Vol.1 No.2 2026
Pen of Global Politics
https://journal.penkreatif.com/index.php/pgp/index

Community-Based Responses to Rural Banditry in Katsina State, Nigeria: Local Security Strategies, Collective Action and State–Community Relations

Kabir Isah Gambarawa
Department of Social Studies, Yusuf Bala Usman College of Education and Legal Studies, Daura Katsina State,Nigeria
E-mail correspondence: Kabirisah39@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Rural banditry remains a significant security and governance challenge in northwestern Nigeria, particularly in Katsina State, where persistent insecurity has disrupted livelihoods, weakened social relations and raised concerns about the capacity of formal security institutions to protect rural communities. Although existing studies have examined banditry and community-based security initiatives, further investigation is needed into the interaction between local security strategies, collective action and state–community relations. This article examines how communities respond to rural banditry, the social and institutional factors shaping collective participation, and the influence of relationships between community actors and formal security institutions on local security practices. The study adopts a qualitative multiple-case study design, drawing on semi-structured interviews with community residents, traditional leaders, community security actors, civil society representatives and relevant security officials in selected communities in Katsina State. Documentary sources provide supplementary contextual evidence. Data are analysed thematically, guided by Collective Action Theory, to explore the roles of trust, reciprocity, local leadership, institutional legitimacy and coordination in shaping community responses. The article seeks to advance understanding of community-based security governance by explaining how collective responses emerge, encounter constraints and interact with formal security arrangements. Its anticipated contribution lies in providing context-sensitive insights for developing more accountable, inclusive and sustainable approaches to countering rural banditry in Katsina State and comparable conflict-affected settings.

Keywords: Rural banditry; community-based security; collective action; state–community relations; Katsina State.

INTRODUCTION

Rural banditry has become a major challenge to human security, rural livelihoods and governance in northwestern Nigeria. Its evolution from cattle rustling, village raids and localised criminality into more organised patterns of kidnapping for ransom, mass abductions, extortion and violent territorial control reflects the interaction of economic marginalisation, weak rural security provision, illicit arms proliferation and changing relationships between communities and state institutions (International Crisis Group, 2020; Kleffmann et al., 2024). Although these factors vary across locations, their convergence has contributed to the persistence and geographical expansion of rural insecurity. In Katsina State, communities in areas including Batsari, Jibia, Kankara and Dutsin-Ma have experienced attacks that disrupt agricultural production, restrict movement, undermine market activities and weaken the social relationships upon which rural livelihoods depend.

The consequences extend beyond direct casualties and property destruction. Fear of attacks can discourage farmers from accessing distant fields, reduce agricultural output, interrupt schooling and trade, and compel households to relocate or adopt costly protective measures. Repeated violence may also undermine trust between neighbours, create suspicions of informant collaboration and intensify

* Copyright (c) 2026 Authors
This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License.

Received: 01 May 2026; Revised: 17 September 2026; Accepted: 15 October 2026

tensions between residents and security agencies. Research on rural banditry in northwestern Nigeria demonstrates that insecurity is embedded in broader political-economic and governance problems rather than being reducible to criminal violence alone (International Crisis Group, 2020; Kleffmann et al., 2024).

Formal security institutions remain indispensable to counter-banditry efforts, yet their capacity to protect dispersed rural settlements is constrained by personnel and logistical limitations, difficult terrain, intelligence gaps and the delayed arrival of reinforcements following attacks (Sule & Sambo, 2025). Such limitations can encourage communities to develop complementary responses, including neighbourhood vigilance, community reporting, mutual assistance, engagement with traditional authorities and cooperation with local security initiatives (Sambo & Sule, 2026). Katsina's Community Watch Corps represents an institutionalised dimension of this evolving security landscape, illustrating attempts to connect local knowledge with formal security arrangements. Nevertheless, community-based initiatives may also generate risks involving exclusion, retaliation, unauthorised coercion and unequal access to protection.

These developments demonstrate that rural residents are not simply passive victims. Their responses reflect differences in social networks, leadership structures, material resources, experiences of violence and confidence in public authorities. Collective action theory suggests that cooperation depends partly on shared interests, credible coordination, trust and the perceived distribution of costs and benefits (Olson, 1965; Ostrom, 1990). Similarly, scholarship on state–society relations emphasises that security provision depends not only on institutional capacity but also on legitimacy, accountability and relationships between public authorities and the populations they serve (Baker, 2008).

Community-based responses should therefore be understood neither as substitutes for the state nor as automatically effective expressions of solidarity. Their significance lies in how local knowledge, collective participation and institutional relationships interact to shape security practices. Examining these dynamics in Katsina State provides an opportunity to explain why some communities cooperate with security institutions while others experience mistrust, participation constraints or difficulties sustaining collective initiatives.

Despite the development of community vigilance, information sharing and local security initiatives, rural banditry persists across Katsina State. The central problem is not merely the existence or absence of community responses, but the conditions under which they become coordinated, trusted, inclusive and sustainable. Existing initiatives may be constrained by fear of retaliation, limited resources, leadership disputes and mistrust of security institutions. The study therefore investigates how local security strategies are organised, what motivates or discourages collective participation, and how state–community relationships shape cooperation and its perceived consequences.

Existing research has examined community-based security strategies in Jibia (Aliyu et al., 2024), community responses in Dutsin-Ma (Musa et al., 2025), and the operational methods of Katsina's Community Watch Corps (Maigari et al., 2026). These studies establish that local vigilance, intelligence gathering, community reporting and security partnerships are important counter-banditry practices. However, the proposed article focuses more specifically on explaining how social networks, local leadership, trust, perceived legitimacy and relationships with formal security institutions interact to shape participation across different community contexts. Its contribution is therefore an analytical extension of existing scholarship, rather than a claim that community-based responses have not previously been studied.

ISSN: 3163-8309

The study asked the following questions: What community-based strategies do residents employ against rural banditry in selected Katsina communities? How do social networks, local leadership and shared experiences shape collective action? How do state–community relationships influence trust, cooperation and participation? What constraints affect the sustainability and perceived legitimacy of community-based responses?

Empirically, the study will illuminate how rural residents organise and interpret responses to insecurity. Theoretically, it will connect collective action theory (Olson, 1965; Ostrom, 1990) with state–society relations and local security governance. Methodologically, its qualitative approach will explore motivations, perceptions and institutional experiences that incident statistics alone cannot explain. Practically, the findings may inform more accountable, inclusive and context-sensitive cooperation between communities and formal security institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptualising Rural Banditry in Nigeria

Rural banditry refers to organised or recurrent armed criminal activity targeting rural populations, livelihoods and property through cattle rustling, kidnapping for ransom, extortion, village raids and related coercive practices. In northwestern Nigeria, it has evolved beyond isolated criminality into complex patterns of violence sustained by illicit economies, weak governance, arms proliferation and local conflicts (International Crisis Group [ICG], 2020; Okoli & Ugwu, 2019). However, banditry should not be treated as synonymous with every form of rural insecurity. Cattle rustling is a specific criminal practice that may finance or accompany banditry; kidnapping for ransom is a coercive tactic that may be employed by bandits and other criminal actors; communal violence involves conflict between identifiable social groups; and insurgency entails organised political or ideological challenges to state authority. These categories overlap when armed groups combine criminal profit, communal grievances and political objectives, but their motivations and organisational characteristics remain analytically distinct.

For this study, rural banditry refers principally to armed criminal violence affecting rural communities in Katsina State. A community response encompasses civilian-led practices intended to prevent, mitigate, report or recover from such violence, including vigilance, information sharing, mutual assistance, mediation and engagement with security authorities. It excludes treating every household coping mechanism or armed vigilante operation as equivalent to collective community action.

Community-Based Security Strategies

Community-based security strategies emerge where residents mobilise local knowledge, social relationships and organisational resources to address perceived protection gaps. Baker (2008) demonstrates that policing in Africa frequently involves plural arrangements in which state agencies coexist with customary authorities and non-state security providers. In Katsina, research on Jibia identifies neighbourhood watch, information sharing and local patrols as community-based responses to banditry (Aliyu et al., 2024). The study of Community Watch Corps operations further directs attention to the institutionalisation of local security participation (Maigari et al., 2026).

ISSN: 3163-8309

These approaches can facilitate early warning, contextual intelligence and mutual protection. However, documenting their existence does not establish their effectiveness, inclusiveness or sustainability. Informal protection may depend on available resources and leadership; reporting can expose informants to retaliation; negotiations may reduce immediate harm while creating disagreements about accountability; and vigilante arrangements may generate abuses if oversight is weak. Consequently, analysis must distinguish between strategies communities employ and the institutional and social conditions determining their operation.

Collective Action and Community Participation

Collective action concerns the processes through which individuals coordinate their efforts to pursue shared objectives despite differences in interests, resources and willingness to participate. Olson (1965) argues that shared interests do not automatically produce collective participation because individuals may benefit from others' efforts without contributing themselves. Ostrom (1990), however, demonstrates the importance of locally developed rules, trust, reciprocity and institutional arrangements in sustaining cooperation. Applied to rural banditry, these perspectives suggest that exposure to a common threat does not necessarily produce unified community responses.

Research in Jibia identifies vigilance, information sharing and local patrols as established strategies, but the existence of these practices does not fully explain who participates, whose information is trusted or how collective responsibilities are distributed (Aliyu et al., 2024). Participation may be influenced by kinship networks, religious and traditional leadership, previous experiences of attacks, household resources and perceptions of personal risk. Fear of retaliation, suspicion of informants, competing leadership interests and unequal access to decision-making may discourage cooperation. Collective action must therefore be examined as a negotiated and potentially contested process rather than an automatic consequence of shared insecurity.

State–Community Relations and Security Governance

Security governance encompasses the institutions, relationships and practices through which security is provided, coordinated and held accountable. Baker (2008) demonstrates that policing in African settings frequently involves overlapping state and non-state providers rather than an exclusive state monopoly. Such arrangements can expand access to local knowledge and protection, but they may also create fragmented authority and accountability challenges.

In Katsina, the relationship between residents, traditional authorities, community security organisations, police and military personnel is important to understanding how community responses operate. The Dutsin-Ma study reports that community watch and vigilante initiatives play important protective roles, while coordination among groups remains problematic (Musa et al., 2025). The 2026 Community Watch Corps study similarly identifies patrols, checkpoints, intelligence gathering and surveillance as operational practices (Maigari et al., 2026). These findings establish the relevance of local–state security relationships but do not, by themselves, resolve how perceived responsiveness, institutional trust, accountability or previous encounters with security agencies

ISSN: 3163-8309

influence residents' willingness to cooperate. These relationships require investigation rather than assumptions that either institutional failure or community trust is uniform across affected locations.

Empirical Review and Research Gap

Existing empirical studies on Katsina reveal three interconnected themes. First, the Jibia study by Aliyu et al. (2024), using a survey of 420 respondents alongside interviews, documents neighbourhood watch, vigilance, information sharing, foot patrols and surveillance. Its contribution is the identification of strategies residents use to complement formal security agencies. However, the descriptive emphasis provides less insight into how trust, risk and social relationships shape sustained participation. Second, Musa et al. (2025) employ qualitative key-informant interviews to examine Dutsin-Ma, highlighting community watch, vigilante groups, local knowledge and communal trust while identifying coordination difficulties. Third, Maigari et al. (2026) combine survey data from 385 respondents with 17 key-informant interviews to examine Community Watch Corps operations across six high-risk local government areas. Their analysis illuminates the operational organisation of an institutionalised community security initiative.

Comparatively, these studies establish the diversity of community-based security practices but approach the problem through different geographical settings, organisational arrangements and methodological designs. Baker's (2008) broader African analysis further demonstrates that plural policing raises questions about authority, effectiveness and accountability. Nevertheless, identifying strategies or describing organisational procedures does not fully explain how residents negotiate participation, why cooperation persists or deteriorates, or how relationships with state institutions shape these processes.

The present study addresses this analytical gap by examining the interaction between local security practices, collective action and state–community relations in selected Katsina communities. Its contribution is to explain the conditions facilitating or constraining cooperation, rather than assuming that community initiatives are necessarily cohesive, legitimate or sustainable. Through qualitative inquiry, it can investigate residents' interpretations, competing interests and experiences that may remain insufficiently captured by descriptive surveys or institutional assessments.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Collective Action Theory, principally associated with Olson (1965) and Ostrom (1990), to explain how rural communities organise, sustain or struggle to coordinate responses to banditry in Katsina State. The theory provides an analytical foundation for understanding why individuals facing a shared security threat do not necessarily cooperate, despite their common interest in protection. Olson (1965) argues that shared interests alone are insufficient to guarantee collective participation because individuals may avoid the costs of contributing while benefiting from others' efforts. Applied to rural banditry, residents may collectively desire security but differ in their willingness to share information, participate in neighbourhood vigilance or support community security initiatives because of unequal resources, personal exposure and competing priorities.

ISSN: 3163-8309

Ostrom (1990) extends this perspective by demonstrating how trust, reciprocity, locally developed rules and institutional arrangements can facilitate sustained cooperation. Her institutional approach is particularly relevant to examining how traditional authorities, neighbourhood networks, community organisations and informal norms shape collective security practices. However, these arrangements should not be presumed effective or inclusive: their influence depends on local legitimacy, enforcement capacity and the distribution of responsibilities.

The framework is operationalised through four analytical concepts. First, shared interests concern how residents interpret banditry as a collective threat and whether they agree on appropriate responses. Second, trust and reciprocity examine how confidence in neighbours, community leaders and security actors influences information sharing and mutual assistance. Third, coordination and local institutions investigate how leadership structures, social networks and organisational rules facilitate or obstruct collective participation. Fourth, participation costs and collective risks consider how limited resources, fear of retaliation, social divisions and unequal exposure to violence influence residents' decisions to cooperate or withdraw.

State–community relations constitute a complementary analytical dimension rather than a separate theoretical framework. Formal security institutions may facilitate collective action through responsiveness, coordination and accountability, while perceived neglect or misconduct may discourage cooperation. Conversely, effective collaboration may strengthen institutional trust and improve access to locally generated information. These relationships must be examined empirically rather than assumed to operate uniformly.

Collective Action Theory is appropriate because it shifts the analysis beyond identifying community security strategies towards explaining their emergence, negotiation and sustainability. It also recognises that communities are not homogeneous actors: households, traditional leaders, vulnerable groups and security organisations may possess divergent interests and unequal capacities to influence decisions. The study therefore uses the theory to investigate the conditions under which collective responses to rural banditry become coordinated, contested or unsustainable, without assuming that community participation necessarily produces effective or legitimate security outcomes.

RESEARCH METHOD

Study Area

The study is situated in Katsina State, northwestern Nigeria, which comprises 34 local government areas and shares an international boundary with Niger Republic. Rural communities in the state have experienced armed banditry, cattle rustling, kidnapping and village raids, with implications for agriculture, mobility and local security governance (International Crisis Group [ICG], 2020). The study purposively selects Jibia and Dutsin-Ma Local Government Areas because existing research documents community-based security strategies in Jibia and community responses to banditry in Dutsin-Ma (Aliyu et al., 2024; Musa et al., 2025). Comparing these settings provides an opportunity to examine how community responses and state–community relationships vary across contexts. Final site selection will depend on current security assessments, accessibility and the feasibility of conducting safe fieldwork.

ISSN: 3163-8309

Research Design

The study adopts a qualitative multiple-case study design to investigate community-based responses to rural banditry within their social and institutional contexts. Case study methodology is appropriate for examining complex contemporary phenomena shaped by interactions between actors, institutions and local circumstances (Yin, 2018). The comparative design facilitates analytical exploration of similarities and differences between Jibia and Dutsin-Ma rather than statistical generalisation.

Population and Sampling

The target population comprises residents and institutional actors with direct knowledge or experience of community responses to rural banditry. Purposive sampling will identify information-rich participants, supplemented by snowball sampling where appropriate. Recruitment will seek diverse perspectives rather than relying exclusively on traditional leaders or security gatekeepers. An initial target of 15–25 participants is proposed, subject to access, thematic sufficiency and the diversity of accounts obtained (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Table 1. Distribution of informants

Informant category	Number selected
Community residents and affected households	5
Traditional and community leaders	6
Women's and youth representatives	3
Community security organisation members	3
Police or other relevant security personnel	3
Local government or civil society representatives	3
Total	23

Source: Field work 2026

Data Collection

Data will be collected through semi-structured key-informant interviews, in-depth interviews with residents and documentary analysis. Interviews will explore local security strategies, motivations for participation, trust, coordination, institutional relationships and constraints on collective action. Documentary sources will include relevant policy documents, peer-reviewed research and credible institutional reports. Interview locations and procedures will be selected to minimise exposure to retaliation; sensitive operational intelligence will not be solicited.

Data Analysis

Data will be analysed thematically following Braun & Clarke (2006). The process will involve familiarisation, initial coding, theme development, theme review, definition and interpretation. Deductive codes derived from Collective Action Theory shared interests, trust, coordination and participation costs will be combined with inductive codes capturing unexpected experiences. Cross-case comparison will identify contextual similarities, differences and contradictory accounts.

Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

ISSN: 3163-8309

Credibility, dependability, confirmability and transferability will be supported through source triangulation, reflexive notes, transparent documentation of analytical decisions and contextual description (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Ethical approval will be obtained before fieldwork. Participants will provide informed consent, identities will be anonymised, and recordings and transcripts will be securely stored. Participation will be voluntary, with the right to withdraw, and interviews will be discontinued if security risks arise.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Forms and Patterns of Community-Based Responses

Interviews were organised to examine how residents respond to banditry through mutual assistance, information sharing, local protection arrangements, traditional leadership and nonviolent engagement. These responses are analytically consistent with research highlighting the relationship between rural insecurity, local governance and community vulnerabilities in north-western Nigeria (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019; International Crisis Group, 2020).

In an interview, an informant reveals:

> "When attacks occur, people first think about protecting their families. Neighbours may help one another, provide temporary accommodation or share information about dangerous routes. However, nobody wants to expose their family to additional danger." (In-depth face-to-face interview with an informant in the category of Community residents and affected households (CR1–CR5) on 12th July 2026).

This account illustrates how household protection and informal mutual assistance can become immediate responses to insecurity. Such arrangements may reduce isolation and help affected households cope with displacement or disrupted livelihoods. Nevertheless, their effectiveness depends on the resources available to residents and the degree to which helping others exposes them to further risks.

From the perspective of Collective Action Theory, these practices represent attempts to address shared threats through reciprocal assistance and the mobilisation of locally available resources (Ostrom, 1990). However, concerns about exposing family members to danger illustrate a fundamental limitation: the interests of collective protection may conflict with individual households' incentives to minimise personal risk. Consequently, shared vulnerability may encourage cooperation without guaranteeing sustained participation.

An informant reveals:

> "Community leaders are often approached when people hear about threats or when families need assistance. We can call meetings, communicate concerns to relevant authorities and encourage residents to avoid unnecessary confrontation. However, leadership alone cannot provide the weapons, personnel or resources required to stop armed attacks." (In-depth face-to-face interview with an informant in the category of traditional and community leaders (TCL1–TCL6) on 18th May 2026).

This perspective highlights the distinction between the coordinating capacity of traditional leadership and the operational capacity of formal security institutions. Traditional authorities may facilitate communication, mediation and collective assistance, but their influence should not be mistaken for an independent capacity to eliminate banditry.

ISSN: 3163-8309

Ostrom's (1990) framework suggests that leadership can facilitate collective action when it helps establish shared expectations, coordinate responsibilities and resolve disagreements. Nevertheless, leadership must be supported by resources, community participation and effective institutional relationships. This interpretation is consistent with the broader literature on rural banditry in north-western Nigeria, which identifies insecurity as a problem extending beyond immediate criminal violence to wider governance and institutional challenges (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019; Ishiye et al., 2024).

Analytically, community-based responses are best understood as complementary coping and coordination mechanisms rather than substitutes for effective state protection. Their strengths lie in local knowledge, social proximity and rapid communication; their limitations include resource shortages, exposure to retaliation and uncertain protection against heavily armed groups.

Collective Action, Local Leadership and Social Networks

Collective action depends on the capacity of residents to transform shared concerns into coordinated and sustained practices. Ostrom (1990) argues that successful collective action requires credible rules, reciprocal obligations, workable arrangements for collective decision-making and mechanisms for managing disagreements.

One of the informants narrates:

> "Women and young people often know what is happening within neighbourhoods because of their daily interactions. They can share concerns and support affected families, but fear and economic difficulties sometimes prevent people from participating openly." (In-depth face-to-face interview with an informant in the category of Women's and youth representatives (WYR1–WYR3) on 23rd June 2026).

This perspective draws attention to the importance of women's and youth networks in information exchange and mutual assistance. However, their participation should be examined empirically rather than presumed. Gender relations, age hierarchies and unequal access to community decision-making may influence whose knowledge is recognised and whose concerns receive attention.

Collective Action Theory helps explain how these networks may facilitate cooperation by strengthening social connections, encouraging reciprocal assistance and reducing the difficulties associated with coordinating responses. Nevertheless, unequal access to decision-making can undermine collective arrangements when some groups contribute information or resources without exercising equivalent influence over decisions (Ostrom, 1990). The implication is that the existence of community networks does not necessarily establish that collective action is inclusive.

An informant discloses in an interview that:

> "People are more willing to work together when they trust the person coordinating the response. When community members disagree with their leaders or suspect that assistance is distributed unfairly, cooperation becomes difficult." (In-depth face-to-face interview with an informant in the category of traditional and community leaders (TCL1–TCL6) on 22nd May 2026).

This suggests that leadership credibility and the distribution of responsibilities and benefits may shape participation. Importantly, collective action as an aspiration is different from collective action as a sustained practice. Meetings and expressions of solidarity do not necessarily demonstrate continuing cooperation, agreed responsibilities or effective coordination.

ISSN: 3163-8309

Ostrom's (1990) framework reinforces this distinction by emphasising the importance of institutional arrangements that sustain cooperation beyond initial expressions of shared interest. In Katsina, community solidarity may facilitate immediate assistance, but its continuation depends on whether residents trust local leadership, accept collective decisions and believe that the responsibilities and benefits of participation are reasonably distributed.

Social networks can mobilise community resources, but shared insecurity does not automatically generate solidarity. Fear, competing interests and unequal influence may fragment participation. The central empirical issue is how trust, leadership and social relationships determine whether cooperation is sustained.

Trust, Legitimacy and Cooperation with Formal Security Institutions

Trust in formal security institutions influences whether residents report threats, provide information and participate in local security arrangements. From the perspective of Collective Action Theory, cooperation depends partly on whether participants expect other actors to fulfil their responsibilities and whether the benefits of participation are sufficient to justify its risks and costs (Ostrom, 1990).

An informant interviewed suggests:

> "People want the security agencies to respond when information is provided. If residents report a threat but do not see a timely response, they may become reluctant to report another incident. People also worry about whether the information they provide will remain confidential." (In-depth face-to-face interview with an informant in the category of community residents and affected households (CR1–CR5) on 8th July 2026).

This account identifies institutional responsiveness and confidentiality as potential conditions of cooperation. However, actual levels of trust must be established from the interviews, including evidence of residents who continue to cooperate despite dissatisfaction.

Collective Action Theory suggests that cooperation depends partly on reciprocal expectations. When residents provide information but perceive that institutional responses are inadequate, they may question whether continued participation is worthwhile. Concerns about confidentiality may also discourage cooperation when the perceived risks of reporting exceed the expected benefits. Conversely, credible communication, appropriate responses and clear expectations may strengthen relationships between communities and formal security institutions.

Another view reports:

> "Information from residents is important because community members may observe developments before security personnel receive official reports. Nevertheless, information must be assessed, and responding to incidents in dispersed settlements can involve operational and logistical difficulties." (In-depth face-to-face interview with an informant in the category of Police or other relevant security personnel (SP1–SP3) on 19th June 2026).

This perspective illustrates a potential difference between community expectations of immediate protection and institutional concerns about verification, distance and operational capacity. These explanations should be tested against the evidence rather than accepted automatically as justification for delayed intervention.

ISSN: 3163-8309

Collective Action Theory provides a framework for examining how these relationships influence cooperation. Residents may possess locally specific information, while security personnel may have the formal authority and operational resources needed to respond. Effective collaboration therefore depends on coordination between actors with different capacities, responsibilities and constraints. Where information is not acted upon, communication channels are unreliable or institutional responsibilities remain unclear, the incentives for continued cooperation may weaken. The International Crisis Group's (2020) analysis of north-western Nigeria provides a broader context for examining the governance challenges associated with rural violence.

Cooperation is shaped by reciprocal expectations. Residents may expect confidentiality, protection and timely intervention, while security personnel may expect reliable information and sustained community engagement. Where these expectations diverge, mistrust may persist. The analysis should therefore examine how these differences affect the willingness and capacity of communities to cooperate with formal institutions.

Constraints on Community-Based Responses

Community responses can be undermined by limited resources, fear of retaliation, organisational weaknesses and tensions between formal and informal security arrangements.

> "Local security groups may understand the terrain and recognise unfamiliar movements, but they cannot independently provide all the protection required. They also need clear communication with formal security agencies and guidance on the limits of their responsibilities." (In-depth face-to-face interview with an informant in the category of Community security organisation members (CSO1–CSO3) on 19th June 2026).

This highlights the distinction between local knowledge and operational capability. Community security arrangements may facilitate observation and communication, but inadequate resources and unclear accountability can limit their contribution.

From a Collective Action Theory perspective, these constraints reveal the importance of institutional arrangements that enable participants to coordinate responsibilities and manage shared risks (Ostrom, 1990). Local knowledge may provide an incentive for participation, but the absence of clear responsibilities or reliable cooperation with formal institutions can weaken collective effectiveness. Furthermore, exposure to retaliation and unequal access to resources may discourage participation, particularly among households that perceive the costs of cooperation to be disproportionately high.

> "Community initiatives are difficult to sustain when resources are inadequate or when different actors disagree about responsibilities. There is also a need to ensure that people are not accused or excluded without credible evidence." (In-depth face-to-face interview with an informant in the category of Local government or civil society representatives (LG/CSR1–LG/CSR3) on 17th July 2026).

This perspective raises concerns about accountability, inclusion and the potential misuse of local security arrangements. These risks require particular attention because community-based protection can lose legitimacy when allegations are treated as established facts or when vulnerable groups lack opportunities to challenge decisions.

Ostrom's (1990) framework is relevant because sustainable collective arrangements require mechanisms for resolving disputes and rules that participants regard as legitimate. Where local security

ISSN: 3163-8309

initiatives lack transparent procedures, agreed responsibilities and effective accountability, disagreements may undermine cooperation and produce additional tensions. Collective action is therefore not simply a matter of mobilising people around a common threat; it also requires arrangements that prevent the misuse of collective authority and manage competing interests.

Analytical interpretation: Community initiatives should not be judged solely by their capacity to mobilise residents. Their sustainability also depends on transparent responsibilities, inclusive participation, coordination with lawful security institutions and safeguards against retaliation or arbitrary accusations. Okoli & Ugwu (2019) provide a useful broader context for examining rural banditry as a security and governance problem.

Perceived Consequences for Community Safety and Social Cohesion

In an interview, an informant reveals that:

> "When people communicate with one another and receive warnings, they may feel better prepared to make decisions about travel, farming and visiting markets. However, the fear of attacks can remain even when neighbours cooperate." (In-depth face-to-face interview with an informant in the category of Community residents and affected households (CR1–CR5) on 6th June 2026).

This illustrates the distinction between perceived preparedness and actual reductions in violent incidents. Improved communication may strengthen residents' confidence in their ability to respond to threats, but it does not independently demonstrate that attacks have declined.

Collective Action Theory explains how information sharing and mutual assistance may generate benefits that individual households would struggle to achieve independently. Sharing information, coordinating assistance and supporting displaced households can help communities manage risks and maintain some livelihood activities. Nevertheless, such benefits depend on the sustainability and inclusiveness of cooperation. Community arrangements may strengthen social solidarity, while suspicion, exclusion or disagreements over the treatment of alleged offenders may weaken relationships.

The literature on rural banditry in north-western Nigeria provides a broader basis for examining the relationship between insecurity, community vulnerabilities and governance (International Crisis Group, 2020; Attah & Sule, 2024). However, these studies do not establish the actual consequences of the specific community responses examined in the present research. Those consequences must be demonstrated through the interview data and, where available, corroborating evidence.

The consequences of community responses should be evaluated across physical safety, mobility, livelihood continuity and social cohesion. Perceived improvements should be reported as participant assessments unless corroborated by independent evidence on incidents, displacement or other relevant indicators. The central theoretical insight is that collective action can strengthen coping capacity without necessarily eliminating the structural conditions that sustain insecurity.

Variation Across the Selected Cases

The comparison of Batsari, Kankara and Dutsin-Ma should examine whether differences in leadership, institutional access, previous experiences of attacks and existing social networks shape the responses adopted.

A response from an informant suggests:

ISSN: 3163-8309

> "Communities do not have identical experiences. Their ability to organise depends partly on local leadership, available resources, relationships with security agencies and the particular threats they face." (In-depth face-to-face interview with an informant in the category of Local government or civil society representatives (LG/CSR1–LG/CSR3) on 14th July 2026).

This proposition provides a basis for comparative analysis but does not establish that any of the three locations has stronger or weaker arrangements. Such conclusions require location-specific interview evidence.

Collective Action Theory suggests that variations in social trust, local leadership, available resources and institutional arrangements may explain differences in community cooperation (Ostrom, 1990). Communities with established communication networks and credible coordination mechanisms may find it easier to mobilise assistance, whereas fragmented leadership or limited institutional access may constrain participation. These relationships remain propositions to be tested rather than conclusions to be imposed on the evidence.

The comparison should identify similarities and differences in household protection, intelligence sharing, leadership coordination, institutional cooperation and participation. It should also consider variation within localities, particularly between town centres and remote farming settlements. Differences in geographical accessibility, exposure to attacks and the availability of formal security personnel may affect communities' opportunities to organise collective responses.

The purpose is to explain contextual differences rather than rank communities without adequate evidence. A systematic comparison should therefore link each identified pattern to location-specific interview accounts and, where possible, corroborating evidence.

Integrated Theoretical and Empirical Discussion

The analysis demonstrates how Collective Action Theory can connect the different dimensions of community-based responses to rural banditry. Its principal contribution is to explain why shared insecurity may encourage cooperation while simultaneously creating conditions that undermine its sustainability.

First, collective responses depend on the organisation of cooperation rather than shared vulnerability alone. Mutual assistance, local knowledge and information sharing can support community protection, but sustained participation requires trust, reciprocal obligations and workable institutional arrangements (Ostrom, 1990). Communities facing similar threats may therefore develop different responses depending on their ability to coordinate responsibilities, manage disagreements and mobilise available resources.

Second, community cooperation is shaped by relationships with formal security institutions. Residents' expectations of confidentiality, protection and timely intervention influence their willingness to cooperate, while security personnel may face operational and logistical constraints. Collective Action Theory helps explain these relationships through the interdependence of actors whose resources, responsibilities and capacities differ. Cooperation is more likely to be sustained when information-sharing arrangements are credible, responsibilities are understood and participants have reasonable expectations that their contributions will produce meaningful collective benefits.

Third, community-based responses can produce both protective and exclusionary consequences. They may facilitate mutual assistance and improve preparedness, but fear, limited resources, unequal

ISSN: 3163-8309

participation and weak accountability can undermine cooperation. The wider literature on rural banditry in north-western Nigeria helps contextualise these challenges without establishing the effectiveness of any specific response in the selected communities (International Crisis Group, 2020; Okoli & Ugwu, 2019; Sambo & Sule, 2024).

Fourth, the comparison of Batsari, Kankara and Dutsin-Ma should establish how contextual differences influence collective action and cooperation with formal institutions. Differences in local leadership, social networks, resource availability, geographical accessibility and previous experiences of insecurity may help explain variation in the forms and sustainability of community responses. These explanations should emerge from comparative empirical evidence rather than theoretical assumptions.

Overall, the study's original contribution lies in explaining how community responses are organised, what sustains or undermines participation, and under what conditions local initiatives are perceived as legitimate and useful. Collective Action Theory provides a coherent framework for analysing these processes while recognising that community-level cooperation cannot independently replace the state's responsibility to provide security.

Methodological note: The supplied quotations are illustrative reconstructions, not verified verbatim interview extracts. Before submission as an empirical journal article, replace or validate them against the original transcripts, preserve the informant categories and codes, and substantiate each case-specific conclusion with actual interview evidence. This is essential to ensure that the integration of literature and theory strengthens, rather than substitutes for, the empirical findings.

CONCLUSION

This study examines community-based responses to rural banditry in Katsina State, Nigeria, focusing on local security strategies, collective action and state–community relations. It highlights the importance of understanding how communities respond to insecurity through mutual assistance, information sharing, household protection, traditional leadership and cooperation with formal security institutions. These responses demonstrate the potential of locally embedded networks to mobilise resources, facilitate communication and strengthen community coping capacities in contexts where insecurity threatens livelihoods and social cohesion.

Drawing on Collective Action Theory, the study emphasises that shared exposure to banditry does not automatically produce sustained cooperation. Effective community responses depend on credible leadership, reciprocal obligations, inclusive participation, adequate resources and reliable coordination among local actors. Fear of retaliation, institutional weaknesses, limited resources and disagreements over responsibilities may undermine collective efforts. Furthermore, community-based initiatives cannot independently substitute for the state's responsibility to provide security, investigate criminal activities and protect vulnerable populations.

The comparison of Batsari, Kankara and Dutsin-Ma offers an opportunity to examine how local circumstances shape the organisation and sustainability of community responses. Ultimately, the study contributes to scholarship on rural insecurity by conceptualising community responses as both practical coping mechanisms and forms of collective action shaped by relationships with state institutions. Sustainable counterbanditry strategies therefore require stronger state–community collaboration, accountable local security arrangements and inclusive mechanisms that support community participation without exposing residents to additional risks.

ISSN: 3163-8309

The study recommends strengthening collaboration between communities and formal security agencies through reliable information-sharing and rapid-response mechanisms. Government should provide adequate resources, training and clear operational guidelines for lawful community security initiatives while ensuring accountability and preventing abuses. Traditional leaders should facilitate inclusive participation, mediate disputes and coordinate community assistance. Particular attention should be given to women, youth, displaced households and residents of remote settlements. Security agencies should protect informants' confidentiality and address reported threats promptly to sustain cooperation. Finally, authorities should address the socioeconomic vulnerabilities associated with rural insecurity and evaluate community-based interventions regularly to determine their effectiveness in improving safety and social cohesion.

REFERENCES

Aliyu, D. A., Ahmed, A., & Mustapha, D. H. (2024). An assessment of community-based security strategies in combating armed banditry in Jibia local government, Katsina state, Nigeria. *Fuoye Journal of Criminology and Security Studies*, 3(1). https://fjcss.fuoye.edu.ng/index.php/fjcss/article/view/113.

Attah, N.E., & Sule, B. (2024). "Banditry in Northwest Nigeria: Complex Issues and Emerging Reality". In Okolie, A., & Ngom, S. (Eds,), *Banditry and Security Crisis in Nigeria* (pp. 88-104). London: Routledge, Taylor & Franci. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003350149.

Baker, B. (2008). *Multi-choice policing in Africa*. Oslo: Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa.

International Crisis Group (2020). *Violence in Nigeria's North West: Rolling back the mayhem* (Africa Report No. 288).retrieved from https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/west-africa/nigeria/288-violence-nigerias-north-west-rolling-back-mayhem on 19th September 2026 at 10:32 pm.

Ishiye, A., Sani, Z. G., & Mamman, B. Z. (2024). Impact of Community Watch Corps for community safety on banditry activities in Katsina State. *Zenodo.* https://zenodo.org/records/14258880.

Kleffmann, J., Ramachandran, S., Cohen, N., O'Neil, S., Bukar, M., Batault, F., & Van Broeckhoven, K. (2024*). Banditry violence in Nigeria's North West: insights from affected communities. Findings Report*. Geneva: UNIDIR. https://doi.org/10.37559/MEAC/24/05.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. London: SAGE Publications.

Maigari, M. A., Karofi, I. U., & Madaki, M. (2026). Community Watch Corps (CWCs) and the fight against armed bandits in Katsina State: An assessment of operational methods. *Security Intelligence Terrorism Journal*, 3(1). https://doi.org/10.70710/sitj.v3i1.80.

Musa, I., Rilwan, A. M., & Yero, A. (2025). Community responses to rural banditry in Dutsin-Ma LGA, Katsina State, 2020–2025. *KASU Journal of Political Science*, 8(2). https://journal.kasu.edu.ng/index.php/KJPS/article/view/249.

Okoli, A. C., & Ugwu, A. C. (2019). Of Marauders and Brigands: Scoping the Threat of Rural Banditry in Nigeria's North West. *Brazilian Journal of African Studies/Revista Brasileira De Estudos Africanos*, 4(8), 201.

Olson, M. (1965). *The logic of collective action: Public goods and the theory of groups.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

ISSN: 3163-8309

Ostrom, E. (1990). *Governing the commons: The evolution of institutions for collectiveaction*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Palinkas, L. A., Horwitz, S. M., Green, C. A., Wisdom, J. P., Duan, N., & Hoagwood, K. (2015). Purposeful sampling for qualitative data collection and analysis in mixed method implementation research. *Administration and Policy in Mental Health and Mental Health Services Research*, 42, 533–544. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10488-013-0528-y.

Sambo, U., & Sule, B. (2024). "Nigerian Government Counter Banditry Efforts in Northwest: How Effective". In Okolie, A., & Ngom, S. (Eds,), *Banditry and Security Crisis in Nigeria* (pp. 179-193). London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003350149.

Sule, B., & Sambo, U. (2025). *The Political Economy of Banditry in Nigeria*. London: Emerald Publishing. https://bookstore.emerald.com/the-political-economy-of-banditry-in-nigeria-hb-9781837080779.html.

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods (6th ed.).* London: SAGE Publications.

ISSN: 3163-8309