry is linked to PTSD symptoms among the victims.

5. Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the below conclusion was drawn:

- There was a significant relationship between exposure to banditry attacks and depression, anxiety and PTSD among residents of banditry-affected communities in Ogbomoso, Oyo State, Nigeria.

6. Recommendations

In view of the findings of this study, it was recommended that government at all levels and non-governmental organizations are advised to provide accessible mental health supports and care in banditry-affected communities so as to improve people's psychological health status. Also, mental health counselling and effective stress management should be integrated into primary health care services and community outreach activities to help victims of banditry cope with the traumatic situation already experienced.

References

Adigun, J. O. (2025). Perceived health comorbidity among students with hearing impairment in Federal University of Lafia, *Lafia Journal of Special Needs Education 3*(1), 82-92

Abdulllahi, A. (2019). Rural banditry, regional security and integration in West Africa. *Journal of Social and Political Sciences, 2*(3), 644-654

ACAPS (2020). *Nigeria: Banditry and displacement in the Northwest*. Retrieved June 18, 2026, from www.acaps.org

Akinyetun, T. S. (2021). *Banditry in Nigeria: Insights from situational action and situational crime prevention theories.* Adeniran Ogunsanya College of Education, Lagos State, Nigeria. Retrieved June 25, 2026, from www.accord.org

Akpa-Achimugu, J. & Ibeh. C. (2023). *Implications of armed banditry for education in Nigeria's Northwest regio*n. GCSP Alumni Note

Anhange, S.T. & Korzerzer, S. G. (2026). Exposure to violence, trauma resilience and mental disorders among people with associated banditry activities in Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Management Research, 12*(4), 560-569

Brennrer, C. (2021). *Combating banditry in Northwest Nigeria*. American security project

Daramola, S. O. (2019). *Most mental health issues begin at age 15-clinical psychologist*. Retrieved June 11, 2026, from www.focusreporters.com

Hillary, E. Z., Umeh, C. B. & Kuchaks, D. P. (2025). Impacts of banditry on the psychological well-being of Christian populations in Kaduna State, Nigeria. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Management Research, 11*(8), 577-585

Ifeanyi, O. (2024). *What to know about anxiety?* Retrieved September 19, 2024, from medicalnewstoday.com

Kleffmann, J., Ramachandran, S., Cohen, N., O.Neil, S., Bukar, M., Batault, F. & Broeckhoven, K. V. (2024). *Banditry violence in Nigeria's Northwest: Insights from affected communities*, UNIDIR. Retrieved June 11, 2026, from www.unidir.org

Muhammad, N. A., Abdulmalik, I. & Jobe, A. A. (2023). Psychological effects of kidnapping and banditry on teaching and learning in tertiary institutions in Northwest Region, Nigeria. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Education, 16*(1), 1-13

Musa, A. & Ahmed, T. S. (2021). Banditry and its implications for internally displaced persons in Giwa and Birnin Gwari Local Government Areas of Kaduna State. *Journal of Conflict and Peace Studies in Africa, 5*(2), 98-112

National Population Commission (2006). *Popultion by State*. Retrieved June 15, 2026, from www.npc.gov.ng

Odinkalu, C. A. (2018). *Banditry in Nigeria: A brief history of a long-war*. Retrieved June 11, 2026, from www.punch.com

Ojo, J. S. (2020). Governing ungoverned spaces in the foliage of conspiracy. Towards (Re) ordering terrosim, from Boko Haram Insurgency, Fulani militancy to banditry in Northern Nigeria. *African Security, 13*(1), 77-110

Okwelum, C. O. (2022). The Buhari state and the origin of banditry in Nigeria. *International Journal of Law and Public Administration, 5*(2), 21-31

Olayemi, A. S. (2017). Insecurity and trauma in rural Nigeria: A study of the North-west region. *Journal of African Peace and Development, 4*(4), 55-70

Oyedeji, I. (2026). *Deeply traumatizing-family of slain Ogbomoso teacher seeks end to circulation of murder footage.* Retrieved June 9, 2026, from www.thecable.org

Salihu, H. A. & Ajayi, B. T. (2022). Psychological effects of terrorism and violent crime in Nigeria: The case of banditry victims in Zamfara and Kaduna States. *Nigerian Journal of Psychology, 10*(3), 75-91

Shalangwa, M. W. (2013). The nature and consequences of armed banditry in border communities of Adamawa State, Nigeria. M.Sc. Thesis submitted to the School of Post-Graduate Studies, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria, Nigeria

The New Humanitarian (2026). *Women pay the price of surging banditry in Northwest Nigeria*. Retrieved June 17, 2026, from www.thehumanitarian.org

Uchi, J. & Iwuamadi, C. (2018). Nigeria: Rural banditry and community resilience in the Nimbo community. *Conflict Studies Quarterly, 24*, 71-81

UNICEF (2019). *Humanitarian action global annual results report 2019-humanitarian.* Retrieved June 18, 2026, from www.unicef.org

WHO (2019). *World assessment instrument for mental health system*. WHO Press. World Health Organization, 20 Avenue Appia, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland

Wikstrom, P. (2019). Explaining crime and criminal careers: The DEA Model of situational action theory. *Journal of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology, 6,* 188-203

Yakubu, D., Odeniyi, S., Kolawole, D. T., Odogun, G., Otuchikere, C. Adedipe, A. & Oshokha, G. (2026). *School closures spread after fresh bandit attack.* Retrieved June 6, 2026, from www.punch.com

Yalwa, T., Balarabe, F., Gomma, H. L. M., Musa, H. A., Sheikh, L. T., Anyebe, E. E. & Lawali, Y. (2023). Exploring the experiences of survivors of rural banditry in accessing mental health services in Zamfara with Western Nigeria: A qualitative study. *International Journal of Advanced Research in Multidisciplinary Studies, 3*(2), 137-145

Yamane, T. (1967). *Sample size calculation.* Retrieved June 10, 2026, from www.scribd.com