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The Impact of Kidnapping on Agriculture Activities in Ukum Local Government Area, Benue State, Nigeria

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Abstract

Kidnapping has emerged as a major security and development challenge in Nigeria, with particularly severe consequences for agrarian communities whose livelihoods depend on agriculture. In Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State, recurrent abductions have disrupted farming activities, obstructed trade routes, displaced farmers, reduced labor availability, and discouraged investment, thereby intensifying food insecurity and economic hardship. This study aimed to examine the impact of kidnapping on agricultural activities in Ukum LGA. The study was anchored in Anomie theory, as developed by Émile Durkheim and refined by Robert K. Merton, to explain how structural strain, blocked opportunities, and weakened social norms may contribute to criminal behavior, including kidnapping. A cross-sectional survey design was adopted. The study population comprised residents of Ukum LGA, and a sample of 400 respondents was determined using Taro Yamane's formula. Respondents were randomly selected across thirteen wards, while data were collected through structured questionnaires and interviews with twelve key informants. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically frequencies and percentages. The findings revealed that kidnapping has significantly disrupted

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agricultural activities in the study area, resulting in food insecurity, farmer displacement, blocked trade routes, and reduced agricultural investment. The study concludes that kidnapping undermines agricultural production, rural livelihoods, and food security in Ukum LGA. These findings highlight the need for strengthened rural security, targeted support for displaced farmers through access to farmland and agricultural inputs, investment incentives for agricultural recovery, and community awareness initiatives to mitigate kidnapping risks and restore agricultural productivity.

Keywords: Agricultural Activities; Food Security; Kidnapping; Rural Insecurity; Ukum LGA

INTRODUCTION

Kidnapping is a long-standing global phenomenon that has evolved from an isolated criminal practice into a complex transnational security and development challenge. Historically, kidnapping can be traced to seventeenth-century England, where children were abducted and sold as slaves or agricultural labourers to colonial farmers (Ameh, Kareem, & Adah, 2020). Even earlier, in ancient Rome, Emperor Constantine (AD 315) imposed the death penalty for kidnapping due to its prevalence and destructive social consequences. Throughout medieval Europe, the practice was employed for political and economic leverage, with notable examples including the prolonged captivity of King Richard I of England in the twelfth century (Ameh et al., 2020). These historical precedents illustrate that kidnapping has long been intertwined with power, coercion, and economic exploitation.

In the contemporary global system, kidnapping remains a pervasive security threat affecting both developed and developing societies. In conflict-prone states such as Iraq and Afghanistan, kidnapping has been widely used by insurgent groups as a tool for ransom generation, political bargaining, and psychological warfare (Kuo, 2013). For instance, in Iraq, kidnapping became normalised as a criminal enterprise, with victims often released only after substantial ransom payments, while in Afghanistan, the Taliban intensified the abduction of government officials, diplomats, and international aid workers to gain strategic leverage (Kuo, 2013). High-profile incidents, such as the abduction of Pakistan's ambassador to Afghanistan, Tariq Azizuddin, in 2008, demonstrate how kidnapping has become embedded in modern conflict economies.

Across Africa, kidnapping has increasingly been employed by militant groups, criminal networks, and insurgents to finance operations and exert political pressure. In

countries such as Cameroon, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic, politically aligned militias routinely use kidnapping as a strategy of intimidation and revenue generation (Segun, Solomon, & Kahinde, 2021). The Sahel region has become a particular hotspot, with Islamist militant groups such as Jama'at Nusrat al-Islam Wal-Muslimin (JNIM) and the Islamic State Sahel Province engaging in systematic abductions and mass violence. In Burkina Faso and Mali, the kidnapping and killing of civilians, foreign nationals, and religious workers have become recurrent features of regional insecurity (Anadolu, 2022; Caleb, 2022). These dynamics have deepened humanitarian crises and severely disrupted livelihoods, especially in agrarian communities that depend on mobility, land access, and market stability.

Nigeria represents one of the most affected countries in Africa in terms of kidnapping prevalence. What began in the early 2000s in the Niger Delta as politically motivated abductions linked to resource control has since evolved into a nationwide criminal enterprise driven largely by ransom (Abdulkabir, 2017). The scale of the problem is alarming: over 2,000 persons, including schoolchildren, government officials, traditional rulers, and businesspeople, have been abducted in recent years (Abdulkabir, 2017). High-profile incidents such as the 2014 abduction of over 270 Chibok schoolgirls and the 2020 kidnapping of 344 students in Kankara, Katsina State, underscore the magnitude of the crisis (Gabriel & Olugbenga, 2021; Bashiru & Mustapha, 2022). These events not only generated international outrage but also exposed the vulnerability of rural and semi-urban communities to organised criminal violence.

The North-Central geopolitical zone of Nigeria, often referred to as the Middle Belt, has been particularly affected by the surge in kidnapping. States such as Benue, Plateau, Niger, Nasarawa, Kogi, Kwara, and the Federal Capital Territory have experienced persistent abductions targeting farmers, traders, civil servants, and commuters (Nasidi, 2019). The consequences of this insecurity are especially severe for agriculture, which is the dominant livelihood in the region. The Governor of Niger State once warned that the fear of kidnapping was keeping farmers away from their fields, thereby threatening national food security (Nasidi, 2019). In Benue State, widely regarded as Nigeria's "food basket," escalating kidnapping and banditry have led to loss of lives, displacement of rural populations, and the abandonment of fertile farmlands (George, 2019).

Within Benue State, Katsina-Ala, Kwande, Ukum, and Logo Local Government Areas have emerged as major hotspots of kidnapping. A confessed kidnap kingpin revealed that criminal gangs operating in these areas turned to kidnapping as a more lucrative

alternative to armed robbery due to heightened security on major highways (George, 2019). Ukum Local Government Area, which is predominantly agrarian, has been particularly affected. The people of Ukum largely depend on the cultivation of crops such as yams, cassava, maize, guinea corn, groundnuts, and Bambara nuts, as well as livestock rearing, including goats and pigs (Chukwuma, 2022). However, persistent kidnapping has created an atmosphere of fear that has driven farmers away from their fields, disrupted planting and harvesting cycles, and reduced overall agricultural output.

Beyond farm production, kidnapping has undermined the broader agricultural value chain in Ukum LGA. The fear of abduction has discouraged traders, transporters, and external buyers from entering the area, thereby constraining market access and increasing food prices. Many farmers have abandoned their farmlands entirely and migrated to safer communities, resulting in declining productivity, worsening food insecurity, and rising rural poverty (Muhammad, 2020). Investment in agriculture has also declined, as insecurity deters both public and private capital from financing modern farming, storage, and processing facilities. Consequently, Ukum's agrarian economy has become increasingly fragile.

Furthermore, the growing kidnapping crisis has diverted government attention and resources away from development to security operations. Funds that could have been invested in rural roads, healthcare, education, water supply, electricity, and agricultural extension services are now being channelled toward security interventions (Ochogwu, 2023). This has deepened infrastructural deficits in Ukum LGA and further constrained agricultural productivity and rural welfare.

Although existing studies have examined kidnapping and insecurity in Nigeria, limited scholarly attention has been given to how kidnapping specifically affects agricultural livelihoods at the local government level. In a context where agriculture remains the backbone of Ukum's economy, understanding how kidnapping disrupts farming, marketing, and investment is crucial. This study, therefore, seeks to systematically examine the impact of kidnapping on agricultural activities in Ukum Local Government Area, Benue State, in order to generate empirical evidence that can inform policy, security interventions, and rural development strategies.

Statement of the Problem

Security challenges in Nigeria have increasingly undermined socio-economic development, with poverty, youth unemployment, proliferation of arms, corruption, and social injustice creating conditions that fuel violent crimes such as kidnapping (Caleb, 2022).

Kidnapping has grown at an alarming rate across the North-Central geopolitical zone, creating widespread fear and instability. In Benue State, recurring abductions of citizens, public officials, and business operators have intensified insecurity, forcing residents to limit movement and economic engagement. Government resources that could support development projects are increasingly diverted toward security operations, leading to infrastructural deficits and weakened public services (Ochogwu, 2023).

Ukum Local Government Area, a predominantly agrarian community where livelihoods depend largely on crop farming and livestock rearing, has been severely affected by this insecurity. Persistent kidnapping has discouraged farmers from accessing their farmlands for fear of abduction, disrupted farming cycles, reduced food production, and weakened local trade in agricultural produce. Traders, buyers, and investors are reluctant to operate in the area due to safety concerns, while many households expend scarce resources on ransom payments, further impoverishing families and reducing their capacity to reinvest in agriculture (Chukwuma, 2022). Although studies have examined kidnapping and socio-economic development in Nigeria, limited scholarly attention has focused specifically on how kidnapping affects agricultural and farming activities at the local government level. Given that agriculture remains the backbone of Ukum's economy, there is a clear need to empirically examine how kidnapping is disrupting farming activities, food production, and rural livelihoods in the area.

Objective of the Study

The main objective of this study is to examine the impact of kidnapping on agricultural activities in Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State

Literature Review

The concept of kidnapping has attracted attention from scholars in criminology, sociology, and security studies due to its growing social and economic implications. Okoli and Agada (2014) define kidnapping as the unlawful seizure, detention, and movement of a person against his or her will, usually for the purpose of obtaining ransom, political advantage, or other material benefits. They emphasize that kidnapping involves coercion, restriction of liberty, and the violation of fundamental human rights, making it both a criminal and a humanitarian concern.

Expanding on this perspective, Nwankwo (2016) conceptualizes kidnapping as a form of violent crime characterized by the forceful abduction and confinement of individuals in order to compel a third party, often family members, employers, or governments, to meet

certain demands. According to this view, kidnapping is not merely an act of physical seizure but a calculated strategy of economic exploitation and psychological intimidation designed to generate financial gain or strategic leverage.

Similarly, Akinola (2018) views kidnapping as a socio-economic crime embedded in broader structures of insecurity, poverty, and weak governance. He argues that kidnapping occurs when individuals or organized groups illegally capture and detain victims to extort resources, assert power, or protest perceived marginalization. This definition situates kidnapping within the context of structural strain and social disorganization, highlighting its links to systemic inequalities and institutional failures.

Moreover, Adepoju (2017) defines agricultural activities as the range of human practices involved in the cultivation of crops, rearing of animals, and management of natural resources for the production of food, raw materials, and income. He emphasizes that agricultural activities encompass land preparation, planting, harvesting, livestock management, and post-harvest handling, forming the backbone of rural economies.

Building on this view, Okeke and Yusuf (2019) conceptualize agricultural activities as an integrated system of biological production processes supported by labor, technology, and environmental resources. According to them, these activities include crop farming, animal husbandry, fisheries, forestry, and agro-processing, all of which contribute to household sustenance and national economic development. They argue that agricultural activities extend beyond subsistence production to include commercial and market-oriented operations.

In another dimension, Ezeh and Chukwu (2021) define agricultural activities as organized efforts directed toward the sustainable use of natural and human resources for the production, processing, storage, and distribution of agricultural goods. They emphasize that agricultural activities form part of a broader value chain that links farmers to markets, industries, and consumers, thereby contributing to food security, employment generation, and overall socio-economic stability.

The relationship between kidnapping and agricultural productivity has gained increasing attention in development and security scholarship, particularly in regions where agriculture remains the backbone of rural livelihoods. At the global level, conflict and violent crime have been shown to disrupt agricultural systems by restricting farmers' mobility, reducing access to land, and discouraging investment. According to Brück, d'Errico, and Pietrelli (2019), insecurity creates what they describe as "risk-induced production paralysis,"

where farmers limit their activities due to fear of attack or abduction. This implies that even where farmland and inputs are available, perceived insecurity constrains agricultural output. This global perspective provides a theoretical foundation for understanding how kidnapping undermines agriculture in fragile rural economies such as those in Nigeria.

Building on this global argument, De Luca and Verpoorten (2020) demonstrate that violent crime in Sub-Saharan Africa significantly reduces farm labour supply and crop output, particularly in communities exposed to repeated attacks. Their study shows that farmers in high-risk areas shorten farming seasons, avoid distant farmlands, and reduce capital investment in agriculture. This supports Brück et al.'s (2019) risk-aversion framework, but situates it more clearly within African agrarian economies where physical presence on the farm is indispensable. In such settings, kidnapping does not merely pose a security threat but becomes a structural constraint on food production.

In Nigeria, empirical evidence confirms that kidnapping has become one of the most destabilising threats to rural agriculture. Nwankwo and Ifejika-Speranza (2020) found that farmers in North-Central Nigeria reduced cultivated land and labour use due to fear of abduction and violent attacks. Their study indicates that insecurity increases the cost of farming by forcing households to hire guards, relocate to safer areas, or abandon farming altogether. This aligns with De Luca and Verpoorten's (2020) African-level findings, but further reveals how kidnapping directly alters farm-level decision-making in Nigeria's rural communities.

Further supporting this position, Akinwale (2021) shows that kidnapping has disrupted agricultural markets in Nigeria by making rural-urban transportation risky and expensive. Traders are reluctant to enter farming communities, while farmers struggle to transport produce to markets due to fear of highway and farm-route abductions. This finding links agricultural decline not only to production challenges but also to market failures, thereby extending Nwankwo and Ifejika-Speranza's (2020) argument beyond farm gates to the broader value chain.

However, Okoli and Ugwu (2022) caution that the impact of kidnapping on agriculture is not uniform across Nigeria. Their study reveals that areas with weak rural policing and limited government presence experience more severe agricultural disruption than those with effective community security networks. This challenges the assumption that kidnapping alone determines agricultural decline and introduces governance as a mediating

variable. While Akinwale (2021) emphasises market disruption, Okoli and Ugwu (2022) show that institutional failure intensifies the economic effects of insecurity.

In Benue State, which is Nigeria's major food-producing region, the connection between kidnapping and agricultural decline is particularly evident. Ijirshar, Udaah, Mile, Vershima, and Adaudu (2024) found that insecurity, including kidnapping, has a statistically significant negative effect on crop and livestock production across rural LGAs in the state. Their findings confirm earlier national-level studies but contextualise the problem within Benue's agrarian economy, where farming is both the main livelihood and the primary driver of food supply.

Focusing more narrowly on rural farming communities, Muhammad and Terwase (2023) demonstrate that farmers in Benue's Zone A, covering Ukum, Katsina-Ala, Kwande, and Logo LGAs, are increasingly abandoning farmlands due to kidnapping threats. Their respondents reported delayed planting, reduced farm size, and the hiring of armed escorts, all of which raise production costs and reduce output. This reinforces Ijirshar et al.'s (2024) macro-level findings while providing micro-level insight into how kidnapping shapes everyday farming behaviour.

Similarly, Chukwuma (2022) observes that kidnapping has weakened agricultural labour supply in Benue State as young people avoid farming for fear of abduction. This creates a labour shortage that forces older farmers to reduce farm size and productivity. Chukwuma's findings complement Muhammad and Terwase (2023) by showing that kidnapping not only drives farmers off their land but also discourages generational continuity in agriculture.

However, Terzungwe and Abah (2023) argue that the impact of kidnapping on agriculture in Benue is also mediated by poverty and rural underdevelopment. They found that farmers who lack access to credit, mechanisation, and extension services are more vulnerable to insecurity because they cannot afford protective measures or rapid recovery after attacks. This challenges purely security-focused explanations and supports Okoli and Ugwu's (2022) argument that institutional and economic conditions shape the severity of kidnapping's impact.

From a food-security perspective, Umar (2025) links kidnapping in North-Central Nigeria to declining food availability and rising prices. He shows that farm abandonment and disrupted supply chains have reduced the volume of crops entering urban markets, thereby

contributing to inflation and hunger. This reinforces the micro-level findings of Chukwuma (2022) and Muhammad and Terwase (2023) by demonstrating how local kidnapping translates into national food insecurity.

Theoretical Framework: Anomie Theory

Anomie Theory is rooted in the positivist sociological tradition, which explains crime and deviance as outcomes of social structures rather than individual moral weakness. Epistemologically, the theory emerges from structural functionalism, a perspective that views society as a system of interdependent institutions regulated by shared norms and values. Social order, from this standpoint, depends on effective moral regulation and equitable access to societal opportunities. When these regulatory mechanisms weaken or social structures fail to function properly, instability arises, and deviant behaviours become more likely. Crime is therefore understood as a socially patterned response to structural imbalance rather than purely psychological or biological causes.

The concept of anomie was first introduced by Émile Durkheim in the late nineteenth century to describe a state of normlessness resulting from rapid social and economic changes. Durkheim argued that when societal norms lose their regulatory power, individuals experience feelings of frustration, purposelessness, and disconnection from collective values. This breakdown in moral regulation increases the likelihood of deviant behaviour, as individuals lack clear guidelines to direct their actions. Crime, in Durkheim's view, is a normal but socially conditioned phenomenon that reflects weakened social integration and regulation within a society.

Robert K. Merton later refined the concept by focusing on the structural disjunction between culturally approved goals and socially available means of achieving them. Merton observed that many societies strongly emphasize success goals such as wealth, status, and material achievement, but access to legitimate opportunities is unevenly distributed. This inequality produces strain, particularly among individuals in disadvantaged positions, who may feel pressured to achieve societal expectations without having the lawful means to do so. One adaptation to this strain is innovation, in which individuals accept societal goals but employ illegitimate methods to achieve them. Criminal activities, including kidnapping, may therefore represent attempts to attain economic success in contexts where legitimate opportunities are limited.

Anomie theory assumes that social order depends on shared norms and effective moral regulation, that inequality in opportunity structures generates strain and frustration, and that crime is a socially structured response to blocked access to legitimate means. It further assumes that deviance is more prevalent in contexts characterized by economic hardship, weak governance, and social disorganization. Individuals in such environments are more likely to turn to crime when legitimate pathways to success are inaccessible or ineffective.

This theoretical perspective is particularly relevant to agrarian communities such as Ukum Local Government Area of Benue State, where livelihoods depend heavily on farming, communal cooperation, land access, and local security. Persistent poverty, youth unemployment, weak state presence, and the commercialization of violence have eroded traditional norms and social control mechanisms in the area, creating conditions consistent with anomie and structural strain. In this environment, kidnapping can be interpreted as an innovative adaptation to blocked economic opportunities, where individuals resort to illicit means to pursue financial survival or advancement. However, this adaptation produces serious consequences for agricultural activities, as insecurity forces farmers to abandon their lands, reduces labour availability, disrupts trade routes, and discourages agricultural investment. The resulting food insecurity and rural poverty further intensify structural strain, creating a cycle of insecurity and economic decline. Anomie theory therefore provides a useful framework for linking structural inequality, weakened social regulation, and the disruption of agricultural livelihoods.

The theory's strength lies in its ability to connect crime to broader socio-economic conditions rather than individual pathology, emphasizing the roles of poverty, unemployment, inequality, and institutional weakness in generating deviant behaviour. It also supports policy-oriented interventions aimed at strengthening rural economies, expanding legitimate livelihood opportunities, and restoring social regulation. However, the theory has limitations, as it tends to underemphasize the influence of organized criminal networks, political violence, state complicity, and corruption, all of which are significant in Nigeria's kidnapping crisis. Despite these limitations, anomie theory remains a valuable analytical lens for understanding how structural dislocation, economic exclusion, and weakened social control contribute to insecurity and the decline of agricultural production in rural communities like Ukum.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a cross-sectional survey method. A sample size of 400 respondents was selected from the total population projection of 313,300 using Taro Yamane's formula. Questionnaires were distributed to 400 respondents who were randomly selected across the thirteen (13) wards, while interview was also conducted with twelve (12) Key informants to complement the data collected through the questionnaire. Responses from the questionnaire were analysed using descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages, and inferential statistics of Chi-square(X^2).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 Bio-data of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	216	56.0
	Female	170	44.0
Marital Status	Single	81	21.0
	Married	233	60.4
	Divorced	20	5.2
	Widower	16	4.1
	Widow	26	6.7
	Separated	10	2.6
Age	20–29	110	28.5
	30–39	172	44.6
	40–49	61	15.8
	50–59	27	7.0
	60 and above	16	4.1
Educational Qualification	Primary Certificate	34	8.8
	Secondary Certificate	140	36.3
	Tertiary Certificate	120	31.0
	Non-formal Education	52	13.5
	Others	40	10.4
Occupation	Farming	140	36.3
	Public Servant	44	11.4
	Civil Servant	32	8.3
	Trading	120	31.0
	Artisan	7	1.8
	Unemployed	30	7.8
	Others	13	3.4
	Total	**386**	**100.0**

Table 1 showed the sex of the respondents. While 56.0% are males, 44.0% are females. It can be seen from the result that; majority of the respondents were males. This implies that the males are more accessible and willing to express their opinion to the

questionnaire than the female counterpart. The same table showed the marital status of the respondents. 21.0% are single, 60.4% are married, 5.2% are divorced, 4.1% are widower, 6.7% are widow, while 2.6% are separated. This shows that a considerable number of the respondents are married. It went further to show the age of the respondents. 28.5% are between the ages of 20-29 years, 44.6% are between the ages of 30-39 years, 15.8% are between the ages of 40-49 years, 7.0% are between the ages of 50-59 years, while 4.1% are 60 years and above. This showed that the majority of the respondents are within the age bracket of 30-39 years. This further reveal that the age bracket 30-39 constituted the most willing population who were as well accessible in the process of administering the research questionnaire. The implication on this study is that, age group 30-39 must have experience the incidence of kidnapping in Ukum LGA over a period of time. The table also shows that 8.8% has primary school certificate, 36.3% are secondary school certificate holders, 31.1% are tertiary certificate holders, 13.5% received non-formal education, while 10.4% has other qualifications. This shows that majority of the respondents has secondary school and tertiary certificates. This shows that a significant percent of the respondents is literate making the data collected for the study ingenious. The table also shows the occupation of the respondents, however, 36.3% are farmers, 11.4% are public servants, 8.3% are civil servants, 31.1% are traders, 1.8% are artisan, 7.8% are unemployed, while 3.4% belong to other occupations. This shows that the majority of the respondents are farmers and traders. This implies that the data collected is ingenious since significant percent of the respondent are farmers and traders who might have knowledge of what kidnapping is in Ukum LGA.

Table 2: Respondents' Opinion on how Kidnapping Affects Agriculture Activities in Ukum LGA

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Blocking of local trade routes	96	24.9
Food insecurity	121	31.3
Farmers become internally displaced, living on their farmland	97	25.1
Lack of investment in the agricultural sector	72	18.7
Total	**386**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2025.

Respondents were asked to indicate how kidnapping affects agricultural activities in Ukum Local Government Area. The results presented in Table 2 revealed widespread disruption of farming and food supply systems. The findings show that 31.3% of the respondents identified food insecurity as the major consequence of kidnapping, 25.1%

reported that farmers have become internally displaced and have abandoned their farmlands, 24.9% indicated that local trade routes have been blocked, while 18.7% noted a lack of investment in the agricultural sector. These results suggest that kidnapping has significantly weakened agricultural production and distribution in Ukum LGA, thereby threatening food availability and rural livelihoods.

Table 3: How does kidnapping affects the future of agriculture in Ukum LGA?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Food crops cannot be planted.	115	29.8
Farmers will migrate to other places where there is relative peace.	100	25.9
There will be no local or foreign investment in agriculture and farming.	81	21.0
Government will lose revenue since agricultural produce will not be available to the market for sale.	90	23.3
Total	**386**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

From the above table, 29.8% indicated food crops cannot be planted, 25.9% indicated farmers will migrate to other places where there is relative peace, 21.0% indicated there will be no local or foreign investment in agriculture and farming, while 23.3% indicated government will lose revenue since agricultural produce will not be available to the market for sale in Ukum LGA. Thus, it could be seen from the result that majority of the respondents revealed that the persistent kidnapping activities in Ukum LGA will affect the future of agriculture/farming. This implies that security need to be tighten up as to protect the lives of the farmers and others in Ukum LGA so that the agricultural activities will thrived.

Table 4.: Would foreign and local investors be interested to invest in agriculture despite the incessant kidnapping in Ukum LGA?

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	163	42.2
No	223	57.8
Total	**386**	**100.0**

Source: Field Survey, 2023.

From the table above, 42.2% indicated yes, while 57.8% indicated no. However, it could be seen from the result that majority of the respondents revealed that both foreign and local investors will not be interested to invest in a crime prone area since no investment will thrive in an environment that is not safe. This implies that investors both foreign and local

will choose safer places for their investment rather than investing in areas that will not yield much positive results.

Test of Hypothesis H_0: Kidnapping has no significant effect on agriculture/farming activities in Ukum LGA.

Chi-square Calculation

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E_i} = \frac{(96-96.5)^2}{96.5} + \frac{(121-96.5)^2}{96.5} + \frac{(97-96.5)^2}{96.5} + \frac{(72-96.5)^2}{96.5} = 12.45$$

Chi-square Statistic: 12.45

Critical Value (df=3): 7.81

Decision: Reject the null hypothesis.

The chi-square statistic (12.45) is greater than the critical value (7.81). This indicates that there is sufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis. Therefore, it can be concluded that kidnapping has a significant effect on agriculture and farming activities in Ukum LGA. Kidnapping leads to disruptions in local trade routes, food insecurity, displacement of farmers, and lack of investment in the agricultural sector.

The interview responses further illuminate the severity of this situation. One of the interviewees, a 54-year-old farmer, explained that:

"These kidnappers are everywhere around the farms and bush roads. Many of us no longer go to our farms because we may not return alive. Some people have even left Ukum completely to avoid being kidnapped" (02/6/2025/Participant A, Ukum Central).

This account supports the survey finding that many farmers have become internally displaced and are no longer cultivating their lands. The fear of kidnapping has turned fertile farmland into unsafe zones, forcing households to abandon agriculture as their primary means of survival.

Another interviewee, aged 47, also noted that:

"When farmers are kidnapped, their families must sell their farm produce or animals to raise ransom. After that, they have nothing left to continue farming, so they relocate to IDP camps or to safer towns" (04/6/2025/Participant D, Zaki Biam).

This response explains why 25.1% of respondents indicated that farmers have become displaced. It shows that kidnapping not only removes farmers physically from their land but also drains their financial capacity to reinvest in agriculture.

A third interviewee, a 50-year-old trader, further observed that:

"Even when some farmers manage to produce crops, they cannot bring them to the market because the roads are dangerous. Vehicles are attacked, and people are kidnapped on the way. That is why food is now scarce and very expensive" (06/6/2025/Participant G, Ugba).

This statement strongly aligns with the 24.9% of respondents who reported that local trade routes are blocked and with the 31.3% who identified food insecurity as the most serious outcome. It highlights how insecurity disrupts the movement of agricultural produce from farms to markets, leading to shortages and rising food prices.

Another interviewee, aged 42, emphasised the investment dimension of the crisis, stating that:

"Nobody wants to invest in farming here again. Investors and large farmers are afraid that their workers or produce will be attacked, so they take their money to safer places" (07/6/2025/Participant M, Anyiin).

This confirms the 18.7% of respondents who identified a lack of investment in agriculture as a key effect of kidnapping. The withdrawal of investors further weakens agricultural productivity and limits employment opportunities in rural areas.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that kidnapping has great impact on food security, because farmers are internally displaced due to the activities of kidnapping therefore, affecting agriculture/farming in Ukum LGA. This is in line with the position of Otuisi, Ogisi and Emaziye (2023) who assert that the key actors of agricultural sectors which include the farmers (producers), the intermediaries (processors) and the consumers had the issue of attaining food security in Nigeria due to the activities of kidnappers and other criminal element who targets the local settlers, and in fear of being kidnapped or killed flee their communities leaving their farmland. The result of these challenges are such that, no agricultural investor whether local or foreign will be motivated to invest in an unsafe, insecure and degraded environment which lead to the decline in food production and the economic

activities of that area. This also corroborate with the study of Suleiman and Bilkisu (2020) who assert that kidnapping has affected Nigeria, the negative impacts of killing and kidnapping of farmers, chasing of farmers out of their farmlands, seizing of farmlands, theft of cattle, burning and raiding of grain silos, and blocking of local trade routes has made farming activities very difficult in the affected areas. Any form of violence that leads to insecurity in rural areas where majority of the people are farmers is bound to affect food security anywhere in the world. In villages where incessant kidnapping and other criminal attacks are carried out, many people especially women and children flee such areas to become internally displaced persons (IDPs) who take shelter at IDP camps and this affects farming and food production in that particular year.

Based on the findings, the study concluded that kidnapping is a significant threat to agricultural activities and livelihoods in Ukum Local Government Area. The insecurity created by frequent abductions has forced farmers to abandon their farmlands, disrupted food supply chains, and blocked local trade routes, leading to food scarcity and rising market prices. The displacement of farmers and the withdrawal of investors from the agricultural sector have further weakened production, limited employment opportunities, and reduced overall economic activity in the area. The study also concluded that the psychological fear and economic strain caused by kidnapping exacerbate rural poverty, undermine food security, and hinder sustainable agricultural development.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed to address the impact of kidnapping on agricultural activities in Ukum Local Government Area:

i. **Strengthen rural security:** Increase patrols, establish checkpoints along farming routes, and promote community policing to protect farmers and their produce.
ii. **Support internally displaced farmers:** Provide access to temporary farmland, agricultural inputs, and financial assistance to enable farmers to resume farming safely.
iii. **Encourage agricultural investment:** Introduce incentives such as tax breaks, subsidised farm equipment, and security guarantees to attract local and foreign investors back to the agricultural sector.

Implement community awareness programs: Educate residents on the risks of kidnapping, the importance of vigilance, and foster cooperation between farmers, local leaders, and security

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