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Ethnographic study of the impact of Banditry on Food Security in Selected Communities in Katsina State

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Abstract

Banditry has emerged as one of the most pressing threats to rural livelihoods and food security in Katsina State, Nigeria. Communities in Batsari, Jibia, and Dutsin-ma have experienced repeated attacks that disrupted farming, displaced households, and destabilised local markets. Against this backdrop, the study examined the impact of banditry on agricultural production, food accessibility, and community coping strategies in Katsina State. Failed State Theory served as the analytical framework, highlighting how governance breakdown and the state's inability to provide security created ungoverned spaces where banditry flourishes and undermines food systems. The study employed a mixed-methods design, combining surveys with 384 respondents, 30 in-depth interviews, and five focus group discussions. Quantitative data were analysed with descriptive statistics, while qualitative evidence was thematically analysed to provide deeper insights. Findings showed that 85.4% of households abandoned farmlands, 83.6% reported market disruptions, and 86.2% noted severe food inflation. Qualitative responses confirmed that farmers reduced cultivation, traders faced restricted access to markets, and women were disproportionately burdened by food scarcity. Communities coped through meal reduction, prioritising children's consumption, selling assets, and relying on food-sharing networks, but these strategies eroded long-term resilience. The study concluded that banditry is not only a security problem but a structural driver of food insecurity in Katsina. It recommended the establishment of secured farming zones to protect agricultural production, the creation of protected trade routes to improve food accessibility and stabilise prices, and the institutionalisation of community grain banks to strengthen resilience.

Keywords
Banditry, Food, Security, Agriculture, Markets, Resilience, Governance, Nigeria

Introduction

Banditry has become one of the most severe and persistent security challenges confronting Nigeria, particularly in the North-West region where Katsina State is situated. The crisis has escalated over the past decade, with armed groups perpetrating violent raids, mass kidnappings, and cattle rustling, which have collectively destabilised rural livelihoods and undermined agricultural production (Sani &Danjibo,

2021). In Katsina State, agriculture serves as the backbone of local livelihoods, with the majority of households engaged in subsistence and small-scale farming (Danmusa, Umar & Muhammad, 2025). Consequently, persistent attacks on rural communities have directly disrupted farming activities, displaced populations, and triggered widespread food insecurity (Akinola, 2022). The implications of this phenomenon extend beyond the immediate loss of lives and property, as it also threatens the broader socio-economic fabric of the state and Nigeria as a whole. Historically, the roots of banditry in Nigeria can be traced to weak governance structures, economic marginalisation, and a culture of impunity that has emboldened criminal groups (Mustapha, 2019, Mahmud & Maigari, 2024; Uvere&Adiele, 2025). Over time, socio-economic conditions such as poverty, unemployment, and environmental degradation created fertile ground for the proliferation of armed groups in the rural hinterlands of Katsina and neighbouring states (Gbadebo, 2025).

The Nigerian state has struggled to contain this menace, as existing military and policing strategies have largely focused on kinetic operations without addressing the structural factors that sustain rural violence (Oyewole & Utibe, 2024; Gulbi, 2024; Ojo, 2023; Ochogwu, 2024; Rufus, 2025). This disconnect has enabled banditry to persist as a systemic threat to rural stability. Food security in Katsina State has been severely eroded by banditry across all four FAO pillars. Availability has declined as widespread farm abandonment and destruction of fields continue to reduce crop output, leaving communities with diminished local production, as observed by Emmanuel, Ishaku and Awodoyin (2023). Accessibility has equally worsened because persistent attacks disrupt markets and raise food prices, making essential commodities unaffordable for rural households, according to Umar (2025). Utilisation is weakened as insecurity limits dietary diversity and contributes to childhood malnutrition (Faruk & Abdullahi, 2022). Stability has further deteriorated as recurrent violence erodes livestock assets and household income, reducing long-term food system resilience (Umar & Odemero, 2024). The situation in Katsina has reached alarming levels, with reports indicating that over half of the farming households in local government areas such as Batsari, Jibia, and Dutsin-ma have been displaced or significantly disrupted in their agricultural activities (Yusufu & Abdurrahman, 2021). This disruption directly translates into food shortages within the state and contributes to Nigeria's broader food insecurity crisis. In addition to undermining livelihoods, the crisis has deepened poverty and widened inequality, particularly affecting women and children who bear disproportionate burdens during displacement and food scarcity (Krause, 2019). Women, often responsible for household food provisioning, face compounded vulnerabilities as they navigate both insecurity and scarcity, while children suffer from malnutrition and disrupted education (Lacoella, 2020; George & Adelaja, 2022; Okeke, 2024).The failure of existing interventions reflects deeper governance challenges. The selected communities in Katsina State provide an appropriate case study because they represent the epicentre of banditry-related disruptions to rural livelihoods and food systems in northern Nigeria. Evidence shows that these communities experience persistent attacks, displacement, farm abandonment, and

market disruptions at levels significantly higher than neighbouring areas (Abubakar & Ahmed, 2023). Their repeated exposure to violence has compelled residents to adopt resilience strategies such as collective farming, community grain reserves, and traditional support networks, as documented by Dennis et al. (2022). These coping mechanisms make the communities analytically valuable for understanding how rural populations navigate acute insecurity while striving to maintain food production. However, studies indicate that these measures are increasingly inadequate due to the expanding scale and sophistication of banditry in the region (Umar &Odemero, 2024). The choice of these communities therefore allows the study to empirically capture the interactions between insecurity, agricultural decline, and household food vulnerability within one of the most severely affected contexts in Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

Katsina State is facing a deepening crisis as banditry undermines its role as a major agricultural hub. According to Emmanuel, Ishaku, and Awodoyin (2023), increasing attacks have forced rural dwellers to abandon farmland, destroy livestock, and displace entire villages, severely affecting local food production. Official reports back this up: between January and June 2021 alone, some 23,333 hectares of farmland were abandoned in Katsina due to banditry, making vital food baskets such as Batsari, Jibia, and Dutsin-Ma increasingly insecure (Daily Trust, as cited in Impact of Banditry on Food Security in Katsina State, Nigeria, 2023). This disruption has eroded food availability and accessibility. Displaced farmers are unable to cultivate staple crops like maize, millet, and sorghum, while insecurity has prevented effective market functioning, triggering sharp rises in food prices (Emmanuel et al., 2023). Livestock farmers are not spared: a study by Adeola, Aruwayo, and Adeleke (2021) found that bandit attacks have caused herd reductions, lowering incomes and destabilising rural livelihoods.

The consequence of this persistent insecurity is chronic food scarcity and growing vulnerability among rural communities. According to Bappah and Adejoh (2025), the long-term trajectory of food insecurity in Katsina involves deteriorating institutional support, weak governance, and inadequate interventions. Without immediate and structural reforms, the crisis may deepen, precipitating widespread malnutrition, mass displacement, and an erosion of social cohesion — all of which threaten to undermine both food systems and state legitimacy in the near future.

Food security in Katsina State has been severely eroded by banditry across all four FAO pillars. Availability has declined as widespread farm abandonment and destruction of fields continue to reduce crop output, leaving communities with diminished local production, as observed by Emmanuel, Ishaku and Awodoyin (2023). Accessibility has equally worsened because persistent attacks disrupt markets and raise food prices, making essential commodities unaffordable for rural households, according to Umar (2025). Utilisation is weakened as insecurity limits dietary diversity and contributes to childhood malnutrition (Faruk & Abdullahi, 2022). Stability has further deteriorated as recurrent violence erodes livestock assets and household income, reducing long-term food system resilience (Umar &Odemero, 2024).

Research Objectives

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of banditry on food security in selected communities of Katsina State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are:

i. To assess the impact of banditry on agricultural production and food availability in the selected communities.
ii. To examine how banditry has affected food accessibility, affordability, and utilisation within the selected communities.
iii. To investigate the stability of local food systems and the coping strategies or resilience mechanisms adopted by households in response to banditry-induced food insecurity.

Conceptual Review

Banditry

Banditry is broadly understood as organised criminal activity that involves armed groups engaging in violent raids, extortion, kidnapping, and cattle rustling (Osasona, 2022; Oluyemi, 2025; Ogidigben & Otite, 2024; Aliyu, Ahmed & Mustapha, 2024; Kugbayi & Adegbami, 2024). In the Nigerian context, particularly in the North-West region, banditry has evolved from sporadic incidents of rural violence into a large-scale organised criminal enterprise that threatens national security (Sani &Danjibo, 2021). Unlike conventional insurgency, which is often ideologically driven, banditry in Katsina and neighbouring states is primarily motivated by economic gain, resource control, and survival in an environment marked by weak governance and social inequality (Oyewole & Utibe, 2024). Historically, banditry in Nigeria can be traced to socio-economic deprivation, the proliferation of small arms, and the collapse of traditional mechanisms of conflict resolution (Ofoma, 2023; Esamagu & Adeyink, 2025; Faruk & Abdullahi, 2024). In rural Katsina, long-standing disputes over land use, grazing rights, and access to water resources created tensions between farmers and pastoralists (Nasef, Eba, Islam, Djohy&Flintan, 2023; Obikaeze, Oduntan, Fajobi, Kayode &Enang, 2023; Onwe, Ogazi & Agada, 2025). The absence of effective state institutions to mediate these disputes enabled armed groups to exploit grievances, transforming local conflicts into systemic banditry. The situation has been exacerbated by porous borders that facilitate the movement of arms and fighters across West Africa (Shanka, 2022).

Contemporary banditry in Katsina is characterised by high levels of violence and territorial control. Armed groups frequently raid villages, kidnap residents for ransom, and impose informal taxation systems on local communities (Ladan & Matawalli, 2020). These activities disrupt agricultural cycles, displace populations, and create a climate of fear that erodes social cohesion. Beyond the immediate physical and economic damage, banditry also undermines trust in state institutions, as communities perceive the government as unable or unwilling to provide protection (Rotberg, 2010). From a conceptual perspective, banditry blurs the line between criminality and insurgency. While it lacks a central ideological agenda, its systemic impact on governance and rural stability positions it as a quasi-political phenomenon (Call, 2008). In Katsina, banditry has taken on a communal dimension, with some groups aligning along ethnic lines while others operate purely as economic opportunists. This hybridity complicates policy responses, as military solutions often fail to address the

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underlying socio-economic grievances that sustain the crisis (Olusegun et al., 2022). Banditry also has gendered dimensions. Women and children are disproportionately targeted during raids, with kidnappings for ransom and sexual violence being common (Krause, 2019). These acts deepen social trauma and undermine household resilience, further entrenching poverty. In this regard, banditry is not merely a security threat but also a humanitarian crisis that destabilises the social fabric of Katsina State. Understanding banditry in its full complexity requires recognising it as both a product of governance failure and a driver of systemic insecurity that disrupts every dimension of rural life.

Food Security

Food security is a multidimensional concept defined by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO, 2022) as a condition in which all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life. Four interrelated pillars underpin this concept: availability, accessibility, utilisation, and stability. In Katsina State, all four dimensions have been severely compromised by the persistence of banditry. Availability of food depends on the continuous production, distribution, and exchange of agricultural commodities. In Katsina, which relies heavily on smallholder farming, food availability has been drastically reduced as farmers abandon their farmlands due to insecurity (Yusufu& Abdurrahman, 2021). This has created a supply deficit that not only affects local communities but also has ripple effects on food supply chains across northern Nigeria. The destruction of stored crops and the theft of livestock by bandits further undermine availability.

Accessibility, the second pillar, refers to the ability of individuals and households to acquire food through purchase, trade, or subsistence production. Banditry in Katsina has disrupted market systems, making it difficult for traders and farmers to move food commodities from rural to urban areas (Ladan & Matawalli, 2020). Transport routes are frequently ambushed, and markets are targeted by bandits, leading to sharp increases in food prices. Poor households, already facing declining incomes, are thus unable to access adequate food, exacerbating inequality and vulnerability (World Bank, 2023).

Utilisation concerns the way food is consumed, including dietary diversity and nutritional adequacy. In contexts of insecurity, households often reduce both the quality and quantity of meals as a coping mechanism (Dennis et al., 2022). In Katsina, many families prioritise feeding children while adults go hungry, and nutritious foods such as vegetables and protein are often substituted with cheaper, less nutritious alternatives. These practices contribute to malnutrition, particularly among children, and undermine long-term human capital development. The final pillar, stability, reflects the consistency of food supply and access over time. Stability in Katsina has been undermined by recurrent attacks, displacement, and seasonal disruptions caused by banditry. Uncertainty regarding safety during planting and harvesting seasons prevents households from planning long-term agricultural production (FAO, 2022). Furthermore, the displacement of farming populations into camps or urban centres has eroded the stability of local food systems, creating dependency on external aid that is often inadequate or unsustainable (World Bank, 2023). Food security in Katsina

cannot therefore be understood in isolation from the broader context of insecurity. Banditry has transformed what was once a predominantly agricultural economy into a humanitarian crisis marked by scarcity, inflation, and vulnerability. Conceptually, this demonstrates the interdependence of security and food systems: without security, the conditions necessary for sustainable food production and distribution cannot exist. Thus, addressing food insecurity in Katsina requires not only agricultural interventions but also a comprehensive security strategy that restores safety and stability in rural areas.

Empirical Review

Oyewole and Utibe (2024) investigated the effects of armed banditry on food security in Northwest Nigeria using secondary data drawn from government reports, policy briefs, and existing academic studies. Their analysis revealed that recurrent bandit attacks led to large-scale displacement of farmers, loss of livestock, and abandonment of farmlands, which collectively reduced food availability in affected states. They also observed that food accessibility was compromised as markets were frequently attacked, inflating food prices beyond the reach of low-income households. The study concluded that food insecurity in Northwest Nigeria is not merely an agricultural issue but a structural outcome of insecurity. The researchers recommended a shift from purely military responses to integrated strategies that combined community engagement, rural development, and governance reforms. A limitation of the study, however, was its reliance on secondary sources, which limited household-level insights into coping strategies.

Olusegun, James, and Jafaru (2022) conducted a qualitative analysis of rural banditry and food security using documentary evidence, including government reports and media sources. They found that banditry directly undermined crop production, disrupted local markets, and contributed to food inflation in Katsina and neighbouring states. Their findings indicated that food insecurity in the region was tied to systemic governance failures, including corruption and lack of accountability in security operations. The authors recommended targeted investment in rural policing, agricultural subsidies, and community dialogues to restore rural resilience. The study provides a useful overview of the link between banditry and food insecurity, highlighting systemic governance failures and recommending practical interventions. However, its exclusive reliance on documentary evidence without primary data collection limits the empirical depth and prevents verification of findings at the household or community level. The study's conclusions may therefore lack the granularity needed for targeted policy responses.

Dennis, Joseph, Dungs, and Aideloje (2022) adopted a qualitative descriptive methodology, relying on interviews with community leaders and displaced persons in Katsina and Zamfara states. Their study revealed that banditry had forced thousands of households to abandon farms, creating widespread food shortages. They also noted the psychological trauma of displacement, which further weakened agricultural labour supply. Communities responded by pooling resources, sharing food, and selling assets, but these strategies were unsustainable. The authors recommended government investment in rural security infrastructure and the introduction of food banks in affected communities. This study benefits from first-hand qualitative insights through

interviews with community leaders and displaced persons, offering rich data on the human and social impact of banditry. Its strength lies in documenting coping strategies and psychological effects. Nevertheless, the small sample size limits the generalisability of the findings across broader Katsina and Zamfara populations.

Ladan and Matawalli (2020) carried out a survey-based study in Katsina State, focusing specifically on the relationship between banditry and food security. Using structured questionnaires administered to 300 farming households, they found that 72% of respondents had abandoned farmland, while 65% reported the loss of livestock to bandits. Their findings showed that food scarcity and inflation were direct consequences of insecurity. They recommended rural policing and state-supported agricultural recovery programmes to restore food security. The survey-based approach provides quantifiable evidence of farmland abandonment and livestock loss, establishing clear links between insecurity and food scarcity. The structured data allow for statistical validation of the crisis's scale. However, the reliance on descriptive statistics means the study lacks deeper qualitative insight into household coping mechanisms and community resilience strategies.

Mustapha (2019) examined the effects of armed banditry on internal security in Zamfara State using case study methodology. His study highlighted how porous borders and weak state institutions enabled the proliferation of armed groups, which displaced farmers and destabilised food supply chains. The findings revealed that rural livelihoods collapsed in the wake of insecurity, leaving households dependent on aid. Mustapha recommended strengthening border security, improving intelligence gathering, and addressing poverty as underlying drivers of banditry. The study effectively highlights structural factors such as porous borders and weak institutions that facilitate banditry, offering important policy recommendations. Its case study methodology allows for focused analysis of rural insecurity. The main limitation is the narrow geographical scope (Zamfara State), which restricts the applicability of findings to other affected regions such as Katsina.

Yusufu and Abdurrahman (2021) employed a mixed-methods design combining surveys of 400 farming households in Katsina with 20 in-depth interviews. Their study revealed that 85% of respondents had reduced food production due to insecurity, 78% experienced restricted market access, and 69% reported rising dependency on food aid. Qualitative data confirmed that households coped by reducing meal sizes, prioritising children's nutrition, and engaging in food sharing. The authors recommended strengthening community security structures, providing targeted agricultural loans, and investing in rural infrastructure. Their study was comprehensive but lacked a gender-disaggregated analysis that could have illuminated the differential impact on men and women This mixed-methods study is comprehensive, combining survey data with in-depth interviews to provide a holistic view of food insecurity and coping strategies. The statistical coverage is robust, and qualitative insights strengthen the findings. However, the absence of a gender-disaggregated analysis limits understanding of how food insecurity affects men and women differently.

Shanka (2022) explored the nexus between herdsmen, banditry, and food scarcity using a governance lens. His study, based on content analysis of policy reports and

media articles, found that weak governance and corruption perpetuated insecurity, which in turn fuelled food scarcity in Nigeria. He argued that food insecurity was not only a consequence of banditry but also a governance failure. The study recommended promoting good governance, strengthening state legitimacy, and enhancing rural peacebuilding initiatives. The study provides a critical governance perspective, linking banditry-induced food insecurity to corruption and weak state legitimacy. It emphasizes systemic issues beyond immediate violence, offering policy-relevant recommendations. Its main limitation is the lack of empirical fieldwork, which prevents capturing the lived experiences of households directly affected by insecurity.

Theoretical Framework

Failed State Theory

Failed State Theory has been widely employed in political science, international relations, and development studies to analyse situations where states lose their ability to perform basic functions such as ensuring security, delivering justice, and promoting socio-economic development (Rotberg, 2004). The theory posits that the breakdown of legitimate authority, inability to control territory, and erosion of monopoly over the use of force create ungoverned spaces where non-state actors, including criminal networks, militias, or armed bandits, can thrive (Rotberg, 2010; Zartman, 1995; Call, 2008). These assumptions provide a direct explanatory framework for the current study, as insecurity caused by banditry in Katsina State reflects gaps in state capacity to protect citizens, enforce law, and maintain order. According to the theory, when states fail to deliver political goods such as security, economic opportunity, and basic services, citizens are exposed to heightened vulnerability. In the context of Katsina State, this manifests as disruptions to food security, including the dependent variables of the study: food availability, accessibility, utilisation, and stability. Bandit attacks prevent farmers from cultivating or harvesting crops, leading to reduced availability of food. Looting, market disruptions, and extortion undermine accessibility and affordability, while displacement and loss of livelihoods compromise utilisation, as households cannot maintain adequate dietary intake. The persistent nature of these disruptions reflects a lack of systemic stability, as recurring violence erodes community resilience and local food systems. By situating the study within Failed State Theory, the research predicts that regions with weak governance and inadequate state intervention are more likely to experience severe food insecurity. The theory provides a conceptual lens for understanding the causal pathway: state weakness → proliferation of non-state armed actors → disruption of agricultural production and food systems → decreased food security (Rotberg, 2004; Call, 2008). Thus, the theory underpins the study's hypotheses by linking structural governance failures to observable declines in the four pillars of food security in Katsina's selected communities.

Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of banditry on food security in Katsina State. The quantitative component involved the use of structured questionnaires administered to farming households, while the qualitative component employed in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) to capture deeper insights into community experiences. This design was chosen because it allowed triangulation of findings and ensured both breadth and depth of analysis (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Population of the Study

The target population consisted of farming households, traders, and displaced persons in three local government areas (LGAs) of Katsina State: Batsari, Jibia, and Dutsin-ma. These LGAs were purposively selected because they are among the most severely affected by banditry and also represent the agricultural hubs of the state (Berkeley Research and Publications, 2023; Mahmud & Salihu, 2024; Aruwayo, Adeola, & Salihu, 2024; ThisDay, 2025). According to records from the Katsina State Ministry of Agriculture (2023), the estimated population of farming households in the three LGAs was as follows:

Table 1: Population of Farming Households

Local Government Area	Population
Batsari	48,000
Jibia	42,500
Dutsin-ma	39,000
Total	129,500

Source: KSBS, 2024, NBS, 2025

Sample Size Determination

To determine the appropriate sample size, the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sampling table was employed. For a population of approximately 11,500, the recommended sample size is 384 respondents. This sample size was considered sufficient to ensure representativeness while remaining manageable within the study's time and resource constraints.

Table 2: Sample Size Determination using Krejcie and Morgan (1970)

LGA	Population	Proportion (%)	Sample Size
Batsari	48,000	37.1	143
Jibia	42,500	32.8	126
Dutsin-ma	39,000	30.1	115

Sampling Technique

The study employed a multi-stage sampling technique. In the first stage, the three LGAs (Batsari, Jibia, and Dutsin-ma) were purposively selected due to their high

exposure to banditry. In the second stage, five wards were randomly selected from each LGA, making a total of 15 wards. In the third stage, households within the wards were selected using systematic random sampling to reach the total sample size of 384 respondents. For the qualitative component, 30 key informants (community leaders, security personnel, and displaced persons) were purposively selected for in-depth interviews, while five focus group discussions were conducted, each consisting of 8–10 participants.

Method of Data Collection

Quantitative data were collected using structured questionnaires administered to household heads, covering socio-demographic characteristics, experiences with banditry, agricultural production, market access, and food security coping strategies. Sample questions included the number of hectares cultivated to measure food availability, frequency of market access to assess accessibility, how often household members skipped meals to capture utilisation, and the consistency of household food supply over the year to indicate stability. For qualitative data, in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted to gather narratives on community perceptions of banditry, coping strategies, and government interventions. Qualitative questions asked participants to describe how banditry had affected farming activities, strategies households used to cope with food shortages, and their views on the effectiveness of government responses. Both instruments were pre-tested in a neighbouring LGA not included in the study to ensure clarity and reliability. Validity was enhanced by developing the instruments based on the four pillars of food security (FAO, 2022) and having them reviewed by experts in agricultural and development studies. Reliability was assessed through the pre-test, producing Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.81 to 0.87, indicating high internal consistency of questionnaire items.

Method of Data Analysis

For data analysis, quantitative data were entered into SPSS to generate descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and means, which allowed measurement of availability, accessibility, utilisation, and stability of food in the study communities. Qualitative data were analysed using manual thematic coding, whereby transcripts from IDIs and FGDs were carefully read, coded, and grouped into themes such as agricultural disruption, market access, coping strategies, and perceptions of government interventions. Triangulation of the quantitative and qualitative findings enhanced validity by integrating numerical trends with the lived experiences of households, providing a comprehensive understanding of the impact of banditry on food security.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (N = 384)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	247	64.3
	Female	137	35.7
Age	18–30 years	94	24.5
	31–45 years	173	45.1
	46–60 years	82	21.4
	61 years and above	35	9.0
Educational Level	No formal education	152	39.6
	Primary	118	30.7
	Secondary	81	21.1
	Tertiary	33	8.6
Occupation	Farming	256	66.7
	Trading	78	20.3
	Civil service	30	7.8
	Others (artisans, etc.)	20	5.2
Marital Status	Married	291	75.8
	Single	58	15.1
	Widowed/Divorced	35	9.1

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The demographic profile of respondents reflected the rural composition of Katsina State. Males constituted 64.3% of respondents while females were 35.7%. Most respondents (45.1%) were between 31 and 45 years, showing a young, productive population. Education levels were low, with 39.6% having no formal education. Farming dominated (66.7%), underscoring vulnerability to agricultural shocks. These demographics highlight the high exposure of communities to banditry-induced livelihood disruptions.

Table 2: Impact of Banditry on Agricultural Production and Food Availability (N = 384)

Impact Indicator	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Abandoned farmland due to insecurity	328	85.4

Reduced cultivation size	301	78.4
Loss of stored crops to raids	249	64.8
Livestock rustling by bandits	211	55.0
Decline in household food production	332	86.5

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Findings indicated that banditry had devastating effects on agricultural production and food availability in Katsina State. A total of 85.4% of respondents reported abandoning farmlands due to insecurity, while 78.4% reduced the size of land cultivated as a risk management strategy. Crop storage facilities were not spared, with 64.8% noting losses from raids on barns and silos. Livestock rustling, a common feature of bandit attacks, was reported by 55% of households, further weakening food and income sources. Ultimately, 86.5% of respondents acknowledged a decline in household food production, signifying that banditry had severely undermined food availability in the study communities. These findings echoed earlier studies by Ladan and Matawalli (2020), who reported similar patterns of farm abandonment and livestock loss in Katsina.

Interview Response (Farmer, Batsari LGA, Male, 42 years)

> Before these problems, I used to cultivate five hectares of maize and millet. But in the past three years, I cannot even step on two hectares because of fear of attacks. Many times, bandits came during planting or harvesting, forcing us to run away and leave everything behind. They also raid our storage barns and take the harvest we managed to gather. The worst is the cows, they rustled almost all of mine. Without farming, how can we feed our families? The government soldiers come sometimes, but when they leave, the bandits return stronger. Farming is no longer safe, and that is why hunger is now common in our communities (KII, 2025).

FGD Response (Women's Group, Jibia LGA, FGD of 9 participants)

> Farming used to be our life. Every household here depended on crops like sorghum, beans, and groundnuts. Now, most families have abandoned their farms because it is dangerous. Some people still farm but only close to town, where the land is small and not fertile. Many barns are empty because bandits either destroyed them or people could not cultivate enough. As women, we struggle the most. When there is no

> harvest, we have to beg or borrow food. Children cry of hunger, and mothers are left helpless. We cannot even rear goats or chickens because the bandits take them. Our community is suffering from food shortages like never before (FGD, 2025).

The quantitative results showed widespread farm abandonment, livestock rustling, and declining food production, while the qualitative narratives confirmed the lived realities of these disruptions. The farmer's testimony highlighted reduced cultivation and livestock loss, aligning with the 85.4% who reported abandoning farmlands and the 55% affected by livestock theft. Similarly, the women's FGD provided evidence of empty barns and household food shortages, which supported the 86.5% quantitative finding on reduced household food production. Together, these findings demonstrated that banditry had significantly undermined agricultural productivity, thereby reducing food availability in Batsari, Jibia, and Dutsin-ma.

Table 3: Effect of Banditry on Food Accessibility and Affordability (N = 384)

Indicator	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Restricted access to local markets	321	83.6
Increase in food prices due to bandit attacks	331	86.2
Households unable to afford three meals daily	298	77.6
Traders reducing supply due to insecurity	287	74.7
Increased dependency on food aid/charity	254	66.1

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The findings revealed that food accessibility and affordability had been severely constrained by banditry. A significant 83.6% of respondents indicated restricted access to local markets as a result of attacks and road blockages by armed groups. An even higher 86.2% reported sharp increases in food prices, with many households unable to purchase basic staples. Consequently, 77.6% of households admitted they could not afford three meals per day, while 74.7% noted that traders reduced supplies due to insecurity. Furthermore, 66.1% of households relied increasingly on food aid or community charity. These findings aligned with Yusufu and Abdurrahman (2021), who documented rising food inflation and reduced affordability in Katsina following repeated market disruptions by bandits.

Interview Response (Trader, Dutsin-ma LGA, Male, 37 years)

> Before the bandits came, I could take my goods freely to the market in Jibia or Katsina town. Now, the roads are too dangerous. Sometimes they block traders, seize everything, or even kill people. Because of that, many of us reduced how often we supply food items. Even when food reaches the market, prices are very high because transport is risky and scarce. A bag of maize that used to sell for ₦18,000 is now ₦40,000 or more. Customers complain, but we also face the

> danger and high cost. Poor families cannot afford enough food anymore, and hunger is spreading. Banditry has made even buying food a struggle (KII, 2025).

FGD Response (Men's Group, Batsari LGA, FGD of 8 participants)

> In the past, we went to markets every week to buy food. But now, most markets are not safe. Bandits attack traders on the way or inside the markets, so people are afraid. When food reaches the community, it is too expensive. A mudu of rice that we used to buy at ₦250 now costs ₦600. Families cannot buy meat or beans regularly. Most households eat once or twice a day, sometimes only porridge. Our children cry of hunger, but we cannot provide more. The little food aid that comes is not enough and sometimes does not reach the poorest families. Food is available in some towns, but for us in the villages, it is difficult to access or afford it (FGD, 2025).

The quantitative data highlighted severe market disruptions (83.6%), high food prices (86.2%), and reduced meal frequency (77.6%). The trader's interview confirmed that transportation risks inflated food prices, aligning with the quantitative evidence. Similarly, the FGD participants emphasised reduced access to safe markets and skyrocketing prices, supporting the data on affordability challenges. Together, the evidence showed that food accessibility in Katsina was not only restricted by physical insecurity but also by economic barriers, leading to widespread reliance on food aid and unsustainable coping strategies.

Table 4: Coping Strategies and Resilience Mechanisms (N = 384)

Coping / Resilience Measure	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Reduced daily meal frequency or portion sizes	309	80.5
Prioritised feeding children over adults	297	77.3
Sold livestock or productive assets to buy food	279	72.6
Women engaged in petty trading, food processing, or informal work	268	69.8
Relied on borrowing, food-sharing networks, or humanitarian aid	285	74.1

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Households relied on multiple coping strategies: 80.5% reduced meals, 77.3% prioritised children, 72.6% sold assets, and 69.8% of women turned to informal work. Reliance on food sharing or aid was reported by 74.1%. Interview (Community Leader, Jibia LGA)

> Our people no longer think long term; they think about tomorrow's food. When bandits attacked last harvest, many families sold goats and chickens for grain money. I remember a farmer who sold his only cow to buy maize and later regretted

> it because he could not pay school fees or rebuild his stores. Women started selling small cooked portions by the roadside and processing groundnuts to get quick cash. Neighbours help each other, if one family has a little, they share; otherwise there is no dignity. We also formed informal credit groups where members lend each other small quantities of grain or money to survive until the next planting. But these loans are risky when there may be no harvest. This mutual aid keeps people alive but wears out community savings and trust. If insecurity continues, we fear these networks will break down and the community will lose the last safety net (KII, 2025).

FGD (Mixed Women & Youth, Dutsin-ma)

> We discussed how we cope and all agreed it is unsustainable. Mothers skip meals so children can eat, and grandmothers eat last. Many households pooled money to buy a 50-kg bag of millet together, shared among three or four families, but it doesn't last. Young men began small trades, carrying goods between safe points, repairing tools, or selling charcoal, but earnings are very small. Some sold small ruminants for immediate cash and later regretted it because they lost breeding stock. Churches, mosques, and neighbours give ad-hoc help; NGOs come sometimes but irregularly. We rely on credit from a few traders, promising to repay after harvest, yet most fear they cannot repay. Women described increased workload and stress: managing scarce food, looking for odd jobs, and caring for children. Everyone agreed that these coping strategies prevent immediate hunger but damage future productive capacity, making recovery harder when peace returns (FGD, 2025)

Quantitative and qualitative data converged: the numerical prevalence of meal reduction (80.5%), child prioritisation (77.3%), asset sales (72.6%), women's informal work (69.8%), and reliance on sharing/aid (74.1%) matched the lived accounts from interviews and FGDs. The community leader's account explained the mechanism by which asset liquidation temporarily secured food but undermined future livelihoods; the FGD highlighted gendered burdens and the fragility of social safety nets. Together, the evidence showed coping strategies were multi-layered but largely short-term, eroding household capital and community resilience.

Discussion of Findings

The first objective sought to assess the impact of banditry on agricultural production and food availability in Batsari, Jibia, and Dutsin-Ma communities. The findings indicate that repeated armed attacks have significantly disrupted farming activities, resulting in abandoned farmlands, destruction of crops, and reduced livestock production. Farmers reported that insecurity prevented them from cultivating their fields during critical planting and harvesting periods, leading to lower food output.

This aligns with studies by Emmanuel, Ishaku, and Awodoyin (2023), who found that banditry in Katsina State forced farmers to abandon large areas of arable land, directly threatening local food production. Similarly, Ladan and Matawalli (2020) reported that agricultural productivity in northern Nigeria declines in areas affected by bandit attacks, highlighting the fragility of subsistence farming in insecure regions. These findings also resonate with Olusegun, James, and Jafaru (2022), who observed that food availability in North-West Nigeria is closely tied to the security of rural agricultural systems. Compared with broader analyses by Rotberg (2004) and Call (2008) on state fragility, the present study provides granular, community-level evidence of how insecurity translates into tangible reductions in food production.

The second objective examined how banditry has influenced food accessibility and affordability for households in the selected communities. The study revealed that banditry has constrained the flow of agricultural produce to local markets, leading to scarcity and elevated food prices. Households reported difficulties accessing staple foods due to market closures, road blockages, and general fear of venturing into insecure areas. These results support the findings of Umar (2025), who documented that armed attacks in northern Nigeria disrupt supply chains, driving up the cost of food and limiting household purchasing power. In addition, Faruk and Abdullahi (2022) highlight that children under five experience heightened vulnerability to malnutrition during periods of reduced food availability, a pattern corroborated in the surveyed communities. This underscores the multidimensional nature of food insecurity, affecting both physical access and economic affordability. Earlier studies, such as those by FAO (2022) and World Bank (2023), provide global or regional overviews of food insecurity, but the current study contextualizes these challenges at the micro-level, demonstrating the specific mechanisms through which insecurity limits household food access.

The third objective aimed to identify and evaluate community coping strategies and resilience mechanisms adopted in response to banditry-induced food insecurity. The findings indicate that households employ diverse strategies, including temporary relocation, reliance on alternative income sources, reduced meal frequency, and participation in informal community protection networks. These coping mechanisms were often necessary for survival, given the inconsistent presence of formal security interventions. This aligns with the work of Dennis, Joseph, Dungs, and Aideloje (2022), who documented similar adaptive strategies among rural communities in Northwest Nigeria facing persistent banditry. Sakka (2022) also observed that livelihood diversification and community-based resource management are common resilience measures in insecure northern Nigerian contexts. While these strategies mitigate the immediate impacts of banditry, they often provide temporary relief and are insufficient to fully counteract the structural drivers of food insecurity, such as weak governance, poverty, and limited access to markets. Compared to global

perspectives, such as those by Iacoella (2020) and George and Adelaja (2022) on conflict-induced food insecurity, the study highlights the localized, community-driven nature of adaptation in Northern Nigeria.

Conclusion

The study established that banditry has profoundly disrupted food security in the selected LGAs of Katsina State. Agricultural production was severely affected, with households abandoning farmlands, reducing cultivation, losing stored crops, and experiencing livestock theft. These disruptions translated into major constraints on food accessibility and affordability, as communities struggled to reach markets and purchase staples. In response, households adopted coping strategies such as reducing meal frequency, prioritising children, selling productive assets, engaging women in informal work, and relying on social networks or aid, though these measures were largely unsustainable. Qualitative narratives from farmers, traders, women, youth, and community leaders corroborated the survey findings, revealing the lived realities of insecurity, market disruption, and eroded social safety nets. Applying Failed State Theory clarified that governance deficits and the state's inability to protect citizens created ungoverned spaces exploited by bandits, turning insecurity into a structural driver of food insecurity. The evidence underscores that sustainable recovery requires integrated interventions that secure production and markets, rebuild assets, and strengthen local social protections.

Recommendations

i. Katsina State Government, in collaboration with traditional authorities in Batsari, Jibia, and Dutsin-ma, should implement secured farming zones during planting and harvest seasons. This would involve coordinated, community-embedded security patrols (security forces + vetted local vigilantes), scheduled safe-passage windows for farmers, and community notice systems (radio/phone) that announce cleared farming days. Secured zones should be complemented with mobile agricultural extension visits and small input packages distributed at multiple safe points to encourage return to cultivation.

ii. The State Ministry of Commerce and local councils should establish protected agricultural trade corridors linking key rural collection points to major markets, enforced through joint civil-security escorts and temporary market safe-havens. These corridors would reduce transport risk premiums, stabilise local supply, and be paired with temporary market price monitoring and targeted subsidies for staple grains to shield the poorest households from immediate inflationary shocks.

iii. Local development partners, women's groups, and the Katsina State Ministry of Agriculture should support the creation of community grain banks and cooperative asset-restocking schemes managed by women's cooperatives and youth committees. These schemes would formalise existing food-sharing practices, provide low-interest emergency credit (in kind or cash), and include livestock restocking vouchers and vocational support for women's petty trades to rebuild household productive capacity aftershocks.

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