

The Impact of Banditry, Kidnapping and Cost of Fuel on Food Security in Nigeria

Garpiya Umar

Department of Political Science
Federal University of Education, Zaria

Corresponding author: umargarpiyapeace@yahoo.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-9836-7731>

Abstract

Food security continues to be a critical issue in Nigeria, complicated by various challenges such as banditry, kidnapping, and rising fuel costs. This paper employs the Theory of Political Economy as a framework to understand the economic burden that households face due to increased food prices. These price hikes result from disrupted agricultural activities caused by banditry, kidnapping, and high fuel costs. Through a review of relevant literature and recent secondary data, this paper explores the impact of these factors on agricultural productivity and food availability, providing an analysis of the current state of food security in Nigeria. The Nigerian government has made significant efforts to reduce poverty, hunger, and food insecurity among its growing population. One notable initiative is the National Policy on Food and Nutrition, which aims to enhance Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) across various sectors and social groups. This policy has faced criticism for failing to bring about the necessary improvements in nutrition. Ongoing issues of banditry and kidnapping create insecurity, disrupting agricultural activities and preventing farmers from working their fields or safely transporting their goods. This disruption leads to decreased agricultural output and increased food prices. In addition, high fuel prices resulting from the removal of fuel subsidies in 2023 directly impact the cost of agricultural production and food transportation, making food less affordable for the population.

Keywords: Food Security, Food Insecurity, Kidnappings, Cost of Fuel

Introduction

Food security, defined by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) as the availability, access, and utilization of sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life, is a critical issue globally, and particularly in Nigeria (FAO, 2020). 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations in September 2015, this agenda includes 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with Goal focusing specifically on ending hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture. Nigeria, with its vast agricultural potential, should be a breadbasket for the African continent. However, the country faces significant challenges that threaten its food security, including banditry, kidnapping, and rising fuel costs. These challenges disrupt agricultural activities, reduce food production, and increase food prices, thereby compromising food security.

Heady and Ecker (2012) reported that there are about 250 definitions and 450 indicators of food security but the most widely accepted definition of “food security” is the one from FAO which evolved after the 1996 World Food Summit which states that “food security exists when 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” (FAO, 1996). X-raying the definition reveals the multi-dimensional nature of the food security concept. Food sufficiency focuses on the availability and adequate quantities of food of appropriate quality; physical and economic access focuses on individuals’ access to sufficient food; the security aspect relates to food utilization by the body, food safety, risks involved among other factors while food stability relates to time-bound aspect of food availability, access and utilization (Ike et al. 2015).

Nigeria’s Intervention Programs in Achieving Food and Nutrition Security

Government in Nigeria is not relenting in its efforts towards reducing abject poverty, hunger and food insecurity among its geometric population, where children (infants and adolescents) and women are the most affected. Some policies and programs that are nutrition-based with workable frameworks to curb food insecurity and all sorts of malnutrition have been developed. Some of them have been put to use, while some are yet to yield the results needed. The Nigerian government has made several efforts to return agriculture to its enviable position in the Nigerian economy. One of the policies and strategies enacted by the Nigerian government aimed at reducing the level of food and nutrition insecurity is mentioned below (IITA, 2017; Olomola, 2017; Otekunrin et al., 2019).

National Policy on Food and Nutrition (NPFN)

The National Committee on Food and Nutrition of the National Planning Commission developed this document in 2002. The document focuses on Food and Nutrition Security (FNS) in different sectors and among different classes of society (IITA, 2017; Olomola, 2017; Otekunrin et al. 2019). The policy did not yield needed improvement in nutrition as reported by the Ministry of Budget and National Planning, and this occasioned its revision in 2016 to better performance (FGN, 2016; Olomola, 2017; Otekunrin et al., 2019).

Theoretical Framework

For this research work, a theory would be used to further buttress why banditry, kidnapping and the cost of fuel will hurt food security. Here, the research adopted the Political Economy theory, and this theory examines how political forces influence economic policies and outcomes, and how economic realities shape political power and structures. It considers the interplay between economics, law, and politics, and how institutions develop in different social and political contexts.

“Political” derives from the Greek term (polos) for the city-state, the fundamental unit of political organization in the classical period. Political economy therefore, originated in the management of the family and political households. Writing fifteen years before Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, Steuart (1967: 2) made the connection by noting that “What economy is in a family, political economy is in a state.” It is also important to note that from the very beginning, political economy combined a sense of the descriptive and the prescriptive. As communication scholar Dallas Smythe describes it driving force or “meta-political economy,” it is “the body of practice and theory offered as advice by counsellors to the leaders of social organizations of varying degrees of complexity at various times and places” (Smythe, December 4, 1991). This is in keeping with the Dictionary of Economic Terms, which defined the original intent of political

economy as a “branch of statecraft,” but which is now “regarded as a study in which moral judgments are made on particular issues” (Gilpin, 1977).

Other definitions concentrate on how the development of economics narrowed what was originally a broadly based discipline. As early as 1913, a standard economic dictionary noted that “although the name political economy is still preserved, the science, as now understood, is not strictly political: i.e., it is not confined to relations between the government and the governed, but deals primarily with the industrial activities of individual men” (Palgrave, 1913). Similarly, in 1948, the Dictionary of Modern Economics defined political economy as “the theory and practice of economic affairs” and noted that: Originally, the term applied to broad problems of real cost, surplus, and distribution. These questions were viewed as matters of social as well as individual concerns. ... With the introduction of utility concepts in the late nineteenth century, the emphasis shifted to changes in market values and questions of equilibrium of the individual firm. Such problems no longer required a broad social outlook, and there was no need to stress the political. (Horton, 1948)

At the same time, there is evidence that the transition from political economy to economics was not inevitable. This same 1948 volume notes the beginnings of a revival of interest in a more broadly defined political economy. It senses that “the emphasis is once again returning to political economy” with the “recent rise of state concern for public welfare.” This was echoed later on in a standard book on economic terms (Eatwell, Milgate, and Newman, 1987) for public welfare.” This was echoed later on in a standard book on economic terms (Eatwell, Milgate, and Newman, 1987: 906) for public welfare.” This was echoed later on in a standard book on economic terms (Eatwell, Milgate, and Newman, 1987) for public welfare.” This was echoed later on in a standard book on economic terms (Eatwell, Milgate, and Newman, 1987)

Political Economy Theory explores the relationships between individuals, societies, and economic structures, focusing on how political institutions, the political environment, and economic systems influence each other (Gilpin, 2001). Using Political Economy Theory, the research will analyze statistical data on agricultural production, food prices, and incidents of banditry and kidnapping. To examine policy documents and government reports on measures taken to address these issues.

Interplay of Security and Economy

Banditry and Kidnapping: These criminal activities create insecurity that disrupts agricultural activities. Farmers are unable to work their fields or transport their goods safely, leading to reduced agricultural output and increased food prices (Adefemi et al., 2019).

Fuel Costs: High fuel prices directly affect the cost of agricultural production and food transportation. This leads to higher food prices, making food less affordable for the population (Okunlola, 2020).

Institutional and Policy Responses: The theory helps analyze how Nigerian institutions respond to these challenges and the effectiveness of policies aimed at combating banditry and kidnapping, as well as managing fuel prices (Onuoha, 2018). It also examines how political interests and economic policies regarding fuel pricing impact food security (Afolabi, 2021).

Economic Impact on Households: Political Economy Theory provides a framework for understanding the economic burden on households caused by increased food prices due to

disrupted agricultural activities and high fuel costs (Adeoye & Ibitoye, 2019). It explores how these economic pressures affect food accessibility and affordability, contributing to food insecurity.

Broader Societal Implications: The theory considers the broader societal impacts, including how insecurity and high costs of living can lead to further social instability, creating a cycle that perpetuates food insecurity (Obi, 2020). It helps assess the long-term impacts of these issues on Nigeria's development and socio-economic stability. By employing Political Economy Theory, it will provide an analysis of how banditry, kidnapping, and fuel costs intersect to impact food security in Nigeria, highlighting the intricate connections between political decisions, economic conditions, and social outcomes.

Food security

Nigeria, according to World Data Lab (6th May 2020), has an estimated population of 205,323,520 persons and has 102,407,327 people living in extreme poverty (50% of the total population) (World Data Lab, 2020). Nigeria is unarguably the most populous nation in Africa and is ranked number 7 globally with an estimated growth rate of 2.43 per cent per annum and a high dependency ratio of 88 per cent. According to Worldometer, Nigeria's population is equivalent to 2.64% of the total world population, and it is projected to reach 401million by 2050 (NPC/NBC, 2018; Otekunrin et al., 2019; Worldometer, 2020; World Data Lab, 2020). In 2014, Nigeria, the 10th largest crude oil producer in the world, achieved the status of a middle-income country. In spite of Nigeria's oil wealth, 50% of Nigerians' total population lives in extreme poverty within the poverty threshold of \$1.90 per day (World Data Lab, 6th May, 2020). Food insecurity in Nigeria is currently at an alarming rate, calling for urgent and immediate intervention.

Food security requires adequate access to basic and nutritious food that promotes wellbeing and protection of every member of the society from malnutrition, hunger and starvation. In the development circle, endemic famine/drought, sudden pest attack on agricultural produce and poor yield from farmlands are threats to food security (Adebakin, 2012). Physical availability as well as economic and physical access to food, its utilization and stability are dimensions of food security (FAO, 2012).

On the other hand, food insecurity may be referred to as the absence of one or more of these components. Food insecurity is conventionally classified into two categories: chronic and transitory, while seasonal food insecurity falls in between the two (FAO, 2008; Jones et al. 2013). "Food security is a situation that exists when 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"(FAO 2002).

This new emphasis on consumption, the demand side and the issues of access by vulnerable people to food, is most closely identified with the seminal study by Amartya Sen. Eschewing the use of the concept of food security, he focuses on the entitlements of individuals and households. The international community has accepted these increasingly broad statements of common goals and implied responsibilities. But its practical response has been to focus on narrower, simpler objectives around which to organize international and national public action. The declared

primary objective in international development policy discourse is increasingly the reduction and elimination of poverty.

The 1996 WFS exemplified this direction of policy by making the primary objective of international action on food security halving of the number of hungry or undernourished people by 2015. Essentially, food security can be described as a phenomenon relating to individuals. It is the nutritional status of the individual household member that is the ultimate focus, and the risk of that adequate status not being achieved or becoming undermined. In the case of this journal article is not about the nutritional aspect of food security but the access to the food itself as a result of Banditry, Kidnap and couple with the high cost of fuel which makes the food inaccessible due to cost and shortage as a result of fuel cost, inability for farmers to go to their farms for fear of kidnap for ransoms or payment of ransom before farming. These three intertwined factors make food security worse than it was before.

A food-insecure situation is said to exist when the demand side is not balanced with the supply side (Egbuna, 2001). The situation of banditry, kidnapping and fuel cost helps in making the supply of food almost impossible. Food insecurity exists when everyone at all times cannot afford safe and nutritious food to preserve a healthy and active life (World Food Summit, 1996; FAO, 2006).

Banditry and Kidnapping

Banditry and kidnapping have become rampant in many parts of Nigeria, particularly in the northern regions, which are crucial for agricultural production. According to the International Crisis Group (2020), these criminal activities have led to the displacement of farmers, loss of livestock, and destruction of crops. The fear of attacks has forced many farmers to abandon their farms, leading to a decline in agricultural output. Banditry often involves armed groups that raid villages, steal livestock, and destroy farmlands, while kidnapping for ransom disrupts the socioeconomic activities in rural communities.

The National Bureau of Statistics (2021) reports that, agricultural productivity in the northern region has decreased by 20% due to these insecurities. This decline directly impacts food availability and prices across the country, exacerbating the food security crisis. Additionally, the psychological impact of living under constant threat cannot be underestimated, as it reduces the willingness of farmers to engage in agricultural activities.

According to Hobsbawm (1969), banditry often emerges in societies with stark inequalities, where marginalized groups turn to crime as a form of social protest. While Kertzer (2020) notes that, banditry can sometimes be romanticized in local folklore, portraying bandits as folk heroes who challenge corrupt authorities. In the words of Bayart 2009, he explains that in many African countries, banditry is exacerbated by weak state institutions and the availability of small arms, making it a significant security concern.

Kidnapping is the unlawful abduction or detention of a person against their will, often to extract a ransom, force compliance, or achieve some other objective. This criminal act can involve various motivations, including financial gain, political leverage, or personal vendettas. On the other hand, according to the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation), kidnapping is defined as the illegal taking of a person, typically to demand a ransom or to achieve a specific goal (FBI, 2020).

This definition aligns with most legal interpretations, emphasizing the element of unlawful confinement or transportation.

Motives and Types

Kidnappings can be classified into different types based on their motives:

- i. **Ransom Kidnapping:** This type involves abducting an individual to demand money or valuable items from the victim's family or associates. This is one of the most common forms and is often driven by financial incentives.
- ii. **Political Kidnapping:** Perpetrated by political groups or terrorists, this type aims to leverage the captive for political gains, such as the release of prisoners, the broadcast of political messages, or to exert pressure on governments (Wilkinson, 2021).
- iii. **Parental Kidnapping:** This occurs in custody disputes where one parent abducts their child to gain custody or to relocate without legal consent (American Bar Association, 2017).
- iv. **Express Kidnapping:** A form of abduction where the victim is held for a short period, typically until a small ransom is paid. This type is prevalent in certain countries and involves quick, opportunistic crimes (Thomson Reuters, 2019).

Psychological and Social Impact

The impact of kidnapping extends beyond the immediate physical harm. Victims often experience long-term psychological trauma, including post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and depression. The families of the victims also suffer from prolonged stress and uncertainty during and after the abduction incident (Office for Victims of Crime, 2021). Kidnapping is a complex and multifaceted crime with severe implications for individuals and society. Understanding its various forms, motivations, and impacts can aid in developing effective strategies for prevention and response, ensuring better safety and justice for potential victims.

Costs of Fuel

The cost of fuel in Nigeria has seen significant increases in recent years, primarily due to the government's policy changes and global oil price fluctuations. Fuel is critical for powering farm machinery, irrigation systems, and transporting goods to markets. According to the Central Bank of Nigeria (2021), the cost of diesel, which is predominantly used in farming operations, has risen by over 40% in the past year. This increase in fuel prices has led to higher operational costs for farmers, which are often transferred to consumers in the form of increased food prices.

Fuel costs also affect the affordability and availability of transportation, making it difficult to move agricultural produce from rural areas to urban markets. This results in food wastage and loss, further aggravating the food security situation. The World Bank (2022) has highlighted that increased transportation costs due to high fuel prices have led to a 15% rise in food prices in Nigeria, contributing to higher levels of food insecurity.

Impact on Food Security

The combined effect of banditry, kidnapping, and rising fuel costs has led to a significant reduction in food production and availability in Nigeria. The FAO (2021) reports that the country is facing a severe food security crisis, with an estimated 9.2 million people in need of food

assistance. This situation is particularly dire in the northeastern region, where insurgency and banditry are most prevalent.

The decrease in agricultural productivity due to insecurity and high operational costs has led to increased food prices, making it difficult for many Nigerians to afford basic food items. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2022), food inflation in Nigeria stood at 20.3%, one of the highest in the world. This high rate of food inflation disproportionately affects low-income households, which spend a significant portion of their income on food.

Conclusion

Food security in Nigeria is under significant threat from banditry, kidnapping, and rising fuel costs. These challenges disrupt agricultural activities, reduce food production, and increase food prices, leading to higher levels of food insecurity. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive strategies that enhance security, reduce operational costs for farmers, and improve infrastructure and agricultural practices. By implementing these solutions, Nigeria can work towards achieving food security and ensuring that all its citizens have access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food.

Recommendations

Addressing food security in Nigeria requires a multifaceted approach that tackles the root causes of insecurity and high operational costs. Some panaceas include:

- i. **Enhanced Security Measures:** Strengthening security in rural areas through increased information on security gathering, civil-security partnership, and security presence can help protect farmers and their livelihoods. Encouraging the communities to establish community-based security initiatives and early warning systems can also mitigate the impact of banditry and kidnapping.
- ii. **Subsidizing Fuel Costs:** Implementing policies to subsidize fuel costs for agricultural purposes can reduce the financial burden on farmers. This could involve targeted subsidies for diesel and other fuels used in farming operations. Or if possible, make the fuel accessible at all times and deregulate.
- iii. **Infrastructure Development:** Investing in rural infrastructure, such as roads and storage facilities, can improve the transportation and preservation of agricultural produce, reducing food wastage and ensuring that food reaches markets efficiently.
- iv. **Support for Agricultural Practices:** For the past eight or so years, farmers have been battling high costs of fertilizers, herbicides and even tractors for farming their farms, so, providing farmers with access to modern farming techniques, improved seeds, and irrigation systems can enhance productivity. Extension services that offer training and support can help farmers adopt more resilient and efficient farming practices.
- v. **Economic Diversification:** Encouraging economic diversification in rural areas by putting in all the necessary measures like supporting these communities that are faced with the action of banditry, kidnap and find it hard to transport their product due to high cost of transportation to cushion the effects of these diversity to reduce dependence on agriculture and provide alternative livelihoods. This can help communities become more resilient to shocks and reduce the impact of insecurity on food production.

References

- Adebakin MA (2012). National security challenges and sustainable economic development: Evidence from Nigeria. *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences* 2012;1(1):1-30. 30.
- Adefemi, O. S., Lawal, T. A., & Ogunleye, I. O. (2019). Impact of insecurity on agricultural development in Nigeria. *Journal of Agricultural Studies*, 7(3), 56-72.
- Adeoye, A. O., & Ibitoye, A. O. (2019). Economic implications of insecurity on the food sector in Nigeria. *African Journal of Economic Policy*, 26(1), 87-105.
- Afolabi, A. (2021). Political economy of fuel subsidy in Nigeria. *Energy Policy Journal*, 45(2), 123-134.
- American Bar Association. (2017). Parental Kidnapping: Prevention and Remedies. Retrieved from <https://www.americanbar.org>
- Bayart, J.-F. (2009). *The State in Africa: The Politics of the Belly*. Polity.
- Central Bank of Nigeria. (2021). Annual Report.
- Egbuna EN (2001). Food security in Nigeria: The challenges and way forward. (Paper presented at the Annual conference of The Nigerian Economic Society. Theme: Natural Resource use, the Environment and Sustainable Development;307- 325.
- FAO (2006). Food security. Policy Brief. 2; 1-4.
- FAO. (2020). *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World*.
- FAO. (2021). *Nigeria at a Glance*.
- FBI (2020). Kidnapping and Missing Persons. <https://www.fbi.gov>
- FOA (2008). An introduction to the basic concepts of food security. Food Security Information www.fao.org/docrep/013/al936e/al936e00.pdf
- Gilpin, R. (1977). *Economic Interdependence and National Security in Historical Perspective*", Princeton University Press
- Gilpin, R. (2001). *Global Political Economy: Understanding the International Economic Order*. Princeton University Press.
- Headey, D. and Ecker, O (2012). "Improving the measurement of food security" (No. 01225). IFPRI Discussion Paper 01225 <http://www.ifpri.org/publication/improvingmeasurement-food-sec>
- Hobsbawm, E. J. (1969). *Bandits*. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- IITA (2017). "Synthesis Report of the Nigeria Zero Hunger Strategic Review". International Institute of Tropical Agriculture.
- Ike, C.U., Jacobs, P and Kelly, C (2015). Towards comprehensive food security measures: Comparing key indicators. *Africa Insight*, 44(3), 91-111.
- International Crisis Group. (2020). *Stemming Nigeria's Massive Farmer-Herder Conflict*.
- Kertzer, D. I. (2020). *Rebels with a Cause: The Lives and Times of Notorious Bandits*. Princeton University Press.
- National Bureau of Statistics. (2021). Annual Agricultural Survey.
- National Bureau of Statistics. (2022). Consumer Price Index Report.
- Obi, C. I. (2020). Insecurity and economic development in Nigeria. *Security Studies Review*, 31(4), 45-60.
- Office for Victims of Crime. (2021). The Impact of Kidnapping. <https://www.ovc.gov>](<https://www.ovc.gov>
- Okunlola, O. O. (2020). The impact of fuel prices on agricultural productivity in Nigeria. *Journal of Energy Economics*, 52(3), 213-229.

- Olomola, A.S. (2017). Ending rural hunger in Nigeria: Mapping needs and actions for food and nutrition security. Final research report submitted to the Brookings Institution, Washington D. C., USA.
- Olomola, A.S., and Nwafor, M. (2018). Nigeria agricultural sector performance review: A background report for Nigeria, Agriculture Joint Sector Review.
- Otekunrin, O. A and Otekunrin, O. A (2020). Healthy and Sustainable Diets: Implications for Achieving SDG2. In: Leal Filho W., Azul A., Brandli., Ozuyar P., Wall T. (eds) Zero Hunger. Encyclopedia of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Springer Cham (in press).
- Otekunrin, O. A., Otekunrin, O. A., Momoh, S. and Ayinde, I. A. (2019). How far has Africa gone in achieving the Zero Hunger Target? Evidence from Nigeria. *Global Food Security*, 22, 1-12. <https://doi.org/j.gfs.2019.08.001>
- Onuoha, F. C. (2018). The state and food security in Nigeria: Policy and institutional responses. *Nigerian Journal of Political Science*, 30(1), 65-84.
- Thomson Reuters. (2019). Express Kidnapping: A Growing Threat. Retrieved from <https://www.thomsonreuters.com>
- United Nations (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>
- Wilkinson, P. (2021). *Terrorism versus Democracy: The Liberal State Response*. Routledge.
- World Bank. (2022). *Nigeria Economic Update*.
- World Food Summit (1996). *Declaration on World Food Security*. Rome.