

RURAL BANDITRY AND FOOD SECURITY IN TAKUM LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between rural banditry and food security in the Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria, amid increasing insecurity in agricultural areas. The paper posits that the increasing prevalence of banditry manifested through kidnapping, cattle rustling, village attacks, and armed robbery serves as a significant catalyst for food insecurity by disrupting agricultural production systems and eroding rural livelihoods. The research is built on the Frustration–Aggression Theory, which explains that persistent socio-economic frustrations such as poverty, unemployment, and marginalization, when combined with the state’s inability to adequately ensure security and safeguard citizens, create conditions that trigger aggressive and criminal behaviours, thereby undermining both human and food security systems. The research employs a descriptive and analytical methodology, utilizing both primary and secondary data sources. Primary data were gathered via structured questionnaires, while secondary data were obtained from pertinent scholarly literature, with analysis performed using suitable statistical methods to evaluate the proposed hypotheses. The findings indicate a substantial inverse correlation between rural banditry and food security, illustrating that the multifaceted aspects of banditry markedly diminish agricultural productivity, displace farming communities, disrupt food supply chains, and exacerbate food prices, ultimately intensifying poverty and hunger in the examined region. The study concludes that the ongoing prevalence of rural banditry constitutes a significant threat to sustainable food systems and rural development. It therefore advocates for a comprehensive, multi-faceted strategy that includes enhanced rural security frameworks, improved intelligence-gathering mechanisms, active community involvement in security governance, and targeted economic empowerment initiatives to tackle the underlying causes of banditry. Moreover, it promotes enhanced state investment in agriculture and rural infrastructure as vital strategies for reinstating farmers' confidence and guaranteeing long-term food security.

Keywords: *Banditry, Kidnapping, Insecurity, Frustration-Aggression Theory*

INTRODUCTION

Banditry has evolved as one of Nigeria's most widespread and persistent kinds of violent crime against humanity in recent years. On an almost daily basis, there are disturbing reports of indiscriminate killings of innocent farmers, large-scale livestock theft, abductions, sexual violence, arson destruction of entire villages, and widespread property looting across the country, particularly in the northwest. During President Muhammadu Buhari's administration, it was claimed that over 3,478 persons died in seven months from December 2021 to June 15, 2022 while 2,256 were kidnapped by bandit organizations (The Punch, 2022).

Similarly, the Council on Foreign Relations (2020) said that bandits killed over 1,100 people in 2018 in states including Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto, Kaduna, and Kebbi. This statistic increased to nearly 2,200 deaths in 2019, with more than 1,600 fatalities reported between January and June 2020. As of September 2019, these violent episodes had forced over 160,000 people into internal displacement, resulting in the creation of over 41,000 refugees. By 2020,

the number of internally displaced individuals (IDPs) had surpassed 247,000, with an estimated 60,000 refugees reported. According to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED, 2021), bandits killed almost 2,600 civilians in 2021 alone, marking a nearly 250 percent rise over the statistics recorded in 2020.

These armed organizations' activities have grown bolder and more widespread, encompassing attacks on schools, markets, transportation infrastructure, and even security units. In August 2021, for instance, a passenger bus travelling between Zamfara and Sokoto States was attacked, and all occupants were reportedly burnt alive as retaliation for intensified military operations against bandits.

Similarly, towards the end of May 2022, several travellers were abducted when armed groups attacked vehicles and set buses ablaze along the Kaduna–Birnin Gwari Road in Kaduna State (CHANNELS TV, 2022). In many instances, even personnel of the Department of State Services (DSS) have fallen victim to such attacks, highlighting the severity of the situation. Reports also indicate that divisional police officers, military personnel, and other paramilitary officials have been abducted, with ransoms demanded for their release (Vanguard, 2022). In another high-profile incident, bandits attacked the Abuja–Kaduna train, derailed it, and gained access to first-class coaches occupied by members of the political elite and their families, resulting in fatalities and multiple kidnappings. The Abuja–Kaduna highway has similarly remained a hotspot for repeated attacks involving killings and abductions (Felix, 2022).

Rural banditry, particularly in the form of violent attacks and robbery targeting rural populations engaged in agriculture, has created severe socio-economic shocks. These shocks often result in the displacement of farming communities, thereby threatening their survival and contributing to hunger, food shortages, poor nutrition, reduced productivity, and declining income levels. If not adequately addressed, these conditions can further intensify the hardships experienced by affected populations. Abdulahi (2019) observes that across West Africa, the increasing frequency and severity of banditry have contributed to rising regional insecurity, posing a threat to regional integration efforts.

The growing incidence of armed banditry in Nigeria encompasses a wide range of violent activities, including kidnapping, physical assaults, killings, forced displacement, cattle rustling, and disruption of economic activities (Ojo, Oyewole, & Aina, 2023). According to Ojo (2020), the underlying causes of banditry in Nigeria include poverty, climate change, youth unemployment, weak governance structures, corruption, and inadequate security protection for vulnerable populations. The impact of rural banditry has been particularly severe on economically active individuals in agriculture and other rural occupations, leading to displacement, destabilization of communities, increased food insecurity, and rising poverty levels (UNICEF, 2023). The phenomenon has become so widespread that it has acquired local terminology in different regions; for instance, in northern Nigeria, armed bandits are commonly referred to as “Kwanta-Kwanta.”

However, despite these proposed measures, previous efforts have not achieved substantial success in reducing banditry or improving food security in Nigeria's northwestern region. Many existing studies also lack comprehensive analysis of the economic implications of banditry and fail to provide clear, actionable policy recommendations capable of producing long-term solutions. This gap in the literature provides the basis for the present study. Accordingly, this research seeks to examine the relationship between banditry and food security

in Takum Local Government Area, with the aim of generating practical and sustainable recommendations to address the challenges.

Literature Review

Rural Banditry

Rural banditry can be understood as a pattern of organized criminal activities occurring predominantly in rural settings, involving acts such as armed attacks, cattle rustling, kidnapping, destruction of farmlands, and the forced displacement of local populations. In the Nigerian context, particularly within the northern and middle-belt regions, this phenomenon has evolved into a major internal security concern with far-reaching consequences for both human livelihoods and national development. Communities in areas such as Takum Local Government Area have experienced significant disruptions due to these activities, including loss of lives, breakdown of economic systems, and reduced agricultural productivity.

In a broader sense, banditry refers to violent criminal behavior characterized by the use of force or threat to intimidate victims with the intention of robbery, assault, or killing. It is classified as a crime against persons and has been widely documented across different societies (Nigeria Watch, 2019). However, the meaning and societal perception of banditry have not remained static. Historically, in parts of Europe and the Americas during the 19th century, individuals labeled as bandits were sometimes perceived as resistance figures challenging oppressive systems. Scholars such as Warte (2019) note that these actors were occasionally regarded as defenders of marginalized populations. Figures like Chucho el Roto, Herachio Bernel, and Santanon were, in certain contexts, admired by the public, despite being officially categorized as criminals by the state (Watts, 2019).

From an African historical perspective, banditry is not a recent development. Its roots can be traced to earlier periods characterized by inter-group conflicts over land, resources, and political dominance. During pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial eras, similar patterns of violence were observed across different parts of the continent (Robinson, 2009). Despite changes in its form, the persistence of banditry has continued to be linked to structural issues such as poverty, inequality, weak governance, and limited state presence (Abdullahi, 2019).

In contemporary Nigeria, rural banditry—particularly in the form of cattle rustling—has become increasingly prominent. It involves the organized theft of livestock, often executed by armed groups operating through informal networks. These activities are largely driven by economic motivations and thrive in environments where law enforcement is weak (Kwaja, 2014). In pastoral communities, cattle rustling has, in some cases, transformed into a mechanism for wealth accumulation.

The situation is particularly severe in states such as Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, Sokoto, and Niger, where bandit groups frequently carry out attacks on villages, farms, and highways (Olaniyan & Yahaya, 2016). Reports indicate widespread violence, including killings, abductions, and destruction of property. For instance, thousands of cattle were stolen within a short period between 2013 and 2014 (Bashir, 2014; Tauna, 2016), while subsequent years recorded increasing numbers of attacks and casualties (Abdullahi, 2019). Victims are often subjected to severe violence, including injuries, sexual assault, and forced displacement (Akowe & Kayode, 2014; Adeniyi, 2015).

Despite these contributions, there remains a noticeable gap in the literature regarding detailed economic implications and practical policy strategies. Many existing studies focus primarily

on descriptive analysis without offering comprehensive solutions. This study therefore seeks to extend the discussion by providing deeper insights into the banditry–food security nexus and proposing sustainable interventions.

Food Security

Food security is a multifaceted term that has been characterized in numerous ways in academic and policy literature. The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2019) defines food security as persons having consistent physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that matches their dietary needs and preferences for an active and healthy life. Similarly, the World Bank (2020) defines food security as a situation in which people can receive enough food to maintain a healthy and productive lifestyle.

The FAO framework identifies three primary components of food security: availability, accessibility, and utilization. Availability refers to the presence of adequate food supply within a given area, which may be influenced by local production, imports, and food reserves. Accessibility relates to the ability of individuals or households to obtain food, which depends on income levels, market conditions, and distribution systems. Utilization involves the proper consumption and biological use of food, taking into account nutritional quality, food preparation, and health conditions.

Scholars such as Maxwell and Frankenberger (2020) emphasize that food security goes beyond mere availability of food. It requires that individuals, particularly vulnerable groups, have reliable and sustained access to food without fear of shortage. Reutlinger (2019) further argues that food security must incorporate both quantity and quality, ensuring that dietary requirements in terms of calories, protein, and micronutrients are adequately met. Davies (2019) also highlights the importance of stability, noting that consistent access to food over time is essential.

Food insecurity, on the other hand, occurs when individuals are unable to meet their dietary needs due to lack of access to adequate food. According to FAO (2010), this condition often results from insufficient food consumption, which can lead to malnutrition and poor health outcomes. Food insecurity may arise from a combination of factors including poverty, conflict, environmental challenges, and economic instability.

Over time, the concept of food security has expanded to include additional dimensions such as cultural acceptability, sustainability, and food safety (Robertson, 2019). It is now widely recognized as a complex issue that intersects with multiple sectors, including agriculture, health, employment, and governance (Pottier, 2019).

Food insecurity can manifest in different forms, including chronic, seasonal, and temporary conditions. Chronic food insecurity is particularly severe, often leading to long-term malnutrition and increased vulnerability to diseases (Daphne, 2022). Udemezue and Kanu (2019) note that prolonged food insecurity contributes significantly to child mortality in developing countries.

Globally, food security has been a central focus of development initiatives since it was first formally discussed at the 1974 World Food Conference. The concept was further refined during the 1996 World Food Summit, which established the widely accepted definition used today. It remains a key component of global development goals, reflecting its importance in promoting human well-being and economic stability.

Kidnapping and Food Security in Rural Communities in Nigeria

Kidnapping has increasingly become one of the most disruptive forms of insecurity affecting rural communities in Nigeria, with far-reaching implications for agricultural production and overall food systems. In many agrarian regions, the persistent threat of abduction has created an atmosphere of fear, forcing farmers to either reduce their farming activities or completely abandon their farmlands. This situation has contributed significantly to declining agricultural output and reduced food availability across affected areas (Ojo, 2021).

The impact of kidnapping extends beyond immediate physical harm to victims; it also disrupts the socio-economic fabric of rural communities. When individuals are abducted, households often divert resources toward ransom payments, thereby weakening their economic capacity to invest in farming activities. In many cases, victims who are released may choose to relocate permanently, leading to a reduction in the available agricultural workforce. Consequently, large portions of arable land remain uncultivated, further diminishing food production.

Adeyemi and Uche (2022) observe that in states such as Kaduna, Zamfara, and Benue, repeated incidents of kidnapping have led to mass displacement of farming populations. This displacement not only reduces food production but also interrupts local supply chains, making it difficult for food to move from rural producers to urban consumers. The disruption of these supply chains contributes to food scarcity and increased dependence on external sources.

In addition, the prevailing insecurity discourages both private and institutional investment in agriculture. Investors are often unwilling to commit resources to regions where safety cannot be guaranteed, thereby limiting the development of agricultural infrastructure and modernization (Eze & Mohammed, 2023). This lack of investment further weakens productivity and reduces the resilience of food systems.

Another significant consequence of kidnapping is its effect on food prices. As agricultural output declines and supply chains become inefficient, the prices of staple foods such as rice, maize, and beans tend to rise (Ibrahim, 2021). This places additional financial pressure on households, particularly those with low income, increasing their vulnerability to food insecurity and malnutrition.

Cattle Rustling and Food Security in Rural Communities in Nigeria

Cattle rustling has evolved into a major dimension of rural banditry in Nigeria, particularly in the northern regions where livestock production plays a central role in the economy. This form of criminal activity involves the organized theft of cattle and other livestock, often accompanied by violence, destruction of property, and loss of lives. Its implications for food security are profound, as it directly affects both the availability of animal products and the livelihoods of pastoral communities.

The persistence of cattle rustling is closely linked to environmental and ecological changes. Factors such as desertification, shrinking water bodies, and declining pasture availability have intensified competition over natural resources. As pastoralists migrate in search of grazing land, they often come into conflict with farming communities, creating conditions that facilitate banditry (Mohammed & Ibrahim, 2015).

These conflicts frequently escalate into violent confrontations, resulting in significant human casualties and displacement. Reports from various sources indicate that thousands of people have lost their lives, while many others have been forced to flee their homes (Daily Trust, 2017;

Ameh, 2018). The destruction of settlements and livelihoods further undermines agricultural activities and reduces food production.

Weak governance structures and inadequate security presence in rural areas contribute significantly to the prevalence of cattle rustling. Many affected communities are located in remote regions with limited access to law enforcement, making them easy targets for criminal groups. Forested areas and porous borders provide safe havens for bandits, allowing them to operate with relative ease.

Village Raids and Food Security in Rural Communities in Nigeria

Village raids represent one of the most destructive forms of rural violence, with severe consequences for both human security and food systems. These attacks, often carried out by armed groups, target rural settlements, leading to loss of lives, destruction of property, and forced displacement of residents.

One of the most immediate effects of village raids is the displacement of farming populations. When communities are attacked, residents are often forced to flee to safer areas, leaving behind their homes and farmlands. Adeyemi and Yusuf (2022) note that in several states, including Benue, Zamfara, and Katsina, repeated attacks have resulted in the abandonment of entire villages. This displacement significantly reduces agricultural activities, as farmers are unable to cultivate or harvest their crops.

In addition to displacement, village raids often involve the deliberate destruction of food resources. Attackers may burn crops, destroy storage facilities, and steal livestock, thereby reducing both current and future food availability. The loss of these resources has long-term implications for food security, as affected communities struggle to recover their livelihoods (Okonkwo, 2021).

The disruption of food distribution systems is another major consequence of village raids. Insecurity along transportation routes discourages traders and transporters from moving goods, leading to shortages in local markets (NBS, 2023). As supply decreases, food prices increase, making it difficult for households to access essential commodities.

Furthermore, the persistent threat of attacks discourages investment in agriculture. Both local farmers and external investors are hesitant to engage in agricultural activities in high-risk areas (Adebayo, 2020). This lack of investment limits the development of infrastructure and reduces opportunities for economic growth.

Armed Robbery and Food Security in Rural Communities in Nigeria

Armed robbery constitutes another significant threat to food security, particularly in rural areas where agricultural activities depend heavily on safe access to land, markets, and transportation networks. The use of weapons in robbery incidents increases the level of violence and creates widespread fear among rural populations.

Farmers are often targeted during critical periods such as planting and harvesting seasons. These attacks result in the loss of crops, farming equipment, and income, thereby reducing agricultural productivity (Adebayo & Yusuf, 2022). In some cases, farmers may abandon their activities altogether due to safety concerns, leading to further declines in food production.

The theft of agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, and tools also affects farming efficiency. Without access to these essential resources, farmers are unable to maintain or

improve their productivity (Okonkwo, 2021). This contributes to lower yields and reduced food availability.

Livestock theft associated with armed robbery further compounds the problem. In regions where animal husbandry is a major source of livelihood, the loss of livestock affects both income and food supply. Meat and dairy production decline, contributing to food shortages (FAO, 2023).

Transportation systems are also severely affected by armed robbery. Attacks on roads create insecurity for traders and transporters, leading to delays, increased costs, and reduced movement of goods (NBS, 2023). This disruption of supply chains contributes to higher food prices and limited access to food.

The persistent threat of robbery discourages investment in agriculture and rural trade. As insecurity increases, economic activities decline, and food systems become less stable. This situation increases the risk of hunger and malnutrition, particularly among vulnerable populations (UNICEF, 2023).

In addition to economic impacts, armed robbery has psychological effects that influence behavior. Fear of attacks can reduce farmers' willingness to expand production or invest in new technologies, thereby limiting agricultural growth (Adeyemi, 2021).

Theoretical Framework

This study employs the Frustration–Aggression Theory as its primary theoretical framework to elucidate the relationship between rural banditry and food security in the Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State, Nigeria. The thesis, initially formulated by Dollard et al. (1939) and subsequently enhanced by researchers like Berkowitz (1962), asserts that violence frequently results directly from frustration, which occurs when people or organizations are obstructed from attaining legitimate socio-economic objectives. Within this concept, continuous deprivation, inequality, and limited chances build psychological strain that may find expression in violent and criminal actions. In contemporary cultures, particularly in unstable rural economies, such discontent is often related to structural weaknesses such as poverty, unemployment, weak governance, and limited access to resources, hence creating fertile ground for the creation and expansion of banditry.

In the context of Takum Local Government Area, the application of the Frustration–Aggression Theory provides a persuasive explanation for the increased incidence of rural banditry. The neighborhood is marked by pervasive poverty, youth unemployment, inadequate infrastructure, and minimal state presence, all of which contribute to feelings of marginalization and socio-economic exclusion among people. These situations cause deep-seated frustration, especially among unemployed youngsters and displaced persons, who may resort to aggressive and illegal actions like as kidnapping, cattle rustling, and armed robbery as alternative means of survival. Furthermore, competition over scarce resources such as land, water, and grazing routes raises complaints among different tribes, thereby increasing the possibility of violent conflict and organized banditry.

The manifestation of aggressiveness in the form of banditry has immediate and catastrophic ramifications for food security in the studied area. Violent attacks on farming communities, damage of crops, and theft of cattle greatly affect agricultural productivity, which is the principal source of subsistence in Takum. As farmers are driven to flee their farmlands owing to fear of attacks, the level of food production decreases substantially, resulting to diminished

food supply within local marketplaces. Additionally, the ongoing danger of violence discourages investment in agriculture and limits access to farming inputs, further complicating the problem of food insecurity. In this way, the theory effectively relates the psychological and structural bases of aggressiveness to actual socio-economic effects, particularly in the agricultural sector.

Moreover, the cycle of dissatisfaction and anger is reinforced through the relocation of rural communities, resulting in the growing number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) inside and surrounding Takum. Displacement not only deprives individuals of their primary means of livelihood but also places additional burden on host communities and scarce resources. The concentration of displaced populations in camps or urban periphery leads to increasing dependence on humanitarian assistance, ultimately weakening local food systems and worsening food insecurity. This condition further generates frustration among impacted groups, some of whom may again resort to criminal actions as coping methods, thus continuing a vicious cycle of violence and deprivation.

By setting the problem of rural banditry within the Frustration–Aggression theoretical lens, this study underlines the important link between socio-economic hardship, violent conduct, and food insecurity in Takum Local Government Area. The idea stresses that banditry is not just a security issue but also a manifestation of deeper systemic inequities and governance failings. Consequently, addressing the issue of banditry and its impact on food security requires a holistic approach that goes beyond military interventions to include poverty reduction, job development, enhanced rural governance, and efficient conflict resolution processes. Such integrated measures are critical for lowering frustration among vulnerable communities, stopping the cycle of aggressiveness, and eventually promoting sustainable food security in the research area.

Methodology

This study uses a descriptive survey research design. This strategy is regarded appropriate since it allows the researcher to systematically collect data from a specific population and describe existing conditions without manipulating any of the variables under investigation. The design focuses on obtaining information about current phenomena as they naturally occur, thereby allowing for objective analysis and interpretation.

The descriptive survey method is particularly useful in studies that seek to examine relationships between variables and to understand patterns, attitudes, and perceptions within a population. In the context of this research, it provides a suitable framework for assessing how different forms of rural banditry influence food security in Takum Local Government Area. By relying on this design, the study is able to generate reliable data that reflect real-life experiences and conditions within the study area.

Data Presentation And Analysis

Table 4.1: Mean and standard deviation on effect of Kidnapping on Food Security

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	N	$\bar{X}$	δ	Rk
1	Do you agree that farmer flee or abandoned farmland for fear of kidnapping in Takum Local Government leading to food security?	200	78	36	53	367	3.60	0.49	Agree
2	Do you agree that kidnapping hinder the movement of agricultural inputs such as fertilizer, seeds etc in Takum Local Government Area, Taraba State?	100	141	55	71	367	3.60	0.49	Agree
3	Do you agree that families may be forced to pay ransoms, stop working to care for victims, reducing their income and food access in Takum Local Government Area, Taraba State leading to food insecurity?	122	131	51	63	367	3.60	0.49	Agree
4	Do you agree that fertile land are not accessed because of risk associated with such location in Takum Local Government Area, Taraba State?	123	121	69	54	367	3.70	0.46	Agree
Grand mean/Standard deviation						-	3.58	0.48	Agree

Source: Filed Survey, 2025

Criterion mean: $\bar{X} \geq 2.50 \rightarrow$ agree

$\bar{X} < 2.50 \rightarrow$ disagree

Results of Table 4.1 shows the mean and standard deviation scores the rating items on effect of kidnapping on food security in Takum Local Government Area. The raw data revealed that the strongly agreed have the higher percentage as compared to the disagreed. This correlates with the mean figures where all the items have mean rating scale above 2.50, including grand

mean. This shows that kidnapping affect food security as farmer flee or abandoned farmland and families may be forced to pay ransoms, stop working to care for victims, reducing their income and food access in Takum Local Government Area, Taraba State leading to food insecurity (grand mean = 3.58).

Test Of Hypotheses

H₀: There is no significant relationship between kidnapping and food security in Takum Local Government Area

Hypothesis one was tested using the percentage values of the respondent's responses on items 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively in table 4.3.

Table 11: Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	19.91 ^a	8	.71
Likelihood Ratio	20.18	8	.251
N of Valid Cases	367		

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 11.18.

Result Interpretation

Level of Significance: 0.05

Degrees of Freedom (df): 8

Table Chi-Square (χ^2_{table}): 16.919

Calculated Chi-Square (χ^2_{cal}): 21.41

P-value: < 0.05

Since the calculated value of Chi-Square (χ^2_{cal}) is greater than the table value of Chi-Square (χ^2_{table}), and the P-value is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (H₀) and accept the alternative hypothesis (H₁) which states that there is a significant relationship between kidnapping and food security in Takum Local Government Area.

Discussion of Findings

The outcome of the first hypothesis tested in this study indicates that there is a significant relationship between kidnapping and food security in Takum Local Government Area. This result is consistent with the findings of Ojo (2021), who noted that the prevalence of kidnapping compels many farmers either to become victims of abduction for ransom or to abandon their communities due to fear. Such situations often result in farms being neglected, leaving crops unharvested or destroyed. Consequently, this disruption in farming activities contributes to reduced food availability, which in turn leads to scarcity, rising food prices, and increased levels of hunger. The constant threat of abduction has therefore discouraged active participation in agriculture, resulting in a decline in overall agricultural productivity.

The findings from the second hypothesis reveal a significant relationship between cattle rustling and food security in Takum Local Government Area. This aligns with the position of Ameh (2018), who observed that cattle rustling has led to the loss and destruction of livestock, thereby affecting rural livelihoods. The study further emphasizes that environmental and ecological factors, alongside the weakening capacity of the state to provide adequate security,

play a major role in the persistence of rural banditry. In this regard, ecological challenges such as desertification and resource scarcity have contributed to increased movement of pastoral groups across regions. This migration, often associated with transhumance practices, has been identified as a major trigger for conflicts and other forms of banditry across the country.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that armed banditry in Takum Local Government Area of Taraba State is driven by a complex interplay of socio-economic and structural factors, including the breakdown of social values, rising youth unemployment, proliferation of small and light weapons, and harsh economic conditions within Nigeria and across its borders. The data further demonstrate that banditry is sustained by cross-border collaboration between foreign elements and local youngsters who possess knowledge of the area, hence boosting the sophistication and persistence of attacks. This has resulted in substantial socio-economic implications, including disruption of agricultural and commercial activity, loss in market participation due to fear and insecurity, and widespread psychological suffering among inhabitants. Efforts by communities and security organizations, such as vigilante groups and roadblocks, have proven mainly fruitless due to the challenging terrain and the guerrilla tactics adopted by bandits. Consequently, the study reveals that banditry considerably harms food security by displacing farmers, lowering agricultural production, and destabilizing local food systems.

In light of these findings, the study recommends a coordinated and multi-dimensional approach to addressing the menace. This includes strengthening rural security through increased patrols along farming and market routes, enhancing community policing, and improving intelligence gathering mechanisms.

1. Targeted economic interventions such as youth employment programmes, vocational training, and access to microcredit should be implemented to address the root causes of banditry.
2. Affected farmers should be supported through the provision of agricultural inputs, soft loans, and the rehabilitation of damaged farmlands, alongside the establishment of secure farming corridors and market routes to restore confidence and productivity.
3. Humanitarian assistance and livelihood diversification programmes should also be extended to displaced households to reduce vulnerability and prevent further cycles of violence.

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