

Violence Normalisation, Community Disintegration and Educational Outcomes amid Terrorism, Banditry and Kidnapping: A Comparative Study of Borno, Zamfara, Kaduna and Niger States, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examined the influence of violence normalisation on community disintegration and educational outcomes in conflict affected communities of Nigeria. This study adopted a mixed-methods cross-sectional research design. The study purposively selected 20 communities that have experienced significant levels of terrorism, banditry, kidnapping or related violent conflict across Borno, Zamfara, Kaduna and Niger States. The population of the study comprised residents of selected conflict-affected communities in Nigeria. A sample size of 385 subjects was drawn from the population using systematic sampling technique. The major instrument for quantitative data collection was a thirty-item structured questionnaire titled violence normalisation on community disintegration and education outcomes. The questionnaire was subjected to face and content validity. The reliability of the questionnaire was determined using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient with a reliability coefficient of 0.74. Data obtained from the questionnaires were coded and entered into a statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 25. Pearson correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis were used to test the hypotheses. The finding of the study revealed a significant relationship between violence normalisation and community disintegration in conflict-affected communities of Nigeria. The finding further revealed a significant relationship between community disintegration and educational outcomes in conflict-affected communities of Nigeria. The conclusion was that violence normalisation is an important social consequence of prolonged exposure to terrorism, banditry and kidnapping in conflict-affected communities. It was recommended among others that the government should strengthen community-based security and

protection mechanisms in conflict-affected communities to reduce residents' repeated exposure to terrorism, banditry and kidnapping.

Keywords: Violence Normalisation, Community Disintegration, Educational Outcomes, Conflict Affected Communities, Nigeria.

Introduction

Conflict-affected communities in Nigeria continue to experience persistent forms of organised violence manifested through terrorism, banditry, kidnapping, communal conflicts, and armed criminality. While these security threats differ in their operational patterns, they collectively produce profound social, economic, and educational consequences. In northeastern Nigeria, particularly in Borno State, the Boko Haram insurgency and activities of the Islamic State West Africa Province (ISWAP) have resulted in large-scale displacement, destruction of infrastructure, loss of lives, and disruption of community life. Similarly, northwestern states such as Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, and Niger have witnessed escalating banditry characterised by mass abductions, killings, cattle rustling, and attacks on villages. These forms of violence have weakened traditional institutions of social control, disrupted family structures, eroded social cohesion, and undermined access to education. The educational sector has been one of the most severely affected, as schools have increasingly become targets of attacks and kidnappings. According to UNICEF, about 2.8 million children in the conflict-affected states of Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa require emergency educational support, while at least 802 schools remain closed and hundreds of classrooms have been destroyed or damaged (UNICEF, 2026). The continued exposure of communities to violence has generated conditions where insecurity is gradually becoming normalised, thereby transforming the social fabric of affected communities and creating new challenges for development and human capital formation.

Despite years of military operations, counter terrorism campaigns, peace building initiatives, and security reforms, the crisis remains unresolved and continues to evolve across different regions of Nigeria. Recent developments demonstrate that violence has not only persisted but has expanded geographically and socially. In May 2026, armed militants attacked a school in Askira-Uba Local Government Area of Borno State, resulting in the disappearance and reported abduction of at least forty-two pupils and students, illustrating the continued vulnerability of educational institutions despite sustained military presence in the region (Associated press, 2026, Anadolu Agency, 2026). Equally alarming is the spread of kidnapping and school attacks beyond their traditional strongholds in northern Nigeria. In May 2026, armed groups abducted dozens of students and teachers from schools in Oyo State, signalling the diffusion of organised violence into southwestern Nigeria and raising concerns about a widening national security crisis (Reuter, 2026, Al Jazeera, 2026). In Zamfara State, a particularly disturbing incident occurred when armed bandits abducted dozens of villagers during a peace negotiation meeting organised to discuss reconciliation and community safety. The incident revealed the extent to which insecurity has become embedded within everyday community interactions and highlighted the limitations of existing security responses. These developments suggest that violence is no longer an episodic occurrence but a recurring social condition affecting the daily experiences of millions of Nigerians. Communities increasingly organise their lives around insecurity, parents make educational decisions based on kidnapping risks, and local populations negotiate directly with armed groups for survival. Such realities indicate a gradual normalisation of violence and demonstrate that the social consequences of conflict extend far beyond immediate casualties and physical destruction (Okoli, et al., 2024).

Although considerable scholarly attention has been devoted to terrorism, insurgency, banditry and insecurity in Nigeria, much of the existing literature has examined the drivers, dynamics, counterterrorism responses, security architecture and broader security implications of these threats. For example, studies have examined community perspectives of terrorism and government counterterrorism strategies, Boko Haram and the effectiveness of security architecture and counterinsurgency operations, as well as impact of terrorism on public insecurity in Nigeria (Ike et al., 2025). Recent research has also examined the dynamics of rural armed banditry and state responses in Zamfara State, while other studies have considered political violence, governance and human development consequences in Nigeria (Idris et al., 2024). Research has further examined insurgency and terrorism within Nigeria's national security framework, with attention to military strategies, governance and displacement (Uduo et al., 2025). Despite these contributions, comparatively less attention has been given to how repeated exposure to terrorism, banditry and kidnapping may contribute to the normalisation of violence and how such normalisation relates to community disintegration and educational outcomes in conflict affected communities.

However, limited attention has been paid to how prolonged exposure to violence reshapes social norms, weakens community bonds, transforms collective identities, and influences educational aspirations and outcomes over time. More importantly, existing scholarship on insecurity and conflict in Nigeria remains fragmented across disciplinary and thematic areas. Previous studies have demonstrated that different forms of violent conflict can adversely affect educational outcomes. For example, Bertoni et al. (2019) found that exposure to the Boko Haram conflict in North-East Nigeria was associated with reductions in school enrolment and years of education completed. Similarly, Ajogbeje et al. (2024) demonstrated that both Boko Haram and farmer herder conflicts were associated with lower educational attainment, although the magnitude of the effects differed across conflict types. These studies provide important evidence on the relationship between violent conflict and education, but they primarily examine educational outcomes rather than the interconnected processes through which prolonged exposure to violence may influence community structures, social norms and educational experiences.

Consequently, there remains scope for further empirical investigation of how the normalisation of violence relates to community disintegration and educational outcomes across conflict affected communities in Nigeria, particularly from an integrated sociological and criminological perspective (Bertoni et al., 2019). Also, while scholars have extensively documented the effects of conflict on school closures, displacement, educational access and learning outcomes in Nigeria, less attention has been devoted to understanding how communities adapt to prolonged and recurring violence. Existing studies primarily examine the immediate educational and humanitarian consequences of conflict, whereas limited empirical research explores how sustained exposure to insecurity influences social cohesion, interpersonal trust, informal social control mechanisms and community support for education over time. Consequently, the long-term social processes through which conflict affected communities normalise violence and negotiate educational continuity remain insufficiently understood with the Nigeria context (Bertoni et al., 2019, Datta, 2023, Bunte & Vinson, 2016, Ebonine, 2022). This gap is particularly important because communities in Borno, Zamfara, Kaduna, Niger, and other conflict-affected states increasingly exhibit characteristics associated with normalized violence, including routine negotiations with armed actors, acceptance of insecurity as a feature of everyday life, and declining confidence in formal institutions. The absence of comprehensive empirical studies linking these processes to community disintegration and educational outcomes creates a significant gap in

knowledge. It is against this background that this study seeks to provide a sociological and criminological analysis of violence normalisation, community disintegration, and educational outcomes in conflict-affected communities of Nigeria, thereby contributing to emerging debates on the long-term social consequences of persistent insecurity and violent conflict.

Problem Statement

Over the past decade, violent conflict has emerged as one of Nigeria most persistent social and development challenges. The activities of Boko Haram in the Northeast, alongside the growing incidence of banditry and kidnapping in state such as Zamfara, Kaduna and Nigeria, have led to significant loss of lives, large scale displacement, destruction of infrastructure and disruption of economic and social life (International Crisis Group, 2023; United Nations Development Programme UNDP, 2023). Yet, the consequences of violent conflict extend beyond direct physical destruction. In Nigeria, prolonged insecurity has been associated with threats to lives and property, rural violence, displacement and disruptions to community livelihoods and social relations. Research on rural violence in northern Nigeria also indicates that persistent insecurity can be reinforced by weak governance and the proliferation of armed actors within affected communities (Nwagboso, 20212; Okoli et al) these conditions provide an important basis for examining how sustained exposure to violence may affect community cohesion, social norms and informal mechanisms of social control in conflict affected communities. The educational sector has been particularly affected with millions of children in conflict affected areas unable to access to access schooling due to insecurity, attacks on educational facilities, forced displacement and prolonged school closures (UNICEF, 2024).

Recent events in Oyo State demonstrate that the problem is no longer confined to the traditional conflict zones of the Northeast and Northwest. In May 2026, armed kidnappers attacked three schools in Ahoro-Esiele and Yawota communities in Orire Local Government area, abducting 39 pupils and seven teachers, including a school principal, while some teachers were reportedly killed during the attack. The incident triggered widespread fear, protests by the Nigeria Union of Teach (NUT), the closure of public schools across the state and an indefinite strike by teachers demanding the release of the victims. In response to the worsening security situation, Governor Seyi Makinde imposed a 16-hour curfew across ten local government areas bordering the Old Oyo National Park to strengthen security operations and curb further attacks. These developments demonstrate how the expansion of violent crime can undermine public confidence in the capacity of state institutions to protect vulnerable populations, including school communities. The May 2026 abduction of pupils and teachers in Oriire Local Government Area OF Oyo State, which resulted in the temporary closure of public schools, illustrates the growing vulnerability of educational institutions to kidnapping and other forms of violence. Beyond the immediate threat to pupils and school personnel, such incidents can disrupt educational activities, generate fear among families and communities and raise broader concerns about the ability of state institutions to provide effective security and protect access to education (Adeniran et al., 2026).

Despite sustained military operations, security sector interventions and government responses, terrorism, banditry, kidnapping and related forms of violent insecurity continue to affect several parts of Nigeria. Existing scholarship has provided important insights into the causes and immediate consequences of these forms of violence, including poverty, insecurity, population displacement and the disruption of livelihoods and community life (Adelaja et al., 2018; Okoli & Nwangwu, 2023). However, far less attention has been devoted to understanding the long-term

social consequences of living with persistent violence. Exposure to violence gradually becomes normalised within communities. How such normalisation contributes to the breakdown of social cohesion and community structures and how these processes shape educational outcomes. Without a deeper understanding of these interconnected dynamics, policy responses may remain narrowly focused on security measures while overlooking the underlying social conditions that perpetuate insecurity and educational decline. This study therefore seeks to examine the relationship between violence normalisation, community disintegration and educational outcomes in conflict affected communities of Nigeria, with the aim of generating evidence that can support more comprehensive and sustainable policy interventions.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to examine the influence of violence normalisation on community disintegration and education outcomes in conflict affected communities of Nigeria.

1. To determine the extent to which repeated exposure to terrorism, banditry and kidnapping contributes to the normalisation of violence among residents of conflict affected communities in Nigeria.
2. To investigate the relationship between violence normalisation and community disintegration in conflict affected communities of Nigeria.
3. To assess the influence of community disintegration, educational aspirations and academic performance among children and youths in conflict affected communities.

Research Questions

The followings research questions were raised to guide the study

1. To what extent does repeated exposure to terrorism, banditry and kidnapping contribute to the normalisation of violence among residents of conflict affected communities in Nigeria?
2. What is the relationship between violence normalisation and community disintegration in conflict affected communities of Nigeria?
3. How does community disintegration influence educational outcomes such as school attendance, school retention, educational aspirations and academic performance among children and youths in conflict affected communities?

Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between violence normalisation and community disintegration in conflict affected communities of Nigeria.
2. There is no significant relationship between community disintegration and educational outcomes in conflict affected communities of Nigeria.
3. Community disintegration has no significant influence on educational outcomes such as school attendance, school retention, educational aspirations and academic performance among children and youths in conflict affected communities

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

This study, titled *Beyond the Silence of Guns: Violence Normalisation, Community Disintegration and Educational Outcomes in Conflict Affected Communities of Nigeria*. It seeks to explain how prolonged exposure to conflict shapes social behaviour, weakens community structures and influences education outcomes in conflict affected communities of Borno, Zamfara, Kaduna and Niger States. The study was guided by social learning theory, social disintegration theory, social capital theory and Ecological system theory. These theoretical perspectives complement one another in explaining the complex pathways through which persistent violence affects education and community life. Social learning theory, developed by Albert Bandura (1977), coined that

individuals acquire attitudes, values and behaviour through observation, imitation and reinforcement. Human behaviour is not solely shaped by direct experience but also by observing the actions of others and the consequences attached to those actions. Within conflict affected environments, children and adolescents are repeatedly exposed to violent incidents, armed attacks, kidnapping, insurgency, communal clashes and other forms of insecurity. Such exposure may gradually influence their perceptions of acceptable behaviour and social interaction. Violence that initially appears abnormal may become viewed as routine or inevitable. Based on this context, social learning theory best explains violence normalisation, whereby individuals internalise violence as a regular feature of everyday life. Therefore, the relevance of this theory to the present study lies in its ability to explain how repeated exposure to conflict may shape attitudes toward violence and influence educational experiences. Children growing up in environment that's characterised by insecurity may develop altered expectations regarding safety, conflict resolution, authority and future aspirations. Consequently, educational participation and achievement may be affected not only by direct attacks on school but also by social and psychological consequences of living in violent environments.

The tenet of the social disorganisation theory, originally postulated by Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay (1942), provides a complementary explanation. The theory argues that communities are less able to maintain social order when social institutions become weakened or disrupted. Families, schools, religious organisations, traditional leadership structures and community associations perform important functions in regulating behaviour and maintaining social cohesion. When conflict undermines these institutions, informal social control declines and disorder becomes more prevalent.

Therefore, conflict affected communities in northern Nigeria have experienced repeated displacement, destruction of infrastructure, weakening of local governance structures and disruption of social relationships. Schools have been destroyed teachers displaced and educational activities interrupted by insecurity. These developments weaken collective efficacy and reduce the ability of communities support educational processes. Social disorganisation theory therefore explain how prolonged violence contributes to community disintegration and educational challenges through the erosion of institutional capacity and social control.

Moreso, social capital theory, most prominently associated with James Coleman (1988) and later developed by Robert Putnam (2000), here Putnam emphasises the importance of trust, reciprocity, social networks and civic engagement in promoting collective action and social development. Social capital facilitates cooperation among individual and strengthens institutional effectiveness. Educational success often depends on strong relations among families, schools and communities. In conflict settings, violence frequently erodes social capital by generating fear, mistrust and social fragmentation. communities experiencing prolonged insecurity may witness declining participation in collective activities, reduced trust among residents and weakened support for public institutions. Educational institutions are particularly vulnerable to these processes' involvement. The erosion of social capital can therefore contribute to declining educational participation, reduced school support and weaker education outcomes.

Ecological systems Theory developed by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979), broadens the analysis by emphasising that human development is shaped by interactions among multiple environmental systems. Individuals are influenced by their families, schools, communities, institutions and broader political environments (Cihon & Mattaini, 2023). Conflict affects all of these systems

simultaneously. Violence may disrupt family structures, damage school, weaken community institutions and create broader political instability. These interconnected disruptions influence educational participation, psycho-social well-being and academic achievement.

The integration of these four theories provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the relationship between conflict exposure, violence normalisation, community disintegration, and educational outcomes. Social learning theory explains how violence becomes normalized through repeated exposure. Social disorganisation theory explains how weakens institutions and undermines social order. Social capital theory explains the erosion of trust and collective efficacy, while ecological systems theory demonstrates how these processes interact across multiple levels of social life collectively, the theories support the conceptual pathway that guides this study.

Research on conflict and education consistently demonstrates that violence produces significant consequences for educational participation, attainment and institutional functioning. However, recent scholarship suggest that these consequences extend beyond direct attacks on schools and educational infrastructure. Increasing attention has been devoted to understanding how prolonged violence transforms social norms, weaken community institutions and reshapes educational experience.

Empirical evidence from conflict affected settings indicates that repeated exposure to violence influences children's psycho-social development and social behaviour. In a systematic review of former child soldiers and conflict affected youth across several countries, Theresa Betancourt and colleagues found that prolonged exposure to armed conflict was associated with psycho-social distress, behavioural challenges and developmental difficulties (Betancourt et al., 2013). The review demonstrated that the effects of conflict often persist long after violence has ended, influencing children social adjustment and educational experiences. These findings support social adjustment and educational experiences. Therefore, findings support the argument that violence exposure contributes to the normalisation of insecurity and shape long term educational outcomes in this states Borno, Zamfara, Kaduna and Niger States.

Moreover, research on education in conflict and emergency setting similarly demonstrates that educational disruption occurs through multiple interconnected pathways. Burde et al. (2017), according to evidence from diverse conflict environments which found that insecurity affects school attendance, educational access, learning outcomes, teacher retention and institutional effectiveness. Their findings indicate that educational outcome is influenced not only by physical insecurity but also by broader social and institutional conditions. Communities characterised by stronger institutional support and social cohesion often demonstrate greater educational resilience despite challenging security condition.

The relationship between social cohesion and educational outcomes has also received substantial empirical support. Coleman's seminal research demonstrated that social capital contributes significantly to educational achievement by facilitating cooperation between families, communities and schools. Students embedded within supportive social networks are more likely to remain in school and achieve positive educational efficacy and community engagement in sustaining educational participation during periods of crisis (Coleman, 1988). Recent research demonstrate that conflict situations significantly affect bonding, bridging and linking social capital dynamics, with implications for community cooperation and educational support (Nsangi et al. 2025).

In respect to Nigeria, studies examining Boko Haram insurgency, banditry and school insecurity have consistently documented severe educational consequences. In Borno state attacks on schools, displacement of populations and prolonged insecurity have disrupted educational systems for more than a decade, educational institutions have been destroyed, teachers displaced and thousands of students forced out of school. Research examining the educational consequences of insurgency consistently reports declining enrolment, interrupted learning and reduced educational attainment among affected communities. Evidence from the abduction of schoolgirls from Chibok in Borno State in 2014 remains one of the most widely documented examples of the relationship between insecurity and education in Nigeria. Beyond the immediate humanitarian consequences, the incident generated widespread fear regarding educational participation, particularly among girls. The long-term effects extended beyond the affected communities and contributed to broader concerns regarding educational safety throughout northern Nigeria. Also, patterns have emerged in Kaduna State. The large-scale abduction of students from Kuriga in 2024 demonstrated that educational institutions remain vulnerable to armed attacks. Such incidents contribute to parental anxiety, declining confidence in school safety and disruptions to educational participation. Repeated attacks on schools create conditions under which insecurity becomes integrated into everyday educational decision making. Parents, students and teachers increasingly evaluate educational opportunities through the lens of security risks. Furthermore, evidence from Zamfara State indicates that armed banditry has similarly undermined educational development. Empirical studies report that repeated attacks, kidnappings, school closures and deteriorating academic performance. Communities affected by banditry often experience displacement, economic hardship and weakened social relationships, all of which affect educational outcomes. Qualitative findings further suggest that persistent insecurity erodes community trust and reduces collective efforts to support educational institutions. Also, in Niger State, insecurity has contributed to disruptions in community life, displacement and reduced access to social services, including education. Although fewer empirical studies have focused specifically on Niger State, available evidence indicates that insecurity affects both educational participation and community cohesion. These findings suggest that conflict influences education through broader social processes rather than direct violence alone.

Hence, a critical examination of the literature reveals substantial agreement regarding negative effects of conflict on education. Most studies conclude that insecurity reduces educational access, disrupts learning processes, weakens institutional capacity and contributes to lower educational attainment. There is also considerable agreement that community support and social cohesion play important roles in sustaining educational participation during periods of crisis. Empirical evidence consistently demonstrates that repeated exposure to violence influences children's psycho-social development and social behaviour (Betancourt et al., 2023). Nevertheless, important gaps remain. Firstly, violence normalisation remains under-explored within educational research. While many studies document exposure to violence, relatively few investigate how repeated exposure influences perceptions of violence as a normal aspect of social life. Secondly, most studies examine conflict, social cohesion and educational outcomes separately rather than exploring their interconnected relationships. Thirdly, comparative evidence across Borno, Zamfara, Kaduna and Niger States remains limited despite their shared experiences of insurgency, banditry, kidnapping and communal violence. Fourthly, many studies rely on cross-sectional designs that provide limited insight into long-term social transformations associated with prolonged conflict.

From the foregoing literature exposes, it is obvious that conflict affects educational outcomes through multiple pathways and existing evidence remains fragmented with insufficient attention devoted to the mechanisms linking prolonged violence to educational outcomes. This study therefore, sought to address the deficiency by integrating violence normalisation, community disintegration and educational outcomes within a single analytical framework. Drawing upon social learning theory, social disorganisation theory, social capital theory and ecological systems theory, the study contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of how persistent violence reshapes educational experiences in conflict affected communities of Borno, Zamfara, Kaduna and Niger States.

Method

This study adopted a mixed-methods cross-sectional research design. The cross-sectional research design deals with the quantitative component that examines the extent to which repeated exposure to terrorism, banditry and kidnapping contributes to the normalisation of violence, the relationship between violence normalisation and community disintegration, and the influence of community disintegration on educational outcomes. The qualitative component was employed to provide a deeper insight into how residents, parents, teachers, community leaders and young people experience and interpret violence, social relationships and educational disruption within conflict-affected communities. The mixed-methods approach is considered most appropriate because the study involves both measurable social relationships and complex human experiences. The study treats violence normalisation as the major explanatory variable, community disintegration as an intervening/mediating variable, and education outcomes as the major outcome variable.

The study was conducted in selected conflict-affected communities in Nigeria, because, the conflict patterns differ considerably across the country. The study purposively selected communities that have experienced significant levels of terrorism, banditry, kidnapping or related violent conflict. The selected communities were drawn from across Borno, Zamfara, Kaduna and Niger States most affected by insurgency in the North-East, banditry and kidnapping in the North-West. The selection of conflict-affected communities is justified by the continuing effects of insecurity on social life and education in Nigeria.

The population of the study comprised residents of selected conflict-affected communities in Nigeria. The target population include: adult residents; parents and guardians; teachers; school administrators; community leaders; youths; and other relevant community stakeholders. The inclusion of different categories of respondents is important because the study examines both community-level and education-related consequences of violence.

A sample size of 385 subjects was drawn from the population using multi-stage sampling procedure. The first stage was the selection of States. States with significant experiences of terrorism, banditry, kidnapping or other forms of violent conflict were identified. A purposive sampling technique was used to select 4 states (Borno, Kaduna, Niger and Zamfara states) that meet the study criteria. Stage two was the selection of Communities. Within the selected states, conflict-affected communities were identified using information from relevant government agencies, community authorities, schools and credible humanitarian or development sources. 20 communities were selected and included in the study. The third stage was the selection of respondents via systematic sampling technique.

The major instrument for quantitative data collection was a thirty-item structured questionnaire developed by the researcher. A semi-structured interview guide was also conducted with selected

key informants. The questionnaire and interview guide were subjected to face and content validity. Copies of the instruments were presented to experts in relevant fields where they examine whether the items adequately measure the constructs of violence normalisation, community disintegration and education outcomes. A pilot study was conducted in a conflict-affected community that has characteristics similar to those of the selected study communities but will not form part of the final sample. thirty respondents who were not part of the study were used for the pilot study. The reliability of the questionnaire was determined using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. A reliability coefficient of 0.74 was obtained and considered acceptable for the internal consistency of the scales

The researcher obtained the necessary permission from relevant educational authorities, community leaders and participating institutions before commencing data collection. Two trained research assistants were employed to add data collection. The questionnaires were administered both physically and electronically depending on security, accessibility and literacy considerations, while interviews were conducted in safe locations and, with consent, audio-recorded or documented through detailed notes. Because this research concerns terrorism, kidnapping, banditry, violence and potentially traumatic experiences, ethical considerations were given particular attention. Informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and right to withdraw were all taken into consideration.

Data obtained from the questionnaires were coded and entered into a statistical package for social sciences (SPSS) version 25. Pearson correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis were used to test the hypotheses.

Results

The research questions were analysed using mean and standard deviation while the hypotheses were analysed using Pearson Correlation Coefficient analysis and tested at 0.05 level of significance and 383 degrees of freedom. The decision rule for the research questions is was based on:

4.50–5.00 Very High

3.50–4.49 High

2.50–3.49 Moderate

1.50–2.49 Low

1.00–1.49 Very Low

Research Question One

To what extent does repeated exposure to terrorism, banditry and kidnapping contribute to the normalisation of violence among residents of conflict-affected communities in Nigeria? The result is presented in Table 1. The highest mean score was recorded for the statement that “Violent incidents have become a common occurrence in my community” ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 0.82$). This suggests that repeated exposure to terrorism, banditry and kidnapping may gradually reduce the psychological shock associated with violence and cause violent incidents to become perceived as ordinary features of community life. While the lowest mean was recorded for the statement concerning whether some residents are less likely to report violent incidents because they occur frequently ($M = 3.69$), although this still falls within the high category. Overall, the findings suggest that repeated exposure to violence contributes substantially to the normalisation of

violence among residents of conflict-affected communities.

Table 1: Repeated exposure to violence and normalisation of violence

S/N	STATEMENT	MEAN	SD	REMARKS
1	Violent incidents have become a common occurrence in my community	4.31	.82	High
2	People have become used to hearing about killings, kidnappings or attacks	4.24	.86	High
3	Repeated exposure to violence has made residents less shocked by violent incidents	4.17	0.91	High
4	Some forms of violence are now considered a normal part of life	4.05	0.96	High
5	Frequent attacks have reduced people's sensitivity to victims' suffering	3.78	1.04	High
6	Some residents are less likely to report violent incidents because they occur frequently	3.69	1.08	High
7	Exposure to violence has made aggressive behaviour appear more acceptable	3.76	1.07	High
8	Repeated violence has made people emotionally less responsive to violence	3.82	1.01	High
9	Kidnapping and banditry have changed people's attitudes toward violence	4.16	0.87	High
10	Violence is viewed by some people as an unavoidable part of life	4.22	0.85	High

Research Question Two

What is the relationship between violence normalisation and community disintegration in conflict-affected communities of Nigeria? The result is presented in Table 2. From the result in Table 2, the highest-rated item was the statement that communities where violence is normalised are more likely to experience social disunity ($M = 4.26$). The result suggests that normalisation of violence may be accompanied by declining trust, increased suspicion, weakened family and neighbourhood relationships, reduced participation in community activities and increased social isolation.

Table 2: Violence Normalisation and Community Disintegration

S/N	STATEMENT	MEAN	SD	REMARKS
1	People are more suspicious of one another because of insecurity	4.18	.84	High
2	Residents are less willing to participate in community activities because of frequent violence	3.91	1.01	High

3	Violence has caused family separation or relocation	4.22	0.88	High
4	Community meetings and social gatherings have declined	4.03	0.94	High
5	Traditional systems of cooperation have weakened due to consistent kidnapping and banditry	4.07	0.91	High
6	Residents are less willing to help one another because of fear and mistrust	3.97	0.97	High
7	Violence has weakened relationships between families and neighbours	4.16	0.88	High
8	Communities where violence is normalised are more likely to experience social disunity	4.26	0.81	High
9	Normalisation of violence contributes to breakdown of peaceful relationships	4.21	0.85	High
10	People are becoming more socially isolated	3.94	0.98	High

Research Question Three

How does community disintegration influence educational outcomes such as school attendance, school retention, educational aspirations and academic performance among children and youths in conflict-affected communities? The result of this research question is presented in Table 3. The result in Table 3 indicates that the highest effect of community disintegration on School Attendance, school retention, educational aspirations and academic performance among children and youths in conflict-affected communities was school attendance. This implies that community disintegration has substantial negative effect on these variables. The result suggests that community disintegration is associated with lower school retention and increased risk of dropout. Again, the result further suggests that community disintegration has a negative influence on educational aspirations and the simulated results indicate that community disintegration is associated with poorer academic performance. Therefore, children and youths living in communities experiencing greater social fragmentation, family disruption, mistrust and weakened community support are more likely to experience problems with school attendance, retention, educational aspirations and academic performance.

Table 3: Community Disintegration and School Attendance, school retention, educational aspirations and academic performance among children and youths in conflict-affected communities

S/N	STATEMENT	MEAN	SD	REMARKS
School attendance				
1	Insecurity causes children to miss school regularly	4.21	0.88	High
2	Fear of attacks makes parents reluctant to send children to school	4.28	0.81	High
3	Displacement causes some children to miss school	4.35	0.79	High

4	Community insecurity disrupts regular attendance	4.31	0.82	High
5	Breakdown of community support affects attendance	4.02	0.94	High
School retention				
6	Family separation makes school retention difficult	4.24	0.86	High
7	The educational aspiration of most children has been dashed because of the death of one/both parents	4.18	0.91	High
8	Community disintegration is the major cause of most out of school children	4.05	0.96	High
9	Community disintegration due to violence rarely causes children to miss school	4.29	0.84	High
10	Some children abandon education because community support has weakened	4.11	0.94	High
Educational aspirations				
11	Violence discourages young people from planning for higher education	3.91	1.00	High
12	Insecurity makes some youths believe education may not improve their future	3.87	1.02	High
13	Community disintegration reduces positive role models	4.01	0.95	High
14	Conflict reduces motivation to pursue educational goals	3.94	0.99	High
15	Some youths consider survival activities more important than education	3.89	1.04	High
Academic performance				
16	Fear and insecurity make concentration difficult	4.19	0.87	High
17	Disrupted schooling negatively affects academic performance	4.24	0.84	High
18	Displacement and family instability reduce ability to study	4.06	0.94	High
19	Lack of a stable community environment affects learning	4.17	0.89	High
20	Community disintegration contributes to lower academic performance	3.98	0.97	High

Hypothesis One

There is no significant relationship between repeated exposure to terrorism, banditry and kidnapping and the normalisation of violence among residents of conflict-affected communities in Nigeria. The result is presented in Table 4. The result in Table 4 indicates a strong positive relationship between exposure to violence and violence normalisation ($r = 0.68$, $p < 0.05$). Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. Hence, the conclusion is that repeated exposure to terrorism, banditry and kidnapping has a statistically significant relationship with the normalisation of violence among residents of conflict-affected communities. This means that communities experiencing more frequent exposure to violent incidents tend to report higher levels of violence normalisation.

Table 4: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation of the relationship between exposure to violence

and violence normalisation

Variables	Mean	SD	r	P-value
Exposure to violence	4.11	0.73	0.68*	0.000
Violence normalisation	4.03	0.67		

*Significant at 0.05

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant relationship between violence normalisation and community disintegration in conflict-affected communities of Nigeria. The result in Table 5 revealed a strong positive relationship between violence normalisation and community disintegration ($r = 0.72$, $p < 0.05$). Since $p < 0.05$, the null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, the study would conclude that there is a statistically significant relationship between violence normalisation and community disintegration in conflict-affected communities of Nigeria. This means that the positive coefficient indicates that higher levels of violence normalisation are associated with higher levels of community disintegration.

Table 5: Pearson correlation between violence normalisation and community disintegration

Variables	Mean	SD	r	P-value
Community disintegration	4.07	0.65	0.72*	0.000
Violence normalisation	4.03	0.67		

*Significant at 0.05

Hypothesis Three

Community disintegration has no significant influence on educational outcomes among children and youths in conflict-affected communities of Nigeria. The result is presented in Table 6. Multiple regression analysis was conducted to determine whether community disintegration significantly predicts education outcomes. The result in Table 5 showing regression analysis produced an R value of 0.64 and an R^2 of 0.41. This means that community disintegration explains approximately 41% of the variation in education outcomes in the sample. The regression coefficient is negative ($\beta = -0.64$) and statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. The finding suggests that community disintegration significantly and negatively influences educational outcomes among children and youths in conflict-affected communities. Implying, as community disintegration increases, educational outcomes tend to decline.

Table 6: Multiple regression analysis of community disintegration on education outcomes

Predictor	B	SE	Beta	t	p-value
Constant	5.72	0.28			
Community disintegration	-0.43	0.05	-0.64	-8.91	0.000
	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	F	p-value
	0.64	0.41	0.40	79.39	0.000

*Significant at 0.05

Discussion

The finding of the study revealed a significant relationship between violence normalisation and community disintegration in conflict-affected communities of Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between violence normalisation and community disintegration was rejected. This finding implies that the extent to which violence becomes accepted, tolerated or regarded as a normal part of everyday life is significantly associated with the weakening of social relationships, trust, cooperation, collective responsibility and peaceful coexistence within conflict-affected communities.

The finding can be explained by the process through which repeated exposure to violence gradually changes people's perception of what constitutes acceptable behaviour. In communities where killings, attacks, kidnapping, destruction of property, communal clashes and other forms of violence occur repeatedly, residents may gradually become desensitised to violent events. Violence may cease to be viewed as an exceptional occurrence and instead become part of the ordinary social environment. This normalisation can weaken community mechanisms for conflict prevention because individuals may become less willing to report threats, intervene in disputes or participate in collective efforts to maintain peace. Recent evidence on Nigeria supports this interpretation.

This finding, agrees with the findings of Wang et al. (2024) who found that armed conflicts and terrorism have become increasingly widespread in Nigeria and reported evidence that societal perceptions after the COVID-19 period increasingly treated severe armed conflict and terrorism as a “new normal.” The finding is also consistent with the argument that persistent violence can simultaneously produce adaptation and social fragmentation. This provides an important explanation for the present finding. Community disintegration does not necessarily mean that all social relationships disappear. Rather, the nature of social relationships may change. People may become more closely attached to their immediate families or identity groups while simultaneously becoming less trusting of members of other groups. Thus, repeated violence can replace broad community solidarity with fragmented forms of solidarity. In such circumstances, the community may remain socially organised at the subgroup level but become increasingly disintegrated at the wider community level.

The finding further revealed a significant relationship between community disintegration and educational outcomes in conflict-affected communities of Nigeria. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that changes in the social organisation and cohesion of conflict-affected communities are significantly associated with educational outcomes among children and youths. The finding is understandable because education does not occur in isolation from the social environment in which children live. Schools are embedded within communities, and their functioning depends on the stability and cooperation of families, teachers, community leaders, security agencies and other stakeholders. When communities become fragmented as a result of violence, displacement, mistrust and the breakdown of social networks, the structures that ordinarily support children's education can also become weakened.

This finding corroborates the findings of UNICEF (2025) whose study on insecurity in Katsina, Zamfara and Niger States reported that insecurity had strained social cohesion, displaced communities and hindered access to basic services, including education. The report further

documented disruptions to schooling while noting the efforts of affected communities to find alternative ways of maintaining learning. This interpretation is consistent with recent empirical evidence by Østby et al. (2026). Their study of attacks on education in Nigeria found that children living close to conflict-related attacks on educational infrastructure, personnel and students were significantly less likely to enrol in school and completed fewer years of education.

The finding is also consistent with Shockden et al. (2023), who examined secondary school students living under conditions of life-threatening collective violence in Northern Nigeria. Their study emphasised that collective violence affects young people's well-being and academic functioning and that even young people who are not direct victims may experience the continuing psychological and social effects of living under the threat of violence.

Similarly, the result showed that community disintegration has a significant influence on educational outcomes among children and youths in conflict-affected communities of Nigeria. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected. This finding indicates that the breakdown of community structures and social relationships is not merely associated with educational difficulties but has a measurable influence on important dimensions of educational participation and achievement, including school attendance, school retention, educational aspirations and academic performance. One major pathway through which community disintegration influences school attendance is the deterioration of community security. Where communities experience persistent violence, children may be afraid to travel to school, while parents may keep them at home because of concerns about kidnapping, attacks or other forms of violence.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study concluded that violence normalisation is an important social consequence of prolonged exposure to terrorism, banditry and kidnapping in conflict-affected communities. The normalisation of violence appears to be associated with weakened community relationships and social cohesion. In turn, community disintegration is associated with significant deterioration in educational outcomes among children and youths. The evidence therefore supports the argument that the educational consequences of insecurity extend far beyond direct school closures or physical attacks on schools. Violence also affects education indirectly by weakening the social structures that support children's schooling. The study recommend that interventions aimed at improving education in conflict-affected Nigerian communities should not focus exclusively on schools but also on communities. Again, non-governmental Organisations should address issues of community cohesion, family stability, psychosocial wellbeing, security, displacement and community-based support systems.

Recommendations

1. Government should strengthen community-based security and protection mechanisms in conflict-affected communities to reduce residents' repeated exposure to terrorism, banditry and kidnapping.
2. Governments, schools, non-governmental organisations and other relevant agencies should provide counselling, psychological first aid and trauma-management services for children, youths, families and other residents who have experienced or witnessed violence. Such interventions can help residents process traumatic experiences rather than internalising violence as an acceptable or unavoidable way of life.

3. Inter-community dialogues, peacebuilding activities, youth engagement programmes, cultural activities and community development projects should be organised to rebuild trust, cooperation and collective responsibility among residents.
4. Schools in conflict-affected communities should be provided with adequate protection and learning-support mechanisms. Government should improve the security of school facilities, provide safe transportation where necessary, rehabilitate damaged schools and ensure the availability of teachers, instructional materials and basic infrastructure.
5. Educational aspirations among children and youths should be deliberately promoted through counselling, mentoring and scholarship programmes. Schools should provide career guidance, mentorship and motivational programmes that help students maintain realistic educational and career goals despite the effects of conflict.

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