

ASSESSMENT OF THE EFFECTS OF BANDITRY ON AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION IN TOTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF NASARAWA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Banditry have paralysed agricultural sectors where the populace derived their livelihood. The menace posed by bandits has affected the populace thereby making people sojourn in neighbouring communities. The study therefore assessed the effects of banditry on agricultural production in Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The study adopts the Situational Theory which posits that crime is motivated by the prevailing socioeconomic circumstances of individual in society. The data collected was through structured questionnaire administered to one-hundred and fifty (150) respondents using five (5) communities in the study area and was analysed and presented with the use of descriptive statistics (tables, frequencies and percentages) using SPSS version 20. The results revealed that banditry has affected agricultural production which in turn affected livelihood with increase in the prices of goods and services. Therefore, the study recommended that the government should make employment a top priority for citizens as these would reduce poverty and criminal acts. Also, there should always be an equipped and well-trained personnel with sophisticated weapons to ensure that all borders in the country are well-policed to confront the bandits. Lastly, there should be a synergy between communities and government at various levels with a view to mapping out strategies on how to end banditry not only in the affected states or regions, but Nigeria in general.

Keywords: Assessment, Effects, Banditry, Agricultural Production.

Introduction

Threats to agricultural production for the past years in some communities in Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State is caused by banditry, as this has become a worrisome development to every Nigerian, particularly those in the region. The sustained terrorist and banditry activities have had negative impact on agricultural activities and farming system, not only are farming activities incapable of being carried out under insecure environment, domestic agricultural production is stifled, farming communities are displaced and access to market blocked. The banditry attacks carried out on these farming communities have made it difficult for farmers to access their farm lands to either plant or harvest. Beside the physical attack on the farmers, the damages carried out by their livestock (cows, cattle, etc.) have negative impact on the economy, as this has reflected in the undaunted rise in the prices of food commodities, scarcity of some food items and adverse food insecurity as areas where food items are produced are no longer producing. This is because most of the farmers have abandoned their farm lands and migrated to other communities for safety of lives hence, leaving their farms fallow

and unharvested crops which would pose adverse effect on the farming system. Onah (2010) asserts that the frequency of attacks may be attributed to the ease with which the bandits move in and out of the communities without any form of resistance. Asiwaju (2004) held that some communities have been turned into areas of concentration for bad roads, absence of health facilities and educational institutions, and have become sites for poorly managed forest reserves that now provide cover as hideouts for bandits. Bagu & Smith (2017) noted that organized research on banditry is still at its nascent stage, but Kuna & Jibrin (2016) noted that there have been some scholarly works on the subject matter, they assert that banditry has become prevalent in some parts of the North-Central regions. The increasing incidences of banditry has affected both human and agricultural production as Gadzama, Oduebe & Dariya (2018) opined that human security goes beyond the concept of mere physical security in the traditional sense. However, Ewans (2007) had a different view when he saw modern concept of human security as that which identifies the inherent weaknesses of the traditional security pattern by focusing on State security rather than the protection of individuals and communities. In addition, Ewans (2007) believed that security in modern times should be redirected towards the protection of life and property of individuals and communities rather than concentrating more on State functionaries, their families and allies, and by extension what they define as critical infrastructures.

Banditry has to do with armed violence perpetrated by criminal opportunists and syndicates along the country's borders and rural communities. Acts of criminality by bandits are targeted at human life or property; armed robbery, kidnapping, cattle rustling and allied violence. McGregor (2014) assert that banditry activities include village market raids, rape of women, arson and outright killings, these actions have always involved the use of force, threats and intimidation on people in the community. The bandits are motivated by the imperative of material accumulation and the quest to rob, assault or even liquidate a person or a group of persons based on political, ideological or religious considerations. Ja'afar (2018) is of the view that there were records of instances of banditry in colonial Nigeria which date back to the 1930s where wayfarers and merchants travelling on the local shallow feeder roads were sometimes ambushed by criminals who were basically targeting goods carried on donkeys, camels and ox-carts. Such bandits at that time forcefully took away goods and disappeared into the bush, or at some other times, the bandits raided villages and carted away valuable properties and produce.

However, increase in banditry attacks on communities has become an issue of concern. According to Collins (2000) who defined banditry as an act of robbery and violence in areas where the rule of law has broken down. Banditry is an organization of armed men for the purpose of attacking State or social institutions or enterprises or individual persons. Participation in such bands and in the attack committed by them is equally regarded as banditry (Collins, 2000). For Abdullahi (2019), the prevalence of banditry and its severity has contributed to the rising increase in regional insecurity with a potential threat to regional integration of the sub region. The United Nations (2020) observed that attacks by insurgent group on agricultural productivity had obstructed farming practices. Egwu (2016) stated that banditry has moved from its rudimentary phase to a more complex and complicated pattern of criminality. Bagu & Smith (2017) assert that 'gangs of criminals, often youth from farming and herding communities have taken advantage of the growing insecurity in the country to launch attacks on villages and communities to loot, engage in highway robberies, cattle rustling and killings for personal gains'. Adeniyi (2018) held that the stretched large landmarks and forest zones are enough and comfortable for hideouts and effective camp training grounds for bandit activities.

Conceptual Issues

Concept of Banditry

There is no universally acceptable conception of banditry in the social sciences as banditry has been conceptualized from different perspectives by different scholars. Hence, a bandit is an armed robber who belongs to a group of people that operates in an isolated or lawless area of a country, stealing, or robbing people with weapons. Banditry is associated with class struggle whereby a group of people championing the causes of the masses against elite oppression. This group of people rob the rich and give to the poor, and in return, the poor aid, admire and protect the bandits from authorities. Warte (2011) define banditry as an act of crime committed either by the residents of a village or people in low socio-economic strata in order to fulfil their basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter. Okoli & Ugwu (2019) asserted that banditry is motivated by either economic or political motives. This implies that banditry is the practice of raiding and attacking of victims by members of an armed group, whether or not premeditated, using weapons of offence or defence especially in semi-organized groups for the purpose of overpowering the victims and obtaining loots or achieving some political goals. Also, Okoli & Okpaleke (2014) asserted that banditry involves the use of force, or threat to intimidate a person or a group of persons in order to rob, rape or kill. Banditry is not restricted to the rural settings, but have extended its tentacles to urban. Ladan & Mutawalli (2020) noted that banditry has assumed some level of violence as a result of access to sophisticated weapons of warfare like rifles and other small and light weapons that are illegally imported into the country through its porous borders. Shalangwa (2013) held that bandits no longer target the rich people alone, but victimize the poor, women and even children. Shalangwa (2013) sees bandits as outlaws and desperate lawless marauders who do not have a definite residence or destination, but roam around forests and mountains to avoid being detected or arrested.

In the same vein, Omotola (2014) holds that banditry has been a major source of insecurity affecting the political economy in Nigeria. It is on this basis Dayo & Salihu (2015) described banditry as a political economy problem resulting from the absence of equitable access to state resources and a deliberate agenda to exclude others from social formation. Aisha (2020) opined that bandits have continued to ravage agricultural activities of the country, its prevalence and severity in Nigeria has increase regional insecurity with a potential threat to regional integration of Northern Nigeria. In addition, Saleh (2015) and Jumare & Surma (2015) reported that some of the bandits from some countries of the West African sub-region such as Niger Republic and Mali were invited to carry out large scale attacks in some countries of the sub-region. They moved through the porous West African borders with their arms to assist their fellow bandits in carrying out large scale or reprisal attacks. Bagu & Smith (2017) were concerned with this development when they maintained that most of the bandits are gangs of criminal, often youth from farming and herding communities who have left their domains and have internalized new values and habits of robbing people on the highways and rustling cattle for personal gains, that both farming and herdsman communities were victims of this criminality. Centre for Democracy and Development (2015) supported the above assertion that bandits have increased their penchant for criminality from highway robbery and rustling to looting, laying seige on local markets and killing innocent Nigerians. The Humanitarian (2018) opines that some bandits have gone to the extent of kidnapping foreign miners and demanding payments of appropriate ransoms before their releases.

In considering the dangers associated with banditry, Okoli & Lenshie (2018) averred that the Government of Nigeria in a bid to curtail banditry, directed the suspension of all forms of mining activities in the country. Ewans (2007) advocated that there should be concerted efforts to shift attention from the normal State centered approach to security and surveillance to people-oriented approach to security. Ewans (2007) was of the view that the rural people best know the routes used by the bandits into their communities, and that they should be allowed to play pivotal roles in actualizing

their own security, necessary State laws should be put in place to allow the people access to effective security equipment needed to safeguard their lives and properties. Krause (2004); Axworthy (2004); Fukuda-pan & Messineo (2012) put it that, sovereignty and security of life are the direct responsibility of government on which its civil populace depends on to protect their populations against insecurity. Campbell (2020) asserted that the army introduced several military operations to quash banditry, but the operations only succeeded in pushing back the bandits and destroyed some of their hideouts while some were killed, but maintained that attacks have continued without any sign of stoppage.

Concept of Agricultural Production

The growth in agricultural production is necessary not only to increase food availability and raise nutritional levels of the population; it is essential to the security of a nation. The increasing attention paid to food impact on poverty, humanitarian crises, conflicts and climate change all suggest that agricultural production is a national security concern. In Nigeria, food is a much more complicated subject than it used to be. Daniel (2016) asserted that policy makers must consider not only nutrition but also access to locally grown commodities, management of food waste, and the impact of commodity prices on its daily cost of food. Agricultural production affects and is vulnerable to changes in economic stability, climate change, education and national health. Debate over food deserts, or places without access to fresh fruits and vegetables, remain important when it comes to socio-economic indicators, and addressing the double burden of malnutrition in Nigeria sparks conversations about inadequate, education, and nutrition in the rural areas of Nigeria. Investing in agriculture is one of the ways to reduce insecurity, poverty, expand economic activity, and grow the middle class. But security challenges are the emerging contemporary issues faced by Nigerians, and some of the challenges include: Boko Haram insurgency, oil bunkering, kidnapping, armed robbery, political violence, herdsman violence. Others include; unemployment, high rate of poverty, malnutrition, political instability and corruption.

Research on agricultural production requires attention and efforts to ponder into a comprehensive understanding of how to address it. Poverty, banditry, Boko Haram etc. are major problems faced by many developing countries in the world, including Nigeria. It has been described as a vicious cycle causing hunger and malnutrition and is aggravated by rapid population growth. The low level of agricultural production due to attacks by Boko Haram or the herdsman coupled with a rising population growth rate in Nigeria is likely to lead to a food crisis and a higher unemployment level. The unemployed population becomes prime targets for recruitment into these insurgency groups whose actions further deepen food insecurity. Tackling unemployment is a prerequisite to curbing insecurity in agricultural sector. Implementing and executing a national industrial policy, which stimulates the growth and development in all sectors of the economy would go a long way in creating jobs for the unemployed. Undertaking projects to build new infrastructure or improve on the already existing ones would stimulate national production and provide employment opportunities. Policy makers should tailor policies towards transforming agricultural sector from its subsistent state to a mechanized sector. Policy realignment in the sector would not just revive the sector but also enhance foreign earnings and increase the sector's contribution to the GDP.

Empirical Review

Banditry in Nigeria

Banditry as an organized armed individual whose purpose is to attack States, communities, institutions, enterprises and individuals has existed and operated in different parts of the world since the 17th Century. Studies have shown that in 2018, about "1,100 people were killed in six north-western States of Nigeria, and more than 2,200 killed in 2019 and 1,600 killed between January and June 2020," and

247,000 people were displaced, with more than 41,000 refugees being created by their operation (Aisha, 2020). Bashir & Mustapha (2022) asserted that the effect of banditry is extensive, and in addition to complicating the security crisis in the country, it has also increased the incidence of forced migration, food insecurity, cattle rustling, destruction of property, health challenges, displacement, humanitarian crises, and death. They further hold that, between 2018 and 2020, an estimated 4,900 people lost their lives to bandit attacks, while 309,000 were internally displaced persons and 60,000 refugees recorded. According to Abdullahi (2019), some bandits were asked to carry out large-scale attacks in the sub-countries where they travelled through West Africa's porous borders, with weapons in their hands to aid their fellow bandits in carrying out large-scale or retaliatory attacks. The International Crisis Group {ICG} (2020) argued that the security challenge in the North has its root from long-running competition over land and water resources between mostly Fulani herders and Hausa farmers, both of whom have mobilized armed groups (bandits) for Fulani pastoralist and vigilante for the Hausa farmers in the name of protection. They argued further that these ethnic groups decry failure of the government to protect them and insist on self-protection. These ethnic militias have the backing of ethnic, community, religious and traditional leaders who justify their actions and shield them from facing the full wrath of the law (ICG, 2020). Abdullahi (2019) posited that rural banditry is a form of identity conflict which affects social relations among different ethnic groups in West Africa. Regrettably, Nigeria is currently the epicenter of banditry in West African Sub Region, with North West and North Central taking the center stage.

Any sort of violence that causes insecurity in rural areas where farmers make up the bulk of the population is said to have effect on agricultural production in the world. The root cause of armed incursion into Nigeria could be found in the political insurgency that erupted in Chad (and later in Niger Republic) in the previous decade. During this period, rebels converted the island on the Lake Chad to their base and launched guerilla attacks against Chadian Government troops. Bobbo (1999) held that rebels occasionally entered into Nigeria to attack border communities and to steal property such as cattle and money in order to prosecute their insurrection against their national government. Gadzama, Saddiq, Oduchie & Dariya (2018) asserted that the factors responsible for the incessant banditry in northern Nigeria include poverty, greed, corruption and poor security. They further held that the presence of security personnel has not really yielded the desired results as bandits have continued to rape women/girls indiscriminately, steal farm produce, rustle cattle, rob and kidnap/abduct residents for ransom. These bandits prevent people from going about their daily businesses which had negatively affected the economy of Nigeria. Okoli & Okpaleke (2014) argued that banditry has manifested in the form of cattle rustling and has become a concern in northern Nigeria where cattle breeding is a major occupation of the people. They further noted that the problem has been compounded in recent years by the rising incidence of farmer-herder conflict which has now become a major security challenge. The strategic implication of this development is that it has the capacity of raising the instrumental value and utility of cattle rustling to a level where its solution would be as problematic as terrorism itself.

Uche & Iwuamadi (2018) contended that banditry has been on the increase due to the fact that governance has become deficit and the absence of effective security tending mechanisms has taken turn for the worse. They further argued that the fictionalization of vigilantes in most communities in Nigeria bred criminal activities that escalated the tensed milieu. Ladan (2019) blames the rising wave of banditry in northern Nigeria on the high levels of poverty, illiteracy, limited security presence, unemployment, drug abuse, presence of forest areas, porous borders, and grievance over security operations, desire to acquire wealth and the collapse of amnesty programme and peace deals. He explained that long stretches of forest vegetation have become the hideouts and operating bases for bandits from where they come to the villages along the roads to launch attacks. Similarly, Ladan & Ladan (2011) revealed that from 1980s to date a number of industries in the State have stopped functioning

as a result of some problems, and the rate of unemployment further increase as farming activities are presently threatened by armed banditry. Okoli & Ochim (2016) argued that Nigeria's forestlands have been poorly managed and secured, which makes them vulnerable to criminal habitation and activities. Bobbo (1999) noted that the atrocities committed by bandits against helpless Nigerian communities could be attributed to the growing internationalization of crime, economic hardship and the wave of political instability sweeping across the African Continents. This development has created political insecurity in the sense that people recruited outside Nigeria's neighboring countries could easily use social and cultural affinity to infiltrate and create instability within the country.

Ladan & Mutawalli (2020) have shown that banditry has negative impacts on agricultural production in Nigeria. They explained that the attacks by bandits on farming communities across States in northern Nigeria portend great danger to the prospects for food availability in the country as many farmers are very scared to go back to their farms to engage in their usual farming activities. The negative impacts include killing and kidnapping of farmers, chasing of farmers out of their farmlands, seizing of farmlands, theft of cattle, burning and raiding of grain silos, and blocking of local trade routes. Shalangwa (2013) found out that banditry in border communities can be attributed to factors such as the influx of ex-combatants from neighboring war-torn countries, especially the Chad, Niger and Cameroon, unemployment among youths and easy availability of arms. He further asserted that bandits attack people on the highways with military weapons and violently dispossess victims of their money/valuables and escape into the hills and forests. They operate in groups usually between the ages of 28 and 45 years and speak Hausa or Fulfulde languages. Shalangwa (2013) asserted that banditry has impact on the socio-economic lives of the people such as the disruption of commercial activities, disruption of social activities like festivals and school attendance, negative impact on the supply and delivery of basic amenities and the psychological trauma suffered by residents, victims and relatives of victims of banditry. Shalangwa (2013) further stated that there is a failure on the part of law enforcement agencies towards controlling and preventing incidents of banditry in Nigeria. The challenges these law enforcement agencies face in this regard include inadequate funding, inadequate training and equipment, political interference, poor welfare package, poor quality of human and personnel resources, and the absence of a comprehensive crime prevention policy.

Abdullahi (2019) holds that banditry has a negative effect on agricultural production because of its involvement in robbery and violence against individuals particularly rural inhabitants who engage on farming, livestock and other agricultural production in the country. It is for this reason that the government recognised that banditry poses severe threat to farming communities in the northern region and as a result, established special agro-rangers' crops unit to protect farmers and farming interests across the country. The use of this agro-rangers is to prevent attacks on the field and give farmers more confidence to operate on their farms without fear of being attacked. The displacement of farming communities as a result of attacks by armed groups, criminal violence and banditry is associated with an alarming rise in food and nutrition insufficiency due to non-availability of food. The United Nations (2020) underscored the gravity of conflict induced food insecurity when quoted to have said "the future of young generations in the region is at stake, as food insecurity not only affects the dignity of families, but has serious consequences on the physical and cognitive development of children". The overall implication is reinforcing cyclic interconnections that would create and sustain intractable security crisis. The intractability of insecurity would result from the clash of national and food insecurity. In other words, with national insecurity making it impossible for farmers to engage in their farm activities, food shortage would result. As food shortage results, it creates disaffection, which in turn spawns a new round of insecurity due to the intensification of food crisis and mass reaction to it.

The low level of agricultural production due to attacks from Boko Haram or herdsmen coupled with a rising population growth in Nigeria will lead to food crisis and a higher unemployment level. More so, the unemployed population becomes prime targets for recruitment into these insurgency groups whose actions further dampen food insecurity. Otu (2003) notes that violence caused by bandits is usually mainly perpetrated by males who are of the ages, predominantly that of the active members of the working population, mostly those from the lower income class, the offence and offender are also violent in nature. Muggah & Bachelor (2002) asserts that bandits affect the supply of cash crops as public and commercial transportation to markets is often interrupted and consequently, farmers are forced to abandon commercial harvests; where these often happen repeatedly, social investment often decline with broad effects on both foreign investment confidence and overseas development assistance. Also, Ginifer & Ismail (2005) noted that the threats and actual use of violence by armed groups, vigilantes and robbers have led to communities retreating into themselves and often have stimulated the growth of private security services for those who can afford them and vigilante protection for the poor.

Theoretical Framework

Situational Theory

This theory is associated with Wikström (2004) who explained why some people commit crime in society. The theory posits that crime is motivated by individual's morality and the prevailing situations and in which people are responsible for their actions, but such actions are as a result of the situations they find themselves. Such act of crime is the product of choice made after considering various alternatives and the stimuli present at a particular situation. Thus, crime is committed when it is perceived as worthwhile and suitable alternative, given the prevailing situation, and/or when a person fails to apply moral restraint. This situational theory rests on four major elements: the person (psychological make-up, experience), the setting (the environment an individual is exposed), the situation (choices resulting from interaction with the setting), and the action (the person's behavior). The theory explicates the notion that factors that induce crime are the same for all people regardless of age and criminal career stage. The theory further argues that people's propensity to commit crime is different, just as environments also vary. The setting an individual finds himself determines whether a crime will be committed or not. For instance, if an individual who struggles all day as a result of poverty, finds him/herself in an environment without guardianship, but with certain escape options and resources, they are likely to commit crime. Crime occurrence is the interaction between an individual's crime propensity and the criminogenic incentive. A person with a low propensity to crime due to strong moral rectitude and/or the presence of government authority will be less susceptible to criminogenic incentives, while a person with a high crime propensity is less likely to resist crime inducement. When applied to banditry in Nigeria, the theory expounds on the interaction between the person, setting, situation, and action. The individual especially with low crime propensity is motivated by the situation to consider crime as a worthwhile alternate to realize the desired outcome, and because the individual is a product of society, he is likely to subscribe to society's norms. Wikström's (2004) postulation of crime results from interaction between a person and the environment, and in a society characterized with criminogenic inducement, the individual becomes vulnerable to crime which motivates individual's action. The psychological experience resulting from poverty, unemployment, inequality, and displacement coupled with the prevailing circumstance such as under-governed spaces, influx of small arms and light weapons, bad governance, and poorly equipped security apparatus, engenders a negative situation which encourages banditry. Hence, the effects of banditry in Toto Local Government Area is attributed to increasing interactions among people who are victims of adverse socioeconomic conditions.

Methodology

Toto is one of the Local Government Areas in Nasarawa State. The major occupation of the people is farming, cattle rearing, business/trading etc. The population projection of Toto Local Government Area is 183,800 (NPC Trial Census, 2022). The research design for the study is a descriptive survey design method used to assess the effects of banditry on agricultural productivity in Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State. A structured questionnaire was used as an instrument for collection of primary data from respondents, while the secondary data was sourced from journals, textbooks, newspapers and online-peer reviewed materials. With the population of Toto Local Government Area, it was difficult for the entire population to be interviewed. With this population and the margin of error of 0.05 confidence level of 95% and with the recommended sample size was 150 using the Research Advisor 2006. The communities were selected using the snowball sampling technique to get other communities that had been attacked by bandits. Therefore, the areas covered were; Toto, Kuru, Katakwa, Warrakata and Gwargwada. Out of the one-hundred and fifty (150) questionnaire administered to the respondents, only one-hundred and twenty (120) questionnaire were filled and returned. Thirty (30) questionnaire were not returned due to the fact that after several revisit of the study area, most of the respondents were not found at home due to their busy schedule, while others could not access the questionnaire administered to them. An in-depth interview was also conducted with the community chiefs to elicit information where the questionnaire could not explore in details. The results were analysed and presented in tables using descriptive statistics such as percentages and frequency counts on a likert-scale of strongly agreed, agreed, strongly disagreed and disagreed with the use of a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 as well as the discussion of findings made from the study.

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Table 1 Causes of Banditry in Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State.

S/ N	Causes of Banditry	Strongly Agreed		Agreed		Strongly Disagreed		Disagreed		Total	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1	Proliferation of small arms and light weapons	49	40.8	37	30.8	19	15.8	15	12.5	120	100
2	Bad governance in the Country	63	52.5	43	35.8	5	4.16	9	7.5	120	100
3	Increase in criminal elements due to porous borders	54	45	39	32.5	17	14.2	10	8.3	120	100
4	High unemployment rate and poverty	31	25.8	68	56.7	9	7.5	12	10	120	100
5	Farmers/Herdsmen Clashes	43	35.8	59	49.2	7	5.8	11	9.2	120	100
6	Displacement due to natural disasters	35	29.2	61	50.8	17	14.2	7	5.8	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Table 1 shows that 86 (71.6%) of the respondents assert that the cause of banditry was due to the proliferation of small arms and light weapons into the country by some bandits from neighbouring countries and these bandits were not properly disarmed as some make their ways into Nigeria with arms which were later found in the hands of local criminals who use such to further terrorize the nations. Ladan & Mutawalli (2020) noted that banditry has assumed some level of violence as a result of access to sophisticated weapons of warfare like rifles and other small and light weapons that are illegally imported into the country through its porous borders. Bashir & Mustapha (2022) assert that the effect of banditry is extensive, and in addition to complicating the security crisis in the country, it

has also increased the incidence of forced migration, food insecurity, cattle rustling, destruction of property, health challenges, displacement, humanitarian crises, and death. However, between the year 2018 and 2020, an estimated 4,900 people lost their lives to bandit attacks, while 309,000 were internally displaced persons and 60,000 refugees recorded (Bashir & Mustapha, 2022). Crises from other neighbouring countries have aggravated the problems of banditry as this situation has posed a great security threats to the nation and apart from the exchange of weapons for money, some of these bandits join some local criminal gangs who engage in armed robbery and other violent crimes, constituting a threat to the national security.

Also, 106 (88.3%) of the respondents were of the view that the cause of banditry in the country was as a result of bad governance as the government has failed to secure the protection of citizens and their properties and they stated that this paved way for the infiltration of banditry into the ungoverned territory of the State. The finding is in line with the International Crisis Group (2020) which argued that the ethnic groups decry failure of the government to protect them and insist on self-protection through the use of vigilantes. This inability of the government to provide security to citizens in the community was responsible for the infiltration of banditry in the country. The study also found out that increased criminal elements in the country was as a result of porous borders as this was seen from the analysis that 93 (77.5%) of the respondents affirmed that the nation's borders are so porous to the extent that bandits from neighbouring countries flux the country through various routes either as a result of displacement or in search for greener pasture. Ladan (2019) blames the rising wave of banditry in northern Nigeria on the high levels of poverty, illiteracy, limited security presence, unemployment, drug abuse, presence of forest areas, porous borders, and grievance over security operations, desire to acquire wealth and the collapse of amnesty program and peace deals. More so, 99 (82.5%) of the respondents were of the opinion that high rate of unemployment and poverty was the cause of banditry in the State and more especially in the research area as these factors has significantly affected the livelihoods of people who in turn opted for an alternative means of survival. This finding is in tandem with studies conducted by Ladan & Ladan, (2011) which revealed that the rates of unemployment may further increase as farming activities are presently threatened by armed banditry. They further states that a lot of the youths are jobless with no reasonable means of livelihood which makes them more vulnerable and easy recruits for criminal gangs.

More so, some respondents were of the views that farmers'/herders clashes were the causes of banditry. These respondents constitute 102 (85%) of the total respondents. Most herders/bandits kill, kidnap and chase farmers out of their farmlands, seize their farmlands, cattle, burn and raid grain silos as well as man road blocks in local trade routes. This finding corroborates with what Gadzama, Saddiq, Oduechie & Dariya (2018) asserted that the factors responsible for the incessant banditry in northern Nigeria include poverty, greed, corruption and poor security. They further held that the presence of security personnel has not really yielded the desired results as bandits have continued to rape women/girls indiscriminately, steal farm produce, rustle cattle, rob and kidnap/abduct residents for ransom. Ladan & Mutawalli (2020) held similar view when they state that banditry has negative impacts on agricultural production in Nigeria. The negative impacts include killing and kidnapping of farmers, chasing of farmers out of their farmlands, seizing of farmlands, theft of cattle, burning and raiding of grain silos, and blocking of local trade routes. While 80% of the respondents affirmed that the displacement of people as a result of natural disasters such as flood is the cause of banditry in Nigeria particularly those from neighbouring State of Benue and countries like Cameroun, Chad and Niger.

Table 2 Effects of Banditry in Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State.

S/ N	Effects of Banditry	Strongly Agreed		Agreed		Strongly Disagreed		Disagreed		Total	
		Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
1	Reduction in Population	54	45	41	34.2	10	8.3	15	12.5	120	100
2	Increase in Prices of Food	73	60.8	25	20.8	8	6.7	14	11.7	120	100
3	Destruction of Farm Land	45	37.5	52	43.3	13	10.8	10	8.3	120	100
4	Food Insufficiency	11	9.2	86	71.7	7	5.8	16	13.3	120	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022.

Table 2 shows that 95 (79.2%) of the respondents affirm that the activities of bandits have led to the reduction in population as many of the inhabitants in the affected communities had lost their lives while others are refugees in other neighbouring communities. Banditry has created population imbalance as many people are forced to migrate to other places causing a reduction of people from their origin and increases the population where they are refugees. This imbalance of population has caused lots of problems such as the spread of diseases, shortage of amenities, over congestion, death etc. This was seen from the studies carried out by Bashir & Mustapha (2022) that between 2018 and 2020, an estimated 4,900 people lost their lives to bandit attacks, while 309,000 were internally displaced persons and 60,000 refugees recorded. Studies conducted by Aisha (2020) affirmed that in 2018, about "1,100 people were killed in six north-western States of Nigeria, and more than 2,200 killed in 2019 and 1,600 killed between January and June 2020," and 247,000 people were displaced, with more than 41,000 refugees being created by their operations. Also, there has been an increase in prices of goods and services in the country as this is seen from data collected from respondents that 98 (81.7%) of the responses were in affirmative order as these increases in prices has affected the livelihood and income of the populace. For instance, a bag of rice that was sold for #22,000 to #24,000 depending on the quality as at 2018 is now sold at #48,000 to #50,000, while a modu of beans, millets, corn etc. that was once sold at #200 to #400 is now sold at #1,200 with a devastated effects on the consumption rate of the people thereby leading to disease/malnutrition.

More so, 97 (80.8%) of the respondent asserts that many of the farmers in the communities have lost their farmlands to bandits and this has affected the people's agricultural production because they no longer go to their farmlands to plant crops for criminals to destroy. This result is in line with the study conducted by Ladan & Matawalli, (2020) which revealed that the nefarious activities of armed bandits have the capacity to scare farmers away from farming activities thereby affecting the quantity of food crops and dairy products that could be produced and made available in the market. This have affected food sufficiency in the country and 97 (80.8%) of the respondents were in affirmation that banditry has affected food stuffs. This finding is similar to the study conducted by Ladan & Mutawalli (2020) which revealed that the nefarious activities of armed bandits have the capacity to scare farmers from farming and cattle breeding activities. This has created devastating effects on human security which has led to loss of lives, properties, displacement of the people from their ancestral homes and horror due to shocks. The loss of cattle and other animals indicates that animal husbandry which has been a source of livelihood has been affected with the closure of businesses and markets. Also, Okoli & Okpaleke (2014) found out that the rate of rural banditry in recent years has affected farm produce as prices of farm products is high. In summary, the incidences of banditry have negatively affected the agricultural production.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study assessed the effects of banditry on agricultural production in Toto Local Government Area of Nasarawa State, Nigeria. The study revealed that high rates of unemployment/poverty, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, porous borders, bad governance, farmers'/herdsmen clashes, displacement of people due to natural disasters etc. were the causes of banditry in the community. More so, the study revealed that the activities of bandits have resulted in the loss of live and property by the victims of bandit attacks, hence, the need to address it. Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made.

- i. The government should make employment a top priority for the citizens as this will help to alleviate poverty and reduce criminal activities in the country. If this is carried out, the youths will be gainfully employed to meet their basic needs, and the thoughts of criminal acts would be reduced.
- ii. There should be equipped security personnel to ensure that all borders in the country are well policed with sophisticated weapons to confront the bandits in order to enable the people go about their normal activities.
- iii. The government should be more proactive on issues bordering on security by ensuring that criminal bandits are arrested and prosecuted in order to reaffirm its position as the provider of security. This will improve the level of human security and create more confidence among the people.
- iv. Good governance is a solution to the problem of banditry; thus, government should shun corruption and live up to the promises made to the people during electioneering campaigns.
- v. There should be stiffer punishment for perpetrators of banditry in the country to serve as a form of deterrent to others with criminal intent.
- vi. There should be a synergy between communities and government at various levels with a view to mapping out strategies on how to end banditry not only in the affected states or regions, but Nigeria in general.

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