

**KIDNAPPING AND TERRORISM IN UMUNNEOCHI LGA, ABIA STATE: COMMUNITY
RESILIENCE AND LOCAL COMMUNITY RESPONSES 2020-2023**

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Abstract

Kidnapping, terrorism, and the associated demands for ransom have emerged as serious security challenges in Isuochi and across Nigeria. The presence of cattle herders in the forests of Isuochi since 2018 has contributed to significant security concerns in Abia State. These challenges have resulted in severe socio-economic, psychological, and political consequences, as well as the tragic loss of lives. This study investigates the nature and incidence of kidnapping between 2020 and 2024, examining its consequences and the measures adopted by both the government and local communities to address the menace. The study focuses on kidnapping and terrorism in the Umunneochi Local Government Area of Abia State. It adopted a qualitative research design, with data collected through interviews, personal communications, newspaper reports, journal articles, and community speeches. The data were analysed using descriptive and textual methods. The findings reveal that the major causes of kidnapping include poverty, unemployment, the pursuit of political power driven by greed, and the presence of armed Fulani herders in the forests and farmlands of Umunneochi. The study also found that existing anti-kidnapping laws in Nigeria have been largely ineffective and that the government's response has been inadequate. Although community-led initiatives have achieved some success in addressing the problem, these efforts have not been sustained because of the high cost of providing adequate security. The consequences of kidnapping are far-reaching, including economic losses arising from ransom payments, loss of life, psychological trauma, and social stigma. The study recommends that the government address the underlying causes of poverty and unemployment, strengthen the enforcement of anti-kidnapping laws, and improve the capacity, welfare, and accountability of law enforcement agencies. It also recommends the imposition of appropriately severe penalties, in accordance with the law, for those convicted of kidnapping.

Keywords: Kidnapping, Terrorism, Ransom, Herdsmen, Community, Consequences

Introduction

Recently, Nigeria has been grappling with an alarming increase in kidnappings and ransom demands, leading to significant economic losses, loss of lives, psychological and emotional trauma, and widespread fear of the unknown. This criminal activity spans various geographical areas within Nigeria, impacting individuals in both urban and rural communities. Kidnappings have surged, with perpetrators typically targeting victims from diverse ethnic and socio-economic backgrounds, affecting both the wealthy and the less fortunate. Before 2006, kidnapping incidents were relatively rare, but they gained prominence in Nigeria due to actions taken by the Niger Delta youths, who began abducting oil workers for ransom to pressure the Federal Government for compensation, disrupting the oil trade in the process.

Before the current administration, kidnapping in Nigeria has manifested in various forms and for numerous reasons. However, it is important to note that Nigerians traditionally are not associated with such practices, as it was not initially considered a business venture within the country. Regrettably, kidnapping has evolved into a lucrative enterprise, becoming a significant source of income for perpetrators in the South-South, South-West, North-East, South-East, and Middle Belt regions. This crime is increasingly prevalent across the nation (Uzorma & Nwanegbo, 2014). The uptick in such activities has been exploited by other criminals and miscreants, likely influenced by unemployment and the substantial financial rewards associated with ransom demands. This study examines the rate of kidnapping from 2020 to 2024, before the emergence of Governor Alex Otti.

To address the prevalence of kidnapping in Nigeria, Schmid (2021) reports that in 2016 alone, an astounding total of 3,003 incidents were recorded. This figure included 1,700 foreign military personnel (3.9%), 476 corporate officials (32.0%), 219 prominent opinion leaders (4.6%), and various government officials (5.7%). Additionally, there were 29,443 foreign diplomats or officials and non-military personnel (26.5%), 800 members of the host government military (4.7%), and 966 private parties, which accounted for a significant 50.4%. Suspected terrorists were also involved in 12 cases (0.6%). According to Action on Armed Violence (2019), between 2008 and 2010, the Nigerian Police Force recorded 887 cases throughout the country. Highlighting the frequency of these events, Dodo (2010) notes that kidnapping occurs everywhere in Nigeria; it has become an endemic issue deeply rooted in the fabric of the nation. The reported incidents are indeed heartbreaking. Various forms of kidnapping exist, including express kidnapping, enforced disappearance, tiger kidnappings, secret kidnapping, public kidnapping, and miracle fishing.

To highlight the dire nature of the situation, it is noteworthy that even the Nigerian government has resorted to paying ransoms for the safe release of abducted individuals. In clandestine agreements, they have provided rebels with cash, motorcycles, and vehicles to secure these releases. In Kaduna State, for instance, then-Governor Nasir El Rufai employed similar tactics on multiple occasions to ease tensions in the region. The mass abductions perpetrated by Boko Haram have forced thousands to flee Northern Nigeria. The Global Slavery Index (2016) has acknowledged that the civil unrest, widespread corruption, and alarming frequency of schoolgirl abductions by Boko Haram, along with the ongoing kidnappings across the country, amount to a form of slavery in Nigeria.

The lack of detailed information regarding the prevalence of kidnapping in Umunneochi LGA highlights the significance of the present study. Perpetrators continually develop new tactics to ambush their victims and engage in negotiations with their families. This includes understanding the steps taken during abductions, the methods of execution, ransom demands, and the efforts made by law enforcement to rescue the victims. Due to the absence of a comprehensive account and reporting on the rising incidents of kidnapping and their detrimental effects in Isuochi, Umunneochi LGA, Abia State, there is also a lack of clarity regarding the specific roles of the government and law enforcement in addressing the issue, as well as the initiatives undertaken by residents to combat it. Therefore, this study is particularly relevant for investigating, among other aspects, how kidnappings are carried out and their impacts on both the victims and their families. The issue that drives this study is the rising prevalence of kidnapping and ransom payments in Nigeria, which has led to harrowing experiences, trauma, economic losses, and fatalities. This challenge is exacerbated by the absence of comprehensive records on trends in kidnapping and ransom payments, as well as limited insights into government intervention, local responses, and empirical recommendations aimed at preventing future incidents. Understanding the modus operandi and dynamics of kidnapping is essential for developing effective intervention strategies.

The study has specific objectives to: analyse and document the specific trends and frequencies of kidnapping incidents in Isuochi; assess the socio-economic consequences of kidnapping in Umunneochi; critically evaluate the effectiveness of existing security measures and law enforcement strategies in preventing, responding to kidnapping incidents in Umunneochi; examine the dynamics of ransom negotiations and payment, and the challenges that victims and their families face in the negotiation process.

This study serves as an important addendum to the existing body of knowledge regarding kidnapping and ransom payment in Nigeria. It provides valuable insights for the government, law enforcement agencies, and policymakers, equipping them with credible information on kidnapping trends, operational methods, and ransom practices. This understanding can highlight areas for collaboration. Furthermore, the people of Nigeria, particularly those in Isuochi, stand to benefit from this research as it equips them with essential knowledge on how to avoid kidnapping and how to respond effectively in the event of an abduction.

This study focuses on the issue of kidnapping in Umunneochi LGA, Abia State, covering the period from 2020 to 2023. It examines the dynamics of kidnapping and ransom in this region, particularly highlighting how the community has united to combat the threat posed by individuals who have encroached upon their farmlands and roadways. The objective of the study is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the kidnapping and ransom dynamics within Isuochi. It will analyse kidnapping incidents from 2020 to 2024, explore the socio-economic impacts of these crimes, and evaluate the general security measures in place. Additionally, the study will assess the efficacy of local law enforcement strategies in both preventing and responding to kidnapping incidents in the Isuochi community.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design, drawing on both primary and secondary sources of data. These sources include interviews, documentary records concerning kidnapping incidents in Isuochi, and personal communications. The working population consists of nine newspaper reports and six victims who served as respondents. The researcher utilized purposive sampling to select three newspaper reports and two testimonies from respondents. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive and content analysis methods, guided by the application of two theoretical frameworks: Rational Choice Theory and Routine Activity Theory.

Review of Related Literature

In their 2020 study, "A Historical Account of the Scourge of Kidnapping in Nigeria: Implications on National Security," Ahmed et al. highlighted that kidnapping has evolved into a significant menace and a pressing security challenge in Nigeria. This illicit activity involves the forceful abduction of individuals, taken to undisclosed locations, with the intention of demanding ransom from their families. Consequently, Nigeria has gained notoriety on a global scale as a nation where individuals are held against their will for various motives known only to the perpetrators. During the tenure of the last administration under President Muhammadu Buhari, Nigeria was ranked among the most dangerous places to live. Several factors contribute to this

disturbing trend, including the pursuit of criminal financial gain, the elimination of political adversaries, human sacrifices, and ritualistic practices. Kidnapping has thus become a common term in both public and private discourse, reflecting its widespread occurrence in the country.

The kidnapping theory served as the foundation for this study, which utilized data derived from incidents and reports concerning kidnapping in Nigeria. This paper aims to explore the prevalent causes and effects of kidnapping on Nigerian society, particularly in relation to insecurity. Among the key causes identified is the alarming rate of unemployment in Nigeria. As such, the paper concludes that unemployment stands as a significant challenge facing the country. Nigeria, as a developing nation, is grappling with high levels of youth unemployment, which poses a major threat to its national security. The paper offers several recommendations for addressing this surge in criminal activity. Notably, it emphasizes the need for policies that will attract both local and foreign investment, thereby creating employment opportunities for young people, especially those in vulnerable situations. While this work is related to the current study in its focus on kidnapping, it differs in methodology, area of study, scope, and theoretical frameworks. Eseosa and Oleabhie (2022), in their study titled "Historical Background of Kidnapping in the Context of Its Socio-Economic Implications in Nigeria," highlighted that kidnapping has become a significant issue for many African societies. This crime is particularly troubling due to the substantial financial incentives it presents in the form of ransom payments. In Nigeria, it has become increasingly common for citizens to report incidents of kidnapping on a nearly daily basis. Observations indicate that kidnapping has evolved beyond mere financial transactions, now intertwining with robbery, terrorism, political conflict, and blackmail. Considering these factors, this paper analyses kidnapping by examining its global trends, conceptual definitions, historical context, statistical data pertaining to Nigeria, socio-economic consequences, and the challenges faced in combating kidnapping within the country.

The study conducted a qualitative meta-analysis of the existing literature on kidnapping. It was noted that one of the primary barriers to reducing the incidence of kidnapping in Nigeria stems from socio-economic factors. This research recommends that the government collaborate with the private sector to create jobs and enhance security. The study is related to the current investigation as both address the issue of kidnapping in Nigeria. However, while the previous study examined Nigeria as a whole, the present research focuses specifically on Abia State, particularly Isuochi in the Umunneochi Local Government Area. Additionally, whereas the earlier work utilized a qualitative meta-analysis approach, this study will employ a content analysis method. The two studies differ in terms of methodology, scope, purpose, and theoretical frameworks.

Nnam (2019) conducted a study on 'Kidnapping in the southeastern states of contemporary Nigeria: an empirical investigation into the social and demographic characteristics of offenders. The study adopted a cross-sectional research design. A specific non-probability sampling technique known as respondent-driven sampling was used in selecting a sample of 86 from a total population of 123 inmates in the two prisons. Data gathered from in-depth oral interviews were analysed using thematic analysis. The findings indicated that various social and demographic characteristics—including age, occupation, gender, social background, and marital status—contribute to the phenomenon of kidnapping in Nigeria, with men in their youth predominantly involved in these activities. While this study is related to the current research regarding the geographical focus, as both address Abia State, they also share a common subject matter. However, they diverge in methodology: the present study employs textual analysis and utilizes a purposive sampling technique to generate its population, whereas the study utilized thematic analysis alongside a non-probability sampling technique known as respondent-driven sampling. Additionally, the previous work adopted a cross-sectional research design, while the current study incorporates both qualitative and quantitative research designs. Furthermore, the two works differ in terms of scope, theoretical framework, and overall purpose.

Theoretical Framework

This study utilizes Strain Theory and Routine Activity Theory. According to Agnew (1992), strains or stressors heighten the likelihood of negative emotions such as anger and frustration. These emotions can create pressure for corrective action, with crime being one potential response. Engaging in criminal behaviour may serve to alleviate strain (for example, through theft to obtain desired money), seek revenge, or mitigate negative emotions.

Routine Activity Theory, developed by Cohen and Felson in 1979, examines the relationship between situational factors and criminal activity. According to Rossmo and Summers (2015), deviance or criminal behaviour arises from evolving lifestyles and changes in population behaviour. Consequently, the occurrence of crimes is influenced by both timing and location. According to Cohen and Marcus, three key factors contribute to deviance: the presence of motivated offenders, the existence of potential targets, and the availability or lack of guardianship. These theories explain, analyse, and document the trends and frequency of kidnapping incidents in Isuochi. They also allow for an assessment of the socio-economic consequences, a critical evaluation of the effectiveness of current security measures and law enforcement strategies in preventing and responding to

kidnappings, as well as an examination of ransom negotiations and payments. Additionally, the theories address the challenges that victims and their families encounter throughout the negotiation process.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Trends and Frequencies of Kidnapping Incidents in Isuochi

The incidences of kidnapping in Isuochi within the timeframe set for the present study are heartbreaking. As reported by the founders of Izu Umunneochi (IU), led by Chief Emeka Madubuike, which was borne out of the exigencies of 2021 when the past governments at both the Federal and State levels seemingly abdicated their primary responsibility. The people were helpless as criminals and marauding herdsmen destroyed their farmlands and produce, raping, maiming, and killing the people as they carried out their nefarious operations almost unchallenged. Kidnapping for ransom and other crimes have taken over the land; the fear was palpable, the sufferings agonizing, and the cries from the nooks and crannies of the LGA deafening. In short, the entire LGA lived in fear daily.

In a recent conversation with Dr. Clifford, the former President General of Nneato, he shed light on several kidnappings that took place during his tenure. One notable incident occurred on November 26, 2020, when a couple was abducted from their home overnight. Initially, their disappearance was thought to be sudden, but it soon became clear when ransom demands of twenty million naira for their release began to surface.

Another alarming event took place on March 6, 2021, when Dr. and Mrs. Nkem Okereke were ambushed around 2:00 PM; their car sustained multiple bullet holes along the Lomara Ngodo road in Isuochi. Just days later, on March 19, 2021, Chief C.C. Olima, a lecturer at Spiritan University Nneochi, was attacked as well. Fortunately, he managed to escape despite his car being hit with a barrage of bullets. Additionally, a group of families returning from a burial service was targeted by kidnappers along Leru Lomara road, but they fortunately managed to escape.

Mrs. Chimankpa Patrick, a staff member at Spiritan University Nneochi, narrowly escaped a kidnapping attempt when an okada driver abandoned her at a specific location, claiming he had run out of fuel. After pushing his motorcycle a bit further, he managed to start it and drove away. Sensing something was amiss, she made the courageous decision to run, which ultimately saved her life as kidnappers emerged from the bush in pursuit of her.

In a related incident, a staff member of the National Examination Council (NECO) in Owerri was kidnapped on April 11, 2021, along Nneato Leru Road. Reports indicate that he regained his freedom after paying a ransom of 10 million naira. Furthermore, on the same road, a family was attacked while driving; the male member was seized by the kidnappers, leaving the rest of the family to seek funds for his release. They ultimately paid 2 million naira to secure his freedom.

On June 13th, 2022, His Eminence Samuel Kanu Uche, the Methodist Prelate in Nigeria, along with his team, was abducted in broad daylight at approximately 3 pm. He was visiting the Ngodo Methodist Cathedral, accompanied by the Bishop of Ngodo, his Chaplain, and two others. After enduring two harrowing days in the forest, during which His Eminence cried out in pain, the Methodist Church of Nigeria paid a ransom of N100 million to secure their release. Just three days later, two staff members from Spiritan University Nneochi, Associate Professor Ezeownuka and Dr. Ms. Ojukwu, were kidnapped while returning to Awka after lectures. They were released two days later following the payment of N22 million to their captors.

On July 6th, 2022, a boy of less than 15 years was kidnapped. The other day, they also kidnapped another boy riding a motorcycle and took him to the bush, demanding N3 million ransoms. But the boy is a prayer warrior; he prayed, and they slept. Then he escaped, but he was severely tortured. All forms of kidnappings as reported above were followed up with some demands for ransom by the kidnappers; hence, they are classified as criminal Kidnappings, Abiakam (2002). Some kidnapped victims have not been heard from or have not been seen and are presumed dead. Others include:

11/40/2021	Staff of the NECO Owerri were kidnapped	N10,0000000 ransom was paid.
18/04/2021	Attacked but could not kidnap the victim as the vigilante group (VG) resisted	
20/05/2021	Kidnappers struck but were unsuccessful due to resistance from the vigilante group of Nneato	
06/08/2021	Attacked but were resisted by VG of Nneato	
16/ 04/2021	Attacked and kidnapped some persons	Ransom paid before being released
16/04/2022	Attacked and kidnapped some persons	N8,000,000 ransom was paid
13/05/2022	Attacked and kidnapped some persons	Ransom paid
23/05/2022	Attacked but unsuccessful	
26/05/2022	Stoke and kidnapped 16 persons	Ransom paid
27/05/2022	Attacked and kidnapped	
29/05/2022	Attacked and kidnapped some people	Ransom paid

11/06/2022	Attacked a family going back to Okanachi, kidnapped the man and left the other family members	Ransom was paid
15/06/2022	Attacked and kidnapped two lecturers of SP University	Ransom paid
06/07/2022	A 15-year-old boy was kidnapped	Never found again
12/06/2022	A young boy was also kidnapped	N3,000,000 was demanded, but the boy escaped
13/06/2022	Prelate His Eminence, Samuel Kanu Uche, and his Team were adopted	N100,000000 ransom paid
19/07/2022	There was a resisted attempt	Failed
20/07/2022	There was a resisted attempt	Failed
29/07/2022	There was a resisted attempt	Failed
12/08/2022	A reverend father was kidnapped	Undisclosed ransom paid
3/09/2022	Attacked but was resisted by Izuumuneochi	Failed
10/01/2023	Attempted kidnapping	Perpetuators caught
10/01/2023	Hon. Ikedi Ezekwesiri was attacked and shot at hand	Failed
10/01/2023	Attacked and kidnapped some women coming back from a burial at Nneato	N2,000,000 ransom paid

In this study, we examine a specific type of kidnapping primarily motivated by ransom demands, categorizing it as criminal kidnapping. Notable patterns and trends have emerged concerning the methods employed by kidnappers during this period. While some victims were abducted from their homes, particularly at night, the majority were taken from the streets. Those abducted reported that kidnappers typically organized themselves into three groups, positioned along the roadside in a descending arrangement. The abduction usually occurs when a victim is situated near the middle group, effectively trapping them. Attackers may approach from the front, behind, or from the side. Once the kidnapping is successful, victims are often forced into the bush and made to navigate through dense undergrowth for considerable distances, sometimes enduring this ordeal for an entire day. Upon reaching their hideout, negotiations commence, frequently accompanied by psychological manipulation and torture aimed at pressuring victims to compel their loved ones to act swiftly and appropriately. Throughout this study's timeframe, the observed trends encompass both criminal kidnapping and forced adoption.

The Socioeconomic/Consequences of Kidnapping in Isuochi

Nnam (2019) conducted a study on "Kidnapping in the Southeastern States of Contemporary Nigeria: An Empirical Investigation into the Social and Demographic Characteristics of Offenders." The research employed a cross-sectional design and utilized a specific non-probability sampling technique called respondent-driven sampling to select a sample of 86 from a total population of 123 inmates across two prisons. Data were gathered through in-depth oral interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis.

The findings revealed that various social and demographic factors—including age, occupation, gender, social background, and marital status—contribute to the phenomenon of kidnapping in Nigeria. Notably, young men were predominantly involved in these activities. While Nnam's study is relevant to the current research due to its geographical focus on Abia State and its common subject matter, there are significant methodological differences. The present study employs textual analysis and uses a purposive sampling technique to generate its population, in contrast to Nnam's thematic analysis and respondent-driven sampling. Additionally, the previous study adopted a cross-sectional research design, whereas the current research incorporates both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The two works also differ in terms of scope, theoretical framework, and overall purpose. Nnam. (2019) conducted a study on "Kidnapping in the Southeastern States of Contemporary Nigeria: An Empirical Investigation into the Social and Demographic Characteristics of Offenders." The research employed a cross-sectional design and utilized a specific non-probability sampling technique called respondent-driven sampling to select a sample of 86 from a total population of 123 inmates across two prisons. Data were gathered through in-depth oral interviews and analysed using thematic analysis.

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study adopted a cross-sectional research design, whereas the current research incorporates both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The two works also differ in terms of scope, theoretical framework, and overall purpose.

A protesting student of ABSU lamented that the situation is affecting the economy of their community, and that many people have been killed. No day passes without these hoodlums kidnapping motorists who are mostly students. A few days ago, a motorist was shot dead while some passengers, suspected to be students of the ABSU, were abducted. These are a fact that there is a wanton loss of lives and property, which in turn affects the social lives and economy of the locals, as many of them live and move about with great fear of the unforeseen. Because of incessant kidnapping and ransom demands, the Abia State University, Uturu (ABSU) approved an indefinite mid-semester break for the students. This is an indication that kidnapping has adverse consequences on academic performance, as schools are forced to close due to insecurity. According to a female local, “we now live in fear of herdsmen who have been terrorising our people”, and challenged security agencies in the state to rise to the occasion to avoid angry youths taking the law into their hands. This presents the true picture of the situation in the local government as people move about with tense emotions of terror. Millions of naira were usually paid as ransom, as shown above earlier, which consequently impoverishes the victims, rendering them economically unviable. Many go as far as borrowing to save their lives, money they would work for years to pay back.

Community efforts in fighting back against the kidnappers by the Izu Umunneochi (IU) Vigilante.

Touching on the efforts of the locals in arresting the situation, Prince Uche, a youth leader in Umunneochi, said that ‘Umunneochi youths were ready and prepared to secure their communities, vowed that the youths, despite frustrations by the security operatives, would not allow Fulani herdsmen to take over their forests. He thanked Senator Ohuabunwa, M.A, for coming to identify with the people even though he was no longer in power, while pleading with him to explore his network and contacts to help end the people’s misery. Due to the failure of Nigerian security operatives, Izu Umunneochi (IU) Vigilante or Umunneochi Central Vigilante team was established through Emeka Madubuike. This led to the establishment of a legitimate local vigilante and the provision of vehicular logistics and other necessary equipment, including financing, after registering the vigilante with the then Abia State Ministry of Homeland Security through the assistance and co-operation of some of our members.

In sourcing funds under the IU platform, a sum of around N20 million was raised from the good-spirited individuals and citizens of Umunneochi, both at home and abroad, alongside an extra N15million that came later from Mr. Madubuike. Ngodo Town Development Union (NTDU) raised additional funds and logistics to strengthen the security teams within the LGA. The team provided additional human resources and logistics in the common fight against insecurity in Umunneochi. They specifically took over the security protection along Leru to the Express, to Orie Ngodo, from the Express towards Nneato, and generally within the Ngodo area. The NTDU team formed Ogbakolo Araka (a security outfit formed under Igwe Araka of Ngodo) and, under this umbrella, raised an additional N28 million. To date, the Ogbakolo Araka security team has provided the communities with some form of security protection.

The then President General of Nneato, Mr. Clifford, engaged a security group from Aguleri in Anambra State, known for their reputed protection against bullets through a locally practiced charm called *odeshi*. These men took to the streets of Umunneochi, establishing roadblocks similar to those of the police. Reports indicated that they pursued kidnappers into the forest and successfully rescued some victims in the process. However, both the military and police were evidently opposed to their presence in the area and managed to remove them, using the election period as a pretext.

During the fact-finding visit in June 2022 of the Governor of Abia State to the scenes of incessant kidnappings and killings in Umunneochi LGA of Abia State, the following directives were given: That the Commissioner of Police, Abia State, alongside Umunneochi Youths, provide immediate Security along the Ihube to Isuochi road stretching from Ngodo through Lomara Junction all the Way to Ihube. The Commissioner of Police, Abia State, has been mandated to draw up logistical requirements for mounting six additional checkpoints at strategic locations across Umunneochi LGA. He further directed that all settlers, herders, and individuals residing inside the forests in Umunneochi LGA should vacate such locations with immediate effect. All cows and herders around Umunneochi LGA are hereby strictly restricted to the Cattle Market located at Umuchieze. Before the emergence of Governor Otti, the Nigerian security architecture was overwhelmed, helpless, and appeared compromised. The installation of CCTV cameras throughout the local government by Governor Otti, and a combined operation by police, army, and navy, led to the discovery of over 80 bodies behind the cattle market. His effort technically ended the kidnapping saga in Isuochi.

Examining The Dynamics of Ransom Negotiations and Payment, and the Challenges that Victims and their Families Face in the Negotiation Process.

The victims interviewed during this study affirmed that negotiation is strictly done on the phone with the victims' lines to their closest family member or friend who could negotiate the ransom. Mr. Victor is a local contractor from Uturu, situated in Isikwuato, a neighbouring Local Government Area to Umunneochi. He usually commutes between Isuochi and Isikwuato, both of which are known hotspots for kidnappings. On the 17th July 2023, after completing his work, he was captured while riding his motorbike on his way home. After walking for over six hours, his captors stopped at a specific location to camp for the night. He recounted how they utilized tarpaulin and waterproof materials to shield themselves from the elements, leaving him exposed to the cold. Initially, there was no communication with his family, but the following night, they decided to reach out to inform them of the kidnapping and to convey their ransom demands. When the family (his brother) told the abductors that they had no money, they beat up the man with the phone still open so that his brother would listen to his moaning and crying in pain. That night, the second night, the kidnappers had more victims brought to them to take care of while those who brought them left. Victor will later come to know that one of the new victims is a pastor. After assaulting them, the kidnappers confiscated the pastor's ATM card after he boasted about having two million naira in his bank account, and they also secured the PIN. The following morning, one of the captors left the forest camp unexpectedly to head into town. Upon returning, the situation turned disastrous for the pastor, as he had inadvertently provided them with the wrong PIN. This error led to a violent outburst from the kidnappers, who threatened his life. Realizing his mistake, the pastor remembered that he had given the incorrect PIN while still in possession of the ATM card. Mr. Victor, along with others, witnessed these events unfold. The kidnappers assured them that once the ransom was paid, they would be led to safety, explaining that they resorted to kidnapping because the Governor of Abia State had destroyed their businesses in Lokpanta. After more than a week in captivity, Victor was eventually released following the payment of two million naira by his family.

Discussion of Findings

The following findings were made from the data presented above:

1. Concerning the first objective, it was discovered that criminal kidnapping predominated the timeframe under investigation (2020-2024).
2. The results revealed that the kidnapping rate within the time frame was alarming and heart-wrenching.
3. It was found that there was a colossal loss of lives, properties, and disruption of businesses due to incessant kidnapping.
4. It was discovered that the community banded together and mounted a spirited effort to fight back the marauders that took over their roads and farmlands.
5. The result shows that, before the emergence of Governor Alex Otti, the government did almost nothing to contain the situation.

Conclusion

This study examines kidnapping and terrorism in the Umunneochi Local Government Area (LGA) of Abia State, with particular emphasis on community resilience and local efforts to combat these security challenges. The study is limited to Umunneochi LGA and specifically focuses on the dynamics of kidnapping and ransom activities in the Isuochi area. It provides a concise account of the patterns and nature of kidnapping and ransom incidents that occurred between 2020 and 2023. Furthermore, the study explores the socio-economic consequences of kidnapping for individuals, families, and the Isuochi community. It also examines the security measures adopted to address the menace. To assess the effectiveness of local law enforcement and community-based strategies in preventing, responding to, and mitigating kidnapping incidents in Umunneochi.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings:

1. Investigation should be intensified on the military architecture of Nigeria to ascertain its role in managing kidnapping in Nigeria.
2. It is recommended that further investigation should be made to cover the kidnapping trend in the Northern part of Nigeria to define the type and trend of kidnapping in that area.
3. The researcher recommends a demographic study conducted in Nigeria in relation to the mortality rate because of kidnapping.

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