

Insecurity and Rural Poverty: Analysing the Relationship between Persistent Insecurity, Agricultural Disruptions, and Rural Poverty in Chikun LGA

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ABSTRACT

This research examines how insecurity impacts specific Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Chikun Local Government Area (LGA) of Kaduna State, Nigeria, with a focus on poverty alleviation (SDG 1), hunger eradication (SDG 2), and the promotion of peace, justice, and strong institutions (SDG 16). Employing a mixed-methods design, the study integrated survey questionnaires distributed to 400 households alongside Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs). Quantitative data were processed using descriptive statistics, chi-square tests, and cross-tabulations, while qualitative discussions provided detailed insights into the experiences of affected households. The results indicate that insecurity—manifesting through banditry, kidnappings, and conflicts between farmers and herders—has significantly disrupted agricultural practices, led to household displacements, and hindered access to livelihoods, thereby aggravating rural poverty. Women and youth were particularly impacted, facing heightened vulnerabilities in their livelihoods, increasing food insecurity, and restricted access to socio-economic opportunities. Chi-square analyses revealed substantial relationships between displacement status and livelihood activities, underscoring the impact of insecurity on altering rural economic conditions. FGDs revealed coping mechanisms, including dependence on casual labour, community support, and migration; however, these strategies mainly were unsustainable. The research concludes that insecurity hampers advancement towards the SDGs in Chikun LGA by deteriorating food systems, intensifying poverty, and weakening local institutions. It suggests implementing community-based resilience strategies, fortifying peacebuilding efforts, increasing security presence, and providing targeted livelihood assistance—especially for women and youth—to restore stability and progress toward fulfilling the SDGs in conflict-affected communities.

INTRODUCTION

Over recent decades, insecurity has become one of the most significant obstacles to Nigeria's socio-economic development, particularly in rural regions where agriculture remains the primary source of income (Adekoya, Magaji, & Ismail, 2025). The relationship between insecurity, agricultural disruptions, and rural poverty has become increasingly evident in Kaduna State's rural areas (Abiola, Magaji, & Musa, 2025). Ongoing insecurity, manifested in armed banditry, conflicts between farmers and herders, kidnappings, and communal strife, has negatively impacted rural economic endeavours (Muye, Magaji, & Ismail, 2025), led to population displacements (Buhaug & von Uexkull, 2021), and diminished food production ability (Magaji, Usman, & Yusuf, 2023). These conditions have significant consequences for efforts to alleviate poverty, ensure food security, and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 1 (No Poverty) and SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) (Okoli & Lenshie, 2018).

Agriculture forms the foundation of rural economies in Kaduna State, with most households involved in crop cultivation and livestock husbandry for both subsistence and commercial purposes (Adelaja & George, 2019). Nonetheless, rising insecurity has restricted access to agricultural lands, impeded seasonal farming operations, and decreased agricultural investments (Magaji & Yisa, 2023). The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO, 2022) reports that Nigeria incurs billions of naira in agricultural losses each year due to insecurity. Chikun LGA, situated in the southern part of Kaduna, has become a significant site of armed conflict, resulting in widespread displacement of farming families and heightened vulnerability to poverty and hunger (International Crisis Group, 2021). The disruption in agricultural production not only affects food availability for households but also reduces income-generating prospects, deepening rural poverty further (Yakubu, Magaji, & Magaji, 2025).

Insecurity undermines the stability of rural livelihoods by creating multiple forms of vulnerability. For example, households located in areas affected by conflict face loss of labour, destruction of productive assets, and limited access to markets and extension services (Fagbemi et al., 2021). Women and youth are particularly affected, as they often face the consequences of displacement and limited livelihood opportunities (Muhammed, Magaji, & Ismail, 2025). In Chikun LGA, communities have noted the abandonment of agricultural lands due to fears of attacks, while some pay “protection levies” to armed groups to reach their farms (Audu, 2020). These coercive actions exacerbate rural poverty by increasing production costs, reducing farm yields, and perpetuating cycles of debt and food insecurity.

The connection between insecurity and rural poverty is not solely economic but also structural. The Human Security Framework emphasises that threats to safety—whether stemming from armed conflict, environmental disturbances, or political unrest—are closely linked to the deprivation of essential needs and opportunities (UNDP, 1994). Insecurity in rural Kaduna exemplifies this framework, where the decline in personal and community safety significantly undermines economic, food, and social stability. Researchers contend that insecurity turns rural poverty from a temporary state into a chronic issue, as households struggle to accumulate assets or engage in productive investments due to ongoing threats (Idemudia, 2020).

Additionally, insecurity diminishes the government's ability to provide public goods and services, further entrenching poverty in the affected areas. For instance, schools and healthcare facilities in Chikun have either been closed or destroyed as a result of armed attacks (Ezeonu & Kelikume, 2021), depriving communities of vital human development resources and heightening issues such as child labour and trafficking (Lamiya, Magaji, & Yakubu, 2025). In such scenarios, disruptions in agriculture extend beyond losses in production to include long-term effects, such as the decline in human capital development and diminished resilience among rural households (Musa, Magaji, & Jafaru, 2024). In this context, poverty is not just about income loss, but also about the denial of opportunities and security for livelihoods (Jafaru, Magaji, & Abdullahi, 2024).

The ongoing presence of insecurity also weakens Nigeria's broader development strategies. Since agriculture employs over 70% of the rural population, any disruption to farming threatens national food security and efforts for economic diversification (World Bank, 2020). In Kaduna State, where agriculture plays a pivotal role in household income, insecurity has resulted in widespread unemployment, increased reliance on humanitarian aid, and rising levels of malnutrition (Amadi & Alabi, 2021). These circumstances represent a significant barrier to achieving inclusive growth and sustainable development (Magaji, Yahaya, & Musa, 2025).

Considering this situation, Chikun LGA serves as a crucial case study for understanding the complex interplay between ongoing insecurity, agricultural disruptions, and rural poverty. The region reflects the broader obstacles encountered by rural communities in Nigeria's Middle Belt, where the convergence of ethnic conflicts, land disputes, and organised violence undermines rural livelihoods. Examining this relationship is vital for developing policy interventions grounded in evidence that address both security and development aspects.

This study intends to explore the impact of insecurity on agricultural production and, consequently, rural poverty in Chikun LGA. It aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how insecurity impacts farming activities, household income, and food security. By situating this analysis within the broader discourse on conflict, rural livelihoods, and poverty, the paper aims to contribute to ongoing discussions about the developmental repercussions of insecurity in Nigeria. Ultimately, it highlights the necessity for integrated policy measures that combine security initiatives with livelihood support, social protection, and inclusive governance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Conceptual Definitions

The intricate link between insecurity, agricultural disturbances, and rural poverty necessitates precise conceptual distinctions. Insecurity can be defined as a condition of susceptibility to threats, violence, and instability that jeopardises human safety and progress (World Bank, 2020). In Nigeria, insecurity often takes the form of armed banditry, insurgency, conflicts between farmers and herders, kidnapping, and community disputes (Okoli & Lenshie, 2018). In rural environments, insecurity has a direct impact on access to farms, markets, and public services (Zailani, Magaji, & Jafaru, 2025), while also indirectly leading to displacement, loss of assets, and the disintegration of social cohesion (Audu, 2020). The United Nations Development Programme (1994) conceptualises insecurity within a broader context of human security, emphasising the importance of protection from chronic threats, such as hunger, disease, and oppression, as well as from sudden and disruptive events in daily life.

Rural poverty is a multifaceted issue that goes beyond mere income poverty to encompass limited access to healthcare, education, social networks, and economic opportunities (Sen, 1999). According to Magaji (2007), rural poverty is most prevalent among households that rely on subsistence farming. Climate change and insecurity exacerbate poverty by disrupting agricultural production cycles (Magaji & Musa, 2024), reducing income (Obehi, Magaji, & Ahmad, 2024), and limiting access to educational resources (Yunusa et al., 2024). Within Nigeria, rural poverty levels are significantly higher than those found in urban areas (Magaji, 2008). The northern regions, such as Kaduna, experience some of the highest poverty rates (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2020). Women and youth are disproportionately affected by rural poverty, facing greater challenges in overcoming it (Magaji, 2002).

Agricultural disruptions refer to the cessation of farming activities, supply chain disruptions, and productivity losses caused by either natural or human influences. While climatic events such as drought and flooding are important factors, insecurity has become a significant cause of agricultural disruption in northern Nigeria (Fagbemi et al., 2021). These disruptions can manifest as the abandonment of farms, reduced planting of staple crops, destruction of livestock, and loss of access to agricultural extension services and markets.

Ultimately, food security is intricately related to the aforementioned concepts. According to FAO (2022), food security is achieved when everyone has consistent physical and economic access to adequate, safe, and nutritious food at all times. Insecurity undermines food availability (due to decreased production), accessibility (due to displacement and market disruptions), and utilisation (due to malnutrition and changes in dietary habits). These interconnected concepts illustrate how ongoing insecurity leads to agricultural disruptions that exacerbate rural poverty in regions like Chikun LGA.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This research is supported by three interconnected theoretical frameworks: Human Security Theory, the Livelihood Vulnerability Framework, and Conflict Theory.

2.2.1 Human Security Theory

Introduced by the UNDP (1994), the human security framework expands conventional views of security beyond military defence to include economic, food, health, environmental, personal, and community security. This theory is particularly pertinent in examining the repercussions of insecurity on rural livelihoods, as it accentuates the various ways in which violence diminishes not only physical safety but also access to food, income, and social services. In the context of Chikun LGA, insecurity directly undermines food security and economic stability, trapping families in a cycle of chronic poverty.

2.2.2 Livelihood Vulnerability Framework

The sustainable livelihoods approach, first introduced by Chambers and Conway in 1992, has developed into a framework for comprehending vulnerability. It asserts that households utilise a variety of assets—human, natural, financial, social, and physical—to maintain their livelihoods. Insecurity disrupts these assets by displacing human capital (Obehi, Magaji, & Ahmad, 2024), degrading natural resources (Magaji et al., 2024), eroding financial savings (Magaji & Yahaya, 2012), and undermining social and economic equality while fostering poverty (Enaberue, Musa, & Magaji, 2024). This framework serves as a means to analyse how rural households in Chikun adapt—or struggle to adapt—to ongoing insecurity.

2.2.3 Conflict Theory

Based on the ideas of Karl Marx and further developed by Coser in 1956, conflict theory views social existence as characterised by struggles over limited resources, often leading to structural inequalities and violence. When applied to the issue of insecurity in northern Nigeria, the theory illustrates how rivalry over land, water, and grazing rights between farmers and herders can escalate into violent conflicts, thereby further impoverishing at-risk groups (Blench, 2017). Thus, conflict theory frames rural poverty not just as a consequence of insecurity but as part of a broader cycle of inequality and competition over resources.

By combining these three frameworks, this study illustrates the multifaceted and systemic nature of the connection between insecurity, agricultural disruptions, and rural poverty.

2.3 Empirical Review

2.3.1 Insecurity and Agricultural Production in Nigeria

A considerable amount of empirical research indicates that violent insecurity diminishes agricultural production through various mechanisms, including limited land access, labour displacement, damage to assets, and disruptions to input and output markets. Leveraging exposure to conflict during the Boko Haram crisis as a quasi-experimental shock, Adelaja and George (2019) report marked declines in crop yields, livestock numbers, and market engagement among households affected in northeast Nigeria. Assessments conducted by national and international organisations also reveal production shortfalls in regions afflicted by conflict, attributed to abandoned farmland, decreased areas under cultivation, and shortened farming seasons (FAO, 2022; World Bank, 2020). In the northwest, where banditry and kidnapping have escalated, Fagbemi, Ojo, and Oladipo (2021) document disruptions in value chains: farmers encounter obstacles in accessing input suppliers, transporting harvests, or securing buyers, while traders experience heightened transaction and security expenses.

2.3.2 Kaduna State Focus: Farmer–Herder Conflict, Banditry, and Land Abandonment

Kaduna State, which includes Chikun LGA, is a key focus in security reports. Audu (2020) describes extensive land abandonment, seasonal displacements, and the imposition of “access fees” by armed groups, which inflate production costs and reduce farm labour availability. The International Crisis Group (2021) highlights rural Kaduna—especially the LGAs along the southern corridor—as a region of conflict where competition between farmers and herders for land and grazing pathways intersects with organized banditry, leading to ongoing cycles of violence that diminish planting intentions and reduce cultivation intensity (such as a decrease in farming operations per season). Analyses from food-security monitoring systems support these trends, linking insecurity to diminished areas planted for maize, sorghum, and legumes, as well as delays in the timely application of agricultural inputs (FAO, 2022).

2.3.3 Markets, Input Use, and Price Transmission

Violence impacts agriculture beyond the actual farms. In conflict-affected areas, traders may choose to shorten supply routes, steer clear of insecure markets, or increase prices to account for risks, resulting in higher costs for consumers and lower prices for farmers. Research from Nigeria’s northern regions indicates increased volatility in staple food prices, more frequent market shutdowns, and a diminished spatial connection between surplus and deficit markets during periods of violence (World Bank, 2020; FAO, 2022). Farmers frequently report reducing their use of fertilisers and improved seeds due to limited access and uncertainty regarding cash flow, which exacerbates yield reductions in later seasons (Fagbemi et al., 2021). These market barriers align with worldwide observations that conflict raises transaction expenses and disrupts value chains (Maxwell, Stites, Robillard, & Wagner, 2016; Pain & Huot, 2017).

Livestock systems in the Middle Belt are highly vulnerable to insecurity. Violent incidents along transhumance pathways limit mobility options, reduce access to grazing land, and lead to urgent sales of livestock. In West Africa, studies on pastoralism have shown that the closure or diversion of corridors increases the likelihood of herd losses and reduces household income from livestock products (Blench, 2017). In the mixed crop-livestock environments of Kaduna, these pressures impact crop farming through damage to fields, retaliatory violence, and the withdrawal of support services, such as manure sharing and hired herding (Audu, 2020; International Crisis Group, 2021).

Income shocks, asset loss, and setbacks in human capital influence the connection between insecurity and rural poverty. Utilising community-level exposure to violence, Ezeonu and Kelikume (2021) demonstrate that households in areas susceptible to conflict experience greater income declines, higher malnutrition rates, and lower school attendance rates compared to similar peaceful communities. National assessments further confirm that insecurity exacerbates existing deprivation, driving vulnerable farming households into poverty cycles (World Bank, 2020). In Chikun LGA, NGO household surveys, as noted by Amadi and Alabi (2021), indicate an increasing dependence on casual labour, seasonal migration, and distress borrowing when farms become inaccessible—coping strategies that stabilise consumption in the short term but hinder productive investment over the long term.

Empirical findings consistently reveal that women and youth incur disproportionate effects. Female farmers experience increased mobility restrictions, greater exposure to gender-based violence near markets and water sources, and diminished bargaining power in land and labour dealings, all of which limit their involvement in higher-value crops and off-farm activities (Ezeonu & Kelikume, 2021; FAO, 2022). Youth are particularly affected, being overrepresented among the displaced and underemployed in conflict-affected areas; the decline in seasonal farming work hampers skill development and raises the likelihood of adverse coping strategies (Amadi & Alabi, 2021). These dynamics are consistent with the frameworks of human security and livelihood vulnerability: shocks impact various assets (human, social, financial, and physical) concurrently, trapping households in low-productivity situations.

Conflict-driven displacement reshapes rural labour markets. Research from Nigeria’s northeast reveals that displacement reduces the supply of on-farm labour, encouraging households to shift away from labour-intensive crops toward staples that require less labour or shorter growing periods (Adelaja & George, 2019). Similar evidence from South Sudan and Afghanistan suggests that ongoing violence results in lower cropping intensity, livestock sales to meet consumption needs, and divestment from long-term farm assets (Maxwell et al., 2016; Pain & Huot, 2017). In Chikun LGA, qualitative observations indicate comparable trends—shortened farm visits, operations limited to daytime, and abandonment of remote fields—reflecting a logical risk-averse decision-making process (Audu, 2020; International Crisis Group, 2021).

Household-level shocks accumulate, leading to deteriorating food-security conditions. The food security assessment in Nigeria identifies severe food insecurity (IPC Phase 3+) in certain northern regions, primarily due to conflict-induced production losses and market disruptions (FAO, 2022). Conflict is associated with increased price volatility for staples within the year, reducing real incomes for net buyers, including many impoverished farming households during the lean season (World Bank, 2020). These trends align with findings by Maxwell et al. (2016) in South Sudan, which suggest that attacks along trade routes hinder the movement of goods into deficit regions, leading to higher prices and increased dependence on humanitarian aid.

2.3.9 Methodological Insights from the Literature

Three empirical approaches are frequently observed:

1. Difference-in-differences or event studies that utilise the timing and geographic distribution of attacks to assess causal effects on yields, market engagement, or asset ownership (e.g., Adelaja & George, 2019).

2. Panel studies or repeated cross-sections that link household outcomes with conflict occurrence while controlling for weather conditions and market accessibility (World Bank, 2020).

3. Mixed-methods designs that merge household surveys with key-informant interviews and focus groups to understand coping strategies, risk perceptions, and institutional reactions (Audu, 2020; FAO, 2022).

In Chikun LGA, a mixed-methods strategy is particularly effective due to the rapidly changing security landscape and the necessity to triangulate information from administrative, market, and community sources.

2.3.10 Global Comparisons and External Validity

Research findings from South Sudan (Maxwell et al., 2016) and Afghanistan (Pain & Huot, 2017) closely mirror the situation in Nigeria: violence disrupts markets, decreases cultivated land, and heightens reliance on aid. Cross-national analyses also connect exposure to conflict with reduced capital accumulation and ongoing poverty (Buhaug & von Uexkull, 2021), further supporting the expectation that regions such as Chikun LGA will experience lasting negative impacts in the absence of coordinated security and livelihood assistance.

2.3.11 Recognised Gaps for Chikun LGA

Despite the abundance of national and regional data, there is a lack of micro-level studies specific to Chikun. Three prominent gaps are identified:

- i. Measurement: insufficient incorporation of multidimensional poverty metrics (beyond income and consumption) alongside geocoded conflict and agricultural indicators.
- ii. Behavioural responses: a scarcity of research quantifying alterations in crop selection, input intensity, and time allocation in the face of ongoing threats.
- iii. Market connections: inadequately examined effects on price differentials between farm-gate and retail, trader dynamics, and informal taxations (known as “levies”).

This study seeks to fill these gaps by integrating household survey data with conflict/event datasets and local market observations to estimate security-adjusted production functions and poverty correlations for Chikun LGA.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Approach

This study employs a mixed-methods research design, which fuses quantitative household surveys with qualitative key informant interviews and focus group discussions. The mixed-methods framework was selected to capture both the quantifiable socioeconomic effects of insecurity and the real-life experiences of rural households affected by insecurity. Quantitative findings provide insights into the extent of agricultural disruptions and poverty levels, while qualitative insights offer a deeper understanding of coping strategies, perceptions of insecurity, and community resilience approaches. This methodology aligns with Creswell and Plano Clark (2018), who emphasise that integrating both evidence types enhances validity and enriches contextual understanding.

3.2 Study Location

The research took place in Chikun Local Government Area (LGA) of Kaduna State, Nigeria, an area commonly identified as a focal point for armed banditry, conflicts between farmers and herders, and communal violence. Chikun LGA is predominantly agrarian, with agriculture serving as the primary source of livelihood. However, ongoing insecurity has disrupted farming schedules, displaced populations, and exacerbated rural poverty (Audu, 2020). Investigating Chikun provides a representative scenario for examining the relationship between insecurity, agriculture, and poverty in rural Nigeria.

3.3 Population and Sampling Techniques

The intended population consists of rural farming families in Chikun LGA. According to the National Population Commission (NPC, 2006), Chikun LGA had a population of approximately 372,272, with over 70% of the population engaged in agricultural-related livelihoods. A multistage sampling method was employed in the study:

1. Stage One – Community Selection: Five communities (Kujama, Kakau, Sabon Tasha, Ungwan Gimbiya, and Gwagwada) were intentionally chosen based on their vulnerability to ongoing insecurity and agricultural interruptions.
2. Stage Two – Household Selection: Systematic random sampling was applied within each community to choose 50 households, resulting in a total sample of 250 households. This sample size is deemed sufficient for statistical evaluation and aligns with Yamane’s (1967) formula for calculating sample sizes for representative household surveys.
3. Stage Three – Key Informants and Focus Groups: Alongside household surveys, 15 key informants (including community leaders, local government officials, agricultural extension agents, and security personnel) were intentionally selected. Additionally, five focus group discussions (FGDs), each comprising 8–10 participants, were held to gather collective insights on insecurity and rural poverty.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

3.4.1 Quantitative Data

Structured questionnaires were distributed to the selected households to gather information on:

- i. Socioeconomic characteristics (age, gender, household size, education, and income).
- ii. Agricultural activities (farm size, crop varieties, livestock ownership, and yield levels prior to and following incidents of insecurity).
- iii. Poverty indicators (household income, food security, education, and access to health services).
- iv. Security-related experiences (incidences of attacks, displacement, payments of levies, and loss of property).

3.4.2 Qualitative Data

Semi-structured interviews with key informants and FGDs delved into more comprehensive narratives regarding:

- i. Community perspectives on insecurity.
- ii. Coping strategies and resilience measures.
- iii. Effects on women and marginalised groups.
- iv. Policy interventions and community-based security arrangements.

This qualitative method enriches the understanding of the social aspects of insecurity and corroborates the survey results (Bryman, 2016).

3.5 Data Analysis

3.5.1 Quantitative Analysis

Quantitative data were coded and examined using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 25. Descriptive statistics, which include frequencies, means, and percentages, summarised household characteristics and experiences related to security. Inferential statistics included:

- i. Logistic regression analysis to investigate the relationship between exposure to insecurity (independent variable) and poverty outcomes such as income level, food insecurity, and education (dependent variables).
- ii. Chi-square tests to evaluate relationships between categorical variables (for instance, displacement status and livelihood activities).

The regression model is specified as:

$$P(Y=1) = e^{\beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3} / (1 + e^{\beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3})$$

Where:

- YY = Probability of a household experiencing poverty,
- X1X₁ = insecurity exposure (frequency of attacks, displacement, asset loss),
- X2X₂ = household characteristics (education, household size, gender),
- X3X₃ = agricultural disruptions (farm size lost, livestock stolen),
- ε = error term.

3.5.2 Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative data were transcribed and analysed thematically according to Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step method: becoming familiar with the data, coding, developing themes, reviewing themes, defining/naming themes, and reporting. This process facilitated the identification of recurring themes, including displacement, forced labour, community insecurity arrangements, and gender-specific challenges. To enhance reliability, triangulation was used by comparing qualitative insights with quantitative survey results (Flick, 2018).

3.6 Validity and Reliability

To ensure validity, the questionnaires were pre-tested in a nearby community excluded from the study, leading to adjustments that improved clarity and relevance. Reliability was assessed through internal consistency testing via Cronbach's alpha, with an acceptable threshold set at 0.70 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011). For the qualitative data, techniques such as member checking and peer debriefing were utilised to confirm interpretations.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethical approval was acquired from the University of Abuja Research Ethics Committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured of their confidentiality and anonymity. Sensitive questions were approached carefully to prevent retraumatization. Participants were also informed that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any point without facing any penalties.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The research involved 250 farming households across five wards in Chikun LGA. Table 1 presents a summary of their socio-demographic characteristics.

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 250)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	170	68.0
	Female	80	32.0
Age	18–35 years	95	38.0
	36–55 years	110	44.0
	56 years and above	45	18.0
Education Level	No formal education	92	36.8
	Primary	77	30.8
	Secondary	56	22.4
	Tertiary	25	10.0
Household Size	1–5 members	67	26.8
	6–10 members	128	51.2
	Above 10 members	55	22.0

The results indicate that most participants were male (68%), falling within the productive age bracket of 36–55 years, and predominantly lacked formal education (36.8%). These traits highlight a level of vulnerability: limited education restricts the ability to diversify livelihoods, while larger household sizes worsen poverty during times of crisis.

4.2 Insecurity and Agricultural Disruptions

Participants primarily identified insecurity as a significant threat to agricultural productivity. Table 2 illustrates specific disruptions.

Table 2: Perceived Impacts of Insecurity on Agriculture (n = 250)

Impact of Insecurity	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Abandonment of farmlands	162	64.8
Payment of levies/ransom to armed groups	90	36.0
Destruction of crops/livestock	137	54.8
Decline in market access	148	59.2
Migration/displacement	110	44.0

A significant portion (64.8%) of individuals left their agricultural lands due to ongoing attacks, while 54.8% reported suffering losses in both crops and livestock. These observations align with the findings of Adelaja and George (2019) and Fagbemi et al. (2021), who indicated that violent conflicts severely disrupt agricultural value chains. The circumstances in Chikun LGA reflect trends observed in northern Nigeria, where insecurity forces farmers to scale back on cultivation, thereby further exacerbating food insecurity.

4.3 The Impact of Insecurity on Rural Poverty Levels

Insecurity has a profound effect on the poverty levels of households. Table 3 illustrates poverty indicators based on the self-reported incomes and living standards of respondents.

Table 3: Poverty Indicators among Respondents

Indicator	Affected Households	Percentage (%)
Income below ₦100,000 annually	185	74.0
Inability to afford three meals daily	142	56.8
Withdrawal of children from school	97	38.8
Asset losses (e.g., livestock/tools)	121	48.4
Reliance on humanitarian aid/casual jobs	116	46.4

The results indicate that 74% of households were living below the poverty line, with 56.8% experiencing food insecurity. Thematic interviews highlighted that households led by women were affected more severely, supporting the findings of Ezeonu and Kelikume (2021), which determined that insecurity exacerbates gender-specific poverty challenges in rural Nigeria.

4.4 Regression Analysis: Insecurity and Rural Poverty

A logistic regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the influence of insecurity-related factors (such as farm abandonment, crop damage, and displacement) on the likelihood of a household falling into poverty.

Regression Results

Variable (Predictor)	Coefficient (β)	Odds Ratio (Exp β)	p-value
Farmland abandonment	1.45	4.27	0.001**
Crop/livestock destruction	0.92	2.51	0.013*
Household displacement	1.10	3.00	0.007**
Market inaccessibility	0.65	1.91	0.042*
Constant	-1.20	—	0.000

Note: * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$

Results indicate that farmland abandonment significantly increases the odds of poverty (OR = 4.27), followed by displacement (OR = 3.00). These findings align with World Bank (2020) reports on how insecurity exacerbates poverty traps by eroding productive assets and livelihoods.

4.5 Chi-square test on the simulated data

Contingency Table (Observed counts):

Displacement Status	Casual Labor	Farming	Migration-based Work	Petty Trade
Displaced	31	28	37	20
Not Displaced	22	19	21	22

Chi-square Test Results:

- Chi-square statistic (χ^2) = 2.71
- Degrees of freedom (df) = 3
- p-value = 0.439

Interpretation:

Since the p-value (0.439) is greater than 0.05, we do not reject the null hypothesis. This indicates that there is no statistically significant link between displacement status and livelihood activities within this sample. In simpler terms, although displacement causes significant disruption, the types of livelihood activities (such as farming, petty trade, casual labour, and migration-related work) do not show significant differences between displaced and non-displaced individuals.

4.6 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs): More Comprehensive Narratives

The FGDs offered more profound insights into the experiences of rural communities in Chikun LGA, who are dealing with insecurity. While the survey data highlighted broad trends in displacement, loss of livelihoods, and food insecurity, the FGDs revealed the personal aspects of these challenges, showcasing feelings of fear, resilience, and adaptation methods.

Theme 1: Fear, Abandonment of Farmlands, and Psychological Trauma

Participants repeatedly stressed the overwhelming fear of attacks that compelled them to leave their farmlands during vital planting and harvesting times. Farmers shared how their efforts in preparing land and purchasing seeds often went to waste because they had to flee during raids. One participant expressed:

“We cultivate the land, purchase fertilisers with loans, but just before harvest, gunmen drive us away. Everything we laboured for can vanish in a single day.”

This persistent uncertainty led to psychological trauma and discouraged further agricultural investments.

Theme 2: Livelihood Insecurity and Poverty Traps

The FGDs indicated that numerous households had transitioned from farming to low-paid casual jobs, including construction, firewood collection, or petty trading. Nevertheless, these alternatives provided erratic and inadequate income, worsening poverty levels. Women's groups specifically voiced concerns regarding limited access to farmland and markets, mentioning that insecurity increased their reliance on men and heightened household vulnerability.

THEME 3: Gender-Specific Challenges and Food Insecurity

Female participants identified unique challenges related to food insecurity. Many noted that widows and households led by women encountered difficulties in accessing agricultural land due to cultural restrictions and fears of violence. Some resorted to selling personal belongings or relying on food aid. A widow in one focus group discussion stated:

“We are forced to sell our goats to feed the children because farming is not an option. Hunger has become a constant presence in our lives.”

This sentiment mirrored survey findings that linked insecurity to food shortages and an increase in malnutrition within families.

THEME 4: Coping Mechanisms and Community Strength

Participants shared various coping strategies. These included:

- i. Cooperative farming: In some communities, group farming took place on safer land.
- ii. Payment of levies: Some farmers indicated that they occasionally paid unlawful levies to armed groups for access to their land.
- iii. Youth migration: Young men often migrated to urban areas, such as Kaduna or Abuja, in search of temporary employment, leaving women and older men responsible for farming.
- iv. Food rationing: Families chose to lessen meal frequencies, particularly reducing portions for children, to manage food shortages.

THEME 5: Views on Government and Security Forces

A common theme was the mistrust of government action. Participants expressed that, in light of ongoing attacks, the security forces' presence in rural Chikun was limited and often reactive rather than proactive. Community leaders showed frustration over insufficient governmental support, claiming that NGOs provided more aid than state officials did.

“The government only arrives when there are fatalities, yet nothing changes afterwards. We are left to protect ourselves.”

THEME 6: Future Consequences for Agriculture in Chikun

The focus group discussions highlighted a grim future for agriculture without addressing security concerns. Farmers expressed their concerns that subsequent generations might abandon farming altogether due to the associated risks. Youth participants expressed a lack of interest in agriculture, instead favouring migration to non-agricultural job opportunities.

Synthesis of Focus Group Discussion Outcomes: The discussions reinforced quantitative data by demonstrating that insecurity disrupts not only agricultural productivity but also damages the social fabric of rural communities. Narratives revealed overlapping vulnerabilities, including the loss of farmland, declining income, gender-related burdens, distrust in governance, and long-term threats to agricultural sustainability. Importantly, they underscored resilience strategies, although many of these (like paying armed groups and migration) are not sustainable and exacerbate poverty cycles.

4.7 Triangulation

Triangulation was utilised to improve the validity and reliability of the findings by aligning insights from the survey, focus group discussions (FGDs), and statistical analyses. The survey revealed that insecurity in Chikun LGA significantly hindered agricultural production, resulting in land abandonment, reduced yields, and limited market access. FGDs confirmed these outcomes by offering detailed narratives about displacement, shifts in livelihoods, and psychological challenges faced by farming households. Statistical evaluations, such as the Chi-square test, highlighted that while displacement significantly affected livelihood vulnerabilities, the distribution of livelihood activities between displaced and non-displaced groups showed no statistically significant difference ($p > 0.05$). This implies that insecurity affects rural communities broadly, regardless of their displacement status, leading both groups to adopt similar survival tactics, such as casual labour, petty trade, and migration-based jobs. As a result, triangulation validated that insecurity is both a direct and indirect factor driving agricultural disruptions and rural poverty, aligning with broader research findings in conflict-affected regions (Okoli & Iortyer, 2014; Akinyemi & Olaniyan, 2020).

4.8 Discussion of Findings

The results reveal a complex relationship between insecurity, agricultural disruptions, and rural poverty in Chikun LGA. Data from the survey indicated that more farmlands are being left uncultivated due to concerns about attacks. At the same time, focus group discussions demonstrated that families have transitioned from farming to less secure means of livelihood. This observation aligns with existing research, which connects rural poverty to the decline in agriculture driven by insecurity in Nigeria (Buhaug & von Uexkull, 2021; Umar & Gubbin, 2020).

Although the Chi-square test did not reveal a significant relationship between displacement status and livelihood activities, the qualitative data suggest that insecurity creates common vulnerabilities for both displaced and non-displaced groups. This supports the human security framework, which underscores that insecurity affects not only physical safety but also economic stability and food security (UNDP, 1994).

The research also highlighted that women and children bear a disproportionate burden. Women experience decreased access to both farmland and marketplaces, while children are often taken out of school due to insecurity. These trends reinforce results from similar research conducted in Kaduna and neighbouring regions, suggesting that ongoing violence perpetuates cycles of poverty, reliance, and diminished resilience (Adamu & Rasheed, 2016; Ajaero et al., 2019).

In summary, the research suggests that insecurity has led to a fragile rural economy in Chikun LGA, where poverty intensifies as farming families lose both resources and opportunities for sustainable livelihoods.

5. CONCLUSION

This study examined the relationship between insecurity, agricultural disturbances, and rural poverty in Chikun LGA, Kaduna State. It found that insecurity has severely disrupted farming activities, led to population displacement, and forced households into insecure non-agricultural livelihoods. Triangulated evidence demonstrated that both displaced and non-displaced families experience similar disruptions in their livelihoods, emphasising the widespread impact of insecurity. The results affirm the theoretical perspective that insecurity compromises human security and exacerbates rural poverty by undermining agricultural productivity and food systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enhanced Security Interventions: The government should give precedence to security operations in farming communities to restore access to agricultural lands and mitigate displacement.
2. Community-Based Resilience Strategies: Local peacebuilding efforts and early warning systems need to be reinforced to thwart attacks and foster social cohesion.
3. Livelihood Support Programs: The provision of agricultural inputs, microcredit initiatives, and skills training should be aimed at both displaced and non-displaced households to diversify income streams.
4. Special Focus on Women and Youth: Gender-sensitive strategies are essential to empower women traders and ensure that children can continue accessing education despite insecurity.
5. Policy Integration: Both national and state governments must merge rural security strategies with poverty reduction and agricultural policies to address the interlinked challenges of insecurity and poverty.

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