IIJP 2026 | Volume 2, Issue 1, pp. 1624-1631 | ISSN: 2636-4484

IMPACT OF BANDITRY ON THE LIVELIHOOD OF RESIDENTS IN SHIRORO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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ARTICLE INFO
Article No.: 0253
Accepted Date: 13/03/2026
Published Date: 30/03/2026
Type: Research

ABSTRACT
Banditry has emerged as a significant security challenge in Nigeria, particularly in the North West region, threatening democratic governance and peaceful coexistence. This study examines the impact of banditry on livelihoods in Shiroro Local Government Area, Niger State, with a focus on food security, economic activities, and coping strategies adopted by residents. The study is anchored on the Queer Ladder Theory, Frustration-Aggression Theory, and Relative Deprivation Theory, which provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the motivations behind armed banditry. A descriptive survey design was used, with 241 questionnaires retrieved from Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps in Kuta. The results show that banditry has had a devastating impact on livelihoods, with 50.2% of respondents strongly agreeing that armed conflict has hindered community development and progress, and 51.0% strongly agreeing that it has limited economic opportunities and livelihood prospects. The study identifies coping strategies adopted by residents, including selling assets, borrowing money, and reducing family consumption. The study recommends that the government prioritize the deployment of security personnel, support affected households, and implement policies to enhance food security and economic empowerment.

Keywords: Agricultural productivity, Banditry, Food security, Income generation, Coping Mechanism, Livelihood

Introduction

The phenomenon of banditry has emerged as a significant security challenge in Nigeria, particularly in the North West region, threatening democratic governance and peaceful coexistence (Akinyetun, 2022). Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State has been particularly affected, with widespread incidents of kidnapping, arson, cattle rustling, looting, raping, and killings (Ibrahim & Ahmad, 2020). The activities of bandits have not only resulted in loss of lives and property but also have serious socio-economic implications for the region.

Despite efforts by the government and security agencies to address the issue, banditry continues to escalate in Shiroro, with devastating consequences for rural communities. The lack of effective measures to combat banditry has emboldened the perpetrators, making it a lucrative business (Adetayo, 2022). The situation is further exacerbated by conflicts between Fulani herdsmen and farmers, leading to loss of lives, destruction of farmlands, and displacement of communities (Basil, 2015; Ekpeyemi, 2016).

The effect of banditry has left many scars on the people of the community with complicating and porous security architecture that has forced many residents to flee their homes and migrate to neighboring villages for safety, food shortages, destruction of lives, farm produce and properties with internally displaced camps (IDP) being flooded with refuges dying of starvation and disease on a daily basis. The study finds it necessary for the Government to create an enabling environment that would ensure safety of its people and their properties with constant and effective deployment of adequate number of security personnel to the affected communities to checkmates the illegal activities of the rural bandits.

Rural banditry intersects with several other important themes in the Nigerian political economy. Which are; the problems of human and national security; altered balance in state-society relations; the impact of climate change on agricultural practices and different occupational groups; the emerging challenge of food security and the modernization of agriculture; and the question of intergroup relations and social harmony in Nigeria's diverse and plural context, even more important is the impact of cattle rustling on livestock production. Livestock production is not only a significant aspect of agriculture in Nigeria's quest to diversify its economy, but also remains crucial to the overall wellbeing of pastoralist communities, particularly the nomadic Fulani herders. Also in recent period, rural banditry and violent conflict between pastoralists and farmers in Nigeria have been on the rise. This social conflict has traditionally consisted of dispute over natural resources and is often presented as a conflict between pastoralists and farmers over land that has recently developed into rural banditry with heavy human and economic cost, ranging from the sexual assault of women and girls, attacks on villages and cattle rustling, among others (Jibrin, 2015).

This paper seeks to:

1. Examine the impact of banditry on livelihoods in Shiroro LGA.
2. Assess the effect of banditry on food security and economic activities.
3. Identify coping strategies adopted by residents.

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored on the Queer Ladder Theory (QLT) as its framework of analysis. The QLT, propounded by Daniel Bell (1919-2011), explains the functional significance of organized crime as a desperate tactic for socioeconomic empowerment and social climbing (Okolie & Okpaleke, 2014). The theory posits that organized crime is an instrumental behavior, a means to an end, and a way to accumulate wealth and build power.

The QLT is relevant to this study as it provides insights into the sociological foundations of armed banditry in Nigeria. The theory suggests that organized crime thrives in contexts where the government's capacity to detect, sanction, and deter crime is poor, public corruption is endemic, and legitimate livelihood opportunities are slim (Okoli & Orinya, 2013). In Nigeria, the phenomenon of armed banditry has been driven by a criminal quest for economic accumulation in an environment that condones crimes.

Frustration-Aggression Theory

Frustration-Aggression Theory, proposed by Dollard et al. (1939), suggests that aggressive behavior often results from frustration. The theory posits that frustration leads to aggressive behavior, which in turn leads to resistance or an attempt to block the source of frustration. In the context of Nigeria, this theory explains the aggressive behavior of armed bandits as a response to the frustration caused by poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to basic necessities.

Relative Deprivation Theory

Relative Deprivation Theory, credited to Samuel Stouffer (1949), suggests that individuals or groups feel deprived of something considered essential to them, leading to aggressive behavior. In Nigeria, this theory explains the feelings of deprivation among certain groups, who feel marginalized and excluded from the country's resources, leading to armed banditry. The QLT, Frustration-Aggression Theory, and Relative Deprivation Theory provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the motivations behind armed banditry in Shiroro Local Government Area, Niger State. The theories suggest that armed banditry is a result of a combination of factors, including poverty, unemployment, lack of access to basic necessities, and feelings of deprivation and marginalization.

Food Security

Citing the World Bank (1986), Abu and Soom, (2016), food security is defined as the access by all people at all times to enough food for an active healthy life. Food security exists when food is available to everyone at all times, they have means of access, and that it is nutritionally adequate in terms of quantity, quality, and variety. Also, that it is acceptable within the given culture (FAO, 2004). It is only when these five conditions are in place that it can be said that a population is food secured.

The absence of any of these conditions at household, regional and national levels cause food insecurity (Folorunso, Gama & Ademiluyi, 2018). Hence, making food available in sufficient quantity and quality is considered as a basic prerequisite for economic development, social interaction, political stability and security of the nation. Food security can either be at international, national, regional, state or household levels. It should be noted however that food security at one level does not necessarily imply food security at the other level. At the national level, food security exists when 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 active and healthy life. At the household level, food security implies physical and economic access to food that is adequate in terms of quantity, quality, safety, and cultural accessibility to meet each person's needs (Ingawa, cited in Abu & Soom, 2016, p.56) Food security has four components, namely food availability, food accessibility, food sustainability, and food utilization (Yusufu, 2020).

Humanitarian Consequences

The Banditry has also had a devastating impact on the humanitarian situation in Shiroro. Studies have shown that the Banditry has led to increased food insecurity, with many households struggling to access basic necessities like food and water (Ajakaiye et al., 2018). The destruction

of healthcare infrastructure has also resulted in increased mortality rates, particularly among vulnerable populations like children and women (Iyekekpolo, 2018).

Methodology

The purposive sampling technique was used in selecting the study area based on the number of wards present in the local government and also how frequently banditry activities occur in the area. The research design used a descriptive survey with the application of questionnaire as an instrument for the collection of data as the area has experienced challenges as a result of banditries. There are a total of fifteen wards in the local government with a population of 235,404 (census, 2006). Eight wards were selected at random these are Gurmana, Bassa, Koki, Magani, Alawa, Kurebe, Maganda and Magami. A total of 400 questionnaires were randomly administered. However,241 questionnaires were retrieved at the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camp in Kuta.the reason for the retrieval of this number as against the total number of the administered questionnaire was as a result of the limitation of the researcher's ability to go deep into the communities owing to security concerns. The questionnaire was aimed at gathering quantitative data the livelihoods of the affected communities including agricultural productivity, income generation and food security. The result obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics. FGDs was conducted with community leaders, farmers, and other stakeholders to gather qualitative data on the consequences of banditry on livelihoods. Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) was conducted with local government officials, security personnel, and humanitarian aid workers to gather data on the humanitarian response to the banditry.

Results and Discussion

Table 1: Age distribution of respondents

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
19 – 25 years	2	0.8
26 – 45 years	142	58.9
46 years and above	97	40.2
Total	**241**	**100.0**

Source: Authors Field Work, 2026

Table 1, represent age distributions of respondents, it revealed that 0.8% of the total responses presenting 2 people are between the ages of 19- 25yrs, 142 respondents or 58.9% represent those who ages are between 26 – 45yrs, 40.2% or 97 respondents are those whose age are between 46 years and above. This therefore, means that the respondents who completed and returned the questionnaire are mostly, those whose age distributions are between 26 to 45yrs.

Table 2: The occurrence of armed conflict hindering community's overall development and progress.

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agreed	121	50.2
Agreed	72	29.9
Undecided	7	2.9
Disagreed	25	10.4
Strongly disagreed	16	6.6
Total	**241**	**100.0**

Source: Author's Field Survey, 2026

Table 2 shows that 121 respondents representing 50.2% strongly agreed that the occurrence of armed conflict has hindered the community's overall development and progress 72 respondents representing 29.9% agreed, while 7 respondents representing 2.9% were undecided, 25

respondents representing 10.4% disagreed and 16 respondents represented by 6.6% strongly disagreed. This suggest that insecurity is a major concern for education in Shiroro, with most respondents acknowledging its negative impact,

Table 3: Impact of armed conflict on economic opportunities and livelihood prospects of the community

Responses	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strongly agreed	123	51.0
Agreed	68	28.2
Undecided	10	4.1
Disagreed	25	10.4
Strongly disagreed	15	6.2
Total	**241**	**100.0**

Source: Author's Field work, 2026

Table 3 shows that 123 respondents representing 51.0% strongly agreed that the presence of armed conflict has limited economic opportunities and livelihood prospects in our community, 68 respondents representing 23.2% agreed, while 10 respondents representing 4.1% were undecided, 25 respondents representing 10.4% disagreed and 15 respondents represented by 6.2% strongly disagreed. This suggest that armed conflict is seen as a major obstacle to economic growth and livelihood in the communities.

Strategies to cope with the Impact of Banditry on the Family's Income

Figure 1, revealed that 34 % of the respondents said they have to sell asset to cope with the impact of the insurgents on the family income, while 12% agreed that they borrow money for them to be able to cater for their family and 16.0% said they had to reduce their family consumption, also, 0.9% said that they have to get more family member working for them to cope with the impact of the insurgency while 29.0% of the respondents from both the displaced and host family members saying they had to split family members among other households for them to be able to cushion the effect of the menace.

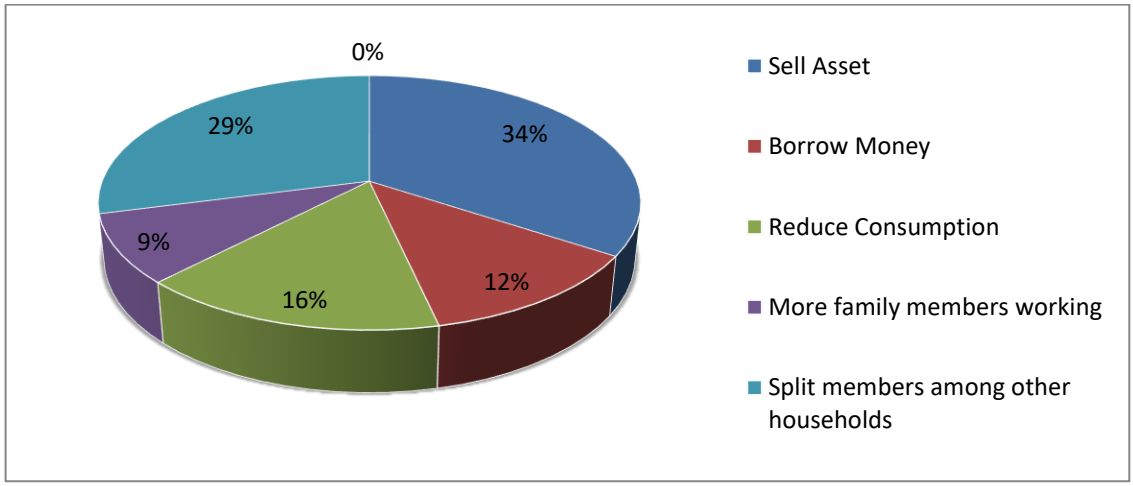


Figure 1: Strategies to cope with the Impact of Banditry on the Family's Income
Source: Author's Field work, 2026

Discussion of Findings

The findings from this research reveal the devastating impact of banditry on livelihoods in Shiroro Local Government Area, Niger State. The results show that the majority of respondents

(58.9%) are between the ages of 26-45 years, indicating that the affected population is predominantly of working age.

The study's first objective was to examine the impact of banditry on livelihoods in Shiroro LGA. The results show that 50.2% of respondents strongly agreed that armed conflict has hindered the community's overall development and progress, while 29.9% agreed. This suggests that insecurity is a major concern for the community, with most respondents acknowledging its negative impact. This finding is consistent with the Queer Ladder Theory (QLT), which posits that organized crime thrives in contexts where the government's capacity to detect, sanction, and deter crime is poor (Okoli & Orinya, 2013). The lack of effective measures to combat banditry has emboldened the perpetrators, making it a lucrative business.

The study's second objective was to assess the effect of banditry on food security and economic activities. The results show that 51.0% of respondents strongly agreed that the presence of armed conflict has limited economic opportunities and livelihood prospects in the community, while 28.2% agreed. This suggests that armed conflict is seen as a major obstacle to economic growth and livelihood in the communities. This finding is consistent with the Frustration-Aggression Theory, which suggests that aggressive behavior often results from frustration (Dollard et al., 1939). The frustration caused by poverty, unemployment, and lack of access to basic necessities has led to aggressive behavior among armed bandits.

The study's third objective was to identify coping strategies adopted by residents. The results show that 34% of respondents said they have to sell assets to cope with the impact of the insurgents on family income, while 12% agreed that they borrow money to cater for their family. This suggests that residents are adopting various coping strategies to mitigate the impact of banditry on their livelihoods.

The Relative Deprivation Theory provides additional insights into the motivations behind armed banditry. The theory suggests that individuals or groups feel deprived of something considered essential to them, leading to aggressive behavior (Stouffer, 1949). In Nigeria, the feelings of deprivation among certain groups, who feel marginalized and excluded from the country's resources, have led to armed banditry.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings of this study suggest that banditry has had a devastating impact on livelihoods in Shiroro Local Government Area, Niger State. The study's results are consistent with the Queer Ladder Theory, Frustration-Aggression Theory, and Relative Deprivation Theory, which provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the motivations behind armed banditry. The study recommends that the government should create an enabling environment that would ensure safety of its people and their properties with constant and effective deployment of adequate number of security personnel to the affected communities to checkmates the illegal activities of the rural bandits. However, this study can further be researched into in the nearest future by looking into areas such as comparative study on the impact of banditry across different Nigerian states; the role of technology in mitigating security risks and effects of counterterrorism policies on economic recovery with a view to proffering tenable solutions.

Recommendations

1. The government should prioritize the deployment of security personnel to affected communities to ensure safety and security and Support should be provided to affected households to help them recover from the impact of banditry.
2. The government should implement policies to enhance food availability, accessibility, and sustainability in affected communities while Agricultural support programs be established

to help farmers recover from the impact of banditry and Economic empowerment initiatives be implemented to promote livelihood diversification and income generation.

3. Community-based coping mechanisms should be supported and strengthened while alternative livelihood options be provided to reduce dependence on affected livelihoods and social protection programs should be established to support vulnerable households.

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