



JOURNAL OF PHILOSOPHY, POLICY AND STRATEGIC STUDIES

Volume 2, Number 2 (June, 2026)

ISSN: 1595-9457 (online); 3043-4211 (print)

Website: <https://jppssuniuyo.com/> Email: jppssuniuyo@gmail.com

Received: June 19, 2026 Accepted: June 25, 2026 Published: June 30, 2026

Citation: Eno, Idongesit M. & Edet, Eno K. "Role of Public Administration in Managing Banditry and Rural Insecurity in Nigeria." *Journal of Philosophy, Policy and Strategic Studies*, 2 (2): 166-174.

Article

Open Acces

ROLE OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN MANAGING BANDITRY AND RURAL INSECURITY IN NIGERIA

Idongesit Micah Eno¹ & Eno Kingsley Edet²

Department of Public Administration

Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Uyo, Uyo

Abstract

This study examined the role of public administration in managing banditry and rural insecurity in Nigeria. It investigated how public administrative institutions at the federal, state, and local government levels responded to the increasing incidence of bandit attacks, kidnappings, and rural violence, as well as the effectiveness of their strategies in addressing the crisis. The study adopted a descriptive research approach and relied on secondary sources of data such as textbooks, journal articles, policy documents, and security reports. The findings revealed that banditry had become a persistent and expanding security challenge in Nigeria, particularly in rural communities across the North-West, North-Central, and emerging parts of the South-West regions. It was discovered that public administration played a central role in managing insecurity through policy formulation, coordination of security agencies, intelligence support systems, and allocation of resources. However, the effectiveness of these efforts was limited by inadequate funding, corruption, weak inter-agency coordination, poor intelligence gathering, and insufficient security personnel. The study further found that government interventions such as military operations, community policing initiatives, dialogue strategies, and socio-economic empowerment programmes had recorded partial success but were constrained by poor implementation and lack of sustainability. It was also established that rural insecurity had severe negative effects on national development, including loss of lives, displacement of persons, disruption of agricultural activities, food insecurity, and decline in investment. The study concluded that effective management of banditry in Nigeria required a stronger and more efficient public administration system. It recommended increased funding for security agencies, improved inter-agency collaboration, enhanced intelligence gathering, strict anti-corruption measures,

Copyright © 2026 By JPPSS. Publishers: Omega Books

This is an open access article which permits unrestricted use provided the work is properly cited.

expansion of rural development programmes, adoption of modern security technologies, and greater community participation in security governance. These measures were considered necessary for achieving sustainable peace, stability, and national development in Nigeria.

Keywords: Public Administration, Banditry, Rural Insecurity, Security Management, Community Policing, National Development, Crime Prevention, Internal Security.

Introduction

Security is one of the fundamental responsibilities of government and an essential condition for sustainable development. The protection of lives, property, and public institutions enables citizens to engage in productive economic and social activities. In Nigeria, however, the increasing incidence of banditry and rural insecurity has posed significant challenges to governance, public administration, and national development. The persistence of these security threats has raised concerns about the capacity of government institutions to effectively manage insecurity and ensure the safety of rural communities. Banditry refers to organized criminal activities involving armed robbery, kidnapping, cattle rustling, village attacks, and other violent acts perpetrated by criminal groups. In recent years, banditry has emerged as one of the most serious security challenges confronting Nigeria, particularly in the North-West, North-East, South-West and North-Central regions. The activities of bandits have resulted in loss of lives, displacement of populations, destruction of property, disruption of agricultural activities, and increased poverty among rural dwellers (Okoli and Lenshie, 2018). Rural communities have become particularly vulnerable due to inadequate security presence, poor infrastructure, weak governance structures, and limited access to public services.

Public administration plays a critical role in addressing security challenges through policy formulation, implementation, coordination, and service delivery. It encompasses the activities of government institutions and officials responsible for maintaining law and order, providing essential services, and promoting public welfare. According to Adebayo (2013), public administration serves as the machinery through which government policies and programmes are implemented to achieve societal goals. In the context of security management, public administration is responsible for coordinating security agencies, mobilizing resources, facilitating intergovernmental cooperation, and ensuring effective policy implementation. The rise of banditry in Nigeria has been linked to several factors, including poverty, unemployment, weak law enforcement institutions, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, environmental degradation, and poor governance (Onuoha, 2020). These factors have contributed to the emergence and expansion of criminal networks operating in rural areas. The inability of public institutions to adequately address these underlying causes has further aggravated insecurity and weakened public confidence in government. Successive governments in Nigeria have introduced various measures to combat banditry and rural insecurity. These measures include military operations, community policing initiatives, intelligence gathering, security sector reforms, and socio-economic intervention programmes. Despite these efforts, banditry continues to threaten rural livelihoods and undermine development efforts. This situation suggests that beyond security operations, effective public administration is necessary to ensure proper policy implementation, institutional coordination, and sustainable conflict management. It is against this background that this study examines the role of public administration in managing banditry and rural insecurity in Nigeria, with a view to assessing government

efforts, identifying existing challenges, and proposing measures for enhancing security management and rural development.

Conceptual Clarification

Public Administration: Public administration is a field of study and practice concerned with the implementation of government policies and the management of public institutions. It involves the organization, coordination, and supervision of governmental activities aimed at achieving public objectives and promoting societal welfare. Public administration serves as the machinery through which government decisions are translated into actions and services for the citizens. According to Wilson (1887), public administration is the detailed and systematic execution of public law. He argued that public administration focuses on the practical application of government policies and programmes. Similarly, White (1926) defined public administration as all operations having the purpose of fulfilling or enforcing public policy as declared by competent authority. This definition emphasizes the role of administrative institutions in implementing government decisions and ensuring that public services reach the people. Pfiffner and Presthus (1967) viewed public administration as the coordination of individual and group efforts to carry out public policy. They maintained that public administration encompasses planning, organizing, staffing, directing, coordinating, reporting, and budgeting within government organizations. In the same vein, Adebayo (2013) described public administration as the process through which governmental functions are executed to achieve national goals and improve the welfare of citizens. Public administration performs several important functions, including policy implementation, public service delivery, maintenance of law and order, resource management, and development planning. It also facilitates communication between government and citizens while ensuring accountability, transparency, and efficiency in governance. In contemporary societies, public administration plays a crucial role in addressing complex challenges such as poverty, unemployment, environmental degradation, public health crises, and security threats.

Security and Insecurity

Security is a fundamental requirement for human existence and societal development. It refers to the condition in which individuals, communities, and nations are protected from threats that may endanger their lives, property, values, and well-being. Security creates an environment that enables citizens to pursue their social, economic, and political activities without fear or intimidation. According to McGrew (1988), security refers to freedom from threats and the ability of a state to protect its territorial integrity and citizens. Similarly, Nwanegbo and Odigbo (2013) defined security as the protection of lives, property, and institutions from both internal and external threats. The concept extends beyond military defence to include economic security, food security, environmental security, political security, and human security. The human security perspective introduced by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 1994) broadened the concept of security by emphasizing the protection of individuals rather than merely the protection of the state. Human security focuses on freedom from fear and freedom from want, highlighting the importance of economic opportunities, access to healthcare, education, and social justice. Insecurity, on the other hand, refers to the absence of security or a situation where individuals and communities are exposed to danger, violence, uncertainty, and fear. Achumba, Ighomereho, and Akpor-Robaro (2013) described insecurity as a state of fear or anxiety arising from the presence of threats to life and property. It reflects the inability of government and security institutions to effectively prevent or control criminal and violent

activities. Nigeria has experienced various forms of insecurity, including terrorism, kidnapping, armed robbery, communal clashes, farmer-herder conflicts, piracy, and banditry. These security challenges have negatively affected socio-economic development, discouraged investment, disrupted educational activities, and weakened public confidence in government institutions. Rural communities are often more vulnerable because of inadequate security infrastructure, poor road networks, limited government presence, and widespread poverty. The persistence of insecurity poses significant challenges to governance and development. Consequently, governments at all levels are expected to formulate and implement effective policies aimed at protecting citizens and promoting peace and stability.

Banditry

Banditry is a form of organized criminal activity characterized by violent attacks against individuals, communities, and institutions for economic, political, or social gains. It involves crimes such as armed robbery, kidnapping, cattle rustling, village raids, extortion, and destruction of property. Banditry is usually perpetrated by armed groups operating outside the authority of the state and often exploiting weak governance structures. According to Blench (2010), banditry refers to criminal activities carried out by armed groups that attack people and property in rural areas, particularly where government authority is weak. Similarly, Okoli and Okpaleke (2014) defined banditry as organized violence involving armed groups that engage in robbery, cattle theft, kidnapping, and attacks on communities for material benefits. Historically, banditry has existed in different parts of the world where state control is weak and socio-economic conditions encourage criminal behaviour. In Nigeria, however, banditry has become a major security concern, especially in the North-West and parts of the North-Central region. The phenomenon gained prominence through activities such as cattle rustling, mass abductions, attacks on villages, and ransom-related kidnappings. Several factors have been identified as causes of banditry in Nigeria. These include poverty, unemployment, weak security institutions, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, porous borders, environmental degradation, and poor governance (Onuoha, 2020).

Nature and Causes of Banditry in Nigeria

Banditry has emerged as one of the most significant security challenges confronting Nigeria in recent years. The phenomenon is characterized by organized criminal activities involving armed groups that engage in kidnapping, cattle rustling, armed robbery, village raids, extortion, and attacks on rural communities. Although banditry is not entirely new in Nigeria, its scale, sophistication, and level of violence have increased considerably, particularly in the North-West and parts of the North-Central geopolitical zones. The nature of banditry in Nigeria is largely rural and transnational. Most bandit groups operate from remote forests, mountainous terrains, and poorly governed border areas where security presence is limited. These groups often possess sophisticated weapons and maintain organized networks that enable them to carry out coordinated attacks on villages, highways, markets, schools, and farming communities. According to Okoli and Okpaleke (2014), contemporary banditry in Nigeria is characterized by criminal violence aimed at acquiring economic benefits through coercion and intimidation. Banditry in Nigeria has evolved from isolated incidents of cattle rustling and rural robbery into a complex security threat involving mass kidnappings, attacks on educational institutions, and large-scale destruction of lives and property. The activities of bandits have resulted in the displacement of thousands of people, disruption of agricultural production, closure of schools, and increased humanitarian crises in affected

communities (International Crisis Group, 2020). The persistent nature of these attacks has created fear and uncertainty among rural populations and has undermined government efforts toward rural development.

Several factors have contributed to the emergence and expansion of banditry in Nigeria. One of the major causes is poverty. High levels of poverty in many rural areas have created conditions that make criminal activities attractive to some individuals. The lack of access to basic necessities and economic opportunities often drives vulnerable youths into criminal networks. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2022), poverty remains widespread in many parts of Nigeria, creating socio-economic conditions that can fuel insecurity. Unemployment is another significant factor contributing to banditry. The inability of the economy to provide adequate employment opportunities for the growing youth population has increased frustration and social exclusion. Many unemployed youths are easily recruited into bandit groups with promises of financial rewards and social recognition. Nwankwo and Eze (2019) argue that youth unemployment remains one of the major drivers of criminality and violent conflicts in Nigeria.

Weak security institutions have also contributed significantly to the rise of banditry. Inadequate funding, shortage of personnel, poor intelligence gathering, lack of modern equipment, and limited operational capacity have reduced the effectiveness of security agencies in preventing and combating criminal activities. As a result, many rural communities remain vulnerable to attacks due to insufficient security presence. Another major cause of banditry is the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The availability of illegal firearms has increased the capacity of criminal groups to engage in violent activities. Nigeria's porous borders have facilitated the movement of arms and criminal elements across neighbouring countries, making it easier for bandits to acquire sophisticated weapons (Onuoha, 2020). Poor governance and weak state presence in rural areas also constitute important factors responsible for banditry. Many rural communities suffer from inadequate infrastructure, poor public service delivery, and limited government intervention. The absence of effective governance structures often creates power vacuums that allow criminal groups to operate with minimal resistance. According to Onimode (2018), weak governance and institutional failures are among the underlying causes of persistent insecurity in Nigeria. Table 1 summary of major bandit attacks and kidnappings in Nigeria between 2020 and May 15, 2026.

Table 1: Major Bandit Attacks and Kidnappings in Nigeria (2020–2026)

Year	Location	Incident Description	Impact/Outcome
2020	Katsina State (Kankara)	Mass abduction of students from Government Science Secondary School, Kankara by armed bandits	Over 300 students kidnapped; later released after negotiations
2021	Zamfara State (Jangebe)	Kidnapping of schoolgirls from Government Girls Secondary School, Jangebe	About 279 schoolgirls abducted and later released
2021	Kaduna State	Series of school and highway kidnappings by armed groups	Multiple deaths and mass abductions of students and travelers
2022	Kaduna State (Abuja–Kaduna Train)	Armed attack on passenger train	Dozens killed/injured; over 60 passengers abducted
2022	Zamfara State	Rural community raids and mass kidnappings	Hundreds displaced and abducted
2023	Niger State	Attacks on rural communities and schools	Multiple kidnappings of pupils,

Year	Location	Incident Description	Impact/Outcome
			students, and villagers
2024	Kaduna State (Kuriga community)	Mass abduction of schoolchildren in rural area	Dozens of students kidnapped; nationwide concern
2024	North-West & North-Central Nigeria	Widespread rural bandit attacks	Thousands affected, including repeated school kidnappings
2025	Niger State (Papiri/St. Mary's School)	Large-scale abduction of schoolchildren and teachers	Over 300 pupils and staff kidnapped; many later released in phases
2025	Kebbi State	Attack on Government Girls School, Maga	About 25 students abducted; school staff killed during attack
2026	Oyo State (Oriire LGA)	Armed attack on multiple schools in rural communities	About 39–46 persons abducted, including pupils and teachers; one teacher killed

Source: Researcher's Compilation (2026)

The proliferation of banditry and the outcome suggest serious insecurity in the country. Therefore, understanding the nature and causes of banditry is essential for developing effective policies and administrative strategies that can address the challenge. Sustainable solutions require a combination of security measures, economic empowerment programmes, institutional reforms, and improved governance capable of addressing both the immediate and underlying causes of banditry in Nigeria.

Roles of Public Administration in Security Management

Public administration plays a vital role in maintaining peace, security, and stability within society. As the machinery through which government policies and programmes are implemented, public administration is responsible for coordinating activities aimed at protecting lives and property, maintaining law and order, and promoting national development. Effective security management depends largely on the efficiency and responsiveness of public administrative institutions. One of the primary roles of public administration in security management is policy formulation and implementation. Government agencies develop policies and strategies designed to prevent and address security threats such as banditry, terrorism, kidnapping, and communal conflicts. Public administrators ensure that these policies are translated into practical programmes and actions capable of achieving security objectives (Adebayo, 2013).

Public administration also performs the function of coordinating security agencies. Security management requires collaboration among various institutions such as the military, police, intelligence agencies, civil defence corps, immigration services, and local government authorities. Public administrators facilitate communication, cooperation, and information sharing among these agencies to ensure effective responses to security challenges. Another important role is resource mobilization and allocation. Security agencies require adequate funding, personnel, equipment, and logistics to perform their duties effectively. Public administration is responsible for budget preparation, resource distribution, and monitoring the utilization of public funds allocated for security purposes. Efficient resource management enhances the operational capacity of security institutions. Public administration contributes to intelligence gathering and information management. Through various governmental structures and community networks, public institutions collect, analyze, and disseminate information necessary for preventing and combating criminal

activities. Effective intelligence systems enable security agencies to identify threats and respond proactively.

Furthermore, public administration promotes socio-economic development programmes aimed at addressing the root causes of insecurity. Poverty reduction initiatives, youth empowerment schemes, educational programmes, and rural development projects help reduce conditions that encourage criminal activities. By improving living standards and creating opportunities, public administration contributes to long-term security and stability. Public administration also performs monitoring and evaluation functions. Government agencies assess the effectiveness of security policies and programmes to identify areas requiring improvement. This process ensures accountability, transparency, and continuous enhancement of security management strategies.

Government Policies and Programmes for Combating Banditry

The growing threat of banditry in Nigeria has compelled government at various levels to introduce several policies and programmes aimed at restoring peace and security in affected communities. These interventions combine military operations, law enforcement measures, community-based initiatives, and socio-economic programmes designed to address both the immediate and underlying causes of banditry. In the context of this study, one of the major government responses has been the deployment of military operations in bandit-prone areas. Operations such as *Operation Hadarin Daji*, *Operation Sahel Sanity*, and other joint security operations have been launched to dismantle bandit camps, rescue kidnapped victims, and restore law and order in affected states. These operations involve collaboration among the Nigerian Armed Forces, the Police Force, and other security agencies (Onuoha, 2020). The government has also strengthened law enforcement through increased recruitment of security personnel and provision of security equipment. Efforts have been made to improve intelligence gathering, surveillance systems, and border security in order to prevent the movement of criminal elements and illegal weapons across the country's borders.

Community policing is another important policy initiative introduced to combat banditry. Community policing encourages active participation of local communities in security management through collaboration between citizens and law enforcement agencies. This approach enhances intelligence gathering and promotes early detection of security threats. The Nigeria Police Force has implemented various community policing programmes aimed at improving grassroots security. Additionally, several state governments have established local security outfits to complement federal security agencies. Examples include vigilante groups and community security networks that assist in intelligence gathering and crime prevention. These local initiatives are intended to improve security coverage in rural areas where formal security presence may be inadequate. Despite these policies and programmes, banditry remains a significant security challenge in Nigeria. Factors such as inadequate funding, poor coordination among security agencies, corruption, weak intelligence systems, and difficult geographical terrain continue to limit the effectiveness of government interventions. Therefore, strengthening public administration and improving policy implementation remain essential for achieving lasting solutions to banditry and rural insecurity.

Challenges Facing Public Administration in Managing Banditry and Rural Insecurity

Public administration in Nigeria faces numerous challenges in its efforts to effectively manage banditry and rural insecurity. These challenges have significantly limited the capacity of government institutions to prevent, control, and respond to security threats in rural communities.

- i. **Inadequate Funding of Security Institutions:** Public administration in Nigeria is constrained by insufficient budgetary allocation to security agencies. This limits the ability of government to procure modern weapons, surveillance tools, communication equipment, and logistics needed for effective operations. As a result, security responses to banditry are often slow and ineffective, especially in remote rural areas.
- ii. **Weak Coordination Among Security Agencies:** There is often poor collaboration between the police, military, intelligence services, and paramilitary agencies. Inter-agency rivalry and lack of unified command structures lead to duplication of efforts and communication gaps. This weak coordination reduces the effectiveness of responses to rural insecurity and allows bandit groups to exploit institutional gaps.
- iii. **Corruption Within Public Institutions:** Corruption remains a major obstacle to effective public administration. Mismanagement and diversion of security funds weaken operational capacity. In some cases, bribery and compromise of officials undermine security operations, allowing criminals to evade arrest or prosecution. Closely linked with corruption is sabotage of information and infiltration by religious bigots.
- iv. **Inadequate Manpower and Poor Training:** Security agencies are often understaffed relative to the size of rural areas that require protection. In addition, many personnel lack adequate training in modern policing techniques, intelligence operations, and crisis management. This reduces their efficiency in combating sophisticated bandit networks.
- v. **Poor Intelligence Gathering and Information Sharing:** Effective security management depends on timely and accurate intelligence. However, weak community relations and poor inter-agency communication hinder intelligence flow. This makes it difficult for security agencies to anticipate attacks or respond proactively.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that public administration is a critical instrument in addressing banditry and rural insecurity in Nigeria. However, the effectiveness of public administrative institutions is significantly limited by institutional, operational, and socio-economic challenges. The persistence of banditry indicates that existing strategies have not fully addressed the root causes of insecurity, particularly poverty, unemployment, weak governance, and inadequate rural development. Therefore, achieving sustainable security in Nigeria requires a holistic approach that strengthens public administration, improves coordination among security agencies, and addresses the underlying socio-economic conditions that fuel banditry. Without effective administrative reforms and improved governance, efforts to combat rural insecurity may continue to yield limited results. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- i. Government should provide adequate budgetary allocations to security institutions to enhance their operational capacity, logistics, and welfare.
- ii. Administrative institutions responsible for security management should be strengthened through reforms that improve efficiency, accountability, and professionalism.
- iii. Security agencies should adopt integrated command structures and enhance cooperation to eliminate rivalry and improve coordinated responses to insecurity.

- iv. Government should invest in modern intelligence systems and strengthen community policing to ensure timely detection and prevention of criminal activities.
- v. Government should punish convicted bandits to serve as deterrence to others.

References

- Achumba, I. C., Ighomereho, O. S. and Akpor-Robaro, M. O. M. (2013). Security challenges in Nigeria and the implications for business activities and sustainable development. *Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development*, 4(2), 79–99.
- Adebayo, A. (2013). *Principles and Practice of Public Administration in Nigeria*. Ibadan: Spectrum Books.
- Blench, R. (2010). *Conflict between Pastoralists and Cultivators in Nigeria*. Abuja: DFID-Nigeria.
- International Crisis Group. (2020). *Violence in Nigeria's North West: Rolling Back the Mayhem*. Brussels: International Crisis Group.
- McGrew, A. (1988). Security and order: The changing nature of world politics. In J. Baylis & N. Rengger (Eds.), *Dilemmas of World Politics* (pp. 28–48). Oxford University Press.
- National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). (2022). *Nigeria Multidimensional Poverty Index Survey 2022*. Abuja: National Bureau of Statistics.
- Nwanegbo, C. J., and Odigbo, J. (2013). Security and national development in Nigeria: The threat of Boko Haram. *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(4), 285–291.
- Nwankwo, C., and Eze, R. (2019). Youth unemployment and insecurity in Nigeria: Implications for national development. *International Journal of Social Sciences and Management Research*, 5(3), 45–58.
- Okoli, A. C., and Lenshie, N. E. (2018). Nigeria: Nomadic migrantization and rural violence in the North-West region. *Conflict Studies Quarterly*, 25, 3–20.
- Okoli, A. C., and Okpaleke, F. N. (2014). Banditry and crisis of public safety in Nigeria: Issues in national security strategies. *European Scientific Journal*, 10(4), 350–362.
- Onimode, B. (2018). *Governance and Development Challenges in Nigeria*. Lagos: Malthouse Press.
- Onuoha, F. C. (2020). From pastoralism to banditry: Security challenges in Nigeria's North-West. *African Security Review*, 29(3), 255–270.
- Pfiffner, J. M., and Presthus, R. V. (1967). *Public Administration* (5th ed.). New York: Ronald Press.
- UNDP. (1994). *Human Development Report 1994*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). (2022). *Human Development Report*. New York: United Nations Development Programme.
- White, L. D. (1926). *Introduction to the Study of Public Administration*. New York: Macmillan.
- Wilson, W. (1887). The study of administration. *Political Science Quarterly*, 2(2), 197–222.
- Yusuf, M., and Abdullahi, A. (2021). Community policing and security management in Nigeria. *African Journal of Public Administration*, 8(2), 45–61.