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**AN ANALYSIS OF THE MENACE OF KIDNAPPING IN NIGERIA: THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC DISCOURSE**

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***Abstract***

*Kidnapping in its modern form in Nigeria has been traced to 2006 when the kidnapping expatriates in the oil producing Niger Delta started, and since then till now, the perpetrators have been modifying their means of operation as it has been manifesting in different forms and spaces. Between 2020 and 2022, the Fulani-Herdsmen/Farmers conflict in Nigeria has heightened and gotten complicated with kidnapping as one of its manifestations. In the Isuikwuato, Abia state, South East of Nigeria, kidnapping has crippled economic and social life in the local government and citizen's move with fear of the unknown. This study therefore explored the relationship between the Fulani-Herdsmen/Farmers conflict and kidnapping, the impact of economic status on kidnapping and the effect of societal values on the kidnappers' behavior. Using a descriptive survey, the study employed a multistage sampling method to draw 362 samples from the total population of Isuikwuato LGA. Primary data was collected with the use of questionnaire, and subjected to descriptive analysis using means and standard deviation to describe data around the objectives of study, while the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was used in testing the three research hypotheses. The study's findings show a significant relationship between the Fulani-Herdsmen/Farmers conflict and kidnapping; a significant impact of economic status on kidnapping; and a significant relationship but negative effect of societal values on the kidnappers' behavior. Therefore the study concludes that crime in general and kidnapping as we see it in Nigeria and Isuikwuato in particular, did not start and will not end with solving the Fulani-Herdsmen/Farmers conflict, but with a wholesome look at the socio-economic situation of the country.*

**Introduction**

Kidnapping is not a new criminal occurrence or behavior in the world. It is a global phenomenon with varying criteria and settings. Prior to the 1990s, kidnapping was a rare occurrence in Nigeria, and it was not mentioned in the UN Office of Drugs and Crime's Eighth Survey on Crime Trends and Criminal Justice System Operation, which was performed in 2002 (Obarisiagbon and Aderinto, 2018). The abduction of expats working for oil corporations in the Niger Delta area began the current wave of kidnappings in Nigeria on February 25, 2006. Kidnapping was used to send a message to the world about the area's long history of injustice, marginalization, alienation, and underdevelopment (Akpan, 2010). Since then, the threat has been aggressively monetized in many sections of the country. Kidnapping no longer affects only foreigners in Nigeria; it also affects natives as well, including adult women and men, the rich and the poor, the elderly, and children.

The narrative of notable recent kidnaps in Nigeria has shown that the national rate of kidnapping has deteriorated from 0.001 per 100,000 populations in 2013 to 40 in 2018, emerging at an average annual rate of 42.84 percent, despite the significant fluctuations, from 2017 to the third quarter of 2019, it tends to decline to 25 and changed at 78.57 percent. And according to a mid-year crime index 2019, Nigeria ranked third in Africa and fourteenth worldwide (Knoema, 2019b). The most unfortunate victims of Nigeria's kidnapping epidemic typically die as a result of their ordeal, while the fortunate ones are released for ransom.

The Niger Delta incidences of expatriate kidnapping can be said to have introduced the modern version of kidnapping for ransom in Nigeria. After then came the Osi-kankwu era in Abia state, and now the herdsmen era which started as conflict between the herders and farmers in many Nigerian communities over grazing lands, mostly in the Southern regions. The conflict degenerated until the incessant kidnapping for ransom, which have complicated the security challenges of Nigeria, as many believes that the kidnapping for ransom in this herdsmen era is not perpetrated by herders alone as many non-herders have seen it as a lucrative business and capitalize on the herders-farmers conflict to perpetrate their evil. This study therefore, interests in the socio-economic causes of kidnapping in Nigeria during the herdsmen era.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The problem of kidnapping for ransom has become almost a daily occurrence in Nigeria generally and Abia State in particular. Residents of Uturu, Abia State, have pleaded with the state government to help them after ranchers dressed as kidnappers took over the Okigwe – Uturu Road, which is just a few meters from Abia State University, Uturu. Seven students from the tertiary institution were kidnapped recently after their shuttle bus was ambushed by suspected Fulani herdsmen. The kidnappers took the students into the jungle as the shuttle bus driver was shot. However, after paying a ransom of N4 million, SaharaReporters learned that they had been released (Saharareporters, 2022).

Again, a shuttle bus was attacked by suspected Fulani herdsmen along Okigwe – Uturu Road, a few meters away from Abia State University, Uturu, according to a story in Punch News online on May 18. The shuttle bus driver was found dead; and this happened two days after seven Abia State University students were abducted along the same route. According to the report, ABSU students are kidnapped on a daily basis along that route by plainly recognizable Fulani herdsmen, and the state governments of Abia and Imo have done nothing (Sunday, 2022).

Sunday (2022) further reported that this threat has been ongoing for some time when suspected Fulani herdsmen attacked Isuikwuato Local Government Area in Abia State, abducting 10 travelers and killing a woman after rapping her. Armed with lethal weapons, the bandits allegedly forced their victims' vehicles to stop before swooping down on the occupants and marching them into the bush. This is the fourth kidnapping by suspected Fulani herdsmen between February and November 2021, after two ABSU academics were abducted together with other passengers by the same group of criminals in August of that year. These incidents and others alike have caused untold hardship on the social and economic lives of residents, leading to disruption in academic activities of Abia state university in May, 2022 and the closing of businesses around that area.

This therefore calls the attention of concerned citizens and researchers into the causes of this menace, which is why this study shall be concentrating on the socio-economic dimensions of the causes of kidnapping due to the socio-economic trend of kidnapping in Nigeria and specifically in Abia state.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The study aims at exploring the Socio-economic causes of kidnapping in Nigeria, during the Fulani Herdsmen Era. Specifically, the study shall pursue the following objectives

- (1) To probe the relationship between the Herders/Farmers' conflict and kidnapping in Abia State
- (2) To assess the link between economic status and kidnapping in Abia State
- (3) To find out if a relationship exists between societal values and kidnapping in Abia state

### **Research Hypotheses**

From the above objectives, the study shall test the following hypotheses as stated in the null form:

$H^{01}$ : There is no significant relationship between the Herders/Farmers' conflict and kidnapping in Isuikwuato Abia State.

$H^{02}$ : There is no significant impact of economic status on kidnapping in Isuikwuato Abia State.

$H^{03}$ : There is no significant effect of societal values on the behaviors of kidnapers in Isuikwuato Abia state

### **Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

#### **Brief History of Kidnapping**

Human kidnapping is not a new problem; this heinous crime has a variety of motivations that can be broadly characterized as social, political, and economic. According to Cyriax, *et al.* (2009), the first significant kidnapping event reported for economic motives was that of Charlie Ross, a 4-year-old boy from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. These authors go on to say that the word "kidnap" originated from the English practice of capturing children in the seventeenth century and transporting them as slaves to tobacco plantations in America's colonies. He pointed out that the majority of aggravated kidnappings took place to achieve one or more of the following goals: obtaining a hostage for ransom, robbing, terrorizing, blackmailing, sexual invasion, and others (Samaha, 2011).

It is important to remember that kidnapping for social motives is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria. Individuals, particularly foreigners, were frequently kidnapped in ancient times for ritual or funeral purposes by renowned chiefs and soldiers. However, the first case of kidnapping that drew national notice occurred in 2006, when terrorists from the Niger Delta held total captive to protest regional inequity. Nigeria, according to the terrorists, is being constructed at the expense of the region, which acts as the country's cash cow. Kidnappings of government expatriates have been followed by kidnappings of Nigerian politicians and their children, as well as religious leaders and their families. It is pointed out in Samaha (2011) that as at 2009, a total of 512 kidnapping cases have been reported, up from 353 for all of 2008.

In 2008, almost all of the kidnappings took place in the south-east and Niger Delta regions, which are home to Africa's largest oil and gas industries. After the ransom is paid, the

majority of the captives are released unhurt. The majority of the occurrences occurred in South-Eastern Nigeria (Abia State), with 110 persons taken hostage; all of them were released, and police detained 70 suspects in connection with the kidnapping. Gangs have taken advantage of the collapse in law and order to target any high-profile expat or Nigerian who would be willing to pay a huge ransom Okorie-Ajah, Nwokeoma, and Okpan (2018).

On their trip to Lagos in July 2010, four journalists were kidnapped in Abia State. The kidnappers sought N30 million in ransoms. The mother of the previous president of the Nigeria Football Federation (NFF) was kidnapped in Idah, Kogi State, and the kidnappers wanted a ransom (Ngwama, 2014). Seven persons, including five foreign expats, were purportedly seized by suspected militants in Calabar, according to Okorie-Ajah, Nwokeoma, and Okpan (2018). They were on their way to work at the Mfamosing Lafarge Holcim facility. The kidnappers fatally shot a local driver in the process. Similarly, Rev. Akan Weeks of Reigners Bible Church was kidnapped, according to Inyang (2013), and a ransom of N5 million naira was requested and paid before he was freed.

Kidnappers kidnapped a catholic priest in-charge of St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Eku in Ethiope East Local Government Area of Delta State, according to Okorie-Ajah, Nwokeoma, and Okpan (2018). The kidnappers demanded a ransom of N10 million for Rev. Fr. Joseph Oghenekevwe Ojakorotu's release. The kidnapping of 250 students in a girls' secondary school in Chibok, Borno State in 2014, and many more by Boko Haram, was one of the main kidnappings that occurred before the Fulani Herders conflict began.

### **Causes of Kidnapping**

There are many causes of kidnapping as has been categorized by researchers (Okoli & Agada, 2014; Imhonopi & Urim, 2016; Ihe, 2018; Samuel, 2019; Ibrahim & Ahmad, 2020). But for the scope of this study, the socio-political and economic categories of the causes of kidnapping shall be explored here.

According to Chingunta and Mkanawire (2002), the rates of youth unemployment and poverty differ depending on social and economic status. As a result, unemployment and poverty are factors that lead to kidnapping among the youth. According to Umez (2000), Nigeria's socioeconomic status is the cause of kidnapping, as kidnappers see it as a way out of poverty in exchange for wealth. This is because when someone is abducted, a large ransom is required, and the victim will not be returned to his family until the ransom is paid to the kidnappers.

In addition, according to Inyang (2013), "the issue of youth unemployment, as well as social inequality and unequal distribution of the nation's resources, are all factors of kidnapping in Nigeria". As a result of these conditions, adolescents have turned to kidnapping and illegal actions in order to gain a piece of the nation's wealth." Kidnapping has hampered Nigeria's socio-economic development, luring some unemployed youngsters and graduates into it as a lucrative and alternative means of making money, gaining economic influence, and escaping poverty (Okorie-Ajah, Nwokeoma & Okpan, 2018; Ottuh & Aitufe, 2014; Dodo, 2010).

Similarly, in contemporary Nigeria, corruption and fraud are highlighted as two related elements that play a significant role in economically motivated kidnapping. According to Adibe (2012), the agitation of Niger Delta and other Nigerian youths in general might not have led to kidnapping if our national resources were shared wisely; the Nigerian leader's corrupt

influences must have sparked vices such as kidnapping in the country. As the business of kidnap booms in Nigeria, it team-up with a corrupt police force, bankers, etc.

According to Ugwuoke (2011), politicians engage the most indolent people for political thuggery and leave them with unfulfilled promises. As a result, the disgruntled armed adolescents who have been used and dumped will have to figure out how to survive by abducting their masters' family and defenseless people as a form of retaliation. In Nigeria, the rise of oil in the 1970s sparked terrible crimes, with political office holders amassing vast sums of money and those banned from lucrative government contracts resorting to kidnapping as an alternative unlawful part of the "national cake" (Ene, 2018).

Kidnapping is also claimed to be on the rise as a result of the government's lack of capital punishment. Most traditional African legal systems reserved capital punishment for the most serious of crimes; the lack of a rigorous penalty for kidnappers is one of the reasons why the scourge is worsening in Nigeria. Kidnappers regard their illegal enterprise as a wealthy fortune, making it difficult for them to give up (Dodo, 2010). This is due to the little danger of retaliation for traffickers; as a result, the trade thrives. Finally, the changing value system in Nigeria has been identified as a factor in abduction. According to Umez (2000), the governing value system in contemporary Nigeria is one that endorses and glorifies illegal and corrupt means of earning as necessary and sufficient means of earning; it now re-shapes most Nigerians moral integrity, including youths, and is the polar opposite of the traditional system, which was based on good morals and hard work.

According to Odey (2000), a society that is keen on condemning its youths for being dishonest and lazy, as well as for instituting a threat to the general public such as kidnapping, armed robbery, and materialism, should also be keen on providing better economic, social, and moral alternatives that will disintegrate immoralities and thus flush their current deviations to criminal life. According to Dodo (2010), the quick-money syndrome is one of the causes of kidnapping in Nigeria because most Nigerians are unwilling to work hard. Simultaneously, in modern Nigeria, survival of the fittest is the rule.

### **Theoretical Framework**

To illustrate on the deteriorating kidnapping incidences in Nigeria, the study is anchored on the strain theory of crime; as it is undeniably sufficient to give insight on this vicious act in Nigeria. Following on the work of Émile Durkheim, strain theories have been advanced by Robert King Merton, Albert K. Cohen, Richard Cloward, Lloyd Ohlin, Neil Smelser, Robert Agnew, Stven Messner, Richard Rosenfeld and Jie Zhang, but this study shall concentrate on the Merton variant of the strain theory.

Robert Merton's Strain Theory arose from a fundamental issue he raised about why deviation rates differed so much amongst communities. He believed there might be deviation if there is a disconnect between what constitutes success and the right methods for achieving those goals. He discovered that the United States is a prime example of high levels of deviance due to the strong societal value of achieving success, particularly monetary, but that the ways for achieving such achievement are contradictory, as they are in Nigeria.. Employees with a college degree are appreciated, but kidnappers who gained their money by collecting ransoms are also admired, demonstrating that achievement is valued more than the means by which it is achieved (Agnew, 2015).

In his thesis, Robert Merton identified five basic methods in which people adapt, particularly in a capitalist society like Nigeria, where there are strong contrasts and specified goals between deviant and conventional means of achieving such goals. In this topic, the fourth adaptation mechanism in Merton's theory, "Innovation," is most important. In today's rich-overnight Nigerians' fantasy, where everyone is anxious for a treasure riches, new tactics have turned to the shortest path to wealth, with abduction for ransom being one of the deviant strategies. Indeed, in Nigeria, inventive ways have morphed into a common value system that promotes unlawful and corrupt actions as sufficient and necessary means of survival, as characterized by Umez (2000).

### **Research Methodology**

In order to determine the socio-economic causes of kidnapping in Abia State, Nigeria, the study employs a descriptive survey research design with a quantitative technique of analysis. Because of the high occurrence of kidnapping in the area, the Isuikwuato Local Government in Abia state was chosen as a case study. Isuikwuato is expected to have a population of 151,700 people in 2016. (NPC, 2019). Because the entire population cannot be investigated, the Taro Yamane formula for calculating sample size from a finite population, as described by Okwandu (2004), is used to arrive at a sample size of 400.

Isuikwuato LGA is made up of 8 major communities which include Imenyi, Ohaise, Ogudo-Asa, Ezere, Umun-Nekwu, Isu Amawu, Achara-Uturu, and Mbaugwu. From among these communities, the researcher purposively selected 4 communities which include Achara-Uturu, Ogudu-Asa, Ezere, and Umun-Nekwu communities for their closeness to the hit center of the Kidnapping activities which is around the Okigwe Uturu, and ABSU-Isuikwuato roads. From the selected communities, the snowball sampling method was employed to select people who had been kidnapped themselves or their close relatives, while the purposive sampling technique was used to select other respondents who were believed by the researcher to be knowledgeable enough to provide answers to the research questionnaire. The selection was made in proportions of 30% and 70%, respectively. As a result, 120 people who have experienced kidnap and 280 additional respondents were chosen to take part in the study.

Respondents were given a 15-items questionnaire of a 4-Point rating scale to fill out and return immediately. Only 362 of the 400 questionnaires issued were entirely and accurately filled, indicating that they could be used for analysis. For testing hypotheses, descriptive and inferential statistics such as frequencies, rating scales, and Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) were used to analyze the data acquired through the questionnaire.

### **Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings**

The socio-demographic data of respondents is presented in tabular form in this phase of the study, where percentages show weight of response, mean scores define the variables according to the research objectives, and the PPMC is used to evaluate the hypotheses.

#### **Socio-demographic characteristics of respondents**

The socio-demographic characteristics of the respondents are presented in Table 4.1

**Table 4.1: Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents**

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Description	Demographic Variables	Frequency	Percentage (%)
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<b>Gender</b>	Male	253	69.9
	Female	109	30.1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Age</b>	25-29	20	5.5
	30-34	97	26.8
	35-39	155	42.8
	40-above	90	24.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>	Married	174	48.1
	Single	113	31.2
	Divorced	16	4.4
	Separated	18	4.9
	Widowed	41	11.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Educational Qualification</b>	First school leaving	36	9.9
	WASSCE/Equivalent	50	13.8
	OND/NCE	113	31.2
	B.Sc/Equivalent	138	38.1
	Post Graduate Degree	25	6.9
	<b>Total</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Religious Affiliation</b>	Christianity	230	63.5
	Islam	88	24.3
	Traditional	23	6.4
	Other, specify	21	5.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>100</b>	
<b>Annual Income</b>	80,000-199,000	39	10.8
	200,000-599,000	151	41.7
	600,000-1,499,000	127	35.1
	1,500,000 and above	45	12.4
	<b>Total</b>	<b>362</b>	<b>100</b>

**Source: Field Survey, 2022**

From the data in table 4.1, it is observed that the sociodemographic distribution of respondents shows more of male respondents (69.9%) than female (30.1%), and more of the respondents (42.8%) are in the age bracket 35-39, followed by those 30-34 (26.8%), 40 and above (24.9%), while the age bracket with the least of the respondents (5.5%) are those 25-29 years of age. This indicates that the average age of the Isuikwuato population is around the active age bracket 30-39 years. The data reveals in a descending order, that 48.1% of the respondents are married, 31.2% are single, 11.3% are widowed, 4.9% are separated, while 4.4% are divorced.

This indicates a low rate of divorce in Isuikwuato local government. For the education qualification, it is observed that the highest percentage (38.1%) of the respondents holds

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B.Sc./Equivalent, followed by OND/NCE holders (31.2%), WASSCE/Equivalent (13.8%), First School Leaving Certificate (9.9%) and least of all Postgraduate degree holders (6.9%). Interesting is on postgraduate degree holders, which seems small for a local government hosting a tertiary institution. The implication is possibly that the university lecturers of Abia State University are not residing in Isuikwuato, but in other neighbouring towns such as Okigwe, Imo state and Umuahia the state capital, which may be as a result of the security challenges and other reasons.

As expected, Isuikwuato being a local government in an Eastern state which are predominantly Christians, the respondents were made more of Christians (63.5%), followed by Islam (24.3%) which is interestingly high in the face of this security tension in the local government. Other religions are traditional (6.4%) and others (5.8%). Interestingly, the data reveals their annual income to assess the economic status of the respondents, and it was observed that majority (41.7%) of the respondents earn between 200,000-599,000 per annum, which in average is not up to 40,000 per month and can be argued as low economic status.

**The Relationship between the Study's Variables**

**Table 4.2: The Descriptive Statistics on the socio-economic causes of kidnapping.**

S/ N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Descriptive			Remark
		Freq.	Freq.	Freq.	Freq	Tot al	Mea n	Standard Deviation	
<b>The relationship between the Herders/Farmers' conflict and kidnapping in Abia State</b>									
1	There was no kidnapping in Abia State before the Fulani-Herders/Farmers conflict	20	57	195	80	362	2.29	1.12	Disagreed
2	Rates of kidnapping increased with the advent of the Fulani-Herders/Farmers conflict	95	170	57	30	362	2.76	1.14	Agreed
3	Most of the kidnapping activities are linked with Fulani Herdsmen	75	165	72	40	362	2.73	1.20	Agreed
4	There is the existence of non-Herdsman kidnapping gangs in Abia state	25	67	180	80	362	2.27	1.11	Disagreed
5	Other non-Herders collaborate with the Fulani-herders to perpetrate the heinous act of Kidnapping in Abia state	116	154	50	32	362	2.55	1.09	Agreed
<b>The impact of economic status on kidnapping in Abia State</b>									
6	The Fulani-Herdsman are not well paid for their herding services	99	167	60	26	362	2.61	1.30	Agreed
7	All kidnapping cases I have experienced/heard of during the Fulani-Herdsman era were for ransom purposes	105	165	55	27	362	2.76	1.30	Agreed
8	The kidnappers target mostly rich men and their family members	74	162	75	41	362	2.59	1.13	Agreed
9	The kidnappers use sophisticated method and spend much money taking good care of their victims	38	77	170	67	362	2.07	1.09	Disagreed
10	Unemployed Non-Herders are collaborating with the Fulani-Herdsman in perpetrating the	85	155	75	37	362	3.04	.95	Agreed



kidnapping activities									
The effect of societal values on the behaviours of kidnapers in Abia state									
11	Kidnappers are aware that in Nigeria, wealth is valued than the means of acquiring it	115	155	52	30	362	2.56	1.11	Agreed
12	If the Herders have to defend their herd by kidnapping humans, there is nothing wrong in it	24	68	181	79	362	2.26	1.10	Disagreed
13	Most of the Fulani-Herders grow in the bush, away from home training and love	81	144	88	39	362	2.52	1.17	Agreed
14	The Fulani-Herdsman kidnapers are mostly not educated	45	162	88	57	362	2.73	1.03	Agreed
15	The politicization of the Herders/Farmers conflict for corrupt reasons is one of the causes of kidnapping	75	165	72	40	362	2.73	1.20	Agreed

Source: SPSS 23

Legend: 4.00-2.50= Agreed: 2.49-1.00= Disagreed

The data in table 4.2 shows the relationship between socio-economic factors and kidnapping in Isuikwuato, Abia State Nigeria. It reveals that the Fulani-Herders/Famers conflict did not introduce kidnapping in Abia state as there have been records of kidnapping activities prior to this period. Nevertheless, available data shows that the rates of kidnapping in Isuikwuato LGA Abia state increased with the advent of the Fulani-Herders/Famers conflict. Also, that most of the kidnapping are linked with the Fulani herders. The data also established that there is no record of non-Fulani-Herders kidnapping gang in Isuikwuato, rather, non-herders are reported to collaborate with the Fulani-Herdsman in perpetrating the heinous crime.

On the relationship between economic factors and kidnapping, the available data reveals that the Fulani Herdsman are not well paid for their herding services; that all kidnapping cases observed during Fulani-Herdsman era were for ransom purposes; also, the kidnapers target mostly rich men and their family members; and that the kidnapers don't use sophisticated method nor spend money taking care of their victims, which implies they are careful about spending the much they have realized; and finally, it is observed that the non-Herders who collaborate with them are unemployed indigenes.

On the effect of societal value on the behaviours of kidnapers, it was observed that Nigerians presently values wealth more than the means of acquiring it; nevertheless, people still frown at and condemns the method of using kidnapping as a means by the Herders; it is also observed that the most of the herders did not really have much of a home training as they grew in the bush learning mostly the act of herding; in addition to lack of home training and love, data also reveal that the Fulani-Herders-kidnapers are mostly uneducated, which will most definitely affect their level of rationality and value for human life; and finally, it is seen that the level of corruption in Nigeria which has led to the politicization of the Fulani-Herders/Famers conflict, has led to the kidnapping experienced in Nigeria generally and Isuikwuato, Abia State in particular.

### Test of Hypotheses

The stated hypotheses are tested in this section using the Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC). The analysis is meant to test whether significant relationship exists between the Fulani-Herders/Famers conflict and kidnapping in Isuikwuato; Economic status and

kidnapping; and societal values and kidnapping. The correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) ranges from -1 to +1 so that the closer the  $r$  values to +1, the stronger the relationship between the study's variables.

### Hypothesis One:

**H<sub>0</sub>1:** There is no significant relationship between the Herders/Farmers' conflict and kidnapping in Isuikwuato Abia State.

**Table 4.3: Relationship between the Herders/Farmers conflict and kidnapping**

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	R	T cal	Sig.
Herders/Farmers Conflict	362	2.9950	0.80053	0.828	14.111	0.001
Kidnapping	362	3.0550	0.70985			

Source: SPSS 23

The result shows that the Herders/Farmers conflict has a mean of 2.9950 which is less than kidnapping with a mean of 3.0550. The implication is that the Herders/Farmers conflict is significant to whatever security issues in the area of their operation. However, the correlation (R) indicates a positive result of 0.828 which is above 0.5 thus implying a strong relationship between the Herders/Farmers conflict and kidnapping in Isuikwuato.

The T-cal has a value of 14.111 with a significance value of 0.001 which is less than 0.05 significance, therefore the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate accepted that there is significant relationship between the Herders/Farmers conflict and kidnapping in Isuikwuato Abia State.

### Hypothesis Two:

**H<sub>0</sub>2:** There is no significant impact of economic status on kidnapping in Isuikwuato Abia State.

**Table 4.4: Impact of economic status on kidnapping**

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	R	T cal	Sig.
Economic status	362	2.0950	0.96501			
Kidnapping	362	2.1454	1.00401	0.765	12.043	0.005

Source: SPSS 23

The result in table 4.4 shows that economic status has a mean of 2.0950 while kidnapping has a mean of 2.1454. Also, the correlation (R) indicates a positive value of 0.765, the T-cal has a value of 12.043 with a significance value of 0.005 which is less than 0.05 significance, implying a significant impact of economic status on kidnapping. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternate accepted that there is a significant impact of economic status on kidnapping in Isuikwuato Abia State.

### Hypothesis Three:

**H<sub>0</sub>3:** There is no significant effect of societal values on the behaviours of kidnapers in Isuikquto Abia state

**Table 4.5: Effect of societal value on kidnapping**

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	R	T cal.	Sig.
Societal values	362	3.2150	0.96501			
Kidnapping	362	3.3950	1.02401	0.256	6.332	0.066

**Source:** SPSS 23

The table 4.5 shows that the mean value of societal value is 3.2150 while kidnapping have a mean of 3.39500 suggesting that there is less effect of societal value on the behaviour of kidnappers. Also, the correlation (R) shows a positive result of 0.256, with the T-cal value of 6.332 and insignificance value of 0.066, it is therefore concluded that there is a positive relationship between the variables, but an insignificant effect of societal value on kidnapping.

This implication is that in as much as societal value is expected to impinge on the moral behaviors of the kidnappers, the opposite was the case. Therefore, the study accepts the null hypothesis, that there is no significant effect of societal value on the behaviours of kidnappers.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings on the study's objective one, which is on the relationship between the Fulani-Herders/Famers conflict and kidnapping, has shown that the conflict did not introduce kidnapping in Abia state because there were prior records of kidnapping activity.

Nonetheless, data shows that kidnapping rates in Isuikwuato LGA abia state surged when the Fulani-Herders/Famers conflict broke out. In addition, the majority of the kidnappings are tied to Fulani herders. The data also revealed that in Isuikwuato, there is no record of a non-Fulani-Herders kidnapping group; rather, non-herders are said to have collaborated with Fulani-Herdersmen in committing the horrible crime.

These findings imply that in agreement with Ihe (2018); Samuel (2019); and Ibrahim & Ahmad (2020), the corruption and politicization of any ethnic and religious related issues in Nigeria, is a major cause of insecurity and crime and can be concluded to have a significant link with the kidnapping experienced in Isuikwuato Abia State.

The second objective of the study which is on the impact of economic status on kidnapping, explored some economic factors that has been put forward by previous researchers as causes of kidnapping. For example, Dodo (2010), Ottuh & Aitufe (2014) and Okorie-Ajah, Nwokeoma & Okpan (2018) had postulated that unemployment and poverty is a major cause of kidnapping in Nigeria. Therefore, the respondents were quizzed on economic status of the Fulani-Herdsmen as they observe.

The study has found that the Fulani Herdsmen are not well paid for their herding services; that all kidnapping cases observed during Fulani-Herdsmen era were for ransom purposes; also, the kidnappers target mostly rich men and their family members; and that the kidnappers don't use sophisticated method nor spend money taking care of their victims, which implies they are careful about spending the much they have realized; and finally, it is observed that the non-Herders who collaborate with them are unemployed indigenes. Therefore, this study concludes in agreement with Chingunta and Mkanawire (2002) that unemployment causes kidnapping and with Inyang (2013), Ottuh & Aitufe (2014) and Okorie-Ajah, Nwokeoma & Okpan (2018), that poverty and low standard of living influences kidnapping.

The third objective looked at the effect of societal value on the behaviours of kidnappers as previous researchers have put forward factors such as corruption (Ugwuoke,

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2011; Ene, 2018), moral decadence and changing value system (Umez, 2000; Dodo, 2010) as reasons for kidnapping in Nigeria. Therefore, this study explored these factors on kidnapping during the Fulani-Herders era in Isuikwuato Abia State. It was observed that Nigerians presently values wealth more than the means of acquiring it; nevertheless, people still frown at and condemns the method of using kidnapping as a means by the Herders; it is also observed that the most of the herders did not really have much of a home training as they grew in the bush learning mostly the act of herding; in addition to lack of home training and love, data also reveal that the Fulani-Herders-kidnappers are mostly uneducated, which will most definitely affect their level of rationality and value for human life; and finally, it is seen that the level of corruption in Nigeria which has led to the politicization of the Fulani-Herders/Famers conflict, has led to the kidnapping experienced in Nigeria generally and Isuikwuato, Abia State in particular.

Therefore, in summary of findings, this study in addition to unemployment, poverty, moral decadence and changing social value as pointed out by previous reports, have found out that the nature of work of the herders exposes them to limited level of training, care and love they need to function according to the norms of the society. This explains further the assertions of the strain theory, that when the society fails to provide the enabling environment for the members to meet up the social expectation, the members will carve out their own medium which will most of the time be illegal, such as kidnapping as experienced in Isuikwuato Abia State and other parts of Nigeria.

**Conclusion**

The relationship between crime and socio-economic factors cannot be overemphasized, as the link is manifesting in different new forms and dimensions. The Fulani-Herdersmen/Farmers conflict has introduced a security challenge in Nigeria that has developed a hydra head, carrying along its trail, religious, ethnic and political undertones that is vibrating the already shaken foundations the country's unity.

This study has assessed and found a relationship between the Fulani-Herdersmen/Farmers conflict and kidnapping in Nigeria, which did not just happen, as it also concluded that the socio-economic situation of the country which affects the standard of living in the country has predisposed the citizens to scramble for means of survival as the strain theory has pointed out, that when the society does not provide legal means to achieving expectations, the citizens will carve a means for themselves which most of the time will be illegal.

In this issue of kidnapping in Isuikwuato local government of Abia state, this study concludes that it did not start and cannot end with the resolution of the Fulani-Herdersmen/Farmers conflict. This is because, the citizens were already poor and unemployed before the conflict started, so, the conflict only became a front that soothes their conscience and helps them justify their action. But what can you say about those non- Fulani-Herdersmen who have joined in the trade? If the conflict is resolved and the socio-economic situation remains as it is, crime will still find another space and dimension to manifest.

**Recommendations**

This study therefore recommends that everyone has a part to play in solving the security and crime problem in Nigeria, and kidnapping in particular. To do this, there need to be a

wholesome approach and not just looking at the Fulani-Herdsmen/Farmers conflict motivated kidnapping.

1. For the government, they need to create an enabling environment for citizens to meet up their social expectations, which could be by job creation. This can erase the issue of capital punishment, since some these kidnapers are not really enjoying crime, but only see it as a means to achieving their financial success. Therefore, following the postulations of the strain theory, if legal means of achieving same is provided, they will be no kidnapping.
2. To apply the above recommendation to the Fulani-Herdsmen/Farmers conflict motivated kidnapping and in relation to the findings of this study, the Federal government need to provide an enabling environment for the coexistence of Fulani-Herdsmen and Farmers. This could be done by building ranches for the herders and providing fertilizers for the farmers.
3. Also, the more ransom is being paid, the more the kidnapping 'trade' thrives. Therefore, the security personnel should be well empowered to do their work of securing the citizens and by so doing, they will be no need to pay ransom since the kidnapers will be searched out before they even demand for ransom. This could be possible by taking a deeper look at community policing, such that it is well structured and brought into the main-stream security system. This is because, the kidnapers hide in the bushes and interior parts of the communities which only members of such communities know about. Therefore, if members of the community are security agents empowered through the community policing, kidnapping will find hiding difficult.
4. Finally, families, religious bodies, and social organisations should go back to the drawing board and find where we missed in the process of moral probity. The young ones should be made to know that the society values success but not more than the means of achieving it. The young ones should be brought up through love and care.

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