



Implications of Community Involvement in Combating Kidnapping in Ajaokuta Local Government Area of Kogi State, North-Central, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examines the implications of community involvement in combating kidnapping in Ajaokuta Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria. The study specifically, identified the forms of community involvement in the prevention and control of kidnapping in Ajaokuta LGA, assessed the effectiveness of community-based strategies in addressing kidnapping within the study area, examined the challenges faced by communities in their efforts to combat kidnapping, and explored the level of collaboration between community security groups and formal law enforcement agencies. Social Disorganisation Theory, originally developed by Shaw and McKay, to interpret the link between community structure and crime in Ajaokuta Local Government Area (LGA), Kogi State. Utilising a mixed-methods design, data were collected from 384 respondents through structured questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions. The findings indicate that kidnapping remains a significant security threat, with community members actively engaging in anti-kidnapping activities, notably through reporting suspicious persons and participation in vigilante groups. A statistically significant positive association was found between the level of community involvement and the perceived effectiveness of efforts to reduce kidnapping incidents. Nevertheless, the study identifies key challenges including inadequate training, insufficient resources, and limited coordination with formal security agencies that impede optimal performance and sometimes precipitate vigilantism. The study concludes that community participation is a vital component of local security strategies; however, sustainable outcomes require enhanced collaboration with law enforcement, targeted capacity development, and supportive policy frameworks. Recommendations emphasize the need to strengthen partnerships, improve resource allocation, and establish clear regulatory guidelines to optimize community-driven security initiatives.

Keywords: Ajaokuta, Community Involvement, Kidnapping, Kogi State, Security, Vigilante Groups,

Introduction



Kidnapping has evolved into one of the most pervasive and destabilising forms of violent crime in Nigeria's contemporary security landscape. Originally localised within the oil-rich Niger Delta region where it was predominantly utilised by militant groups as a means of political agitation and economic negotiation, kidnapping has since metamorphosed into a widespread criminal enterprise with complex motivations that cut across political, economic, and ideological lines (Okoli & Agada, 2014; Nwankpa, 2014; Egwuaba, 2018). Over the past decade, the phenomenon has witnessed a geographic diffusion, extending its grip to previously less-affected regions, including Nigeria's North-Central zone. Within this geopolitical zone, Kogi State has emerged as a significant hotspot for kidnapping. The intensification of abduction incidents in the state is largely attributable to its strategic centrality in Nigeria's road transportation network. Kogi functions as a transit gateway, connecting the northern and southern parts of the country. This geographic centrality, compounded by porous borders, expansive forests, and weak surveillance infrastructure, renders it vulnerable to criminal incursions and facilitates illicit mobility (Edeh & Ugwuoke, 2019; Akinyemi, 2021; Egwuaba & Ebisi, 2021). Particularly, Ajaokuta Local Government Area (LGA) traversed by the Okene–Ajaokuta–Benin–Ore highway has become a notorious corridor for kidnapping incidents due to its dense forests and inadequate formal policing presence.

The resurgence and entrenchment of kidnapping in the area underscore the critical limitations of Nigeria's formal security apparatus, which continues to grapple with underfunding, logistical challenges, manpower shortages, and operational inefficiencies (Chukwuma, 2017; Adebayo, 2020; Ejirefe & Egwuaba, 2023). As state-centric responses struggle to provide effective deterrence, communities have been compelled to adopt localised, self-help security mechanisms aimed at safeguarding their lives and livelihoods. This shift has catalysed the emergence of various forms of community participation in crime control, including vigilante groups, neighbourhood watch schemes, youth patrols, and traditional security arrangements. Community involvement in local security has thus become both a necessity and a strategic alternative in many rural and peri-urban settings across Nigeria (Egwuaba & Ebisi, 2021). In Ajaokuta LGA, informal security structures are not merely complementary to state efforts they often function as the frontline defense against kidnapping and other criminal activities. These community-driven initiatives rely on

grassroots intelligence sharing, rapid mobilization of local response units, and active engagement of traditional and religious institutions. Such interventions reflect a localised adaptive capacity that is



deeply rooted in cultural norms and communal solidarity (Agbiboa, 2020; Eze, 2022; Egwuaba & Sunday, 2023; Egwuaba et al., 2024).

Nonetheless, while community-based security frameworks offer the advantages of contextual responsiveness and communal ownership, they are not without significant challenges. The absence of regulatory oversight has, in some instances, led to cases of extrajudicial actions, human rights abuses, and the politicisation of vigilante networks. Moreover, power asymmetries within local communities can influence the composition and operation of these groups, thereby undermining their legitimacy and sustainability (Iyekekpolo, 2021; Eweka & Olusegun, 2016). These dual dynamics efficacy and vulnerability highlight the need for critical empirical inquiry into the structure, effectiveness, and consequences of community involvement in security governance. Although the discourse on community policing and grassroots security in Nigeria is gaining academic and policy attention, there remains a notable paucity of context-specific research that systematically interrogates these issues in locations such as Ajaokuta LGA. This study, therefore, seeks to bridge this gap by examining the nature, forms, and implications of community participation in combating kidnapping within Ajaokuta LGA of Kogi State.

Statement of the Problem

Kidnapping has escalated into a formidable national security challenge in Nigeria, profoundly undermining social stability, economic growth, and the overall well-being of affected communities. Despite ongoing efforts by formal security agencies, the menace persists, fueled by systemic challenges such as inadequate policing capacity, scarce resources, and intricate socio-political dynamics (Okoli & Agada, 2014). In particular, Ajaokuta Local Government Area (LGA) of Kogi State presents a worrying security scenario due to its strategic positioning along key transit corridors most notably the Okene–Ajaokuta–Benin–Ore route which has increasingly become a conduit and sanctuary for criminal networks engaged in kidnapping and related trans-border offenses (Edeh & Ugwuoke, 2019, Egwuaba et al., 2024). The evident insufficiency of state security forces has necessitated a shift towards community-driven security strategies. Local

residents have mobilised through informal structures such as vigilante groups and community policing initiatives to curb the rising tide of kidnappings. While these grassroots efforts have yielded some successes in crime reduction, critical questions remain unanswered regarding their long-term



sustainability, legitimacy, and operational coordination with formal security institutions. Moreover, concerns surrounding human rights adherence, accountability, and the potential for abuse of power within these informal frameworks remain largely under-examined (Chukwuma, 2017).

Further complicating the effectiveness of community involvement are pervasive fears of reprisal attacks by criminals, limited access to training and resources, and a general lack of institutional support from government agencies (Iyekekpolo, 2021). These factors collectively constrain the potential of community participation as a robust complement to formal security mechanisms. This knowledge gap surrounding the dynamics, challenges, and consequences of community-based anti-kidnapping initiatives in Ajaokuta LGA hampers the formulation of informed policies and strategic frameworks at both local and state levels. Without comprehensive empirical insight, there is a significant risk that community security interventions may lose efficacy or, worse, exacerbate existing insecurities and social tensions through unregulated actions. In light of these challenges, this study seeks to critically examine the implications of community involvement in the fight against kidnapping in Ajaokuta LGA, with the aim of informing policy, enhancing collaboration between formal and informal security actors, and contributing to sustainable security governance.

Objectives of the Study

The study sought to:

1. Identify the forms of community involvement in the prevention and control of kidnapping in Ajaokuta LGA.
2. Assess the effectiveness of community-based strategies in addressing kidnapping within the study area.
3. Examine the challenges faced by communities in their efforts to combat kidnapping in Ajaokuta LGA.
4. Explore the level of collaboration between community security groups and formal law enforcement agencies in the study area.

Review of Related Literature

Conceptualizing Community Involvement in Security



Community involvement in security refers to the active participation of local residents and stakeholders in initiatives aimed at preventing and controlling crime within their environment. This participation often manifests through community policing, vigilante groups, neighborhood watch programs, and collaboration with formal security agencies (Egwuaba & Olisa, 2020; Marenin, 2016). The theoretical foundation for community involvement is rooted in the notion that security is a shared responsibility, and local knowledge, social cohesion, and trust are critical to effective crime prevention (Skogan, 2006). In Nigeria, where state policing capacity is often limited, community participation has emerged as a vital strategy for addressing insecurity, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas. Such involvement is seen as a way to supplement formal law enforcement, harness indigenous resources, and enhance intelligence gathering (Alemika & Chukwuma, 2000). However, questions persist regarding the legitimacy, accountability, and effectiveness of such community-led security arrangements (Ejirefe & Egwuaba, 2023; Akinyele, 2010).

Kidnapping as a Security Challenge in Nigeria

Kidnapping in Nigeria has evolved into a complex and lucrative criminal enterprise, targeting individuals for ransom with devastating consequences for victims and communities (Okoli & Agada, 2014). Its prevalence spans multiple regions, including Kogi State, which is vulnerable due to its geographic location and porous borders (Edeh & Ugwuoke, 2019; Egwuaba, 2019; Egwuaba, 2018). The socio-economic factors driving kidnapping include poverty, unemployment, weak governance, and ethnic conflicts (Adibe, 2018). The formal security apparatus has struggled to contain kidnapping, resulting in increased reliance on community mechanisms. Vigilante groups and local security outfits have become frontline actors in combating kidnapers, although their operations are often informal and unregulated (Chukwuma, 2017).

Empirical Studies on Community Involvement in Combating Kidnapping

Several empirical studies have explored the role of community involvement in security management in Nigeria and similar contexts. Chukwuma (2017) found that community policing and vigilante groups contribute significantly to intelligence gathering and rapid response in crime prevention. However, the study noted that these groups face challenges such as lack of training, poor equipment, and occasional human rights abuses. Also, in Zamfara State, Iyekekpolo (2021) examined the activities of the Yan



Sakai vigilante group and reported that while the group improved local security, their operations sometimes undermined formal law enforcement and led to tensions within communities. This study highlights the delicate balance required between community autonomy and state oversight. Also, Edeh and Ugwuoke (2019) in a study investigated trans-border crimes, including kidnapping, along the Okene-Benin corridor and emphasised that local community involvement was critical in intelligence sharing and monitoring suspicious activities. Nonetheless, they pointed out the necessity for better coordination between communities and security agencies to enhance effectiveness. Similarly, Agbibo (2020) in a study analysed grassroots security efforts in urban and peri-urban Nigeria, noting that while community involvement reduces crime incidence, it risks entrenching vigilante justice and extrajudicial practices if not properly regulated.

Implications of Community Involvement

Community participation in security can enhance local ownership, reduce crime rates, and improve trust between citizens and law enforcement (Skogan, 2006). However, without institutional support, training, and clear legal frameworks, community security initiatives may become unsustainable and prone to misuse (Akinyele, 2010). The social implications include the empowerment of marginalised groups, the potential for conflict, abuse of power, and social fragmentation (Iyekekpolo, 2021; Egwuaba & Sunday, 2023). Therefore, understanding the contextual dynamics and outcomes of community involvement is critical for designing effective and ethical security policies.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopts Social Disorganisation Theory, originally developed by Shaw and McKay (1942), to interpret the link between community structure and crime in Ajaokuta Local Government Area (LGA), Kogi State. The theory posits that crime thrives in areas where social institutions such as families, schools, and community networks are weakened by factors like poverty, residential instability, and social fragmentation. These conditions reduce informal social control, allowing criminal activities like kidnapping to flourish (Sampson & Groves, 1989; Bursik & Grasmick, 1993). In Ajaokuta, widespread socioeconomic challenges including unemployment, infrastructural decay, and poverty contribute to social disorganization, creating an environment conducive to insecurity and kidnapping (Ejirefe & Egwuaba, 2023). According to the theory, these disruptions hinder the community's ability to regulate behavior, maintain order, and prevent crime.

Application to the Study:



Community participation in local security such as forming vigilante groups, neighbourhood watches, and collaborating with local law enforcement can be interpreted through the concept of collective efficacy, a core extension of Social Disorganisation Theory (Sampson, Raudenbush & Earls, 1997). Collective efficacy refers to the community's shared capacity to achieve mutual goals, including crime reduction, through trust, solidarity, and coordinated action. In Ajaokuta, where formal policing is often inadequate, residents step in to restore order, demonstrating grassroots attempts to rebuild social cohesion and strengthen informal social controls. However, consistent with the theory's warnings, these efforts are often hampered by the very social disorganisation they aim to counter such as limited institutional support, fragmented networks, and concerns about the accountability of informal security actors (Iyekekpolo, 2021). Thus, Social Disorganisation Theory helps explain both the emergence of kidnapping and the community's reactive security strategies in Ajaokuta. It highlights the dual necessity and difficulty of grassroots efforts to combat crime in contexts marked by weakened social infrastructure. The theory further suggests that enhancing social capital, rebuilding local institutions, and integrating community initiatives with formal security systems are vital for achieving sustainable crime prevention in such areas.

Methodology

This study adopted a mixed-methods research design to explore community participation in combating kidnapping in Ajaokuta Local Government Area (LGA), Kogi State. The choice of Ajaokuta was strategic, given its vulnerability to security threats along the Okene-Ajaokuta-Benin-Ore corridor, a high-risk zone due to its geographic and socio-political complexity. The target population comprised residents of Ajaokuta LGA, including community leaders, youth representatives, local vigilante members, and law enforcement officers. With a population of approximately 150,000 (NPC, 2019), the study drew a statistically determined sample size of 400 respondents, using Cochran's (1977) formula at a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. Below:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 (pq)}{e^2}$$

A multi-stage sampling technique was employed. Ten communities, Ajaokuta Town, Geregu, Adogo, Oguro, Ebiya, Eganyi, Emagboya, Achagana, Odonu, and Otukutu were purposively selected based on: Reported incidents of kidnapping, Presence of community-based security structures, and Accessibility for fieldwork. From each community, 40 adult respondents (18+) were randomly selected using household-based systematic or ballot sampling. Data collection tools included structured



questionnaires for quantitative data and In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) for qualitative insights. The fieldwork lasted six weeks in early 2025 and was carried out by trained field assistants. Data analysis involved the use of SPSS version 27 for descriptive statistics and Chi-square tests to assess relationships in the quantitative data, while thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative data to extract patterns and enhance the interpretation of quantitative results.

Table 1: Shows Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n=400)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	236	59.0
	Female	164	41.0
Age Group	18-30 years	108	27.0
	31-45 years	142	35.5
	46-60 years	97	24.3
	60 years and above	53	13.2
	Marital Status	Single	121
	Married	221	55.3
	Divorced/Separated	34	8.5
	Widowed	24	6.0
Educational Level	No formal education	32	8.0
	Primary	84	21.0
	Secondary	168	42.0
	Tertiary	116	29.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of respondents in the study area. A majority were male (59.0%), with females accounting for 41.0%, indicating a slightly male-dominated sample. In terms of age, the largest group was 31–45 years (35.5%), followed by 18–30 years (27.0%), 46–60 years (24.3%), and 60 years and above (13.2%), showing a diverse age distribution across young, middle-aged, and older adults. Regarding marital status, 55.3% of respondents were married, while 30.3% were single. Those divorced/separated made up 8.5%, and 6.0% were widowed, suggesting that most participants were in stable marital relationships.

In terms of education, 42.0% had secondary education, 29.0% had tertiary education, 21.0% had primary education, and 8.0% had no formal education. This indicates a relatively high level of educational attainment, which may contribute positively to awareness, civic engagement, and participation in community-based security initiatives.

Table 2: Level of Community Involvement in Fighting Kidnapping

Community	Often Participates(f/%)	Sometimes	Rarely Participate
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Involvement	Participates (f/%)	(f/%)Activities
Vigilante group membership	110 (28.2%)	134 (34.9%)
Reporting suspicious persons	160 (41.7%)	94 (24.5%)
Participation in community Meetings	95 (24.7%)	130 (33.9%)
		159 (41.4%)

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 2 presents varying degrees of community participation in anti-kidnapping activities within Ajaokuta LGA. Participation in vigilante groups reflects moderate but inconsistent engagement: 28.6% of respondents reported participating often, 36.5% sometimes, and 34.9% rarely. This distribution suggests that while grassroots security enforcement is active, commitment levels vary among community members. The highest level of involvement was seen in reporting suspicious persons, with 41.7% often participating, 33.9% participating sometimes, and only 24.5% rarely involved. This indicates strong vigilance and a willingness among residents to support security efforts through informal surveillance and collaboration. In contrast, attendance at community security meetings was less robust. Only 24.7% of respondents attended regularly, 33.9% participated sometimes, while 41.4% rarely engaged. This points to a greater community focus on action-oriented measures like reporting and patrols, with comparatively lower participation in structured discussions and strategic planning. Supporting these findings, an IDI participant stated:

“We formed the vigilante group because the police cannot always be everywhere. We needed to protect our people, farms, and markets from kidnappers.” (Vigilante leader/IDI/3/4/2025).

Another interviewee added:

“When the government security forces fail to provide adequate protection, it becomes our responsibility as community members to stand up and defend ourselves.”(Community elder/IDI/4/4/2025).

Table 3: Forms of Community Involvement in Combating Kidnapping

Community involvement strategy	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Vigilante group formation and patrols	268	67.0
Information sharing and intelligence gathering	194	48.5
Local bylaws and sanctions	112	28.0
Collaboration with formal security agencies	91	22.8

Source: Field Survey, 2025



Table 3 highlights the various forms of community involvement in the fight against kidnapping in Ajaokuta LGA. The most common strategy is the formation and patrols by vigilante groups, reported by 67.0% of respondents, underscoring the community’s strong dependence on informal, grassroots security structures as a frontline defense against crime. Additionally, information sharing and intelligence gathering was reported by 48.5%, indicating a high level of proactive engagement in early warning and crime prevention efforts. Community meetings and sensitization activities, cited by 39.3%, reflect moderate participation in public awareness and collective dialogue on security matters. Local bylaws and sanctions, mentioned by 28.0% of respondents, demonstrate the use of internally developed rules to deter and manage security threats. In contrast, collaboration with formal security agencies was the least reported form of involvement, at 22.8%, suggesting possible challenges such as weak trust, poor coordination, or limited access to formal institutions. This low figure may point to a gap in trust, access, or coordination between communities and state security institutions. Corroborating these findings, a participant in FGD reported that:

“Fighting kidnapping requires collective effort as It is everyone’s business. If one person is kidnapped, the whole community suffers.” (Youth participant/FGD/6/4/2025).

Table 4: Perceived Effectiveness of Community Involvement in Reducing Kidnapping

Effectiveness Level	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Very Effective	70	18.3
Effective	160	41.7
Neutral	80	20.8
Ineffective	50	13.0
Very ineffective	24	6.3
Total	384	100.0

Source: Field Survey, 2025

Table 4 reveals that the overall perception of community involvement in reducing kidnapping in Ajaokuta LGA is largely positive. A combined 57.9% of respondents consider community efforts either effective (41.7%) or very effective (18.2%), reflecting strong local confidence in grassroots security interventions. However, 20.8% of respondents held a neutral view, possibly due to inconsistent outcomes or limited personal experience with these initiatives. Additionally, 19.3% rated community involvement as either ineffective (13.0%) or very ineffective (6.3%), indicating skepticism among a segment of the population regarding the impact or execution of such efforts. These findings suggest a prevailing perception that community involvement contributes positively to mitigating kidnapping, although there is room for strengthening strategies and addressing public concerns to enhance trust and effectiveness. Corroborating the above findings, an IDI interviewee reported that:



“Since we started patrolling and reporting suspicious activities, kidnappers have been less bold. Our presence is a deterrent.” (Vigilante leader/IDI/6/4/2025).

However, concerns about excesses were noted by an IDI participant, who stressed that:

“Some vigilante members have acted violently without proper authority, which sometimes creates problems instead of solutions.” (Local government official/IDI/5/4/2025).

Table 5: Challenges Facing Community Anti-Kidnapping Efforts

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Inadequate funding/logistical support	217	54.3
Fear of reprisal attacks	184	46.0
Poor collaboration with government agencies	129	32.3
Low community participation	105	26.3
Corruption and compromise	91	22.8

Source: Field Survey,2025

Table 5 highlights key challenges undermining community-led anti-kidnapping efforts in Ajaokuta LGA. The most prominent obstacle is inadequate funding and logistical support, cited by 54.3% of respondents, reflecting the financial and material limitations that weaken local security initiatives. The fear of reprisal attacks, reported by 46.0%, also poses a serious deterrent, as individuals hesitate to engage due to threats to personal safety from criminal actors.

Furthermore, poor collaboration with government agencies was identified by 32.3% of respondents, indicating a lack of coordination between community groups and formal security forces. This gap can lead to fragmented efforts and reduced overall effectiveness. Other reported challenges include low community participation (26.3%) and corruption and compromise (22.8%), pointing to internal issues such as apathy and lack of integrity within the community structures. In support of these findings, responses from both IDI and FGD interviewees stressed that:

“We are volunteers with little or no formal training. We have no communication devices or protective gear, which makes our work risky.” (Vigilante group member/IDI/4/4/2025).

Another interview participant opined that:

“Many people are afraid to report suspicious persons because kidnappers sometimes come back for revenge.” (Local market leader/IDI/6/4/2025).

An FGD respondent stressed that:

“Many do not want to get involved because they fear being targeted. Also, we don’t trust the police to act on our reports.” (Women’s group/FGD/5/4/2025).

Similarly, another interviewee reported that:



“There is poor cooperation between the vigilante group and the police. Sometimes, the police even see us as a threat instead of allies.” (Community leader/IDI/6/4/2025).

Another FGD retorted that:

“Working together has brought us closer, but there have been misunderstandings between vigilantes and some youths who feel unfairly targeted.” (Youth participant/FGD/5/4/2025).

Test of Hypothesis

Table: Chi-square Test Showing Relationship Between Level of Community Involvement and Perceived Effectiveness

Variable	χ^2	df	p-value
Community involvement vs. perceived effectiveness	25.47	4	0.000*

The result of the Chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 25.47$, $df = 4$, $p = 0.000$) indicates a statistically significant relationship between the level of community involvement and the perceived effectiveness of efforts to combat kidnapping. Since the p-value is less than the conventional significance level of 0.05, the null hypothesis of no association is rejected. This implies that as community involvement increases, perceptions of the effectiveness of anti-kidnapping strategies also improve. In other words, communities that are more actively engaged in vigilance, reporting, meetings, or collaboration tend to perceive these efforts as more impactful.

Discussion

This study sheds light on the critical role of community involvement in addressing the growing threat of kidnapping in Ajaokuta Local Government Area, Kogi State. A large proportion of respondents view kidnapping as a common and alarming issue, consistent with previous studies (Edeh & Ugwuoke, 2019; Oguche, 2020) that point to a rising trend in such crimes, particularly in socioeconomically vulnerable regions of Nigeria. Contributing factors include poverty, unemployment, and weak formal security presence (Ibekwe & Ejike, 2021). The study further reveals that community members are actively involved in anti-kidnapping efforts, particularly by reporting suspicious individuals and participating in vigilante activities. This aligns with Sampson’s (1997) theory of collective efficacy, which highlights the importance of social cohesion and shared responsibility in maintaining public order. These grassroots responses reflect attempts by residents to fill gaps left by under-resourced and overstretched official security forces, a trend observed in similar Nigerian contexts (Iyekekpolo, 2021; Oladipo & Akinsanya, 2022).

However, the study also highlights variation in participation levels, especially lower engagement in formal vigilante groups and organized meetings due to fears of reprisal, resource constraints, and mistrust of state security agencies (Onuoha, 2014). These findings emphasise the limitations of relying



solely on community efforts and point to the need for stronger government support, trust-building measures, and better resource allocation. Importantly, most respondents believe that community involvement contributes significantly to reducing kidnapping, a perception supported by previous empirical studies (Nwankwo & Onwuamaeze, 2018; Adebajo & Ige, 2020). The significant statistical relationship found between community involvement and perceived effectiveness confirms the vital role of community-driven security strategies in enhancing local safety and combating crime.

Conclusion

The study concludes that kidnapping is a persistent and serious security issue in Ajaokuta Local Government Area, significantly affecting residents' safety and overall well-being. This widespread criminal activity is linked to underlying socio-economic problems and governance shortcomings that heighten local insecurity. Community involvement has emerged as a crucial grassroots strategy for addressing this threat, with active participation shown to positively influence local security by reinforcing informal social control measures. The research confirms a statistically significant relationship between such community efforts and perceived improvements in security conditions.

However, despite their potential, community-based anti-kidnapping initiatives face notable limitations. These include insufficient resources, lack of formal training for local security actors, and weak coordination with official law enforcement agencies. These challenges can sometimes lead to unintended negative outcomes, such as vigilantism and human rights abuses, which ultimately undermine the goal of sustainable security. To enhance the long-term effectiveness of community involvement, the study recommends formally integrating these initiatives into the wider policing framework. This should be supported by targeted policies, training programs, and adequate funding to empower communities, ensure accountability, and promote adherence to human rights standards.

Recommendations

In light of the study's findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Formal partnerships between community security groups and law enforcement agencies should be institutionalised. Such collaboration is essential to build mutual trust, facilitate timely and reliable information sharing, and enable coordinated responses to kidnapping threats. Strengthened synergy between these actors can help bridge gaps caused by limited police presence and improve community confidence in formal security structures.
2. There should be regular and targeted training programs must be implemented to equip community security actors with the necessary skills in lawful crime prevention, conflict de-



escalation, and human rights protection. Proper capacity building will reduce risks associated with vigilantism and enhance the professionalism and legitimacy of community initiatives.

3. Adequate provision of resources, including communication devices, transportation means, protective gear, and operational funding, is crucial to improving the effectiveness and sustainability of community anti-kidnapping efforts. Resource support will empower local actors to carry out their duties efficiently and safely.
4. Adequate awareness campaigns and sensitisation programmes should be intensified to encourage broader community participation in security initiatives. Promoting collective responsibility and reinforcing the value of community vigilance can enhance social cohesion and mobilize more residents to actively contribute to crime prevention.
5. Both National and Kogi State House of Assembly should formulate clear and enforceable regulatory frameworks developed to govern community security activities. Such policies will ensure accountability, transparency, and adherence to legal standards, thereby safeguarding against abuses and ensuring that community actions complement rather than undermine formal law enforcement efforts.

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