

The Effects of Armed Banditry and Survival Strategies of Victims in Sabon Birni Local Government Area, Sokoto State, Nigeria**Suleiman Abdullahi Muhammad**

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muhdasuleiman1@gmail.com**Abstract**

Armed banditry remains a major security challenge in Northern Nigeria. The phenomenon disproportionately affects the northern States and Sokoto State is one of the hotbeds of the armed banditry hosting numerous bandit groups. This paper examines the multidimensional effects of armed banditry among victims and strategies employed by the victims to survive in Sabon Birni LGA, Sokoto State, Nigeria. The study was anchored on the resilience theory. Data were collected from 380 respondents selected through multi-stage cluster sampling technique. Findings from the study revealed that armed bandits have dismantled the agrarian economy, disproportionately affecting women's access to land and markets, while deepening the cycle of poverty that fuels further unrest. Social, economics and health aspects of the communities were adversely affected by the increasing spate of banditry in the State. The study concluded that armed banditry in Sabon Birni LGA constitutes a complex challenge that deepens hardship and further complicates the existing poverty profile of the State. The study recommends that sustainable peace in Sabon Birni LGA requires a strategy that moves beyond military force to include gender-sensitive economic empowerment and community-based psychosocial support.

Keywords: Armed Banditry, Effects, Survival, Zamfara State, Human Security,**INTRODUCTION**

Armed banditry constitutes a significant security challenge in Nigeria, particularly in Sokoto State, where it has adversely impacted the socio-economic fabric of the region. Although, armed banditry may be considered a relatively new phenomenon, Ja'afar (2018) explains that armed banditry in Nigeria predates the country's emergence as a politically sovereign nation, and it dates back to the 1930's. In those days, wayfarers and merchants travelling on the local shallow feeder roads were sometimes ambushed by bandits who basically targeted 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 farm produce. In recent times, the upsurge in bandit activities in the northern region of Nigeria, characterised by violent theft and kidnapping, has renegotiated gender roles thereby creating renewed hardships for communities.

In Zamfara State, armed banditry has not only jeopardized safety but has also profoundly affected the socio-economic fabric of the region. Families face disruption of agricultural activities, loss of livelihoods, and displacement from their homes, which are particularly detrimental to women who often assume the roles of caregivers and providers (Adamu & Ogbodo, 2021). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2019) emphasizes that women in conflict zones frequently suffer disproportionately, facing increased vulnerability to violence and economic instability. In response to these challenges, gender survival strategies have evolved among women in Sokoto and Zamfara States. According to Okwori (2022), women have adapted by engaging in non-traditional forms of employment, utilising socio-cultural networks, and forming cooperative groups to enhance their economic resilience. These adaptive strategies are crucial as they not only ensure the survival of individuals but also contribute to community stability (Bamaiyi, 2021).

The prevalence of armed banditry in Sokoto State, has not only disrupted the socio-economic landscape but has also uniquely affected gender roles and survival strategies within the community. Despite the extensive media coverage and governmental interventions, knowledge on the multidimensional effects of armed banditry in Sokoto State remains sketchy. In most cases, women are the primary victims of insurgency (Amnesty International, 2020). While women continue to adapt to the imposed gender uncertainties, they still encounter significant barriers, including social stigma and limited access to resources, which hinder their full participation in these survival strategies (Musa, 2021). Surviving men are also challenged with how to cope with gender role expectations while being faced with loss of livelihoods. Understanding these dynamics in conflict areas is essential for developing effective interventions (Shaw, 2020). By examining the multidimensional effects of the phenomenon of armed banditry, the research seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the socio-economic dynamics at play and the adaptive strategies employed by the victims of banditry.

Objectives of the Study

- i. To ascertain the effects of armed banditry in Sabon Birni LGA;
- ii. To describe the survival strategies adopted by victims of armed banditry in Sabon Birni LGA.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Armed Banditry

Armed banditry in Nigeria highlights its roots in socio-economic disenfranchisement, political instability, and the proliferation of small arms (Adeleke, 2020; Okeke, 2021). Banditry has been linked to the erosion of traditional livelihoods, particularly in rural areas where agriculture is the primary source of income (Ogunleye, 2019). Gender studies in conflict zones emphasize that women often bear the brunt of violence, facing increased vulnerability and limited access to resources (Mastrorillo, 2016). In Zamfara, the intersection of armed banditry and gender dynamics is particularly pronounced, as women navigate both the immediate threats posed by violence and the long-term effects on their livelihoods (Nwankwo, 2022). While men are frequently the direct targets of killings and kidnappings, women and children bear the brunt of the long-term displacement, economic collapse, and social restructuring that follows. As of 2025, the survival strategies in Zamfara are defined by a mix of extreme vulnerability and forced agency.

In the context of Northwest Nigeria, banditry has evolved from localized cattle rustling into a complex, ransom-driven humanitarian crisis (Ofoma, 2023). Conceptually, it is often framed through the lens of eco-survivalism, a state where the bandits themselves are driven by a desperate struggle for survival within forest environments, leading to increasingly ferocious attacks on rural communities to secure resources (Saminu, 2023). This form of armed banditry is characterised by mass killings, kidnappings for ransom, and the systematic displacement of rural populations, which severely degrades the socio-economic development and per-capita income of affected regions (Udosen & Uwak, 2021). Banditry is an eco-survivalism and state fragility, banditry in Northwest Nigeria is no longer a simple criminal act of theft, it has evolved into a systemic threat driven by eco-survivalism. Bandits in the forest as a predatory space indicated that eco-survivalism describes a cycle where bandits, living in harsh forest conditions, are forced to attack rural communities to sustain their own lives, which in turn triggers a humanitarian crisis for the villagers (Saminu, 2023). Banditry also pushed by the socio-economic erasure, in Zamfara bandits acts as a tax on development. It systematically reduces per-capita income by preventing farmers from accessing their lands and destroying local markets in frontline LGAs like Anka, Shinkafi, and Tsafe (Abdulrasheed, 2024). Banditry is also a failure of border monitoring. The ability of groups to move between Zamfara/Sokoto and the Niger Republic demonstrates how banditry exploits the ungoverned spaces between nations (Udosen &Uwak, 2021).

Migration and Displacement

Displacement is a primary survival tool. In March 2026 alone, single raids in areas like Maradun displaced over 1,000 individuals, with women and children making up over 80% of the displaced population. These families often flee to safer urban centers like Gusau or cross into neighboring states, living in makeshift camps with severe shortages of food and water. Mental Health and the Invisible Crisis: Survivors in Zamfara are dealing with a mental health epidemic. Awake (2025) indicated that, a significant majority of survivors show moderate to severe symptoms of psychological distress like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and anxiety. The breadwinner burden women, now serving as heads of households in conservative cultural settings where they have limited education or prior empowerment, face immense psychological pressure to sustain their families while mourning lost husbands.

Survival

Survival in a conflict zone is defined as the ability of individuals and households to maintain physical safety and basic needs despite localised violence shocks (Stojetz & Brück, 2023). For the youth, survival is inextricably linked to educational and psychological resilience. The proliferation of out-of-school children due to school-targeted kidnappings forces a shift where "survival" includes the preservation of future prospects against the immediate threat of forced labor or recruitment (Ojewale & Saminu, 2024). Household coping strategy. At the household level, survival is often a trade-off. Large households or those with high dependency ratios often adopt coping behaviors that prioritize immediate food security over long-term welfare, such as withdrawing children from school or selling productive assets (Stojetz & Brück, 2023). Survival is often misunderstood as merely "not dying." In academic terms, it is the ability to maintain a trajectory of development despite "local violence shocks (Stojetz & Brück, 2023). Educational Survival: For youth, survival is defined by learning on the edge (Ojewale, 2024). When schools are targeted for ransom-driven kidnappings, the act of going to school becomes a survival risk. Consequently, "survival" for many youths involves the forced abandonment of education, which creates a long-term toll on tomorrow by depleting the region's human capital (Kanu & Saminu, 2024). Psychological Resilience: Survival also has a psycho-social dimension. It involves the capacity of youth and women to process the trauma of displacement and kidnapping. Without community-led psycho-social support, survival remains incomplete, as individuals remain trapped in a state of perpetual trauma (Kanu, 2024).

Survival and Coping Mechanisms

Victims faced with the failure of formal state protection, gender-specific survival strategies have emerged such as, community-driven defense, and communities have turned to self-organised security like, vigilante groups where men and young boys often join local "Yan Sakai" (volunteer guards) or hunter militias. There is also a heavy reliance on traditional spiritual systems and prayer groups to seek protection where the military presence is thin. Perhaps the most complex shift is the changing role of women in the conflict economy where informal breadwinners like widowed or displaced women have become the sole providers, often entering informal markets, though their mobility is limited by the threat of kidnapping on major highways. Abdulrasheed (2025), highlighted a grim survival strategy in Zamfara state where some women have been recruited as arms traffickers. Because they are less likely to be searched at checkpoints than men, they are used to move weapons and intelligence for bandit groups, often out of economic desperation or coercion.

Strategy

Strategy refers to the proactive and reactive measures adopted by victims to mitigate the impacts of banditry. Spatial strategies like migration and displacement are primary strategies adopted by the victims. In early 2020, over 210,000 individuals in the region utilised cross-border migration into the Niger Republic as a strategy to escape violence and seek economic stability (Udosen & Uwak, 2021). Economic Diversification: Strategies also include shifting from high-risk agricultural activities to informal trade or seeking refuge in Internally Displaced Persons camps to access humanitarian aid (Abdulrasheed & Mumuni, 2024). Resilience Strategies: These involve community-led initiatives, such as the development of safe school frameworks and psycho-social support networks, aimed at fostering long-term resilience among youth who have survived kidnapping or displacement (Kanu & Ojewale, 2024). Strategy refers to the deliberate choices made by individuals to manage the risks of banditry. These are categorized into short-term coping and long-term resilience.

Spatial Survival Strategies: The most prominent strategy in Zamfara and Sokoto is mass displacement. This is a spatial strategy where individuals abandon their ancestral lands to seek safety in IDP camps or across the border in the Maradi region of Niger (Udosen & Uwak, 2021). By early 2020, over 210,000 people had utilized this strategy (Udosen & Uwak, 2021). Economic diversification is another strategy, many households have shifted from high-risk farming to

informal, low-yield trades that do not require entering the "danger zones" of the forests (Ofoma, 2023). There is also communal resilience, this involves the formation of local vigilante groups or community-based "safe school" initiatives. These strategies are often born out of a realisation that state security is insufficient, forcing communities to take their survival into their own hands (Ojewale, 2024).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is anchored on the resilience theory. The theory emphasises the capacity of individuals and communities to adapt and thrive despite adversity (Folke, 2016). Resilience theory is a multidisciplinary framework used to understand how individuals, communities, or ecosystems persist, adapt, and transform in the face of significant shocks, stresses, or disturbances. While it originated in ecology, it has become a cornerstone of developmental psychology and disaster management (Walker, 2004). Resilience theory rests on several fundamental premises: Non-linearity: Systems do not move in straight lines, they are subject to thresholds or tipping points where a small change can lead to a massive shift in state (Folke, 2006). Dynamism over stability: Change is seen as a constant and necessary part of a system's life cycle, rather than an anomaly to be avoided. Interconnectivity (Panarchy): Systems are nested across scales (e.g., an individual is nested in a family, which is nested in a community). A shock at one level affects the others (Gunderson & Holling, 2002). Agency and Learning: Particularly in social systems, resilience assumes that actors can learn from past disturbances to build adaptive capacity for future events. Strengths and weaknesses of the theory: Proactive focus, shifts the conversation from vulnerability and deficit to strengths and capacity building" (Masten, 2001). Integration: It successfully bridges the gap between natural sciences (ecology) and social sciences (sociology, psychology), offering a common language for complex problems. Systemic perspective: It encourages looking at the big picture, recognizing that solving a problem in isolation might weaken the resilience of the larger system. Also, the theory has followings weaknesses: Conceptual Ambiguity, because it is used in so many fields, the definition can become fuzzy, leading to difficulties in consistent measurement (Brand & Jax, 2007). Conservative bias: Critics argue that resilience can be used to justify the status quo. If a community is "resilient" enough to survive poverty, it might reduce the perceived need for systemic political or economic reform (Cote & Nightingale, 2012). Burden of responsibility: In social policy, a focus on individual resilience can sometimes shift the blame for failure away from the state and onto the individual for not being tough enough.

METHODOLOGY

Sabon Birni Local Government Area is the study location. The choice of the study location is informed by the frequency of bandit attacks in the area. This study adopted survey descriptive research design. 380 respondents were purposively selected, ensuring representation from both genders and various socio-economic backgrounds. The inclusion criteria for the respondents was either direct contact with the bandits as victims, or people whose relations actually suffered the consequences of banditry. Others are women whose husbands were killed by the bandits and those whose life savings, properties, businesses and houses have been destroyed by the ravaging armed bandits. Furthermore, the study used key informant interviews to elicit responses for eight key informants comprising security personnel, traditional leaders, victims of banditry, and government officials. The quantitative data gathered were analysed using descriptive frequency tables. While the qualitative data were analysed thematically. Themes which emerged from the transcriptions were carefully extracted and used to support the quantitative findings.

FINDINGS

Table 1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Sex	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	290	76.3
Female	90	23.7
Total	380	100.0

Age	Frequency	Percentage (%)
18 – 25	182	47.8
26 – 35	93	24.7
36 – 45	61	16.5
46 and above	44	11.0
Total	380	100.0

Marital Status	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Single	128	33.6
Married	188	49.7
Widow	42	11.0
Divorce	22	5.7
Total	380	100.0

Qualification	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Primary	90	23.8
Secondary	190	50.0
Tertiary	70	18.4
Other forms of education	30	7.8
Total	380	100.0

Occupation	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Students	64	16.8
Farmer	120	31.5
Trader/Business	101	26.7
Civil Servant	65	17.1
Security Operatives	30	7.9
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The data in Table 1 indicates that 76.3% of the study respondents were male, while 23.7% were female. The dominance of males over females could be a result of purdah, which hides females' access to public places. Regarding the age distribution of the respondents, the collected data revealed that 47.8% were within the age of 18-25, while 24.7% were in the age range of 26-35, 16.5% in the age bracket of 36-45 years, and 11.0% fell in the age category of 46 and above. The

dominance of the 18-25 age category could be a result of the energetic nature in the fight against banditry. Regarding marital status, the data showed that 33.6% were single, 49.7% were married, 11.0% were widowed, and 5.7% were divorced. The implication is that married respondents were more present during the research period. Furthermore, the educational qualifications distribution of respondents shows that 23.8% of respondents reported having primary education, 50.0% reported having secondary education, 18.4% reported having tertiary educational qualifications, and 7.8% reported having acquired other forms of education. The implication is that the majority of respondents acquired the basic educational qualifications. Regarding the occupation of respondents, the collected data revealed that 16.8% were students, while the majority, 31.8%, were farmers. Additionally, 26.7% were traders or businesspeople, 17.1% were civil servants, and a small percentage, 7.9%, were security operatives. The data suggests that the majority of the respondents are farmers whose farming activities are disrupted by bandits.

The effects of banditry in Sabon Birni Local Government Area of Sokoto State are presented in this subsection. Data elicited from the respondents on the effects of banditry in the area are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: The General Effects of Banditry in Sabon Birni LGA

Effects	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Killings	208	54.7
Kidnapping	42	11.1
Destruction of properties	130	34.2
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 indicates that 54.7% of the respondent's identified killings as one of the effects of banditry in the study area, while 34.2% of respondents identified kidnapping as one of the effects of banditry in the study area. Also, 11.1% of the respondents alluded to the destruction of properties as the effect of banditry. The above data imply that the majority of the respondents are farmers who they suffered killings and their farming activities have been destroyed by the bandits. This clearly shows that the majority of people in the study location had experienced bandits' attacks in their communities. In-depth interviews also confirmed this, as evident from the statement of a traditional ruler who said that:

Bandits changed from attacking people on bush paths to attacking people on the highways with sophisticated weapons and increasing violence. We started experiencing this kind of banditry from 2018 to date. Years ago, bandits attacked people on bush paths, but today they attack on the highways, sometimes they even attack our homes, and the authorities are just watching. It is we, the vigilantes, who have been trying to control this problem (A Traditional ruler 15/01/2025).

A prominent community member stated that,

They usually attack people, along bush paths with clubs or bows and arrows, but the weapons are more sophisticated today. Banditry is more rampant now than 25 years ago. The sophisticated weapons they use today are from soldiers who fought civil wars in Chad and Niger (Community member 15/01/2025).

A Vigilante leader said,

In those days, it was fair, but today it is terrible. Attacks used to be on bush paths or the stealing of cattle. In those days, when the bandits saw people, they themselves were afraid, but today, they are not afraid. It is only when they see us (vigilantes) that they are afraid. The bandits now attack in broad daylight, even on the highways (Vigilante 16/01/2025).

A member of the key informants confirmed that bandits' activities inflicted so much damage, such as killings, destruction of farm produce, cattle rustling, and kidnapping for ransom. Thus, the effects of banditry in Sabon Birni Local Government Area cut across human and material resources. From the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, finding implies that people experienced multifaceted forms of damage from the activities of bandits in the study location.

Table 3: Negative Effects of Bandits on Farming Activities in Sabon Birni LGA

Negative Effects	Frequency	Percentage
Destruction of farm produce	130	34.2
Cattle rustling	143	37.6
Killing of farmers	50	13.2
Kidnapping for ransom	57	15.0
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The data presented in Table 3 illustrate the effects of bandits' activities on farming activities in the study area. The majority, 37.6% noted that cattle rustling was the major effect, given the number of cattle rustled by the bandits. Similarly, 34.2% of the respondents pointed out that farm produce has been affected by the activities of bandits, while 13.2% of respondents indicated that farmers have suffered killings in the study area. In addition, 15.0% of the respondents reported that people were kidnapped for ransom as a result of banditry in the area. These clearly show that the activities

carried out by bandits have inflicted so many effects on farming communities in Sabon Birni Local Government Area of Sokoto State. One of the interviewees, a youth leader, affirmed thus:

Killings of farmers and kidnapping for ransom have become a lucrative business for bandits. Farmers and their families are no longer moving freely; farming and the training of animals have become a problem in our society today. We farm, and they would not allow us to harvest our crops. We are looking at them destroying our farm produce; rearing of animals is no longer on our side. If you are training cows as if you are selling illegal goods in the market, you will be hunting day by day till they ensure that they have carted away cows (Youth leader 17/01/2025).

Analysis of evidence provided in both quantitative and qualitative data shows that the intensity of bandits in Sabon Birni Local Government Area has varied in various capacities that have restrained peaceful living in the area. This finding implies that communities across the 11 council wards of Sabon Birni Local Government have suffered different types of intense banditry, with significant effects including killings, kidnapping, destruction of farm produce, cattle rustling and displacement of people in the affected area.

Table 4: Social Effects of Banditry in Sabon Birni LGA

Effects	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Loss of lives	90	23.6
Abduction	60	15.7
Destruction of properties	80	21.0
Cattle rustling	95	25.0
Displacement	55	14.7
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

As an addendum to the data in Table 4, respondents' views were sought on the specific effects of banditry faced by the farmers. The data indicates that 23.6% of the respondent's suffered loss of life. The frequent grievous attacks had led to the loss of several lives in the communities. Also, 15.7% of the respondents were affected by the abduction of fellow farmers in the study area. Additionally, 21.0% of respondents said destruction of properties, people living in the affected area have suffered burning and destructions of their properties by the bandits, furthermore, 25.0% of the respondents said cattle rustling, people in the study area have suffered cattle rustling by the bandits, 14.7% of the respondent said displacement, people were displaced from their various home. The above data collection implies that the majority view the study area as a place where lives are lost. This clearly shows that the majority of the respondents were of the view that persistent attacks by bandits on farming communities resulted in massive loss of lives, cattle

rustling, abductions and destruction of properties. These were also confirmed by a key informant during the interview with one farmer, who happened to be the victim of bandits, who disclosed that:

We have seen many consequences of bandits in this our community, bandits carted away with my two hundred and fifteen (215) cows and is not quiet long they kidnapped my brother and his wife along with seven people from this community, they collected 10 million and three motorcycles worth of 5million before they release them for us, and the issues is not only here is taken place all over Sabon Birni LGA this is what we have been experiencing from the beginning till date (One victim from Gatawa 5/02/2025).

The divergent findings show that the rate of bandit attacks is high in Sabon Birni Local Government. The occurrences of bandit attacks in the area have been disturbing all aspects of life, ranging from the loss of lives, abduction, and destruction of properties, cattle rustling and overall displacement. The findings concluded that bandits have had a significant impact on the Sabon Birni Local Government Area.

Table 5: Economic Effects of Bandits in Sabon Birni LGA

Economic effects	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Cash crop farming	135	35.7
Livestock rearing	140	36.8
Irrigation farming	83	21.8
Raining/dry season farming	22	5.7
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The data shows in the Table 5 indicated that 35.7% of the respondents said cash crop farming such as, Tomato, Pepper, Onions and Watermelon were affected by the activities of bandits, while 36.8% of the respondents said livestock farming, and 21.8% of the respondents said irrigation farming, the practices in the study area have stopped, also 5.7% of the respondents said raining/dry season farming were affected by the activities of banditry where farmers were fear of being kidnaped. The above data collection suggests that the majority indicated they are farmers involved in livestock farming. These clearly showed that all farming activities in the study location have been affected by the bandits. The table and information gathered from the key informant were on the same page, when interviewed with one Farmer who said:

You could have seen the level of destruction of farm produce and killings of farmers in our community for yourself. If you had come at the times the incidents occurred, you would have sympathized with the farmers of this community, who have totally ruined this

community, causing hunger and unnecessary sickness in our women and children (A farmer from Lanjegu town, 8/02/2025).

The analysis of quantitative data and in-depth interview shows that farming and farmers have serious challenges owing to the persistence of bandits attacks in Sabon Birni Local Government Area, as stated by the interviewee that cash crops farming is no longer profitable because even though you f to get vehicle that will take the goods to the market is a problem, drivers are afraid of being kidnapped, he further stressed that in terms of irrigational farming fuel is not easy to afford, therefore the whole farming activities is affected by the activities of banditry in Sabon Birni Local Government Area of Sokoto State.

Table 6: Effects of Bandits on the Health of farmers

Health effects	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Physical injuries	45	11.8
Illness	95	25.0
Depression	55	14.6
Hunger	120	31.5
Trauma	65	17.10
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The data in the Table 6 results shows that 11.8% of the respondents said women and children have suffered physical injuries caused by the activities of bandits in the study area, while 25.0% of the respondents said, women and children have been ill due to the frequent attacks of bandits in the study location, and 14.6% of the respondents indicated that women and children have been depression as a result of bandits attacks, also 31.5% of the respondents said women and children have suffered during harvest time, the cost of transportation, and the requirement that farmers shows that the effects of banditry in the study location have generated physical injuries, illness, depression, hunger and trauma on women and children. The above data collection suggests that the majority of those affected are women who experienced hunger in the study area. These clearly show that the effects of banditry have done so much damage to women and children in the study location. This is further confirmed by the interviewee, who is a health worker at the community health center.

Our women and children are catching sickness every day, ranging from malaria, physical injuries while running for their lives, depression and trauma due to the frequent attacks of bandits. Moreover, all these sicknesses are caused by hunger and an unclean environment.

You will see 20 people in one classroom in government primary schools; no proper hygiene is considered in the environment (Health worker, 9/02/2025).

Quantitative data and in-depth interviews were pertinent to note that activities of bandits have affected the health of women and children in Sabon Birni Local Government Area. The findings drawn are the conclusions from the respondents and interviewees, as they were cross-validated and confirmed during the analysis. It is also confirmed through the researcher's observations during the fieldwork.

Table 7: Coping Strategies Adopted After Bandit Attacks in Sabon Birni LGA

Coping strategies	Frequency	Percentages (%)
Remain in the current house	50	13.5
Accommodated by relatives	45	11.8
Move to the Govt facilities	80	21.0
Moved to the IDPs Camp	120	31.4
Migrated to Neighbouring Community	85	22.3
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The information on Table 7 indicates how the victims of banditry in the affected area were sheltered and accommodated after the attacks by bandits. 13.5% of respondents said that people remain in their houses after bandits' attacks. In comparison, 11.8% of respondents said people were accommodated by their relatives after bandits' attacks, also 21.0% of respondents said victims were moved to the Government facilities such as primary and secondary schools in the affected area, furthermore 31.4%; of respondents said victims were settled in the IDP Camp in Sabon Birni town, and 22.3% of respondents said victims were migrated to the neighbouring communities for their safety. The above data collection implies that the majority are internally displaced persons who were found in the IDP camp. This revealed that the majority of the affected people were moved to the IDP camp and neighbouring communities for their safety. Also gathered from the key informant interview, when asked how they cope, a key informant who is a member of the Vigilante in Lanjegu council ward said:

Because we were not prepared during the previous attack, in which we suffered losses of lives and destruction of farm produce, we now evacuated our families and our belongings to live with relatives/ friends in other neighbouring communities. If you look around, life has been easy for all of us here in this community (A community member and also a member of the vigilante group, 10/02/2025).

Also, a community leader in the Gatawa council ward of Sabon Birni LGA disclosed that:

The government converted a primary school into an IDP camp, and the whole affected community moved and stayed for a very long time before some unwanted activities started happening in the camp. We returned to our various villages, engaging in Vigilante work (Yan banga, 10/02/2025).

The study cross-validated the findings with data collected from the questionnaire, in-depth interviews, and observations on coping strategies for the victims in the affected areas after bandits' attacks in Sabon Birni Local Government Area. The findings indicated that most of the people affected by the bandits' attacks fled to IDP camps, Government facilities such as primary and secondary schools, relatives, neighbouring communities and other areas considered to be safe. At the same time, some remained in their current houses. In support of the findings through the observations, a researcher has to look around the scene and believe the eyewitness of the coping strategies adopted after the attacks in terms of accommodations by the victims of banditry in the study location.

Table 8: The Survival Strategies after Bandits' Attacks

Coping Strategies	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Labour	155	40.7
Family/friends support	40	10.4
NGOs	55	14.4
Govt social welfare	80	21.0
Begging	50	13.5
Total	380	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

The data displayed in Table 8 indicated that 40.7% of the respondents reported being fed through labour. In comparison, 10.4% of respondents reported that their families and friends provided them with food, 14.4% of respondents stated that they received assistance from NGOs, and 21.0% of respondents indicated that the Government's social welfare programs supported them. Furthermore, 13.5% of respondents were forced to beg to feed themselves. The above data collection suggests that the majority are low-income individuals who labour to support their families in the study area. It was also confirmed from the interviewee, who happened to be the community leader, who said that:

Many of us ran to relatives elsewhere for help, and God also used some organisations to bring relief assistance to our communities. These organisations stood by us, and that has

really helped us to get back on our feet. Another community member in the same area disclosed that we received food and little financial support from the senator representing our zone (Community leader 11/02/2025).

Both quantitative and qualitative data show that the victims of banditry in the study locations coped with their feeding with the support of families, friends, the Government and non-governmental organisations. However, the majority were fed through hard labour. The findings were confirmed from the analysis of numeric data and in-depth interviews.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings regarding the effects of armed banditry in the study area highlighted several areas of impact of banditry on the people. On farming activities, the findings revealed an overwhelming majority of victims of banditry suffered high loss of lives and destruction of their properties within the period being investigated. On the economic effects, the majority of the victims of banditry in the study location suffered massive economic decline, and all their farms' production for economic activities has been hampered. Some of them lost everything they had worked for in their entire existence, including houses, stores for raw materials, animals, unharvested crops, and other valuable properties destroyed due to the bandits' attacks in the study location within the period being studied. The majority of respondents estimated the monetary value of their economic losses in billions of naira, between livestock theft and payments of ransom for kidnaped persons in Sabon Birni Local Government Area, within the period being investigated. Moreover, on the social effects of banditry in the study location, findings revealed that the majority of households affected in the study location have suffered displacement and separation of family members. These findings showed that the majority in the area of study experienced diverse effects of bandits, including economic decline, loss of lives and property, physical and health implications, psychological effects, and impacts on food security during the period being studied.

The findings are also corroborated by other studies conducted by Abdullahi (2023), Chinwokwu and Arop (2022), and the World Food Programme (2020). They found that bandit attacks have left many people with significant socioeconomic consequences. They further found that the activities of banditry affected people, ranging from killings, destruction of properties, and displacement of communities. According to these scholars, the perpetrators of banditry in the communities are often unopposed and present in the absence of any forms of resistance. The growing threat is claiming the lives of individuals and hundreds of others, rendering them homeless. At the same

time, the issues of food security, as well as humanitarian crises, further make life unbearable for many people in the affected areas.

The second objective of the study was to describe the coping strategies adopted by the victims after bandits' attack in the Sabon Birni Local Government Area. Findings from this objective revealed that victims coped with accommodation challenges because they live with relatives and family members in different communities. Also, a large number of affected people moved to IDP camps in various government facilities like primary schools and the Local Government Secretariat, using them for shelter. In contrast, a few people remain in their current houses, praying for God's intervention. Similarly, victims could cope with feeding challenges because they received long-term support from relatives in other communities, charity organisations, the Government, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), also some displaced persons laboured to provide food for themselves. Additionally, majority of children in the study location stopped attending school to reduce the risk of being attacked on the way or at school. To cope with their primary economic activity, which is farming, in the face of bandits' attacks, the majority of the victims stopped going too far into the bush for farming activities to avoid possible danger on the way or on the farm. To cope with security challenges, the affected communities have taken measures to secure their families and defend their communities against bandits' invasion by forming vigilante groups, carrying out patrols' day and night within the various communities to enable them to sight invaders from a far distance.

This finding aligns with a study conducted by Ajiboye (2019) in social psychology, which found that individuals who are forced to live in a precarious condition that puts their lives at recurrent risk or danger develop strategies to minimise the risk to their lives. This finding explains why the victims of banditry have evolved diverse coping strategies in the study location to enable them to cope with the challenges of their existence in the face of banditry.

CONCLUSION

Armed banditry in Sabon Birni LGA presents a complex challenge that exacerbates socioeconomic, and health conditions of the victims. Future research should explore the varying effects of the phenomenon on gender and how this disproportionately alters gender roles in the contemporary society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Border security and monitoring: Strengthen border management between Sokoto and the Niger Republic to protect displaced persons and curb the movement of illicit arms.
- ii. Economic empowerment: Provide targeted agricultural grants and vocational training for women in IDP camps to rebuild the rural economy.

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