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Impact of Security Challenges on Socio-Economic Development in Anambra state: Evidence from selected communities

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Abstract
Security challenges is a serious issue in Nigeria, particularly in Anambra state, South East Nigeria. It's manifestations in violent crimes such as kidnapping, armed robbery, cultism, herder/farmer conflict, activities of unknown gunmen and extortion by thugs, has disrupted the socio-economic fabric of the affected areas. The rise in insecurity can be attributed to several factors, including economic deprivation, unemployment, and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons. The impact of insecurity in Anambra State is profound, leading to loss of lives, displacement of residents, and a general state of insecurity. The local economy has suffered as businesses close early or relocate due to security concerns, and agricultural activities are disrupted, leading to food insecurity. This study therefore investigated security challenges in Amansea, Agulu, Ichida, Ifite Isuaniocha and Mbaukwu communities in Anambra State. It focused on the current insecurity situation in the region, its causes, and strategies adopted by the people to cope. The research explored historical context, their present activities and changes in their activities over time. Data was collected using the qualitative methods which include In-Depth Interview (IDI), Focus Group Discussion (FGD), Key Informant Interview (KII) and Case Study. The social disorganization theory was adopted as the theoretical framework. Findings showed that that Anambra State is faced with security challenges due to cultism, kidnapping, robbery, activities of unknown gunmen and disturbance from cattle herdsmen. It also noted that in order to cope, private bodies/organization employ vigilantes and other security apparatus, reporting to relevant authorities, reduction in night movements, while farmers build fence around their farms or farm close to their individual homes. These had led to reduction in food product as well as affected economic activities negatively in the state.

Keywords: Anambra State, Challenges, Development, Insecurity. Socio-Economic

Introduction

Scholars have attempted in several way to define security challenges but have not arrived at a working definition. This is because to a large extent, the political elites determines what security threat is and what it is not. In order words, the State weaponized crime. The state is complicit to most security challenges. However, Federal Ministry of Budget and Economic Planning on its summit on Nigerian

Security Challenges: Implications on sustainable Development in 2024 referred Security challenges as various threats, risks, and vulnerabilities that can compromise the safety and well-being of individuals, organizations, or nations. These challenges can manifest in numerous forms, including physical threats like terrorism and crime, cyber threats such as data breaches and hacking, and even natural disasters or pandemics. Effectively addressing security challenges requires a comprehensive approach that considers both the specific threats and the broader context in which they occur (Ratliff, 2024). There are different types of security challenges globally. They include:

Physical Security which includes threats like terrorism, armed robbery, kidnapping, and civil unrest, which can result in loss of life, injury, and property damage (Carr, 2024). Cyber threats which involve attacks on computer systems and networks, including data breaches, malware, ransomware, and phishing attacks, which can compromise sensitive information and disrupt operations. Economic instability, poverty, and unemployment can contribute to social unrest and create an environment where crime and instability can flourish. Climate change, natural disasters, and resource scarcity can pose significant security challenges, leading to displacement, conflict, and humanitarian crises. Political corruption, lack of good governance, and social inequality can undermine trust in institutions and create an environment where security challenges can thrive (Itse, 2021).

The focus of this study is on physical security. Security challenges globally can be traced to the Medieval/post-Medieval period. It was primarily regarded as a soldier for liberation, a bringer of justice and a protector of the faith. As for the medieval outlaws, the essential motivations to become an outlaw were mainly economic conditions. Medieval criminals either tried to flee from the tragic poverty and living conditions established in provincial counties, or was attracted by the means given by the improvement of Balkan commerce and travel (Heard, 2015). Heard (2015) further stated that kidnapping is an act of detainment and a serious crime, and actually a hideous crime as ancient as civilization itself. Some of the earliest historical documents available talk of people and whole divisions of population being captured by force and sold, bartered, or subjugated. Even entire societies have been kidnapped and eliminated or auctioned into servitude (Everard, 2009). Thus, we may assume that slavery was the earliest form of kidnapping because free individuals were often kidnapped and sold to the slave traders in the ancient ages. For instance, Newton (2002) recorded that Vikings abducted uncountable number of people

during their raids in the British Isles and Western European soils, and either held some of them for ransom or sold the other into the slave markets (Newton, 2002). In the Roman Empire as well, similarly, subjugated populations were obliged to contribute the Roman army with soldiers, and that was carried out through kidnapping and slavery.

In Nigeria, because of the nature of their operation, the populace call them "unknown gunmen". The most common types of rural criminal activities in Nigeria are armed robbery, kidnapping, cattle rustling, village raiders, activities of unknown gunmen and herders/farmers conflict. Anambra state which is the focus of this study, has had reoccurring security challenges recently. The most common types of security issues are armed robbery, kidnapping, farmers/herders clash, activities of unknown gunmen and cultism. Report by Eboesomi (2025) noted that Ihiala, Ogbaru, Nnewi North, Orumba North, Idemili North, Aniocha, Awka South, and Awka North Local Government Areas. The major flash points along Anambra boarder with Enugu State – Amansea, Isuaniocha, Nnewi, Ihiala and part of Onitsha. The report further stated that kidnapping and highway ambushes remain a lingering fear among traders and other passengers returning from markets as they most often fall victims. Farmers are also not as they are victims of kidnap in their own farms. It is on this note that this paper seeks to interrogate the impact of security challenges on Socio-economic development of Anambra State,

Literature Review

The followings are some of the security challenges predominant in Nkgeria.

Armed robbery: Stealing or taking possession of what does not belong to the individual is one of the crimes that has existed and still exist in human society. According to Mathias (2015) in the earlier times, the perpetrators carry out their activities either in the night when people are asleep or in the morning hours when men had gone to farm. In most society people are aware of who is a thief and there are societal sanctions on such persons of questionable character which includes: chanting songs with the person's name during festivals, flogging the person publicly, making the person walk naked round the village (Mathias, 2015) Armed robbery on the other hand is stealing from somewhere or someone using weapons. Ezinwa and Ezedinachi (2020) noted that all through the six geo-political regions in Nigeria,

there are dangerous spots of highway robbery and banditry along major roads. The Nigerian highways according to them are perpetuated with desperate out laws and men of the underworld that rob commuters of their property by force.

Kidnapping: Clutterbuck (1987) defined kidnapping as an act of detainment which is as ancient as civilization itself. According to him, it dates back to the then agricultural villages and hunting age where groups or rebels who wanted to fight or pursue their opponents off their land can exact pressure on the ruler by kidnapping his children. Schreiber (2026) also noted that kidnapping is criminal offence consisting of the unlawful taking and carrying away of a person by force or fraud or the unlawful seizure and detention of a person against his will. Ayuba (2020) on the other hand stated that the root of the word kidnapping is believed to have been derived from two words namely: 'kid' (infant) and 'napping' (to be caught sleeping). Tzanelli (2009) noted that the act of kidnapping originated in the 17th century Great Britain when infants of the wealthy families would be caught while they are sleeping and carried away for ransom hence the term 'kid' 'napping'. Thus, there is a sort of consensus among researchers that the concept of kidnapping first emerged as an act of child abduction or stealing. Uzoma and Nwanegbo-Ben (2014) cited in Dami (2021) also defined kidnapping as the "act of seizing and detaining or carrying away a person by unlawful force or by fraud, and often with a demand for ransom. It involves taking a person from their family forcefully without their consent with the motive of holding the person as a hostage and earning a profit from their family". O'Brien (2008) further noted that to abduct, which is often used interchangeably with kidnap, comes from the Latin prefix *ab* (away) and verb *ducere* (to lead). Thus, victims are forcefully taken away and lead to where they are kept until ransom is paid. Kidnapping involves the use of offensive gadgets, weapons, technologies and sensitive information by the criminals (kidnappers) in order to forcefully take away their victims thereby instilling fears and terror in the minds of their relatives. Schreiber (2026) noted that the principal motives for kidnapping are to subject the victim to some form of involuntary servitude, to expose him to the commission of some crime against his will or to obtain ransom for his safe release. He further noted that kidnappers are usually skilled, tactful and rational as they calculate the costs and benefits of their actions. Thus, successful kidnapping involves, among other things, availability of material and human resources, some level of technology, professional training in the use of sophisticated weapons etc (Schreiber, 2026). Very often, kidnappers

do have their targets and also have informants who give them necessary information about the targets. Numerous factors come into consideration when determining a potential target for kidnapping depending on the nature and purpose of the kidnapping operation. The purpose for kidnapping includes political, religious, revenge, prisoners. On rear occasion, it may occur as a result of a misplaced identity. However, in all, ransom is the major determinant of the caliber or category of people to be kidnapped (Wright,2009). Thus, most kidnappers determine their targets based on the victim's Kidnap Ransom Value (KRV). KRV can be described as the 'strategic net worth of a kidnapee, which in essence, makes him/her a kidnap target' (Okoli &. Agada, 2014).

Kidnapping is a global phenomenon. There is no part of the globe where kidnapping does not exist. The US Department of State's Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC,2019) report on Nigeria indicates that Nigeria has one of the world's highest rates of kidnap-for-ransom cases. Other countries high up on the list include Venezuela, Mexico, Yemen, Syria, The Philippines, Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia. Ayuba (2020) noted that there is hardly a part of Nigeria which has not experienced kidnapping in recent times and the most disturbing fact is that there have not been any conscious and concerted effort to arrest the situation. Kidnapping has remained the most virulent form of banditry in Nigeria. It has become the most pervasive and intractable violent crime in the country. In Nigeria, Kidnapping can be targeted at individuals or at groups. School children have been kidnapped in groups in various parts of the country. BBC News 2026 reported that more than 1,500 school children had been adopted since 2014. Up to 276 were taken during the Chbok mass abduction. In November 2025, three hundred staff and students were abducted from Saint Mary's Secondary/Primary School Papiri, Niger State Nigeria (Mohammed, 2025). Mohammed (2025) further noted that since January 2023, at least, 816 pupils had been taken in 22 school attacks. Usually, the prime targets of kidnapping for ransom are individuals and organizations considered to be wealthy enough to pay a fee in exchange for being freed (Briggs, 2001).

Herder/Farmer Conflict: According to Sanni (2016) a herder in Nigeria is any individual who owns a large collection of livestock such as sheep, cows, goats, horses, donkeys, and lots of others. It also refers to someone who herds livestock and from the Fulfulde speaking ethnic group (Stevenson, 2016). The definition involves both the owner of the herd of animals and/ or the one that tends the herd whether in free range grazing or intensive system and irrespective of the tribe or ethnic region. Conflict according

to Shittu (2020) can be defined as the opposition among social entities directed against one another. It is distinguished from competition which is defined as opposition among social entities independently striving for something of which the supply is inadequate to satisfy all. Therefore, conflict could be well understood if defined on the basis of society, hence a social conflict. Farmers are individual who earn their livelihood through cultivation of crops in the land. The effects of the conflicts between them and the nomadic herders include land encroachment, crop damage by cattle, killing of stray cattle by the farmers, inadequate grazing reserves for the nomads, indiscriminate bush burning, perceived hatred between farmers and herders and climate change. This implies that that farmers would be forced to retaliate when their farms are being destroyed by cattle or stray cattle led by the nomads. Ojiagu et al (2022) also reported that struggle over grazing land, deliberate grazing of cattle on crops and Climate (weather) change are the causes of farmer-herder conflicts. On the other hand, Okeke (2022) noted that the herdsmen and farmer conflict adversely affect the socio-economic development in Anambra state by draining of federal and state governments resources meant for developmental purposes; inhibiting the delivery of public services; discouraging potential foreign and local investors from investing in the state/country; affecting rapid economic growth; destructing lives and farmland among others.

Cultism: Cultism refers to the practices and activities of secret groups or societies, often characterised by rituals, secrecy, and exclusivity. In Nigeria, cultism has become a significant social issue, particularly in educational institutions, where it is associated with violence, criminal activities, and disruption of academic environments. Studies by Adeboye (1998), Adeyanju, (2000), Amaele (2008) and Alemika (2013) noted that cultism thrives due to factors like peer pressure, societal frustration, and the allure of power and recognition. It is also worthy to note that some of these cults set off originally for good but deviated as time went on. For instance, Onwuemeodo, Nwosu and Oguntease (1999) noted that the pirates confraternity set out to fight muribudun convention, neo-colonialism, tribalism and at the same time, defend humanistic ideas while promoting comradeship and chivalry amongst its members. However, they became violent due to lack of loyalty to the dictates of the groups and power struggle among their leadership

In addition, Pemede (2001) also reported that between 1996 and 1999 more than three hundred and fifty (350) Nigerian student were killed as a result of power struggle among the secret cult group in tertiary

institutions while others were either seriously wounded or maimed in cult related violence. Efforts to curb cultism include awareness campaigns, stricter regulations, and community engagement.

Based on the above discuss, security challenges means the occurrence or prevalence of armed robbery or violent crime. It involves the use of force or threat to that effect, to intimidate a person with the intent to rob, rape or kill. Security challenges like armed robbery, kidnapping etc are crime against persons and it has been a common genre of crime as well as the cause of violence in contemporary Nigerian societies. Most of the studies conducted on insecurity and banditry in Nigeria was conducted in the Northern parts of the country, however his study examined the current state of insecurity in some communities in Anambra State, exploring the types of activities that they are engaged in, and how the population reacts to their presence.

Theoretical Orientation

This study is anchored on the social disorganization theory. Social disorganization theory as popularized by Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay in 1929 and published in 1942 assumes that crime rates are constant in areas with certain environmental conditions, such as high unemployment, population fluctuation or material decay. Such conditions prevent social organization and cohesion in the neighbourhood and thus informal social control of delinquency. Once crime is widespread, criminal norms and values that compete with normative values are culturally transmitted and passed on to new residents. As a result, crime rates in certain areas are constant regardless of the specific population. People are therefore influenced in their actions by a certain environment. This theory argues that weak social institutions (family, education, law enforcement) create an environment conducive to crime. In Nigeria, issues such as broken homes, lack of education, and weak policing allow criminal groups and cultist activities to thrive. The main criticism of the theory of social disorganization as an explanation for deviant behaviour and crime is that the responsibility for individual actions is shifted from the individual to society. Also, Shaw and McKay have been criticized of being tautological in their proposed explanation of crime, as social disintegration is seen as the cause of crime, but crime is also seen as an indicator of social disorganization (Vito, Maahs & Holmes, 2007).

In relation to this study, Nigeria as a developing country faces a lot of security challenges which could be traced to inequality, unemployment, poverty, ethnic conflict, politically based violence, organized violent groups, porous borders, political corruption, poor governance and lots more. A lot of its citizens had been displaced from their homes and farmlands due to terrorism and farmer/herder clashes. Only a few individuals swim in the ocean of wealth while majority are in abject poverty. The ruling class make laws to favour their interests and maintain the status quo at the detriment of the masses. These social conditions provide a fertile and conducive environment for crime and deviant behavour to thrive.

Area of the Study

The study was conducted in Anambra state Nigeria. The state derives its name from the Omambra River, the largest left bank tributary of the River Niger with a total land area of 4,416 sq. km. Anambra State which is situated on a generally low elevation on the eastern side of the River Niger, shares boundaries with Kogi, Enugu, Imo, Abia, Rivers, Delta and Edo states (Ayadiuno, Chukwuka & Udegbunam, 2021). Anambra is the eighth-most populated state in the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the second-most densely populated state in Nigeria after Lagos State. The stretch of more than 45 km between the towns of Oba and Amorka contains a cluster of numerous thickly populated villages and small towns, giving the area an estimated average density of 1,500Â–2,000 persons per square kilometre (Gamers, 2019).

The creation of the present Anambra State resulted mainly from the desire to spread the gains of economic development and arrest the national problem of north-south, geopolitical dichotomy evident in the former Anambra State. There was the agitation that the indigenes of the present Anambra State, because of their highly developed manpower, dominated the state public services; while on the other hand, there was some measure of concentration of infrastructural base and government industrial development in the region that now is Enugu State. Administratively, the state consists of twenty-one local government areas and the state capital is Awka, renowned for its craft industries, mainly blacksmithing and wood carving. Economically, Anambra State is a center of trade, administration, and education. (Nweke, 2019). The selection of Anambra State as the area of study is justified by its unique crime profile (Obineri, 2024).

Methodology

The study adopted the qualitative research method which involves Focus Group Discussion (FGD) In-Depth Interview (IDI), Key-Informant Interview (KII) and Case Study. Three Local Government Areas (LGA) were selected namely: Awka North LGA, Awka South LGA and Aniocha LGA. The reason for selecting these LGAs is because they experienced security challenges recently. For instance security situation in Anambra at a time of this study was very bad. There were a lot of killings before the 2021 elections. Specifically, six (6) FGD was conducted, two for each of the three LGAs. For Awka North LGA, Amansea and Isuaniocha was selected, for Awka South LGA, Ifite and Mbaukwu was selected and for Aniocha LGA, Agulu and Ichida communities were selected. Four IDI sessions were conducted in each of the three LGAs and two KIIs were also conducted in each of the three LGAs. The case studies were two, comprising of one male direct survivor and one female direct survivor. The researcher adopted the purposive sampling technique for the selection of all categories of participants. To enter the different communities of the selected study locations, we were assisted by the President Generals (PG) of the communities. They helped the researchers to reach the different study groups namely the famers, the hunters, the cattle headers, male and female community members. As such, the researchers were able to establish some form of working relationship with the leaders of the groups before the commencement of the fieldwork. For the security personnel, a letter was written the Commissioner of Police and the Zonal Commandant of Civil Defense who released a female officer and a male officer respectively to the research team. While the case study participants were survivors of kidnap activities. It is worthy to note here that the female case study relocated from Ihiala where the incidence happened to Amansea where she has a relation. The IDI and FGD sessions were conducted through face-to-face informal charts and at a place that is convenient for the participants. Voice recorders and field notes were used for capturing all the interactions between the researchers and the participants.

The data collected were analyzed using thematic content analysis and narrative quotes. Thus, tape recorded data and field notes were transcribed and presented as results. The data collection process lasted for five weeks, from August to September 2023.

Findings

Table 1: Positions in relation to the study, specific behaviours and reactions of the participants.

FGD = 2 Male Farmers - Normal 1 Male Hunter - Normal I Male Community Member - Normal 1 Female Farmer - Normal 1 Female Community Member – Declined to speak for most part **IDI** = 1 Female Community Member who is not a farmer/cattle breeder – Was initially apprehensive. But opened up and spoke during the repeat interview which took place after the first one failed. **KII=** 1 Female Farmer - Normal 1 Cattle breeder (Male) - Normal
FGD = 2 Male Farmers – Normal 1 Male Community Member - Normal 1 Female Farmer - Normal 1 Female Community Member - Normal **IDI** = 1 Male Community Member who is not a farmer/cattle breeder - Normal **KII** = 1 Male Security Official (Immigration) - Normal 1 Female Community Leader – Normal
FGD = 2 Male Farmers – Normal 1 Male Community Member – A clergy man. He dominated the FGD 1 Female Farmer – Normal 1 Female Community Member - Normal **IDI** = 1 Male cattle breeder – Normal **IDI** = 1 Male cattle breeder – Normal KII= 1 Female Police officer- Normal
Case Study = I Direct Male Survivor – It took him time to open up and give actual details of his kidnap experience. He became emotional/teary when recounting his ordeal in the kidnappers' den and his eventual release. **FGD** = 2 Male Farmers - Normal 1 Male Hunter - Normal I Male Community Member - Normal 1 Female Farmer - Normal 1 Female Community Member - Normal **IDI** = 1 Female Community Member who is not a farmer/cattle breeder - Normal 1 Male Community Member who is not a farmer/cattle breeder - Normal 1 Female Farmer – Normal
KII = 1 Male Security Official (NSCDC) – Normal
Case Study = I Direct Female Survivor – Appears to be very introverted. She didn't open up to say much despite repeated probes. **KII** = 1 Male Community Member who is not a farmer/cattle breeder - Normal **IDI** = 1 Female Farmer - Normal

FGD = 2 Male Farmers, 1 Male Hunter, I Male Community Member, 1 Female Farmer and 1 Female Community Member - Normal
FGD = 2 Male Farmers – both sounded agitated by the situation 1 Male Hunter - Normal 1 Male Community Member – Sounded agitated 1 Female Farmer – Sounded agitated 1 Female Community Member - Normal **IDI** = 1 Female Farmer - Normal 1 Male Community Member - Normal **KII** = 1 Male Community Leader – Normal

The findings were further presented thematically and discussed under subheadings in line with the objectives of the study.

The Current State, History and causes of Insecurity in Anambra State:

The participants were of the view that insecurity is a recent issue in the state. It became worse in 2020 and 2021. They noted that things were much better in the state before 2020. They also noted that the common type of security challenges are kidnapping and armed robbery. The kidnappers target only wealthy people and parents of people who they know will be able to pay them ransom. However, because of the increase in neglect of the citizenry by government, all other criminal activities increased in the state. Particularly the activities of the Fulani cattle herdsmen. They equally noted that the communities were peacefully co-existing together with the Fulani's before conflict escalated.

According to the opinion of the FGD participants:

> ok, the problem is just how everyone has said. The government neglected the people so the situation has been deteriorating. The security situation here has not been easy since 2020. Things continue deteriorating to the point where we are today and people are no longer safe. Criminal activities like killings, kidnapping and so on. In fact, it is at an alarming rate now, it is on an increase. (FGD/Ifite).

The participants noted that, criminal activities was not occurring that much in their communities. Farmers/herders clashes did not exist here. Unknown gunmen attacks did not also occur in the state before

now. But it is now a common occurrence. The major types of security challenges was kidnapping and robbery. One of the opinion of the participants was that:

> Major threat to security was kidnapping which did not necessarily always happen in the town but in neighbouring towns. Another local security threat was robbery especially by non-indigenes. Unemployment seems to be the major factor behind rising insecurity (FGD/Isuanaocha)

Another opinion of the participants was that:

> Before 2019, there was relatively peace in Ifite precisely but starting form 2019 and upwards there is crises and violence everywhere. Some people, (the youth) the youths are the ones involved in kidnapping, as such, (both landlord and tenant) nobody will sleeps with the two eyes closed. The only thing I can say for this kidnapping and some other things you mentioned is that government is supposed to do something (FGD/Ifite)

A male community Leader said that:

> Kidnapping takes place in the victims' homes or while driving on the road. The threat of insecurity scares members of the community from coming back home. All of these have the combined effect of increasing hunger and hardship. After a particular incident here, the Federal government provided security. But there is challenge of inadequate pay, lack of patrol vehicles and equipment on the part of the local vigilante services (IDI, Male Community Leader/Ichida).

The types of activities Criminals in Anambra state engage in:

Criminals in Anambra state engage in several activities which includes Kidnapping, robbery, Cultism and the disturbance by cattle herdsmen. In Mbaukwu, it was gathered from responses that things became worse as from 2020. The participants noted that killer herdsmen invade the forests and farms in the community with their cattle. They lead their cattle into farms and destroy the crops. Both male and female farmers are targets/victims. It is not the fault of the victims who own the farms. Participants from Agulu noted that Kidnappers target women and wealthy men. The Fulani cattle herdsmen also rape the women in the farms and use their herds to destroy the crops. Thus, their mode of operation include, shooting to scare security agents away, killing and looting peoples properties.

A female participant from Agulu said:

> We are now forced to farm inside our compounds because of Kidnappers. It is not only kidnapping, they also rape our women in the farm. Kidnapping and robbery are the major threats in this area. Night life has been seriously hampered. Killing a human being used to be a taboo, but that is no longer the case. The main targets of kidnappers are the parents of wealthy children. Wealthy men and women are their main target (IDI, Female Farmer/Agulu).

According to one of the participants:

> Yes, our women and mothers are the most affected, the Fulani cow spoil and destroy their farms. Government need to do something, I know that if government goes there, and give them instructions (I mean those herdsmen) if government tell them to vacate from there, they will obey, you understand (Male IDI/Mbaukwu).

One of the IDI participants noted that:

> They rape farmers, making it difficult for farmers to go to their farms. This has also affected the production of food stuff in the community. Not only that, it has increased the level of poverty. Last year some of our female farmers complained that they were harassed and intimidated in their farms by cattle herdsmen and if not for some of the youth that are passing there, I mean the Okada riders that came to their rescue that they would have raped them. (Male/IDI, Isu-Aniocha)

Data collected from the case study; the direct female survivor, we discovered that there is a complete breakdown of security in Ihiala LGA, where she resides but, due to the escalation of kidnapping in the area. She relocated to Amansea where her sister lives. Robbery is also a big problem all traceable to unemployment. Their main target are the rich male members of the community. She was still traumatized as at the time of the interview, thus, could not respond to most of our questions. However, she noted that the robbers are from neighbouring states and the attack both rich and poor people alike. According to her:

> They attack people anywhere. We all ran into the bush. We suspect that they are likely from Imo state - a neighboring state (female case study/Amansea).

In Ifite, the major criminal activities are cultism and the threat of killer herdsmen on the farms. They deliberately lead their animals into farms to eat and destroy crops and threaten the farmers. The cultist killings happen mostly on the road. The most affected groups are male youths and students. The predominant view of the FGD participant at Ifite was that:

> It happens around Ifite/unizik gate and it is mostly unizik cult boys killing themselves. Though a times stray bullet can kill an innocent person (FGD/ male/Ifite)

Another opinion of the participants was that:

> As for me, it have not been long since I came to this community but the little time I have been here, the things that are happening is too much. One day we ran from the junction where we are selling to the house because of the shooting and in the morning they said that they have killed 5 people (FGD/Female/Ifite).

While in Nibo, the Community had always enjoyed peace. Insecurity began to rise from 1999. Robbery, cultism (of recent) and occasional kidnapping are major security threats. Major cause is poor parenting.

Main victims of kidnapping are males or persons who are wealthy enough to pay ransom. The kidnappers are usually well informed about their victims. Robbery is not a main issue

The participants noted that the criminals work with informants

> Before somebody robs you, they target something. If you don't have anything there is no need of them coming to you, before they come to you they will know that you have something that's why I said they work with information. If you are with somebody now and that person know that you have the money, that person is an informant, he will now inform them to come. Without information they won't come (male, IDI/Mbaukwu)

How the population reacts to the security challenges in Anambra State

Companies, Banks, individuals and other cooperate organizations in Anambra state employ the service of private security outfits to secure their lives and properties. This practice has encouraged the possession of arms by non-state actors.

One of the participants noted that

> Politicians and some people who have money, banks and big companies normally employ security agents to protect them and their properties. But for poor people, you are on your own. However the bad thing here is that when you disengage such security men, they use the gun and go into armed robbery (Female IDI/Police officer)

Another participant noted that:

> We are trying our best in curbing insecurity in the state. But you see, we don't have equipment like rescue car, protective gadgets, good guns and so on. You need to see the type of rifle these criminals are carrying. I am just doing this work because of the love of my country. (Male security officer)

Members of the communities devised several other means of coping, some of which are that they no longer go to the farms because of the fear of armed killer herdsmen. They do small scale farming within and around the inhabited sections of the communities. These had brought about increased hunger and poverty as these communities are largely agrarian. Also most members of the communities have no other means of earning a living aside farming. The participants also noted that before now, when criminals are caught, they were usually beaten to death. But now any criminal that is caught is handed over to law enforcement agents. According to one of them:

> I think it is better now, because then it is jungle justice, whenever they catch a thief, they beat him, after that they burn him but for now, they hand them over to the police after torturing them, ok (P6/FGD/Male/Mbaukwu)

Some of the strategies adopted by the community includes, reporting to relevant authorities, reduction in night movements, reduction in living a life of affluence, building fence around their farms, farming close to the individual homes and at worst cases relocating away from the community. Thought these strategies have not yielded any positive outcome, the people adopt it as a coping strategy. One of the participant noted that:

> We have tried by building bamboo fence around our farms. However, in spite of building the bamboo hedges round their farms, the Fulani herdsmen destroy them and move in their cattle to destroy the farms. This situation has destroyed the cordial relationship between the community and the Fulani herdsmen. Reports have been made severally to government. But nothing has been done about the situation (Female, community leader/ Mbaukwu).

.Another participant noted that:

> The response by the community was simply to run for their lives, because the community was rendered helpless (Female case study/Amansea).

One of the participant noted that:

> Because of them, once it's 7pm, you can't come out. Especially that junction there. You can't come out there, so just go inside your house and stay (Male, community leader/Isuaniocha)

Also another participant noted that:

> Nowadays whenever we have something like that burial, traditional marriage, white wedding or any kind of event, we invite security men to watch over people's cars and other things (P3, FGD/female/Ichida)

Conclusion

This study examined security challenges in Amansea, Agulu, Ichida, Ifite Isuaniocha and Mbaukwu communities in Anambra State, Nigeria. Findings showed that before 1998 insecurity was not a big problem in Anambra state. According to the participants, it started at Nibo in 1999 and worsen in 2020 just before the Governorship election of 2021. The state's slogan was initially HOME FOR ALL and latter LIGHT OF THE NATION. All these showed that the state was a very peaceful and habitable place. Things were much better in the state. However from 1999, there had been frequent occurrence of security challenges in these communities as participants at Isuaniocha reported that they were harassed, raped and

intimidated in their own land by criminals which had led to the people abandoning their farm lands, which alternatively leads to poor harvests, loss of investments and finally poverty in the whole communities. Participants noted that they have reported to the relevant authorities and no action was taken. Furthermore, the major security problem in Ifite is cultism and the cultist killings happen mostly on the road. The most affected groups are male youths. Everybody in that area live in fear not knowing when the next killing will take place. Parents have had to relocate their teenage sons to the village or other areas because of the threat of cultist killings. It is worthy to note that Nnamdi Azikiwe University main campus is domiciled in the community as such, there is a high student population resident in the community. This may explain in part the reason behind the high rate of cultism. However, the major cause is poor parenting. This is also in line with the viewpoint of the Social Disorganization theory which argues that weak social institutions (family, education, law enforcement) create an environment conducive to crime.

The different security challenges predominant in the communities includes kidnapping, cultism, robbery, disturbance by armed Fulani cattle herdsmen and attacks from unknown gunmen. The communities on the other hand has made several efforts such as encouraging people to stop late night movements, inviting security men to watch over cars during weddings, burials and other such events, building bamboo hedges round their farms, use of local vigilante groups to guard their houses, farms, staging peaceful protest/ demonstration and official report of the cases to State and Federal government asking them to provided security. The State Government has also provided security assistance for the communities. Despite all these interventions, the problems still persist. Even though, there is also complain of the challenge of inadequate pay, inadequate patrol vehicles and lack of equipment on the part of the Security personnel and local vigilante services.

Based on the findings, the study put forth the following recommendations:

1. Security issues at State levels should be given topmost priority. More fund should be voted to security issues at the state levels
2. Security personnel should be adequately remunerated and given all the necessary equipment for operations. These will serve as a motivation to them to respond faster in troubled zones.

3. People living in crime prone areas should avoid late night movements. This could reduce their exposure to Criminal attacks.
4. Parents should endeavor to train their children to acquire higher education or skills so that they will be gainfully employed. If the youths are gainfully employed, they will not take pleasure in criminal activities.
5. Parents should advice their children on the dignity of labour and the dangers of crime. If youths are enlightened on the consequences and dangers of crime, they will prefer to choose to be law abiding citizens.
6. Criminals should be severely punished whenever they are caught. This will serve as a deterrent to others.

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