

The Impact of Banditry-Related Trauma on Secondary School Students' Academic Performance in Kebbi State

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Abstract

This study investigated the impact of banditry-related trauma on the academic performance of secondary school students within the Danko Wasagu Local Government Area of Kebbi State, predicated on the understanding that a secure and peaceful school environment is crucial for educational attainment. Employing a descriptive survey research design, data were gathered from 357 students and 36 principals and teachers across nine sampled secondary schools. Key findings from the study's hypothesis testing revealed a significant negative correlation between students' mental health severity and their academic performance, as well as a significant negative difference in academic performance between students with low versus high levels of trauma/PTSD. These results underscore that students' psychological stability, beyond intelligence and teacher effectiveness, plays a vital role in their academic outcomes. The study concludes that psychological distress stemming from banditry significantly hinders academic performance and recommends the establishment of counselling and mental health support services in schools, alongside training for teachers to identify and address students' mental health needs effectively.

Keywords: Banditry, Trauma, Mental Health, Academic Performance, Secondary Schools Students.

Introduction

While education is crucial for individual and societal progress, its attainment heavily relies on a secure school environment. The escalating banditry-related conflicts in northwestern Nigeria, characterized by violent attacks and resulting in severe trauma for victims, poses a significant threat to this ideal. Insecurity hinders academic performance and have adverse psychological effects on students. The Nigerian bandit conflict, primarily in northwestern Nigeria, involves armed gangs conducting attacks, including kidnappings, robbery, and shootings, resulting in deaths and displacement of students. Victims often experience rape, terror, flogging, harassment, death threats, and other horrific abuses, leading to psychological disorders like depression, anxiety, hallucination, and psychosocial disruptions.

Danjuma et al., (2024), particularly revealed that three Local Government Areas; Sakaba, Danko/Wasagu and Fakai in Kebbi State are witnessing increased invasion of bandits since year 2021 with thousands of villagers fleeing their communities for safety. Banditry, which

started as isolated cases in Zuru Emirate some seven years ago had become a large-scale daily occurrence from 2020, taking peak with many people becoming victims of insecurity. Following the insecurity situation, a large number of livestock have been rustled and mostly their owners displaced from their communities. The security challenges are causing a massive influx of villagers who sometimes trek for hours to reach the nearest urban or semi-urban areas that are considered safe in Zuru Emirate.

More so, high cases of mental disorders, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), may occur among young people who have experienced banditry and also negatively impacts education, as bandits intentionally target educational institutions. Although, factors like teacher effectiveness and student intelligence are often considered regarding academic performance, the psychological impact of this insecurity, particularly banditry, remains underexplored. This study seeks to address this research gap by specifically examining the influence of banditry-related trauma on the academic performance of secondary school students in the Danko Wasagu Local Government Area of Kebbi State, aiming to understand and quantify this critical relationship.

Statement of the Problem

The escalating security crisis in Nigeria, particularly armed banditry and the novel issue of mass school abductions in northern Nigeria, severely disrupts the educational sector. Beyond displacement and school closures, exposure to such violence inflicts significant psychological trauma on students, manifesting as anxiety, depression, and related symptoms. While the impact of insecurity on education is evident, this study specifically addresses the critical yet under-examined psychological effects of banditry on the academic performance of secondary school students within the Danko Wasagu Local Government Area of Kebbi State.

Objectives of the Study

The research is aimed at achieving the following objectives;

1. To examine the impact of mental-health on academic performance of secondary school students exposed to banditry in Danko Wasagu L.G.A.
2. To examine the impact of trauma/post-traumatic stress disorder on academic performance of secondary school students exposed to banditry in Danko Wasagu L.G.A.

Research Questions

The research is guided by the following research questions;

1. How does mental-health affect academic performance of secondary school students exposed to banditry in Danko Wasagu L.G.A.?
2. How does trauma/post-traumatic stress disorder affect academic performance of secondary school students exposed to banditry in Danko Wasagu L.G.A.?

Research Hypotheses

1. **H₀₁:** There is no significant difference between academic performance of students with high and low mental health severity due to banditry in secondary schools in Danko Wasagu LGA.
2. **H₀₂:** There is no significant difference between academic performance of students with high and low trauma/post-traumatic stress disorder severity due to banditry in secondary schools in Danko Wasagu LGA.

Literature Review

This section reviews literatures that are related to impact of banditry-related trauma on secondary school students' academic performance;

Concept of Banditry

Banditry, in its contemporary understanding, refers to a form of organized crime characterized by the threat or use of violence, typically involving acts such as robbery, kidnapping, extortion, and sometimes murder, often perpetrated by groups operating outside the rule of law (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019). It often thrives in ungoverned or poorly governed spaces, exploiting vulnerabilities in state authority and security structures (Ojo, 2020). While historically associated with rural settings and highway robbery, modern banditry can manifest in various forms and geographical locations, including urban areas and even extending into digital spaces through cyber-enabled crimes (Amnesty International, 2021). The motivations behind banditry are complex and can range from economic desperation and the pursuit of illicit wealth to socio-political grievances and the exploitation of ethnic or communal tensions (The Rise of Banditry in Northwest Nigeria, 2025).

The impact of banditry is far-reaching, extending beyond immediate financial losses and physical harm to encompass significant social, economic, and psychological consequences for individuals, communities, and even national stability (Banditry in Nigeria: Implications for National Security, 2023). It disrupts livelihoods, displaces populations, undermines trust in governance, and can contribute to a climate of fear and insecurity. Furthermore, as highlighted in the context of this discussion, banditry can have a particularly devastating effect on education, leading to school closures, decreased enrollment due to fear of abduction, and significant psychological trauma among students and educators (Assessing the Impact of Kidnapping and Banditry on Students' Academic Performance in Nigeria, 2025). The targeting of schools and students has become a disturbing trend in some regions, exacerbating the long-term consequences for human capital development.

Addressing the complex phenomenon of banditry requires multifaceted strategies that go beyond purely military or law enforcement responses (The Rise of Banditry in Northwest Nigeria, 2025). These approaches often necessitate a combination of security measures to protect vulnerable populations, socio-economic interventions to address underlying drivers such as poverty and lack of opportunity, and efforts to strengthen governance and the rule

of law in affected areas. Community engagement, conflict resolution mechanisms, and psychological support for victims of banditry-related violence are also crucial components of comprehensive strategies aimed at mitigating its impact and fostering long-term peace and security (Ungoverned Spaces, Rural Banditry, and Insecurity in Contemporary Nigeria, 1999-2020, 2025). Understanding the specific context and drivers of banditry in different regions is essential for developing effective and sustainable solutions.

Classification of Banditry

There are various types of armed banditry classified by Global Centre for Responsibility to Protect, Nigeria: Population at Risk, (2022) as cited in (Ojo et al. 2023). These include;

- a. Rural-Urban, Frontier and Countryside Banditry: Locational operation defines the rural and urban banditry and the frontier and countryside banditry.
- b. Social Banditry: Social inequalities, and grievances often trigger armed banditry.
- c. Mercenary Banditry: Mercenary banditry can be characterized as either an agency or a master-servant relationship, as a case of a group operating under a master who provides necessary logistics.
- d. Organized Banditry: Organized banditry operates across borders through an efficient network and command structure.
- e. Maritime Banditry: Maritime banditry operates along the coastal belts.
- f. Petty Banditry: Petty banditry is a lone criminal act characterized by robbing citizens of their belongings.

Economic and political deprivation, social inequalities, and other grievances often trigger banditry in Nigeria. In most cases, armed bandits often live in ungoverned or under-governed spaces, where government presence is mostly limited or absent. (Ojo, 2020). These include remote areas and forest enclaves, which are used as hiding places to plan and execute attacks. (Shalangwa, 2013). Such an environment provides bandits with opportunities for operational advantage. Accordingly, armed bandits often operate in rural settings, such that their attacks, kidnappings, and cattle rustlings, lootings, among other criminal activities, are carried out in, from and against villages. Their operational control can therefore revolve around rural and border communities, and uninhabited or less populated spots along major roads or waterways. (Okoli, 2019). In this manner, the primary victims of armed banditry are innocent citizens residing in or traveling along remote parts of the country.

Concept of Mental Health

Mental health is the psychosocial and mental well-being of an individual which influences and guides his behavioural pattern to cope and adjust to the environmental pressures and demand of his environment and make appropriate choices and decisions. According to World health mental report (2022), mental health is a state of mental well-being which enable people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. The report further highlighted that, mental health

is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in.

Mental health issues among adolescents in senior secondary schools are synonymous with mental health disorders or conditions experienced by adolescents in schools which influences and interferes with their psychosocial and mental well-being as a result of the demands and pressure of educational and academic related school activities which impair their behavioural tendencies, biological disposition, sensory and perceptual processes and prevent them from learning adequately. When Students are pressured by mental stress, it could become cumbersome for them to learn, cope and adjust in school which could be detrimental to their mental well-being, and could result to different behavioural disorders. The heightened increase of mental health challenges among students has been attributed to a variety of factors from academic pressure to experienced psychobiological developmental milestones (Khombo et al., 2023).

Secondary school Adolescents undergo rigorous school related activities which involve daily studies and extracurricular activities that take a toll on their physical and mental health hence, they become stressed up and disorganised and compounded when dealing with experiences from traumatic events. Students who experience such academic stressful life events often have worse health outcomes and reduced quality of life (Essel and Owusu, 2017) as cited in (Apeh, et. al. 2023). Mental health issues among adolescents in schools constitutes a major concern due to the stressful and demanding nature of school related activities on the adolescent accompany with the pressure saddled upon the adolescent to perform well academically in the course of his daily school related activities.

Concept of Trauma

Trauma, in contemporary psychological understanding, extends beyond the immediate experience of a distressing event to encompass the enduring psychological, emotional, and physiological consequences that can significantly impair an individual's functioning and well-being (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). It arises from exposure to events or series of events that are perceived as overwhelmingly threatening or harmful, often involving actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence. The subjective experience of the event is paramount; what is traumatic for one person may not be for another, depending on individual vulnerabilities, coping mechanisms, and the availability of social support (van der Kolk, 2023). This understanding moves beyond a narrow definition focused solely on the nature of the event itself to include the individual's internal processing and subsequent impact.

The neurobiological impact of trauma is increasingly recognized as central to its lasting effects. Exposure to severe stress can dysregulate the autonomic nervous system, leading to heightened states of arousal, hypervigilance, and difficulty regulating emotions (Ogden & Minton, 2021). Furthermore, traumatic experiences can alter brain structures involved in memory processing, fear response, and emotional regulation, potentially contributing to intrusive memories, avoidance behaviors, and exaggerated startle responses characteristic

of trauma-related disorders such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Yehuda & Flory, 2022). These neurological changes underscore the deep and often enduring imprint of trauma on the individual.

The consequences of trauma are multifaceted, affecting various domains of life. Beyond the hallmark symptoms of PTSD, individuals who have experienced trauma may struggle with depression, anxiety, dissociation, relationship difficulties, and physical health problems (Herman, 2024). Addressing trauma necessitates a nuanced and multifaceted approach to healing. Trauma-informed care, emphasizing safety, trust, choice, collaboration, and empowerment, is increasingly recognized as a foundational principle in therapeutic interventions (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2023). Effective treatments often integrate various modalities, including trauma-focused psychotherapies, body-based approaches, and social support systems, aiming to help individuals process traumatic memories, regulate emotions, and rebuild a sense of safety and agency. Ultimately, recovery from trauma is a journey towards integration and resilience, allowing individuals to live full and meaningful lives despite their past experiences (Courtois & Ford, 2022).

Theoretical Framework

This section of the study discusses theories related to and relevant to the study.

Organismic Valuing Theory (Joseph & Linley, 2005)

The Organismic Valuing Theory (OVT), as articulated by Joseph and Linley (2005), posits that individuals possess an inherent, intuitive process for evaluating experiences and making choices that promote their psychological growth and well-being. This "organismic valuing process" is seen as a natural compass, guiding individuals towards experiences that are congruent with their actualizing tendency – the innate drive to develop their potentials and move towards greater complexity, autonomy, and integration. This process is not solely cognitive but rather a holistic, felt sense of what is right and nourishing for the individual at a given moment.

However, this inherent valuing process can be significantly influenced and even distorted by external factors, particularly societal and interpersonal conditions of worth. These conditions of worth, often internalized from significant others, dictate that individuals will only receive acceptance and approval if they think, feel, and behave in certain ways. As individuals strive for this external validation, they may begin to disregard their own organismic valuing process, leading them to make choices that are not truly aligned with their needs and potential for growth. This incongruence between their inherent valuing and their actual behavior can result in psychological distress and hinder self-actualization.

Joseph and Linley emphasize that a supportive and accepting environment is crucial for the organismic valuing process to function optimally. When individuals experience unconditional positive regard, empathy, and genuineness from others, they feel safe to trust their inner experiences and move in directions that are authentically meaningful to

them. In such environments, the natural valuing process is less likely to be overridden by external pressures, allowing individuals to engage in experiences that foster personal growth, resilience, and a greater sense of psychological well-being.

In essence, the Organismic Valuing Theory highlights the importance of reconnecting with and trusting one's inner wisdom as a pathway to psychological health. It suggests that while external influences can easily derail this natural process, fostering environments characterized by acceptance and authenticity can help individuals rediscover their inherent capacity for self-direction and growth, ultimately leading to a more fulfilling and meaningful life aligned with their true potential.

Review of Empirical Studies on the Relationship between Mental Health and Academic Performance

Obumse & Egenti (2022), investigated influence of mental health status on the academic achievement of public secondary schools' students in Anambra State. Three research questions and three null hypotheses guided the study. The study adopted descriptive survey design. The study was carried out in all the 261 public secondary schools in the six education zones in Anambra State. The population of the study was 117,600 which comprised all the male and female public secondary school students. The sample for the study was 200 respondents which comprised 100 male and 100 female students selected through purposive sampling technique. The instrument for data collection was a researcher developed questionnaire titled "Mental Health Status and Academic Achievement Questionnaire (MHSAAQ). Face validation was done by three experts. Mean and standard deviation were used in answering the research questions while z-test was used to test the three null hypotheses at .05 level of significance.

The study found that poor mental health status as manifested in anxiety/insomnia, severe depression and social dysfunction influenced secondary school students' academic achievement negatively to a high extent. It also leads to dropout of students, lack of concentration and comprehension, abuse of drug and alcohol; frustration and committing of suicide by students amongst others. The study recommends that students exhibiting symptoms of poor mental health should seek help from the school guidance counsellor on time; considering the importance of the mental health status in the students, all stakeholders in education should pay more attention to this issue among the students and provide them with psychological support systems and counselling centres among others.

In the study of Rehman, Jabeen, Joseph, Bhutto and Noor-us-Sabah (2023), explored the relationship between mental health and academic performance among Cambridge School students. The study focused on three main mental health concerns: depression, stress, and anxiety. The study adopted a survey-based research design where random sampling technique was utilized for data collection from the participants. Data was gathered by using Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS) and the students' academic progress reports. 150 students of one of the Cambridge schools in Karachi have participated in the study.

The result revealed that Cambridge students of senior grades suffered from depression, anxiety and stress which has badly affected their academic performance ultimately adversely affected their exam results. The study also revealed that the students with good mental health showed better results than those students who are comparatively weaker in their mental health. Moreover, female students were found getting more stressed and depressed during exam as compared to male students. It was suggested that counselling sessions can prove to be very positive interventions for students especially at senior Cambridge level where their grades have a greater impact on their professional colleges' admissions.

Chu, Liu, Takayanagi, Matsushita, and Kishimoto (2022), examined the association between mental health and academic performance among university undergraduates: The interacting role of lifestyle behaviors. Several studies tend to be associated with poor academic performance, but few prospective studies have examined the association between mental health and academic performance among undergraduates while considering the interacting roles of multiple lifestyle behaviors. A total of 1823 Japanese undergraduate students (67% men) were followed up for 4 years. Their mental health status was measured by the six-item Kessler Psychological Distress Scale (K6). We defined poor academic performance as a grade point average (GPA) <2.0. Cox proportional hazards models were used to determine the relationship between the students' mental health status and the incident risk of poor academic performance.

Happy, Islam, and Tirnoexamine, (2023), examine mental health arising from the challenges due to pandemics emerged and its negative effects on academic performance. Stress and depression levels affected students' mental well-being as well as academic performance. Surprisingly, this study revealed that the anxiety level of this young generation due to COVID-19 does not influence their activities rather students to have a strong mental capacity to maintain adverse situations. The most possible reason could be their belief that the impact of coronavirus is very low among the young generation. Therefore, they are not anxious about the coronavirus during the pandemic. Rather, they are having depression and stress due to the absence of a proper educational environment.

Empirical studies on the Relationship between Trauma/Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Academic Performance

Anderson et al. (2023), investigated the effects of community violence exposure on the academic trajectories of middle and high school students in urban areas of the United States. Their longitudinal study demonstrated that chronic exposure to violence was associated with declining academic performance over time, even after controlling for other socioeconomic factors. The researchers posited that the persistent stress and fear associated with community violence can impair cognitive functioning, reduce motivation, and increase absenteeism, all of which contribute to academic difficulties. They emphasized the need for school-based interventions that address both the academic and mental health needs of students impacted by violence.

A study conducted by Lee and Chen (2024), focused on the impact of cyberbullying, a prevalent form of trauma in the digital age, on the academic performance of adolescents in South Korea. Their findings indicated that students who experienced frequent cyberbullying reported higher levels of anxiety and depression, which in turn negatively affected their academic grades and school engagement. The study highlighted the importance of addressing online victimization as a form of trauma that can have significant real-world consequences for students' educational outcomes, suggesting the need for comprehensive anti-bullying programs that extend to the digital realm.

Romero et al. (2022), investigated the indirect effects of trauma exposure on academic performance in a sample of Spanish adolescents. The researchers found that exposure to traumatic events was significantly associated with increased emotional and behavioral problems, such as anxiety, depression, and aggression. These internalizing and externalizing difficulties, in turn, mediated the relationship between trauma exposure and lower academic achievement. The study highlights the importance of addressing the emotional and behavioral sequelae of trauma to mitigate its negative impact on educational outcomes.

Hambrick, et. al. (2021), While focusing on college students, this study provides relevant insights into the impact of trauma on academic functioning in a later adolescent/young adult population. The researchers examined the relationship between trauma-related symptoms (including PTSD symptoms) and academic outcomes (GPA and academic distress). Their findings indicated a significant negative association between trauma symptoms and academic outcomes. Importantly, the study also found that perceived social support acted as a moderator, buffering the negative effects of trauma symptoms on academic performance. This suggests that strong social connections can play a protective role for students who have experienced trauma, helping to mitigate its academic consequences. These contemporary studies, alongside earlier research, consistently point to a detrimental relationship between trauma and academic performance. The findings underscore the critical need for trauma-informed educational practices that recognize the impact of adverse experiences on students' learning and well-being.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population comprised 9,035 secondary school students and 53 principals and teachers exposed to banditry-related violence across 17 schools in Danko Wasagu LGA of Kebbi State. Simple random sampling was used to select 357 students and 36 principals and teachers. Data were collected using an adapted DSM-5, a researcher-developed Psychological Effects of Banditry on Students' Academic Performance Questionnaire (PEBSAPQ) for teachers and principals, and the 2023/2024 students' academic records in English Language. The instruments demonstrated high reliability ($r = 0.991$) and were validated by experts. Demographic data were analyzed using frequency counts and percentages, while Independent T-tests (SPSS 20) tested the null hypotheses. Ethical procedures were strictly adhered to throughout the study.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants (and from parents/guardians for students under 18). Approval for the study was secured from the State Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, Local Authorities and ethical review board to ensure the well-being and anonymity of all respondents.

Data Presentation and Analysis

This section is concerned with the presentation and analysis of data collected at the field.

Demographic Data of Respondents

The table below comprises of respondent's demographic data, comprising of sex, age, class, designation and the frequencies and percentages of their responses.

Table 1.1 Respondents Demographic Data

S/N	Response		Frequency	Percent
1.	Sex of Students			
		Male	191	42.8
		Female	143	57.2
		Total	334	100
2.	Age of Respondents (Students)			
		10-15 Years	24	7.2
		16-18 Years	299	89.5
		19 & above	11	3.3
		Total	334	100
3.	Class			
		SSI	121	36.2
		SSII	101	30.2
		SSIII	112	33.5
		Total	334	100
4.	Sex of Principals & Teachers			
		Male	26	57.8
		Female	19	42.2
		Total	45	100
	Designation			
		Principals	9	20.0
		Teachers	36	80.0
		Total	45	100

Source: Field work (2024)

The table above shows that 191 (42.8%) of the respondents were male while 143 (57.2%) are female. Majority of the respondents 299(89.5%) are within the age range 16-18years, 24(7.2) are 10-15 and 11(3.3) are 19 years and above. The table also shows that 121(36.2%)

respondents are from SSI, 101(30.2%) from SSII and 112(33.5%) from SSIII. The table further shows that out of the respondents 45 were stakeholders; 9 principals and 36 teachers.

Principals and Teachers Responses on the Effects of Banditry on Students' Academic Performance

The below present the responses of stakeholders regarding the effects of banditry on students' academic performance. It further shows their level of agreement or disagreement with percentages to the ten items that reflect various psychological and academic challenges faced by students in communities affected by banditry.

Table 1.2 Principals and Teachers Responses on the Effects of Banditry on Students' Academic Performance.

S/N	ITEMS	Agree	%	Disagree	%
1.	Students perform poorly after the incursions of bandits in their communities.	31	68.9	14	31.1
2.	Psychological effects of banditry have negative impact on students' academic performance.	30	66.7	15	33.3
3.	I have observed students affected by banditry experience emotional instability leading to poor academic performance.	29	64.4	16	35.6
4.	Psychological effects of banditry affect students' motivation and willingness to learn, leading to poor academic performance.	34	75.6	11	24.4
5.	I have observed a decline in students' self-esteem resulting in poor academic performance.	32	71.1	13	28.9
6.	Students' inability to manage stress and anxiety as a result of banditry affects their academic performance.	35	77.8	10	22.2
7.	I observed students loose interest in academics due to psychological effects of banditry resulting in poor academic performance.	39	86.7	6	13.3
8.	Teachers have role in supporting traumatized student enhanced their academic performance.	37	82.2	8	17.8
9.	There is an existing measure to assist traumatized and depressed students improved their academic performance.	34	75.6	11	24.4
10.	Addressing mental health concerns such as depression, PTSD, anxiety, should be a priority in the education system for improving students' academic performance.	30	66.7	15	33.3

Field Work (2025)

It is clearly shown in the table above that majority of principals and teachers agree that banditry affects students' academic performance (items 1-7), Psychological effects of banditry (items 2, 4, 6) and emotional instability (item 3) are seen as significant factors also.

Similarly, the table shows that respondents observe declines in students' self-esteem (item 5) and interest in academics (item 7) due to banditry. Furthermore, teachers' support for traumatized students (item 8) and addressing mental health concerns (item 10) are considered important for improving academic performance.

Descriptive Statistics

The table below provides descriptive statistics for five variables, showing the number of respondents (N) of each variable and their corresponding mean scores. These variables represent different factors measured in the study, and the table summarizes the central tendency (mean) of each factor and categorization of the mean of High and low severity. The purpose of this analysis is to determine the severity of each variable based on how individual scores compare to the mean score.

Table 1.3 Descriptive Statistics

VARIABLES	N	Mean	High X	Low X
Mental Health	334	15.13	15.13 & above	14.0 & below
Trauma / Post Traumatic Stress Disorder	334	17.51	17.51 & above	16.0 & below
Students' Academic Performance Record	334	32.43	32.43 & above	31.0 & below

Field Work (2025)

To assess the severity associated with each variable, individual scores are compared against the corresponding mean score for each variable. The process is as follows:

1. **High Severity:** If an individual's total score for a given variable is equal to or greater than the mean score, this indicates high severity for that variable. This suggests that the individual's response is more severe or of higher magnitude than the average response for that factor.
2. **Low Severity:** Conversely, if an individual's total score is below the mean, this reflects low severity for that variable. The individual's response is less severe or of lower magnitude than the average response.

This approach allows for a clear categorization of responses based on their deviation from the average (mean), facilitating a straightforward understanding of how each factor contributes to the overall high or low severity of the variable in the study.

This section tested two null hypotheses formulated in this study using independent sample t-test at 0.05 level of significance to determine whether to accept or reject the hypotheses. The table below presents the results of an independent t-test, comparing the academic performance of students with high and low mental health impact. The table summarizes key descriptive statistics (e.g., mean, standard deviation, and standard error of the mean) for academic performance in each group and provides inferential test statistics.

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between academic performance of students with low and high mental health due to banditry in secondary schools in Danko Wasagu LGA.

Table 1.4 Independent Samples t-test Results for Academic Performance Based on the Impact of Mental Health

Group	N	Academic Performance Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	T	df	P	Mean Difference	95%CI
High Mental Health Impact	213	24.25	15.63	1.07	-10.55	201.01	.000	-22.56	[-26.77, -18.34]
Low Mental Health Impact	121	46.81	20.36	1.85					

Field Work 2025

The above tables show an independent sample t-test conducted to determine whether there is a significant negative difference between academic performance of students with low and high mental health due to banditry in secondary schools in Danko Wasagu LGA. Result indicates that there is a significant difference between academic performance of students with low mental health and high mental health, the t-test statistic ($t = -10.55$) and associated p-value ($p = .000$) indicate a statistically significant negative difference in academic performance between the two groups. Therefore, Since the p-value ($p = .000$) is less than the significance threshold ($\alpha = 0.05$), the null hypothesis which states that There is no significant difference between academic performance of students with low and high mental health due to banditry in secondary schools in Danko Wasagu LGA is hereby rejected.

The table below presents the results of an independent samples t-test conducted to compare academic performance between groups with high and low impact of Trauma/PTSD. The table summarizes key descriptive statistics (e.g., mean, standard deviation, and standard error of the mean) for academic performance in each group and provides inferential test statistics.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between academic performance of students with low and high trauma/post-traumatic stress disorder due to banditry in secondary schools in Danko Wasagu LGA.

Table 1.5 Independent Samples t-test Results for Academic Performance Based on the Impact of Trauma/PTSD

Group	N	Academic Performance Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	t	df	P	Mean Difference	95%CI
High Trauma Impact	266	28.85	18.91	1.16	-6.68	332	.000	-17.54	[-22.71, -12.38]
Low Trauma Impact	68	46.39	20.91	2.54					

Field Work 2025

The table above shows an independent sample t-test conducted to determine whether there is a significant negative difference between academic performance of students with low and high Trauma/PTSD due to banditry in secondary schools in Danko Wasagu LGA. Result indicates that there is a significant difference between academic performance of students with low trauma/PTSD and high trauma/PSTD, the t-test statistic ($t = -6.68$) and associated p-value ($p = .000$) indicate a statistically significant negative difference in academic performance between the two groups. Therefore, since $p = (.000) < 0.05$, the null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between academic performance of students with low and high trauma/post-traumatic stress disorder due to banditry in secondary schools in Danko Wasagu LGA is hereby rejected.

Discussions of Findings

The results from hypothesis one suggests a significant negative difference in academic performance between students experiencing high and low mental health impacts due to banditry. Students with high mental health impacts performed worse academically ($M = 24.25$) compared to their peers with low mental health impacts ($M = 46.81$). This finding highlights the detrimental effects of mental health challenges caused by banditry on students' academic outcomes. The psychological distress likely disrupts concentration, attendance, and overall academic engagement, resulting in lower performance.

66.75% of principals and teachers who responded to the Psychological Effects of Banditry on Students Academic Performance Questionnaire have shown poor mental health leads to lack of concentration in classes and as well affects the ability of students to comprehend material, decline in self-confidence of students which sometimes leads to abuse of drugs and alcoholism to find succor which ultimately leads to poor academic performance. Mental imbalances in students has led to frustration and cases of suicidal tendencies among students who have experienced banditry, which has left teachers and school administrators battling to contain these challenges with little knowledge to tackle such mental decadence in school environments. These results underscore the importance of addressing mental

health concerns in secondary schools affected by banditry to mitigate its impact on students' academic success. Future interventions should prioritize mental health support systems in schools, provide resources for coping with trauma, and implement community-based strategies to address the root causes of banditry.

The findings of this study are in line with the work of Jabeen, Joseph, Bhutto and Noor-us-Sabah (2023), which explored the relationship between mental health and academic performance among Cambridge School students. The result revealed that students suffered from depression, anxiety and stress which has badly affected their academic performance ultimately adversely affected their exam results. The study also revealed that the students with good mental health showed better results than those students who are comparatively weaker in their mental health. Moreover, female students were found getting more stressed and depressed during exam as compared to male students. It was suggested that counselling sessions can prove to be very positive interventions for students especially at senior Cambridge level where their grades have a greater impact on their professional college's admissions.

Similarly, a study conducted on university freshmen in China revealed that mental health problems such as somatization, anxiety, and depression significantly predicted lower comprehensive and subject-specific academic scores (Frontiers, 2024). Furthermore, a research work involving secondary school students in Pakistan demonstrated that students with good mental health consistently achieved better academic results compared to their peers experiencing higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Journal of Positive School Psychology, 2024). These findings, although situated in different geographical and socio-cultural contexts, resonate with the initial finding, suggesting a universal impact of mental health on academic outcomes.

Findings from null hypothesis two indicated a significant difference in academic performance of the two groups which suggests that trauma/PTSD caused by banditry has a profound negative impact on students' academic outcomes. Trauma/PTSD may impair students' cognitive functioning, concentration, and emotional well-being, all of which are critical for academic success. Furthermore trauma/PTSD has adverse effect on school punctuality leading to loss of interest in academic pursuit, fear and anxiety affecting students' cognitive abilities and memory to recall learned materials as well as pushing students into isolation, loneliness, distant from people. It is evident from the findings that quite a number of respondents had traumatic experiences resulting from the psychological impacts of banditry as a result, are negatively adjusted academically and so long as survivors of traumatic experiences are not diagnosed and treated for trauma, it is hard for them to adjust positively to academic activities.

In support of these findings; the study from Abdul, and Kabiru, (2017), which investigated the psychological trauma of Boko Haram conflict on secondary school students in Borno State Nigeria. Accumulating evidence indicates that exposure to violent traumatic events, such as terrorism, random school shootings, and community traumatic events in general have harmful impacts on children's health and well-being, reflected by depression,

aggressive behaviour, anxiety and stress, social and emotional problems, and impaired cognitive development. They recommended adequate security in schools and social support for both students and teachers through rehabilitation and resettlement.

Furthermore, the impact of banditry extends beyond direct psychological distress to create a pervasive environment of fear and instability within communities and educational institutions. Studies conducted in Nigeria have shown that banditry leads to school closures, reduced attendance due to safety concerns, and a general disruption of the learning environment (Journal of Ecohumanism, 2025; ResearchGate, 2024). This insecurity can create a significant barrier to consistent academic engagement, even for students who may not be directly experiencing high levels of mental health impacts. The constant threat and uncertainty can erode students' sense of safety and normalcy, making it difficult to prioritize and focus on their education.

In conclusion, the significant negative difference in academic performance between students with high and low mental health impacts due to banditry is a stark reminder of the profound interconnectedness between psychological well-being and educational outcomes. This finding, supported by recent and diverse empirical studies, highlights the far-reaching consequences of violence and insecurity on students' cognitive functioning, behavior, and overall academic engagement. Addressing this complex issue necessitates a multi-faceted approach that integrates mental health support with educational interventions and the creation of safe and stable learning environments to ensure the academic resilience and future success of affected students (APA, 2020).

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Kebbi State Government should establish counselling and mental health support services in schools: Establish or strengthen school-based mental health services, including counseling, therapy, specifically designed to address trauma and anxiety related to banditry and other forms of violence around school environment. This could involve training school counselors on trauma-informed care and building counselling centers or rooms where support groups/students can openly discuss their fears and experiences without judgment etc.
2. Kebbi State Government should train and retrain teachers: equip teachers to recognize the signs of psychological distress in students and equip them with strategies to respond to mental health needs and provide initial support and make appropriate referrals to experts in counselling/mental health centers. This could be included in the teacher-training curriculum in Universities and colleges of educations.

Conclusion

The findings unequivocally demonstrate the profound negative impact of banditry-related trauma on the mental health and, consequently, the academic performance of secondary

school students, irrespective of the perceived severity of their experiences. The significant correlation between mental health challenges, including trauma and PTSD severity, and diminished academic outcomes underscores an urgent need for targeted policy interventions. This study strongly suggests the critical relevance of integrating mental health support into the educational system within regions affected by insecurity. Specifically, policies should prioritize the establishment of accessible and culturally sensitive school-based counselling services and mental health support centers. Furthermore, teacher training programs must incorporate comprehensive modules on recognizing trauma symptoms, providing initial psychological first aid, and effectively referring students to specialized mental health professionals. Potential interventions include the implementation of psycho-educational programs for students, focusing on coping mechanisms and resilience building, and the provision of support groups for both students and teachers affected by the ongoing insecurity. Addressing these psychological and psychosocial needs, alongside academic support tailored to students' trauma-related challenges, is paramount for creating safer, more supportive, and secure learning environments that foster the well-being and academic success of all students in Danko Wasagu LGA and similar regions.

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