

**FOOD SECURITY AND NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT: ASSESSING THE IMPACT
OF KIDNAPPING ON FOOD PRODUCTION IN EDO STATE (2020-2025)**

BY

Osaro OYOMARE

PG/SSC2016632

**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES,
UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY.**

APRIL, 2026

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**BEING A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE POSTGRADUATE COMMITTEE OF
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UNIVERSITY OF BENIN, BENIN CITY.**

APRIL, 2026

CERTIFICATION

We the undersigned certify that this project titled “**Community Policing And Crime Prevention in Urban Nigeria: An Assessment of Edo State Security Network (2021-2025)**” was carried out by Amenze IGIEBOR with matriculation number PG/EDU1105400 in the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Benin, Benin City.

Prof. Joseph Aihie
(Project Supervisor)
DATE_____

Dr. G.O. Igiebor
(Ag. Head of Department)
DATE_____

External Examiner
DATE_____

DEDICATION

This research work is dedicated to God Almighty, whose unfailing mercy, grace, and divine guidance sustained me throughout the course of this academic pursuit. His strength and provision made this journey possible and its completion a reality and also my parents (Mr Albert Alohan Oyomare, and Mrs Osaremen Vivian Oyomare) whose Love kept me focused and determined

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Indeed, this milestone marks not just the end of a programme, but the beginning of greater pursuits.

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ABSTRACT

Kidnapping has become a major security challenge in Nigeria, posing severe threats to rural communities that depend on agriculture for survival. In Ovia North-East Local Government Area of Edo State, frequent abductions between 2020 and 2025 disrupted farming activities, reduced farmers' access to farmlands, and undermined household livelihoods. This study examined the effects of kidnapping on agricultural productivity, farmers' income, food security, children's education, and community wellbeing. Findings from statistical data analysis revealed that persistent kidnappings forced many farmers to abandon their farmlands, leading to reduced food production and discouraging investment in agriculture. Household income declined significantly, pushing families into poverty and disrupting children's education as parents struggled to meet financial obligations. The scarcity of farm produce and other essential goods further increased food prices and worsening the economic hardship faced by rural households. Beyond these economic consequences, the fear and trauma of kidnapping eroded the psychological stability and social cohesion of communities. The study concluded that kidnapping constitutes not only a security problem but also a structural impediment to food security and rural development in Ovia North-East. It recommended strengthening community-based security, supporting affected farmers, and implementing holistic rural development strategies.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Food security remains a fundamental pillar for national development, as it ensures the sustenance and productivity of a nation's population. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2022), food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food. In Nigeria, agriculture contributes significantly to the gross domestic product (GDP) and employs a large percentage of the rural population, making it crucial for poverty alleviation and economic growth (National Bureau of Statistics, 2023). However, the sustainability of agricultural productivity has come under severe threat due to rising insecurity, particularly kidnapping, which has become rampant in recent years, especially in agrarian communities.

Edo State, located in the South-South geopolitical zone of Nigeria, has witnessed an alarming increase in kidnapping incidents between 2020 and 2025. This period saw numerous reports of farmers being abducted on their way to or from farms, thereby creating fear and discouraging agricultural activities in affected communities. Farmers, especially in local government areas like Ovia North-East, Ovia South-West, and Uhumwonde, have either abandoned their farms or significantly reduced their farming activities due to the fear of being kidnapped (Vanguard News, 2024). This trend has contributed to reduced food production levels, market shortages, and increased food prices, thereby aggravating the already fragile food security status of the state.

The persistent insecurity in farming communities has multifaceted implications. Apart from disrupting food supply chains, it has also led to the displacement of rural populations, destruction of livelihoods, and decline in agricultural investments. These consequences not only undermine the livelihood of individual farmers but also affect national food reserves, rural-urban migration trends, and economic productivity (Adewale & Ogunyemi, 2023). Insecurity-driven disruptions, particularly kidnapping, create systemic shocks that ripple through the entire agricultural value chain—from production to distribution—causing food scarcity and stunted national development.

Several studies have highlighted the link between insecurity and underdevelopment in Nigeria. For instance, Okoli and Orinya (2022) argued that the rise of criminality in rural areas, especially kidnapping, has reshaped the socioeconomic landscape of agricultural regions, making them less viable for sustained food production. Additionally, the government's efforts to promote agricultural transformation and self-sufficiency through programs such as the Anchor Borrowers' Programme have faced setbacks due to the persistent threat of insecurity. These challenges have cast doubt on the possibility of achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 2—Zero Hunger—by 2030, particularly in states like Edo where food production is under siege.

In light of the above, it becomes imperative to assess the impact of kidnapping on food production in Edo State within the specified period of 2020 to 2025. This study is motivated by the need to understand the extent to which kidnapping has contributed to the decline in food production and its broader implications for food security and national development. By investigating the relationship between insecurity and agricultural output, the study aims to

provide evidence-based recommendations for policy interventions that can restore confidence in farming activities and improve food supply systems in Edo State and beyond.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problem

Ovia North-East Local Government Area of Edo State, traditionally recognized for its agrarian economy and substantial food production, has increasingly become a hotspot for kidnapping activities over the past five years. The disturbing rise in abductions, particularly targeting farmers in remote communities, has significantly disrupted agricultural practices. Reports indicate that many farmers in areas such as Okada, and Ekiadolor are either abandoning their farmlands or scaling down production due to fear of being kidnapped (Vanguard News, 2024). This development has not only reduced farming activities but has also destabilized rural livelihoods and threatened food availability in both local and urban markets.

Despite the strategic importance of Ovia North-East to the food supply network in Edo State, there has been limited empirical research that specifically assesses how the growing wave of kidnapping affects food production in the area. Government interventions have often focused on broader security measures without addressing the specific impacts of insecurity on agricultural productivity and food security. Furthermore, there is a noticeable gap in localized data and stakeholder perspectives that could guide the formulation of effective, community-sensitive policies.

The problem becomes more critical when considered in the context of national development goals. Food production is essential not only for feeding the population but also for sustaining

rural economies, reducing unemployment, and curbing urban migration. The continued insecurity in Ovia North-East undermines these development priorities. In particular, it raises concerns about the capacity of the region to contribute meaningfully to Edo State's agricultural output and to Nigeria's broader food security agenda.

The economic implications are equally severe. As farmers reduce their cultivation areas or completely withdraw from farming, food scarcity becomes inevitable. This leads to increased food prices, heightened inflation, and rising levels of poverty and malnutrition, especially among vulnerable rural households. Yet, policy responses have remained largely reactive, lacking the precision needed to address the local realities of Ovia North-East and similar farming communities.

Given this context, it is crucial to investigate the extent to which kidnapping has affected food production in Ovia North-East. Understanding the scale, patterns, and socio-economic consequences of this security challenge will offer valuable insights for designing targeted interventions that promote agricultural resilience, safeguard rural livelihoods, and restore food security in the region.

1.3 Research Questions

1. To what extent has the incidence of kidnapping affected the farming activities and food production in Ovia North-East between 2020 and 2025?
2. What are the specific socio-economic consequences of kidnapping on farmers and rural households in Ovia North-East?

3. What strategies can be adopted by local communities and government authorities to mitigate the impact of kidnapping on food production in Ovia North-East?

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To examine the extent to which kidnapping has affected farming activities and food production in Ovia North-East between 2020 and 2025.
2. To analyze the socio-economic consequences of kidnapping on farmers and rural households in the study area.
3. To identify and recommend strategies that local communities and government authorities can adopt to reduce the impact of kidnapping on agricultural productivity in Ovia North-East.

1.5 Scope of the Study

This study specifically focuses on assessing the impact of kidnapping on food production in Ovia North-East Local Government Area of Edo State between the years 2020 and 2025. The scope is geographically limited to this area due to its significance as one of the major agrarian zones in Edo State and its increasing exposure to security threats, particularly kidnapping. The study will critically examine how kidnapping incidents within this period have affected farming activities, crop yield, access to farmlands, labour availability, and overall agricultural productivity. It will concentrate on major farming communities such as Okada, Ekiadolor, Ugbogui, Utekon, and Okokhuo, which are well known for the cultivation of staple crops and the presence of large and small-scale farms.

Ovia North-East is selected for this study because it represents a strategic agricultural belt in Edo State, contributing significantly to the state's food supply, including crops such as cassava, plantain, maize, vegetables, and palm produce. In recent years, however, the area has recorded a noticeable rise in kidnapping incidents, particularly targeting farmers, travellers, and residents of rural communities. This combination of high agricultural value and growing security threats makes it a critical location for assessing the link between insecurity and agricultural output. Furthermore, the local government area lies along major transit routes such as the Benin–Ore Expressway, which has become a hotspot for abductions, thereby disrupting the movement of farmers, farm inputs, and produce. These conditions make Ovia North-East a suitable and compelling case study for understanding how kidnapping undermines food production and rural livelihoods in Edo State.

By narrowing its focus in this way, the study aims to provide in-depth insights and practical recommendations relevant to Ovia North-East, while also offering implications for broader agricultural and security policy discussions in similar regions across Nigeria.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant as it addresses a critical intersection between insecurity and agricultural sustainability, focusing on the growing threat of kidnapping and its impact on food production in Ovia North-East, Edo State. By assessing this relationship, the study contributes to a better understanding of how insecurity affects rural livelihoods and national development, particularly in agrarian regions where agriculture is both a means of survival and a key driver of local economies.

For policymakers and government agencies, the study provides evidence-based insights that can inform the design and implementation of security strategies specifically tailored to protect farming communities. It will support the development of integrated approaches that combine security enhancement with rural development policies aimed at restoring farmers' confidence and boosting food production.

For local communities and agricultural stakeholders, the study identifies the socio-economic consequences of kidnapping on farmers and households, helping them recognize patterns of vulnerability and potential coping mechanisms. This can empower community-based responses and encourage collaborative efforts between security agencies and rural populations.

In the realm of academia and research, this study fills a knowledge gap by providing localized data and context-specific analysis on the impact of kidnapping on food security in Edo State, a subject that has not been extensively explored. It offers a useful foundation for further research on security-related disruptions in agricultural sectors across Nigeria and other developing nations.

Lastly, the study supports national development goals by linking food security with human security, economic stability, and social welfare. Its findings can contribute toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (particularly SDG 2 – Zero Hunger, and SDG 16 – Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), thereby making it relevant to both local and global development agendas.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction to the Literature Review

The literature review chapter is essential to the study as it lays the academic and empirical foundation for examining the relationship between food security, national development, and kidnapping in Edo State. It brings together relevant studies and frameworks that help explain how criminal activities, particularly kidnapping, have influenced agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods between 2020 and 2025. This review allows the research to be grounded in existing knowledge while highlighting the unique context of Edo State.

This chapter emphasizes the significant disruption kidnapping has caused to farming communities, especially in regions already vulnerable to food insecurity. It explores how the fear of abduction has led to the abandonment of farmlands, displacement of rural populations, and overall decline in agricultural output. By connecting these impacts to national development, the literature underscores how food insecurity can lead to broader economic instability, reduced income for farming households, and strain on social systems.

A wide range of sources is reviewed to capture both global and local perspectives on the issue. These include academic journals, reports from international bodies like the FAO and WFP, government documents, media reports, and case studies from Nigeria and other African countries. The literature is chosen to reflect both qualitative insights and statistical evidence, ensuring that the research builds on a comprehensive understanding of the topic.

The structure of the chapter follows a thematic approach, starting with definitions of key concepts such as food security, national development, and kidnapping. It then transitions into

discussions of global and regional trends in agricultural insecurity caused by violence, before narrowing its focus to Nigeria and Edo State. This arrangement allows the study to move from general insights to the specific case under investigation, while identifying knowledge gaps and providing direction for the study's research design.

2.2 Conceptual Overview

2.2.1 Food Security

The concept of food security has evolved over the years to encapsulate more than just the availability of food. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), food security exists when *“all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”* (FAO, 2020). This comprehensive definition reflects a multidimensional approach that includes access, quality, and sustainability. The World Food Programme (WFP) similarly emphasizes that food security involves consistent access to adequate food for healthy living, not just in times of abundance but also in periods of crisis (WFP, 2021). These definitions underscore the central role of food security in human development and global well-being.

Food security is commonly understood through four key dimensions: availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability. Availability refers to the supply of food through production, distribution, and exchange. Accessibility involves the economic and physical capacity of individuals to obtain food. Utilization is concerned with the nutritional value of food and the body's ability to absorb it, often influenced by sanitation and healthcare. Lastly, stability

relates to the consistent presence of the other three dimensions over time, without disruption from shocks such as conflict, climate change, or pandemics (IFPRI, 2022). These components must be met collectively to ensure that food security is achieved at both the individual and national levels.

The importance of food security transcends mere survival and plays a vital role in ensuring individual well-being. Adequate food intake supports proper physical development, cognitive function, and productivity, which are essential for quality of life and economic participation. Malnutrition, a consequence of food insecurity, is directly linked to increased morbidity and mortality, particularly among vulnerable groups like children and the elderly (UNICEF, 2023). Therefore, ensuring food security is a prerequisite for achieving health equity, educational outcomes, and workforce efficiency.

On a national scale, food security contributes significantly to social stability and economic growth. Nations that can provide sufficient food for their populations are less likely to experience unrest, migration pressures, or public health crises. Furthermore, a robust agricultural sector enhances GDP, reduces import dependency, and fosters employment opportunities, particularly in rural areas (World Bank, 2021). In Nigeria, where agriculture remains a critical sector of the economy, threats to food security such as insecurity and kidnapping can reverse development gains and fuel a cycle of poverty and instability (NBS, 2024).

Recent concerns about food insecurity have drawn global attention, especially in light of escalating conflicts, climate change, and economic volatility. In regions like Sub-Saharan Africa, and specifically in states like Edo in Nigeria, the impact of insecurity-related

disruptions such as kidnapping has become a major factor undermining food production and rural livelihoods (FAO, 2023). Understanding the concept and dimensions of food security is therefore essential to developing sustainable policies that can withstand both local and global shocks while supporting human development and national resilience.

2.2.2 Pillars of Food Security

Food security is a multi-dimensional concept that ensures that all individuals have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs for an active and healthy life (FAO, 1996). Central to understanding food security are its four pillars: availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability. Each pillar represents a distinct but interrelated aspect of food security, highlighting that merely producing enough food is not sufficient unless it is accessible, properly utilized, and consistently available over time (Barrett, 2010).

Availability refers to the physical presence of food in sufficient quantities and quality to meet the nutritional requirements of a population. This pillar emphasizes food production, storage, distribution, and supply chain mechanisms that ensure the population has access to adequate food (FAO, 2008). In rural agrarian contexts like Edo State, food availability depends heavily on local farming activities, crop yields, and market supply. Disruptions such as kidnapping, banditry, or other forms of insecurity can limit farmers' ability to cultivate and distribute crops, thereby reducing food availability for both local and broader markets (Ibrahim & Okolie, 2023).

Accessibility focuses on people's ability to obtain food, which is influenced by economic and physical factors. Economic access refers to the affordability of food and the purchasing power of households, while physical access considers proximity to markets, transport infrastructure, and social networks that facilitate food distribution (Pinstrup-Andersen, 2009). In many rural communities in Nigeria, including Ovia North-East, insecurity affects accessibility because farmers may abandon farmlands or avoid markets, increasing the cost of food and limiting household access. Consequently, even if food is available, households may remain food insecure due to barriers in obtaining it.

Utilization addresses the proper biological use of food and the capacity of the human body to absorb nutrients. This pillar involves dietary quality, food preparation, sanitation, and access to clean water, which together ensure that the consumed food contributes to health and nutrition (Saha et al., 2021). Malnutrition or poor dietary diversity can occur if available and accessible food is not adequately utilized. For example, in communities affected by kidnapping, households may resort to consuming low-quality or less nutritious foods due to reduced income and disrupted supply chains, thereby compromising nutritional outcomes despite the presence of some food in markets.

Stability refers to the consistency of food availability, accessibility, and utilization over time. It captures the resilience of food systems to shocks such as economic crises, natural disasters, and social insecurity (FAO, 2012). Food security is only meaningful if individuals have reliable access to adequate food throughout the year, without the risk of sudden shortages or price spikes. In Ovia North-East, repeated incidents of kidnapping can disrupt farming cycles, reduce seasonal harvests, and destabilize household food supplies, highlighting the

interdependence of all four pillars in maintaining overall food security (Adekola & Omoregie, 2024).

2.2.3 Household versus National-level Food Security

Food security is commonly conceptualized at two major analytical levels: the household and the national levels. While both levels address the availability, accessibility, and stability of food, their focus, indicators, and drivers differ significantly. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2023), national food security refers to a country's ability to ensure adequate food supply for its population through domestic production, food reserves, and imports. At this level, macroeconomic policies, agricultural productivity, trade regulations, and national storage capacity are central determinants. National food security therefore provides an overarching framework that influences local and household access but does not automatically translate into food-secure homes.

In contrast, household food security concerns the ability of an individual household to access sufficient, safe, and nutritious food for all members at all times. The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP, 2022) emphasizes that household food security is shaped by income levels, livelihood activities, market prices, social networks, and vulnerability to shocks such as conflict or kidnapping. Even when food is available nationally, households may still face food insecurity due to poverty, displacement, local conflicts, or restricted access caused by insecurity in their immediate environment. Thus, household food security captures the micro-level realities that national food availability statistics often obscure.

The distinction between these two levels is crucial because national food availability does not guarantee equitable distribution or access among households. As Maxwell (1996) argued, food security must be understood beyond supply-side metrics to include access, utilization, and stability at the household level. For instance, a country may record high national food production, yet households in conflict-prone regions may still go hungry due to insecurity, disrupted markets, or fear of accessing farmlands. This gap is evident in Nigeria, where national food production has not prevented widespread food insecurity among farming communities affected by kidnapping and rural banditry (Adewuyi & Okunola, 2023).

Moreover, the factors that undermine food security differ between the two levels. At the national level, threats may include climate shocks, macroeconomic instability, inflation, or disruptions in global trade (World Bank, 2023). At the household level, however, insecurity such as kidnapping, localized violence, and displacement directly hinder farm activities, income generation, and physical access to food. Studies in northern and southern Nigeria show that communities exposed to kidnapping experience reduced farm output, reduced market participation, and increased food prices, even when the national supply remains relatively stable (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2024). This demonstrates that security-related shocks have a more immediate and severe impact at the household level.

Therefore, effective food security policy must consider the interaction between household and national food security. National food security provides the structural conditions, production, trade policies, price stabilization, while household food security reflects the lived experience of individuals accessing and utilizing food. According to Barrett (2010), strong national food systems do not automatically translate into secure households unless policies address

inequality, insecurity, and localized barriers to access. For Edo State, where kidnapping increasingly disrupts farming households, understanding this dual-level framework is essential for designing interventions capable of protecting both national food availability and household food access. This distinction is vital in examining how kidnapping affects food production and, by extension, national development.

2.2.4 Food security in Nigeria

Food security in Nigeria remains a critical development issue despite the country's vast agricultural potential. Nigeria is endowed with arable land, favorable climatic conditions, and a large labor force engaged in agriculture. However, the country continues to experience widespread food insecurity, driven by economic, environmental, and socio-political challenges. In recent years, the situation has worsened, making food security a central concern for policymakers and development partners.

Nigeria faces a severe and growing food security crisis. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), about 30.6 million Nigerians were projected to experience acute food and nutrition insecurity during the 2025 lean season (FAO, 2025). This figure is expected to rise significantly, with estimates suggesting that up to 34.7 million Nigerians may face severe food insecurity by mid-2026 if urgent interventions are not implemented (FAO & Federal Ministry of Agriculture, 2025). Earlier reports also indicate a consistent upward trend, with nearly 25 million Nigerians at risk of hunger in 2023 (UNICEF, 2023). These statistics highlight a worsening crisis and place Nigeria among the countries with the highest number of food-insecure people globally.

One of the primary drivers of food insecurity in Nigeria is economic hardship. Rising inflation, particularly food inflation, has significantly reduced purchasing power. Food prices have surged dramatically in recent years, with staple items such as rice and beans becoming increasingly unaffordable for many households (FAO, 2024). Macroeconomic factors such as currency devaluation and the removal of fuel subsidies have increased transportation and production costs, further driving up food prices and limiting access to food for low-income populations.

Insecurity also plays a major role in worsening food insecurity across the country. Armed conflict, insurgency, banditry, and farmer-herder clashes have displaced farming communities and restricted access to farmlands. In northern Nigeria, particularly in conflict-affected states, agricultural activities have been severely disrupted (BusinessDay, 2025). Farmers are often forced to abandon their land due to fear of attacks, leading to reduced agricultural output and food shortages (Ijirshar et al., 2025).

Climate change has further intensified the food security challenge. Flooding, droughts, and irregular rainfall patterns have destroyed farmlands and reduced crop yields. For example, severe flooding in recent years affected millions of people and submerged large areas of farmland, resulting in significant production losses (FAO, 2024). Additionally, environmental issues such as desertification and soil degradation, especially in northern regions, continue to reduce agricultural productivity.

Nigeria's rapidly growing population also contributes to food insecurity. As the population increases, so does the demand for food. However, agricultural production has not kept pace with this growth, leading to supply shortages and increased food prices. This imbalance places additional strain on already vulnerable households. Another important factor is the low level

of agricultural productivity in Nigeria. Many farmers still rely on traditional farming methods, with limited access to modern technology, improved seeds, fertilizers, and irrigation systems. Access to finance is also a major constraint, as smallholder farmers often lack the capital needed to invest in improved agricultural practices (Abolade et al., 2025). These limitations hinder the ability of the agricultural sector to meet national food demands.

The effects of food insecurity in Nigeria are far-reaching. Malnutrition is widespread, particularly among children and women. Many children suffer from stunted growth, weakened immune systems, and increased risk of mortality due to inadequate nutrition (FAO, 2024). Food insecurity also reduces productivity, as individuals who do not have access to sufficient food are less able to work effectively, thereby affecting economic growth and development. In addition, food insecurity contributes to social and political instability. Rising food prices and shortages can lead to protests, increased crime rates, and, in extreme cases, conflict. This creates a cycle where instability further worsens food insecurity, making it more difficult to achieve sustainable development.

The Nigerian government and its partners have implemented several measures to address food insecurity. Agricultural programs aimed at supporting farmers with inputs, financing, and training have been introduced (Guardian, 2025). Humanitarian interventions by international organizations such as the FAO and UNICEF provide food assistance and nutritional support to vulnerable populations, particularly in conflict-affected areas. Efforts have also been made to stabilize food prices and improve market access, although these measures have had limited success due to persistent economic challenges.

Addressing food security in Nigeria requires a comprehensive and coordinated approach. Improving agricultural productivity through mechanization, access to quality inputs, and

extension services is essential. Addressing insecurity in farming regions is equally important, as it will enable farmers to return to their fields and increase production. Promoting climate-smart agriculture can help mitigate the effects of climate change, while improving access to finance will allow farmers to invest in better technologies. Strengthening food distribution systems and infrastructure can also reduce post-harvest losses and ensure that food reaches all parts of the country efficiently.

In conclusion, food security in Nigeria is a complex issue influenced by multiple interconnected factors, including economic instability, insecurity, climate change, and population growth. Despite the country's agricultural potential, millions of Nigerians continue to face hunger and malnutrition. The rising number of food-insecure individuals highlights the urgency of effective interventions. With the right policies, investments, and commitment, Nigeria can overcome these challenges and move toward achieving sustainable food security for its population.

2.2.5 Food Security as a Driver of National Development

Food security is widely recognized as a foundational element of national development because it directly influences the health, well-being, and productivity of the population. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2023), a food-secure nation ensures that its citizens have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food at all times. This stable access reduces hunger, malnutrition, and disease prevalence, thereby improving life expectancy and overall population health. Healthy populations contribute more effectively to economic activities and place less strain on public health systems, enabling governments to channel resources toward infrastructure, education, and other development priorities.

Economically, food security stimulates national development by enhancing labour productivity and promoting economic growth. Well-nourished individuals tend to be more productive, innovative, and capable of sustained work performance. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI, 2021) notes that food-secure households demonstrate higher farm output, better labour efficiency, and greater participation in income-generating activities. At the macroeconomic level, stable food systems reduce production shocks, stabilize prices, and promote investor confidence in agriculture—one of the largest economic sectors in many developing countries, including Nigeria. Thus, food security becomes a catalyst for broad-based economic development.

Food security also drives national development by supporting agricultural transformation and rural development. Agriculture remains a vital sector for employment, export earnings, and industrial raw materials in many African economies. The World Bank (2022) emphasizes that when countries invest in ensuring food availability and accessibility, they unlock the potential of agricultural value chains, from production to processing, distribution, and marketing. This generates employment, reduces rural poverty, and promotes inclusive development. Moreover, food-secure rural populations are less likely to migrate to urban centres, reducing urban congestion and pressure on limited city infrastructure.

Furthermore, food security contributes to social stability and national cohesion, which are essential for sustainable development. Severe food insecurity has been linked to increased crime rates, violent conflicts, and political instability across sub-Saharan Africa (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2022). When food is abundant and accessible, grievances related to deprivation and inequality are minimized, reducing the likelihood of

social unrest. Nigeria's recent security challenges, including farmer-herder conflicts and kidnapping, illustrate how threats to food systems can escalate into broader national crises. Ensuring food security therefore strengthens peace, stability, and the conducive environment needed for development initiatives to thrive.

Hence, food security enhances human capital development, which is central to long-term national advancement. Adequate nutrition supports cognitive development, improves school performance, and boosts workforce skills. According to UNICEF (2021), children from food-secure households are more likely to complete schooling and attain higher levels of academic achievement, contributing to a more skilled and competitive labour force. Enhanced human capital promotes innovation, technological adoption, and improved governance, all of which drive sustainable national development. Thus, food security acts not only as a social welfare objective but as a strategic economic and developmental imperative for national prosperity.

2.3 Development

The concept of development has undergone a significant transformation over time, evolving from a narrow economic interpretation to a broad, multidimensional framework that encompasses human well-being, social equity, political freedom, and environmental sustainability. In its earliest usage, particularly in the post-Second World War era, development was largely understood in terms of economic growth. Countries were considered developed if they achieved sustained increases in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) or Gross National Income (GNI). This perspective was strongly influenced by modernization theorists such as Rostow, who argued that societies pass through linear stages of growth, ultimately reaching a stage of high mass consumption (Rostow, 1960). Within this framework,

industrialization, capital accumulation, and technological advancement were viewed as the primary drivers of development.

However, this growth-centered view soon attracted criticism as it became evident that economic expansion did not automatically translate into improved living conditions for the majority of the population. Many countries experienced rising GDP alongside persistent poverty, unemployment, and inequality. This disconnect led scholars and policymakers to reconsider the meaning of development and to adopt more people-centered approaches. One of the most influential contributions in this regard came from Amartya Sen, who reconceptualized development as the expansion of human capabilities and freedoms. According to Sen (1999), development is not merely about increasing income but about enhancing individuals' ability to lead lives they value. This perspective shifted attention toward access to education, healthcare, and opportunities, emphasizing that true development must improve the quality of human life.

Building on this idea, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) introduced the Human Development Index (HDI), which measures development using indicators such as life expectancy, education, and income. This marked a significant departure from purely economic metrics and reinforced the idea that development is inherently multidimensional (UNDP, 2023). At the same time, growing awareness of environmental challenges led to the emergence of the concept of sustainable development. Popularized by the Brundtland Commission in 1987, sustainable development emphasizes the need to balance present economic and social needs with the preservation of environmental resources for future generations (WCED, 1987). This approach highlights the interconnectedness of economic

growth, social inclusion, and environmental protection, arguing that neglecting any of these dimensions undermines long-term development.

In addition to these perspectives, structural and dependency theorists offered critical insights into the global dynamics of development. They argued that underdevelopment is not simply a stage through which countries pass but a condition shaped by historical exploitation and unequal economic relationships between developed and developing nations. According to Frank (1967), the global capitalist system perpetuates inequality by extracting resources from poorer countries while enriching wealthier ones. This perspective challenged the universality of Western development models and called for alternative strategies tailored to the specific contexts of developing countries.

Furthermore, the role of political institutions and governance has become increasingly recognized as central to development outcomes. Effective institutions, characterized by transparency, accountability, and the rule of law, are essential for managing resources, implementing policies, and fostering economic growth. Conversely, weak institutions and corruption can hinder development by misallocating resources and undermining public trust (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2012). This institutional perspective underscores that development is not solely about economic or social factors but also about the quality of governance and political organization.

Cultural and social dimensions also play a crucial role in shaping development processes. Development is not a one-size-fits-all concept, as different societies have distinct values, traditions, and priorities. Imposing external models without considering local contexts can lead to resistance and failure. As a result, participatory approaches that involve communities

in decision-making have gained prominence, ensuring that development initiatives are more inclusive and culturally appropriate.

In contemporary discourse, development has become even more expansive, incorporating issues such as gender equality, digital transformation, and inclusive growth. The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations in 2015 reflects this comprehensive vision, addressing a wide range of global challenges, including poverty, health, education, inequality, and climate change (United Nations, 2015). These goals highlight the need for coordinated global action and recognize that development must be inclusive, equitable, and sustainable.

In conclusion, the concept of development has evolved from a narrow focus on economic growth to a complex and multidimensional idea that prioritizes human well-being, social justice, and environmental sustainability. It is both a process and an outcome, involving continuous improvement in the quality of life and the expansion of opportunities for all individuals. As global challenges continue to evolve, the understanding of development will likely adapt further, requiring innovative and inclusive approaches that address the interconnected nature of economic, social, political, and environmental issues.

2.3.1 Dimensions of Development

Development is a broad and multidimensional concept, and as such, it can be classified into various types depending on the focus, scope, and objectives involved. These types of development are interconnected and often overlap in practice, but each highlights a particular aspect of societal progress. Understanding the different types of development is essential for analyzing how societies grow, transform, and improve the well-being of their populations.

One of the most commonly discussed types is economic development, which refers to the process by which a country increases its productive capacity and improves the standard of living of its people. Economic development goes beyond mere economic growth, which is typically measured by increases in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It involves structural changes in the economy, such as industrialization, technological advancement, diversification of production, and reduction in unemployment and poverty. According to Todaro and Smith (2020), economic development also includes improvements in income distribution and the creation of opportunities for productive employment. In many developing countries, economic development remains a central goal because it provides the foundation for other forms of development.

Closely related to economic development is social development, which focuses on improving the quality of life of individuals and communities. This type of development emphasizes access to basic services such as education, healthcare, housing, and social security. It also includes efforts to reduce inequality, promote social inclusion, and protect vulnerable groups. Social development recognizes that economic growth alone is insufficient if it does not translate into better living conditions for the population. Indicators such as literacy rates, life expectancy, and access to clean water are often used to measure social development. In this sense, social development is integral to human welfare and long-term societal stability.

Another important type is political development, which refers to the evolution of political systems and institutions that promote good governance, participation, and accountability. Political development involves the establishment of democratic institutions, the rule of law, the protection of human rights, and transparent governance. It ensures that citizens have a

voice in decision-making processes and that leaders are held accountable for their actions. Scholars such as Acemoglu and Robinson (2012) argue that inclusive political institutions are essential for sustainable development because they create an environment where economic and social policies can be effectively implemented.

Human development is a broader and more people-centered concept that integrates economic and social dimensions. It focuses on expanding individuals' capabilities, choices, and freedoms. As articulated by Sen (1999), human development is about enabling people to lead lives they value. This type of development emphasizes education, health, gender equality, and empowerment. The Human Development Index (HDI), developed by the United Nations Development Programme, is a key tool for measuring progress in this area. Human development shifts the focus from national income to human well-being, making it a more comprehensive measure of progress.

In recent decades, sustainable development has gained prominence as a critical type of development. It addresses the need to balance economic growth with environmental protection and social equity. Sustainable development recognizes that natural resources are finite and that environmental degradation can undermine long-term development. It promotes practices such as renewable energy use, conservation of biodiversity, and responsible consumption. The concept was popularized by the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987), which emphasized intergenerational equity—ensuring that future generations have access to the resources they need. Today, sustainable development is central to global policy frameworks such as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Another significant type is technological development, which involves the advancement and application of technology to improve productivity, efficiency, and quality of life. Technological development plays a crucial role in modern economies by driving innovation, enhancing communication, and enabling industrial growth. It has transformed sectors such as agriculture, healthcare, education, and transportation. In the digital age, access to information and communication technologies has become a key determinant of development, often referred to as digital development.

Rural and urban development are also important categories that focus on specific geographical areas. Rural development aims to improve the living conditions of people in rural areas by enhancing agricultural productivity, providing infrastructure, and ensuring access to basic services. It addresses issues such as poverty, food security, and rural-urban migration. Urban development, on the other hand, deals with the planning and management of cities to ensure sustainable growth, adequate housing, transportation, and environmental management. Both types are essential for balanced national development, as neglecting one can lead to regional disparities and social tensions.

Among all these types, national development occupies a central position because it encompasses the overall progress of a country. National development refers to the comprehensive improvement in the economic, social, political, and cultural well-being of a nation. It involves coordinated efforts by the government, private sector, and civil society to achieve sustainable growth and improve the quality of life for all citizens. National development includes elements such as economic prosperity, social justice, political stability, national unity, and infrastructural advancement.

National development is often measured using a combination of indicators, including GDP growth, literacy rates, healthcare access, employment levels, and infrastructure development. However, it also involves less tangible aspects such as national identity, cultural preservation, and social cohesion. In many countries, national development plans and policies are designed to address key challenges such as poverty, inequality, unemployment, and corruption. For example, investments in education and healthcare contribute to human capital development, while infrastructure projects enhance economic productivity and connectivity.

Furthermore, national development requires effective governance and strategic planning. Governments play a crucial role in setting development priorities, allocating resources, and creating an enabling environment for growth. At the same time, citizen participation and accountability are essential to ensure that development efforts are inclusive and equitable. In developing countries, national development is often linked to overcoming historical challenges such as colonial legacies, weak institutions, and economic dependency. In addition to these major types, other forms of development include cultural development, which focuses on preserving and promoting cultural heritage and values, and institutional development, which involves strengthening organizations and systems that support societal functioning. Each of these types contributes to the overall development process and highlights the multifaceted nature of progress.

In conclusion, development is not a single, uniform process but a complex interplay of various types that collectively shape the advancement of societies. Economic, social, political, human, sustainable, technological, and spatial forms of development all contribute to improving human well-being. Among them, national development serves as an overarching

framework that integrates these different dimensions into a cohesive strategy for progress. A comprehensive approach to development must therefore consider all these aspects to achieve balanced, inclusive, and sustainable outcomes.

2.3.2 National Development

National development refers to the comprehensive process by which a country improves the economic, political, and social well-being of its people. It encompasses progress in infrastructure, education, health, income distribution, industrialization, and governance. According to Todaro and Smith (2020), national development involves both economic growth and structural transformation that enhances quality of life. Common indicators used to measure national development include Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Human Development Index (HDI), literacy rates, access to healthcare, and poverty reduction metrics (UNDP, 2022). These indicators help to assess a country's overall progress toward creating inclusive, sustainable, and equitable societies.

The relationship between food systems and national development is deeply interwoven. Food systems, which include production, processing, distribution, and consumption, are foundational to a country's economy and the health of its population. A secure and sustainable food system not only ensures nourishment but also supports employment, income generation, and trade. Conversely, disruptions in food systems, due to insecurity, climate change, or poor governance, can significantly impede national development goals (FAO, 2023). This interdependence means that improving food systems is not only an agricultural concern but a central part of broader development strategies.

In Nigeria, agriculture remains a cornerstone of the economy, contributing significantly to employment and rural livelihoods. Food security and agriculture are central to the country's development policies and are directly aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 2: Zero Hunger, and Goal 1: No Poverty. Nigeria's Vision 2050, which aims to place the country among the top 20 economies in the world, recognizes that a robust agricultural sector is essential for inclusive growth, poverty alleviation, and industrialization (National Planning Commission, 2023). Ensuring food security enhances human capital development by reducing malnutrition and improving labor productivity, both of which are crucial for national development.

Moreover, agricultural development serves as a catalyst for other sectors. Improved food systems lead to better health outcomes, which in turn reduce public health expenditure and increase productivity. Additionally, food-related industries such as agro-processing and food logistics create value chains that foster innovation, entrepreneurship, and job creation (World Bank, 2021). When food production is threatened, such as through insecurity or kidnapping, these developmental benefits are undermined, leading to food shortages, inflation, rural-urban migration, and social unrest, all of which slow national progress.

Given Nigeria's demographic and economic realities, strengthening the agricultural sector and ensuring food security are vital components of its long-term development agenda. The government, through various policies such as the Agricultural Promotion Policy (2016–2020), National Development Plan (2021–2025), and Vision 2050, emphasizes the need for investment in rural development, climate-resilient agriculture, and food value chains (FMARD, 2024). Thus, achieving national development in Nigeria is closely tied to creating a

secure, productive, and inclusive food system that supports not only economic growth but also social stability and sustainable development.

2.3.3 Key Indices of National Development

National development is a multidimensional concept that reflects the overall progress and improvement in the economic, social, political, and technological well-being of a country. It goes beyond mere economic growth to include improvements in living standards, reduction in inequality, access to essential services, and the promotion of human dignity. To effectively measure and evaluate national development, scholars and international organizations rely on several key indices. These indices provide quantifiable and comparable data that help policymakers, researchers, and institutions assess a nation's level of progress and identify areas requiring intervention.

One of the most widely used indices of national development is the Human Development Index (HDI). Developed by the United Nations Development Programme, the HDI measures development based on three core dimensions: life expectancy, education, and standard of living (UNDP, 2023). Life expectancy reflects the health conditions of a population, while education is measured through mean years of schooling and expected years of schooling. Standard of living is assessed using Gross National Income (GNI) per capita. The HDI is particularly important because it shifts the focus from purely economic measures to human well-being, emphasizing that development should be people-centered rather than income-centered (Todaro & Smith, 2020). Countries with higher HDI values generally enjoy better healthcare systems, higher literacy rates, and improved living conditions.

Another important index is Gross Domestic Product (GDP), which measures the total monetary value of goods and services produced within a country over a specific period. GDP is often used as an indicator of economic performance and growth (World Bank, 2022). A rising GDP suggests increased economic activity, higher employment levels, and improved income generation. However, GDP has limitations as a measure of development because it does not account for income distribution, environmental degradation, or the informal sector, which is significant in many developing countries. Despite these limitations, GDP remains a central tool for assessing economic strength and comparing national economies.

Closely related to GDP is Gross National Income (GNI), which includes the total income earned by a country's residents and businesses, including income from abroad. GNI provides a broader perspective on national income and is often used in conjunction with other indicators to assess economic development (World Bank, 2022). It is particularly useful in understanding the economic capacity of a nation and its citizens' purchasing power.

The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is another key measure of national development. Unlike traditional poverty measures that focus solely on income, the MPI considers multiple deprivations that individuals face in areas such as health, education, and living standards (Alkire & Foster, 2011). Indicators within the MPI include access to clean water, sanitation, electricity, housing, and schooling. This index provides a more comprehensive understanding of poverty and helps policymakers design targeted interventions to address various forms of deprivation. It highlights that poverty is not only about low income but also about lack of access to basic services and opportunities.

Income inequality is measured using the Gini coefficient, which assesses the distribution of income within a population. A Gini coefficient of zero represents perfect equality, while a value of one indicates extreme inequality (OECD, 2021). High levels of income inequality can hinder national development by limiting access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities for large segments of the population. Countries with lower inequality tend to experience more inclusive growth and social stability.

Another critical index is the Poverty Headcount Ratio, which measures the proportion of the population living below the national or international poverty line. This index is essential for understanding the extent of poverty in a country and tracking progress in poverty reduction efforts (World Bank, 2022). It is widely used in evaluating the effectiveness of development policies and programs aimed at improving living conditions.

The Literacy Rate and Education Index are also vital indicators of national development. Education plays a fundamental role in human capital development, economic productivity, and social progress. The literacy rate measures the percentage of people who can read and write, while the education index considers enrollment rates and years of schooling (UNESCO, 2022). High literacy levels are associated with better employment opportunities, higher incomes, and improved quality of life. Education also empowers individuals to participate actively in civic and political processes.

Health indicators, such as life expectancy, infant mortality rate, and maternal mortality rate, are essential components of national development. Life expectancy reflects the overall health conditions and quality of healthcare systems in a country, while infant and maternal mortality rates indicate the effectiveness of health services and access to medical care (WHO, 2021).

Improvements in these indicators are often linked to better nutrition, sanitation, and healthcare infrastructure.

Infrastructure development is another key index of national development. This includes access to roads, electricity, water supply, and communication systems. Adequate infrastructure supports economic activities, facilitates trade, and improves the quality of life for citizens. For example, access to electricity enables industrial growth, while reliable transportation networks enhance the movement of goods and people. The level of infrastructural development often reflects a country's capacity for sustainable growth and development.

The Environmental Performance Index (EPI) has gained prominence in recent years as concerns about sustainability and climate change have increased. This index evaluates a country's environmental health and ecosystem vitality, including factors such as air quality, water resources, biodiversity, and climate policies (Yale Center for Environmental Law & Policy, 2022). Sustainable development requires balancing economic growth with environmental protection, making the EPI an important tool for assessing long-term development prospects.

Another significant measure is the Global Competitiveness Index (GCI), developed by the World Economic Forum. This index assesses the productivity and competitiveness of a country's economy based on factors such as institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic stability, education, and innovation (World Economic Forum, 2023). A competitive economy is better positioned to attract investment, create jobs, and sustain economic growth.

Political and governance indicators also play a crucial role in national development. Indices such as the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) and the Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI) measure transparency, accountability, rule of law, and government effectiveness (Transparency International, 2023; World Bank, 2022). Good governance is essential for efficient resource allocation, policy implementation, and the promotion of social justice. Countries with strong institutions and low levels of corruption tend to achieve higher levels of development.

In addition, the Gender Development Index (GDI) and Gender Inequality Index (GII) highlight disparities between men and women in areas such as health, education, and economic participation (UNDP, 2023). Gender equality is a critical aspect of national development, as empowering women contributes to economic growth, improved family welfare, and social progress.

In conclusion, national development is a complex and multifaceted process that cannot be measured by a single indicator. Instead, a combination of economic, social, health, educational, environmental, and governance indices provides a comprehensive assessment of a country's progress. While indices such as GDP and GNI capture economic performance, others like HDI, MPI, and Gini coefficient offer deeper insights into human well-being and inequality. For sustainable and inclusive development, policymakers must consider all these indices and adopt holistic strategies that address the diverse needs of their populations. Ultimately, true national development is achieved when economic growth translates into improved living standards, reduced inequality, and enhanced quality of life for all citizens.

2.3.4 Food Security and National Development

Food security and national development are deeply interconnected concepts that play a critical role in shaping the economic, social, and political stability of nations. Food security, broadly defined, exists when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs for an active and healthy life (FAO, 2008). National development, on the other hand, refers to the overall improvement in the well-being of a country, encompassing economic growth, social progress, political stability, and improved quality of life. The relationship between these two concepts is reciprocal: food security drives national development, while the level of national development determines the extent to which food security can be achieved and sustained.

Food security is commonly understood through four key dimensions: availability, access, utilization, and stability. Food availability refers to the supply of food through domestic production, imports, or food aid. Access involves the ability of individuals and households to obtain food, which is influenced by income levels, market prices, and distribution systems. Utilization relates to how the body uses food, emphasizing nutrition, food safety, and health conditions. Stability ensures that these three dimensions are sustained over time without disruption due to economic shocks, conflicts, or environmental changes (FAO, 2008). These pillars collectively determine whether a population is food secure.

The role of food security in national development is evident in its impact on economic growth. A well-nourished population is more productive, physically capable, and mentally alert, which enhances labor efficiency and economic output. Conversely, food insecurity leads to malnutrition, reduced productivity, and increased healthcare costs, thereby hindering

economic progress. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization, hunger and malnutrition can reduce a country's GDP by several percentage points due to lost productivity and increased health expenditures (FAO, 2013). In developing countries, where agriculture often employs a large proportion of the population, improving food security through agricultural development can significantly boost economic performance.

Food security also plays a crucial role in social development. Access to adequate nutrition is essential for human development, particularly in areas such as education and health. Malnourished children are more likely to experience stunted growth, cognitive impairments, and poor academic performance. This, in turn, affects human capital development and limits future economic opportunities. Sen (1999) emphasizes that development should be viewed as the expansion of human capabilities, and food security is fundamental to this process because it directly influences individuals' ability to live healthy and productive lives. Thus, ensuring food security contributes to improved educational outcomes, better health, and reduced poverty.

Furthermore, food security is closely linked to political stability and governance, which are key components of national development. Food shortages and rising food prices have historically been associated with social unrest, protests, and even conflicts. For instance, spikes in global food prices have contributed to political instability in various regions, highlighting the importance of stable food systems for maintaining peace and order. Governments that fail to ensure food security risk losing public trust and legitimacy. Therefore, effective policies that promote agricultural productivity, stabilize food prices, and ensure equitable distribution are essential for sustaining national development.

Agriculture, as a primary source of food, plays a central role in the relationship between food security and national development. Investments in agricultural infrastructure, research, and technology can increase food production, reduce post-harvest losses, and improve rural livelihoods. In many developing countries, rural development and food security are closely intertwined, as a significant portion of the population depends on agriculture for income and sustenance. Enhancing agricultural productivity not only ensures food availability but also generates employment, reduces poverty, and stimulates economic growth (Todaro & Smith, 2020).

However, achieving food security is increasingly challenged by factors such as climate change, population growth, urbanization, and economic inequality. Climate change, in particular, poses a significant threat to food production through changing weather patterns, droughts, floods, and other extreme events. These disruptions affect crop yields, livestock production, and food supply chains, thereby undermining food security. The concept of sustainable development, as articulated in the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987), emphasizes the need to adopt environmentally sustainable practices to ensure long-term food security and national development. This includes promoting climate-resilient agriculture, conserving natural resources, and reducing environmental degradation.

In addition, globalization and trade policies have significant implications for food security and national development. While international trade can enhance food availability by allowing countries to import food, it can also expose them to global market fluctuations and dependency on external sources. Developing countries must therefore strike a balance

between domestic food production and participation in global markets to ensure resilience and self-sufficiency.

The international community has recognized the importance of food security in achieving sustainable development. The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), aim to end hunger, achieve food security, improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030 (United Nations, 2015). This goal underscores the centrality of food security in the broader development agenda and highlights the need for coordinated efforts at national and global levels.

In conclusion, food security is both a prerequisite for and an outcome of national development. It influences economic productivity, social well-being, political stability, and environmental sustainability. Without adequate access to food, individuals cannot achieve their full potential, and nations cannot attain sustainable development. Conversely, a well-developed nation is better equipped to ensure food security through effective policies, infrastructure, and resource management. Addressing food security challenges therefore requires a comprehensive and integrated approach that considers economic, social, political, and environmental factors. By prioritizing food security, countries can lay a strong foundation for inclusive and sustainable national development.

2.3.5 Food Security and National Development in Nigeria

Food security and national development in Nigeria are closely intertwined, forming a critical foundation for the country's economic growth, social stability, and overall progress. As Africa's most populous nation, Nigeria faces significant challenges in ensuring that its citizens have access to adequate, safe, and nutritious food. These challenges, in turn, have

profound implications for its national development trajectory. Understanding this relationship requires an examination of the nature of food security in Nigeria, its determinants, and its impacts on various dimensions of development.

Food security in Nigeria is defined, in line with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), as a condition in which all individuals have consistent physical, social, and economic access to sufficient and nutritious food for a healthy life (FAO, 2008). However, achieving this ideal remains a major challenge. Recent data indicate that millions of Nigerians experience food insecurity, with approximately 31 million people facing acute food shortages and projections suggesting that over 33 million could be affected during lean seasons (FAO, 2024; National Planning Commission, 2024). Additionally, structural issues such as poverty, conflict, and environmental degradation have contributed to widespread hunger, with nearly 31 million Nigerians reported to be experiencing acute food insecurity in recent years.

Historically, Nigeria was largely food secure, especially in the period immediately after independence in 1960, when agriculture was the backbone of the economy and a major source of export earnings. During this period, the country produced sufficient food for domestic consumption and even exported agricultural commodities such as cocoa, groundnuts, and palm oil. However, the discovery of oil and the subsequent shift in economic focus away from agriculture led to a decline in food production and increased reliance on food imports (Voice of Nigeria, 2025). This structural transformation weakened the agricultural sector and laid the foundation for contemporary food security challenges.

One of the most significant ways in which food security influences national development in Nigeria is through its impact on economic growth. Agriculture remains a vital sector,

contributing about 24% of Nigeria's GDP and employing over 60% of the labor force. As such, improvements in food security through increased agricultural productivity can stimulate economic growth, generate employment, and reduce poverty. Conversely, food insecurity undermines economic development by reducing labor productivity, increasing healthcare costs, and limiting human capital formation. Empirical studies have shown that food security variables such as food availability and accessibility have a direct impact on Nigeria's economic growth, as measured by GDP (Olorunmola et al., 2023).

Food security also plays a crucial role in social development in Nigeria. Adequate nutrition is essential for physical health, cognitive development, and educational attainment. However, widespread food insecurity has led to high levels of malnutrition, particularly among children. Reports indicate significant rates of stunting, wasting, and underweight conditions among Nigerian children, which negatively affect their ability to learn and develop. This situation undermines human capital development, which is a key driver of national progress. As Sen (1999) argues, development involves expanding human capabilities, and food security is fundamental to achieving this goal.

In addition to its economic and social implications, food security is closely linked to political stability and national security in Nigeria. Food shortages, rising food prices, and unequal access to food resources can lead to social unrest, protests, and conflicts. In Nigeria, issues such as farmer-herder conflicts, insurgency in the northeast, and banditry in rural areas have disrupted agricultural activities and displaced farmers, further exacerbating food insecurity. At the same time, food insecurity itself can fuel instability by increasing poverty and

desperation among affected populations. This cyclical relationship highlights the importance of food security as a component of national security and governance.

Several factors contribute to food insecurity in Nigeria, thereby affecting national development. One major factor is climate change, which has led to unpredictable rainfall patterns, droughts, and flooding. These environmental challenges reduce agricultural productivity and threaten food availability. Additionally, insecurity in major food-producing regions has forced many farmers to abandon their land, leading to decreased food production and increased prices. Economic factors such as inflation, rising transportation costs, and limited access to finance for smallholder farmers also play a significant role. Studies have shown that lack of access to credit limits farmers' ability to invest in improved inputs and technologies, thereby reducing productivity and food supply.

Population growth is another critical factor. With a population exceeding 200 million, Nigeria faces increasing demand for food, which often outpaces domestic production. Despite the large agricultural workforce, productivity remains relatively low due to outdated farming techniques, poor infrastructure, and limited technological adoption. Although agriculture contributes significantly to GDP, inefficiencies in the sector prevent it from meeting the food needs of the population.

The implications of food insecurity for national development are far-reaching. Economically, it constrains growth by reducing workforce productivity and increasing dependence on food imports, which strains foreign exchange reserves. Socially, it exacerbates poverty, inequality, and health challenges. Politically, it threatens stability and governance by increasing the likelihood of conflict and undermining public trust in government institutions.

Environmentally, unsustainable agricultural practices driven by the need to increase food production can lead to land degradation and loss of biodiversity.

To address these challenges, Nigeria has implemented various policies and initiatives aimed at improving food security and promoting national development. These include agricultural transformation programs, investment in mechanized farming, and partnerships with international organizations. For instance, recent collaborations and investments in agriculture aim to modernize farming practices, improve value chains, and reduce post-harvest losses. Such initiatives are essential for transitioning from subsistence agriculture to large-scale, commercial farming, which can enhance food production and support economic growth.

Furthermore, achieving food security in Nigeria requires a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach. This includes improving rural infrastructure, enhancing access to finance, promoting agricultural research and innovation, and strengthening institutions. It also involves addressing underlying issues such as poverty, inequality, and conflict. Sustainable agricultural practices, climate resilience strategies, and effective governance are critical to ensuring long-term food security and national development.

In conclusion, food security is both a determinant and an outcome of national development in Nigeria. It influences economic growth, social well-being, political stability, and environmental sustainability. Despite its vast agricultural potential, Nigeria continues to face significant food security challenges that hinder its development efforts. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated policies, investments, and institutional reforms aimed at transforming the agricultural sector and improving access to food for all citizens. By

prioritizing food security, Nigeria can lay a strong foundation for sustainable and inclusive national development.

2.4 Linkages between Rural Agriculture, Food Security, and Sustainable Development

Rural agriculture plays a foundational role in ensuring food security because it is the primary source of food production in most developing countries. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2023), over 70% of the food consumed in sub-Saharan Africa originates from smallholder farmers who operate within rural communities. These farmers contribute directly to national food availability and indirectly to food access through market supplies and local trade networks. As a result, any disruption to rural agricultural systems, whether due to conflict, climate shocks, or insecurity, has immediate implications for household and national food security. In many rural settings, food systems are highly localized, meaning that production and consumption occur within the same geographic area; thus, production shocks quickly translate into food shortages, rising prices, and nutritional deficiencies. This underscores the vulnerability of food systems that rely heavily on rain-fed agriculture and limited storage or processing infrastructure.

The relationship between rural agriculture and food security is further reinforced through rural livelihoods and income generation. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD, 2022) emphasizes that agriculture provides the primary source of income for most rural households, enabling them to purchase food, invest in nutrition, and strengthen resilience against food shocks. In addition to crop farming, rural agriculture encompasses livestock rearing, fisheries, and agro-processing activities, all of which diversify income sources and enhance economic stability. When agricultural productivity increases, rural households

achieve better food access and dietary diversity, including the consumption of protein-rich and micronutrient-dense foods. Conversely, low productivity, land insecurity, and reduced farming activities, such as those caused by kidnapping and rural banditry, reduce household income and deepen food insecurity even in agriculturally endowed regions. Limited access to credit, extension services, and modern technology further compounds these challenges, trapping farmers in cycles of low productivity and poverty.

Beyond food availability and livelihoods, rural agriculture contributes significantly to sustainable development through poverty reduction, environmental conservation, and inclusive growth. The World Bank (2021) highlights that growth in agriculture is up to four times more effective in reducing poverty than growth in other sectors of the economy. This is because agricultural development stimulates rural employment, supports value chain development, and creates opportunities for small and medium enterprises in processing, storage, and distribution. It also plays a critical role in empowering marginalized groups, particularly women and youth, who constitute a significant proportion of the agricultural labor force in rural areas. Sustainable agricultural practices such as agroecology, soil conservation, crop rotation, and climate-smart farming not only improve productivity but also preserve natural resources for future generations. These practices help mitigate land degradation, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and enhance resilience to climate variability, which are essential pillars of long-term sustainable development.

Rural agriculture also promotes sustainable development by enhancing social stability and reducing rural–urban migration. When agriculture thrives, rural communities experience improved income levels, better food security, and enhanced economic opportunities, reducing

the pressure on urban centres and limiting the spread of urban poverty (UNDP, 2022). In addition, vibrant rural economies foster community cohesion, strengthen local institutions, and reduce the likelihood of social unrest. However, when rural farming communities face insecurity such as kidnapping, forced displacement, and destruction of farmlands, migration pressures increase, leading to overcrowded cities, unemployment, and strain on urban infrastructure. This rural distress not only disrupts agricultural production but also weakens national economic stability and food systems (UNDP, 2022). Therefore, safeguarding rural livelihoods is essential not only for food production but also for maintaining broader socio-economic balance.

Furthermore, rural agriculture plays a critical role in national economic development and trade. In many developing countries, agriculture contributes significantly to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and serves as a source of raw materials for agro-based industries. It also generates foreign exchange earnings through the export of cash crops such as cocoa, coffee, and palm oil. Strengthening agricultural value chains, from production to processing and marketing, can enhance competitiveness, reduce post-harvest losses, and increase farmers' incomes. Investments in rural infrastructure, including roads, irrigation systems, storage facilities, and market access, are essential for integrating rural farmers into national and global markets.

Thus, the link between rural agriculture, food security, and sustainable development emphasizes the need for integrated policy approaches. Sustainable development frameworks such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) highlight that progress in agriculture (SDG 2), poverty reduction (SDG 1), gender equality (SDG 5), and climate action (SDG 13)

are deeply interconnected. Strengthening rural agriculture enhances food security, reduces poverty, mitigates climate vulnerabilities, and drives inclusive economic growth. Therefore, countries like Nigeria must prioritize rural security, invest in modern agricultural inputs such as improved seeds and mechanization, expand access to agricultural financing, strengthen extension services, and promote environmentally sustainable farming practices. In addition, policies that support land tenure security, rural education, and digital agriculture can further unlock the full development potential of rural agriculture and ensure long-term food system resilience.

2.5 Kidnapping in Nigeria

Kidnapping in Nigeria has emerged as one of the most serious security challenges confronting the country in recent decades. What began as a politically motivated tactic in the oil-rich Niger Delta has gradually evolved into a widespread criminal enterprise affecting virtually all regions. Today, kidnapping is driven by a complex mix of economic hardship, insecurity, weak governance, and organized criminal activity, making it both a national security threat and a major socio-economic problem (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2024; SBM Intelligence, 2023).

Kidnapping refers to the unlawful seizure and detention of an individual against their will, often for ransom, coercion, or exploitation. In Nigeria, the most common form is ransom-based kidnapping, although other variants such as express kidnapping, mass abductions, and politically motivated abductions also occur (Okoli & Agada, 2014). The phenomenon has diversified over time, reflecting changing motivations and the involvement of different actors, including criminal gangs, insurgents, and opportunistic individuals.

Historically, kidnapping in Nigeria gained prominence in the early 2000s during the period of militancy in the Niger Delta. Armed groups in the region abducted expatriate oil workers and other foreign nationals as a means of drawing attention to grievances related to environmental degradation and the perceived marginalization of oil-producing communities (Amaize, 2011). While these actions were initially framed as political resistance, they soon revealed the financial benefits associated with ransom payments, contributing to the transformation of kidnapping into a lucrative criminal venture (Asuquo, 2009).

Over time, the practice spread beyond the Niger Delta and lost much of its political undertone. By the 2010s, kidnapping had become commercialized and increasingly indiscriminate, with victims ranging from wealthy elites to ordinary citizens. The rise of insurgent groups such as Boko Haram further intensified the situation. These groups adopted kidnapping as a strategic tool for funding their operations, gaining international attention, and negotiating prisoner exchanges (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2025). In addition, the emergence of armed bandit groups in the North-West and North-Central regions has significantly increased the frequency of mass abductions, especially in rural communities and along major highways (ACLED, 2024).

The scale of kidnapping in Nigeria is alarming. Reports indicate that millions of Nigerians have experienced kidnapping incidents directly or indirectly in recent years. For instance, the National Bureau of Statistics estimated over 2.2 million kidnapping-related incidents within a one-year period (NBS, 2024). Similarly, thousands of abductions are recorded annually, with ransom payments amounting to billions and even trillions of naira (SBM Intelligence, 2023;

Nairametrics, 2024). These figures highlight not only the prevalence of the crime but also its profitability, which continues to attract perpetrators.

Several factors contribute to the persistence and escalation of kidnapping in Nigeria. One of the most significant is widespread poverty and unemployment, particularly among youth. With limited access to legitimate economic opportunities, many individuals are drawn to kidnapping as a quick and profitable means of survival (Okoli, 2016). Weak security infrastructure also plays a critical role. Nigeria's security agencies often face challenges such as inadequate funding, poor coordination, and insufficient intelligence, making it difficult to effectively prevent or respond to kidnapping incidents (Reuters, 2024).

Corruption and governance failures further exacerbate the problem by undermining law enforcement and the judicial system. In some cases, perpetrators evade justice due to weak institutional frameworks, which encourages further criminal activity (Ojo, 2019). Additionally, the profitability of ransom payments sustains the cycle of kidnapping, as families often comply with demands to secure the release of their loved ones (SBM Intelligence, 2023). Social inequality also contributes, as disparities in wealth make certain individuals attractive targets.

The patterns of kidnapping in Nigeria vary across regions. In the North-West and North-Central areas, banditry-related kidnappings are most prevalent, often involving large-scale attacks on villages and highways. In the North-East, kidnapping is closely linked to insurgency activities, while in the southern regions, it is more commonly associated with criminal gangs and economic motives (ACLED, 2024). Victims include schoolchildren, travelers, rural dwellers, and high-profile individuals. The methods used typically involve

ambushes, raids, and the use of remote forest hideouts where victims are held during negotiations.

The consequences of kidnapping are far-reaching. Economically, it leads to loss of productivity, discourages investment, and imposes heavy financial burdens on families and communities (NBS, 2024). Socially, it disrupts education, forces displacement, and erodes trust within communities. Psychologically, victims and their families often suffer trauma, anxiety, and long-term emotional distress (Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, 2025). Politically, the persistence of kidnapping undermines public confidence in government and highlights the limitations of the state's capacity to provide security.

In response to the growing crisis, the Nigerian government has implemented various measures. Military operations have been intensified in affected regions to combat bandits and insurgents. Legislative efforts have also sought to criminalize ransom payments in an attempt to deter the practice (Federal Government of Nigeria, 2022). Community policing initiatives and the involvement of local vigilante groups have been encouraged to enhance grassroots security. In some instances, security forces have successfully rescued abducted individuals, particularly in high-profile cases. Despite these efforts, significant challenges remain. Poor intelligence gathering, inadequate resources, corruption, and difficult terrain continue to hinder effective responses. Moreover, the lack of trust between communities and security agencies limits cooperation, which is essential for preventing and solving crimes (Ojo, 2019).

Addressing kidnapping in Nigeria requires a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach. Strengthening the security sector through improved training, equipment, and intelligence systems is crucial. At the same time, addressing underlying socio-economic issues such as

poverty and unemployment is essential to reduce the incentives for criminal behavior (Okoli, 2016). Legal and judicial reforms are needed to ensure swift prosecution of offenders, while community engagement initiatives can help build trust and encourage information sharing. Protecting vulnerable institutions, particularly schools, should also be prioritized through targeted security measures.

In conclusion, kidnapping in Nigeria is a deeply rooted and complex problem that reflects broader structural challenges within the country. Its evolution from a localized political tactic to a nationwide criminal enterprise underscores the need for sustained and coordinated action. Without addressing both immediate security concerns and underlying socio-economic drivers, efforts to curb kidnapping are unlikely to achieve lasting success.

2.5.1 Kidnapping and Rural Insecurity

Kidnapping, as a criminal act, refers to the unlawful seizure and detention of a person against their will, typically for ransom, coercion, or political leverage. It is a form of violent crime that undermines security and public trust. Kidnapping can take several forms, including political kidnapping, where abductions are used to gain ideological or political concessions; economic kidnapping, which is motivated by financial gain through ransom; and criminal kidnapping, often committed by armed groups for intimidation, revenge, or trafficking (Adewale, 2021). These forms frequently overlap in practice, especially in fragile or conflict-prone regions.

In Nigeria, the phenomenon of kidnapping has evolved significantly over the past two decades. Initially associated with political militancy in the Niger Delta during the early 2000s,

kidnapping later spread to other regions and became commercialized, particularly in the North-Central and North-West (Ogunleye, 2022). Several factors contribute to this trend, including rising unemployment, weak law enforcement, poverty, porous borders, and the proliferation of arms. The post-2015 surge in banditry and farmer-herder conflicts further enabled criminal networks to exploit ungoverned rural spaces, turning abductions into a lucrative enterprise (Amnesty International, 2021).

Rural communities have become primary targets of kidnapping due to their isolation, limited access to security forces, and economic vulnerability. Farmers, market women, and community leaders are often abducted for ransom, disrupting agricultural activities and instilling widespread fear (Akinyemi & Okonkwo, 2023). The constant threat of kidnapping forces many to abandon their farmlands or migrate to urban centers, leading to reduced food production and loss of livelihood. This has a ripple effect on national food supply chains, contributing to inflation and deepening rural poverty.

The socio-economic implications of kidnapping in rural areas are profound. In addition to the psychological trauma inflicted on victims and families, there are measurable losses in productivity and income. School closures, disruption of rural markets, and reduced investment in agriculture are common consequences. These conditions discourage both local and external agricultural investment, aggravating food insecurity and hindering rural development (Ezeibe et al., 2023). Moreover, the erosion of trust in government and local authorities further exacerbates insecurity and weakens communal resilience.

Kidnapping in rural Nigeria is not just a law enforcement issue; it is a development challenge. The persistence of rural insecurity undermines efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development

Goals (SDGs), particularly those related to poverty eradication, food security, and peace, justice, and strong institutions. Tackling kidnapping requires a multidimensional approach that combines improved policing, community engagement, economic empowerment, and infrastructural development in vulnerable areas (Iroegbu & Hassan, 2024). Without addressing the root causes and consequences of rural insecurity, national development and food security efforts will remain fragile and unsustainable.

2.5.2 Impact of Kidnapping on Rural Livelihoods and Social Stability

Kidnapping has emerged as a major threat to rural livelihoods, particularly in agrarian communities where residents depend on farming, fishing, and local trade for sustenance and income. In Nigeria, studies indicate that frequent abductions disrupt daily farming activities, reduce labor availability, and limit access to farmlands due to fear of attack (Adebayo & Adeoye, 2024). This disruption leads to decreased crop production, loss of income, and heightened vulnerability to food insecurity. Consequently, households face a double burden: reduced economic capacity and limited food access, which undermines both household and community resilience (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2024).

The economic impact of kidnapping extends beyond individual households to the broader rural economy. Markets are affected when farmers are unable to produce or transport goods safely, leading to shortages, inflated prices, and interrupted trade networks (Ogunleye, 2023). Local agribusinesses, input suppliers, and cooperatives also suffer as operations slow or halt entirely due to insecurity. These economic shocks reinforce cycles of poverty, reduce investment in agriculture, and exacerbate food insecurity, illustrating a direct linkage between criminal insecurity and rural livelihood degradation (Okoh & Uhumwagho, 2023).

Social stability in rural areas is similarly compromised by kidnapping. The constant threat of abduction fosters fear, mistrust, and social fragmentation within communities (Nwankwo & Ibrahim, 2024). Families may relocate, social networks weaken, and collective community activities—including farming cooperatives, markets, and traditional governance forums—are disrupted. This erosion of social cohesion not only undermines rural development initiatives but also reduces community capacity to respond collectively to shocks or crises, leaving populations more vulnerable to subsequent security threats (World Bank, 2022).

Moreover, kidnapping exacerbates psychological and social vulnerabilities, particularly among women, children, and youth. Trauma, anxiety, and social dislocation affect education, health, and participation in communal activities (UNICEF, 2021). In some instances, children are withdrawn from school or parents are unable to afford schooling due to ransom payments or loss of livelihood, perpetuating intergenerational poverty and limiting human capital development. These social consequences demonstrate that insecurity in rural areas has long-term developmental repercussions beyond immediate economic losses.

Thus, addressing the impact of kidnapping on rural livelihoods and social stability requires integrated policy interventions. Strengthening rural security, providing rapid response mechanisms, and promoting community policing can reduce threats to agricultural activities (FAO, 2023). Additionally, social support systems, trauma counseling, and livelihood recovery programs are essential for restoring household resilience and community cohesion. Protecting rural populations from kidnapping not only safeguards livelihoods but also reinforces social stability, which is critical for sustainable development and national growth (Adewuyi & Okunola, 2023).

2.6 Agricultural Sector and National Development in Nigeria

Historically, agriculture has played a central role in Nigeria's economy, serving as the mainstay of livelihoods before the discovery of crude oil in the 1950s. During the pre-independence and early post-independence eras, agriculture accounted for over 60% of the country's GDP and employed a majority of the labor force (Olomola, 2020). Major agricultural products such as cocoa, groundnuts, palm oil, and rubber not only sustained the local economy but also positioned Nigeria as a significant exporter of cash crops. The sector was instrumental in funding infrastructural development, education, and public services before the oil boom led to a shift in economic priorities and subsequent neglect of the agricultural base.

The agricultural sector remains crucial for employment generation and poverty alleviation, especially in rural areas where more than 70% of the population resides. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2022), agriculture provides direct and indirect employment to over 36% of Nigeria's labor force. By engaging smallholder farmers, agricultural cooperatives, and agribusiness ventures, the sector offers opportunities for income generation and social empowerment. Furthermore, agriculture drives rural development through the provision of food, raw materials, and opportunities for community-based enterprises. As such, any improvement in agricultural productivity is directly linked to poverty reduction and rural economic growth (IFPRI, 2023).

There is a strong correlation between agricultural development and macroeconomic performance. An efficient and productive agricultural sector contributes significantly to GDP growth, especially in non-oil sectors. In 2023, agriculture contributed approximately 25.2% to

Nigeria's GDP, highlighting its relevance to the national economy despite systemic challenges (CBN, 2024). Additionally, agricultural growth enhances food availability and affordability, thereby improving food sufficiency and reducing the country's reliance on food imports. Increased investment in crop production, livestock, aquaculture, and mechanized farming practices can further boost economic diversification and fiscal stability.

Agriculture also serves as a buffer against the effects of urban unemployment and rapid population growth. As Nigeria's population approaches 220 million, food demand continues to rise, making sustainable agricultural development critical for national food security and stability (FAO, 2023). Agricultural policies such as the Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA), Anchor Borrowers Programme, and the National Agricultural Technology and Innovation Plan (NATIP) are efforts aimed at revitalizing the sector and making it more responsive to developmental goals. When properly implemented, such initiatives can strengthen value chains, promote exports, and improve rural livelihoods.

Despite its potential, the sector faces numerous challenges including insecurity, climate change, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to finance. The rise in rural banditry and kidnapping has driven many farmers away from their farmlands, undermining productivity and food supply (Ezeibe et al., 2023). Addressing these challenges is key to unlocking the full developmental potential of agriculture. A resilient and inclusive agricultural sector is essential not only for economic growth but also for achieving broader development outcomes such as reduced inequality, increased food security, and national stability.

2.6.1 Agricultural Production and Rural Livelihoods

Agricultural production is the cornerstone of rural livelihoods in developing countries, providing the primary source of food, income, and employment for millions of households. In sub-Saharan Africa, smallholder farmers contribute significantly to national food supply while sustaining household consumption needs (FAO, 2023). Productivity in agriculture directly influences the economic stability of rural communities, enabling families to purchase essential goods, invest in education, and improve living standards. Therefore, agricultural output is closely tied to both the sustenance and economic resilience of rural populations.

The link between agricultural production and rural livelihoods extends beyond subsistence. Increased farm productivity generates surplus produce that can be sold in local and regional markets, enhancing income streams and diversifying household economic activities (IFAD, 2022). Income from agriculture allows rural households to invest in farm inputs such as fertilizers, seeds, and irrigation, creating a positive feedback loop that sustains production and strengthens resilience against food insecurity. Conversely, disruptions in agricultural production, caused by insecurity, climate shocks, or poor access to inputs, adversely affect household incomes and reduce overall livelihood sustainability.

Agriculture also contributes to employment creation and poverty reduction in rural areas. The World Bank (2021) emphasizes that growth in the agricultural sector has a disproportionately high impact on reducing poverty compared to growth in other sectors, primarily because agriculture employs a large proportion of the rural labor force. Beyond farming, agricultural value chains, including processing, storage, transport, and marketing,

offer significant livelihood opportunities for rural youth and women, further supporting household welfare and community development.

Moreover, sustainable agricultural production is closely linked to environmental stewardship, which underpins long-term rural livelihoods. Practices such as crop rotation, agroforestry, soil conservation, and climate-smart agriculture enhance productivity while preserving natural resources (UNDP, 2022). These sustainable practices reduce vulnerability to environmental shocks, protect biodiversity, and ensure that rural communities can maintain productive livelihoods over time. Failure to adopt sustainable practices can lead to land degradation, reduced yields, and increased food insecurity, threatening both household and national development objectives.

Finally, agricultural production and rural livelihoods are interconnected with social stability and community well-being. Reliable production reduces migration pressures, fosters community cohesion, and strengthens local food systems, contributing to overall societal resilience (Adebayo & Adeoye, 2024). In contexts affected by insecurity, such as regions facing kidnapping or banditry, disruptions to agricultural production not only undermine household incomes but also destabilize social structures. Therefore, strengthening agricultural productivity, supporting rural livelihoods, and protecting rural communities are essential for achieving food security, poverty reduction, and sustainable national development.

2.6.2 Factors Influencing Agricultural Output

Agricultural output is fundamentally influenced by the availability and quality of labour. Labour-intensive farming systems, common in many developing countries, rely heavily on human effort for land preparation, planting, weeding, and harvesting. According to the Food

and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2023), rural households with limited labour, due to migration, illness, or conflict, experience reduced farm productivity and lower yields. Moreover, the skill level and experience of farm workers affect efficiency and the adoption of improved farming practices, highlighting the critical role of human capital in sustaining agricultural output.

Land availability and quality also determine agricultural productivity. Fertile, well-irrigated, and adequately sized plots support higher yields, while land scarcity, degradation, and fragmentation constrain output (World Bank, 2022). In rural Nigeria, land tenure insecurity further exacerbates productivity challenges, as farmers may lack incentives to invest in long-term soil conservation or infrastructure improvements. Proper land management, including crop rotation, soil fertility enhancement, and sustainable land-use planning, is therefore essential to optimize agricultural production and secure rural livelihoods.

Access to agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilizers, machinery, and irrigation systems is another key determinant of output. The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD, 2022) emphasizes that limited access to high-quality inputs reduces crop yields, while timely provision of modern technologies and agrochemicals enhances productivity. In many rural communities, financial constraints, inadequate distribution networks, and high input costs limit the adoption of productivity-enhancing measures. Strengthening input supply chains and providing subsidies or credit facilities can significantly boost farm output and household income.

Climate variability and extreme weather events also critically affect agricultural productivity. Erratic rainfall, prolonged droughts, floods, and temperature fluctuations disrupt planting and

harvesting cycles, reduce soil fertility, and increase pest and disease outbreaks (UNDP, 2022). Climate change has amplified these risks, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, where many farmers depend on rain-fed agriculture. Adaptive strategies, including irrigation, drought-resistant crops, and climate-smart farming, are necessary to mitigate the negative impact of climate variability on agricultural output.

Insecurity, including kidnapping, banditry, and communal conflicts, has emerged as a significant constraint on agricultural production in rural areas. Studies show that fear of abduction or attacks deters farmers from cultivating their lands, limits access to markets, and reduces labour availability, directly lowering productivity (Adebayo & Adeoye, 2024; Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2024). Insecurity not only affects household food production but also disrupts local economies and social stability, highlighting the interconnection between safety and agricultural output. Ensuring rural security is therefore essential for sustaining livelihoods, promoting food security, and supporting broader national development objectives.

2.6.3 Insecurity and Its Impacts on Agricultural Production

Numerous national and international studies have established a strong link between rising insecurity and the decline in agricultural productivity. Insecurity, especially in the form of violent conflict, terrorism, and organized crime, disrupts farming cycles, displaces rural populations, and damages critical infrastructure required for food production. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA, 2022) observed that armed conflict and criminal violence in agricultural zones significantly reduce access to farmland and markets, impeding food production and distribution. Similarly, a report by the International Crisis Group (2021) highlighted that regions with sustained violence in Sub-

Saharan Africa, including Nigeria, have experienced substantial declines in crop yields and livestock production due to insecurity.

Northern Nigeria, in particular, offers critical case studies on how insecurity has crippled agriculture. The Boko Haram insurgency in the North-East has led to the displacement of over two million people, many of whom are farmers who can no longer access their land (Ibrahim & Abdullahi, 2020). The activities of armed bandits in the North-West and parts of the North-Central zones have further exacerbated the situation by targeting farming communities for ransom, cattle rustling, and arson (Olorunfemi & Idowu, 2022). In Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna, and Niger states, thousands of hectares of arable land have been abandoned due to threats of kidnapping and violence. These patterns have led to food shortages, rising prices, and a dependence on imported food staples.

As insecurity intensifies, a significant decline in farming activities has been reported across affected regions. Many farmers now avoid planting or harvesting for fear of being attacked, while others have fled to urban centers, leaving farmlands fallow (Alabi & Obadiah, 2023). The seasonal migration of herders and disruptions to agricultural supply chains have compounded these problems, leading to irregular food production cycles. National food output has declined in grains, vegetables, and livestock, contributing to food inflation and declining nutritional standards, particularly in rural communities (Adamu & Isah, 2021). This trend threatens not only food security but also the economic stability of agrarian households.

The consequence of rural insecurity is not only reduced food output but also the collapse of agro-investments. Investors are increasingly reluctant to fund agricultural projects in volatile regions due to high risks and limited government protection. According to the Nigerian

Economic Summit Group (NESG, 2022), insecurity has discouraged both local and international investors from participating in large-scale agriculture and agri-business. Losses in capital, equipment theft, and attacks on workers have made agricultural enterprises unsustainable in high-risk zones. This divestment further limits access to credit and technology for smallholder farmers, deepening rural poverty and dependence on humanitarian aid.

Ultimately, the nexus between insecurity and agricultural decline is a critical barrier to Nigeria's development goals. As long as insecurity persists, particularly in the food-producing belt of the country, efforts toward achieving food sufficiency, poverty reduction, and rural development will remain elusive. Addressing this challenge requires urgent and integrated policy responses that combine security interventions with agricultural protection schemes, rural infrastructure development, and community-based conflict resolution mechanisms (Yusuf & Adekunle, 2023). Only then can Nigeria reverse the destructive impact of insecurity on its agricultural sector and national well-being.

2.7 Socio-economic Effects of Kidnapping on Farming Communities

Kidnapping has become a major threat to the livelihood and well-being of farming communities in Nigeria, with significant socio-economic consequences. One of the most immediate impacts is the decline in farmers' income and productivity. With fear of abduction becoming widespread, many farmers are unable to cultivate their land or harvest produce, especially in remote areas (Okoli & Ugwu, 2021). This results in diminished agricultural output, reduced market participation, and a decline in household food access. Households that

depend solely on agriculture for sustenance and income are increasingly pushed into food insecurity and poverty (Chukwuemeka & Ojukwu, 2023).

Beyond economic loss, the psychological effects of kidnapping on rural populations are severe. Many victims and community members suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, and fear, which hinder their ability to engage in productive activities (Onyekachi & Bassey, 2022). The constant threat of kidnapping has led to increased rural-to-urban migration, particularly among youth and heads of households seeking safer environments. This mass exodus disrupts communal farming networks, labor availability, and intergenerational knowledge transfer, leading to further decline in productivity and food supply (Audu & Ibrahim, 2020).

Farming communities also experience a breakdown in traditional support systems and cooperative structures. Communal farming efforts, cooperative marketing groups, and local savings associations become disorganized due to reduced trust and social cohesion (Eze & Ugwumba, 2021). The fear of being targeted in group activities discourages collaboration and further isolates farmers. Additionally, schools, health centers, and rural markets often shut down during periods of heightened insecurity, further weakening the social fabric of these communities and amplifying economic hardship.

Gender-specific vulnerabilities are also pronounced in the context of rural insecurity. Women farmers, who make up a significant portion of the agricultural workforce in Nigeria, face increased risks of sexual violence, exploitation, and kidnapping (Nnadi & Okoro, 2022). Many women withdraw from farming activities, reducing household income and increasing their dependency on male counterparts or external aid. For youth, the disruption of education

and lack of farming opportunities due to insecurity drive them toward unsafe urban migration or involvement in criminal activities, further perpetuating cycles of violence and poverty (Ogbonna & Yusuf, 2023).

The socio-economic effects of kidnapping on farming communities are therefore multidimensional, affecting not only food production and income but also community structure, social resilience, and gender dynamics. These consequences undermine efforts to promote rural development and agricultural sustainability in Nigeria. Addressing the problem requires integrated strategies involving security provision, economic support for displaced farmers, psychological rehabilitation programs, and gender-sensitive rural development initiatives (Eboh & Nwankwo, 2024). Without targeted interventions, the long-term impacts of kidnapping will continue to weaken Nigeria's agricultural base and deepen rural inequality.

2.8 Food Production

Food production is a fundamental aspect of human survival and a critical component of national and global development. It encompasses all processes involved in the cultivation, harvesting, processing, and distribution of food for human consumption. As the global population continues to grow, the demand for food has increased significantly, placing immense pressure on agricultural systems and natural resources. Food production is therefore not only an economic activity but also a key determinant of food security, health, and sustainability.

Food production can be broadly divided into crop production and livestock production. Crop production involves the cultivation of plants for food, fiber, and other uses, while livestock

production focuses on raising animals for meat, dairy, and other products. These two sectors are interdependent, as crops are often used as animal feed, and livestock contribute to crop farming through manure and labor in some traditional systems (FAO, 2022). Together, they form the backbone of the agricultural sector in most countries.

Agricultural systems vary widely across the world, ranging from subsistence farming to large-scale commercial agriculture. Subsistence farming is practiced mainly in developing countries, where farmers grow food primarily for their own consumption using traditional methods and limited inputs. In contrast, commercial agriculture involves large-scale production using modern technologies, mechanization, and improved inputs such as fertilizers and pesticides (Todaro & Smith, 2020). While commercial agriculture tends to be more productive, subsistence farming remains vital for rural livelihoods and local food supply.

Several factors influence food production, including land availability, climate, labor, technology, and government policies. Land is one of the most critical resources, as fertile soil is essential for crop growth. However, increasing urbanization and land degradation have reduced the amount of arable land available for agriculture. Climate also plays a significant role, as temperature, rainfall, and seasonal patterns determine the types of crops that can be grown and their productivity. Climate change has introduced new challenges, such as unpredictable weather, droughts, and floods, which negatively impact food production (IPCC, 2021).

Labor is another important factor, particularly in developing countries where agriculture is labor-intensive. However, rural-urban migration has reduced the availability of agricultural labor in many regions, affecting productivity. Technology has become increasingly important

in modern food production, with innovations such as mechanization, irrigation systems, improved seed varieties, and precision agriculture significantly enhancing yields and efficiency (FAO, 2022). Government policies, including subsidies, tariffs, and agricultural extension services, also play a crucial role in shaping food production systems.

One of the major challenges facing food production is climate change. Rising global temperatures, changes in precipitation patterns, and increased frequency of extreme weather events have disrupted agricultural activities worldwide. For example, prolonged droughts can lead to crop failure, while excessive rainfall can cause flooding and soil erosion. These environmental challenges threaten food security and require the adoption of climate-resilient agricultural practices (IPCC, 2021).

Another significant challenge is soil degradation. Intensive farming practices, deforestation, and overgrazing have led to the depletion of soil nutrients, reducing agricultural productivity. Soil erosion and desertification further exacerbate the problem, particularly in arid and semi-arid regions. Sustainable land management practices, such as crop rotation, agroforestry, and conservation tillage, are essential for maintaining soil health and ensuring long-term food production (FAO, 2022).

Water scarcity is also a major constraint on food production. Agriculture accounts for a large proportion of global freshwater use, and increasing demand for water from other sectors has created competition for this vital resource. Irrigation is crucial for crop production, especially in regions with limited rainfall, but inefficient water use can lead to depletion of water resources. Improving water management practices and adopting water-efficient technologies are therefore critical for sustainable food production (World Bank, 2022).

Pests and diseases pose another threat to food production. Crop pests and livestock diseases can significantly reduce yields and lead to economic losses for farmers. The use of pesticides and veterinary medicines has helped control these threats, but excessive use can have negative environmental and health impacts. Integrated pest management and sustainable animal health practices are important for balancing productivity with environmental protection (FAO, 2022).

Food production is also closely linked to economic and social factors. Access to finance, markets, and infrastructure greatly influences farmers' ability to produce and distribute food. Smallholder farmers, who produce a significant portion of the world's food, often face challenges such as limited access to credit, poor transportation networks, and inadequate storage facilities. These constraints reduce their productivity and increase post-harvest losses (World Bank, 2022).

Technological advancements have played a transformative role in improving food production. Mechanization has reduced the reliance on manual labor and increased efficiency, while biotechnology has led to the development of high-yielding and disease-resistant crop varieties. Precision agriculture, which uses data and technology to optimize farming practices, has further enhanced productivity and resource efficiency. Digital technologies, such as mobile applications and satellite imaging, provide farmers with real-time information on weather, soil conditions, and market prices (FAO, 2022).

Sustainable food production has become increasingly important in the context of environmental conservation and climate change. Sustainable agriculture aims to meet current food needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. This involves practices such as organic farming, agroecology, and climate-smart agriculture,

which promote biodiversity, reduce environmental impact, and enhance resilience to climate change (IPCC, 2021).

In addition to production, post-harvest handling and food processing are critical components of the food production system. A significant portion of food produced globally is lost due to poor storage, transportation, and processing facilities. Reducing post-harvest losses can significantly increase food availability without the need for additional production. Investments in storage infrastructure, cold chains, and food processing technologies are therefore essential (World Bank, 2022).

Government policies and international cooperation play a vital role in supporting food production. Policies that promote research and development, provide subsidies for inputs, and improve access to markets can enhance agricultural productivity. International organizations such as the FAO and the World Bank provide technical and financial support to countries to improve their food production systems and address challenges related to food security.

In conclusion, food production is a complex and dynamic process influenced by a wide range of environmental, economic, and social factors. While significant progress has been made in increasing global food production, challenges such as climate change, soil degradation, water scarcity, and limited access to resources continue to threaten sustainability. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes technological innovation, sustainable practices, supportive policies, and investment in infrastructure. Ensuring sustainable food production is essential for achieving food security, reducing poverty, and promoting overall development.

2.8.1 Food Production in Nigeria

Food production in Nigeria is a vital component of the nation's economy and a key determinant of food security, employment, and rural development. Agriculture remains one of the largest sectors in Nigeria, employing a significant proportion of the population, particularly in rural areas. Despite its importance and vast natural resources, food production in the country faces numerous challenges that limit its ability to meet the growing demand of an increasing population.

Nigeria's food production system is characterized by a mix of subsistence and small-scale farming, with the majority of farmers operating on less than two hectares of land. These smallholder farmers are responsible for producing most of the country's staple foods, including cassava, yam, maize, rice, and sorghum (Food and Agriculture Organization [FAO], 2022). Livestock production, including cattle, poultry, and fisheries, also contributes significantly to the food supply and nutritional needs of the population.

The country is naturally endowed with diverse agro-ecological zones, ranging from the humid rainforest in the south to the savannah and semi-arid regions in the north. This diversity allows for the cultivation of a wide variety of crops throughout the year. For instance, root and tuber crops such as cassava and yam are predominantly grown in the southern regions, while grains such as millet and sorghum are more common in the northern parts of the country (National Bureau of Statistics [NBS], 2021). This geographical advantage provides Nigeria with the potential to achieve self-sufficiency in food production.

However, food production in Nigeria is constrained by several structural and environmental challenges. One of the most significant issues is the low level of agricultural productivity. Many farmers rely on traditional farming methods, with limited use of modern inputs such as improved seeds, fertilizers, and mechanized equipment. This results in low yields compared to global standards (FAO, 2022). Additionally, inadequate access to extension services limits farmers' knowledge of improved agricultural practices.

Climate change has also had a profound impact on food production in Nigeria. Changes in rainfall patterns, increased frequency of droughts, and flooding have disrupted farming activities and reduced crop yields. For example, severe flooding in recent years has destroyed farmlands and displaced farming communities, leading to significant losses in agricultural output (World Bank, 2022). In northern Nigeria, desertification and land degradation further reduce the amount of arable land available for cultivation.

Another major challenge is insecurity, particularly in the northern regions of the country. Conflicts such as insurgency, banditry, and farmer-herder clashes have forced many farmers to abandon their fields. This has led to a decline in agricultural production and increased food shortages (International Food Policy Research Institute [IFPRI], 2023). The displacement of rural populations also disrupts local food systems and reduces labor availability for farming activities.

Access to finance is a critical constraint for many farmers in Nigeria. Smallholder farmers often lack the collateral required to obtain loans from formal financial institutions, limiting their ability to invest in improved inputs and technologies. As a result, agricultural productivity remains low, and farmers are unable to scale up their operations (Central Bank of

Nigeria [CBN], 2022). Although government programs and microfinance initiatives exist, their reach and effectiveness are often limited.

Infrastructure deficiencies also pose significant challenges to food production in Nigeria. Poor road networks, inadequate storage facilities, and lack of efficient transportation systems hinder the movement of agricultural produce from rural areas to urban markets. This not only increases the cost of food but also leads to high post-harvest losses. It is estimated that a substantial percentage of food produced in Nigeria is lost due to inadequate storage and processing facilities (World Bank, 2022).

Despite these challenges, there have been efforts by the Nigerian government and development partners to improve food production. Various agricultural policies and programs have been implemented to support farmers and enhance productivity. For example, initiatives aimed at providing subsidized fertilizers, improved seeds, and access to credit have been introduced to boost agricultural output (CBN, 2022). The promotion of mechanization and irrigation farming is also being encouraged to reduce dependence on rainfall and increase year-round production.

Technological innovation is gradually transforming food production in Nigeria. The adoption of improved crop varieties, modern irrigation techniques, and digital tools is helping farmers increase yields and efficiency. Mobile technology, for instance, provides farmers with access to market information, weather forecasts, and agricultural advice, enabling them to make informed decisions (FAO, 2022). However, the adoption of these technologies remains uneven, particularly among rural and less-educated farmers.

Sustainable agricultural practices are increasingly being recognized as essential for long-term food production in Nigeria. Practices such as crop rotation, agroforestry, and conservation agriculture help maintain soil fertility, reduce environmental degradation, and improve resilience to climate change. Climate-smart agriculture, which integrates adaptation and mitigation strategies, is particularly important in addressing the challenges posed by changing climatic conditions (World Bank, 2022).

Livestock and fisheries also play an important role in Nigeria's food production system. The livestock sector provides meat, milk, and other animal products, while fisheries contribute significantly to protein intake. However, these sectors face challenges such as disease outbreaks, inadequate feed supply, and poor management practices. Improving animal health services and investing in aquaculture can enhance productivity and contribute to food security.

Post-harvest management and food processing are critical components of food production that require attention. Improving storage facilities, such as silos and cold storage systems, can significantly reduce food losses and increase food availability. Additionally, the development of agro-processing industries can add value to agricultural products, create employment opportunities, and boost economic growth.

In conclusion, food production in Nigeria is a complex and dynamic sector with immense potential for growth and development. While the country has favorable natural conditions and a large agricultural workforce, numerous challenges hinder its ability to achieve food self-sufficiency. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach that includes improving access to finance, enhancing infrastructure, adopting modern technologies, and promoting sustainable agricultural practices. With effective policies, increased investment,

and strong institutional support, Nigeria can significantly improve its food production capacity and ensure food security for its growing population.

2.9 Government and Policy Responses to Rural Insecurity

In response to the rising wave of insecurity in rural areas, the Nigerian government, both at federal and state levels, has implemented several security initiatives aimed at safeguarding farming communities and protecting food production. One of the notable interventions is the establishment of the *Agro-Rangers*, a specialized unit under the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), launched in 2016 to provide security for farmers and agro-investments, particularly in volatile regions (NSCDC, 2020). States like Edo and Katsina have complemented these efforts with local security networks such as the *Edo State Security Network (ESSN)*, designed to support conventional security forces with intelligence and community engagement (Edo State Government, 2023). These strategies aim to restore confidence among rural dwellers and encourage a return to farming activities.

In addition to security-focused programs, the government has introduced several agricultural policies to enhance resilience among farmers affected by insecurity. Initiatives such as the *Anchor Borrowers Programme (ABP)* and the *National Agricultural Technology and Innovation Policy (NATIP)* have been rolled out to provide credit, inputs, and technical support to smallholder farmers (FMARD, 2021). The *National Livestock Transformation Plan (NLTP)* also aims to resolve farmer-herder conflicts that exacerbate rural insecurity. However, despite these efforts, there remain significant policy gaps, particularly in ensuring that vulnerable farmers in high-risk areas are adequately covered, insured, and protected from economic shocks caused by violence and displacement (Alabi & Nwoke, 2022).

One of the major challenges facing these interventions is the implementation gap, especially in conflict-affected zones where governance structures are weak. Many of the security programs are underfunded, poorly coordinated, or limited in scope, making them ineffective in truly addressing the complex dynamics of rural insecurity (Ogundele & Hassan, 2021). For example, the Agro-Rangers operate in only a few states and are not equipped to deal with heavily armed criminal groups. Moreover, delays in disbursement of funds under agricultural support programs, lack of transparency, and political interference hinder the timely delivery of assistance to affected farmers (Okonkwo, 2020).

There is also a disconnect between security and development planning. While security agencies attempt to tackle immediate threats, there is often little integration with long-term agricultural development and community recovery strategies. Rural areas require not only policing but also infrastructure development, land reform, and access to education and healthcare to foster stability and productivity (Nweke & Olowolafe, 2023). Without a holistic approach that combines physical security with socio-economic development, rural insecurity will persist, and agricultural recovery will remain limited.

Therefore, while the Nigerian government has taken important steps to mitigate rural insecurity through both security and agricultural policy measures, substantial gaps remain in their design, coverage, and implementation. Effective coordination among federal, state, and local actors, coupled with community participation and transparency, is essential to achieve meaningful results. Future policies must prioritize inclusive development, conflict-sensitive programming, and sustained support for farmers in insecurity-prone areas to rebuild trust and agricultural capacity.

2.9.1 Local Community Responses and Coping Strategies

In the face of growing insecurity, many farming communities in Nigeria have resorted to local and informal means of protecting themselves, their families, and their livelihoods. One of the most common responses has been the formation of community vigilance groups and local security outfits. These groups are often made up of able-bodied men in the community who patrol farmlands and settlements, sometimes armed with traditional weapons or working in collaboration with government security agencies (Akinyemi & Olanrewaju, 2021). In some states like Zamfara and Benue, informal security networks such as *Yan Sakai* or hunters' associations have taken an active role in defending rural communities against bandits and kidnapers (Ibrahim & Musa, 2023). While these efforts may offer temporary relief, they are often unregulated and sometimes escalate conflict when they operate beyond legal boundaries.

Aside from self-defence measures, rural farmers have also adopted risk-avoidance strategies in their agricultural practices. Many have reduced the size of land they cultivate, choosing only plots close to their homes or within easily accessible and secure zones (Odeyemi & Ojo, 2022). Others have shifted to less labor-intensive or short-cycle crops that require minimal time on the farm, in order to limit exposure to potential attacks. In some communities, farmers engage in night farming or early morning farming routines to avoid being ambushed during daylight (Ezeanya & Ofor, 2020). These changes, however, come at the cost of reduced output and long-term soil degradation due to lack of rotation and overuse of limited land.

Despite the creativity and resilience shown by these communities, there are significant limitations to their coping strategies. Most local vigilance groups lack formal training, modern equipment, and legal authority, making them vulnerable to well-armed criminal elements

(Chika & Anozie, 2021). Additionally, the proliferation of informal security actors has occasionally led to human rights abuses and vigilante justice, which further erodes trust between the people and state institutions. Moreover, without coordination with national security forces, these groups operate in isolation and cannot respond effectively to large-scale attacks or cross-regional threats.

Another limitation lies in the sustainability of these community efforts. As insecurity persists, many local residents experience fatigue, fear, and financial strain, making it difficult to maintain long-term vigilance or support local patrols (Mohammed & Lawal, 2023). In some cases, farmers abandon their villages entirely, leading to the collapse of local food systems and traditional farming knowledge. Youth migration to urban areas also deprives communities of labor and leadership necessary to sustain informal security structures and agricultural production.

Therefore, while community-led responses offer an immediate layer of defense and demonstrate local resilience, they are no substitute for comprehensive state action. There is a need to integrate local efforts with formal security frameworks, ensure accountability, and provide capacity building for community members involved in security roles. Furthermore, rural development programs must prioritize the reconstruction of social trust, livelihoods, and infrastructure to support communities affected by insecurity (Bamidele & Ifeanyi, 2024). Only a coordinated and inclusive approach can truly strengthen local coping mechanisms and restore stability in Nigeria's farming communities.

2.10 Food Security in Edo State: Trends and Threats

Edo State's food system is largely sustained by smallholder farmers who cultivate a wide range of crops including yam, cassava, maize, rice, vegetables, cocoa, and oil palm. The state's favorable agro-ecological conditions, such as fertile soils and regular rainfall, support robust agricultural activity across its three senatorial districts. Local governments such as Ovia North-East, Etsako, and Esan serve as major farming zones contributing significantly to both subsistence and commercial food production (Ezeanya & Omoruyi, 2021; Idemudia & Okoduwa, 2024). These farming activities not only meet household food needs but also supply markets in Benin City and beyond, underpinning local economies.

Key farming communities across the state maintain rural livelihoods through cooperative farming, market linkages, and localized processing. In places like Ovia North-East, farmers often engage in inter-cropping and seasonal crop rotation to optimize yields. However, these traditional systems are becoming increasingly threatened by insecurity, particularly the growing frequency of kidnapping and land disputes (Akinyemi & Adebajo, 2023). As food remains central to household survival, the stability of these rural economies is vital to the food security of the entire state.

One of the most pressing challenges in recent years has been the surge in rural insecurity. High-profile incidents, such as the kidnapping of 32 individuals at a train station in Igueben in January 2023, have drawn attention to the deepening crisis in Edo (Premium Times, 2023). Farmers have been abducted for ransom, forcing many to abandon their farmlands or reduce the area under cultivation for fear of attack (Vanguard, 2025). This has resulted in significant

declines in local food production, disrupted seasonal planting schedules, and triggered food price increases across rural and urban markets (NBS, 2023).

Additionally, farmer-herder conflicts have intensified across Edo State, particularly in border communities such as Owan and Akoko-Edo. These clashes are often triggered by open grazing and land encroachment, resulting in crop destruction, displacement, and in some cases, loss of lives (Adejoh & Ojo, 2022; Olorunfemi & Udo, 2025). Although the Edo State government passed the Anti-Open Grazing Law in 2022 to curb the menace, enforcement remains weak in many rural areas (Edo State Government, 2022). Consequently, communal tensions continue to undermine agricultural stability.

Emerging threats such as kidnapping, land conflicts, and violent herder incursions are gradually eroding the food security landscape in Edo State. Many farmers now limit their cultivation to safer zones or shift to low-labor crops, resulting in decreased food availability and rural income (Olorunfemi & Udo, 2025). While community efforts and state-led interventions are ongoing, a comprehensive and coordinated approach is required to ensure the protection of farmers, restoration of rural livelihoods, and the long-term sustainability of the food system in Edo.

2.11 Ovia North-East as a Case Study Area

Ovia North-East Local Government Area (LGA) is situated in Edo State and covers a landmass of over 2,300 square kilometers. The area is predominantly rural, with a population that depends heavily on agriculture, petty trading, and civil service for survival. It benefits from fertile soil and heavy rainfall, which make it ideal for agricultural production. According

to the Edo State Ministry of Budget and Planning (2023), the LGA's socio-economic structure is characterized by widespread poverty, low literacy levels, and poor rural infrastructure, which hamper economic growth and agricultural commercialization.

Communities such as Okada, Iguobazuwa, and Ekiadolor are known for their vibrant farming practices and form the agricultural heart of the LGA. Smallholder farmers in these areas cultivate crops like cassava, maize, plantain, and oil palm, often through mixed and rotational farming systems. Fishing, livestock keeping, and informal agro-processing are also common. As noted by Adekola and Omoregie (2024), these farming activities contribute significantly to local food availability and employment, even though limited access to finance, extension services, and markets remains a constraint.

Between 2020 and 2025, the LGA has experienced a notable rise in kidnapping and rural insecurity, with incidents reported in areas such as Utese, Okada, and Igueze. A high-profile abduction involving an Edo State commissioner, a council chairman, and a lawyer occurred in July 2020 along the Benin-Auchi Road (Nigerian Tribune, 2020). More recently, in May 2025, gunmen kidnapped and killed a farmer after collecting a ransom of ₦900,000 in Igueze (Punch, 2025). These cases illustrate the growing insecurity that threatens both lives and livelihoods in the area.

The nature of kidnappings in Ovia North-East is often criminal and financially motivated, though herder-related violence also contributes to the insecurity. Communities along major roads and forested paths are especially vulnerable. In early 2020, a farmer was murdered on his farm by suspected herdsmen in a case that shocked the local community (The Nation, 2020). Similarly, in 2025, a mob killed a suspected kidnapper in Okada following a series of

abductions (Vanguard, 2025). These recurring events have increased fear and restricted mobility among farmers and traders.

The cumulative effect of insecurity has been a significant disruption to agricultural productivity and rural livelihoods. Many farmers now limit the size of their farms, avoid isolated areas, or switch to less labor-intensive crops to reduce exposure to attacks. These adaptive strategies, while logical, have reduced output and income levels. According to Ibrahim and Okolie (2023), insecurity has caused the abandonment of farmlands and disrupted rural value chains, thereby intensifying food insecurity in affected communities.

2.12 Gaps in the Existing Literature

Despite a growing body of research linking insecurity to agricultural productivity in Nigeria, there remains a significant gap in localized empirical studies focusing specifically on Edo State. Much of the existing literature concentrates on the broader Northern region of Nigeria, particularly areas affected by Boko Haram insurgency and banditry. However, the rising incidence of kidnapping in the southern and central parts of Nigeria, particularly in Edo State, has not received adequate scholarly attention (Ibrahim & Okolie, 2023). As a result, data-driven understanding of how these security challenges are reshaping food systems in this specific geopolitical zone is still limited.

Furthermore, few studies have effectively captured community-level perspectives, especially from the standpoint of rural farmers who are directly affected by kidnapping. Much of the current research tends to be policy-driven, often relying on secondary data or macroeconomic statistics. There is a lack of participatory or ethnographic research that engages local farmers,

market women, and rural leaders as knowledge holders. As Adekola and Omoregie (2024) observe, without grounded narratives from affected communities, policy recommendations may lack contextual relevance and practical applicability.

A related concern is the inadequate inclusion of gender and youth dimensions in the discourse on insecurity and agriculture. While studies acknowledge the general impact of insecurity, they rarely disaggregate the data to reflect the unique vulnerabilities of women, young farmers, and other marginalized groups. This results in knowledge gaps that prevent targeted interventions and exacerbate rural inequality (World Bank, 2021). Community-based studies that recognize these differences would enrich the literature and promote inclusive rural development.

Another critical shortfall is the lack of research connecting kidnapping specifically to food production metrics such as yield losses, farm abandonment, income reduction, or shifts in cropping patterns. Though general statements are made about how insecurity affects agriculture, very few studies quantify the damage or assess it in longitudinal terms. For example, trends in Ovia North-East LGA between 2020 and 2025 remain largely undocumented in academic discourse, despite numerous media reports of abductions and farm disruptions (Punch, 2025; Vanguard, 2025).

Lastly, there is insufficient documentation of policy gaps and local coping strategies that could inform more effective government response. Although frameworks like the National Food Security Policy and various state-level security networks (e.g., Agro-Rangers, ESSN) exist, academic evaluation of their performance in conflict-prone areas is scarce. Literature that bridges the gap between academic knowledge, lived experience, and actionable

recommendations is urgently needed to advance food security and national development goals in contexts affected by kidnapping and rural violence.

2.13 Theoretical Framework

2.13.1 Human Security Theory

The Human Security Theory, popularized by the United Nations Development Programme in 1994, redefines security from the traditional state-centric and military-focused perspective to a people-centered model that prioritizes the protection of individuals from chronic threats such as poverty, hunger, disease, and violence. It comprises seven core dimensions: economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political security (UNDP, 1994). This broadened conceptualization allows scholars and policymakers to understand insecurity not merely as armed conflict or terrorism, but as any condition that undermines human dignity and survival. In the context of this study, the theory provides a relevant foundation for evaluating how kidnapping, a direct threat to personal security, intersects with food production challenges in rural communities.

This theory is particularly useful in examining the impact of kidnapping on food production, as it offers a holistic understanding of how personal insecurity and food insecurity are interconnected. According to Acharya (2007), threats to human security often manifest in overlapping domains, meaning that violence or fear can immediately translate into food scarcity, poverty, and community instability. By adopting a human-centered lens, the study can better assess how persistent threats of abduction limit farmers' freedom, undermine their livelihoods, and disrupt agricultural systems. This is essential for understanding not just the

physical consequences of insecurity, but also its socio-economic and psychological implications.

In applying Human Security Theory to the Edo State context, personal security, specifically the threat of kidnapping, directly undermines food security by restricting farmers' access to land, reducing farming activity, and threatening rural livelihoods. Farmers in localities such as Okada, Iguobazuwa, and Ekiadolor have reportedly reduced the scale of their farming or abandoned their farmlands due to persistent threats of abduction (Ibrahim & Okolie, 2023). These insecurities affect food availability and accessibility, two of the four pillars of food security identified by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 2022). Thus, Human Security Theory offers a suitable analytical lens for exploring the broader implications of kidnapping beyond the immediate physical harm.

Furthermore, the theory underscores the interdependence between security and development. It highlights the idea that sustainable development cannot be achieved where insecurity persists, especially in societies dependent on agriculture for livelihood. In Nigeria, where agriculture employs a substantial portion of the rural population, insecurity disrupts production cycles and weakens local economies (Adekola & Omoregie, 2024). By focusing on agricultural productivity, income patterns, and food sufficiency, the theory enables this research to explore how personal insecurity spills over into economic decline and household vulnerability.

Human Security Theory also emphasizes community resilience as a vital component of security. In rural areas such as those in Ovia North-East, community cooperation and collective farming practices are crucial for maintaining food production. When kidnapping

scars force farmers to avoid farmlands, migrate, or work in isolation, these communal support systems weaken. As a result, the social fabric necessary for a thriving agricultural community becomes strained. This aligns with the theory's premise that insecurity destabilizes not just individuals but entire communities, thereby threatening long-term social stability.

Despite its usefulness, Human Security Theory has been criticized for being conceptually broad and difficult to operationalize. Its seven dimensions encompass a wide array of variables, making it challenging to isolate specific components for empirical measurement. Critics such as Paris (2001) argue that the theory's broadness weakens its scientific rigor, as concepts like "psychological insecurity" or "community resilience" are complex and resistant to quantification. This poses challenges for researchers who aim to apply the theory within structured empirical studies.

To address this limitation, the current study adopts a quantitative approach, transforming abstract elements of the Human Security Theory into measurable indicators. Variables such as the number of kidnapping incidents, frequency of farming disruptions, crop yield reduction, and household food availability are operationalized into structured questionnaire items. By doing so, the research improves the empirical clarity of the theory and allows statistical verification of how personal insecurity affects agricultural outcomes. This aligns with Kaldor's (2007) argument that human security can be measured when broken down into context-specific, quantifiable parameters.

Thus, the study introduces spatial and temporal specificity to the theory by focusing on Ovia North-East Local Government Area between 2020 and 2025. This localization ensures that the

theory is applied within a concrete socio-geographic reality, rather than in a generalized context. The focus on a period marked by rising insecurity in Edo State allows the research to capture trends, patterns, and cumulative effects on food production. Moreover, by situating the analysis within specific communities such as Okada, Ugbogui, Utekon, and Okokhuo, the study contributes to the limited literature on human security challenges in southern Nigeria. This approach aligns with Human Security Theory's emphasis on understanding threats as they affect real people in real communities and ensures that the analysis is both contextually grounded and methodologically robust.

2.13.2 Food Security Theory

Food Security Theory provides a foundational framework for understanding how food production, access, and utilization affect overall societal well-being. The concept was formally articulated by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO, 1996), which defines food security as a condition where all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and preferences for an active and healthy life. This theory is built on four key pillars: food availability, food access, food utilization, and food stability.

In the context of this study, Food Security Theory is particularly useful in explaining how kidnapping and insecurity disrupt food systems. First, kidnapping reduces food availability by preventing farmers from accessing their farmlands, leading to reduced agricultural output. In regions like Edo State, where smallholder farmers dominate, fear of abduction often results in farm abandonment or reduced cultivation cycles. Second, it affects food access, as declining production leads to higher food prices, making it difficult for households to afford basic food

items. Third, disruptions in income caused by insecurity weaken households' ability to maintain adequate nutrition, thereby affecting food utilization. Finally, persistent insecurity undermines food stability, as food supply becomes inconsistent over time due to recurring disruptions.

Beyond these four pillars, Food Security Theory also emphasizes the importance of food systems and value chains, which include production, processing, storage, distribution, and consumption. Insecurity such as kidnapping disrupts these interconnected stages by affecting transportation routes, limiting market participation, and increasing transaction costs for traders and farmers. For instance, farmers may be unable to transport harvested produce to markets due to fear of attacks along rural roads, leading to post-harvest losses and reduced income. Similarly, middlemen and buyers may avoid high-risk areas, further isolating rural producers from markets and weakening local food systems.

The theory also incorporates the concept of vulnerability and resilience, which is critical in understanding how households respond to shocks. Rural farming households in Edo State often rely on seasonal agriculture and have limited savings or access to insurance. As a result, repeated exposure to insecurity erodes their coping capacity, forcing them to adopt negative survival strategies such as selling productive assets, reducing food intake, or withdrawing children from school. Over time, these coping mechanisms deepen poverty and undermine long-term food security. In contrast, resilient food systems are those that can absorb shocks, adapt to changing conditions, and recover quickly from disruptions, qualities that are significantly weakened in environments characterized by persistent kidnapping and violence.

Furthermore, Food Security Theory recognizes the role of institutional and policy frameworks in shaping food security outcomes. Government interventions such as agricultural subsidies, rural infrastructure development, security provision, and extension services are essential for strengthening food systems. However, in situations where insecurity persists, the effectiveness of these policies is often limited. For example, improved seeds and fertilizers may not translate into increased productivity if farmers are unable to safely access their land. This highlights the need for integrated approaches that combine agricultural development policies with robust security strategies.

The theory also underscores the nutritional dimension of food security, which goes beyond mere caloric intake to include dietary diversity and food quality. Insecurity-induced disruptions in agriculture often reduce the availability of diverse food items such as fruits, vegetables, and animal products. Consequently, households may rely on cheaper, less nutritious food options, increasing the risk of malnutrition, particularly among children and vulnerable groups. This has long-term implications for human capital development, as poor nutrition is linked to reduced cognitive development, lower productivity, and increased healthcare costs.

The theory also highlights the interconnectedness between agricultural productivity and broader economic outcomes. Reduced food production contributes to inflation, poverty, and malnutrition, all of which hinder national development. In addition, declining agricultural output can lead to increased dependence on food imports, putting pressure on foreign exchange reserves and weakening national economic stability. Given that agriculture remains

a major employer in Nigeria, disruptions in this sector also contribute to rising unemployment and social instability.

Therefore, Food Security Theory provides a comprehensive and multidimensional lens for analyzing how insecurity, particularly kidnapping, translates into tangible food system challenges and developmental setbacks. It not only explains the direct impact on food production but also captures the broader socio-economic consequences, including poverty, malnutrition, and weakened resilience. This makes it highly relevant for examining the complex relationship between food security and national development in the context of Edo State.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHOD

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a survey research design which is appropriate for collecting quantitative data from a broad population to assess the impact of kidnapping on food production in Edo State. This design allowed for the use of structured questionnaires to gather standardized responses from farmers and rural dwellers, enabling statistical analysis of key variables such as farm output, land use, and food availability. The survey approach is justified as it facilitates the generalization of findings across affected communities, provides a cost-effective means of data collection, and is suitable for measuring the extent and patterns of rural insecurity. According to Creswell (2014), survey designs are particularly effective for studies that seek to describe existing conditions and examine relationships among variables within a defined population.

3.2 Source of Data

The primary source of data for this study was the questionnaire, which was designed to collect quantitative information directly from farmers, community members, and agricultural stakeholders in Ovia North-East Local Government Area of Edo State. The questionnaire consisted of structured, close-ended questions aimed at capturing data on the frequency of kidnapping incidents, changes in farming activities, income levels, land usage, and food availability between 2020 and 2025. This method is appropriate as it allows for the collection of consistent, measurable responses from a large number of participants within a short period, ensuring the reliability and comparability of data. The use of questionnaires is also cost-

effective and enables the researcher to gather first-hand information that reflects the lived experiences and perceptions of those affected by rural insecurity.

3.3 Population of Study

The population of this study comprised all residents of Ovia North-East Local Government Area (LGA) of Edo State, which serves as the focus of the research due to its agricultural prominence and reported cases of kidnapping affecting food production. According to the National Population Commission (NPC, 2023) and projected population of Ovia North-East LGA is 329,448. This population includes farmers, community leaders, traders, youths, and other rural dwellers whose livelihoods are directly or indirectly linked to agricultural activities. By adopting the entire LGA population as the study population, the research ensured a comprehensive representation of the affected communities and enables a more accurate assessment of the relationship between insecurity and food production across the area.

3.4 Determination of Sample Size

The sample size for this study is determined using the Taro Yamane formula which is suitable for calculating sample sizes from large, finite populations when the degree of precision is known. Given the population of 329,448 residents in Ovia North-East LGA, the formula:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where n= the relevant population sought for

N= total population of study

e = limit of tolerable error (0.05)²

1 = constant

$$n = \frac{329448}{1+329448 (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{329448}{1+329448 \times 0.05 \times 0.05}$$

$$n = \frac{329448}{1+329448 \times 0.0025}$$

$$n = \frac{329448}{1+823.62}$$

$$n = \frac{329448}{824.62}$$

$$n = 399.51$$

$$n \simeq 400$$

This method is justified as it provides a statistically representative sample size that balances accuracy and feasibility, ensuring that the findings can be generalized to the wider population without surveying every individual (Yamane, 1967).

3.5 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

The study adopted a sample size of 400 respondents, determined using the Taro Yamane formula with a 5% margin of error, from the total population of 329,448 residents in Ovia North-East Local Government Area. A simple random sampling technique was employed to ensure that every individual in the population had an equal chance of being selected, thereby reducing selection bias and enhancing the reliability of the results. To ensure adequate coverage of farming communities affected by kidnapping, questionnaires were distributed across Okada, Ekiador, Ugbogui, Utekon, and Okokhuo, which are among the major agrarian settlements in the area. This technique was particularly suitable for the large and diverse population of Ovia North-East, as it ensured that the sample was representative of the broader community, including farmers, traders, and other rural dwellers. The choice of 400 respondents struck a balance between statistical accuracy and logistical feasibility, while the randomness of selection ensured objectivity in the data collection process (Creswell, 2014).

3.6 Method of Data Analysis

The research work made use of the simple percentage method in analyzing the data that was collected through the questionnaire. This method, which is a fundamental tool in descriptive statistics, was employed due to its simplicity and efficiency in presenting data in a clear and interpretable format. By using simple percentages, the responses of participants were converted into relative proportions, making it easier to identify prevailing trends, patterns, and relationships within the dataset. The formula that was used to compute the simple percentage is: $(F/N) \times 100$, where F stands for the frequency of a particular response and N represents the total number of responses. This analytical technique enabled the researcher to present findings in a manner that is not only statistically valid but also easily comprehensible to readers and stakeholders, thereby enhancing the overall impact and usability of the research outcomes.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter present and interprets the quantitative data generated through questionnaire among respondents from the study titled; Food Security and National Development: Assessing the Impact of Kidnapping on Food Production in Edo State (2020-2025). A total number of 400 questionnaires were administered and 382 were completely filled, returned and analyzed.

4.2 Respondents Profile

Question 1: Sex

Table 1: Survey of Respondents Sex

Option	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Male	257	67.28
Female	125	32.72
Total	382	100

Source: Field survey 2025

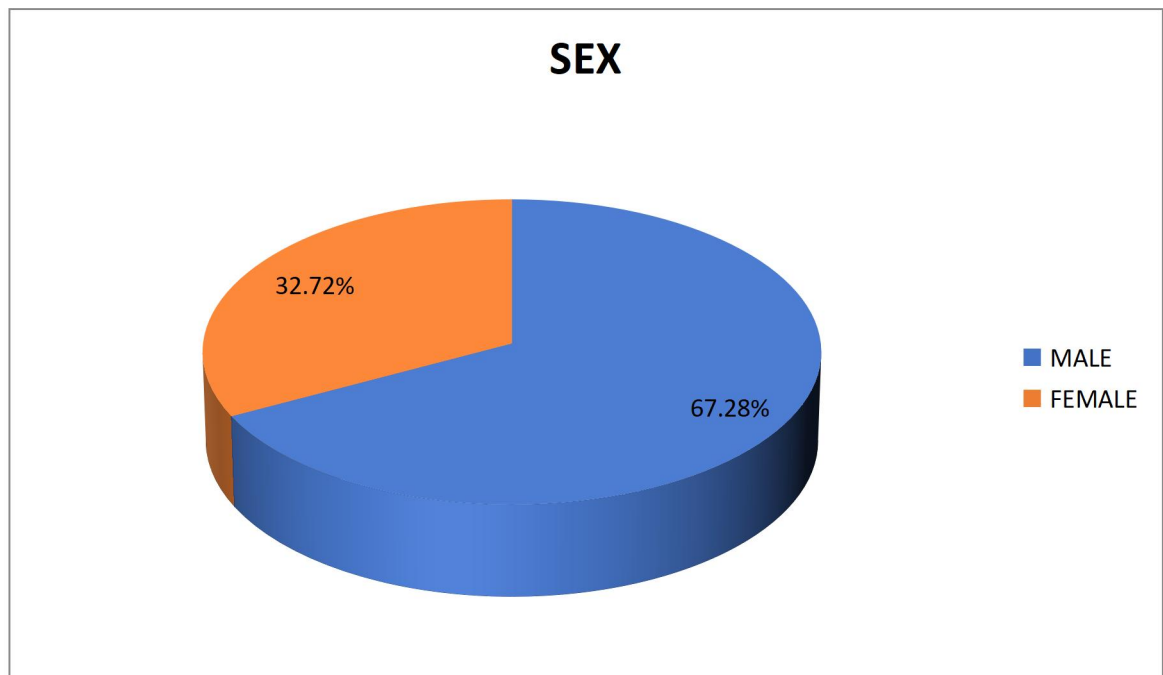


Table 1 and 1 figure showed that 67.28% of the respondents are male while 32.72% are female, which implies that majority of the respondents are male.

Question 2: Age

Table 2: Survey of Age Distribution

Option	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
18-27 years	83	21.73
28-37 years	147	38.48
38-47 years	82	21.47
48-57 years	38	9.95
58 years and above	32	8.38
Total	382	100

Source: Field survey 2025

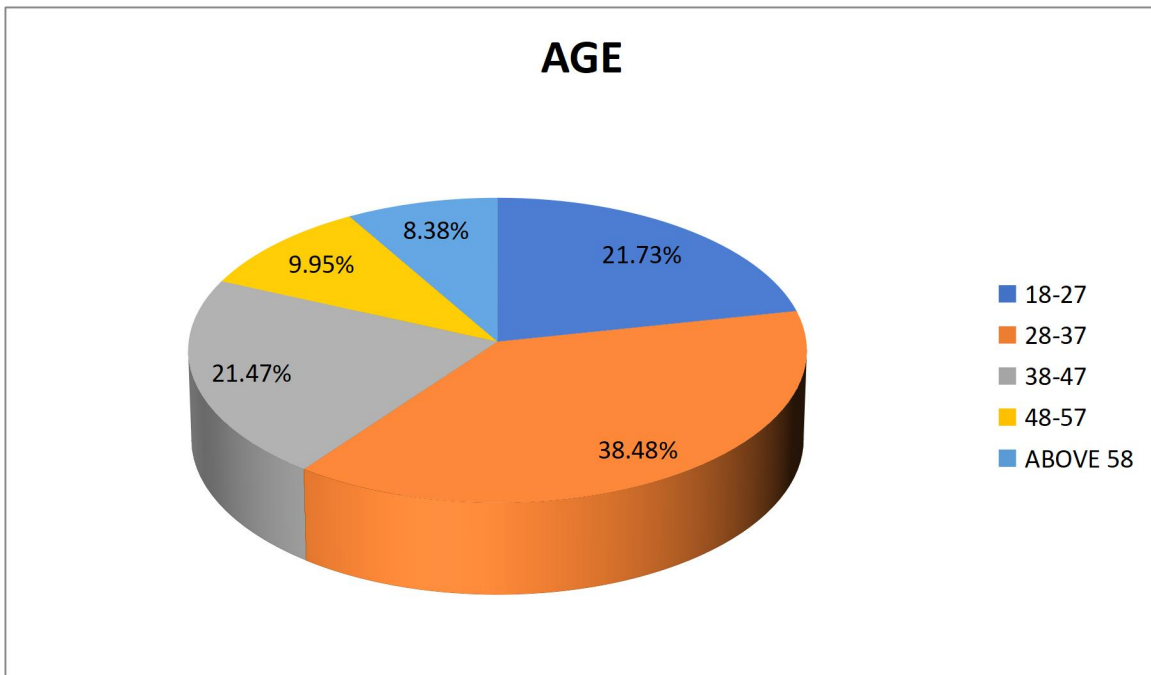


Table 2 showed that 21.73% of respondents constitute the age between 18-27 years, 38.48% of respondents constitute the age between 28-37 years, 21.47% of respondents constitute the age 38-47 years, 9.95% of respondents constitute the age between 48-57 years, and 8.38% of

respondents constitute the age of 58 years and above. The majority of the respondents are between the ages of 28-37 years, which implies that majority of the respondents are young people.

Table 3: Marital Status of the Respondents

Option	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Married	271	70.94
Divorced	22	5.76
Widowed	9	2.36
Single	80	20.94
Total	382	100

Source: Field survey 2025

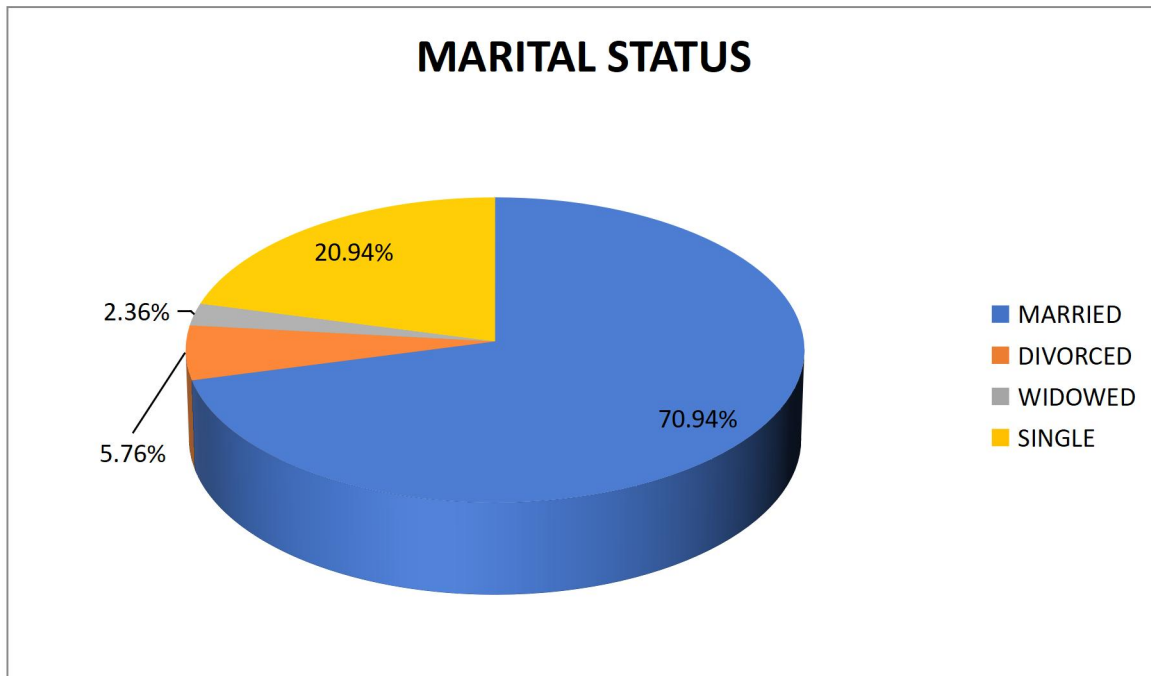


Table 3 above shows the analysis of marital status, 271 respondents representing 70.94% of the sample under review are married, 22 respondents representing 5.76% are divorced, 9 respondents representing 2.36% are widowed and 80 respondents which represent 20.94% are

single. Majority of the respondents are married which implies that there are more married in the population of study.

Question 4: Educational Qualification

Table 4: Survey of Respondents Qualification:

Option	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Primary School Leaving Certificate	54	14.14
SSCE	93	24.35
NCE/OND	98	25.65
B.Sc./HND	105	27.49
M.Sc.	24	6.28
Ph.D	3	0.79
Others	5	1.31
Total	382	100

Source: Field survey 2025

Table 4 showed that 14.14% of the respondents have Primary School Leaving Certificate, 24.35% have SSCE, 25.65% of the respondents have NCE/OND, 27.49% of the respondents have B.Sc./HND, 6.28% of the respondents have M.Sc., 0.79% have Ph.D. and 1.31% of the respondents have other qualifications. Majority of the respondents have B.Sc. and HND which implies that the population under survey is educated people.

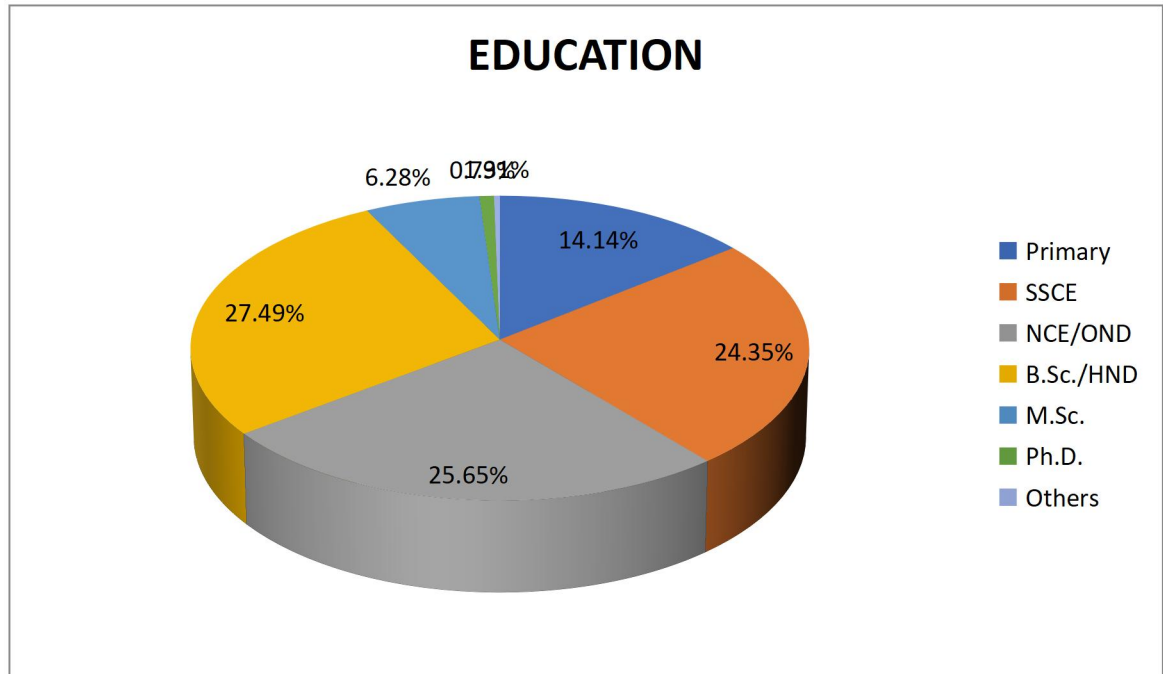
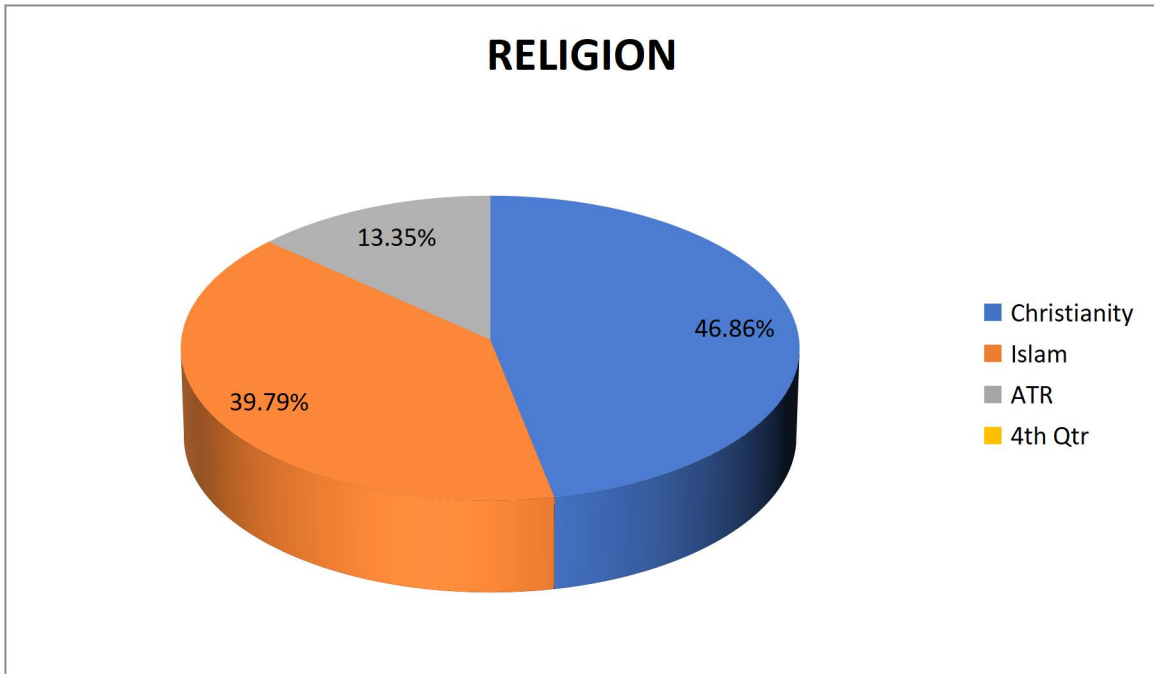


Table 5: Survey of Respondents Religion:

Option	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Christianity	179	46.86
Islam	152	39.79
Africa Traditional Religion	51	13.35
Total	382	100

Source: Field survey 2025

Table 5 shows that 46.86% of the respondents are Christians, 39.79% are Muslims while 13.35% of the respondents are African Traditional Religion worshipers. Majority of the respondents are Christians which implies that there a lot Christians among the population under survey.



4.3 Data Presentation of the Questionnaire

Part B of the questionnaire constitutes questions that relates to the study in which the researcher tends to obtain information in order to draw up conclusion from the findings.

These questions were analyzed through the use of table. They include the following:

Question 6: Kidnapping incidents in Ovia North-East between 2020 and 2025 have significantly reduced farmers' access to their farmlands.

Table 6:

Option	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	108	28.27
Agree	201	52.62
Undecided	12	3.14
Disagree	33	8.64
Strongly disagree	28	7.33
Total	382	100

Source: Field survey 2025

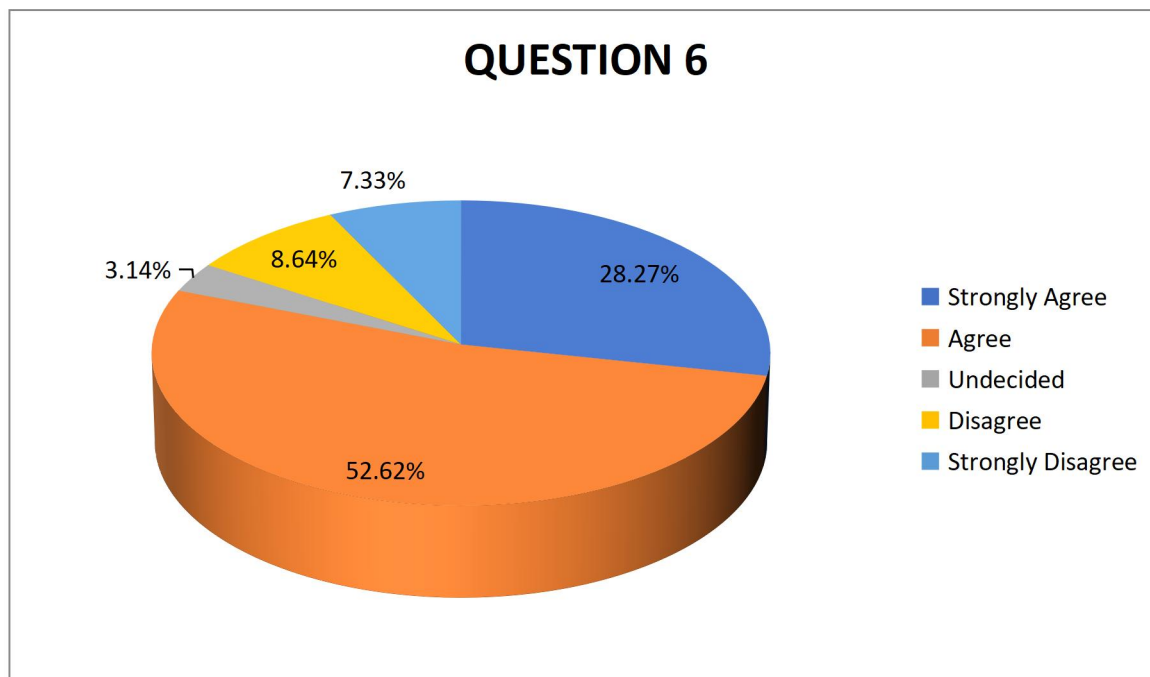


Table 6 revealed that 28.27% of the respondents strongly agreed that Kidnapping incidents in Ovia North-East between 2020 and 2025 have significantly reduced farmers' access to their farmlands, 52.62% agreed on the statement, 3.14% were undecided with the assertion, 8.64% disagreed while 7.33% strongly disagreed on the statement. Majority of the

respondents agreed on the statement which implies that kidnapping incidents in Ovia North-East between 2020 and 2025 have significantly reduced farmers' access to their farmlands.

Question 7: Fear of kidnapping has led to a decline in farming activities in my community during the period under review.

Table 7:

Option	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	33	8.64
Agree	271	70.94
Undecided	7	1.83
Disagree	51	13.35
Strongly disagree	20	5.24
Total	382	100

Source: Field survey 2025

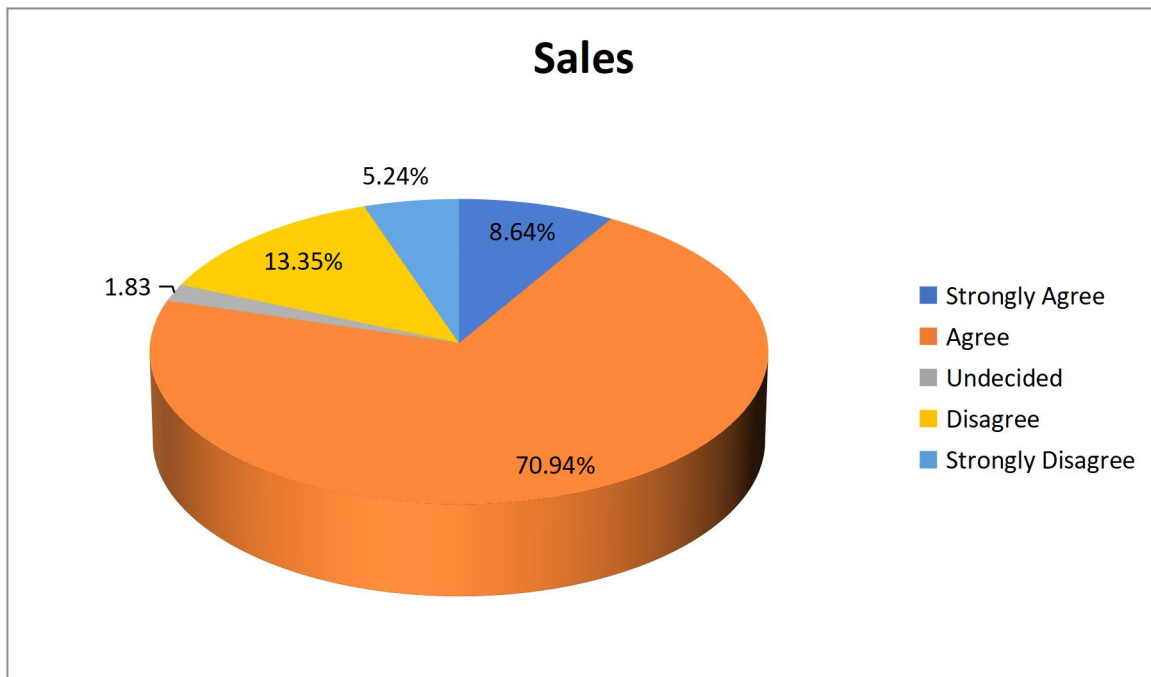


Table 7 revealed that 8.64% of the respondents strongly agreed that fear of kidnapping has led to a decline in farming activities in my community during the period under review, 70.94% agreed on the statement, 1.83% where undecided, 13.35% disagreed and 5.24% strongly

disagreed. Majority of the respondents agreed to the statement which demonstrates that fear of kidnapping has led to a decline in farming activities in my community during the period under review.

Question 8: Many farmers have abandoned their farmlands due to the rising threat of kidnapping in recent years.

Table 8:

Option	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	73	19.11
Agree	197	51.57
Undecided	44	11.52
Disagree	33	8.64
Strongly disagree	35	9.16
Total	382	100

Source: Field survey 2025

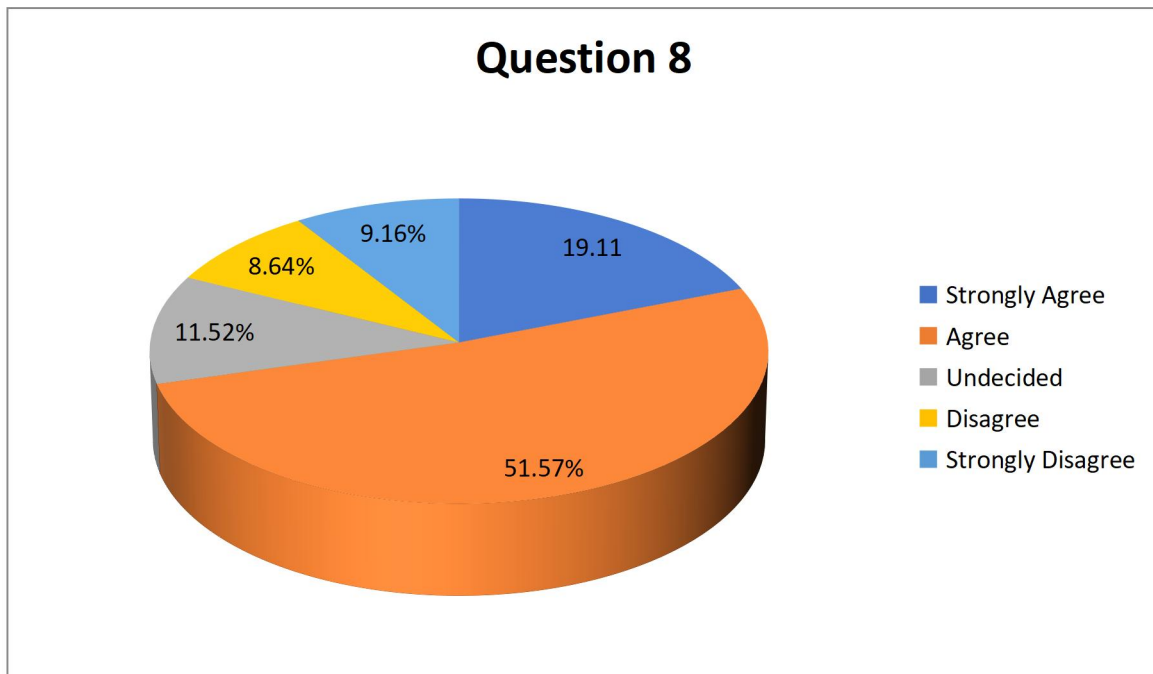


Table 8 revealed that 19.11% of the respondents strongly agreed that many farmers have abandoned their farmlands due to the rising threat of kidnapping in recent years, 51.57% agreed on the statement, 11.52% were undecided over the assertion, 8.64% disagreed and 9.16% of the respondents strongly disagreed to the statement. Majority of the respondents agreed on the statement, which implies that many farmers have abandoned their farmlands due to the rising threat of kidnapping in recent years.

Question 9: The level of food production in Ovia North-East has declined between 2020 and 2025 as a result of kidnapping.

Table 9:

Option	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	198	51.83
Agree	101	26.44
Undecided	8	2.09
Disagree	35	9.16
Strongly disagree	40	10.47
Total	382	100

Source: Field survey 2025

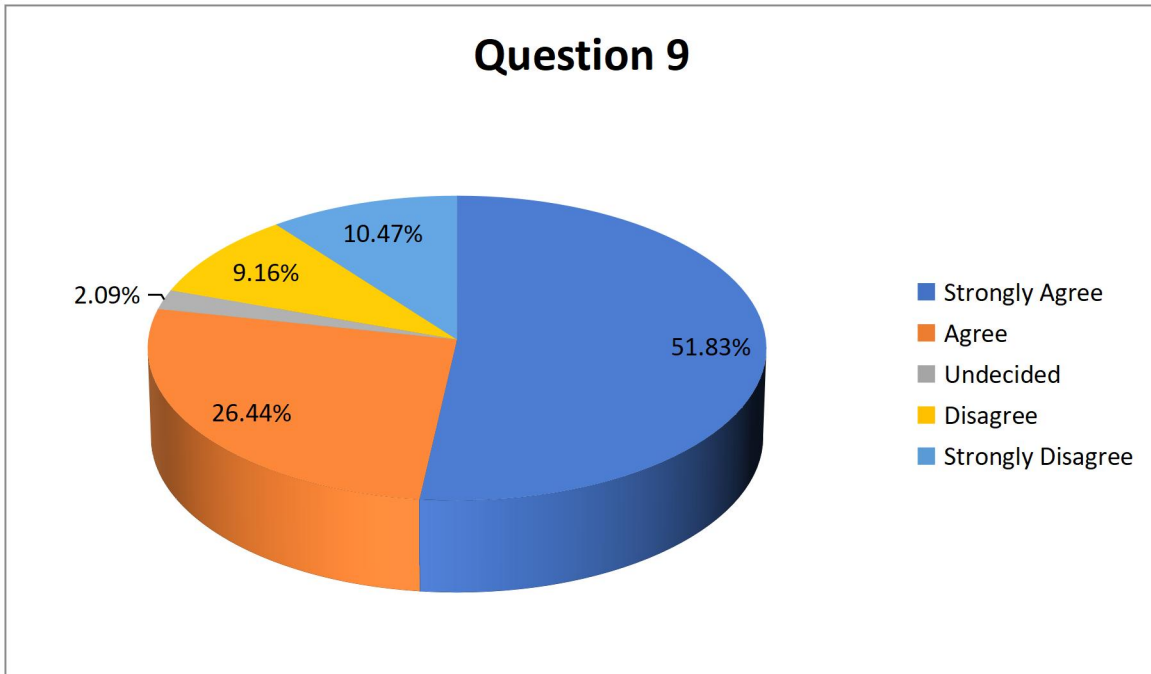


Table 9 revealed that, 198 respondents which comprised 51.83% strongly agreed that the level of food production in Ovia North-East has declined between 2020 and 2025 as a result of kidnapping, 101 of the respondents which constitutes 26.44% agreed to the assertion, 8 respondents which is 2.09% where undecided, 35 respondents which equaled 9.16% disagreed on the assertion and 40 respondents which comprised 10.47% strongly disagreed to the statement. Majority of the respondents strongly agreed to the statement which implies that the level of food production in Ovia North-East has declined between 2020 and 2025 as a result of kidnapping.

Question 10: Kidnapping has discouraged investment in agriculture and farm-related ventures in this area over the past five years.

Table 10:

Option	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	112	29.32
Agree	120	31.41
Undecided	50	13.09
Disagree	68	17.80
Strongly disagree	32	8.38
Total	382	100

Source: Field survey 2025

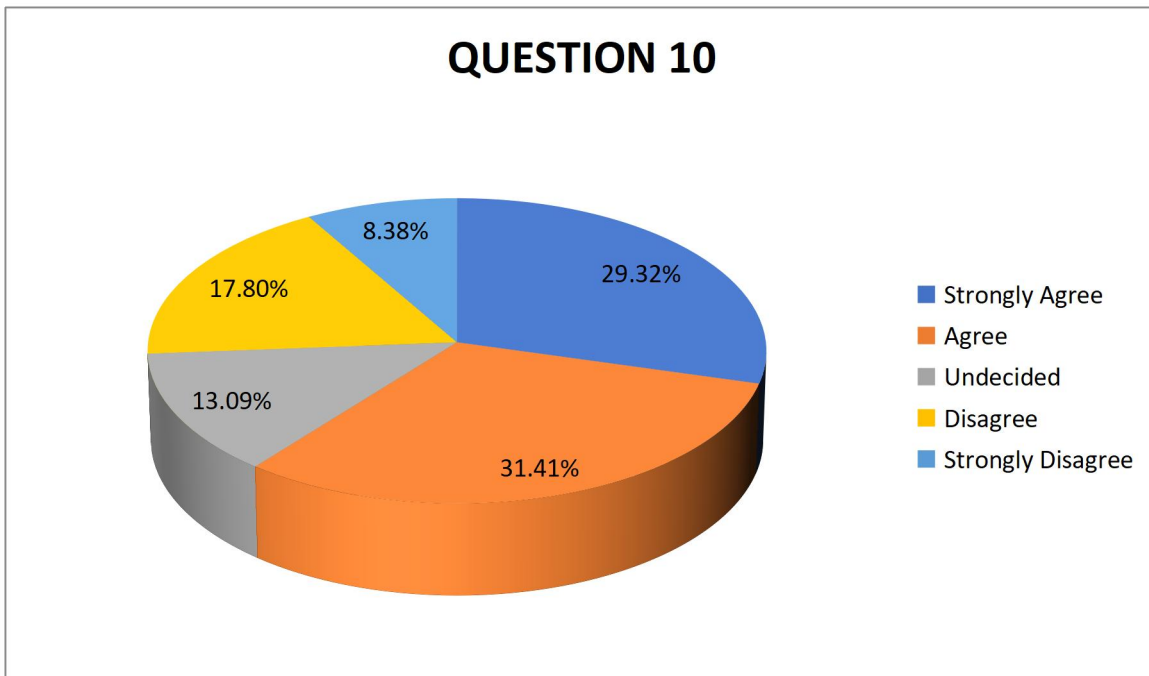


Table 10 revealed that 29.32% of the respondents strongly agreed that **Kidnapping has discouraged investment in agriculture and farm-related ventures in this area over the past five years**, 31.41% agreed to the statement, another 13.09% were undecided, 17.80% disagreed and 8.38% strongly disagreed on the statement. Majority of the respondents agreed

on the statement which implies that **kidnapping has discouraged investment in agriculture and farm-related ventures in this area over the past five years**

Question 11: Kidnapping has caused a significant decline in the income levels of farmers in this community.

Table 11:

Option	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	32	8.38
Agree	199	52.09
Undecided	33	8.63
Disagree	77	20.16
Strongly disagree	41	10.73
Total	382	100

Source: Field survey 2025

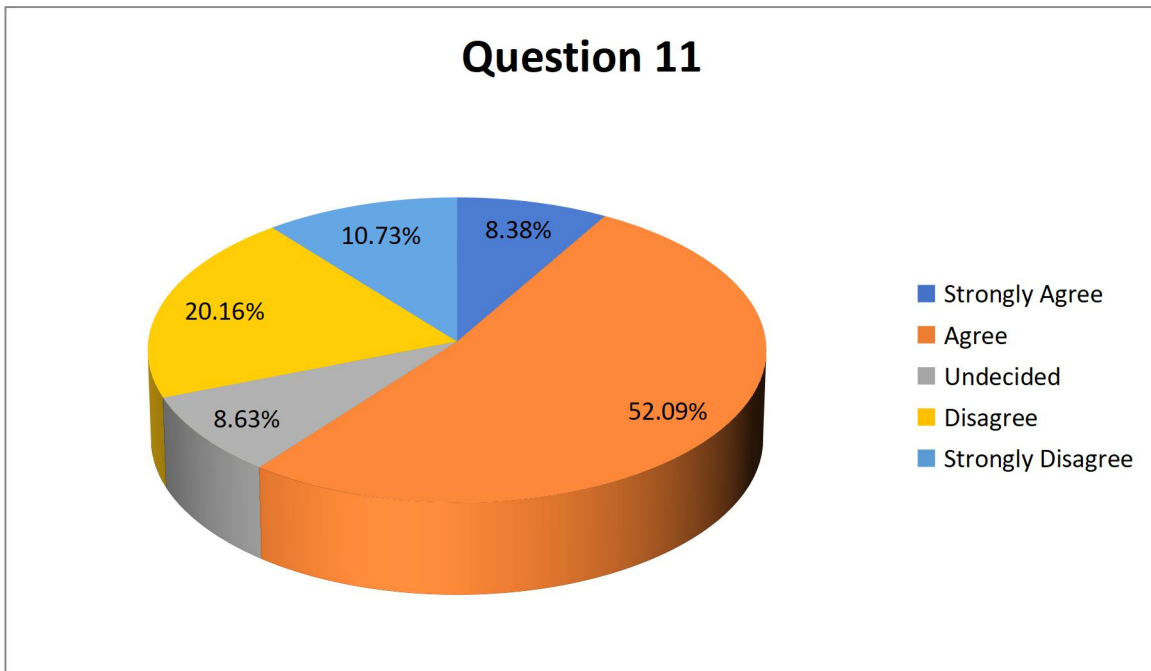


Table 11 revealed that 32 respondents which constitutes 8.38% strongly agree that kidnapping has caused a significant decline in the income levels of farmers in this community, 199 respondents which amounts to 52.09% agreed in the statement, 33 respondents which totals 8.63% were undecided, 77 respondents which comprised 20.16% disagreed and 41 respondents that made up 10.73% strongly disagreed in the statement. Majority of the respondents agreed on the statement which means that kidnapping has caused a significant decline in the income levels of farmers in this community.

Question 12: The frequent occurrence of kidnapping has led to increased poverty among rural households in the area.

Table 12:

Option	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	20	5.24
Agree	231	60.47
Undecided	19	4.97
Disagree	53	13.87
Strongly disagree	59	15.44
Total	382	100

Source: Field survey 2025

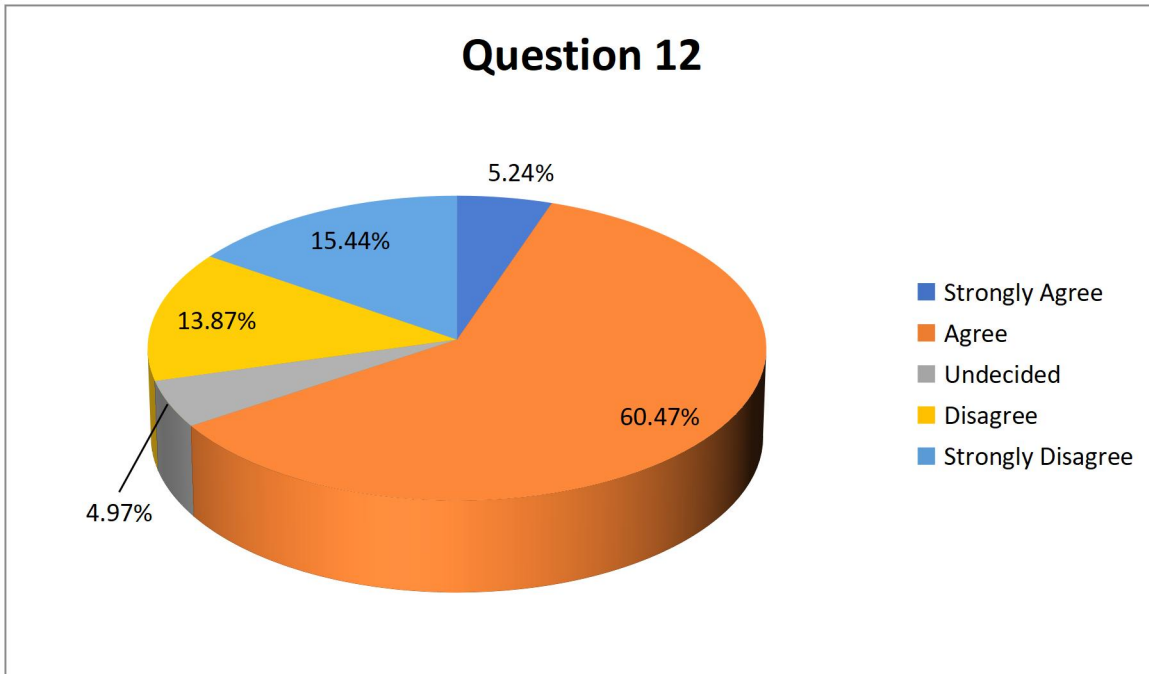


Table 12 revealed that 5.24% of the respondents strongly agreed that the frequent occurrence of kidnapping has led to increased poverty among rural households in the area, 60.47% agreed, 4.97% were undecided, 13.87% disagreed and 15.44% strongly disagreed on the statement. Majority of the respondents agreed to the statement which implies that the frequent occurrence of kidnapping has led to increased poverty among rural households in the area.

Question 13: Families affected by kidnapping have experienced disruptions in their children’s education due to financial hardship.

Table 13:

Option	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	101	26.44
Agree	149	39.01
Undecided	50	13.09
Disagree	31	8.12
Strongly disagree	51	13.35
Total	382	100

Source: Field survey 2025

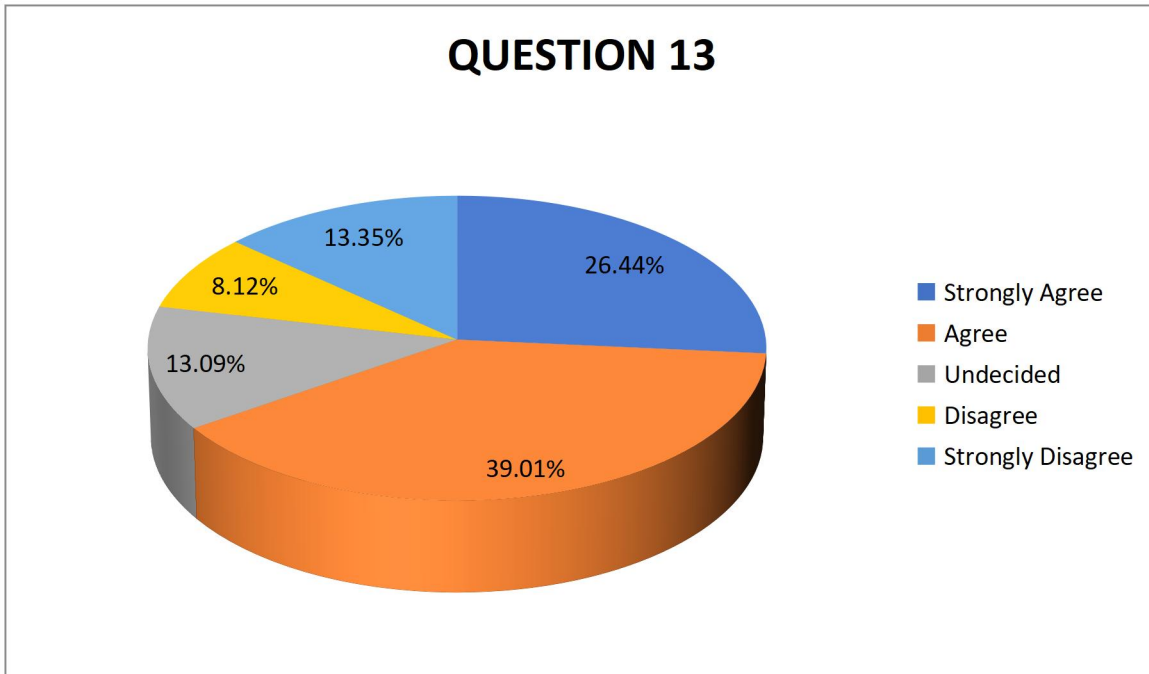


Table 13 revealed that 26.44% strongly agreed that families affected by kidnapping have experienced disruptions in their children’s education due to financial hardship, 39.01% agreed on the statement, 13.09% were undecided, 8.12% disagreed and 13.35% strongly disagree on the statement. Majority of the respondents agreed to the assertion which means that families affected by kidnapping have experienced disruptions in their children’s education due to financial hardship.

Question 14: Kidnapping has increased the cost of food and other basic goods in rural communities.

Table 14:

Option	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	97	25.39
Agree	144	37.70
Undecided	41	10.73
Disagree	68	17.80
Strongly disagree	32	8.38
Total	382	100

Source: Field survey 2025

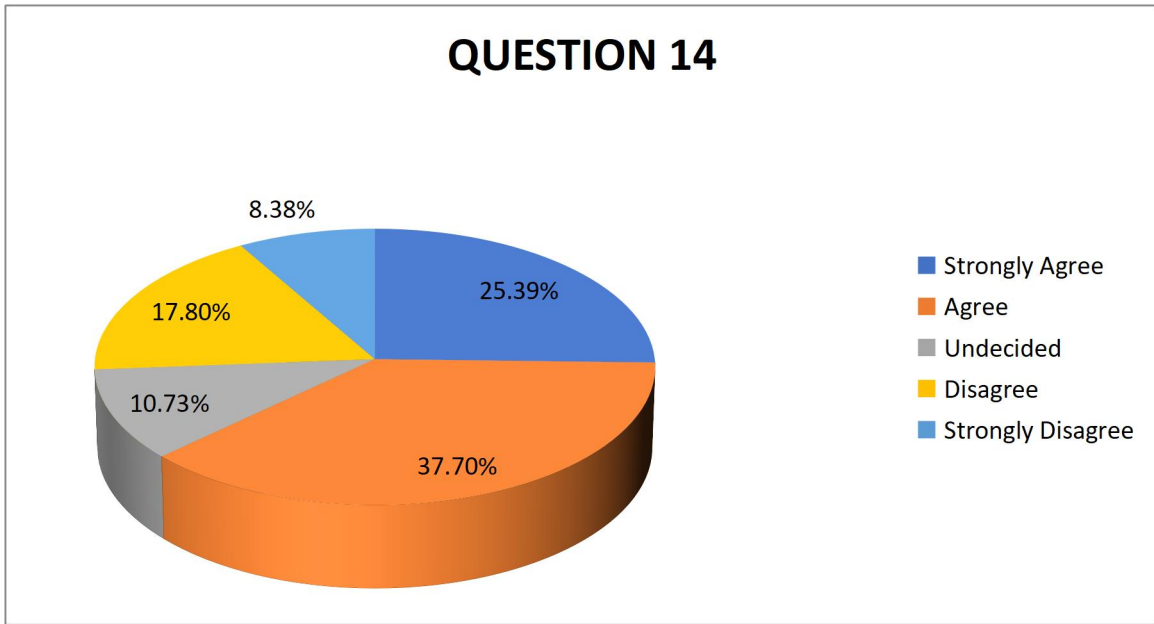


Table 14 revealed that 25.39% of the population strongly agreed that Kidnapping has increased the cost of food and other basic goods in rural communities, 37.70% agreed to the statement, 10.73% were undecided, 17.80% disagreed and 8.38% of the respondents strongly disagreed to the statement. Majority of the respondents agreed to the statement which implies that kidnapping has increased the cost of food and other basic goods in rural communities.

Question 15: The social wellbeing and psychological stability of rural households have been negatively affected by the fear of kidnapping.

Table 15:

Option	Number of respondents	Percentage (%)
Strongly Agree	102	26.70
Agree	188	49.21
Undecided	10	2.62
Disagree	40	10.47
Strongly disagree	42	10.10
Total	382	100

Source: Field survey 2025

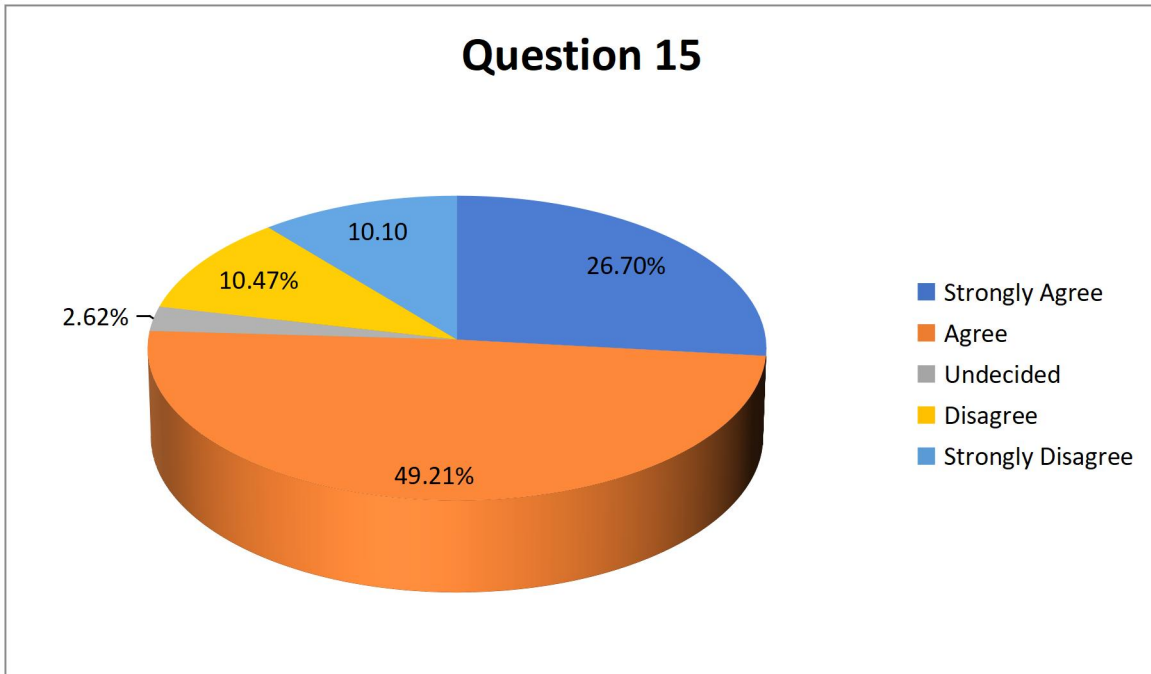


Table 16 revealed that 26.70% of the respondents strongly agreed that the social wellbeing and psychological stability of rural households have been negatively affected by the fear of kidnapping, 49.21% agreed on the statement, 2.62% were undecided with the assertion, 10.47% disagreed while 10.10% strongly disagreed on the statement. Majority of the respondents strongly disagreed on the statement which implies that the social wellbeing and psychological stability of rural households have been negatively affected by the fear of kidnapping.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study are presented below in line with the objectives of the study:

Objective 1: To examine the extent to which kidnapping has affected farming activities and food production in Ovia North-East between 2020 and 2025.

The findings of this study are based on statistical data analyses and it was found in research questions 7, 8, 9 and 10 that kidnapping incidents between 2020 and 2025 in Ovia North-East have had a profound impact on agricultural livelihoods. Farmers' limited access to farmlands, driven by fear of abduction, led many to abandon cultivation, thereby reducing farming activities across the community. This disruption in agricultural production did not only lower food output but also discouraged investment in farming-related ventures. The implication is that insecurity has become a structural barrier to local agricultural development, creating a cycle of reduced productivity, food scarcity, and heightened vulnerability among farming households. By establishing a clear link between kidnapping and declining food production, the study demonstrates how insecurity directly undermines food security and economic stability in rural Nigeria.

These findings align with broader empirical evidence across Nigeria. For instance, a study on arable crop output in the Niger Delta found that higher incidences of kidnapping were significantly and negatively associated with production output at the 1% level, indicating that as kidnapping increases, agricultural production falls (Sage, 2023). Similarly, an investigation by the BBC reported that farm operations by a major rice farmer in northern Nigeria were suspended due to repeated kidnap attempts, with over 350 farmers killed or abducted within 12 months as of mid-2022 (BBC, 2022). From a national perspective, agriculture as a

diversification strategy has been undermined by kidnapping and herdsmen violence, which have forced many farmers to abandon their fields, thereby reducing output and fuelling food insecurity—agriculture growth slowed to just 1.4% in Q2 2024 amid such insecurity (BusinessDay, 2024). Likewise, the All Farmers Association of Nigeria (AFAN) warned that kidnappings, killings, and extortions of farmers are worsening food insecurity, with farmland abandonment becoming increasingly common (Daily Post, 2024; Tribune Online, 2023).

Objective 2: To analyze the socio-economic consequences of kidnapping on farmers and rural households in the study area.

Tables 11 to 15 addressed objective two of the study. The study found that the recurring phenomena of kidnapping have deeply undermined the livelihoods and wellbeing of farming households in this community. The steep decline in farmers' income, driven by frequent abductions and ransom demands, has propelled many into poverty and destabilized household finances. As resources dwindle, families grapple with pulling children from school due to economic hardship, while food and basic commodity prices soar, further straining their budgets. Beyond the economic fallout, the persistent threat of kidnapping has eroded social cohesion and inflicted psychological distress, infusing daily life with anxiety and disrupting the community's overall social wellbeing.

Empirical studies from Nigeria corroborate these dynamics. In Zamfara State, ransom payments frequently result in the liquidation of assets and mounting debts, driving victims' families into financial ruin and deeper poverty (Sani & Mohammed, 2025). The insecurity has also disrupted agricultural trade and displaced farming households, leading to reduced income and widespread food insecurity (Sani & Mohammed, 2025). In North-West Nigeria, farmers

abandoning their farms due to armed attacks triggered sharp increases in food prices, highlighting how kidnapping contributes to inflation and diminished household welfare (Reuters, 2024). Moreover, widespread kidnappings have led to educational disruptions; families are often compelled to sell possessions to secure their children's release, with many children subsequently withdrawn from school due to fear and financial strain (Reuters, 2024). Finally, the psychological toll and community trauma inflicted by banditry and kidnappings have eroded social stability, generating pervasive fear and mistrust within rural societies (Nigeria Risk Index, 2025).

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

As the final chapter of the study, it focuses on the summary of findings on *Food Security and National Development: Assessing the Impact of Kidnapping on Food Production in Edo State (2020-2025)*.

5.2 Summary of the Work

The major aim of this research is to appraise Food Security and National Development: Assessing the Impact of Kidnapping on Food Production in Edo State (2020-2025).

Specifically, the study sought to achieve the following objectives:

The specific objectives are given as follows:

1. To examine the extent to which kidnapping has affected farming activities and food production in Ovia North-East between 2020 and 2025.
2. To analyze the socio-economic consequences of kidnapping on farmers and rural households in the study area.
3. To identify and recommend strategies that local communities and government authorities can adopt to reduce the impact of kidnapping on agricultural productivity in Ovia North-East.

In addition to the objectives, chapter one contains the statement of research problem, the research questions, significance of the study and scope of the study.

In Chapter two, extensive literature was discussed in relation to the focus of the study which is; *Food Security and National Development: Assessing the Impact of Kidnapping on Food Production in Edo State (2020-2025)*.

In chapter three, with the aim of achieving the stated objectives of this study, the researcher adopted the survey method and the research instrument used for data collection is the questionnaire. The questionnaires were administered to 400 respondents of Ovia North East LGA of Edo State whereby, 382 of the questionnaires were returned and analyzed.

The chapter four involves the presentation and analysis of data which was gotten from questionnaires administered and simple percentage was used for analyzing the data.

The chapter five contains summary of the work, conclusion and recommendations.

5.3 Summary of Findings

The study found that kidnapping has had a severe impact on the income levels of farmers in Ovia North-East. Many households that depend on farming as their primary source of livelihood have experienced significant financial setbacks as the fear of abduction discourages them from cultivating their farmlands. Those who continue farming often do so on a reduced scale, which limits productivity and shrinks their earnings. The frequent ransom payments associated with kidnappings further drain family resources, pushing many households into deeper financial distress.

The findings also reveal that the frequent occurrence of kidnapping has heightened poverty levels among rural households in the area. Farming families are forced to divert scarce resources to pay ransoms or relocate to safer but less fertile areas, which reduces agricultural

output and household income. As poverty deepens, rural households struggle to meet basic needs such as food, healthcare, and housing, thereby widening the socio-economic gap between farming communities and more secure regions. This downward economic spiral has entrenched vulnerability and hardship in affected communities.

The study further found that kidnapping incidents have disrupted the education of children in farming households. Many families cannot afford school fees and other educational expenses due to financial losses from ransom payments and declining farm incomes. In some cases, children are withdrawn from school to assist in household survival or because parents fear sending them on long journeys to school in insecure areas. This disruption in education has long-term implications for human capital development and perpetuates cycles of poverty in rural communities.

Finally, the findings highlight that kidnapping has escalated the cost of food and essential goods in the community. As farmers abandon their farmlands, food supply has dwindled, leading to shortages and higher market prices. These price increases disproportionately affect poor households, making basic goods less affordable. Additionally, the persistent threat of abduction has eroded the psychological stability and social wellbeing of rural households. Fear and anxiety dominate community life, eroding trust, social interactions, and collective resilience. Thus, beyond the economic toll, kidnapping has inflicted deep social and emotional scars on the fabric of rural society in Ovia North-East.

5.4 Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that the phenomenon of kidnapping has become one of the most pervasive threats to rural livelihoods, agricultural sustainability, and community wellbeing in

Ovia North-East between 2020 and 2025. The findings reveal a multidimensional impact, where insecurity has not only reduced access to farmland but also diminished farmers' productivity and income levels, thereby pushing many households into poverty. The frequent demand for ransom and the associated financial burden have exacerbated rural hardship, disrupted children's education, and undermined intergenerational prospects for human capital development.

Moreover, the study establishes that kidnapping has triggered significant distortions in the local food supply chain. The abandonment of farmlands and withdrawal of farmers from productive activities have curtailed agricultural output, thereby inflating the prices of food and essential commodities. These developments have deepened the food insecurity already present in the region and widened socio-economic inequalities between secure and insecure communities. The negative consequences are not restricted to economic metrics alone; they extend to the psychosocial wellbeing of residents, who live under constant fear and anxiety, eroding social cohesion and trust within the community.

The cumulative effect of these dynamics is the destabilization of rural livelihoods and the erosion of long-term resilience in farming communities. By linking the fear and reality of kidnapping to food insecurity, poverty, and declining human development indicators, this study underscores that insecurity is not only a law-and-order problem but also a structural impediment to sustainable development. The persistence of kidnapping threatens to reverse developmental gains and risks entrenching cycles of deprivation and vulnerability in Ovia North-East and similar rural contexts across Nigeria.

Therefore, addressing the scourge of kidnapping requires a comprehensive and multidimensional strategy. Beyond militarized security responses, it necessitates strengthening rural policing, investing in community-based security networks, enhancing socio-economic opportunities, and implementing effective support systems for traumatized households. Without such integrated interventions, the nexus between kidnappings, rural poverty, food insecurity, and social disintegration will continue to undermine both local and national development trajectories.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, one key recommendation is the need to strengthen rural security through a community-based approach. The government should expand the capacity of local security networks and vigilante groups by providing training, logistics, and proper coordination with formal security agencies. This will enable faster responses to kidnapping incidents and restore farmers' confidence to access their farmlands. Effective policing in rural areas must also include intelligence-gathering systems that rely on community trust and participation.

Secondly, there is a need for targeted socio-economic interventions to address the economic vulnerabilities created by kidnapping. Government and development partners should provide direct support to affected farmers through subsidized inputs, credit facilities, and compensation schemes for victims. By rebuilding farmers' income sources, households can better cope with the economic shocks of insecurity and reduce the poverty levels that have worsened due to kidnapping. These interventions should be coupled with broader agricultural investment policies to boost production and stabilize food supply chains.

Another important recommendation is the prioritization of education and psychosocial support for households affected by kidnapping. Education assistance programs such as scholarship schemes, fee waivers, and school feeding initiatives should be introduced in affected communities to prevent children from dropping out of school. In addition, psychosocial counseling and trauma-healing programs should be implemented to address the emotional and psychological toll on victims and their families. These measures will help rebuild social resilience and prevent long-term negative effects on human capital development.

Finally, policymakers should adopt a holistic framework that integrates security, governance, and development. Tackling kidnapping requires more than military intervention; it demands addressing the structural causes such as unemployment, rural neglect, and weak governance. Multi-stakeholder collaboration between government agencies, civil society organizations, traditional institutions, and international partners is essential to design long-term solutions. By ensuring accountability, justice for victims, and inclusive rural development, the cycle of kidnapping, poverty, and food insecurity can be broken, thereby restoring stability and sustainable growth in Ovia North-East and other affected regions.

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Appendix

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Department of Political Science
Faculty of Social Sciences,
University of Benin,
Benin City.

June 17th, 2025.

Dear Sir/Madam,

REQUEST FOR COMPLETION OF QUESTIONNAIRE

I am currently a Master's degree student at the University of Benin, conducting a research study titled; **Food Security and National Development: Assessing the Impact of Kidnapping on Food Production in Edo State (2020-2025)**. I kindly request a few minutes of your time to complete this questionnaire with sincerity and thoroughness. I humbly appeal for your support, and please be assured that all responses and any additional information you provide will be handled with the highest level of confidentiality and used strictly for academic purposes.

Thank you sincerely for your cooperation.

Yours Faithfully,

Osaro OYOMARE

QUESTIONNAIRE

SECTION A

Part A: Personal Data Please tick (✓) the option that is applicable to you.

1. Gender: a. Male [], b. Female [].
2. Marital Status: Single [], Married [], Divorced [], Widowed [].
3. Age: a. 18-27 [], b.28-37 [], c. 38-47[], d. above 48 [].
4. Religion: a. Christianity [], b. Muslim [], c. Africa Traditional Religion [].
5. Educational Qualification: a. Primary School [], b. Secondary [], c. Post-secondary [], d. Post graduate [], Others [].

SECTION B: Questionnaires for the Study: Please tick (✓) the option that is applicable to you; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD).

SECTION B: To examine the extent to which kidnapping has affected farming activities and food production in Ovia North-East between 2020 and 2025.

Where; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD)

S/N		SA	A	N	D	SD
6	Kidnapping incidents in Ovia North-East between 2020 and 2025 have significantly reduced farmers' access to their farmlands.					
7	Fear of kidnapping has led to a decline in farming activities in my community during the period under review.					
8	Many farmers have abandoned their farmlands due to the rising threat of kidnapping in recent years.					

9	The level of food production in Ovia North-East has declined between 2020 and 2025 as a result of kidnapping.					
10	Kidnapping has discouraged investment in agriculture and farm-related ventures in this area over the past five years.					

SECTION C: To analyze the socio-economic consequences of kidnapping on farmers and rural households in the study area.

S/N		SA	A	N	D	SD
11	Kidnapping has caused a significant decline in the income levels of farmers in this community.					
12	The frequent occurrence of kidnapping has led to increased poverty among rural households in the area.					
13	Families affected by kidnapping have experienced disruptions in their children's education due to financial hardship.					
14	Kidnapping has increased the cost of food and other basic goods in rural communities.					
15	The social wellbeing and psychological stability of rural households have been negatively affected by the fear of kidnapping.					