

Perceived effects of banditry on the livelihoods of farmers in Borgu local government area of Niger state, Nigeria

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Abstract: Banditry activities have become a menace to the security of lives, properties and livelihoods in Nigeria. The study examined the effects of banditry on the livelihoods of arable crop farmers in Borgu Local Government Area, Niger State, Nigeria. A three-stage sampling procedure was utilized to select 137 respondents for the study. The data was analysed with both descriptive and inferential statistics. The result showed that the main forms of banditry activities in the study area were kidnapping/abduction (92.7%) and raiding of markets (90.5%). The result revealed that the main perceived causes of banditry in the study area were conflicts over resources (93.4%) and a high rate of poverty (92.7%). Major effects of banditry on livelihoods were loss of other income-generating activities (mean=3.52) and was highest ranked financial outcome/effect, delayed planting/harvesting (mean=3.59) was highest ranked physical outcome/effect, inability to connect with extension agents/experts for crop production (mean=3.48) was highest ranked social outcome/effect, high rate of food insecurity among rural people (mean=3.42) was highest ranked human outcome/effect and lack of access to a secure and safe area for crop production (mean=3.52) was highest ranked natural outcome/effects. The study recommended the need for provision of economic and humanitarian support for the affected farmers.

Keywords: Banditry, poverty, food insecurity, arable crop, farmers

1. Introduction

Agriculture is a vital means of livelihood for many people in Nigeria. Agriculture accounts for about 24 % of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employs about two-thirds of the total working population (Central Bank of Nigeria, 2025; Statista, 2024). According to FAO (2021), about 70 % of people practicing agriculture in Nigeria are small-scale farmers. The agricultural sector in Nigeria is characterized by the vast arable land for crop production, inland waters for irrigation and limited climate-related risks (Ifabiyi et al., 2023). Banditry is a serious crime that constitutes a security challenge to many Nigerians. Banditry is

an organized crime by outlaws (bandits) that typically involves the threat or use of violence. It's a criminal act where force and profit are key motivators. Initially in Nigeria, banditry started as extortion and theft and later became cattle rustling. However, banditry has evolved into several armed criminal activities (Daily Trust Newspapers, 2020).

Banditry activities have become a menace to the security of lives, properties, and livelihoods in Nigeria. Banditry initially started as a farmer-herder conflict. However, it has been translated into a multidimensional catastrophe that now includes cattle rustling, looting of farm produces and kidnappings (Aina et al., 2023).

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The increasing occurrence of banditry activities includes killing, looting, stealing, arson, shooting, raping, cattle rustling, population displacements, and disruption of livelihood activities (Ojo et al., 2023). Banditry activities have displaced many people who are into agricultural production, disrupted their economic stability, and intensified the incidence of food insecurity among affected households in Nigeria (UNICEF, 2023). The repeated banditry attacks in Nigeria have attracted international attention to Nigeria (CLEEN, 2021). Bandits have attacked diverse locations across the country, resulting in the deaths of several people in the country. Bandits have attacked diverse locations across the country, resulting in the deaths of several people in the country. Due to continuing occurrences of banditry activities, several communities have been evacuated, school and markets have been closed (Abang, 2021; Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2021). These result in loss of livelihoods and shelter to most rural farmers who are poor and economically vulnerable.

Livelihood refers to the means of earning income. A livelihood is considered sustainable when 'it can withstand and recover from shocks, maintain or improve its capacity, while not depleting the natural resource base' (Ifabiyi et al., 2024a). According to Turner (2017) and Panday et al. (2017), sustainable livelihoods are conceptualized to provide manageable opportunities for the subsequent generation, paying net dividends to other livelihoods. Sustainable livelihood is a dynamic clue that offers measures to eradicate poverty and how disadvantaged people organize their lives (Ifabiyi et al., 2024a). Livelihood outcomes are the repayments that households expect through the engagement of specific actions and methods (Ifabiyi et al., 2024b; Nguthi & Niehof, 2008). Banditry attacks are becoming recurring events in the Borgu local Government area of Niger state, Nigeria (Daily Trust Newspapers, 2020). According to the Global Terrorism Index (2025), insecurity in the form of terrorism and banditry activities has been increasing in Nigeria, which has resulted in the loss of livelihoods of several people. Insecurity continues to be a danger to the Nigerian government and the economic prosperity of many Nigerians (Omodero, 2024). The high rate of banditry attacks would affect agricultural production, as Ojo et al (2023) reported that banditry activities result in displacements and interruptions of the livelihood activities of the rural people. This would result in a higher incidence of food insecurity and poverty among the displaced people.

Several studies have been carried out on banditry activities in Nigeria, such as Terkura & Gwar (2024);

Ibrahim et al (2023); Yusufu & Abdulrahman (2021); and Olaoye et al (2023). However, there is a paucity of information on the effects of banditry on the livelihoods of farmers in the Borgu Local Government Area of Niger State, Nigeria. It is essential to carry out a study on the effects of banditry on the livelihoods of farmers, as such a study would favorably influence government policy towards them to inform them of financial and humanitarian support and protection against bandits. This establishes the lacuna that this study sought to fill. This study, thus, examined the perceived effects of banditry on the Livelihoods of arable crop farmers in Borgu Local Government Area of Niger State, Nigeria.

The Specific objectives of the study were to:

- i. examine the socioeconomic characteristics of respondents in the study area.
- ii. assess the forms of banditry experienced by the respondents in the study area.
- iii. identify the perceived causes of banditry in the study area.
- iv. determine the perceived effects of banditry on the livelihoods of respondents in the study area.

Hypothesis of the study:

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents and the perceived effects of banditry on their Livelihoods.

1.1. Theoretical perspectives

1.1.1. Social disorganization theory

The theory of social disorganization started from the works of Shaw & McKay (1942), where it describes crime and violence as results of the failure of social institutions, belief systems, and informal social controls within a community. It states that communities with high rates of poverty, weak social organizations, and limited collective efficacy are less capable of regulating conduct and stopping criminal activities (Sampson & Groves, 1989). Social Disorganization Theory clarifies how crime and nonconformity stem from the collapse of social structures and community ties rather than from individual moral failings. The theory describes that in an agrarian rural setting, strong social structures such as family systems, traditional leadership, farmer associations, and cooperation are vital for upholding order and supporting agricultural livelihoods. However, banditry flourishes where these structures are weakened. From the perspective of Social Disorganization Theory, banditry both arises from and reinforces social breakdown in farming communities.

The continuous bandit occurrences have led to the dislodgment of people, loss of trust, and breakdown of traditional authority systems that ordinarily control land use, resolve conflicts, and protect communal resources (Okoli & Okpaleke, 2014). As community interconnection wanes, traditional strategies that support farming—such as collective labour exchange, common farm security, and cooperative marketing—become unproductive. For arable crop farmers, social disorganization results in limited access to communal resources, increased anxiety, and an inability to organize farm activities safely. Farmers become isolated, cooperative societies become weakened, and communal agricultural infrastructure is uninhibited or destroyed. According to Sampson et al. (1997), such loss of collective efficacy increases vulnerability to violence and criminal predation, further exposing farmers to recurring bandit attacks. Thus, Social Disorganization Theory clarifies how banditry undermines livelihoods by disrupting the social system that sustains agricultural production, leading to farm abandonment, reducing farmers' income and outputs, increasing the incidence of food insecurity, and subsequently resulting in a higher rate of poverty.

1.1.2. *Livelihoods vulnerability theory*

Livelihoods vulnerability theory builds on vulnerability and livelihoods literature and explains how households are exposed to shocks and risks that affect their ability to maintain secure livelihoods (Chambers, 1989; Ellis, 2000). Vulnerability is usually explained as a function of exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity (IPCC, 2001). In agricultural communities, arable crop farmers are particularly susceptible because their livelihoods depend heavily on land access, seasonal cycles, labour availability, and stable social and security conditions. Banditry represents a severe covariate shock that simultaneously affects many households within the same community (Dercon, 2005). Banditry increases farmers' exposure to risk through violent attacks, stealing of crops, destruction of farming equipment, and forced relocation (FAO, 2018). Farmers' sensitivity is high because any disruption to farm management practices, such as planting, weeding, and harvesting, directly reduces food production and income of the farmers. Meanwhile, adaptive capacity is affected by poverty, weak institutional support, inability to access loans and credits, and insufficient security protection (Ellis, 2000). Based on Livelihoods Vulnerability Theory, frequent exposure to forceful strains such as banditry erodes coping mechanisms over time, pushing farmers into

adopting negative adaptation strategies, including selling productive assets, reducing farm size or migrating out of farming communities (Chambers, 1989; Dercon, 2005). These actions further increase long-term vulnerability and trap households in cycles of poverty and food insecurity. Therefore, Livelihoods Vulnerability Theory elucidates banditry as a risk multiplier that deepens farmers' susceptibility to livelihood collapse by weakening their capacity to absorb, adapt to, and recover from violent shocks/strains.

2. Materials and Methods

The research was carried out in Borgu Local Government Area (LGA) of Niger State, Nigeria. Borgu LGA is situated in the northwestern part of Niger State and shares borders with Kebbi State and the Republic of Benin. A 3-stage sampling technique was employed for this research. The 1st Stage involved the Purposive selection of Wawa district of Borgu LGA because of the high incidence of banditry activities in the area, which informed the selection. The 2nd Stage involved the sampling of six (6) (Kepmgbere, Tunga Taya, Tunga Jagaba, Woko, Sobu Daba, and Wawa) out of ten (10) affected communities in the Wawa Ward of Borgu LGA. The 3rd stage involved a proportionate random sampling of 60% of the registered farmers resulting in the selection of 137 for the study. The forms of banditry encountered by arable crop farmers were measured on a scale of Yes (1) and No (0). The arable crop farmers perceived causes of banditry were measured on a scale of Yes (1) and No (0). The perceived effects of banditry on the livelihoods were measured on a 4-point Likert type scale of strongly agreed=4, agreed=3, disagree=2, and strongly disagree=1. The frequency counts, percentages, and means were used to analyse the data. The hypothesis was tested with the use of Pearson Product-Moment Correlation (PPMC).

3. Results and discussion

3.1. *Socio-economic characteristics of respondents*

The results in Table 1 revealed that 70.8 % of the farmers were male, while about 29.2 % were female. This signifies the dominance of male in area crop farming in the study area. This might be because farming activities are strenuous, which could make it difficult for most females to be involved. The result revealed that the mean age of the farmers was 46.2 years. This indicates that the respondents were within the economically active age bracket. A high percentage (70.1%) of the farmers

Table 1: Socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents

Variables	Freq	Percent	Mean	Std. Dev
1. Gender				
Male	97	70.8		
Female	40	29.2		
2. Age (years)			46.2 years	9.38
≤40	44	32.1		
41-60	82	59.9		
≥61	11	8.0		
3. Marital status				
Single	15	10.9		
Married	96	70.1		
Separated	11	8.0		
Widowed	11	8.0		
Divorced	4	2.9		
4. Educational Level				
No formal education	28	20.4		
Primary	50	36.5		
Secondary	45	32.8		
Tertiary	14	10.2		
5. Annual Income (Naira)			₦4,171,544.12	5764356.23
≤1,000,000	43	31.4		
≥ 1,000,000	94	68.6		
6. Farm Size (acres)			4.7 acres	2.17
≤ 2	14	10.2		
3-5	79	57.7		
≥ 5	44	32.1		
7. Years of Experience			19.3 years	9.30
10	27	19.7		
11 – 20	65	47.5		
≥ 21	45	32.8		
8. Household Size			13 persons	8.24
≤10 persons	78	56.0		
≥ 11 persons	59	43.1		
9. Membership of Social groups/Cooperative Society				
No	61	44.5		
Yes	76	55.5		
10. Supportive Occupation				
Livestock Rearing	54	39.4		
Trading	56	40.9		
Civil Servant	23	16.8		
Artisan	4	2.9		
11. Access to Extension Services				
No	57	42.3		
Yes	79	57.7		
12. Ownership of Farmland				
Owned	68	49.4		
Leased/rent	69	50.6		
13. Credit Sources				
Personal Saving	30	21.5		
Family/Neighbour	60	43.8		
Friend	26	19.0		
Cooperatives	16	11.7		
Banks	5	3.6		

14. Labour Type		
Family Labour	23	16.8
Hire Labour	42	30.7
Both Family & Hired Labour	72	52.6
15. Frequency of Banditry Attacks		
Daily	1	0.7
Weekly	2	2.2
Monthly	40	29.2
Quarterly	66	48.2
Once in 6 months	2	1.4
Once a year	26	18.9

Sources: Field Survey, 2025

were married. Marriage is expected to come with duties and roles that could meaningfully influence people to innovate for the purpose of enhancing their productivity and improving their livelihood. The findings revealed that majority, 79.6 % (primary education-36.5%, secondary education-32.8% and tertiary-10.2%), were literate. This is important as education enhances livelihood activities and could translate into improved livelihood outcomes. The average annual income of the farmers was 4,171,544.12 Naira. This implies that farming is a lucrative business enterprise. The mean farm size was 4.7 acres. This indicates that the respondents are low-to-medium scale farmers. The mean years of experience was 19.3 years. This shows that farmers have a high level of experience in arable crop farming. The mean household size was 13 people. The large household members could serve as farm labour which would lessen the cost of crop production. The result showed that 55.5 % of the farmers were members of social groups/cooperative societies. Membership of social groups /cooperative societies is important; it's a vital source of social and economic capital to the members. The findings in Table 1 also showed that 39.4% of the respondents were into livestock rearing and 40.9% were

engaged in trading. This shows that arable crop farmers engage in other income-generating activities as a means of livelihood diversification. More than half (57.7%) of the farmers have access to extension services. The result revealed that 50.6% of the farmers rented/leased farmland for the cultivation of crops in the study area. About 43.8% sourced credit through the family/ Neighbours. The result also revealed that 52.6% of the farmers utilized both hired and family labour for crop production. The findings in Table 1 revealed that 48.2 % of the farmers encountered banditry activities/attacks quarterly. The frequency of attacks would significantly affect livelihoods and disrupt economic activities. This implies that banditry is a serious problem affecting agricultural production in Borgu LGA.

3.2. The forms of banditry experienced by crop farmers

The findings in Table 2 revealed that the forms of banditry activities the farmers are encountering include kidnapping/abduction (92.7%), raiding of markets (90.5%), raiding of villages/hamlets and arson/burning of farms and properties (87.6%), armed robbery

Table 2: The forms of banditry experienced by crop farmers in the study area

Forms of Banditry	Yes Freq	Percentage
Kidnapping/Abduction	127	92.7
II. Cattle/Livestock Rustling	106	77.4
III. Raiding of Markets	124	90.5
IV. Raiding of Village/hamlets	120	87.6
V. Looting of farms /farm produce	105	76.6
VI. Rape	99	72.3
VII. Murder	108	78.8
VIII. Armed robbery	113	82.5
IX. Theft	112	81.8
X. Destruction of farms and properties	107	78.1
XI. Arson/burning of farms, and properties	120	87.6
XII. Extortions/Ransom payments	99	72.3

Sources: Field Survey, 2025

Table 3: The perceived causes of banditry in the study area

Perceived Causes of Banditry	Yes	
	freq	Percentage
High Rate of Poverty	127	92.7
II. Inadequate security measures	110	80.3
III. Conflict over resources	128	93.4
IV. Poor infrastructure	116	84.7
V. Unemployment	109	79.6
VI. Proliferation of small arms & Light weapons	117	85.4
VII. Weak law enforcement	108	78.8
VIII. Poor governance	109	79.6
IX. Desperate desire to get rich	119	86.9
X High rate of Inflation	108	78.8
XI. Intercommunity conflicts	119	86.9
XII. Illiteracy	114	83.2
XIV. Climate Change	120	87.6

Sources: Field Survey, 2025

(82.5%), and theft (81.8%). This result indicates that kidnapping/abduction, raiding of markets, raiding of villages/hamlets, arson/burning of farms and properties, armed robbery, and theft were the most common forms of banditry activities the respondents encountered. This concurred with the report of Ojo et al. (2023), who reported that banditry activities include kidnapping, looting, arson, shooting, raping, cattle rustling, population displacements, and disruption of socio-economic activities.

3.3. The perceived causes of banditry

The results in Table 3 revealed that the perceived causes of banditry in the study area include conflicts over resources (93.4%), high rate of poverty (92.7%), climate change (87.6%), desperate desire to get rich and intercommunity conflicts (86.9%), proliferation of small arms and light weapons (85.4%). This result shows that conflicts over resources, high rate of poverty, climate change, desperate desire to get rich, and intercommunity conflicts, proliferation of small arms and light weapons were the main perceived causes of banditry. This finding matches with Nwankpa (2024), who reported that the causes of banditry in Nigeria include low institutional coordination, poor security strategies, corrupt governance, high poverty rate, and poor infrastructure.

3.4. The perceived effects of banditry on the livelihoods of crop farmers

The results of the perceived effects of banditry on the livelihoods of farmers presented in Table 4 revealed that for financial outcome, loss of other income-generating

activities (mean=3.52) was the highest ranked effect. Income not able to meet basic needs (mean=3.50) was ranked second and increased food price and disruption of supply chains of food and raw materials (mean=3.47) was ranked third. The result revealed that for physical outcome, delayed planting/harvesting (mean=3.59) was the highest ranked effect. Ranked second was abandonment of farmland (mean=3.46), and loss of car/motorcycle/tricycle for transportation (mean=3.420) was ranked third. For social outcome, Inability to connect with extension agents/experts for crop production (mean=3.48) was the highest-ranked effect. Ranked second was the inability to participate in Social Gatherings (mean=3.46) and ranked third was inability to organize farmers' meetings (mean=3.46). for the human outcome, a high rate of food insecurity among rural people (mean=3.42) was the highest-ranked effect. High incidence of psychological trauma and inability to assess essential healthcare service (mean=3.38) were ranked second, respectively. For natural outcome/effects, lack of access to a secure and safe area for crop production (mean=3.52) and loss of livestock (mean=3.47) were ranked second. The result reveals that loss of other income-generating activities, delayed planting/harvesting, inability to connect with extension agents/experts for crop production, high rate of food insecurity among rural people, and lack of access to a secure and safe area for crop production were the main effects of banditry on the Livelihoods of the arable crop farmers in the study area. These results are consistent with the report of UNICEF (2023), which established that banditry has increased the rate of poverty in most rural communities in Nigeria, undermined their

Table 4: The perceived effects of banditry on the livelihoods of crop farmers

Perception of Livelihood Outcomes	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
Financial Outcome/Effects			
I. Income not able to meet basic needs	3.50	0.51	2 nd
II. Inability to save money from farming	3.44	0.51	5 th
III. Loss of other income-generating activities	3.52	0.52	1 st
IV. Increased food price	3.47	0.53	3 rd
V. Disruption of the supply chains of food and raw materials	3.47	0.50	3 rd
Physical Outcome/Effects			
VI. Loss of farming inputs /Equipment	3.26	0.44	6 th
VII. Displacement of rural community	3.38	0.49	5 th
VIII. Delayed planting/harvest	3.59	2.56	1 st
IX. Abandonment of farmlands	3.46	0.50	2 nd
X. Loss of car/motorcycle/tricycle for transportation	3.42	0.52	3 rd
XI. Loss of family property	3.39	0.52	4 th
Social Outcome/Effects			
XII. Inability to network with other farmers /agencies for resources	3.31	0.52	5 th
XIII. Inability to organize farmers' meeting	3.45	0.51	3 rd
XIV. Loss of access to customers/markets	3.35	0.49	4 th
XV. Inability to connect with extension agents/experts for crop production	3.48	0.52	1 st
XVI. Inability to Participate in Social Gatherings	3.46	0.51	2 nd
Human Outcome/Effects			
XVII. Unable to update knowledge and skills on farming	3.30	0.49	5 th
XVIII. Inability to assess essential healthcare service	3.38	0.50	2 nd
XIX. Not physically fit to carry out farming activities	3.29	0.46	6 th
XX. Human displacement from homes and from means of livelihoods	3.35	0.51	4 th
XXI. High incidence of psychological trauma.	3.38	0.49	2 nd
XXII. High rate of food insecurity among rural people	3.42	0.50	1 st
XXIII. Scarcity of farm labourers	3.29	0.56	6 th
Natural Outcome/Effects			
XXIV. Lack of access to fertile farmland for crop production	3.17	0.56	4 th
XXV. Loss of Livestock	3.47	0.56	2 nd
XXVI. Loss of farm produces	3.31	0.55	
XXVII. Lack of access to a secure and safe area for crop production	3.52	0.52	1 st
XXVIII. Inaccessibility to a farming area with basic facilities like a motorable road, electricity, etc.	3.45	0.50	3 rd

Sources: Field Survey, 2025

stability, displaced many economically active people from agriculture and other rural occupations, and made several households food insecure. Also, Mohammed et al. (2021) stated comparable effects on agricultural outputs, marketing, income reduction, and limited livelihood prospects for conflict-affected farmers.

3.5. The result of the test of hypothesis

The findings of Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) in Table 5 showed that there is a positive and significant relationship between the farm size ($r=0.203$),

years of experience ($r=0.188$), and the perceived effects of banditry on the livelihoods of the farmers at $p \leq 0.05$ level. This finding denotes that the higher the farm size and years of experience, the more severe the effects of banditry on their livelihoods. This is expected as banditry activities would affect those who have invested much in the cultivation of large farm sizes than those who cultivated small scale. This collaborates the findings of Ojo, et al. (2023) which stated that banditry activities result in disruption of the livelihood activities many people in rural area.

Table 5: Pearson correlation showing the relationship between socio-economic characteristics and the perceived effects of banditry on livelihoods

Socio-economic characteristics	R(value)	P(value)	Remarks
Age	0.076	0.375	Not significant
Annual income	0.027	0.755	Not significant
Farm size	0.203*	0.017	Significant
Years of experience	0.188*	0.028	Significant
Household size	0.129	0.135	Not significant

*Significant at 0.05 level

4. Conclusion and recommendations

The study concluded that most of the farmers were male, young and agile. Kidnapping/abduction, raiding of markets, raiding of villages/hamlets and arson/burning of farms and properties, armed robbery and theft were the most common forms of banditry activities the farmers encountered. Conflicts over resources, high rate of poverty, climate change, desperate desire to get rich and intercommunity conflicts, proliferation of small arms and light weapons were the main perceived causes of banditry in the study area. The loss of other income-generating activities, the delayed planting/harvesting, inability to connect with extension agents/experts, high rate of food insecurity among rural people and lack of access to a secure and safe area for crop production were the main effects of banditry on the livelihoods of the arable crop farmers. There is a significant relationship between farm size and years of experience and the effects of banditry on the livelihoods of arable crop farmers. Based on the results of this study, it is therefore recommended that there is a need for the provision of economic and humanitarian support for the farmers who were affected by banditry activities to reduce the severity/effects on their livelihoods. There is also a need for better security measures to be put in place for protection of lives and properties of farmers against banditry activities.

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