

ASSESSMENT OF PERCEIVED IMPACT OF VIOLENT CRIMES ON HUMAN SECURITY IN NIGER STATE, NIGERIA

BY

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ABSTRACT

Violent crimes, encompassing banditry, kidnapping, and communal clashes, pose a severe threat to human security and socio-economic stability in Niger State, Nigeria. This study assessed the perceived impact of these violent crimes on human security, examining their prevalence, patterns, and implications for economic stability, displacement, and governance. Adopting a cross-sectional survey design, the study utilized a mixed-methods approach, drawing quantitative data from 378 respondents selected via multistage sampling techniques, alongside qualitative insights from key informants. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data underwent thematic content analysis. The findings revealed a high prevalence of insecurity, with 54.7% of respondents reporting that violent crimes occur frequently ("often" or "very often"). Regarding the impact on human security, the quantitative results indicated that economic and social disruptions (21.2%), internal displacement (18.5%), and loss of lives and properties (15.9%) were the most severe consequences, followed by human rights abuses by security forces (13.2%) and food insecurity (10.6%). Furthermore, while increased police patrols (34.9%) and military deployments (26.7%) were identified as the primary government security policies, public perception of their effectiveness was poor, with only 34.1% of respondents rating them as effective and 34.7% deeming them ineffective. The study concludes that current security measures are largely reactive and fail to address the root socio-economic drivers of violence. Consequently, it recommends increased funding for the judiciary and law enforcement agencies to ensure swift prosecution, enhanced federal-state synergy, and comprehensive socio-economic interventions targeting poverty and unemployment to dismantle criminal recruitment pipelines.

Keywords: Violent Crimes, Human Security, Banditry, Internal Displacement, Niger State, Security Policies.

INTRODUCTION

Violent crimes have severe implications for human security and economic stability globally. These crimes ranging from armed robbery and terrorism to kidnapping and communal clashes undermine peace, disrupt economic activities, and weaken governance structures. The economic cost of violence accounts for approximately 3-5% of global GDP annually (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2021). While high-income countries experience economic setbacks due to violent crimes, developing nations suffer more due to weaker institutions and governance structures.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, high crime rates hinder investment and economic growth by destabilizing key industries such as tourism and agriculture (World Bank, 2017). Similarly, in Africa, violent crimes, including insurgency, banditry, armed conflicts, and ethnic clashes, disrupt agricultural production, deter investments, and displace millions of people, exacerbating poverty and food insecurity (South African Institute of International Affairs, 2020; International Crisis Group, 2022).

Nigeria, Africa's largest economy, faces significant security challenges, particularly in the northern regions, where terrorism, banditry, and kidnapping have led to widespread instability. The rise in violent crimes has threatened food production, economic stability, and public safety (Nigeria Economic Summit Group, 2023). Niger State, situated in Nigeria's North-Central geopolitical zone, has been particularly affected by these security threats. The state, known for its vast agricultural resources and hydroelectric dams, plays a crucial role in Nigeria's economy. However, the rise in violent crimes, including banditry, communal clashes, and kidnapping, has severely impacted its economic potential, leading to displacement, abandoned farmlands, and declining business activities (Nweze & Ojogwu, 2020). The situation is not getting better with locals being relocated into internally displaced persons camps in the State. While

this challenge persists, there is still paucity of empirical studies on the subject matter. It is in view of the foregoing that this study has investigated the impact of Violent Crimes on Human Security in Niger State, Nigeria.

Statement of Problem

Niger State, Nigeria, has witnessed a surge in violent crimes, including banditry, terrorism, kidnapping, and communal clashes, posing severe threats to human security and socio-economic stability. These crimes have led to widespread displacement, loss of lives, destruction of property, and disruption of livelihoods. Despite efforts by the government and security agencies to curb these challenges, insecurity continues to escalate, weakening governance structures and public trust in state institutions.

The persistence of violent crimes raises critical questions about their underlying causes, their impact on human security, and the effectiveness of current security strategies. While several studies have examined insecurity in Nigeria, there is a gap in understanding the specific impact of violent crimes on human security in Niger State, a region that has become a hotspot for criminal activities. This study seeks to bridge this gap by assessing the extent of violent crimes, their socio-economic implications, and policy responses.

This research is informed by the urgent need to address the rising insecurity in Niger State and its implications for human security. The increasing prevalence of violent crimes has not only affected the safety and well-being of residents but also hindered economic growth, agricultural productivity, and investment in the region. Furthermore, insecurity has strained governance institutions, making it difficult to implement development policies effectively. By investigating the impact of violent crimes on human security, this study provides valuable insights for policymakers, security agencies, and development stakeholders. It highlights the need for evidence-based security strategies and community-driven interventions to mitigate crime and enhance stability in the state.

Research Questions:

- i. What is the prevalence of violent crimes in Niger State?
- ii. To what extent have violent crimes affected human security, particularly in relation to economic stability, displacement, and governance?

Research Objectives

The study aims to:

- i. Examine the prevalence of violent crimes in Niger State.
- ii. Assess the impact of violent crimes on human security, particularly in relation to economic stability, displacement, and governance.

Violent Crimes

Violent crimes, defined as unlawful acts involving the use or threat of physical force, have far-reaching consequences for individuals, communities, and economies. These acts, such as banditry, kidnapping, terrorism, communal clashes, and armed robbery, are often motivated by material gain, political objectives, or intergroup disputes (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2021). Their effects are not confined to immediate physical harm but extend to creating psychological distress, economic instability, and social fragmentation. They are characterized by their intentionality, harmful impact, and capacity to destabilize social order. One defining characteristic of violent crimes is their intentional nature. These acts are deliberate, often planned, and executed to achieve specific objectives, whether economic, political, or social.

Mohammed (2021) emphasizes the calculated use of violence to instill fear or exert control over individuals or communities. The harmful impact of such crimes is profound, with direct consequences including injury, death, and destruction of property. Beyond these immediate effects, violent crimes

have lasting indirect outcomes, such as displacement, trauma, and economic losses (International Crisis Group, 2022). Communities subjected to frequent violence also experience erosion of governance and trust, further undermining social cohesion and stability (Nigeria Economic Summit Group, 2023).

In Nigeria, violent crimes manifest in various forms, each with unique characteristics and impacts. Banditry involves armed attacks aimed at looting resources, extorting ransoms, or controlling territories. It is prevalent in rural areas, especially in Niger State, where it disrupts agricultural activities and displaces residents (Eze & Nwankwo, 2022). Kidnapping for ransom, widespread in both urban and rural regions, has become a lucrative criminal enterprise (Nwosu & Aghedo, 2021).

Armed robbery targets individuals and businesses, often involving the use of weapons to forcibly seize property (Adebanjo et al., 2020). Communal clashes, frequently driven by disputes over land, water, or political dominance, create widespread destruction and deepen intergroup mistrust (Okeke-Uzodike & Ani, 2021). Meanwhile, terrorism, exemplified by groups like Boko Haram, seeks to undermine state authority through organized violence and fear (International Crisis Group, 2022).

The drivers of violent crimes in Nigeria are deeply rooted in socio-economic and political challenges. High levels of poverty and unemployment correlate strongly with the prevalence of violence, as economic desperation drives individuals to criminal activities (Nigeria Economic Summit Group, 2023). Weak governance and ineffective law enforcement exacerbate the issue, allowing criminal networks to operate with minimal repercussions (Eze & Nwankwo, 2022). Resource competition, especially in agrarian regions like Niger State, often escalates into violent disputes over land and water (Okeke-Uzodike & Ani, 2021). Furthermore, the widespread availability of

small arms has intensified the scale and frequency of violent crimes, making them harder to control (Adebanjo et al., 2020).

The impacts of violent crimes extend far beyond their immediate effects, creating cascading challenges for affected regions. Displacement is a common consequence, as families and communities flee violence, leaving behind their homes, jobs, and livelihoods. This has led to humanitarian crises and long-term disruptions in agricultural productivity (Nwosu & Aghedo, 2021). Economic disruption is another significant outcome, as violent crimes deter investments, reduce business activities, and undermine investor confidence (Nigeria Economic Summit Group, 2023). Socially, violent crimes fragment communities, eroding trust and creating environments of fear and instability (Mohammed, 2021).

However, this study conceived violent crimes as unlawful acts that involve the use or threat of physical force with the intent to harm, intimidate, or coerce individuals, groups, or communities. These crimes encompass a wide range of offenses, including but not limited to banditry, kidnapping, armed robbery, terrorism, and communal clashes, which are characterized by their deliberate nature, destructive impact, and capacity to destabilize both social order and economic activities.

Drivers of Violent Crimes in Nigeria

Several socio-economic and political factors drive violent crimes in Nigeria:

1. **Poverty and Unemployment:** Economic desperation fuels criminal activities (Nigeria Economic Summit Group, 2023).
2. **Weak Governance and Law Enforcement:** Inefficient security responses enable criminal networks to thrive (Eze & Nwankwo, 2022).
3. **Resource Competition:** Conflicts over land and water in agrarian regions escalate into violence (Okeke-Uzodike & Ani, 2021).
4. **Proliferation of Small Arms:** Easy access to weapons intensifies crime rates (Adebanjo et al., 2020). The consequences of violent crimes extend

beyond their immediate effects, creating long-term socio-economic disruptions, including displacement, economic instability, and societal fragmentation.

Human Security

Security is a highly contested concept as scholars and policy analysts tend to interpret it quite differently. Imobighe (1990), however, defined security as freedom from threat to a nation's capacity to defend, develop itself, uphold its values and lawful interest. Security is therefore seen as the absence of threat to acquired values and the low probability of damages to acquired values. Boemeken and Schalter (2007), on the other hand submitted that security connotes the absence of severe threat to the lowest acceptable levels of fundamental values that people consider significant to their survival.

In contemporary world, there is so much threat to security. Global peace, stability and sustainability are threatened by protracted crises, violent conflicts, natural disasters, poverty, epidemics and economic downturn. Peace now seems an elusive commodity to mankind resulting in change of human perception and strategies. The thinking globally is that elusive peace can be attained by people oriented, comprehensive and prevention oriented utilization of resources that address the underlying causes of human vulnerability to threats and risks. According to Kerr, (2007), early action that strengthens local capacities and build resilience will promote cohesion and respect for human right and dignity. This line of thought by Kerr and others lead to General Assembly Resolution 66/290 that emphasizes human security in addressing these challenges over national security. Human security is a milestone and marks a shift in emphasis from the state centric view as referent object to humans- centric view (Kerr, 2007. United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), 1994). This is a clear departure from the traditional notion of security which emphasizes the state as entity that needs to be protected. The emancipation and development of the individual is now at the Centre of security agenda (UNDP, 1994).

UNDP (1994) defines the concept human security as the safety from chronic threat of hunger, diseases and repression. It also entails the protection from hurtful and disruptive pattern of daily life. Kerr (2007), further pointed out that human security is the protection of individuals and communities from war and other forms of violence. Human security means absence of insecurity and threats. It therefore means to be secured and free from both fear (of physical, sexual and psychological abuse, violence or death) and from wants (of gainful employment, food, health). As noted by Tadjbakhsl (2005), human security connotes the capacity not only to identify threats but avoiding them and if possible mitigate their adverse consequences if it does happen. What this implies is that victims of armed conflicts suffering from human right violations and massive underdevelopment should be assisted.

However, this study adopts the 1994 UNDP definition of the concept of Human Security. According to the 1994 UNDP report, there are seven measures of human security. These are:

Economic security: The concern here is beneficial productivity, The need to satisfy basic needs through social protection from employment, skill reproduction, job security, labor market security and income security.

Food security: Food security means that individuals within a nation should have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food that meet their preferences and need for a healthy and active life style.

Health security: Health security are activities geared towards proactively and reactively mitigating the danger and impact of acute public health. This is necessary to keep the world safe from infectious diseases that have the potential of becoming an epidemic or worse a pandemic. Disease outbreak with far reaching impact will negatively affect the economy and lead to political instability.

Environmental security: Environmental security connotes the sustainable utilization and protection of the environment and its natural resources.

Environmental security focuses on threats posed to the environment by human actions.

Individual security: Individual security amount to the protection of people against physical and brute force. Individuals should be protected against torture, war, rape, domestic violence and infringement of their fundamental human rights.

Political security: Political security is the prevention of government repression, systematic violation of human rights and threat to militarization. It encompasses the protection of human rights and well-being of citizens. Political security seeks freedom of press, freedom of speech, freedom of voting and abolition of political detention.

Community security: Community security covers the preservation of community held values that are positive to human growth and development. It entails the protection of indigenous people, prevention of ethnic conflicts and discrimination.

Dimensions of Human Security

The concept of human security comprises three core freedoms:

1. Freedom from Fear: Protection from violence and crime.
2. Freedom from Want: Access to economic opportunities, healthcare, and education.
3. Freedom from Indignity: Protection of human rights and social justice (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 1994).

Threats to Human Security

Human security is threatened by multiple factors, including conflicts, natural disasters, economic crises, and environmental degradation. In the context of Niger State, violent crimes have significantly eroded human security, leading to:

Mass Displacement: Thousands of residents have been forced to flee their homes due to insecurity (Nweze & Ojogwu, 2020). Economic Disruptions:

Farmlands have been abandoned, leading to food shortages and income losses (Nigeria Economic Summit Group, 2023). Social Fragmentation: Insecurity has deepened mistrust among communities, weakening social cohesion (Mohammed et al., 2021).

To effectively address human security challenges, a proactive and institutionally responsive approach is required. This includes strengthening law enforcement, improving governance, and implementing policies that address poverty and unemployment. In Niger State of Nigeria, there are visible signs of human security challenges in areas of water pollution, food insecurity, poverty, vandalism, kidnapping, diseases, conflict and unemployment (Adulojo & Okechime, 2016). The failure of governance at both federal and state tend to breed a disruptive structure in Nigeria. It has stirred up violence by youths based on grievances on political rights, cultural rights, minority rights and host of other agitations. These grievances according to Ezemenaka (2021) are rooted on livelihood needs and adequate representation of their interest in governance.

Theoretical Framework:

Frustration Aggression Theory

Frustration aggression hypothesis was the earliest theory of aggression and standard explanation of aggression. Frustration aggression was first proposed by group of Yale psychologists in 1939 before Ferarabend and Feiraunbend, (1972). It was based on psychodynamics explanation of catharsis. It was the argument of Sigmund Freud that drives for aggression was innate just like the drive for food. The only way to reduce aggression is to engage in an activity to release it. The major assumption of the frustration aggression hypothesis is that aggression is always a consequence of frustration, just as the presence of frustration leads to aggression (Dollard, 1939., Ferarabend & Feiraubbbend, 1972). The frustration-aggression hypothesis is an attempt to explain scapegoating. Frustration results when goal response suffers interference, while

aggression is defined as an act whose response is injurious to others (Berkowitz, 1969). Berkowitz (1969) in a proposed revision of the theory, argued that frustration doesn't always lead to aggression. He therefore suggested that aggression only results with the presence of certain cues like the availability of weapons. Violent crime is the outcome of frustration that results when individuals internalize the values of society without access to the conventional means of attaining such values. In Nigeria, the generality wants wealth and power without the requisite skill and educational background.

Applying the above theory to this study, the researcher argued that Banditry is therefore the outcome of aggressive behavior resulting from poverty, unemployment, and the availability of small and light weapons—Scholarly Journal of Social Sciences. However, the theory was critiqued for being too general in relating every criminal tendency to frustration; the theory did not give an account for other members of society who were frustrated yet remained law-abiding. Conclusively, while the theory faces some criticisms, it is still relevant in understanding organized crime and security challenges in Nigeria, especially in Niger State.

Methodology

The study used a cross-sectional survey design. The study population comprises victims who have suffered directly or indirectly from violent crimes in Niger State. A sample size of 400 was drawn using the Yamane statistics formula, while 378 were retrieved for analysis. A multistage sampling technique was adopted, while the data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics and chi-square-based measures. The interview was translated, transcribed, and subjected to thematic content analysis. All ethical standards were adhered to, and the participants were allowed to withdraw their participation at any point they felt their rights were violated.

Data Presentation and Interpretation

Impact of Violent Crimes on Human Security in Niger State, Nigeria

Table 1: Respondent's gender

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Male	220	58.2
Female	158	41.8
Total	378	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 1; shows the gender distribution of the respondents, with males constituting the majority at 220 respondents, representing 58.2% of the total sample, while females accounted for 158 respondents, or 41.8%. This distribution indicates a higher participation of males in the study, which may reflect the gender composition of the population sampled or the specific sectors and activities affected by the focus of the research. Nonetheless, the inclusion of both genders ensures a balanced representation of perspectives in addressing the issues under investigation.

Table 2: Respondents' age group

Response	Frequency	Percentage
18-24	81	21.4
25-34	123	32.5
35-44	89	23.5
45-54	59	15.6
55 and above	27	7.1
Total	378	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 2; presents the age distribution of respondents in the study. The majority of respondents fall within the age group of 25-34 years, accounting for 32.5% (123 individuals) of the total sample. This is followed by the age group of 35-44 years, representing 23.5% (89 individuals), and 18-24 years, with 21.4% (81 individuals). The age group of 45-54 years comprises 15.6% (59 individuals), while the least represented group is 55 years and above, accounting for 7.1% (27 individuals). This distribution suggests that the sample is predominantly composed of younger and middle-aged individuals,

which is reflective of the population's active working and economically productive segments.

Table 3: Respondent's level of education

Response	Frequency	Percentage
No formal education	63	16.7
Primary school	97	25.7
Secondary school	113	29.9
Tertiary education	105	27.8
Total	378	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table shows that respondents with primary school education now account for the largest group at 25.7%, followed by those with secondary education at 29.9% and tertiary education at 27.8%. A notable 16.7% of respondents reported having no formal education. These figures highlight a broader representation of respondents with lower education levels, which may reflect limited access to higher educational opportunities in the surveyed area.

Table 4: Response on how frequent violent crimes occur

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very often	95	25.1
Often	112	29.6
Sometimes	90	23.8
Rarely	58	15.3
Never	23	6.1
Total	378	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 4; reveals that majority of respondents (29.6%) reported that violent crimes occur "often" in their area, while 25.1% stated that such crimes occur "very often." A significant portion (23.8%) noted that violent crimes happen "sometimes," indicating a frequent, yet less regular, occurrence. Fewer respondents (15.3%) said that violent crimes occur "rarely," and a small minority (6.1%) claimed that violent crimes never occur in their area.

These findings indicate that violent crimes are a major concern in the region, with many respondents experiencing or being aware of frequent occurrences. This was further reiterated by a community leader in his words said that:

"From what I've observed, it happens intermittently but is on the rise. In the last six months, we've seen a sharp increase, especially during the holidays when people are out celebrating. The frequency might not seem alarming to outsiders, but for us living here, it feels like we're living in constant fear of the next incident. Maybe it's every two weeks or so, with the most serious crimes happening during the night."

A business owner in his words said that:

"I'd say that violent crime in our area has been increasing steadily. The last time I checked, I heard from the local authorities that in the past three months, there were at least 10 major violent incidents recorded. That's quite high for a community like ours. Most of these crimes happen during the late hours, which means people are always on edge in the evenings."

A local government official also said that:

"It's really unsettling. There are days when nothing happens, but then there are days when it feels like you can't escape the violence. One thing I've noticed is that these crimes often happen in the evenings or at night. It's almost like they're planned, because they usually occur when people are least expecting them. So, while it's hard to pinpoint a clear pattern, it seems like violent crime occurs at least once a week on average."

Table 5: Impact of Human Security

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Violent disrupts economic and social activities	80	21.2
Internal displacement has increased with violent crimes	70	18.5
Human rights abuses and violence from security agencies occur	50	13.2
Communities suffer loss of lives and properties	60	15.9
Food insecurity due to displacement	40	10.6

Restricted access to education	28	7.4
Psychological trauma and fear	25	6.6
Limited access to health care	15	4.0
Weak law enforcement/trust issues	10	2.6
Total	378	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 5: reveals that violent crimes, particularly banditry, have significantly undermined human security in Niger State. The key challenges identified are multidimensional, affecting economic activities, displacement, human rights, education, food security, healthcare, and public trust in security agencies.

Economic and Social Disruptions (21.2%)

Banditry has severely disrupted economic and social activities, as businesses shut down, farmers abandon their lands, and transportation becomes unsafe. This has worsened poverty and unemployment, further destabilizing communities.

Internal Displacement (18.5%)

The high frequency of displacement indicates that many residents are forced to flee their homes due to persistent attacks. This has led to overcrowded Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps, inadequate living conditions, and competition for limited resources.

Human Rights Abuses by Security Forces (13.2%)

A significant portion of respondents reported suffering abuses from military personnel assigned to combat banditry. This suggests that counterterrorism efforts have, in some cases, resulted in human rights violations, further exacerbating insecurity rather than resolving it.

Loss of Lives and Properties (15.9%)

Communities have suffered extensive losses due to killings, arson, and destruction of properties by bandits. This has left many families devastated and deepened fears among residents.

Food Insecurity (10.6%)

Banditry has led to large-scale displacement of farmers, reducing agricultural output and causing food shortages. The insecurity has also disrupted food supply chains, leading to rising food prices and malnutrition, especially among vulnerable populations.

Disruptions in Education (7.4%)

School closures due to bandit attacks have significantly affected children's education. Fear of abductions has forced parents to keep their children at home, contributing to high dropout rates and long-term socio-economic consequences.

Psychological Trauma and Fear (6.6%)

Continuous exposure to violence has caused psychological distress among residents. Many individuals, especially women and children, experience trauma, anxiety, and depression due to persistent fear and uncertainty.

8. Limited Access to Healthcare (4.0%)

Insecurity has made it difficult for people to access medical facilities, either due to attacks on healthcare centers or the inability of health workers to operate in high-risk areas. This has resulted in worsening health conditions, especially for pregnant women, children, and the elderly.

Weak Law Enforcement and Public Distrust (2.6%)

The low percentage of responses on weak law enforcement suggests that while people acknowledge the presence of security agencies, they lack trust in their effectiveness. Reports of delayed responses, corruption, and inadequate personnel contribute to this distrust.

"If violent crimes continue at their current levels, the future of human capital development in Niger State looks bleak. We're already seeing a decline in enrollment in schools, reduced participation in vocational training programs, and a lack of investment in skill development. Young people are being forced to focus on basic survival rather than building a future. In the long term, this will create a gap in the workforce as there won't be enough qualified individuals to fill essential roles, making it harder for the state to develop economically and socially."

A community leader added in his words that:

"The future of human capital development in Niger State is in serious jeopardy if the violent crime situation doesn't improve. It's already challenging to attract investors, and if this insecurity persists, there will be fewer opportunities for skill development. People are losing hope in the state's stability, and when that happens, they look elsewhere for opportunities, or worse, they stop seeking advancement altogether."

A trader in her words said that:

"The current situation is dissuading young people from pursuing education or vocational training. Many are dropping out of school to help their families survive or avoid dangerous areas, and the cycle is repeating itself. If the crime rate remains high, we're going to see a generation that is undereducated, under-skilled, and unprepared for the workforce. This will only make it harder to break free from poverty and underdevelopment."

Table 6: Security Policies Implemented to mitigate Violent crimes in Niger State

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Increased police patrols	132	34.9
Establishment of community watch	94	24.9

programs		
Deployment of military personnel to crime-prone areas	101	26.7
Strengthening of local government security agencies	51	13.5
Total	378	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

The table 6: reveals that the most common security policy implemented to mitigate violent crimes in Niger State is increased police patrols, with 34.9% of respondents indicating its occurrence. The deployment of military personnel to crime-prone areas follows closely at 26.7%, while 24.9% of respondents reported the establishment of community watch programs. The least reported measure is the strengthening of local government security agencies, at 13.5%. These results highlight the prominent role of law enforcement and military presence in addressing violent crime in the state, with community-based efforts like watch programs being less common but still notable. This was further reiterated by security personnel who in his words said that:

"The government has introduced several security policies, such as increased patrols by both police and military forces, and the establishment of security checkpoints in hotspots around the state. You cannot travel on high ways without seeing our men on checkpoints. Our patrol teams are working in the day and at night to ensure safety. The government has also launched a community policing initiative to build stronger relationships between the police and local communities."

A community leader also said that:

"I know the state government has been working on improving security by setting up task forces to tackle violent crime, and they've also been pushing for local community involvement. They've created hotlines for citizens to report suspicious activity and set up rapid response units to deal with emergencies. While these measures show an effort to address crime, the problem persists because many people still feel unsafe in certain areas. I think the security policies need to be more robust and proactive, especially in the most crime-ridden zones. There also needs to

be better coordination between the different security agencies to avoid confusion and inefficiency."

A local government official added that:

"The state government has implemented policies like curfews in high-risk areas, increased police presence, and partnerships with the military to combat violent crime. There's also been some focus on enhancing local intelligence gathering to detect and prevent criminal activities before they happen. I personally feel these measures are somewhat helpful, but they don't always solve the root causes of violent crime. Corruption, unemployment, and lack of access to basic services are still driving factors, and these security policies don't always address those underlying issues. It seems like we need a more holistic approach that combines law enforcement with economic and social support."

Table 7: Perceptions on how effective government security policies have been in in Niger state

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Very effective	57	15.1
Effective	72	19.0
Neutral	118	31.2
Ineffective	105	27.8
Very ineffective	20	6.9
Total	378	100

Source: Field Survey, 2024

Table 7: illustrates the respondents' perception of the effectiveness of government security policies in reducing violent crimes in Niger State. The majority, 31.2%, remained neutral, indicating uncertainty or indifference regarding the impact of the security policies. A combined 34.1% of respondents (15.1% very effective and 19.0% effective) viewed the policies positively, suggesting that a portion of the population believes the measures have been somewhat successful. Conversely, 27.8% felt the policies were ineffective, and 6.9% considered them very ineffective, pointing to a significant portion of respondents who believe the government's efforts are not yielding desired results. These findings highlight a mixed perception, with a considerable share of respondents uncertain or dissatisfied with the

current security measures in place. This was further supported by a women leader who in her words said that:

"We've seen an increase in police presence in certain areas, and some crimes are being addressed, but the policies don't seem to be tackling the root causes of violence. There's also a lack of trust in the security forces in some communities, which makes people hesitant to report crimes. Sometimes we will call police but they will not come until the criminals have finished doing whatever they want to do and left then police will come to ask very annoying questions to people."

A community youth leader in his words said that:

"The government's security policies have shown some positive results, especially with the establishment of community policing and security checkpoints, but the progress is slow. Violent crime, especially armed robbery and kidnapping, still occurs frequently, and some areas remain under the influence of criminal groups. I believe that while the presence of security personnel helps, it's not enough."

A stakeholder in his words said that:

"I would say that the government's security policies have had limited success in reducing violent crime. There's a noticeable police presence in the state, but it often feels like a reactive approach rather than a proactive one. The state is also facing challenges like limited resources and manpower, which hampers the effectiveness of these policies. The government has done well in creating awareness and encouraging citizens to report criminal activities, but they need to do more in terms of long-term prevention."

Findings

The study revealed that insecurity has led to severe economic and social disruptions, forced displacement, human rights abuses, loss of lives and properties, and declining trust in security agencies. Additionally, food insecurity, restricted access to education and healthcare, and psychological trauma further exacerbate the crisis.

The study further revealed that banditry has severely disrupted economic and social activities, as businesses shut down, farmers abandon their lands, and transportation becomes unsafe which has negative impact on human security in Nigeria State. This has worsened poverty and unemployment, and further destabilizing community, individual, food and health security in the study area.

Recommendations

In view of the findings, the following recommendations have been suggested:

- i. There is the need for the Niger State government to increase the funding of the judiciary and other law enforcement to enhance law enforcement and Judicial Processes in Niger State. if further added that the federal and state government can synergize towards strengthening law enforcement agencies and ensuring swift prosecution of criminals as well as improve crime documentation, will provide clearer patterns of criminal activity, and deter further violence.
- ii. The federal, state and critical stakeholders need to address the challenges of unemployment, poverty, homelessness as well as build infrastructure to cater for the immediate and expanded needs of the people to discourage new recruitment of bandits and other criminals in Niger State. this will be effective if government will address the displacement crisis by providing essential services and facilitating the safe return of affected populations directly speaks to the impact of violent crimes on human security. Thus, the study further recommends strengthening of security measures through enhancing intelligence gathering, increasing personnel deployment, and improving coordination among security agencies

will help reduce violent crimes and enhance overall security in the state.

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