

## **KIDNAPPING OF CORPORATE HUMAN RESOURCES AND BUSINESS VIABILITY: INSIGHTS FROM SOUTH-EASTERN METROPOLITAN CITIES**

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**ABSTRACT:** The research evaluates the kidnapping of corporate human resources and business viability in South-Eastern Metropolitan Cities. The study examines the extent to which kidnapping affects employee retention in business enterprises in South Eastern metropolitan cities; and to assess the extent to which kidnapping affects customer engagement in business enterprises in South Eastern metropolitan cities. The research adopts the survey research design. The study uses primary sources of data. The sample size of the study is 105. A structured questionnaire was the major instrument for data collection. The study adopts the purposive sampling technique. The research uses Cronbach Alpha statistic was used to obtain the value of 0.75 as the instrument reliability ratio. Descriptive and inferential statistics were employed for data analysis. The findings reveal that there is a positive and significant extent to which kidnapping affects employee retention; there is a positive and significant extent to which kidnapping affects customer engagement in business enterprises in Southeast metropolitan cities. The study concludes that the kidnapping of corporate human resources personnel can erode business viability in business enterprises in Southeastern metropolitan cities. The study recommends, among others, that business enterprises in South Eastern metropolitan cities need to encourage their workers to be security conscious so as to improve employee retention and customer engagement.

**Keywords:** Kidnapping, Corporate Human Resources, Business Viability, Employee Retention, Customer Engagement

### **INTRODUCTION**

Security of lives and property is, undoubtedly, the key driver of success in every sector of any economy. Insecurity naturally rocks the boat of any meaningful growth development and viability in any human endeavour. One of the attributes of insecurity, which appears to have progressively haunted virtually all sectors of the Nigerian economy, is kidnapping. Crowe (2024) defines

kidnapping as a criminal act that entails the taking of a person or the restraining of a person without any authority to do so, even without the permission of the person. Nelson and Osadema (2024) see kidnapping as a criminal act which involves the seizure, confinement, abduction or carrying away of individuals by force or fraudulently, thereby subjecting the victims to unsolicited servitude with the intention of asking for ransom or in a bid to commit another crime.

This study focuses on the kidnapping of corporate human resources, the very human elements, and the employees or workers that constitute the most important resources of any organization. The study also focuses on businesses in the transportation industry in South-Eastern metropolitan cities. Davey (2024) opines that human resources as a term denotes a company's workforce or employees. Kidnapping of such organizational resources is, unarguably, not in the best interest of any entity.

Kidnapping in Nigeria has a history. Salako (2024) reveals that hostage-taking in Nigeria is traceable to the 1990s in the Nigeria oil-rich Niger Delta. Armed groups began the abduction of foreign oil workers and executives as a protest against the oil pollution of their environments and communities. There are, however, various causes of kidnapping in Nigeria. Demehin et al. (2024) reveal that the causes of kidnapping in Nigeria include the lack of sound security measures and political instability, as well as socio-economic disparities. Ojo and Ojewale (2024) point to borders that are not manned adequately as the key cause of kidnapping in Nigeria, while Otu and Adedeji (2021) blame it on various levels of incapacitation of the civil police.

Kidnapping also has consequences. Umezinwa (2024) maintains that kidnapping influences students' academic performance while adversely influencing socio-economic development. Also, Awopetu and Olabimitan (2024) reveal that kidnapping creates a sense of anxiety and fear in society. This present study evaluates how the kidnapping of corporate human resources may become the bane of business viability in South East Metropolitan cities. By business viability, the study means employee retention and customer engagement. The assumption of this study is that kidnapping as a social vice may trigger employee turnover and poor customer engagement in business enterprises. Jacobse (2024) believes that the retention of workers is all about stabilizing the organizational workforce, while Sambo (2024) is of the view that employee retention triggers efficiency and employee engagement. Also, Danao (2024) opines that customer engagement is the continuous creation and improvement of customer relationships, even as Bishop (2024) shows that customer engagement requires that businesses embrace feedback and social media for sustainability.

This study which assesses the kidnapping of corporate human resources and business viability in South-Eastern metropolitan cities is geared towards investigating how the menace of kidnapping affects employee retention and customer engagement in the enterprises in the metropolitan cities. This is with a view to bridging research gaps while contributing to knowledge.

### **Statement of the Problem**

It is a truism that every organized society creates socio-economic balances, equips and funds the security agencies to international standard and leaves no stone unturned in protecting its borders with other nations while making high unemployment rate and poverty to become histories in their

nations so as to curb kidnapping and other social vices for improved societal and business outcomes.

This is the ideal situation. However, the researchers have observed that kidnapping has ravaged Nigerian society so much that it has actually gotten hold of a major driver of the economy, namely the business sector. Kidnapping cases have continued to increase in Nigeria in general and in the South East metropolitan cities in particular. The litany of kidnapping cases reported in our national dailies each day beats the imagination of the researcher. This ugly situation is feared to be capable of affecting the viability of Southeast metropolitan businesses.

Empirical studies accessed by the researchers in the area of kidnapping neither show the connection between kidnapping and employee retention nor indicate the link between kidnapping and customer engagement in Southeast metropolitan cities. This shows that research gaps exist. It is based on the research gaps that this present study is conducted to bridge the gaps and contribute to knowledge.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of this study is to investigate the kidnapping of corporate human resources as the bane of business viability in SE metropolitan cities. The specific objectives of the study include to:

- i. examine the extent to which kidnapping affects employee retention in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities.
- ii. assess the extent to which kidnapping affects customer engagement in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities.

### **Research Questions**

In alignment with the objectives of the study, the researchers developed the following research questions:

- i. To what extent does kidnapping affect employee retention in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities?
- ii. To what extent does kidnapping affect customer engagement in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities?

### **Hypotheses**

In order to answer the research questions, the researchers developed the following null hypotheses:

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant extent to which kidnapping affects employee retention in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant extent to which kidnapping affects customer engagement in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities.

### **Scope of the Study**

The study concentrates on transportation firms in South East Metropolitan cities of Owerri (Imo), Umuahia (Abia), Enugu (Enugu), Awka (Anambra) and Abakiliki (Ebonyi). The content scope shows how kidnapping affects employee retention; and how kidnapping affects customer engagement in the transportation firms. The unit scope comprises Chief Executives and Unit Heads of Security, Customer Services, Accounting/Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology (IT) and Marketing in fifteen (15) registered transportation companies across South East Metropolitan cities.

### **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

This section comprises conceptual, theoretical, and empirical literature reviews. It also handles the gap identified in literature.

#### **Conceptual Review**

This section examines the major concepts that this study investigates.

#### **Kidnapping in South East Metropolitan Cities**

Here, the study profiles some key instances of kidnapping in the South East Metropolitan cities of Imo, Abia, Enugu, Anambra, and Ebonyi, which are the five states in South East Nigeria. These pieces of evidence are from Nigerian national dailies.

#### **IMO STATE**

1. Uzosike (2024) reports in The Punch Newspaper of August 23, thus: ‘Police arrest five Imo kidnap, armed robbery suspects.
2. Alozie (2024) reports in the Vanguard Newspaper of September 12, thus: ‘Residents raise alarm over kidnapping in Owerri West, North’.
3. Chukwu (2024) reports in the Business Day Newspaper of October 24, thus: ‘Kidnap gang on Port-Harcourt-Owerri Road captured by Rivers police command’.
4. Aleke (2024) reports in This Day of September 26, thus: ‘Police nab five kidnappers, one armed robber in Imo’.
5. Imo Trumpeta of September 12, 2024, reports, thus: ‘Kidnappers lay ambush near FUTO Gate Location’.
6. Omokhunu (2024) reports in The Nation of September 11: “JUST IN: Police arrest five kidnappers in Imo.”
7. Sunday (2024) reports in the Guardian of September 12 thus: ‘Police arrest five suspected kidnappers in Imo’.

#### **ABIA STATE**

1. Nwakanma (2024) reports in the Punch of January 27 that ‘Gunmen kidnap Abia varsity Deputy Vice Chancellor’.
2. Alaribe (2023) reports in the Vanguard of August 3 that ‘Police rescue 3 kidnap victims, arrest two suspects in Abia’.
3. Ugwu (2024) reports in Premium Times of June 11 thus: IGP orders probe into death of suspected kidnapper of two women.
4. Ugwu (2023) reports in Premium Times of July 25 thus: Nigerian troops rescue 13 kidnap victims in Abia.
5. Daily Trust of October 30, 2023 reports thus: Gov. Otti: Over 80 bodies recovered from kidnappers’ den in Abia.

#### **ENUGU STATE**

1. Ede (2024) reports in the Punch of October 19, thus: ‘police kill two Enugu kidnappers’.
2. Ede (2024) reports in the Punch of August 18, thus: Police confirm abduction of three Enugu college students.
3. Ugwu (2024) reports in Premium Times Nigeria of August 18 thus: Armed persons invade Enugu college, abduct students.
4. Chinedu (2024) reports in The Sun of August 22 thus: Police arrest 123 suspected criminals, rescue 19 kidnap victims in Enugu.
5. Vanguard of May 3, 2024 report thus: ‘Police arrest 195 suspects, rescue 19 abducted victims in Enugu’.

#### **ANAMBRA STATE**

1. Obianeri (2024) reports in the Punch of August 14 thus: ‘Rising kidnap cases worry Anambra residents, stakeholders’.
2. Obianeri (2024) reports in the Punch of September 13, thus: Police arrest eight for kidnapping, cultism in Anambra.
3. Vanguard News of August 28, 2024 reports thus: Kidnappers in Ihiala, Anambra ‘Sambisa forest’ of South East.
4. Odinye (2024) reports on Channels Television of August 22 thus: Two suspected kidnappers, robbers arrested in Anambra.
5. Eleke (2024) reports in the This Day of July 26, thus: Gunmen kidnap lawyer, two others in Anambra.

#### **EBONYI STATE**

1. Uzosike (2024) reports in the Punch of August 24 thus: Police arrest kidnapper, rescue abducted victims in Ebonyi.
2. Johnson (2024) reports in the Punch of April 10 thus: Ebonyi police rescue six abducted children.

3. Inya (2024) reports in The Sun of August 5 thus: Fake corps member to die by hanging for stealing children in Ebonyi.
4. Akpa (2024) reports in The Guardian thus: Suspected warlords behead two, kidnap seven, burn five houses in Ebonyi.
5. Aliuna (2023) reports in the Daily Post of December, 2022 thus: Police rescue 12 kidnap victims, arrest 487 suspected criminals in Ebonyi.

### **Business Viability**

In the context of this study, business viability means the ability of a corporate entity to experience employee retention and customer engagement. This study investigates how the kidnapping of corporate human resources affects these viability indicators.

### **Employee Retention**

Kidnapping may influence employee retention in enterprises. Holliday (2024) maintains that employee retention refers to the corporate ability to prevent the turnover of employees. Jacobse (2024) opines that the retention of employees targets the stabilization of the corporate workforce, and it is very relevant for all-around business success and reputation. Employers avoid employee turnover when they receive the right wages and enjoy job security, as well as emotional connection and a favourable organizational climate. Sambo (2024) maintains that employee retention leads to enhanced organizational culture, higher engagement of the workforce, improved customer service and efficiency. Enterprises need to offer competitive compensation packages while creating a positive work environment and providing employee growth opportunities.

### **Customer Engagement**

The kidnapping of corporate human resources may affect customer engagement in enterprises. Danao (2024) is of the view that customer engagement implies progressively creating and beefing up relationships with the customers. It takes place at each point in time and entails that the needs of the customers must be understood, likewise their preferences and points of pain or dissatisfaction. It takes an available corporate human resource and not the kidnapped one, to take up the responsibility of handling customer engagement. Bishop (2024) asserts that to enhance customer engagement, enterprises need to react and be exactly where their customers are; they must make use of feedback and data to engage their customers in a proactive manner, and they must involve the use of social media. Njoku (2024) agrees with the view of Danao (2024); hence, they believe that customer engagement commences from the point a customer becomes aware of the product and progresses to the post-purchase level. It therefore entails customer attraction, customer retention and customer loyalty programmes. This implies that customer engagement is more of a progressive interaction between a customer (who is external to the organization) and the organization itself, with the instrumentality of various platforms that may be internet-based or non-internet-based. The fruits of customer engagement also include business profitability and sustainable/improved market share.



## **Theoretical Review**

In order to improve the study, the study uses the Situational Action Theory (SAT).

### **Situational Action Theory (SAT) (Per-Olof H. Wikstrom, 2004)**

The Situational Action Theory has it that ‘personal crime propensity and the setting’s criminogenic features are direct causes of crime’ (Kleinewiese, 2020). The theory emphasizes the streamlining of the environment-oriented and person-oriented explanations for crime. Since most leading theories of criminology concentrate on either person-oriented or environment-oriented explanatory factors but do not show how these factors behave to explain the acts of crime, the SAT bridges this gap or divide. It does this by integrating major insights from the contributions of people and places in crime causation. The theory explains the process by which these elements interact to bring about action.

SAT explains the reason why people embark on criminal acts even as they know the illegality of such behaviours and conducts. It presents and analyses acts of crime as moral actions – actions guided by value-based rules of conduct specifying what is the right thing to do and what is the wrong thing to do or not to do as a response to particular motivations in the conduct of particular circumstances. The theory recognizes the primacy of morality in the aetiology of behaviours like intentional violations of laws and norms prescribing right from wrong (Fujino, 2023).

Fujino (2023) opines that Wikstrom describes the perception-choice process as a two-step casual process by which acts of crime are seen as the result of a person’s perception of an act of crime as an alternative in a given context and the choice to exercise that behaviour. The first step in the casual process involves perceiving crime as an alternative action in the situation. If people do not perceive crime as an alternative action, they will not engage in it. SAT, therefore, proposes to explain all kinds of crime in all places at all times, thereby giving it a universal application.

SAT argues that the likelihood or probability that a person will commit offences depends on his or her propensity toward crime, his or her exposure to criminogenic situations, and especially the interaction between propensity and exposure. The construct of propensity is conceived as the general tendency of persons to perceive and choose crimes as alternatives to actions. The person’s morality is one of the propensities, and it is composed of moral rules as well as emotions of both shame and guilt. In addition to morality, it is the ability of the person to exhibit self-control; in other words, it is the ability to act according to personal moral rules (Fujino, 2023). The Situational Action Theory is very relevant in this study since kidnapping is a crime.

## **Empirical Review**

In order to show the relevance of the study, the research uses the following empirical studies to boost the research:

Umezina (2024) assessed ‘investigating socio-economic and academic consequences of insecurity and kidnapping in Senior Secondary Schools in Anambra State’. It was a survey

research. The questionnaire was the major instrument for data collection. Data analysis was committed to descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation, while t-test statistic was used in hypotheses testing. The results show a significant difference between the mean ratings of how kidnapping affects the academic performance of the students as well as their socio-economic development. It recommends that the government and traditional rulers should use dialogue and conflict resolution strategies to handle insecurity matters and issues of violence.

Demehin, Raji and Ala (2024) did a study on ‘unveiling the multifaceted dimensions: a sociological inquiry into kidnapping in Nigeria’. Extant literature approach was adopted. It was found that the causes of kidnapping include socio-economic disparities, a dysfunctional law enforcement and judicial system, and longstanding conflicts, political instability, presence of militant groups, insurgency, vulnerable demographics, lack of robust security measures and instances of diverse unrest. The paper submits that the persistence of kidnapping is compounded by the flourishing economic gains it has attracted to its apostles. The study recommends the formulation of policies as well as the refinement of already existing policies so as to ensure the fostering of socio-economic development.

Ojo and Ojewale (2024) investigated ‘fulanization of kidnapping: ethnic profiling of criminality in Nigeria’. The theoretical approach was adopted. The paper profiles 36 pieces of evidence of ‘fulanization’ of kidnapping in Nigeria. The study however, infers that despite the social narrative of the Fulani ethnic group which dominates kidnapping for ransom activities and operations, the profiling of the ethnic group puts social cohesion in the country in danger since there have been pastoralists of Fulani extraction who have been reportedly kidnapped by Fulani bandits. The paper puts the blame for incessant kidnapping on the porous borders of Nigeria, which allows foreigners to access the territory of Nigeria illegitimately, thereby causing repeated kidnapping in the nation. It recommends the empowerment of sub-national governments for the promotion of the security of human lives as well as the security of property in their various jurisdictional areas. This should be in addition to the digitalization of the documentation of the citizens for security purposes.

Awopetu and Olabimitan (2024) assessed ‘psycho-social analysis of kidnapping in Nigeria: Implications for rural children’. A critical and systematic review of secondary data was adopted by the study which employed library research, newspapers, as well as conceptual approach. The study submits that kidnapping and its allied crimes have caused the society to be in an atmosphere of trauma, unending fears and anxiety. Indeed, it reveals that the victims of kidnapping, especially children, are subjected to both short term and long-term adverse effects as they might be defiled during the period they are under hostage. The research recommends very stiff punishments for those who embark on kidnapping even as it reports that in 2022 alone, 307 kidnapping cases were reported in South-East Nigeria.

Oche and Eze (2024) examined ‘banditry and kidnapping in Nigeria: exploring non-traditional approaches to enhance security reliability’. They used the literature approach in the study and employed both the theory of conflict transformation and the theory of critical security studies in the research. The study finds that non-traditional approaches to security significantly addressed banditry and kidnapping in the country, hence these approaches involved community engagement, the economic development of the society, and the resolution of conflicts. The paper recommends



the integration of task forces as well as investing in solutions that are technology-driven. It also lays emphasis on peace-building initiatives that are community-led, which the paper believes should be supported for promoting dialogue as well as reconciliation. This is particularly very essential at the grassroots. This is in addition to addressing poverty, the menace of unemployment and the dangers of marginalization.

Otu and Adedeji (2021) investigated ‘...the public dilemma of kidnapping business in the South-East and South-South regions of Nigeria’. The eclectic method of inquiry and analysis was adopted as it entailed a combination of methods. The study finds that the continuous cases of kidnapping and other crimes of violent nature in the southern region of Nigeria are a function of the fact that the civil police are incapacitated in the prevention of crime and control of crime in the country. These crimes are also because of the conspiracy among some political elites who view kidnapping as an investment opportunity, hence they lure youths who are unemployed into the heinous crimes. The study recommends that relevant security agencies, hunters, and even vigilantes should collaborate to fight kidnapping in Nigeria. It also posits that laws should be enacted to combat kidnapping and the sponsors of kidnapping in Nigeria.

Okoye and Nwaka-Nwandu (2023) empirically handled the ‘effect of banditry and kidnapping on the development of selected tertiary institutions in Nigeria’. It was a survey research. The study commits data analysis to descriptive and inferential statistics. T-test and probit regression analysis were used in the study. Their study finds that banditry and kidnapping are inimical to the development of tertiary institutions and Nigeria as a country. It recommends that the Nigerian government should provide the security personnel sophisticated tools to effectively fight kidnapping and banditry.

Mbam, Jacob, and Amiara (2024) handled ‘kidnapping and banditry: a critique of the Nigerian security, 1999-2022’. The case study method was used in the study, which adopts the Situational Action Theory. The study finds that systemic and deep-rooted corruption, poor funding, inadequate training and poor coordination among the security agencies hinder to a significant extent, various efforts to fight kidnapping and banditry in the country. It posits further that the crimes are aggravated by poverty, youth unemployment, serious illiteracy, inadequate government presence as well as regional inequalities. It recommends that the government needs to embark on comprehensive reforms for viable security policies in Nigeria.

Asiyanbi and Akinyemi (2024) handled ‘the nexus between small arms proliferation and kidnapping on Nigeria’s security system’. It was a desk review. It was found that the efforts of the government are not commensurate with the pain that armed kidnappers inflict on victims and their families. Also, the punishments designed for the criminals are peanuts compared to the weight of the crimes they perpetrate. It was also discovered that the criminals defy security measures while mocking the various efforts of the law enforcement agents.

### **Gap Identified in Literature**

The gap identified in literature is that previous studies in the area of kidnapping failed to evaluate how kidnapping affected employee retention in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities. The

studies also did not assess how kidnapping affected customer engagement in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities. The present study bridges the identified gaps so as to contribute to knowledge.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The study uses the survey research design. The population of the study comprises the Chief Executives and Unit Heads of Security, Customer Services, Accounting/Finance, Human Resources, Information Technology (IT) and Marketing in fifteen (15) registered transportation companies across South East Metropolitan cities. The study observed ethical considerations and respected the demand of the study firms to be kept anonymous for security reasons. They are also the only firms that the researchers to survey them. The total population of the study is 105. The study makes use of the population size to be representative of the sample size, a census because each of the study firms would get only seven questionnaire copies. Therefore, 105 copies of the questionnaire were administered to respondents in the study firms. The sources of data include the primary and secondary sources. While the questionnaire, designed in a five-point Likert Scale: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (UND), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) was the major instrument of data collection used for the study as a primary data tool, the researchers relied on texts, journals and internet sources for secondary data. The validity of the instrument was ensured by showing the instrument to research experts for their input and by ensuring that the study focused on the research questions. The reliability ratio of the instrument was determined with the use of a pilot study, whose results were committed to the Cronbach alpha statistic. A ratio of 0.75 was obtained. The instrument was therefore seventy-five percent (75%) reliable. The study employs descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation for data analysis. Spearman Product-Moment Correlation analysis was used to test hypotheses. The rejection of the null hypothesis was based on  $P < 0.05$ .

## **DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

Out of the 105 questionnaire copies distributed to the respondents, only 87 copies were properly filled and returned. There was, therefore, an 82.9% return.

**Research Question 1:** To what extent does kidnapping affect employee retention in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities?

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on kidnapping and employee retention in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities**

Q/ No	Item	SA	A	UN	D	SD	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Kidnapping is a major cause of employee turnover in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities.	38	21	12	7	9	87	3.83	0.729
2	Employee survivors of kidnapping give management the option of working from home as an alternative to resignation or truancy.	35	20	13	10	9	87	3.71	0.605

Field Survey (2024)

Table 1 above indicates that respondents agreed with the fact that kidnapping is a major cause of employee turnover in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities. The descriptive statistics show a mean score of 3.83 as well as a standard deviation of 0.729. Also, the table indicates strongly that employee survivors of kidnapping give management the option of working from home as an alternative to resignation or truancy; hence, the result shows a mean score of 3.71 with a standard deviation of 0.605.

### Research Question 2:

To what extent does kidnapping affect customer engagement in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities?

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics on Kidnapping and Customer Engagement in Business Enterprises in SE Metropolitan Cities**

Q/No	Item	SA	A	UN	D	SD	N	Mean	Std. Dev.
3	Kidnapping makes it difficult for corporate human resources to attract, retain and achieve customer loyalty in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities.	36	24	11	10	6	87	3.85	0.714
4	Committed corporate human resources demonstrate reservations over customer engagement efforts since the identities of the kidnappers and their informants are not known to the workers.	29	14	23	13	8	87	3.49	0.486

Field Survey (2024)

Table 2 above indicates that respondents agreed to that kidnapping is a major cause of employee turnover in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities. This is with a mean score of 3.85 and a standard deviation of 0.714. Also, employee-survivors of kidnapping give management the option of working from home as an alternative to resignation or truancy, hence the descriptive statistical analysis shows a mean score of 3.49 with a standard deviation of 0.486.

### Testing of Hypotheses

**H<sub>01</sub>:** There is no significant extent to which kidnapping affects employee retention in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities.

**Table 3: Correlation analysis between kidnapping and employee retention in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities**

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation Coefficient	P-value
Kidnapping	3.83	0.729	0.975	0.001
Employee retention	3.71	0.605		

SPSS Correlation Analysis Output (2024).

Table 3 presents the correlation analysis between kidnapping and employee retention in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities. The result shows a p-value of 0.001 and a correlation coefficient of 0.975. A p-value less than 0.05 is the level of significance, rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, there is a significant extent to which kidnapping affects employee retention in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities.

**H<sub>02</sub>:** There is no significant extent to which kidnapping affects customer engagement in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities.

**Table 4: Correlation analysis between kidnapping and customer engagement in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities**

Item	Mean	Standard Deviation	Correlation Coefficient	P-value
Kidnapping	3.85	0.714	0.688	0.001
Customer engagement	3.49	0.486		

SPSS Correlation Analysis Output (2024).

Table 4 presents the correlation analysis between kidnapping and customer engagement in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities. The result shows a p-value of 0.001 and a correlation coefficient of 0.688. A p-value less than 0.05 is the level of significance, rejecting the null hypothesis and accepting the alternative hypothesis. Therefore, there is a significant extent to which kidnapping affects customer engagement in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities.

## Findings

After the data analysis, the study found that:

1. There is a significant extent to which kidnapping affects employee retention in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities.
2. There is a significant extent to which kidnapping affects customer engagement in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities.

## DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The fact that kidnapping is a major cause of employee turnover in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities as shown on Table 1 indicates that kidnapping is an enemy to effective corporate human resources management and overall business viability. It is inimical to stability of tenure of personnel as proposed by Henry Fayol in his fourteen (14) Principles of Management. Kidnapping has the capacity to deny enterprises the opportunities and gains they would have benefitted from, for example, improved employee retention, improved profitability, business expansion, business market share, enhanced competitive abilities and abilities to perform social responsibilities like employment of the youths and payment of taxes to the government. When the majority of the youths in the region are employed, kidnapping of corporate human resources may most likely become a thing of the past and employee retention may therefore be triggered. Mbam,

Jacob and Amiara (2024) handled ‘kidnapping and banditry: a critique of the Nigerian security, 1999-2022’. The case study method was used in the study which adopts the Situational Action Theory. The study finds that systemic and deep-rooted corruption, poor funding, inadequate training and poor coordination among the security agencies hinder, to a significant extent, various efforts to fight kidnapping and banditry in the country. It posits further that the crimes are aggravated by poverty, youth unemployment, serious illiteracy, inadequate government presence as well as regional inequalities. This agrees with the finding in this study. Indeed, the Table 1 reveals that employee-survivors of kidnapping give management option of working from home as an alternative to resignation or truancy. This shows that there is spirit of fear and anxiety among the workers over the dangers of kidnapping. It is possible that working from home can trigger withdrawal from service thereby reducing business viability.

Given that kidnapping makes it difficult for corporate human resources to attract, retain and achieve customer loyalty in business enterprises in South-Eastern metropolitan cities, as shown in Table 2, implies that those employees who are desirous of working on customer engagement practices no longer make themselves available for such functions over the menace of kidnapping. It is not impossible that some of those who claim to be customers are kidnappers. The kidnapping of workers makes the key personnel in customer management avoid one-on-one contact with most customers, and this can be a serious blow to customer attraction, customer retention, customer loyalty and all-round customer engagement. This may be the reason why the same Table 2 indicates that committed corporate human resources demonstrate reservations over customer engagement efforts since the identities of the kidnappers and their informants are not known to the workers. This calls for the need to fortify the national security apparatus over the fight against kidnapping and allied crimes. It is, however, disturbing that the nation still has serious challenges in arresting the ugly situation. Demehin, Raji and Ala (2024) did a study on ‘unveiling the multifaceted dimensions: a sociological inquiry into kidnapping in Nigeria’. The extant literature approach was adopted. It was found that the causes of kidnapping include socio-economic disparities, a dysfunctional law enforcement and judicial system, and longstanding conflicts, political instability, presence of militant groups, insurgency, vulnerable demographics, lack of robust security measures and instances of diverse unrest. The paper submits that the persistence of kidnapping is compounded by the flourishing economic gains it has attracted to the apostles of kidnapping.

## **Conclusion**

This study concludes that kidnapping of corporate human resources is the bane of business viability in South-Eastern Metropolitan Cities. Kidnapping increases employee turnover by adversely influencing employee retention. It also reduces the ability of corporate human resources to enhance customer engagement as it makes it very difficult to make oneself available for the attraction and retention of customers thereby destroying customer loyalty potentials.

Indeed, the study submits that any business enterprise that relegates the security of its workforce to the background risks serious corporate viability challenges. The study therefore infers further that it pays when management cooperates with relevant authorities to protect the most essential organizational resource, the human element, against men of the underworld so that employee

retention, customer engagement, and allied viability indicators may be sustainably improved in enterprises in South-Eastern Metropolitan cities.

### **Recommendations**

The study makes the following recommendations in alignment with the research findings:

1. Management of business enterprises in South Eastern metropolitan cities should encourage their workers to be security conscious so as to escape the dangers of kidnapping thereby improving employee retention in the enterprises.
2. Corporate entities in South-Eastern metropolitan cities should train and retrain their workers on information sharing with customers so that essential information not designed for customers may not leak to the advantage of kidnappers. The corporate human resources should be conscious of customer engagement and should sustain it in the most professional manner with full knowledge of the rights of customers and the limits of staff-customer interaction.

### **Contribution to Knowledge**

This study contributes to knowledge by bridging the research gaps identified earlier in the research. It provides empirical literature on the relationships between: kidnapping and employee retention; kidnapping and customer engagement in business enterprises in SE metropolitan cities. The study also adds to the body of existing literature in the area of kidnapping, in particular, and security challenges in general.

### **Implications for Further Research**

Geographically, this present study focuses on the South-Eastern metropolitan cities of Owerri, Umuahia, Enugu, Abakiliki, and Awka. Further research ought to be done with a wider geographical scope to investigate areas outside the South East geopolitical region. The present study also concentrates on the kidnapping of corporate human resources, which affects employee retention and customer engagement. Future researchers need to work on how kidnapping affects other dimensions of corporate viability, like profitability, productivity, and stakeholders' satisfaction. This study concentrates on transportation firms. Future researchers should assess kidnapping in other sectors outside the transportation sector. This study uses the survey research design to investigate kidnapping of corporate human resources as the bane of business viability in South Eastern Metropolitan Cities. Future researchers should use other methodologies to examine the same relationships with a view to finding out if there may be consistency or reliability in the results obtained.

Also, this study surveys only the chief executives and unit heads of the transportation firms in the study. Future researchers need to expand their survey scope to accommodate other staff in business organizations beyond the proxies and linkages evaluated in this research.



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