

## State Leadership, Anti-Kidnapping Laws and Internal Security Challenges in Akwa Ibom and Abia States

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to find out the influence of state leadership, anti-kidnapping laws on internal security challenges in Akwa Ibom and Abia States. The researcher adopted ex-post facto design for the study. The population of this study was 9,209,524 residents drawn from Akwa Ibom and Abia States. A sample of 575 was generously determined with the use of Yamane (1969) sample determination formula and stratified random sampling techniques. The instrument for the study was State Leadership, Anti-kidnapping Laws and Internal Security Challenges Questionnaire, duly face and content validated by four experts. Cronbach Alpha Reliability coefficients that ranged from .90 to .94 was obtained from the trial test. Simple linear regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance. The results revealed that leadership and anti-kidnapping laws significantly influence internal security in both Akwa Ibom and Abia State individually. It was recommended among others that the government should strengthen community engagement and participation in security initiatives to foster trust and cooperation between citizens and security agencies.

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### **Background to the Study**

In present times, there is growing security concern both in Akwa Ibom and Abia States thus, the need for a critical assessment of leadership performance in the area of internal security and effectiveness of anti-kidnapping laws, becomes imminent. The importance of leadership as a steering ship in every economy cannot be overemphasized due to its vital role to other economic variables, especially internal security which bothers on protection of human lives and properties. Though Abia and Akwa Ibom States have respectively proscribed this act in 2008 and 2009 by enacting laws showing zero tolerance thereby making kidnapping a capital offence (Osewe, 2012), the effectiveness of these laws in terms of practice is far from being achieved as this gruesome act still persist in the two states.

It is an unfortunate development that funds meant to create employment has been embezzled by few greedy and corrupt politicians manning the affairs of the nation over the years and currently (Adesina 2013). Political class sometimes weaponise poverty by engaging the youths in dishonest ways just to win elections or remain in power by all means, equip these youths with all sorts of weaponry to intimidate their opposition for a chance to win at all costs. After clinging to power, they are obsessed with the euphoria of their office forgetting to retrieve these weapons and the youths employ them as tools to perpetrate all kinds of atrocities including kidnapping. The flashy life style exhibited by the corrupt leaders sometimes gravitate the aggrieved youths who feels used and dumped by these elite to go after them or their relatives or any well-meaning Nigerian for kidnapping in a bid to get their own share of the 'national cake' after abduction. Sometimes, kidnapping is politically motivated for political gains and the active unemployed youths are the script actors.

As observed by Olojede & Oni (2019), the most tragic characteristic in Nigeria nowadays is that an educated element of the people is excessively wealthy while its greater population is subjected to abject penury which has significant influence on national security. A report by SB Morgen (SBM) Intelligence, a Lagos-based political risk analysis firm stated that at not less than \$18.34m was remunerated to abductors for exchange for kidnapped victims, especially by their relations and the government between June 2011 and March 2020. Going by the current exchange rate of N1,500 per dollar, it amounts to about 27 billion naira. This significant amount would have been utilized economically to better the lots of the people but engulfed unfortunately by kidnapping. It was on this background that the researcher which to find out the influence of state leadership, anti-kidnapping laws on internal security challenges in Akwa Ibom and Abia States.

### **Statement of Problem**

The increased spate of kidnapping in the Niger Delta and South East regions where Akwa Ibom and Abia states falls, have become a phenomenon of grave concern to the two states and the nation at large. The issue of kidnapping in these states has become an illegal industry established by people with high criminal intent to forcefully obtain huge amount of money from innocent citizens, create confusion and fear in the polity as well as

disruption of economic activities. This unwholesome act has rubbed several citizens of their hard-earned peace and resources, and sometimes results to untimely death of the victims. Many questions arise persistently in the minds of several political economists, as regards state leadership and internal security of Akwa Ibom and Abia States. These include: Is government's leadership style effective enough to quell the uproar and insurgency which hinders development? Are these states safe enough for a robust economic exploration of the abundant natural resources to boast development? Is government at state level proactive in terms of securing lives and properties of Akwaibomites and Abians? How effective is the feedback mechanism of government in addressing the yearnings of the people in regards to kidnapping? Do these states have an effective policy thrust on security? Are there effective laws to address kidnapping as a crime at state level? And how effective are security votes and its utilization for utmost benefits? These and many other questions, form the propelling force of this research work.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Specifically, this study aims at achieving the following:

1. To examine the influence of leadership on internal security in Akwa Ibom and Abia States.
2. To investigate leadership influence on internal security in both Akwa Ibom and Abia States.

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated to aid the study:

1. There is no significant influence of leadership on internal security in both Akwa Ibom and Abia State.
2. There is no significant influence of anti-kidnapping laws on internal security in both Akwa Ibom and Abia State.

Till today, leadership forms the compass of every society therefore; anti-kidnapping laws and internal security remains byproducts and statutory obligations of the government. The effect of state leadership on anti-kidnapping laws and internal security cannot be discussed without a critical look at these variables:

### **State Leadership**

Understanding the important variables (*state leadership and internal security*) that drive this study is of essence. Leadership and internal security, naturally, hold sway to our daily lives, controls and spin the wheel of existence either progressively or retrogressively depending on the overall actions of economic actors. Every leader determines the quality of leadership hence; leadership determines the roadmap which followers must undertake. On this premise, there is no effective security that goes without a corresponding effectiveness in leadership or leadership style. Having established the above fact, it is pertinent to have a grasp of leadership and internal security distinctively.

The government is an agent of the people, as an agent, is answerable to the principal. Thus, the funds and resources of the State belong to the people and the government is merely a custodian of those resources. Nikhil (2022) observes that the dynamics of leadership creates no seamlessness in its understanding. The propensity accorded leaders or attributed to leadership is unending due to classical drive for continuous repositioning of both human characteristics and inventions, to function systematically for optimal goals. Therefore, leadership is mostly defined as the process of influencing others towards the achievement of goals (Sait, 2020; Bassey & Agbor 2015; Sharma et al 2018). A leader exhibits his/her leadership qualities: morals, principles, personality, understanding, talents, capability, and philosophy. Leaders encourage the populace, propel them into accomplishment and transform the world.

Therefore, for effectiveness of the polity, leadership must be responsive and proactive with a critically distilled level of purpose driven honesty, professionalism and intense drive, if positive change must be achieved (Mckinsey & Company 2022). At this juncture, leadership becomes the navigating element of every society as it determines the direction which that society has to follow. This explains why the quality of leadership prowess by leaders of the society determines the direction of that society; be it good or bad. At this juncture, the leadership of the two states becomes inadequate as it has failed to address kidnapping spree which is a menace to both lives and properties of her citizens.

There is a striking ideology posited by Sait (2020) that: "Leadership is a collective procedure that is extremely multifarious. " Therefore, the complexity of leadership makes it cumbersome, dynamic and sometimes highly gushy in a lay man 's eyes. A leader is a crisis manager who sees beyond the present in decision making. This buttresses why they are most times faced with dilemma of making tough choices for the best interest of the moment and the future. This means that leadership is viewed far beyond the act of leading. In practice and principle, addressing a weighty situation such as kidnapping with a stiff policy of capital punishment seems not enough if several contributing factors such as poverty and corruption are not drastically tackled.

### **Internal Security**

It is undeniable that ensuring security is one of the fundamental duties of government and that it is relatively associated to the country 's monopoly of public power. As the key elements of internal security, crime control and policing are therefore central symbols of state sovereignty (Andreas & Felix 2020). In the contemporary world, it has become extremely difficult to divorce internal security from external pressures. Indeed, internal security is symbiotically linked with the global politics and its other dynamics. It has reawakened the minds of the oppressed to seek for justice and equity outside the framework of the nation as it is witnessed today in Nigeria (Dawood & Hadizat 2014). Akwa Ibom State and Nigeria as a whole had suffered myriad of internal security challenges namely; kidnappings and hostage takings, murder, assassinations, armed robberies, cult-related criminal activities and subversion (Abomaye-Nimenibo 2020).

However, beside the external pressure in Nigeria, inter politics affecting the growth and expected development of the economy poses a great threat to internal security. The proliferation of small and big arms in many parts of the country has resulted in total escalation of pocket conflicts to an alarming state. As it stands, the Nigeria government has no well-articulated policy on internal security (Bassey et al 2014). It has relied on adhoc measures, fire brigade approach and excessive use of force, road blocks and persuasions which is never respected by anybody and has become very ineffective in modern times. And this partly explains why the internal security of the nation has become very precarious. It is very important to understand that security holds life in a balance. This means that insecurity itself is a serious scourge politically, economically, psychologically, scientifically and otherwise. A peaceful ambience decorates life, promotes economic viability and gives room for development while its absence is the reverse.

In Nigeria, there is no doubt that the issues of unemployed youths and crime rate are becoming a social problem. This implies that, the nation's future in the area of peace and Security are threatened by the growing number of unemployed youths whose hope lack prospects of ever being able to be employed for a decent living work. Therefore, the economic growth, health sector, social development and political stability will equally remain unattainable until this issue is settled (Egwu et al 2024). To this end, leadership deficiency is mirrored through prolonged unemployed youths in great numbers. In modern times, internal security control has less to do with the use of force as intelligence deployment and engagement has proven very effective in foiling several insurgencies. At a general level, a state is said to be secured if it is free from danger of threat or the ability of a state to protect and promote its cherished values and legitimate interest and enhance wellbeing of its people (Bassey 2023). Hence, security issues are uppermost to every institution of government for effective governance at all point. This implies that failure of concerned authorities to make security their number one priority or be sentimental is inimical to growth and fundamentally repellent. This informs why the security network of the two states has become a shadow and its attendant effects spills over to affecting other economic segments and the nation at large.

### **Anti-kidnapping laws and internal security challenges**

The increased spate of kidnapping in the Niger Delta and South East regions where Akwa Ibom and Abia states falls are part of the prize a society pays for not meaningfully engaging its youth in productive endeavours and this is state leadership failure. Though Abia and Akwa Ibom states have respectively proscribed this act in 2008 and 2009 by enacting laws showing zero tolerance thereby making kidnapping a capital offence (Osewe, 2012) the effectiveness of these laws in terms of practice is far from being achieved as these gruesome acts still persist in the two states. As observed by Egwu et al (2024), kidnapping is now invoking criminal act for the unemployed young people. According to the Nigerian Police Crime Statistical Records (NPCSR; 2017) reports that over 2,285 cases of kidnapping were recorded for the past four and half years. The youths arrested accused the government for failure to provide adequate employment

opportunities which lured them into criminality. Therefore, insecurity challenges as posited by Abdulmalik (2015) have direct link to poverty and youth unemployment which has unabatedly become a major plague in Nigeria. It is very worrisome to submit that amidst other social vices and crime activities involved by unemployed youths, kidnapping tops the list as it appears very precariously lucrative.

It is an unfortunate development that funds meant to create employment has been embezzled by few greedy and corrupt politicians manning the affairs of the nation over the years and currently. Political class sometimes weaponise poverty by engaging the youths in dishonest ways just to win elections or remain in power by all means, equip these youths with all sorts of weaponry to intimidate their opposition for a chance to win at all costs (Osewe, 2012). After clinging to power, they are obsessed with the euphoria of their office forgetting to retrieve these weapons and the youths employ them as tools to perpetrate all kinds of atrocities including kidnapping which happens to top the list. The flashy life style exhibited by the corrupt leaders sometimes gravitate the aggrieved youths who feel used and dumped by these elite to go after them or their relatives or any well-meaning Nigerian for kidnapping in a bid to get their own share of the 'national cake' after abduction. Sometimes, kidnapping is politically motivated for political gains and the active unemployed youths are the script actors (Kingsley 2018).

In a recent development, the Edo State House of Assembly, on February 18, 2025, passed a bill amending the Kidnapping Prohibition Amendment Law of 2013 and addressing related matters during its second reading. The bill prescribes the death penalty for kidnappers and mandates the confiscation and demolition of properties used in the commission of kidnapping (Clifford 2025). They referenced religious texts and constitutional sources to reinforce their arguments in favour of prescribing the death penalty for kidnappers, given the severity of the crime. They highlighted that the death penalty could deter kidnappers who demand ransoms from their victims and often go on to kill them. They stressed the importance of the Executive arm ensuring that death penalties are signed and enforced without leniency. By in-depth analysis, this bill critiques the actions of Nigerian lawmakers, equating their political and economic misconduct to various forms of kidnapping, and argues that if the State Governor, Senator Monday Okpehoho assents to this bill, he may unconsciously be signing the "death warrant" of the political elites who are guilty of economic kidnapping and political banditry in Nigeria (Clifford 2025). This showcases state leadership deficiency which poses great challenges to internal security.

According to Adeniji (2024), the ineffectiveness of Nigerian security leading to the prevalence of crimes such as kidnapping has multi-causal connotations. A critical look at some cases bordering kidnapping in Akwa Ibom and Abia States becomes necessary. The Akwa Ibom State High Court presided over by Justice Augustine Odokwo has sentenced a man, Ekerete Ukpong, to death for kidnapping a four-year-old boy. (Odey, 2021). The 31-year-old, who hailed from Udom Atai community, in the Ikono Local Government Area, was sentenced by the court sitting in the Ikot Ekpene LGA of the state.

Delivering judgement which lasted for about one hour, Justice Odokwo said the court found the convict guilty of kidnapping, punishable by death under Section 1 of the Akwa Ibom State Internal Security and Enforcement Law 2009. Both individuals and government have denied ransom payment for kidnapping cases for the release of abducted persons, at least \$18.34m was paid to kidnappers as ransom – mostly by families and the government – between June 2011 and March 2020, according to a report by SB Morgen (SBM) Intelligence, a Lagos-based political risk analysis firm.

No fewer than seven suspects were arrested by the Akwa Ibom State Eagle Response Squad of the command on February 15, 2023 on a kidnapping case of one Mr. Cletus Okodi in Mkpatt Enin LGA (Chioma 2023). Similarly, on April 11, 2023, about 15:00hours, anti-Kidnapping Squad of the command arrested one Augustine Edet of Anua Offot village in Uyo LGA, who has been on the Police wanted list for series of kidnappings in and around Uyo metropolis and environs. As well, the Akwa Ibom State Police Command has announced the arrest of 45-year-old Ability Etim Samuel and 36-year-old David Vincent Samuel for their alleged involvement in the abduction of a director from the Ministry of Justice and his niece. In his maiden press briefing at the command headquarters in Ikot Akpan-Abia, Uyo, on Monday, the Commissioner of Police, Baba Mohammed Azare, stated that operatives from the Special Weapons and Tactics, SWAT, team, acting on intelligence, uncovered the kidnappers' hideout in Ikot Ukpong village, Abak Local Government Area. The abductees, who were confined in soak-aways, were saved, and two kidnappers were counteracted during the rescue mission (Anthony, 2025).

In Abia State, the Punch newspaper of May 6, 2021 reported a kidnapping incidence which involved an unknown number of Abia State University students while journeying on a bus along Okigwe-Uturu road. Also, three police officers posted to the Abia State police command have been relieved of their job as a result of suspected illegal collection and kidnapping of unsuspicious victims along the Enugu – Port Harcourt expressway. Vanguard reported that the 3 police officers and two noncombatants were apprehended by men of the force from the Abai Division, Aba, after they were discovered to be fortified with an electric baton, assault rifle, and a Beretta pistol. They supposedly engaged a minibus, kidnapped some noncombatants along the expressway, endangered and requested for ransom from their relatives for their freedom. Police Public Relations Officer, Abia Command, DSP Maureen Chinaka, who established the sack of the officers, revealed that they were found guilt-ridden after an orderly room trial which was introduced by the command, inveterate their participation in the unethical act (Alaribe, 2025). These and many other cases of kidnapping has a direct pointer to dysfunctional state leadership which has failed over time to address insecurity challenges and vital economic issues like unemployment, poverty and corruption which is driving youths into insurgency.

## **Methodology**

The researcher used ex-post facto design for the study. The population of this study was the combined population of Akwa Ibom and Abia States which stood at 9,209,524 residents with Akwa Ibom state having 5,482,177 and Abia state 3,727,347 based on the 27% population growth projection (National Population Commission, 2022). A sample of 575 was generously determined with the use of Yamane (1969) sample determination formula. Stratified random sampling techniques were used in selecting the respondents.

The instrument for the study was State Leadership, Anti-kidnapping Laws and Internal Security Challenges Questionnaire developed by the researcher. The questionnire was duly face and content validated by four experts: two from the department of Department of Public Administrations and the other two from the Department of Educational Foundations of the University of Calabar, Calabar. To test the reliability of the research instrument under study, a trial test was conducted on 48 respondents in Rivers and Imo state. The results of the Cronbach Alpha Reliability Method showed reliability coefficients that ranged from .90 to .94. The 18 items questionnaire was structured based on four points rating scale of Strongly Agreed (SA); Agreed (A); Disagreed (D) and Strongly Disagreed (SD) with weight 4, 3, 2, and 1 for all positively worded items and 1, 2, 3, and 4 for all negatively worded items respectively. The questionnaire was administered on the 575 respondents and upon retrieval, 570(99.1%) were correctly filled and put to use while 5(0.9%) were invalidated because of wrong filling. Simple linear regression analysis was used to test the hypotheses at .05 level of significance.

## **Results**

### **Hypothesis One**

There is no significant influence of leadership on internal security in both Akwa Ibom and Abia State. To test this hypothesis, simple linear regression analysis was used with leadership as independent variable and internal security in both Akwa Ibom and Abia State as dependent variable. The f-ratio was used to test the overall impact. The results are presented in Table 1. The results in Table 1 showed a regression coefficient (R) of .618 and a coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) of .382. This means that about 38.2% of the total variation in internal security in both Akwa Ibom and Abia State was attributed to the variation in leadership while 61.8% was attributed to other variables considered in this study. The result of analysis of variance in the regression output produced the computed F-value of 351.660 ( $p < .05$ ) which is statistically significant at .05 probability level with 1:568 degrees of freedom. As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is significant influence of leadership on internal security in both Akwa Ibom and Abia State.

The result of the regression weights of the predictor variable (leadership) in Table 1 showed the positive coefficients ( $B = 1.121$  and  $Beta = .618$ ). This indicated that leadership has a high positive influence on internal security in both Akwa Ibom and Abia State and a unit increase in the adoption of quality leadersip will lead to more than a unit improvement in internal security in both Akwa Ibom and Abia State. Furthermore, the P-

values (.000) associated with the computed t-values (13.059 & 18.753) for the regression constant and leadership are less than .05. This means that both the regression constant and leadership made significant positive contributions to the prediction of internal security in both Akwa Ibom and Abia State. The regression equation is:  $y = 14.358 + 1.121x$ .

**Table 1:** Regression analysis of influence of leadership on internal security in both Akwa Ibom and Abia State

R - value = .618	Adj R - square = .381				
R - square = .382	Std. Error = 3.34078				
Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F - value	P - value
Regression	3924.453	1	3924.453	351.660*	.000
Residual	6330.343	568	11.161		
Total	10264.156	569			
Predictor variable	Unstandardized coeff. B	Std. Error	Std. coeff. Beta	t-value	P - value
Constant	14.358	1.099		13.059*	.000
Leadership	1.121	.060	.618	18.753*	.000

\*Significant at .05 level,  $P < .05$

### Hypothesis Two

There is no significant influence of anti-kidnapping laws on internal security in both Akwa Ibom and Abia State. To test this hypothesis, simple linear regression analysis was used with anti-kidnapping laws as independent variable and on internal security in both Akwa Ibom and Abia State as dependent variable. The f-ratio was used to test the overall impact. The results are presented in Table 2. The results in Table 2 showed a regression coefficient (R) of .659 and a coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) of .434. This means that about 43.4% of the total variation in on internal security in both Akwa Ibom and Abia State was attributed to the variation in anti-kidnapping laws while 56.6% was attributed to other variables considered in this study. The result of analysis of variance in the regression output produced the computed F-value of 435.445 ( $p < .05$ ) which is statistically significant at .05 probability level with 1:568 degrees of freedom. As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected. This means that there is significant influence of anti-kidnapping laws on internal security in both Akwa Ibom and Abia State.

The result of the regression weights of the predictor variable (anti-kidnapping laws) in Table 2 showed the positive coefficients ( $B = 1.156$  and  $Beta = .659$ ). This indicated that anti-kidnapping laws has a high positive influence on internal security in both Akwa Ibom and Abia State and a unit increase in the adoption of anti-kidnapping will lead to more than a unit improvement in internal security in both Akwa Ibom and Abia State. Furthermore, the P-values (.000) associated with the computed t-values (16.412 & 20.867) for the regression constant and anti-kidnapping laws are less than .05. This means that

both the regression constant and anti-kidnapping laws made significant positive contributions to the prediction of internal security in both Akwa Ibom and Abia State. The regression equation is:  $y = 15.412 + 1.156x$ .

**Table 2:** Regression analysis of influence of anti-kidnapping laws on internal security in both Akwa Ibom and Abia States

R – value = .659	Adj R – square = .433				
R – square = .434	Std. Error = 3.19827				
Source of variation	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F – value	P – value
Regression	4454.131	1	4454.131	435.445*	.000
Residual	5810.025	568	10.229		
Total	10264.156	569			
Predictor variable	Unstandardized coeff. B	Std. coeff. std. Error	Betta	t-value	P – value
Constant	15.412	.939		16.412*	.000
Anti-kidnapping laws	1.156	.055	.659	20.867*	.000

\*Significant at .05 level,  $P < .05$

### Discussion of Findings

The significant influence of leadership on internal security in both Akwa Ibom and Abia states, Nigeria, underscores the crucial role that effective governance plays in shaping the safety and well-being of citizens. In these states, leadership has been instrumental in driving initiatives that enhance security, foster community engagement, and promote collaboration with security agencies. By prioritizing security and implementing targeted strategies, leaders in Akwa Ibom and Abia have demonstrated their commitment to creating a safe and stable environment for their citizens. This proactive approach to security has likely contributed to improved outcomes and a reduced risk of conflict in these regions. The finding highlights the importance of visionary leadership in addressing security challenges and promoting peace in local communities. It also suggests that effective leadership can make a meaningful difference in the lives of citizens, particularly in regions where security concerns are paramount.

This result aligned with McKinsey and Company (2022) who indicated that for effectiveness of the polity, leadership must be responsive and proactive with a critically distilled level of purpose driven honesty, professionalism and intense drive, if positive change must be achieved. This finding supported Sait (2020) who stated that Leadership is a Leadership is a collective procedure that is extremely multifarious. Therefore, the complexity of leadership makes it cumbersome, dynamic and sometimes highly gushy in

a lay man's eyes. A leader is a crisis manager who sees beyond the present in decision making.

Overall, the influence of leadership on internal security in Akwa Ibom and Abia states serves as a testament to the impact that dedicated and forward-thinking governance can have on promoting safety, stability, and prosperity. Similarly, the significant influence of anti-kidnapping laws on internal security in Akwa Ibom and Abia states, Nigeria, underscores the critical role that effective legislation plays in combating this menace. By enacting and enforcing stringent anti-kidnapping laws, both states have demonstrated a commitment to protecting their citizens and deterring potential kidnappers. The implementation of these laws has likely contributed to improved security outcomes, including a reduction in kidnapping incidents and an increase in the successful prosecution of kidnappers. Furthermore, the existence of robust anti-kidnapping laws sends a strong message to would-be kidnappers, signaling that such crimes will not be tolerated. In Akwa Ibom and Abia states, the impact of anti-kidnapping laws on internal security is likely multifaceted. Not only do these laws provide a framework for law enforcement agencies to operate within, but they also serve as a deterrent to potential kidnappers. Additionally, the laws may contribute to a sense of safety and security among citizens, which is essential for social and economic development.

This finding did not aver Osewe (2012) who revealed that the effectiveness of these laws in terms of practice is far from being achieved as these gruesome acts still persist in the two states. This result negated Adeniji (2024) who maintained that the incompetence of safety in Nigeria has led to the predominance of wrongdoings: abduction has multi-causal meanings. A critical look at some cases bordering kidnapping in Akwa Ibom and Abia States becomes necessary. The Akwa Ibom State High Court presided over by Justice Augustine Odokwo has sentenced a man, Ekerete Ukpong, to death for kidnapping a four-year-old boy. (Odey, 2021). Overall, the finding highlights the importance of effective legislation in addressing security challenges and promoting peace in local communities. By prioritizing the enactment and enforcement of anti-kidnapping laws, Akwa Ibom and Abia states have taken a crucial step towards enhancing internal security and protecting the well-being of their citizens.

### **Conclusion**

The aim of this study is to find out the influence of State Leadership, Anti-kidnapping Laws on Internal Security Challenges in Akwa Ibom and Abia States. The results revealed that leadership and anti-kidnapping laws significantly influence internal security in both Akwa Ibom and Abia State individually. Both effective leadership and robust legislation are critical components of internal security in Akwa Ibom and Abia states, Nigeria. By prioritizing security and implementing targeted strategies, leaders in these states can create a safe and stable environment for their citizens. Similarly, effective anti-kidnapping laws can deter potential kidnappers and contribute to improved security outcomes. The study's findings highlight the significant impact of leadership and anti-kidnapping laws on internal security in Akwa Ibom and Abia States. This

contribution to knowledge underscores the need for effective governance and robust legislation to combat kidnapping, a menace that has plagued these regions. The study's results imply that policymakers should prioritize strengthening anti-kidnapping laws and ensuring their effective enforcement to enhance internal security. This can be achieved through collaboration between government agencies, security forces, and local communities. Stakeholders who can leverage these findings include: Government officials- to inform policy decisions and legislative reforms; Security agencies- to guide their strategies and operations; Local communities -to understand their roles in preventing kidnapping and promoting security; Lawmakers- to review and strengthen anti-kidnapping laws. The practical implications of this study suggest that improved leadership and legislation can lead to reduced kidnapping incidents, enhanced public safety, and increased trust in government institutions.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. The government should strengthen community engagement and participation in security initiatives to foster trust and cooperation between citizens and security agencies.
2. The government should review and strengthen anti-kidnapping laws to ensure they are effective in deterring kidnappers and providing justice to victims and their families.

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