



Impact of Armed Banditry on Agricultural Production in Nigeria

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Abstract

Universally, armed banditry has posed serious security challenges. Presently in Nigeria, bandit activities are being carried out in almost all of the six geo-political zones particularly in the north. The study examines the impact of armed banditry on agricultural production in Nigeria. The study utilized conflict theory to explore the impact of armed banditry on agricultural production in Nigeria. The study used primarily the secondary sources of data. The study concluded that chronic violence like armed banditry is provoked and reproduced by diverse factors, many of them mutually interactive. These include new patterns of social inequality; disjunctive processes of democratization; criminal networks and other adverse effects of globalization; and the perverse effects of the mass media. The study recommends that Nigerian government, with the aid of the international community, must implement effective policies which will hamper the groups recruiting efforts. In addition, the Nigerian government must be encouraged to make much needed political measures such as fighting corruption, reducing poverty, unemployment, poor governance and improving human rights. Should these steps be taken, the main factors which have been attributed to armed banditry survival will be eliminated; seriously curbing the group's ambitions in the state. Also, there is need for the revitalization of Nigeria's economy. A vibrant economy will create job opportunities for the youths and change their lives in the positive directions. Government at all levels should consider the survival and safety of the people as primary because when people are provided with the basic necessities of life they will not be cajoled into joining any unlawful association.

Keywords: Impact, Armed banditry, Agricultural, Production, Nigeria

I. Introduction

The increasing incidence of armed banditry in Nigeria, particularly in the northern regions, has emerged as a major security concern with significant socio-economic implications. This phenomenon, characterized by activities such as kidnapping for ransom, cattle rustling, and violent attacks on communities, has profoundly affected the lives and livelihoods of many Nigerians. Armed banditry has increasingly become a prominent security challenge in Nigeria. The phenomenon involves various criminal activities perpetrated by groups often armed with sophisticated weapons. The roots of banditry can be traced to several interrelated factors, including economic disenfranchisement, unemployment, and inadequate law enforcement (Audu & Ogundeji, 2019). The disintegration of traditional security systems and the failure of state mechanisms to provide adequate protection have further exacerbated the situation, allowing banditry to flourish.

Audu and Ogundeji (2019) emphasize that the proliferation of small arms and light weapons has facilitated the rise of these armed groups. The porous nature of Nigeria's borders has made it relatively easy for weapons to enter the country, empowering bandits to challenge state authority effectively. This issue is particularly acute in the northern regions, where banditry has not only disrupted local economies but has also posed significant threats to food security and overall social stability. The country's diverse ethnic and religious composition, coupled with socio-economic disparities, has created a fertile ground for conflicts and criminal activities. There has been a notable increase in banditry incidents. The area's



geographical characteristics, including its vast rural landscape and relatively sparse security presence, have made it an attractive target for bandit groups (Suleiman, 2020).

The nature of banditry in Nigeria often involves cattle rustling and kidnapping. These activities could have had devastating impact on the local economy, which is predominantly agrarian. Cattle rustling has led to significant economic losses for farmers, while kidnapping has created an atmosphere of fear and insecurity, further hindering economic activities (Okoli & Ugwu, 2020). The disruption of agricultural activities has had direct implications for food security, as many farmers are forced to abandon their fields, leading to reduced food production and availability. The impact of armed banditry extends beyond immediate economic losses. Socially, the community fabric has been severely affected, with increasing numbers of displaced persons and a general atmosphere of distrust and fear. This social dislocation is further exacerbated by the psychological trauma experienced by victims of violence and their families (Nwankwo, 2021). The inability of security forces to adequately protect residents has led to a loss of confidence in the state's capacity to ensure safety, prompting some communities to take matters into their own hands through vigilante justice or other self-help measures.

Economically, the consequences are profound. The constant threat of bandit attacks has deterred investment and disrupted local markets, further impoverishing already vulnerable populations. This situation has been particularly detrimental to food security, as farmers are unable to cultivate their land or transport their produce to markets safely (Iroegbu, 2021). The resultant scarcity of food products has led to higher prices and decreased access to food for many residents, exacerbating the conditions of poverty and malnutrition. Politically, the issue of banditry has posed a significant challenge to the governance structures in Nigeria. The state's response, which has included military operations and dialogue initiatives, has been criticized for being reactive rather than proactive. There is a growing discourse around the need for a more comprehensive approach that includes addressing the socio-economic root causes of banditry, such as poverty, unemployment, and lack of education (Onuoha, 2021). The failure to adequately address these issues could potentially lead to an escalation in violence and a further deterioration in security conditions.

The increasing prevalence of armed banditry in Nigeria, underscores a significant national and regional security challenge. This phenomenon,

characterized by violent attacks, kidnapping, and cattle rustling, not only disrupts the social and economic stability of affected communities but also poses serious threats to food security. Nigeria's security landscape has been increasingly complicated by various forms of violence, including insurgency, terrorism, communal clashes, and more recently, banditry. Armed banditry, particularly in the northern and central regions, has become a pressing concern for both local and national authorities. As noted by Onuoha (2021), the issue is multifaceted, involving criminality, economic disenfranchisement, and ethnic tensions. The porous nature of Nigeria's borders and the availability of small arms have further exacerbated the situation, making it difficult for law enforcement to contain the spread of violence. The rise in banditry has broader implications for national and regional security. As Audu and Ogundeji (2019) highlight, the activities of bandit groups undermine state authority and create an environment of fear and uncertainty. This insecurity can potentially destabilize not only the affected regions but also spill over into neighboring areas, complicating the security situation in Nigeria's entire northern region. The presence of bandits disrupts economic activities, displaces populations, and strains the capacity of security agencies.

Food security is a critical aspect of national and regional stability, and armed banditry poses a significant threat to this sector. In Nigeria, agriculture is a major component of the economy. The activities of armed bandits, such as cattle rustling and the forced displacement of farmers, directly disrupt agricultural production and supply chains. This disruption has severe implications for food availability, access, and stability. Cattle rustling, a common form of banditry in Nigeria, has been particularly detrimental. Livestock is a vital asset for many rural households, providing a source of income, food, and cultural value. The loss of livestock to rustling not only reduces household incomes but also diminishes the availability of animal products, which are crucial for nutrition (Okoli & Ugwu, 2020). Furthermore, the fear of attacks has led many farmers to abandon their fields, resulting in reduced crop production and contributing to food scarcity in the region.

The disruption of agricultural activities has a cascading effect on the local economy and food security. As Iroegbu (2021) notes, the abandonment of farmlands and the decline in livestock numbers lead to a decrease in local food production. This shortage, in turn, causes food prices to rise, making it more difficult for residents, especially the poor, to afford basic foodstuffs. The insecurity also deters



investment in agriculture and related sectors, further exacerbating the problem. Moreover, the displacement of people due to bandit attacks contributes to food insecurity. Displaced populations often lose access to their livelihoods and face challenges in securing food, shelter, and other basic necessities. The influx of internally displaced persons (IDPs) into already strained communities can lead to competition for scarce resources, further aggravating the food security situation (Nwankwo, 2021).

The connection between armed banditry and food security highlights the broader issue of how insecurity can undermine the foundations of sustainable development. Food security is not just about the availability of food; it also encompasses access, utilization, and stability. Insecure environments disrupt these pillars, leading to chronic food insecurity and malnutrition. This situation creates a vicious cycle where food insecurity can exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, making communities more susceptible to exploitation by armed groups. Addressing the issue of banditry and its implications for food security requires a multi-faceted approach. Onuoha (2021) suggests that responses should not only focus on immediate security measures but also on addressing the underlying socio-economic conditions that give rise to banditry. This includes improving economic opportunities, enhancing education and healthcare access, and strengthening community resilience against criminal activities. The increasing incidence of armed banditry in Nigeria, poses significant challenges to national and regional security and has severe implications for food security. The activities of bandits disrupt agricultural production, displace populations, and undermine economic stability, exacerbating food insecurity. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that tackles both the immediate security threats and the underlying socio-economic issues. Therefore, the paper examines the impact of armed banditry on agricultural production in Nigeria

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

Armed Banditry

Armed banditry refers to the organized use of violence and weapons by groups to intimidate, steal, or extort resources from individuals, communities, or organizations. In the Nigerian context, armed banditry often involves cattle rustling, kidnapping, and attacks on villages, significantly affecting rural and agrarian communities. Okoli and Ugwu (2019) describe armed banditry as a form of criminal activity that thrives in areas with weak

governance and limited security presence. They highlight how it disrupts social order and economic activities, particularly in rural areas where agricultural activities are predominant.

Food Security

Food security is defined by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) as a situation where all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Maxwell and Smith (1992) discuss food security in terms of availability, access, utilization, and stability. They emphasize that food security is not just about the availability of food but also the capacity of individuals and communities to access it.

Theoretical Framework

The paper is positioned within the conflict theory. The conflict theory, rooted in the work of Karl Marx and later expanded by sociologists like C. Wright Mills, focuses on the role of power disparities and resource competition in generating social conflict. It examines how socio-economic inequalities and political disenfranchisement can lead to conflict and violence. This framework can be used to analyze how socio-economic inequalities in Nigeria, such as land tenure issues and resource competition, contribute to the rise of armed banditry. It provides insights into the structural factors that fuel conflicts and how these factors impact food security. Coser (1956) emphasizes the positive and negative functions of social conflict, providing a basis for understanding the dynamics of armed banditry in resource-scarce settings.

The conflict theory is pertinent for analyzing how socio-economic disparities and competition over resources contribute to the emergence and persistence of armed banditry in Nigeria. It provides a lens through which to understand the structural causes of conflict and the resulting impact on food security. However, the theory may overly focus on economic and class factors, potentially underestimating the role of cultural, ideological, and identity-related factors in driving conflict (Collier & Hoeffler, 2004). Furthermore, its traditional focus on class struggle may not fully capture the complexity of modern conflicts, which often involve a mix of criminal, economic, and political motives.

Empirical Review

Insecurity, particularly due to armed conflict and banditry, disrupts agricultural activities by



displacing farmers, destroying crops, and creating an environment of fear and instability that hampers productivity. Boudreau and Holleman (2000) explore the impact of insecurity on agricultural productivity and food security, noting that the displacement of populations and disruption of agricultural cycles lead to reduced food availability and increased prices. Empirical studies have consistently demonstrated the negative impact of armed conflict on agricultural production. For instance, Messer and Cohen (2007) highlight how violence disrupts agricultural production, displaces populations, and destroys infrastructure, thereby compromising food availability and access. Their study underscores that conflict-affected areas often experience severe food shortages and increased malnutrition rates. While Messer and Cohen provide comprehensive data on the broader impacts of conflict, their study may not fully account for the specific mechanisms through which armed banditry affects food security in localized contexts. Moreover, their reliance on macro-level data may overlook nuanced community-level impacts, such as the role of local coping strategies and informal support networks in mitigating food insecurity (Messer & Cohen, 2007).

In the context of Nigeria, several studies have focused on the effects of armed banditry. Okoli and Okpaleke (2014) provide an in-depth analysis of banditry in Northern Nigeria, identifying key drivers such as economic hardship, weak governance, and the proliferation of small arms. They argue that banditry has severely disrupted local economies, particularly agriculture, by causing widespread fear, displacing farmers, and making transportation of goods risky. Okoli and Okpaleke's study is crucial for understanding the specific drivers and impacts of banditry in Northern Nigeria. However, their analysis is somewhat generalized, covering broad regional trends without delving deeply into localized variations. The study also primarily uses qualitative data, which, while rich in contextual detail, may lack the quantitative rigor needed to measure the scale of impact accurately (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014).

In examining food security in conflict zones, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2018) has employed comprehensive food security assessment frameworks, including the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). These assessments consider various indicators, such as food availability, access, utilization, and stability, providing a nuanced picture of food security status in conflict-affected regions. The FAO's methodologies are robust and widely respected, offering valuable quantitative measures of food security. However, these assessments often require substantial data

collection and resource investment, which may not always be feasible where security risks limit data collection. Furthermore, the FAO's frameworks may not fully capture the impact of non-traditional forms of conflict, such as banditry, which may not align neatly with conventional conflict paradigms (FAO, 2018).

A study conducted by Shehu and Aliyu (2017) focused on the local impacts of armed banditry and community responses. They explored how communities in affected areas adapt to insecurity, including changes in agricultural practices, diversification of livelihoods, and reliance on social networks for food distribution. Their findings suggest that while banditry severely impacts food production and access, communities often develop resilience strategies to cope with these challenges. Shehu and Aliyu provide critical insights into the adaptive strategies of local communities, highlighting the agency of affected populations in managing food security challenges. However, their study may overemphasize the resilience of communities, potentially underestimating the chronic vulnerabilities that banditry exacerbates. Additionally, their reliance on qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus groups, may introduce bias and limit the generalizability of their findings (Shehu & Aliyu, 2017).

Quantitative studies, such as those conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2020), offer important data on food security indicators, including household income levels, food consumption patterns, and nutritional status. These studies often employ household surveys and econometric analyses to quantify the extent of food insecurity in different regions of Nigeria. The NBS provides valuable baseline data that can be used to assess the impact of armed banditry on food security. However, these studies may not always capture the nuances of food security in conflict-affected areas, as they typically focus on broader economic indicators without specific attention to the unique challenges posed by insecurity. Moreover, national-level surveys may overlook localized disparities within regions where banditry impacts may be particularly severe (NBS, 2020).

Several studies have documented the adverse effects of armed banditry on agricultural production. Aliyu (2015) conducted a survey-based study in Northern Nigeria, demonstrating how the presence of bandits disrupts farming activities. The study found that armed banditry leads to reduced agricultural output due to fear and insecurity among farmers, who either abandon their farms or reduce the scale of their operations to minimize exposure to



violence. While Aliyu's study provides valuable empirical data, it focuses primarily on quantitative measures such as crop yields and land usage, potentially overlooking qualitative aspects like the psychological impacts on farmers and community cohesion. Additionally, the study's reliance on self-reported data from farmers may introduce bias, as respondents might underreport or exaggerate their experiences based on perceived threats or expectations of aid.

Okoli and Atelhe (2014) explored the broader economic impacts of banditry, particularly in terms of livelihood disruptions. Their research highlighted how banditry not only affects agricultural production but also disrupts local markets and trade routes, leading to inflated food prices and scarcity. The study utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data on market prices with qualitative interviews with local traders and community leaders. The mixed-methods approach adopted by Okoli and Atelhe offers a comprehensive view of the economic impacts of banditry. However, the study's scope may be limited by its regional focus and the potential for interviewer bias in qualitative interviews. Furthermore, while the study provides a detailed analysis of economic disruptions, it does not sufficiently explore the long-term coping mechanisms employed by affected communities (Okoli & Atelhe, 2014).

In their study, Ojeh and Agbo (2018) examined the specific effects of armed banditry on household food security in Kaduna State. Using household surveys and the Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS), they found that households in banditry-prone areas experienced significantly higher levels of food insecurity compared to those in more secure regions. The study also identified key factors such as displacement, loss of assets, and restricted market access as contributors to food insecurity. Ojeh and Agbo's use of the HFIAS provides a standardized measure of food security, allowing for comparability across different contexts. However, the study's focus on quantitative measures may neglect the socio-cultural dimensions of food security, such as dietary diversity and cultural food preferences, which are crucial for a holistic understanding of food security (Ojeh & Agbo, 2018).

II. Conclusion and Recommendations

There is no escaping the fact that armed bandit attacks globally have almost exclusively been led and executed by young men. Nigeria with its ready pools of unemployed labour, exploitative politicians, radical clerics; population prone to violence and weakened national and community

cohesions, offers competitive advantage for militant and terrorist organizations, criminal networks and evil political leaders alike. Hence this study agrees that chronic violence like armed banditry is provoked and reproduced by diverse factors, many of them mutually interactive. These include new patterns of social inequality; disjunctive processes of democratization; criminal networks and other adverse effects of globalization; and the perverse effects of the mass media. The study has critically discussed the impact of armed banditry on agricultural production in Nigeria. While noting the crippling effects of the bandit activities on rural communities in Nigeria, the study urges the government to do everything possible to halt a re-emergence of Thomas Hobbes' state of nature in Nigeria which says "no modern state could afford." The indiscriminate destruction of lives and property through armed banditry attacks makes it a necessity for urgent actions to be taken. The use of brute force has obviously proved insufficient to checkmate their activities, rather it makes them have more recruits. The account of armed bandit activities before and after the government crack-down as well as the killing of their leader is instrumental in understanding and dealing with the new phase of the group characterized by more sophisticated strategy and weaponry. Therefore, the study recommends as follows:

- i. In order to combat the growing threat of armed banditry, the Nigerian government, with the aid of the international community, must implement effective policies which will hamper the groups recruiting efforts. In addition, the Nigerian government must be encouraged to make much needed political measures such as fighting corruption, reducing poverty, unemployment, poor governance and improving human rights. Should these steps be taken, the main factors which have been attributed to armed banditry survival will be eliminated; seriously curbing the group's ambitions in the state.
- ii. For Nigeria to successfully tackle the menace of armed banditry, there is need for the revitalization of Nigeria's economy. A vibrant economy will create job opportunities for the youths and change their lives in the positive directions. Government at all levels should consider the survival and safety of the people as primary because when people are provided with the basic necessities of life they will not be cajoled into joining any unlawful association.



iii. Again, the level of illiteracy in Nigeria calls for an urgent attention. The woeful state of education and literacy in Nigeria can compete for tears with the greatest tragedies in the world. The Nigerian government has neglected the educational sector for years therefore making it impossible for so many to chart a positive course for their lives. The dearth of prospect has prompted so many youths into getting involved in armed banditry. Most of the people who join bandit groups are largely illiterates who do not have formal education. They become cheaply coerced into terrorism because they do not realize anything wrong in destroying the lives of other people. Assuming they had basic education, they would not be easily brainwashed.

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