Impact of Banditry on Food Production in Shiroro Local Government Area, Niger State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Banditry has emerged as one of the most serious security challenges confronting Nigeria, particularly in rural communities where violent attacks, kidnapping, cattle rustling, and destruction of property have negatively affected agricultural activities and food production. This worsening situation necessitated the present study which examined the impact of banditry on food production in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State. The study specifically investigated the nature and prevalence of banditry, its effects on agricultural production and food security, measures adopted to address the menace, and the challenges affecting effective responses. The study adopted the Political Economy Theory because it explains how poverty, unemployment, inequality, weak governance, and competition over scarce resources contribute to insecurity and criminal activities in society. A survey research method was utilized through the administration of questionnaires and in-depth interviews. Data collected through questionnaires were analyzed using simple percentage, while interview responses and secondary sources were analyzed qualitatively through content analysis. Findings revealed that banditry has become widespread, organized, and destructive, resulting in fear, displacement, abandonment of farmlands, and severe threats to food production in Shiroro Local Government Area. The study further showed that banditry reduced food output, discouraged farming activities, increased production costs, and threatened food security and livelihoods. Community vigilante groups and resettlement programmes emerged as more effective mitigation measures, whereas security deployment and financial support remained inadequate. Persistent challenges identified included inadequate funding, poor equipment, poverty, corruption, and political interference. The study concluded that sustainable solutions require community-based security, technology-driven surveillance, youth empowerment, accountability, and depoliticized security operations. The study therefore recommends among others that government should strengthen community-based security structures by supporting vigilante groups, expand youth empowerment programmes through agricultural loans and vocational training, and ensure transparency and accountability in security operations free from corruption and political interference.

Keywords: Banditry, Food Production, Food Security, Shiroro Local Government Area, Niger State.

INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

The phenomenon of banditry has emerged as one of the most enduring and complex security challenges of the 21st century, reshaping how states and communities conceptualize safety, development, and livelihood sustainability. Across the globe, criminal networks that engage in banditry, characterized by armed robbery, extortion, kidnapping, and terroristic violence, have repeatedly undermined the socio-economic foundations of vulnerable populations. In Latin America, for example, organized bandit groups, such as Los Zetas in

Mexico and the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) in Brazil, have disrupted rural economic activities, forced mass migration, and altered land use patterns (Bergman, 2023). In parts of Asia, armed gangs, such as the Golden Triangle militias and certain Yakuza factions, impose de facto control over remote areas, interrupting agricultural cycles and weakening state authority (Chowdhury, 2024). In sub-Saharan Africa, banditry has evolved beyond sporadic raiding to a persistent form of criminal insurgency that has profound impacts on local communities, economies, and especially agricultural systems.

In a global context, insecurity disrupts the normative functioning of societies by introducing elements of fear and unpredictability that discourage investment, employment, and food production. Rural districts, often dependent on farming and livestock rearing, are particularly susceptible. The relationship between insecurity and agriculture is not linear; it is cyclical. Increased bandit attacks limit farmers' access to their fields, reduce seasonal agricultural activities such as planting and harvesting, and force entire communities to relocate, all of which diminish agricultural output and exacerbate food shortages. As documented in Africa generally, banditry interrupts supply chains, displaces rural labor, and inflates food prices, thereby worsening food insecurity for millions of people (Nguyen & Ouma, 2022). In South Sudan and parts of the Sahel, armed groups regularly seize crops for sustenance or sale, leaving farmers destitute and households in crisis (Deng, 2023).

Across Africa, banditry intersects with existing challenges such as climate change, poverty, and weak governance to deepen food insecurity. Particularly in West and Central Africa, the rise of bandit networks has paralleled an intensification of violence that interrupts agricultural production cycles and creates enduring fear among rural populations. In the Lake Chad Basin, for example, communities have been displaced repeatedly, leading to dramatic reductions in farm cultivation and livestock production (Okafor, 2023). Scholars highlight that these groups exploit structural weaknesses in state security provision, leading to "no-go zones" where farmers risk kidnapping, extortion, or death if they attempt to tend their fields (Toure, 2022). This has created a vicious cycle where insecurity begets hunger and hunger deepens vulnerability to further instability.

Nigeria represents a microcosm of the broader African experience with banditry and its ramifications for food systems. Over the past decade, banditry in Nigeria has expanded from localized theft and cattle rustling to a widespread security crisis affecting multiple states, particularly in the northwest and north-central regions. These bandits engage in kidnapping for ransom, armed robbery, attacks on villages, and constant threats that have forced farmers to abandon productive activities. Empirical research consistently finds that banditry results in reduced agricultural output, damaged farmlands, and loss of livestock, factors that jointly undermine food security (Ismail & Nwogbo, 2024; Emmanuel, Ishaku & Awodoyin, 2025). In Katsina State, for instance, banditry has led to mass displacement of rural dwellers, destruction of farmland, and consequent declines in crop and livestock production, with corresponding increases in food prices and food insecurity (Emmanuel et al., 2025).

Extant literature on rural banditry in Nigeria revealed that lower food production and the interruption of farming activities are the principal consequences of insecurity, accounting for over 35% of reported impacts in affected areas (Nwankpa, 2024). These disruptions translate into substantial economic losses and scale back the capacity of rural households to feed themselves and participate in local markets. For example, in Taraba State, recent research shows that banditry has contributed to a nearly 40% reduction in crop yields in some local government areas, as farming communities flee their farms and fear harvesting what little they manage to plant (TSADP, 2021; Dearsley & Enganya, 2024). Moreover, livestock theft and farmland destruction degrade the productive base of rural economies, cutting into food supply chains and destabilizing rural life.

Another telling dimension of the banditry–agriculture nexus is psychological trauma and market disruption. Fear and stress experienced by farmers in insecure environments diminish their productive capacity and willingness to engage in agricultural tasks, leading to observable drops in productivity (Ibrahim, Musa & Ukande, 2021). Where markets remain open, they often reflect inflated prices due to supply shortages, thereby limiting access to essential food items for poorer households. In some Nigerian regions, market

closures and unsafe transportation routes have inflated commodity prices by up to 75% and crippled local economies (Data Deep-Dive, 2025).

Statement of the Problem

Banditry has severely undermined food production in Shiroro Local Government Area (LGA) of Niger State by forcing farmers off their farms, disrupting agricultural cycles and contributing to persistent food insecurity. In Shiroro, rural armed banditry has escalated markedly since about 2017, intensifying through 2021 and beyond, with many farming communities experiencing frequent raids, kidnappings and threats that have destabilised the local agrarian economy (Abdussalam, Attah & Sule, 2022). These attacks have led not only to loss of life and property but have also inflicted structural damage on food production systems that underpin both local livelihoods and the broader food supply in Niger State. Displacement due to fear of bandit attacks has emerged as a primary challenge: substantial numbers of farmers abandon their lands altogether rather than risk cultivation activities, leading to widespread fallow fields and unharvested crops. This form of forced displacement disrupts the planting–harvesting continuum, reducing overall agricultural output and lowering household incomes (Abdussalam et al., 2022; Attah & Sule, 2023). Specifically, in Shiroro, a study found that 64.5% of respondents strongly agreed that poverty and insecurity underpin banditry and its disruption of agricultural activities, highlighting how socio-economic conditions interlink with insecurity to depress food production (Okeke & Nnamani, 2023).

Repeated incursions by bandits have also resulted in the abandonment of farmlands, as farmers choose safety in urban centres or less fertile regions over tending to fields exposed to violence. Abandoned farmlands mean that traditional staples such as maize, yam and rice, which Shiroro and neighbouring LGAs historically produced in significant quantities, are not planted or harvested at previous levels, compounding shortages and eroding food availability (The Sun Nigeria, 2018). Even when farmers attempt to cultivate, the risk of being chased away during the critical harvest period often results in crops left to rot or being seized by armed groups, effectively wiping out seasonal yields before they reach markets (Global Upfront, 2025). Such disruptions drive down crop yields substantially, and though exact quantitative data for Shiroro LGA are scarce, analogous agricultural zones in Nigeria under bandit threat have documented yield drops of up to half for staple grains during peak insecurity periods (Ibrahim, 2023).

Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are to:

- Examine the nature and prevalence of banditry activities affecting farming communities in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State.
- Assess the impact of banditry on food production in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State.
- Identify the measures implemented to mitigate the impact of banditry on food production in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State.

Significance of the Study

This study holds considerable significance across multiple dimensions, contributing meaningfully to academic scholarship, policy formulation, and societal awareness.

From an academic perspective, the study seeks to fill a critical gap in existing literature on the intersection of insecurity and agricultural productivity in Nigeria. While there is a growing body of research on general rural insecurity and agricultural development, empirical investigations specifically examining how banditry disrupts food production, access to farmlands, labor availability, and local food markets remain limited. By providing systematic evidence from Shiroro, the research will advance understanding of the mechanisms through which banditry affects food production, offering new theoretical and practical insights into the resilience and vulnerability of rural agricultural systems under persistent insecurity. The study's findings will enrich discourse in agricultural economics, rural development, security studies, and development

planning, and can serve as a reference point for comparative studies in other regions facing similar challenges.

Scope of the Study

The scope of the study on the impact of banditry on food production in Shiroro Local Government Area, Niger State, Nigeria spans from **2015 to 2025.** The period is justified as it encapsulates the **early onset, escalation, peak disruptions, and emergent recovery efforts** linked to banditry affecting farming communities in Shiroro. In 2015, the first notable bandit attacks were documented in the area, marking a transition from localized criminality to organized violent incursions that began to undermine rural livelihoods. Between 2015 and 2017, the intensity and frequency of attacks grew significantly, creating an environment of fear and uncertainty that began to influence farmers' decisions about planting, harvesting, and remaining in their ancestral lands. This period sets the baseline for comparing pre- and post–banditry agricultural productivity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Conceptual Framework

This section provides clear explanations of essential ideas and terms relevant to the study, offering readers a foundational understanding of the context, scope, and factors influencing the research on the effects of banditry on agricultural productivity in Shiroro LGA.

Banditry

Banditry is a term used in social science and criminology to describe a form of violent crime and organized criminal behavior that involves armed groups or individuals committing illegal acts such as robbery, extortion, kidnapping, murder, and terrorizing people, especially in areas where the rule of law is weak or has broken down. Scholars generally agree that banditry involves collective groups (bandits) operating outside the law, using force or the threat of force to take property or inflict harm on others (Mahmud & Maigari, 2024; Ilias, Peter & King, 2022). In modern academic usage, banditry is often treated as a subset of organized crime that thrives in contexts of poor governance, social inequality, economic deprivation, and conflict, which enable non-state actors to evade law enforcement and carry out violent criminal activities with impunity (Ilias, Peter & King, 2022; Mohammed & Abdullahi, 2024). Rather than a single, universally agreed definition, researchers emphasize different aspects of banditry, its violent nature, organized character, and impact on communities and development.

Fundamentally, banditry combines classic elements of coercion and predation: armed actors deliberately target individuals, communities, traders, and sometimes government institutions to extract goods, money, livestock, or ransom through violence and intimidation. According to scholarly studies, banditry can be characterized by violence, raids on rural villages, cattle rustling, abductions, and other predatory acts that disrupt normal economic and social life (Olapeju & Oluwatobi, 2019 as cited in Ilias, Peter & King, 2022; Shawulu et al., 2024). These criminal activities are not spontaneous but are typically conducted by networks or gangs that rely on mobility, knowledge of local terrain, and often the availability of small arms to sustain repeated attacks against victims. The prevalence of such groups is especially noted in regions where governance structures are weak, law enforcement is limited, and local grievances provide fertile ground for recruitment into bandit movements (Mahmud & Maigari, 2024; Oluyemi, 2025).

Most scholarly work also emphasizes the social and economic root causes of banditry. Research in the Sahel and parts of West Africa highlights how poverty, unemployment, political exclusion, marginalization, and competition for scarce resources contribute to the rise of bandit groups that blend criminal behavior with social protest or resistance against perceived injustices (Fuoli, 2024; Mohammed & Abdullahi, 2024). In such contexts, banditry cannot be understood simply as unorganized criminal conduct but as a complex phenomenon influenced by structural inequalities, historical patterns of governance failure, and the dynamics of rural societies (Fuoli, 2024). This broader perspective challenges older views of bandits as

merely outlaws of the wilderness and instead positions them as agents interacting with state and non-state structures, sometimes even negotiating roles within changing social orders.

Modern definitions also recognize that banditry overlaps with other categories of violent crime, such as terrorism and insurgency, especially when politically motivated violence or ideological elements are involved. The lack of a universally accepted definition among criminologists reflects both the historical evolution of the term and the varied forms banditry takes across different societies (Springer Security Journal, 2025). Nevertheless, scholars consistently highlight the central features of violence, lawlessness, collective criminal action, and the exploitation of weak governance spaces as the defining attributes of banditry.

In my view, banditry is the organized use of violence and intimidation by armed groups to rob, terrorize, and exploit people, particularly where law enforcement is weak or absent.

Food Production

Food production refers to the entire set of actions, processes, and systems that generate the nourishment humans and animals consume, beginning with growing or raising raw food materials and ending with making them available as edible products. In its broadest sense, food production encompasses agricultural activities such as planting, cultivating, harvesting crops, raising livestock, fishing and aquaculture, as well as the transformation of these primary products into foods ready for consumption or further distribution. This multi-stage process ensures that basic nutritional needs are met globally and forms the foundation of all food security efforts because without producing food, there is nothing to process, distribute, or consume to sustain life and health (Daszkiewicz, 2022; FAO, as cited in USDA, 2023).

Basically, food production begins in the field or water, where farmers, fishers, and growers manage natural resources such as soil, water, seeds, and livestock to generate primary food sources. These activities involve understanding biological systems, weather patterns, soil chemistry, animal husbandry, and plant genetics to optimize yield and quality (Porter, 2011; Harris & Fuller, 2014). While traditional farming and fishing practices have supplied food for millennia, modern food production increasingly incorporates scientific knowledge, mechanization, biotechnology, and management techniques to boost productivity, respond to global demand, and adapt to environmental challenges. In this sense, food production is both a biological and technological enterprise.

Beyond on-farm activities, the concept of food production integrates the processing and transformation of raw materials into products that can be consumed directly or stored and distributed (Food Forecast, 2025). After harvest or collection, food items often undergo cleaning, milling, fermentation, packaging, refrigeration, and other steps that make them safe, palatable, and easier to transport. These are essential components of food production because they add value to raw foods and help extend shelf life, improve safety, and meet consumer preferences (Food Forecast, 2025).

Food production also interacts with economic and social systems. It supports livelihoods, rural development, trade, and national economies. Agricultural production often represents a primary source of employment in many regions, particularly in developing countries, where it contributes significantly to income and sustains local communities. Moreover, production levels, efficiency, and sustainability directly influence food prices, availability, and access, key dimensions of food security. As population growth continues and environmental pressures mount, ensuring productive and resilient food systems becomes a central global development challenge (Daszkiewicz, 2022; Campi et al., 2021).

However, food production is not without its environmental and societal implications. Intensive agricultural methods can contribute to soil degradation, biodiversity loss, water scarcity, and greenhouse gas emissions if not managed sustainably. For this reason, emerging approaches such as regenerative agriculture and sustainable production systems are gaining recognition in science and policy as ways to maintain productivity while reducing environmental harm (USDA, 2023).

In simple terms, food production is the comprehensive process of creating food from raw biological resources through cultivation, harvesting, processing, and preparation so that it can be consumed and support human and animal life**.**

Food Security

Food security is a foundational concept in global development that describes a state in which every person has reliable access to food that is not just enough in quantity but also safe, nutritious, and culturally acceptable. Fundamentally, this concept emerged from early efforts to address global hunger and has evolved over decades as scholars and international organizations recognized that hunger is not only about food supply but also about stability, access, and nutritional quality. Early definitions focused largely on the availability of food supplies at national and global levels, but modern scholarship emphasizes that food security must also ensure that individuals and households can consistently obtain and use food in ways that support health and well-being (Smith, 2023). This evolution reflects a deeper understanding of food security as multidimensional, shaped by economic, social, and environmental forces that affect a person's ability to eat well over time (Brown & Lee, 2024).

One of the most widely accepted scholarly definitions comes from the 1996 World Food Summit, later reinforced in academic literature, which states that food security exists "when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life" (World Food Summit, 1996, as cited in Johnson et al., 2025). This definition is significant because it incorporates four central dimensions: availability, access, utilization, and stability. Availability refers to the consistent presence of adequate food through production, trade, or reserves. Access implies that individuals have the financial means and physical ability to procure food. Utilization means that the food consumed must contribute to the health of individuals, considering both food safety and nutritional content. Stability acknowledges that these conditions must hold steady over time despite economic shocks, climate events, or conflict (Johnson et al., 2025).

Scholars also emphasize that food security is not solely a matter of calories, but also involves qualitative aspects of diets, such as micronutrient adequacy and cultural food preferences, which are essential for sustaining a healthy life. For example, recent research underscores that food insecurity persists even in contexts where calories are present if those calories lack essential nutrients or are unsafe to consume, highlighting that quality and safety are integral parts of food security (Smith, 2023). Moreover, global discussions have expanded to include human rights and sociocultural factors, acknowledging that food security is deeply tied to social justice and equity (Brown & Lee, 2024).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This thesis utilizes the survey research design to examine the impact of banditry on food production in Shiroro Local Government Area, Niger State. The survey research approach is particularly suitable for this study because it allows for the systematic collection of data from a large and diverse population, providing a representative understanding of how banditry affects agricultural activities in the area. Shiroro Local Government Area encompasses numerous farming communities with varied experiences and perceptions of insecurity, and the survey method enables the researcher to reach these dispersed populations efficiently, capturing quantitative and qualitative data that reflect the scope and intensity of the impact on food production.

Therefore, by employing structured questionnaires and interviews, the study can collect specific information regarding crop losses, changes in farming practices, disruption of supply chains, and the socio-economic challenges faced by farmers due to banditry. This method also facilitates the measurement of trends, patterns, and correlations between the frequency or severity of bandit attacks and declines in agricultural output, providing empirical evidence that can inform policy and intervention strategies.

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Population, Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The target population for this study include sixty-one thousand and fifty (61,050) individuals, comprising crop farmers, livestock farmers/pastoralists, smallholder subsistence farmers, commercial-scale farmers, women engaged in food crop production, youth farmers, and agricultural labourers; displaced farmers currently residing within Shiroro communities; returnee farmers who have resumed farming after displacement; farm input dealers (seed, fertilizer, and agro-chemical sellers); as well as food crop traders and market women and men from six of the fifteen electoral wards in Shiroro Local Government Area. These wards include Pina, Manta, Allawa, Gurmana, Egwa/Gwada, and Bassa/Kukoki.

However, these wards were chosen because they represent key agricultural zones in Shiroro, including riverine plains (e.g., Pina, Manta) and upland farming communities (e.g., Allawa, Gurmana), as well as populous agrarian settlements (Egwa/Gwada, Bassa/Kukoki). This spread ensures the study captures varied impacts of banditry on crop production, livestock rearing, and food market access across different farming systems within the LGA, giving a comprehensive picture of food production disruptions.

Data Presentation

This chapter is concerned with the presentation and analysis of data based on the administration of questionnaires. The questionnaire is divided into two sections. They are the demographic variables "Bio-data" section and the 'descriptive sections'.

A total of three hundred and eighty-two (382) questionnaires were administered to the selected respondents, comprising of crop farmers, livestock farmers/pastoralists, smallholder subsistence farmers, commercial-scale farmers, women engaged in food crop production, youth farmers, and agricultural labourers, from six selected wards in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State, out of which three hundred and sixty-seven (367) were returned, representing a 96% response rate. This positive response rate avails the research with adequate data for drawing acceptable and reliable generalisations about the population under study. Twelve (12) questionnaires were not returned, representing three percent (3%), while three (3) were wrongly filled, constituting one percent (1%). The analysis of the questionnaires is hereby shown in the table below:

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 4.1: Administration of Questionnaire

Targeted population	**Questionnaire distributed**	**Questionnaire returned**	**Percentage**
Pina Ward	60	57	16
Manta Ward	64	61	17
Allawa Ward	80	77	21
Gurmana Ward	56	55	15
Egwa/Gwada Ward	57	53	14
Bassa/Kukoki Ward	65	64	17
Total	**382**	**367**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, March 2026

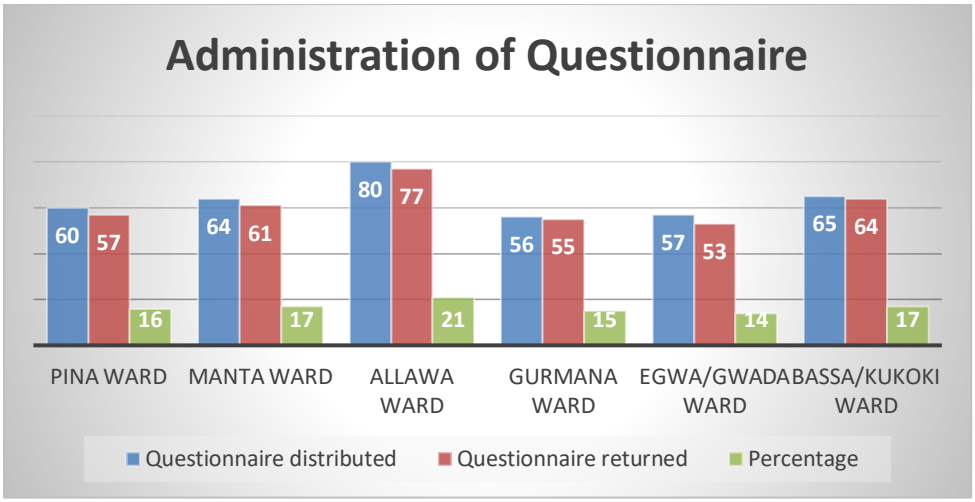


Figure 4.1: Administration of Questionnaire

Table 4.1 and figure 4.1 presents the administration and return rate of questionnaires distributed to respondents across selected wards in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State to examine the impact of banditry on food production. The table indicates that a total of 382 questionnaires were distributed across the six selected wards, while 367 questionnaires were successfully returned and found valid for analysis, representing a high response rate. In Pina Ward, 60 questionnaires were distributed and 57 were returned, accounting for 16 percent of the total responses. Manta Ward had 64 questionnaires distributed with 61 returned, representing 17 percent. In Allawa Ward, 80 questionnaires were administered and 77 were returned, constituting 21 percent, which formed the highest response rate among the wards. Gurmana Ward recorded 56 questionnaires distributed with 55 returned, representing 15 percent. Egwa/Gwada Ward had 57 questionnaires distributed and 53 returned, accounting for 14 percent, while Bassa/Kukoki Ward recorded 65 questionnaires distributed and 64 returned, representing 17 percent. The high retrieval rate reflects respondents' willingness to participate and enhances the reliability of the study findings.

Description of Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Table 4.2: Gender of Respondents

Sex	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Male	258	70
Female	109	30
Total	**367**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, March 2026

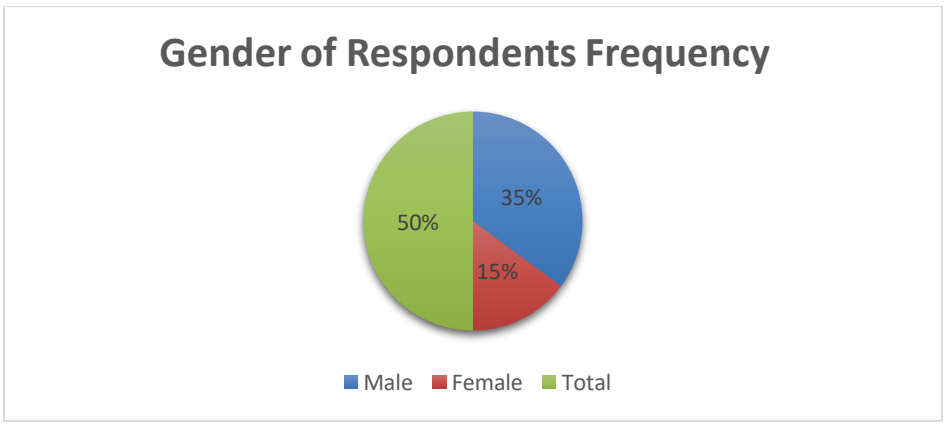


Figure 4.2 Gender of Respondents

Table 4.2 shows the gender distribution of respondents who participated in the survey conducted to examine the impact of banditry on food production in Shiroro Local Government Area, Niger State. The table reveals that out of the total respondents, 258 representing 70% were male, while 109 representing 30% were female. This indicates that male respondents constituted the majority of the participants in the study. The dominance of male respondents may be attributed to the fact that men are more actively involved in farming activities, community security matters, and other outdoor agricultural responsibilities within the study area, especially in conflict-prone environments affected by banditry. The implication of this finding is that the responses obtained largely reflect the experiences, perceptions, and challenges faced by male farmers and household heads regarding the impact of banditry on food production, while still accommodating the views of female respondents who also contribute significantly to agricultural activities and household food security.

Table 4.3: Age of Respondents

Age	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
18-25 years	21	6
26-35 years	65	18
36-45 years	147	40
46-55 years	103	28
56 years and above	31	8
Total	**367**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, March 2026

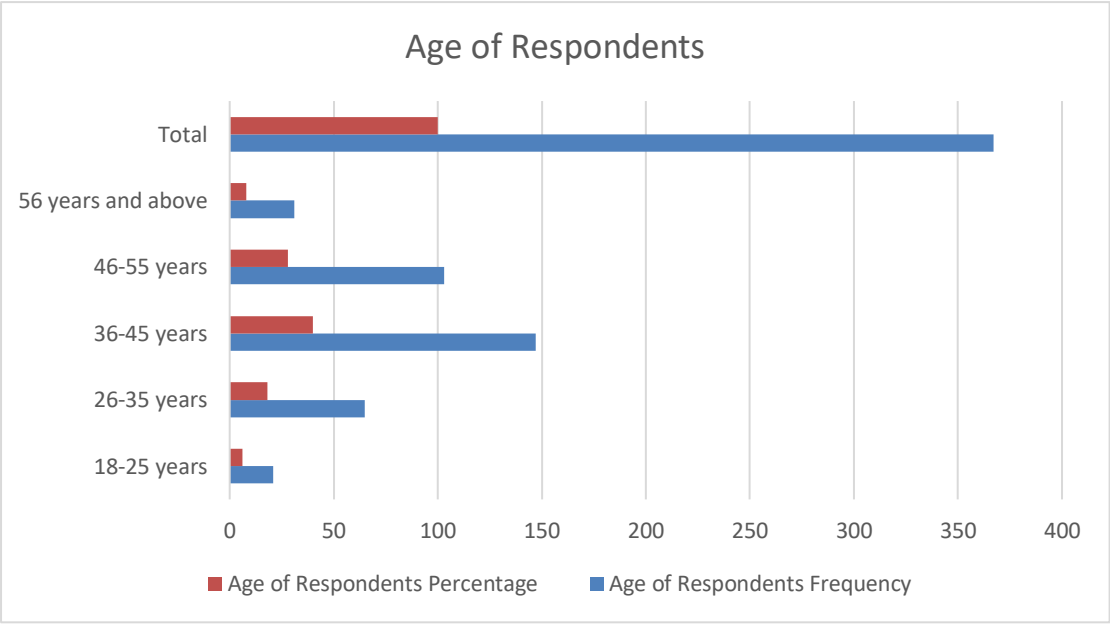


Figure 4.3 Age of Respondents

Table 4.3 shows the age distribution of respondents. The findings reveal that respondents aged 36–45 years constituted the highest proportion with 147 respondents representing 40%, followed by those aged 46–55 years with 103 respondents accounting for 28%. Respondents within the age bracket of 26–35 years were 65 representing 18%, while those aged 56 years and above were 31 representing 8%. The least represented group was respondents aged 18–25 years with 21 respondents representing 6%. This indicates that the

majority of respondents were mature and economically active adults who are directly engaged in farming and food production activities, implying that the study obtained reliable information from individuals with substantial experience and firsthand knowledge of the effects of banditry on agricultural production in the area.

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The study was necessitated by the growing incidence of banditry and insecurity in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State, which has increasingly threatened rural livelihoods, agricultural activities, and food security. The persistent attacks on farming communities, destruction of farmlands, displacement of residents, and disruption of local markets created serious concerns about declining food production and the socio-economic wellbeing of the people. To comprehensively investigate the problem, the study adopted both qualitative and quantitative research methods, enabling an in-depth understanding of the experiences, perceptions, and realities of affected communities. Three research objectives were formulated to address key issues relating to the nature and prevalence of banditry, its impact on food production, mitigation measures adopted, challenges affecting such measures, and sustainable solutions for improving security and agricultural productivity. Respondents for the study comprised crop farmers, livestock farmers and pastoralists, smallholder subsistence farmers, commercial-scale farmers, women involved in food crop production, youth farmers, agricultural labourers, displaced and returnee farmers, farm input dealers, food crop traders, and market women and men selected from six of the fifteen electoral wards in Shiroro Local Government Area. A total of 369 copies of questionnaire were administered and returned for analysis.

Findings revealed that banditry has become widespread, organized, and highly destructive, resulting in fear, displacement, abandonment of farmlands, and severe threats to food production. The study further established that banditry has significantly reduced agricultural output, discouraged farming activities, increased production costs, and undermined food security and economic stability.

Community vigilante groups and resettlement programmes were identified as relatively effective mitigation measures, whereas security deployment, farm subsidies, and financial support remained inadequate. The study also found that poor funding, corruption, poverty, inadequate equipment, and political interference weakened efforts to control banditry. Consequently, the study recommended integrated community security, technological surveillance, youth empowerment, accountability, and non-politicized security operations as sustainable strategies for reducing banditry and improving food production in Shiroro Local Government Area.

Conclusion

This study has clearly established that banditry has become a major threat to food production in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State. The persistent attacks on farmers, destruction of farmlands, displacement of rural communities, kidnapping, and fear of violence have significantly reduced agricultural activities and food supply within the area. Many farmers are now unable to access their farms regularly, while others have abandoned farming entirely due to insecurity and the constant threat to their lives and property. This situation has not only lowered crop yield and household income but has also contributed to food scarcity, rising food prices, poverty, unemployment, and economic instability in the affected communities.

The study further revealed that the absence of adequate security measures and weak government intervention have worsened the challenges faced by farmers. Therefore, there is an urgent need for the government, security agencies, community leaders, and other stakeholders to collaborate effectively in addressing banditry through improved security operations, community policing, intelligence gathering, and support for affected farmers. If decisive actions are taken, agricultural productivity can be restored, rural

livelihoods improved, and sustainable food security achieved in Shiroro Local Government Area and beyond.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are necessary to reduce the impact of banditry on food production in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State.

- The government should strengthen community-based security structures by supporting vigilante groups with proper training, communication gadgets, and collaboration with security agencies because local communities understand the terrain and can easily identify suspicious movements.

- Adequate funding and modern security equipment should be provided to security agencies to improve surveillance, intelligence gathering, and rapid response to attacks in farming communities. This will reduce fear and encourage farmers to return to their farmlands.

- The government should expand youth empowerment programmes through agricultural loans, vocational training, and employment opportunities to reduce poverty and discourage young people from joining criminal groups.

- Government and security operations should be free from corruption and political interference by ensuring transparency, accountability, and equal protection for all communities, as this will strengthen public trust, improve security effectiveness, and create a peaceful environment for sustainable agricultural productivity in Shiroro Local Government Area.

- Resettlement programmes for displaced farmers should be improved through the provision of farm inputs, financial assistance, and rehabilitation of destroyed communities so that affected residents can resume farming activities and improve food production.

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