"Armed Banditry and the Decline of Agrarian Livelihoods: An Assessment of Food Production Dynamics in Shiroro Local Government Area, Niger State, Nigeria"

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ABSTRACT

The escalation of armed banditry has become one of the most formidable security threats facing Nigeria, particularly in rural enclaves where violent raids, abductions, livestock theft, and property destruction have severely disrupted agricultural systems and food availability. This deteriorating security landscape prompted the current investigation, which assessed the consequences of banditry on food production in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State. Specifically, the study examined the patterns and frequency of bandit operations, their ramifications for agricultural output and food accessibility, the countermeasures implemented to address the crisis, and the obstacles hindering effective interventions. The Political Economy Theory provided the analytical lens for the study, as it illuminates how deprivation, joblessness, social disparities, ineffective governance, and contests over limited resources fuel insecurity and criminal enterprises within communities. A survey research approach was employed, utilizing structured questionnaires and comprehensive interviews for data collection. Questionnaire data were processed using descriptive percentages, while interview transcripts and documentary evidence were examined qualitatively through content analysis. The findings established that banditry has evolved into a pervasive, coordinated, and devastating phenomenon, generating widespread fear, population displacement, desertion of agricultural lands, and grave threats to food production in Shiroro Local Government Area. Furthermore, the study demonstrated that banditry diminished food yields, discouraged agricultural engagement, escalated production expenses, and jeopardized food security and household livelihoods. Community-based vigilante structures and resettlement initiatives emerged as the most effective intervention strategies, whereas military deployments and financial assistance proved insufficient. Recurring obstacles identified included insufficient funding, deficient equipment, endemic poverty, graft, and political meddling. The study determined that durable remedies necessitate community-driven security frameworks, technology-enabled monitoring, youth economic empowerment, institutional accountability, and depoliticized security operations. Consequently, the study advocates, among other measures, that authorities should reinforce community-based security mechanisms by bolstering vigilante organizations, broaden youth empowerment schemes through agricultural credit facilities and skills acquisition programmes, and guarantee openness and responsibility in security operations devoid of corruption and political manipulation.

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

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Armed banditry has surfaced as one of the most persistent and intricate security dilemmas of the twenty-first century, fundamentally altering how nations and communities perceive safety, progress, and livelihood sustainability. Globally, criminal syndicates engaged in banditry—marked by armed robbery, extortion, abduction, and terroristic violence—have consistently eroded the socio-economic foundations of vulnerable populations. In Latin America, for instance, organized bandit factions such as Los Zetas in Mexico and the Primeiro Comando da Capital (PCC) in Brazil have destabilized rural economic ventures, precipitated mass exoduses, and reshaped land utilization patterns (Bergman, 2023). In certain Asian territories, armed militias including the Golden Triangle gangs and specific Yakuza factions exercise de facto authority over isolated regions, disrupting agricultural rhythms and eroding state legitimacy (Chowdhury, 2024). In sub-Saharan Africa, banditry has transcended intermittent raids to become a sustained form of criminal insurgency with far-reaching consequences for local populations, economies, and particularly agricultural frameworks.

Within a global framework, insecurity destabilizes the conventional operations of societies by instilling fear and unpredictability that deter investment, employment, and food cultivation. Rural areas, frequently reliant on farming and animal husbandry, are especially vulnerable. The connection between insecurity and agriculture is not straightforward; it is cyclical. Heightened bandit assaults restrict farmers' access to their fields, curtail seasonal agricultural operations such as planting and harvesting, and compel entire communities to relocate—all of which reduce agricultural yields and intensify food shortages. As documented across Africa, banditry disrupts supply networks, displaces rural labor, and drives up food costs, thereby aggravating food insecurity for millions (Nguyen & Ouma, 2022). In South Sudan and portions of the Sahel, armed factions routinely confiscate harvests for sustenance or commerce, rendering farmers impoverished and households desperate (Deng, 2023).

Throughout Africa, banditry converges with pre-existing challenges such as climatic variability, deprivation, and feeble governance to compound food insecurity. Particularly in West and Central Africa, the proliferation of bandit networks has coincided with escalating violence that disrupts agricultural production cycles and breeds enduring fear among rural populations. In the Lake Chad Basin, for example, communities have been repeatedly uprooted, resulting in precipitous declines in crop cultivation and livestock rearing (Okafor, 2023). Researchers emphasize that these groups capitalize on structural deficiencies in state security provisioning, creating "no-go zones" where farmers face abduction, extortion, or fatality if they attempt to cultivate their fields (Toure, 2022). This has produced a vicious cycle wherein insecurity breeds hunger and hunger intensifies susceptibility to further instability.

Nigeria exemplifies the broader African encounter with banditry and its consequences for food systems. Over the past decade, banditry in Nigeria has expanded from localized theft and cattle rustling to a comprehensive security emergency affecting numerous states, particularly in the northwest and north-central zones. These bandits perpetrate kidnappings for ransom, armed robberies, village assaults, and persistent threats that have compelled farmers to abandon productive endeavors. Empirical investigations consistently reveal that banditry leads to diminished agricultural output, ravaged farmlands, and livestock losses—factors that collectively undermine food security (Ismail & Nwogbo, 2024; Emmanuel, Ishaku & Awodoyin, 2025). In Katsina State, for instance, banditry has caused mass displacement of rural inhabitants, destruction of agricultural land, and consequent reductions in crop and livestock production, with corresponding increases in food prices and food insecurity (Emmanuel et al., 2025).

Existing scholarship on rural banditry in Nigeria indicates that declining food production and approximately 35% of reported impacts occur in affected areas (Nwankpa, 2024). These disruptions translate into substantial economic losses and diminish the capacity of rural households to feed themselves and participate in local markets. For example, in Taraba State, contemporary research demonstrates that banditry has contributed to nearly a 40% reduction in crop yields in certain local government areas, as farming communities flee their fields and dread harvesting what little they manage to plant (TSADP, 2021; Dearsley & Enganya, 2024).

Moreover, livestock theft and farmland devastation degrade the productive foundation of rural economies, disrupting food supply chains and destabilizing rural existence.

Another revealing dimension of the banditry-agriculture nexus is psychological trauma and market disruption. Fear and anxiety experienced by farmers in insecure environments diminish their productive capacity and willingness to engage in agricultural tasks, resulting in measurable declines in productivity (Ibrahim, Musa & Ukande, 2021). Where markets remain operational, they frequently reflect inflated prices due to supply shortages, thereby restricting access to essential food items for impoverished households. In certain Nigerian regions, market closures and unsafe transportation corridors have inflated commodity prices by as much as 75% and crippled local economies (Data Deep-Dive, 2025).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Banditry has profoundly undermined food production in Shiroro Local Government Area (LGA) of Niger State by expelling farmers from their lands, disrupting agricultural cycles, and contributing to persistent food insecurity. In Shiroro, rural armed banditry has escalated dramatically since approximately 2017, intensifying through 2021 and beyond, with numerous farming communities experiencing recurrent raids, abductions, and threats that have destabilized the local agrarian economy (Abdussalam, Attah & Sule, 2022). These attacks have resulted not only in 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 centers 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 neighboring 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).

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study are to:

1. Investigate the challenges militating against the effectiveness of the measures implemented to mitigate banditry and ensure effective food production in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State.

2. Propose sustainable solutions for reducing the impact of banditry on food production in Shiroro Local Government Area.

1.4 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

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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.

1.5 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

2.1 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.

2.1.1 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 this study, banditry is conceptualized as the systematic deployment of violence and intimidation by armed collectives to plunder, terrorize, and exploit populations, particularly in contexts where law enforcement is feeble or nonexistent.

2.1.2 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.

2.1.3 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.

2.2 Empirical Review

2.2.1 Nature and Prevalence of Banditry Activities Affecting Farming Communities in Shiroro Local Government Area

Agyo & Wake (2025) investigated the frequency and effects of banditry on maize farmers in Lere Local Government Area of Kaduna State, anchored on rural insecurity and agricultural disruption theory. Using a descriptive survey design with questionnaires administered to selected maize farmers, the study found that 60% of respondents strongly agreed that bandits often target farms to steal valuable crops leading to financial losses, and 74% strongly agreed that frequent bandit attacks disrupt supply chains, making market access difficult. Results also showed that banditry fostered fear and mistrust in rural communities, compelling farmers to invest in security measures such as fencing and surveillance equipment. The study recommended strengthening community security systems and leadership support for rural security. The research, however, focuses mainly on general impacts on a single crop (maize) without clearly unpacking the broader nature and prevalence (frequency and patterns) of all forms of banditry activities within the Lere context. It also does not explore how specific attack modalities vary across time and farming tasks. The present study seeks to fill this gap by documenting the detailed prevalence (how often and where bandit attacks occur) and the contextual nature of bandit activities across different cropping seasons and farming tasks in Shiroro LGA, offering richer empirical specificity.

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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study adopts 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.

3.2 Population, Sample Size and Sampling Techniques

The target population for this study includes 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 laborers; 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.

Sample Size

The sample for this study is 382 respondents. Krejcie and Morgan (1970) statistical formula was used in determining the sample of the above population, as calculated below:

$$n=X2NP(1−P)e2(N−1)+X2P(1−P)n=e2(N−1)+X2P(1−P)X2NP(1−P)$$

Where:

- N = Population size
- X^2 = Chi-square table value
- e^2 = Margin of error
- p = Population proportion
- n = Sample size

$$n=3.841×61,050×0.5×0.5(0.05)2×(61,050−1)+(3.841×0.5×0.5)n=(0.05)2×(61,050−1)+(3.841×0.5×0.5)3.841×61,050×0.5×0.5n=58,623.2625(0.0025)×(61,049)+(0.96025)n=(0.0025)×(61,049)+(0.96025)58,623.2625$$
$$n=58,623.2625152.6225+0.96025n=152.6225+0.9602558,623.2625$$
$$n=58,623.2625153.58275n=153.5827558,623.2625$$
$$n=381.7047n=381.7047∴n=382 (Sample size)∴n=382 (Sample size)$$

Table 3.2: Sample Size Distribution

Targeted Population	Population	Sample	Percentage
Pina Ward	9,664	60	16%
Manta Ward	10,238	64	17%
Allawa Ward	12,853	80	21%
Gurmana Ward	8,886	56	15%
Egwa/Gwada Ward	9,088	57	15%
Bassa/Kukoki Ward	10,321	65	17%
Total	**61,050**	**382**	**100%**

Source: Author's Compilation, December 2025

Sampling Technique

This study utilizes stratified sampling and purposive sampling techniques to ensure comprehensive and representative data collection on the impact of banditry on food production in Shiroro Local Government Area, Niger State. Stratified sampling was employed to distribute questionnaires among diverse categories of respondents, including crop farmers, livestock farmers/pastoralists, smallholder subsistence farmers, commercial-scale farmers, women engaged in food crop production, youth farmers, agricultural laborers, 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 men and women. The population was first stratified according to these specific groups, recognizing their differing experiences, roles, and vulnerabilities in agricultural production. Within each stratum, respondents were then randomly selected proportionate to their population size to ensure that each subgroup is adequately represented.

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 laborers, 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 generalizations 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:

4.2 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 4.1: 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

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Table 4.2 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.

Table 4.2: Marital Status of Respondents

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage
Single	73	20
Married	264	72
Divorced	9	2
Widowed	21	6
Total	**367**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, March 2026

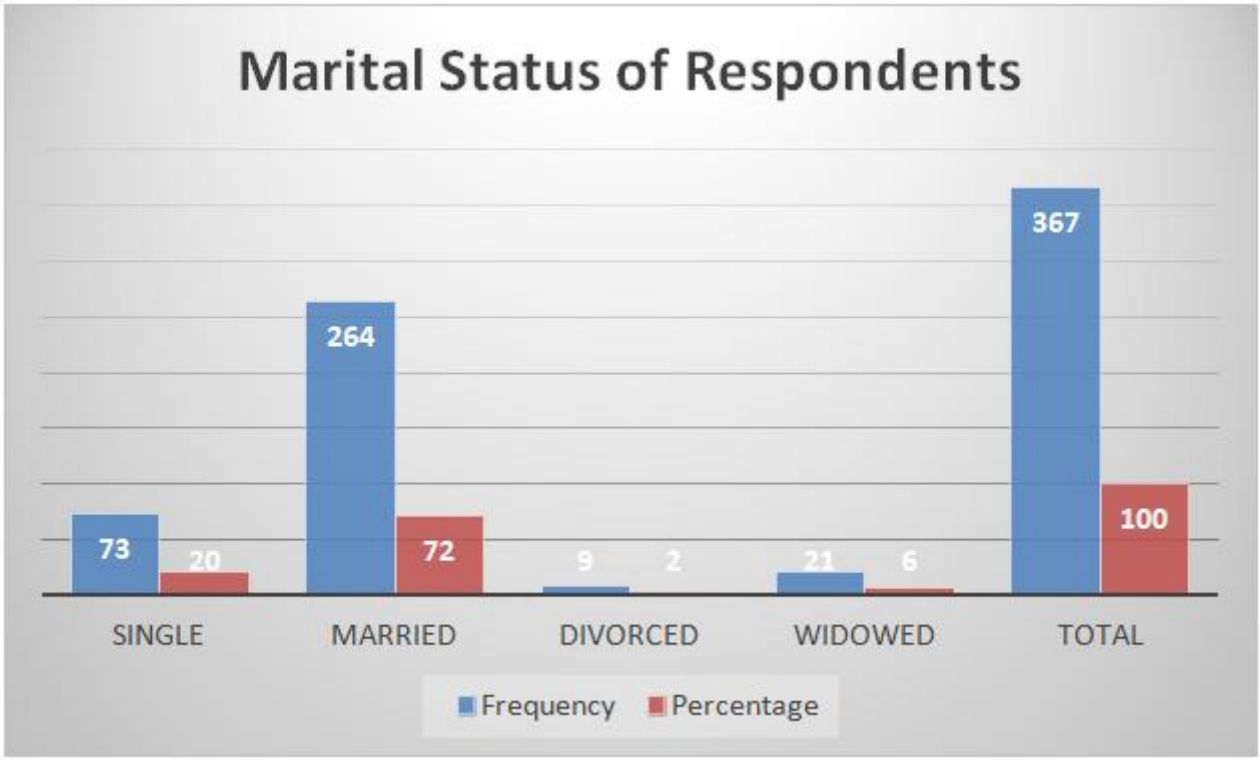


Figure 4.2: Marital Status of Respondents

Table 4.3 shows the marital status distribution of respondents. The data reveals that the majority of the respondents, 264 representing 72%, were married, while 73 respondents constituting 20% were single. In addition, 21 respondents representing 6% were widowed, whereas only 9 respondents accounting for 2% were divorced. This indicates that married individuals formed the dominant group involved in farming and agricultural activities within the study area. The high proportion of married respondents suggests that banditry affects not only individual farmers but also households and family livelihoods that depend heavily on food production for survival and economic stability. It further implies that insecurity in the area may increase the socio-economic burden on families through reduced agricultural productivity, food shortages, displacement, and loss of income.

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Table 4.3: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percentage
No formal Education	96	26
Primary School	68	19
Secondary School	67	18
ND/ HND	59	16
Degree	70	19
M.Sc/Others	7	2
Total	**367**	**100**

Source: Field Survey, March 2026

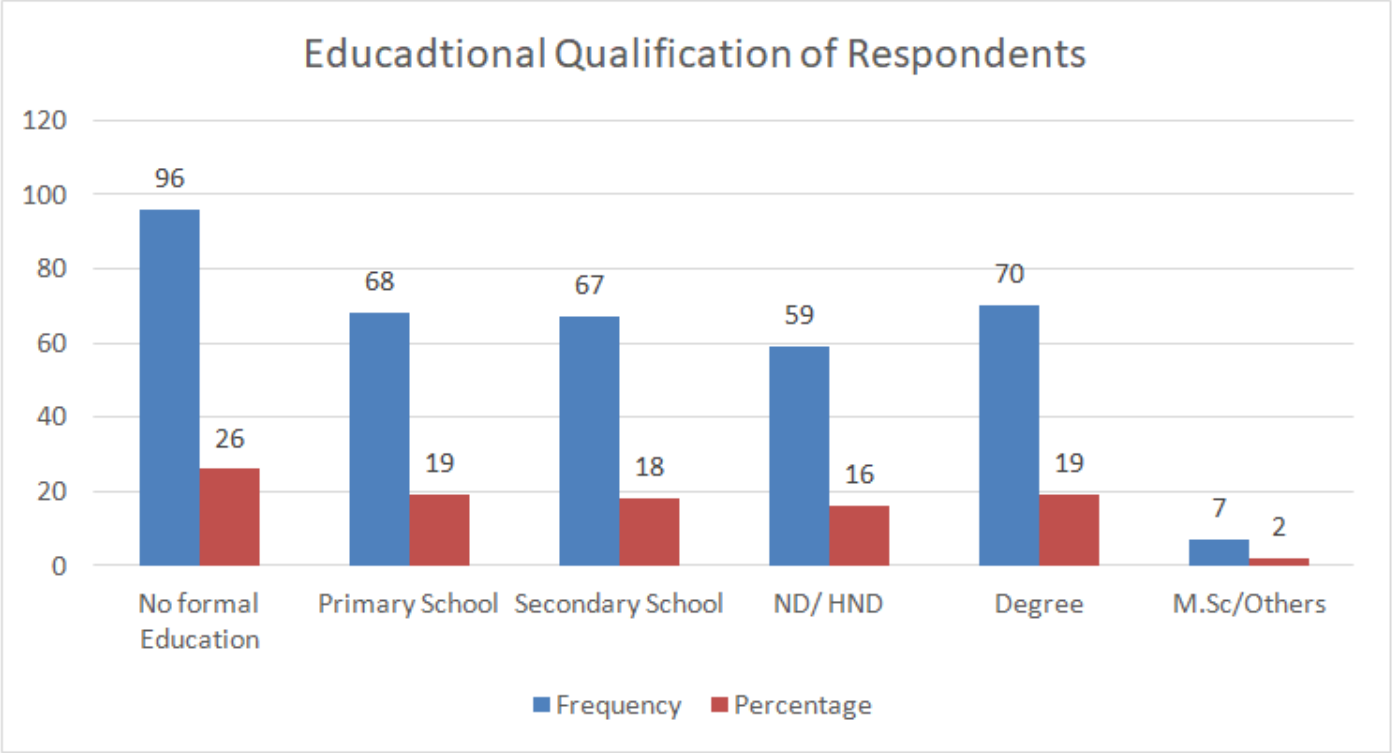


Figure 4.3: Educational Qualification of Respondents

Table 4.3 above shows the educational qualification of respondents. The result reveals that respondents with no formal education constituted the highest proportion with 96 respondents (26%), followed by those with primary school education and degree holders with 68 respondents (19%) and 70 respondents (19%) respectively, while 67 respondents (18%) had secondary school education. In addition, 59 respondents (16%) possessed ND/HND qualifications, whereas only 7 respondents (2%) had M.Sc. or other higher qualifications. This indicates that the majority of respondents possessed low to moderate educational backgrounds, suggesting that banditry affects both educated and less educated farmers and residents in the area. The implication is that limited educational exposure among a significant proportion of respondents may reduce access to modern farming techniques, security awareness, and alternative livelihood opportunities, thereby worsening the negative effects of banditry on food production and agricultural development in the area.

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

socioeconomic 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. Two 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 laborers, 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 232 copies of questionnaire were administered for the analysis.

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, and 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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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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