EVALUATING THREATS OF ARMED BANDITRY ON HUMAN AND FOOD SECURITY IN SHIRORO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT
Growing apprehension has emerged in the northern regions of Nigeria regarding the escalating activities of bandits. Consequently, this investigation was conducted to assess the impact of banditry on both human and food security in the Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State. The study adopted the Routine Activity Theory as its theoretical framework, emphasizing the prevalence of motivated offenders, the presence of suitable targets, and the absence of guards as key tenets. According to the theory, these factors played pivotal roles in the surge of brigandage activities in the study area. Conducted as a descriptive survey, the research employed a triangulation approach, incorporating both quantitative and qualitative methods. The focus was on Shiroro Local Government Area, situated near the border of Niger and Kaduna State, which has witnessed a notable increase in bandit criminalities. The study revealed a distressing percentage of human casualties, accompanied by a significant rise in hospitalizations and trauma resulting from frequent attacks in the region. These incidents have had severe repercussions on human security. Additional findings highlighted the loss of farmlands, livestock, and other animals, along with the closure of markets and businesses, substantially impacting food security in the area. As a recommendation, the study suggests that the government deploy its security forces robustly to curb various forms of armed insurgencies. This involves providing advanced detection equipment in the forested lands of the study area to effectively address the prevailing challenges.

Introduction

Beyond the conflicting and contending definitions, dimensions and perspectives, rural armed banditry in Nigeria is not a new phenomenon. Ja'afar (2018) opines that, there are scholarly discourse which contends that rural banditry in Nigeria predates the country's emergence as a politically sovereign nation. In this direction, Ja'afar (2018) is of the view that there were records of instances of rural banditry in colonial Nigeria, as far back as the 1930's. According to him, in those days, wayfarers and merchants travelling on the local shallow feeder roads were sometimes faced with ambush by criminal bandits 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. So this criminality according to him has existed in pre-colonial times.

The Humanitarian (2018), also reported stated that the first case of banditry was documented around 1901, and the incidence was said to have occurred somewhere between Western Hausaland and the border of the Republic of Niger. In the said incident, it was recorded that over 12,000 strong camels, laden with assorted grains were attacked and 210 merchants were killed. But the disturbing development is captured more by Egwu (2016), when he stated that rural banditry has moved from its rudimentary phase to a more complex and complicated pattern of criminality. Little wonder Bagu and Smith (2017) submitted that "gangs of criminals, often youth from farming and herding communities have taken advantage of the growing insecurity in the country to launch their attacks on villages and communities to loot, engage in highway robberies, cattle rustling and killings for personal gains".

Niger State with the largest landmass distribution in the country is one of the states affected by rural banditry with an overstretched forest hinterland mass of 76,363 square-kilometers, as against the populous Lagos state with only 4,000 square kilometers of land mass, followed by Kaduna and Zamfara states with 46,053 and 39,762 square-kilometres respectively. Adeniyi (2018) believes that their stretched large landmarks and forest zones are enough and comfortable to become hideouts and effective camp training grounds for bandit activists.

Statement of Research Problem

Certain socio-existential conditions have been opined to be sufficient reasons why armed banditry has successfully strived in Nigeria and Niger State in particular. Some of these characteristic conditions have been identified to be both the interiors and borderline ecological challenges. Gaye (2018) maintained that prominent among these conditions are the scarcely governed hinterlands and forestlands. According to him, the North West and North Central regions of the Nigerian hinterlands are marked by extremely dispersed normal settlements, which have been separated by rangelands and farmlands with extreme gaps for settlements; these have served as hideouts which are rarely discovered. Accordingly, Gaye (2018) further stressed that these areas are interspersed by diverse forestlands, some of which are dotted with wetlands, rocks, hills, mountains and caves, and separated from each other, they are equally far separated from the centers of governance at the local and state levels, hence guaranteeing easy penetration by preying criminal bandits into the open spaces in the forests, where they successfully take cover and continue to build up camps to effectively pursue nefarious criminal activities.

According to Okoh&Ugwu (2019), these forestlands are vast, rugged and hazardous, and are highly under-policed to the point that it makes them conducive for to all forms of jungle criminality. The above scholars were also of the view that the rugged open stretched forests provide sufficient avenues for all manners of violent crimes like cattle rustling, kidnappings, arsons, maiming and killings.

The FATF-GIABA-GABAC (2016), report maintained that most attacks are becoming successful because of their closeness to the forest regions with little or no security presence. Bandit activities become profitable to the criminally minded who find it very easy to always terrorize the local population and deprive them of their food and livelihoods. On his own part, Adeniyi (2018), posits that, in addition to the under-governed rural territorial spheres highlighted above, banditry also strive because of the material incentive of the poorly regulated mining, trans-human and illicit arms and artisanal activities taking place in these forests, as bandits occasionally attack mining sites in order to steal gold and cash. The financial proceeds of these illicit gold mining have therefore been fingered as one of the reasons

for proliferation of arms used for kidnappings, maiming and outright elimination of non-cooperating villages, he concluded.

Unfortunately, the government's position on this heinous crime of banditry has left citizens wondering whether government exists for the purpose of protection of lives and properties. (Okoli&Ochim, 2016; Azad, Crawford & Kaila, 2018) explained that the near-non-action of the state's functionaries in relation to security and territorial governance has grossly demonstrated a pathological ground for its incapacity to govern its citizens. This is so because governments at all levels have exhibited a woeful lethargy in dealing with national security emergences. They maintained that government has persistently failed to muster requisite political will and commitment to tackle the situation.

Jaafar (2019) puts it better, when he submitted that; "what we are seeing today is not something that is historically unprecedented. What is new, however, is the incapacity, indifference or unwillingness of the Nigerian state to put the insurgence of rural banditry under its effective control". Consequently, these widespread forests that are still ungoverned and to which the state shows it is incapable of stamping its authority over, has become the camps of the bandits, from these camps, bandits come into the closest villages and towns in a typically three-up on a motorbike, unchecked, unhindered, freely and ruthless, under the "authority" and instructions of the kingpin-bandits in a commando style, plunder rural communities at nights, raid them, kidnap and rustle their cattle, rape their women and burn their houses and agricultural produce before demanding for huge sums as ransom payments for kidnapped victims.

Okoli (2017) further elucidated on the above, he pointed out that, sometimes the lethality of the attacks are merely reprisals, designed to show down communities, which have hitherto challenged or resisted the bandits' onslaught through vigilantism. Shiroro local government area which is the subject matter of this research has a very large landmass with the highest number of wards and the same ecological structures in the forest regions as those mentioned earlier.

Consequently, bandits move in and out from the Birnin-Gwari forests into the stretch of the Sarkin-Pawa extended landmass up to the Allawa forest of the local government to the Erena, Galkogo and Gurmana axis towards Manta-Kushaka-Kurebe axis, lay ambush, capture and kill innocent farmers and abduct same without control. These researchers wonder why social control agencies which have both air and land capabilities and equipment are not able to effectively tackle the menace of the bandits. The impact of banditry has become devastating, apart from the psychological depression of the victims, other losses include material valuables, sources of livelihoods, physical injuries and deaths, others also include social intimidations, restrictions of freedom of movements, stoppage of farming activities with resultant non-supply of cash and food crops, interruption of public and commercial transportations to other local markets and forceful abandonment of large scale harvested from products on farmlands, these above, apart from decline in investor confidence and foreign investments.

The justification for the scope and location of study is based on the reality of massive killings, maiming, kidnappings, rapes, and destruction of farmlands. Others include beheadings, burning down of houses of innocent Nigerians leaving in and around the local government area and shooting of security personnel deployed to the area to maintain peaceful coexistence and obedience to law. All the above mentioned atrocities are executed daily by bandits and co-conspirators in the local government identified for this study.

More disturbing is the fact that for any ceremony to take place in the interiors of the local government, permissions with financial inducements must be made to the leadership of the bandits, and while going to harvest any crop for local consumption or commercial purposes, proper negotiations and appropriate approvals must be received from the bandits. More disturbing is the fact that the native's allegiance for protection is beginning to be in the hands of the bandits and fast turning away from government.

Objectives of the Study

The study is guided by the following research objectives, to

i. Examine the effects of armed banditry on human security in Shiroro Local Government Area

ii. Investigate the effects of the phenomenon on food security in Shiroro Local Government Area

iii. Suggest strategies to combating the growing challenges of armed banditary in Shiroro Local Government Area.

Literature review

There has been growing concern in parts of Nigeria over insecurity caused by bandits. The frequency with which they attack communities has become very worrisome developments to every Nigerian, particularly those living in the northern parts of the country. Onah (2010) subscribes to the view that the frequency of attacks may be attributed to the ease with which these bandit groups move in and out of rural communities without any form of resistance.

Arising from the strategic neglect of rural communities in terms of socioeconomic developments, Asiwaju (2004), held that many rural communities have been turned into areas of concentration for bad roads, absence of health facilities and educational institutions, and have also become sites for poorly managed forest reserve that are now providing cover as hideouts for rural criminal bandits.

Bagu& Smith (2017) noted that organized research on banditry is still at its nascent stage, however, there have been some scholarly works on the subject matter all contended that rural banditry has become reasonably most prevalent in some parts of the North-Central region, with states like Niger, Nasarawa, Plateau and Benue becoming more affected by the phenomenon for sometimes now (Kunn&Jibrin, 2016; CDD, 2015).

What then is armed banditry and how has it affected human and food security the Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State? This research is geared towards providing answers to these questions.

Human security encompasses two ideas, according to (Gadzama, Oduebe and Dariya, 2018) one of the ideas of human security is the notion of safety that goes beyond the concept of mere physical security in the traditional sense, and the other idea is that people's livelihood should be guaranteed through 'social security'' against sudden disruptions.

Ewans (2007) was however of a different view, he saw modern concept of human security as that which tries to identify the inherent weaknesses of the traditional security pattern which fundamentally focuses on the security of the state instead of the protection of the individuals and communities. Therefore, Ewans (2007) believed that security in modern times should be more redirected towards the protection of lives and properties of individuals and communities rather than concentrating more on state functionaries, their families and allies, and by extension what they define as critical infrastructures.

Tadjbakksh&Chenoy, (2007) and Johns, (2014) all defined human security as the absence of insecurity and threats. To be secured and free from both fear of physical, psychological abuses, violence, persecution or death from want of food, good health and job. They concluded that human security should therefore deal with the capacity to identify threats, to avoid them when possible, and to mitigate their effects when they occur.

Food security on the other hand is simply the access to basic nutrition and food supply at all times needed for man's survival needs. The United Nations (2014) defined food security as the opportunity for all people, at all times, to have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needed for an active and healthy life.

Furthermore, Okpaleke (2014) attempt to conceptualised armed banditry, he maintains that banditry has to do with armed violence perpetrated by criminal opportunists and syndicates along the country's border lines and rural interiors. The above writer believes that acts of criminality by armed bandits are targeted at human lives or property; armed robbery, kidnapping, cattle rustling and allied violence. But McGregor (2014), added to the list of criminalities of armed banditry. According to him, armed banditry activities also include village market raids, rape of women, arson and outright killings, these actions have also always involved the use of force, threats and intimidation. Okpaleke (2014) however further maintained that there are different perspectives of rural banditry, according to him; some are motivated by the imperative of material accumulation while others are motivated only by the quest to rob, assault or even liquidate a

person or a group of persons based on political, ideological or religious considerations.

In any case, these researchers have continued to observe that the phenomenon is beginning to be alarming and taking frightening dimensions in Shiroro Local Government Area of Niger State, It's penchant for destruction of lives, farmlands and properties have continued daily in more communities located in the local government area, particularly the hinterlands of the local government and its borders. Markets are closed for fear of attacks, schools are closed for fear of abductions, farmlands are no go areas for fear of attacks and ceremonies are put off and transferred to the State capital while for security reasons all communication networks in the local government have been disconnected in order to make it difficult for bandit communications.

The Northern region in Nigeria is said to have a long history of banditry. According to the humanitarian (Formerly IRIN News, 2018), the Northern region had its first documented case of rural banditry between 'Western Hausaland' and the Republic of Niger border in 1901, when it was recorded that a 12,000 strong group of camel trade merchants were killed. Rural banditry therefore is not new to Nigeria, but over the years, it has successfully transformed from its rudimentary level to one of sophistication, using modern weapons of destruction and complications in their approaches, Egwu (2016) submitted.

Smith &Bagu (2017) seems to be more concerned with this new development in banditry 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, and both the farming and herdsmen communities are also victims of this criminality. The Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD, 2015) supports the above assertion, when it reported that the bandits have increased their penchant for criminality from highway robbery and rustling to include looting, laying seize on local markets and killing unarmed innocent Nigerians.

As a follow-up to the above, Gaye (2018) tries to locate reasons why banditry strives in the North, in his view, the northern region, particularly the North Western and north Central hinterlands are marked by extremely dispersed rural communities separated from each other which makes it susceptible to violent attacks, apart from these, he maintained that the regions are vast, rugged, hazardous and are grossly under-policed. He sees this as one reason why jungle criminality strives without checks. Gaye (2018) concluded that the porosity of the borderlines are total, ill-delineated and ungoverned, which has created very conducive environment for the facilitation of illicit activities such as smuggling of both human and substance (including drugs) and all manners of trafficking unhindered.

The Humanitarian (2018) opines that some bandits have gone to the extent of kidnapping foreign miners and demand payments of appropriate ransoms before their releases. Viewing the dangers associated with the above, Olaniyan and Yahaya (2016); Okoli and Lenshie (2018), averred that the Federal Government of Nigeria in a bid to curtail illegal mining and banditry directed the suspension of all forms of mining activities in Zamfara State in the early weeks of April, 2019. But Okoli (2017) however added to his earlier statement when he stated that, "some of the cattle rustling gangs are also affiliated to local and transnational syndicate groups and mercenaries like the Boko Haram".

Trying to find suitable solution to the menace of rural banditry, 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, he was of the view that the rural people best know the routes used by the bandits into their communities, in other words, they should be allowed to play pivotal roles in actualizing their own security, necessary state laws should therefore be put in place to allow them access effective security equipment needed to safeguard their lives and properties.

The above considerations have become very necessary because rural banditry has caused untold hardships on individuals and communities. (Tadjbakhish&Chenoy, 2007) and Johns (2014), maintained that since human security is 'safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease, repression and protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily lives, it is imperative for government and its agencies to stand up through the protection of people's lives and properties which they have been trained to undertake. Because as Krauye (2004); Axworthy (2004); Fukuda-pan and Messineo (2012), put it, sovereignty and security

of life are the direct responsibility of government, to which its civil populace depends on to protect their populations against insecurity.

A document from, the West Africa Network of Peace Building (WANEP, 2019) reported that 1,000 civilian deaths were recorded from January to December, 2019, all from the North West region through the activities of bandits in the region. With this alarming development, the same source maintained that a committee was set up headed by Mohammed Abubakar, a former Inspector General of Police to negotiate with bandits in Zamfara State between June 2011 and May 2019, the committee discovered that 4,983 women were widowed; 25,000 children were orphaned; and more than 190,000 people were displaced as a result of armed banditry in the State.

However, John Campbell in his blog recorded in a broadcast on July 23rd, 2020 on the programme, Africa in Transition and Nigeria on the brink", suggested that though the army introduced several military operations in the country to quash banditry, operations like the "Operation Puff Adder", "DiranMikya", SharanDaji", "HudarinDaji", "Thunder Strike", "Exercise Harbin Kunama III", they have only created mixed feelings in the minds of Nigerians. The operations only succeeded in pushing back the bandits and destroyed some of their hideouts while some were killed, but Campbell maintained that however according to Campbell, attacks have continued without any sign of stoppage.

Campbell further submits that, it was in the light of these challenges that the Governors of Katsina, Sokoto and Zamfara, agreed on a peace deal with the armed bandits in 2019. But accordingly, the agreements did not last. This is because only recently, on the 24th of August, 2020, the Nigerian Tribune Newspaper published a document written by LanreAdewole, a journalist, suggesting that 1,126 persons were killed, 380 were abducted in the seven northern states as declared by Amnesty International, through its Country Director in Nigeria, Mr. OsaiOjigho. On August 16, 2020, another journalist Adebayo Oladeji reported in Thursday Newspapers that the umbrella Christian body of Nigeria, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) observed that crime and banditry were becoming worrisome, the body subsequently directed its members to resort to self-help as the precarious security situation in the country was becoming dangerous.

CAN was of the view that there is an urgent need to do the needful, if we want to end the killings in the country. The organization indicted the presidency for non-action when it was quoted by the same Newspaper to have said the following: "Tell me why the president of Nigeria has refused to sack his service chiefs after every available evidence indicate that they have failed" CAN conclude.

As regards food security, Muggah&Batchelor (2002) stated that the impact of armed banditry has caused devastating, psychological depression on victims, who have had physical injuries and also lost material valuables, sources of livelihood have also been affected while there is a chain cut in and cut in the farming and supply of cash and food crops, there is also the interruption of public and commercial transportation to other local markets and forceful abandonment of large scale already harvested farm products, agricultural extension workers also find it difficult to locate farmers on their farms for further assistance and necessary inputs, since many of them have already fled to neighbouring communities and city centers for protection. All these have also affected general food chain development and supply and have hitherto affected food security of the victims as well as residents of Shiroro local government area of Niger State where the carnage has been on-going.

Muggah& Batcher (2002) concluded. Little wonder Amnesty International, (2018) maintained that the Birnin-Gwari axis of Kaduna State linking through its borders with Niger State has contributed in guaranteeing criminal bandits the desired hiding places in the forest of Alawa village located in Shiroro local government area of the State. The precarious security situation in Shiroro local government area reached an alarming rate when one SaxoneAkhaine, a journalist with the Guuardian Newspapers reported on August 1st, p,14, (2020) that one Azumi (mrs) of Gurmana village in Shiroro local government stated in an interview that the following, "life is beginning to be meaningless and cruel for members of my community, I never knew that I would one daywake up to be chased away from this my community where I was born and my ancestral home by Fulani people whom we have lived with for decades.

Mallam Musa of Alawa village who was separately interviewed by the same reporter also made the following statements, "the attackers invaded our village and started shooting and burning down our houses at exactly 11.20pm, unknown to me, my wife, my brother's wife, my step mother and three siblings were burnt by the attackers, they also burnt down my cousin's house and slaughtered my cousins' wife and baby. Life has become miserable for me" Apparently reacting to the continued bandit attacks on Shiroro and Rafi local government areas of Niger State.

Distinguished Senator Mohammed Sani Musa, and the law maker representing Niger East Senatorial District in the National Assembly had during an interview with Daily post newspapers on October 23rd, (2021), said the following "I plead with all the security agencies in state to collaborate and quickly mount serious manhunt for those behind the abductions of 30 travelers who were abducted in their separate vehicles by suspected bandits atGarin-Gabas near Zungeru on Wednesday". The Senator further made the following statements "Unless and until we tag these criminals as terrorists, our security agencies will not have unfettered power to treat them the way they should be treated".

Addo (2006) notes that the increasing sophistication and complex modes of operation of the bandits have made the security agencies complacent as bandits have been able to evade detection and enforcement measures. Consequently, Ginifer and Ismael (2005) noted that the threats by bandits have led communities relocating and retreating into city-centers and adding to the already volatile security challenges. Hence, the growing stimulation for the increased services of private security guards and vigilante at the cities, while NGOs and agricultural extension workers are finding it more difficult to reach farmers who have since fled their original communities.

As if these were not enough, Saturday Tribune of 15th August, (2020) reported by one AdelowoOladipo, a journalist, that "no fewer than fifteen (15) people were feared dead, killed by gunmen suspected to be armed bandits in Gurmana Community of Shiroro local government area of Niger State, the Chairman of the vigilante group in the community, Mallam Musa Galadima who was interviewed confirmed that the gunmen invaded their community on no fewer than 52 motorcycles, carrying sophisticated weapons killing, kidnapping and burning down houses and seems to be getting worse daily and is continuing unabated.

Theoretical Framework

The paper adopted, reviewed and applied Routine Activity Theory to the phenomenon under study. This theory which is rather a recent approach to the explanation of crime falls within the social-structural perspective. The main exponents of the theory are Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson in (1979); the theory arose in an attempt to explain predatory criminal activities. Its three main postulations are (i) crime is likely to occur where there is a motivated potential offender, (ii) where there are suitable or attractive targets and (iii) where there is the absence of capable guards or persons who can prevent crime from taking place. Therefore, the theory is more concerned with the opportunities for occurrence. Crime therefore can be perpetrated in terms of capability and availability of suitable and unprotected targets by a motivated offender.

Adopting this theory to armed banditry in Shiroro local government of Niger State, the presence of agriculturally and herding based communities located with the prevalence of large, stretched forestlands, borderlands and unregulated hinterlands which are mostly under-policed or unprotected by the various social control agencies provides sufficient opportunity for banditry to strive. Furthermore, these communities are viably rich rural communities, mostly engaged in animal husbandry, crop production and unofficial mining activities with daily exchange of money and mercantile, trading in cattle, providing suitable targets for armed bandit activities to continue in the communities virtually left with non-existing governmental security agencies to monitor and enforce obedience to law.

The Humanitarian (2018) supports this assertion when it opines that ecology of such communities brings about not only motivation but temptation alike for criminal indulgence. Consequently, bandits who are predators in these communities are likely to have sustained field day engaging in all manners of criminal escapades including lootings, robberies, maiming, rapping, kidnappings and outright killings without any form of resistance.

Methodology

Shiroro Local Government Area is the study location; the research design adopted for this study is survey and a triangulation of quantitative and qualitative methods which were used to describe the effects of banditry in Shiroro local government area. The open and closed ended questionnaires were used as instruments for collection of primary data from respondents, while secondary data was sourced from journals, books, newspapers and online-peer reviewed works. Respondents for the primary data were made up of people who have had either direct contact with the bandits as victims, or whose relations actually participated in the negotiations for payments of ransoms. Others are people whose relations were killed by the bandits and those whose life savings, properties, businesses and houses have been destroyed by the ravaging armed bandits. In-depth interviews were also conducted by the researchers to elicit deeper information where the questionnaires were not able to explore in details. The SPSS package was used in analyzing the collated data. The local government is made up of fifteen (15) delineated wards for administrative and political convenience. One major Federal Government presence is the Shiroro hydro-electricity dam which is located in Gusoro-zumba ward, predominantly farming and fishing community.

The Local Governments stable food production for local consumption and commercial purposes are items like yams, fish, groundnuts, rice, millet, pepper and vegetables. Shiroro local government according to 2006 census has a population of 286,000,548 people geographically located in fifteen (15) wards. The wards are Bangajiya ward, Ubandoma, Egwa-Gwada, Pina, She, Kato, Gusoro-Zumba, Erena, Galkogo, Kwaki-Chukuba, Kushaka-Kurebe, Allawa, Gurmana, Manta and Bassa-Kukoki ward. All the local governments mentioned above have in one way or the other affected and ravaged by the activities of banditry. It is worth mentioning here that the language spoken by majority of natives of the local government is known as Gwari (Gbagyi) with a handful of Hausa and Fulani settlers.

Presentation and Analysis of Data

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Effects of armed banditry on human security

Effects of Attack	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Horror due to shock	16	17.8
Hospitalization due to shock	9	10.0
Death	65	72.2
Total	90	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 1 shows the devastating effects of banditry on human security with majority of the respondents 65 (72.2%) maintaining that it brought about deaths, 16 (17.8%) stated that it brought horror due to shock, while 9 (10%) of them asserted that it brought hospitalization due to shock.

Table 2: Effects of the phenomenon on food security

Effects on Food Security	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Loss of farm land	38	42.2
Loss of cattle	17	18.9
Loss of other animal	19	21.1
Closure of market	11	12.2
Closure of businesses	5	5.6
Total	90	100

Source: *Field Survey, 2022.*

On table 2 above, respondents indicate that the effect of banditry attack on food security led to the closure of businesses with 5 (5.6%) respondents, loss of cattle 17

(18.9%)respondents, loss of other animal 19 (21.1%) respondents, closure of market 11 (12.2%), and finally, loss of farm land claimed the highest number of killings with 38 (42.2%) respondents.

Table 3: Solutions to the growing challenge of bandit criminalities in Shiroro local government

Solutions to the growing challenge of bandit criminalities	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Activities of informal to be curtail	26	28.9
Increased Government sensitivity to the plight of Shiroro citizens	13	14.4
Increased presence of security agencies	32	35.6
Total elimination of informants	19	21.1
Total	90	100

Table 3 above shows the solutions to the growing challenge of bandit criminalities in Shiroro local government with 26 (28.9%) of the respondents stating the activities of informal to be curtailed, 13 respondents on the other hand suggested increased government sensitivity to the plight of Shirorocitizens. However, the majority of the respondent stated they should be increased presence of security agencies, while 19 (21.1%) respondents supported total elimination of informants.

In-depth Interview Analysis

In a bid to elicit further information, on banditry from the above respondents, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with some respondents. The following were some of the responses received and transcribed from the respondents.

As to further elicit more information on the effects of armed banditry on food security, Respondent 1s from Gurmana village in Shiroro local government area had this to say:

> *I am still at a shock as to the devastating nature of the attacks by these rascal bandits without commensurate confrontation by the security agencies. Do you know that we cannot go to our farms to harvest any crops? We even have to depend on our relations at Kuta and Minna to send us food to eat, you can be killed when seen on the farm without getting any official permission from them. They have become another government of their own. We are just in trouble, there will be serious food disaster this year.*

Respondents 2 and 3 were from the Zumba and Gusorovillages in the same Shiroro local government,their views on the devastating effect on food security are as follows:

> *Our market days are now determined by the safety of the opportunities to sell our products. Our farm lands can only be attended to when escorted by sourced vigilantee operatives who are known to be fearless, ruthless and dedicated hunters. Yet, we must pay them in groups for their services. The prices of food items will definitely go up accordingly.*

Respondents 4 and 5are from Kal-kogo (Galadima-kogo) and Alawavillages, they described their pitiable food security matter in the following manner:

> *In our villages, which have been known over the years for sales of cattle, the bandits have rustled over 1200 cattle heads and headed to their Allawa settlement in the forests. We now have shortages in our meat production and sales. Our major source of livelihood has been drastically affected.*

When further prompted to elicit more information on the effects on banditry on human security, Respondents 6, 7 and 8 from Yewuri, Chukuba and Erena villages submitted the following:

> *We have now become lazy people living secretly in our villages waiting for relations from Kuta to supply us food which is sometimes supplied to them at the IDPs camps by Christian and voluntary organizations and sometimes, the government, National Assembly, State and Local Government Officers and Members respectively. It is terrible because we can no longer go*

to our farms. Our farms have become bandit's camps and some of our wives who normally assist us with the farm work are now held captives by these rascal bandits. Do you know that we live constantly in fear? The shock of the alarming numbers of our children forcefully taken away from us into bandit camps is giving us sleepless nights. We cannot explain the sorrowful situation of daily burials of our loved ones in our villages. So far, over sixty heads of families have been killed without any feeling of guilt or remorse.

Respondent 9 however, dwelt on the position of informants and had this to say:

I hope you know that we now have spies and informants living with us and we are afraid to confront them because they work for the bandits. Sometimes, we go to them with money to inform the bandits that we are hungry and need to go our farms to harvest food and cash crops? This is how serious the situation has become.

Respondent 10 is however more concerned with government's intervention and made the following observations:

Which government are you talking about? They will only take you to the camps located in Kuta town and be feeding you and your family with bread. Please informed them to be more dedicated and decisive on eliminating informants in our communities and totally stop banditry activities by increasing the presence of security personnel in our communities. We shall co-operate with them to identify these informants if they give us sufficient protection.

Discussing on Findings

Findings have suggested that the phenomenon has created devastating effects on human security, these effects range from loss of lives with the highest percentage, to hospitalization and horror due to shocks. The study has been able to suggest that banditry also has a devastating effect on food security. The loss of cattle and other animals with higher percentages indicate that animal husbandry which has often been the source of livelihood for the respondents has been seriously affected. Others include the closure of business and markets.

In all, these incidences are capable of reducing the production of crops for both local production and exports. The losses of lives, hospitalizations and horrific fears expressed by the respondents have added to the general challenges of banditry on human security. Thus, if people are killed on daily basis and those alive cannot freely go to the markets, how do they sell their farm produce if they cannot go to their farms? How do they harvest, consume or even process the products for export or guaranteeing market value for their cash crops and those meant for domestic consumption?

Definitely, the crisis of survival will arise, giving way for food scarcity and by implication, food security challenge as the case may be. It is also pertinent to note here that, the fact that people constantly live in perpetual fear of attacks to outright killings amongst many others, may have the tendency of affecting human security.

The findings on the effects of banditry on human security has answered objective (1) of the study which sought to find out the threats of human security, while the finding on food security above has also answered objective two (2) of the study which sought to find out the threats of banditry on food security. The above findings have been supported by Okoli (2017) when he pointed out that; sometimes the lethality of the attacks are reprisals designed to show down communities which have hitherto challenged or resisted the bandits' onslaught through vigilantism.

All the above findings are also in tandem with the adopted theory for this research, which is the routine activity theory. This is so, because the activities of bandits who are the motivated potential offenders find suitable targets in under-policed forest farming and herding communities.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Finding from this study have considered the effects of bandit's activities on human and food security. In all, it has been able to establish that

some respondents have been killed, while others have faced hospitalization due to shock and living in horrific fears. Other are: loss of lives, destruction of farm lands, loss of animals, amongst other experiences of the respondents in this study.

Something very drastic needs to be done in order to curb the excesses of bandits. It is therefore recommended that government takes immediate steps to stop the wanton killings of innocent Nigerians through the provision of very sophisticated detection equipment in the forestlands to detest incursion into the communities by bandits.

It is also recommended that all the security agencies be provided with more sophisticated arms and ammunition, sufficient enough to confront the bandits in order to enable people go to their farms without intimidation, this will enhance the production of food security can be better addressed.

It is recommended that government becomes more proactive in arresting and prosecuting criminal bandits in order to reaffirm its position as principal provider of security to the people. This will improve the level of human security and create more confidence by the people.

It is further recommended that the communities organize themselves as community vigilantes with the necessary ammunition in order to protect themselves.

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