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EFFECTS OF FORCED MIGRATION ON FOOD SECURITY IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract
This study examined the causes of forced migration and its impacts on food security in some selected rural communities of Ifelodu Local Government Areas of Kwara State, Nigeria. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study drew on survey data from 383 respondents including host community members, forced migrants, traders, security personnel, and local government officials. The sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane formula. Quantitative data were complemented with qualitative insights from key informant interviews. Findings revealed that forced migration is primarily driven by insecurity, especially banditry, armed robbery attacks, and poor infrastructure, alongside other contributing factors such as climate change, poverty, and limited government presence. The results further indicate that forced migration has significantly reduced agricultural productivity through farmland abandonment, labour shortages, and heightened fears of attacks, resulting in reduced food availability and rising food prices across communities such as Oro-Ago, Oke-Ode, Oreke, Babanla, Igbaja, sagbe among others. Qualitative evidence confirmed widespread displacement, loss of livelihoods, and market instability caused by prolonged insecurity. The study therefore, recommended an improved security measures, sustained agricultural recovery interventions, strengthened community re-adjustment systems, and enhanced government coordination to mitigate ongoing displacement and promote long-term food system resilience in the region.

Keywords: Forced Migration; Insecurity; Agricultural Productivity; Food Security; Rural Communities.

Introduction

Forced migration is a global phenomenon, with an estimated 122 million individuals forcibly displaced worldwide as of mid-2024 (UNHCR, 2024). Africa hosts a significant proportion of the world's displaced population, with over 40 million individuals affected by conflict, persecution, and climate-related disasters (Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 2024). In the African continent, approximately 20 to 25 million people that were forcibly displaced was largely driven by violence, political instability, and economic insecurity (UNHCR, 2024). In Asia and the Pacific, forced migration is similarly widespread, with tens of millions displaced due to armed conflict, ethnic tensions, and environmental crises (UNHCR, 2024). However, Europe hosts more than 20 million displaced persons, including refugees from within and outside the continent (UNHCR, 2024).

In recent years, food security has become a pressing issue across many regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in Nigeria with increasing threat due to a combination of climatic change, inflation, and widespread violence. According to the World Food Programme (2024), over 26 million Nigerians are at risk of severe food insecurity, with insecurity and displacement playing a key role. Although Kwara State is traditionally known for its rich agricultural resources producing crops like rice, cassava, yam, and maize (Olatinwo 2023) its rural economy has come under pressure due to rising insecurity.

Violent crimes such as kidnapping and killings are forcing farmers and their families to abandon farmlands, relocate to safer areas which has significantly reduce agricultural activities. For instance, in April 2025, the overflow of Jebba dam caused severe flooding across several local government areas along the river bank, destroying over 10,000 hectares of rice farms and rendered thousands homeless. (Wikipedia, 2025). While this occurence highlighted the vulnerability of food systems to natural hazard, the growing wave of security-related forced migration has become more persistent and damaging to the rural economy.

It should be noted that communities in Ifelodun Local Government Areas of Kwara State have been particularly affected. Reports indicate that towns such as Oro-Ago, Oke-Ode, Oreke, Babanla have experienced repeated attacks involving kidnapping, killings, and armed raids, forcing residents to flee for their safety. These criminal activities have disrupted farming seasons, broken supply chains, and prevented access to markets. When rural residents are forced to abandon their farmlands, the immediate result is food shortage for both subsistence and commercial agriculture. Consequently, in these areas forced migration driven by insecurity has become a key factor in food scarcity and rising prices, particularly for staple crops.

In view of the foregoings, this paper aimed assessing how displacement caused by violence affects agricultural production, food security, and rural economy.

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, Kwara State has experienced a surge in insecurity, particularly in ifelodun Local Government Areas (LGAs). Towns such as Oro-Ago, Oke-Ode, Oreke, Igbaja have recorded increased incidents of kidnapping, banditry, and armed violence, leading to the displacement of residents and severe disruptions to local agriculture. As farmers flee their farmlands, there is a decline in the cultivation of staple crops such as yam, maize, cassava, and rice, thereby disrupting local food supply systems and increasing food prices. However, the government's efforts to address insecurity and support affected communities have not been successful (Premium Times, 2025). This underscores the urgent need to investigate how forced migration is undermining food security in the vunerable rural communities of Kwara state.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

i. identify the major causes of forced migration in rural communities such as Oro-Ago, Oke-Ode, Oreke, Babanla in Ifelodun area of Kwara State.
ii. assess the impact of forced migration on food security in the study areas.
iii. make recommendations on how to addressed the challenges

Conceptual Clarifications

Forced Migration

Forced migration refers to the involuntary movement of people from their habitual places of residence due to factors that threaten their lives, security, or basic human rights. These factors can include armed conflict, civil unrest, human rights violations, natural disasters, environmental degradation, and development projects such as dam construction or urban redevelopment (Bakewell, 2020; Pham & Luengo-Oroz, 2022). Unlike voluntary migration, which is often driven by economic, social, or personal aspirations, forced migration is characterized by a lack of choice and urgent survival imperatives. Individuals and households are compelled to move in order to avoid imminent danger, often making migration a reactive rather than planned process (Tarraga, Piles, & Camps-Valls, 2020).

Food Security

Food security is a multidimensional concept that refers to the availability, access, utilization, and stability of food for all individuals at all times. 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 that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life." This definition highlights both the quantitative and qualitative dimensions of food security, encompassing not only the amount of food available but also its quality, safety, and appropriateness for cultural and dietary needs (Gingell, Murray, Correa-Velez, & Gallegos, 2022). Moreover, food security interacts with broader socio-economic and environmental dynamics such as; climate change, conflict, and economic volatility that are capable of disrupting food systems, exacerbate scarcity, and increase the vulnerability of displaced populations (FAO, 2024; Olanrewaju & Balana, 2023).

Theoretical Framework

The Livelihood Theory is adopted for this study. The theory was initially conceptualized by Chambers and Conway (1992) and centered on how individuals and households harness and manage various assets such as land, labor, physical capital, financial resources, and social networks to sustain their livelihoods, improve well-being, and with stand shocks. This framework has been further elaborated by scholars like Scoones (1998) and Ellis (2000), who emphasize that livelihoods are inherently dynamic and diversified, embedded within complex social and environmental contexts. In the context of forced migration, Livelihood Theory highlights how displacement disrupts or even dismantles traditional means of income generation and subsistence. Displaced persons often resort to alternative precarious survival strategies, including informal labor markets, dependence on humanitarian aid, or risky forms of migration.

Complementary to this is the Vulnerability Theory, which draws on the work of Wisner et al. (2004) and Cannon, Twigg, and Rowell (2003). This perspective underscores the influence of broader structural and systemic factors such as weak governance, inadequate access to healthcare and education, environmental degradation, and political marginalization that amplify the risks faced by internally displaced persons (IDPs) and

host communities. Vulnerability is therefore understood not only as exposure to hazards but also as a product of intersecting inequalities and power imbalances that shape individuals' capacities to cope with adversity.

Methodology

The population for this study comprises host community members, forced migrant traders, security agencies, and local government personnel from selected rural communities within Ifelodun Local Government Areas of Kwara State, Nigeria. However, samples were taken from the host community members, primarily farmers and herders, include those from Oro-Ago (2,174), Oke-Ode (1,690), and Oreke (Ile-Ire) (2,602) Babanla (696), in Ifelodun LGA. The Forced Migrants include Oro-Ago (200), Oke-Ode (175), and Oreke (Ile-Ire) (182) Babanla (202), in Ifelodun LGA. The traders from Oro-Ago (98), Oke-Ode (81),Oreke (Ile-Ire) (50), Babanla (82) markets are also included. Additionally, security agencies such as police, DSS, and civil defense personnel from Ifelodun (183) form part of the study population, alongside local government staff from Ifelodun (111). The table below provides a detailed breakdown of the identified cluster populations.

S/N	Cluster	Sampling Population
1.	Host Community Members Farmer, Herders Oro-Ago	2,174
2	Host Community Members Farmer, Herders Oke-Ode	1,690
3.	Host Community Members Farmer, Herders Oreke	2,602
4.	Host Community Members Farmer, Herders Babanla	692
5.	Forced migrant Oro-Ago	200
6.	Forced migrant Oke-Ode	175
7.	Forced migrant Oreke	182
8.	Forced migrant Babanla	202
9.	Market Traders Oro-Ago	98
10.	Market Traders Oke-Ode	81
11.	Market Traders Oreke	50
12.	Market Traders Babanla	82
13.	Security Agencies (Police, DSS & civil Defense) Ifelodun	183
14.	Local Government Personal (Ifelodun)	111
	TOTAL	**8522**

To arrive at our sample size, the study adopted the use of the Yamane formulae. Although there are different types of formulae for determining sample size, the choice of Yamane formula by this study is based on the fact that the best formula to determine sample size for a finite population is through Yamane formula. The Yamane formula for determining the sample is given by:

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

Where N= 8,522

1 is a constant

e = 0.05

$$n = \frac{8{,}522}{1 + 8{,}522\ (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{8{,}522}{1 + 8{,}522\ (0.0025)}$$

$$n = \frac{8522}{1 + 21.305}$$

$$n = \frac{8522}{22.305}$$

n= 382.006 approximately 383

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What are the major causes of forced migration in the rural communities of Ifelodun Local Government Areas of Kwara State?

Table 1: Means and Rank order analysis on **major causes of forced migration in the rural communities of Ifelodun Local Government Areas of Kwara State.**

S/N	Causes of Forced Migration	A		D		U		Mean score	SD	Rank
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%			
1	Conflicts between farmers and herders have caused many people to leave.	211	56.6	101	27.1	61	16.4	2.40	.75	4th
2	Insecurity due to banditry or armed groups is a major reason for migration.	220	59.0	101	27.1	52	13.9	2.45	.72	3rd
3	Communal clashes over land ownership result in displacement of rural dwellers.	41	11.0	225	60.3	107	28.7	1.82	.60	9th
4	Climate change (drought, flooding) forces people to migrate.	52	13.9	241	64.6	80	21.4	1.92	.59	8th
5	Ethnic or religious tensions contribute to forced migration in my community.	92	24.7	89	23.9	192	51.5	1.73	.83	10th

6	Poor policing and delayed security response increase the rate of displacement.	226	60.6	97	26.0	50	13.4	2.47	.72	2nd
7	Government land acquisition causes people to relocate.	82	22.0	213	57.1	78	20.9	2.01	.65	6th
8	Lack of access to services pushes people to migrate.	101	27.1	217	58.2	55	14.7	2.12	.63	5th
9	Economic hardship and unemployment drive forced movement.	113	30.3	142	38.1	118	31.6	1.98	.78	7th
10	Migration often results from a mix of different challenges.	242	64.9	73	19.6	58	15.5	2.49	.74	1st

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 presents the mean and rank order on **major causes of forced migration in the rural communities of Ifelodun Local Government Areas of Kwara State**. The table indicates that item 10 (with mean score of 2.49), item 6 (with mean score of 2.47) and item 2 (with mean score of 2.45) ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd respectively. The items stated that "Migration often results from a mix of different challenges", "Poor policing and delayed security response increase the rate of displacement", and "Insecurity due to banditry or armed groups is a major reason for migration" are regarded as the most **major causes of forced migration in the rural community of Ifelodun Local Government Areas of Kwara State**.

Research Question 2: How has forced migration affected food security in towns such as Oro-Ago, Oke-Ode, Oreke, Babanla*?*

Table 2: Means and Rank order analysis on **how migration affected agricultural productivity and food availability in towns such as Oro-Ago, Oke-Ode, Oreke, Babanla**.

S/N	Causes of Forced Migration	A		D		U		Mean score	SD	Rank
		Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%			
1	Forced migration has caused a shortage of farm labor.	297	79.6	40	10.7	36	9.7	2.69	.63	2nd
2	Many farmlands have been abandoned due to insecurity.	283	75.9	53	14.2	37	9.9	2.65	.65	3rd

3	There is less food available in the markets now than before.	270	72.4	76	20.4	27	7.2	2.65	.61	3rd
4	Migration has led to an increase in food prices.	205	55.0	102	27.3	66	17.7	2.37	.76	8th
5	Displacement has reduced the total cultivated land.	301	80.7	44	11.8	28	7.5	2.73	.58	1st
6	Skilled farmers have migrated, affecting local agriculture.	91	24.4	167	44.8	115	30.8	1.93	.74	9th
7	Fear of attacks has slowed down farming activities.	283	75.9	52	13.9	38	10.2	2.65	.65	3rd
8	Food variety has reduced due to lower agricultural output.	271	72.7	77	20.6	25	6.7	2.65	.59	3rd
9	Food production has declined over recent years.	92	24.7	89	23.9	192	51.5	1.73	.83	10th
10	Forced migration has weakened the agricultural economy.	288	77.2	42	11.3	43	11.5	2.65	.67	3rd

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 presents the mean and rank order on **how migration affected agricultural productivity and food availability in towns such as Oro-Ago, Oke-Ode, Oreke, Babanla, Omu-Aran, and Ajase**. The table indicates that item 5 (with mean score of 2.73), item 1 (with mean score of 2.69) and items 2, 3, 7, 8 and 10 (with mean score of 2.65) ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd respectively. The items stated that "Displacement has reduced the total cultivated land", "Forced migration has caused a shortage of farm labor", and "Many farmlands have been abandoned due to insecurity, There is less food available in the markets now than before, fear of attacks has slowed down farming activities, Food variety has reduced due to lower agricultural output, Forced migration has weakened the agricultural economy".

Findings

First, the causes of forced migration in Kwara South, particularly Oke-Ode, are multi-dimensional, with insecurity as the immediate cause**,** while climate change, poverty, and institutional neglect exacerbate displacement pressures.

Secondly, forced migration has had devastating consequences on agriculture and food supply chain systems in Kwara State in the following ways:

- **Decline in Crop Production**: Nearly all respondents reported abandoned farmlands and spoiled harvests due to farmers' inability to access their farms safely, also, attacks during the harvest season caused substantial food losses.
- **Loss of Labour Force and Farmland Access**: Forced migration disrupted traditional family labour systems, with many youths fleeing to urban areas.
- **Rising Food Prices and Market Instability**: Findings revealed that the decline in production led to food scarcity and inflation**.** Local markets that once supplied maize, yam, and cassava to other areas now depend on external supply. For instance, A bag of maize that used to be ₦18,000 cost ₦45,000 as at the period of this study.
- **Gender and Livelihood Impact:** Women, particularly traders, have been disproportionately affected. With produce rotting on farms and reduced trade activity, many women have become jobless or underemployed**,** deepening household food insecurity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, forced migration in the rural communities of Ifelodun Local Government Areas of Kwara State is primarily driven by insecurity from banditry compounded by poverty, climate change, and weak institutional response. This displacement has severely affected agricultural productivity by reducing cultivated land, creating labor shortages, and forcing farmland abandonment. Consequently, food production has declined, prices have risen, and food security at both household and regional levels has been undermined. Displaced farmers rely mainly on informal, community-based coping strategies such as food sharing, small-scale farming, and mutual support, though these are limited by resources scarcity and persistent insecurity. Government interventions remain weak, poorly managed, and unsustained, leaving rural communities to bear the burden of mitigating the impacts of forced migration on food security.

Recommendations

In the light of the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made;

i. **Strengthen Security Measures:** Enhance policing and rapid response systems in Ifelodun to reduce displacement caused by banditry, armed attacks, and insecurity. This includes improving intelligence networks, community policing, and coordinated security operations to protect farmlands and rural communities.
ii. **Support Agricultural Recovery:** Provide targeted interventions to restore agricultural productivity in affected towns such as Oro-Ago, Oke-Ode, Oreke, Babanla, and others. This could include provision of farming inputs, labor support programs, and incentives for farmers to return to abandoned farmlands, aiming to increase food availability and stabilize markets.
iii. **Strengthen Community-Based Coping Mechanisms:** Enhance the capacity of local coping strategies, such as food-sharing networks, community support groups, and small-scale land leasing. This can be achieved through training, provision of microcredit, and establishment of community food banks to support displaced farmers more effectively.

iv. **Improve Government Intervention and Institutional Response:** Address the governance gaps by ensuring that government interventions are better coordinated, adequately funded, and sustained over time. Policies should integrate security, agricultural support, and social protection programs to reduce the long-term impact of forced migration on food security.

v. Promote Multi-Sectoral Collaboration: Encourage collaboration between government agencies, NGOs, local authorities, and community leaders to jointly address the multidimensional causes of forced migration, including poverty, climate change, and institutional neglect. Such integrated approaches can enhance resilience, reduce displacement pressures, and ensure sustainable food security outcomes.

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