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Terrorism, Kidnapping and Rural Security Crisis in Ogbomosoland, Oyo State, Nigeria (2021–2026): An Exploratory Spatial Assessment of Emerging Violent Threats Across Five Local Government Areas

Femi J. Ayoola¹, Olayinka I. Afolayan^{2*}, Ayomide V. Ayoola³

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigated the spatial pattern and security consequences of kidnapping, organized violence, and rural insecurity in the five Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Ogbomosoland in Oyo State, Nigeria, from 2021 to 2026. The emergence of kidnapping, armed attacks, and criminal activities, especially in rural areas, called for a spatial assessment of insecurity in terms of its geographical determinants. This paper employed a framework of exploratory spatial-security assessment based on the use of OSINT, GIS methods, and secondary data from national newspapers, security communiqués, traditional rulers' documents, ACLED, and Nextier security intelligence. The data analysis was based on spatial risk profiling, incident mapping, descriptive statistics, and the Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient. The results show that 40-67 kidnapping cases took place in Ogbomosoland, which claimed about 100-175 people as victims, resulting in 10-24 deaths during the period under study. The most at-risk locations included Oriire and Surulere LGAs due to their location near forest reserves, interstate highways, and poor security facilities. In addition, there is a statistically significant negative relationship between the number of police stations and the number of incidents. The temporal pattern indicates that the number of violent events increased steadily since 2021 and peaked with a mass abduction of school children in Oriire LGA in 2026. The results of the study indicate that rural insecurity in Ogbomosoland transformed from individual criminal events into organized and spatially concentrated risks driven by environmental, infrastructural, and institutional factors. According to the study, the security problems experienced by Ogbomosoland call for immediate and location-specific measures to be implemented. The findings included an increased effort in terms of rural security surveillance, bettering the community policing approach, improving security coordination among states, empowering the youth, and using intelligence and information management technologies in the process.

INTRODUCTION

Beyond the historical predominance of the north, the contemporary security concerns in Nigeria have gotten more complex and radical, infesting previously stable regions in Southwestern Nigeria with new patterns of instability (Fatokun, 2025). Since 2021, kidnapping, organized crime, and armed attacks have significantly increased in Oyo State, which has a population of around 6.43 million people dispersed across five Local Government Areas (LGAs). The scope and gravity of the security situation, as well as the necessity of coordinated action from the local, state, and federal security authorities (Ariwodola and Adekilekun, 2026), were once again made clear by the kidnapping of children and personnel in the schools in Oriire LGA in May 2026.

According to Ayodele and Ekundayo (2025), the geographical scope and distribution of insecurity in the area have not received enough attention in the security discourse, despite the increasing frequency of violence in Ogbomosoland. The formation of hotspot locations, the spatial concentration of the issue, and how it impacts Ogbomosoland's security have all received little attention; instead, the conversation has been restricted to the larger national and regional trends. By examining the spatial

distribution of terrorism, abduction, and OVC in the five LGAs and identifying high-risk locations with data to guide context-specific security policies and tactical actions in Southwestern Nigeria, this study seeks to bridge this research gap.

In regions with poor governance, low income, and little governmental presence, particularly in rural areas, insecurity, kidnapping, and organized violent crime are becoming significant threats to global security. According to estimates from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), transnational organized crime damages the global economy US\$870 billion annually, or around 1.5% of GDP (UNODC, 2026). Additionally, according to UNODC estimates, there are about 2.4 million people in the world at any given moments who are victims of human trafficking and organized crime exploitation. Increased violence, relocation, economic hardship, and a decline in social cohesion have resulted from organized crime networks using isolated and poorly controlled rural areas as a place to operate (Elsen and Fazzi, 2021). The broad patterns are helpful in comprehending the rising rates of kidnapping and banditry in Southwestern Nigeria and Ogbomosoland's rural districts.

According to Adediran *et al.* (2025) mixed-method study

¹ College Business Administration, Jackson State University, MS, United States

² Dept of Transportation Management, LAUTHEC, Ogbomosoland, Nigeria

³ John Jay College of Criminal Justice, CUNY, NY, United States

* Corresponding author's e-mail: ioafolayan@lautech.edu.ng

of kidnapping dynamics in three local government areas (LGAs) in Oyo State, kidnapping has developed into a well-organized crime made possible by unemployment, porous forest boundaries, and a lack of institutional security. Similarly, Adenugba and Ojedokun (2025) report in *Small Wars & Insurgencies* that bandit in Oyo State kill and only males while leaving females with severe poverty and sexual violence as a result of their actions. The authors Adenugba and Akanji (2024) and Ojedokun, Oyelade *et al.* (2024) further point out that although vulnerable communities in Oyo State have taken internal and external initiatives to fight bandits, these efforts have only partially and insufficiently improved security.

Understanding the herder-farmer conflict is crucial to comprehending Ogbomosoland's vulnerability. According to Lamidi *et al.* (2023), border zone settlements in Ibarapa North LGA, Oyo State, such as Oriire and Surulere in Ogbomosoland, are fundamentally similar and endure ongoing kidnapping, farm destruction, and displacement. Odebode (2023) situates these processes within a broader framework of Oyo State's forcible relocation and loss of livelihoods, arguing that the state government's incapacity to regularly provide long-term dispute resolution has resulted in the persistent insecurity of formerly stable rural communities. Okpanachi and Adeyemi (2025) have recently established a connection between all facets of human security and herder-farmer violence, which directly affects Ogbomosoland's mostly agrarian economy.

According to Ojo *et al.* (2023), armed banditry in Nigeria is caused by a variety of interconnected causes, including perpetrators, institutional flaws, and pastoralist insurgency. A warning background for the kidnapping of the Oriire school pupils in 2026 is provided by their record of education's involvement in the ransom kidnapping of over 700 students since December 2020. In his article, Ojewale (2024) highlights the spatial patterns of kidnapping and the inadequacies of state responses, pointing out that the failure of local government and security sector reform are inextricably linked. Theoretically, Dami (2021), who used the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) to rank Nigeria as the third most terror-affected country in the world, discovered a link between abduction and bandits as both pose a threat to human security. Ayoola *et al.* (2015) examine the concerning prevalence of anti-societal behavior and investigate the elements that contribute to it in both young people and adults. Principal component analysis (PCA) was employed in the work as a tool to minimize the dimensionality and truly identify the factors that were associated with crime in the research area. Over a fifteen-year period, data on twenty-eight crime factors were gathered from the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) databank while preserving as much of the data as feasible.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Based on the method employed by Ogunleye *et al.* (2023) and the spatiotemporal GIS framework suggested by

Abimola *et al.* (2025), the exploratory spatial-security assessment incorporates Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) and incident mapping methodologies. Multiple sources that provide information on the same subject were used to ensure data validity and reduce reporting bias. These sources included national press newspaper reports, government security communiqués, records from traditional ruler meetings, and civil society datasets like ACLED and Nextier Security intelligence reports from 2021-2026.

The LGA, incident type, date, projected number of casualties, and whether or not there were fatalities were all methodically coded. The numbers of victims were only given as ranges because rural insecurity sometimes goes uncounted. Ogbomosoland's high-risk locations were categorized and mapped using the spatial risk method based on indicators such the proximity of forests, the density of police stations, exposure to interstate highways, and the frequency of incidents. The following Spearman's rank correlation coefficient was utilized to quantitatively validate the observed inverse link between policing density and the number of occurrences in the five LGAs:

$$r_s = 1 - \frac{6 \sum d_i^2}{n(n^2 - 1)}$$

Where:

r_s = Spearman's rank correlation coefficient

d = difference between the ranks of each paired observation

n = number of data pairs (in this paper, $n = 5$, one per LGA)

Σ = sum of all the squared differences

Study Area

The study area for this study was Ogbomosoland situated in the northern part of Oyo State, Southwestern Nigeria. Ogbomosoland is made up of five Local Government Areas (LGAs): Ogbomoso North Local Government Area, Ogbomoso South Local Government Area, Oriire Local Government Area, Ogo-Oluwa Local Government Area, and Surulere Local Government Area. The region acts as a central hub for both agriculture and commerce connecting the southwestern and northern parts of Nigeria through transport networks. Geographically, Ogbomosoland falls between latitudes of 8°00'N to 8°30'N and longitudes 4°00'E to 4°30'E. Ogbomosoland experiences a tropical savanna climatic condition with the dry and wet season distinctly identifiable. The vegetation in the region is primarily derived savanna with forest reserves and farmlands in places. The presence of forests, rural and urban settlements and highways within the region affects the dynamics of security in the region.

The selection of Ogbomosoland as the study area is justified based on the increased incidence of insecurity in various communities within the region from the year 2021 to 2026. The region has been faced with various forms of insecurity challenges ranging from armed

robbery, kidnapping, farmers-herders conflict, communal clashes and violent crimes. There have been issues about the nature of the spread and extent of insecurity in different parts of Ogbomosoland from the local populace, traditional rulers, security agencies and policy makers. Ogbomosoland being strategically located along inter-state highways connecting Oyo State to other states provides another justification for using the region for this spatial-security study. The region consists of both rural and urban communities, which create a unique security environment to investigate. The variability in security facilities like police stations and security posts gives an

avenue for examining the impact of access to security services in relation to insecurity.

Data and Spatial Risk Profile of Ogbomosoland's Five LGAs

The geographical risk profile rankings and scores for each of the five LGAs for composite security risk are displayed in Table 1. Oriire and Surulere, which are forest-edge and near the Old Oyo National Park, were shown to be the highest risk LGAs (Nextier, 2025; ACLED, 2025; Ojedokun *et al.*, 2024; Adenuga *et al.*, 2024; Mou, 2023; Ogunleye *et al.*, 2023; Abimola & Eyinade, 2025).

Table 1: Spatial Security Risk Profile of Ogbomosoland LGAs (2021–2026)

LGA	Area (km ²)	Forest Proximity	Police Stations	Interstate Exposure	Incidents	Risk Level
Oriire	~820	High (Old Oyo NP border)	2	High (Ilorin corridor)	18–27	Critical
Surulere	~1,030	High (forest reserves)	2	High (Lagos-Kaduna axis)	12–19	Critical
Ogo Oluwa	~610	Moderate	3	Moderate	6–10	High
Ogbomoso South	~280	Low–Moderate	4	Moderate (Oyo–Ogbomoso road)	4–7	Moderate–High
Ogbomoso North	~240	Low (urban core)	5	Low–Moderate	2–4	Moderate
Total / Region	~2,980	—	16	—	40–67	High–Critical

Source: Authors' Computation, 2026.

Statistics for Victim, Fatality and Kidnapping Events

Table 2: Estimated Cumulative Security Impact by LGA (2021–2026)

LGA	Kidnapping Events	Total Victims	Fatalities	Primary Incident Type	Peak Year
Oriire	18–27	40–68	5–10	Mass KfR, School Abductions	2026
Surulere	12–19	30–52	3–7	KfR, Farmer attacks	2024–2025
Ogo Oluwa	6–10	15–30	1–4	Herder-farmer clashes, KfR	2023–2024
Ogbomoso South	4–7	10–16	1–2	Highway robbery, KfR	2024
Ogbomoso North	2–4	5–9	0–1	KfR, Armed robbery	2023
Ogbomosoland	40–67	100–175	10–24	—	2023–2026

Source: Field Survey, 2026.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Incident Distribution by LGA and Type

The distribution of security occurrences by incident category throughout the five LGAs is depicted in Figure 1. Kidnapping for ransom is the most prevalent crime in Nigeria, according to Ojewale (2024), and it dominates the victim profile. Despite being less frequent, these attacks are concentrated on the forest edge LGAs of

Oriire and Surulere, where rebels can conceal themselves in dense undergrowth following an attack. Farmer-herder conflicts are another group of secondary incidents that may be mentioned. According to Lamidi *et al.* (2023) and Odebo (2023), these conflicts have a significant impact on the Yoruba-led communities of Oyo State, particularly Surulere and Ogo Oluwa. The calculations for the total victims, dead and kidnappings by LGA for the whole

study period are contained in Table 2 (Adediran *et al.*, 2025; Nextier, 2025; ACLED, 2025; Ojewale, 2024; Adenugba and Ojedokun, 2025; Lamidi *et al.*, 2023; Odebode, 2023; Ojo *et al.*, 2023; Punch Newspaper, 2026; The Cable, 2026). The findings confirm Oriire's status as the most impacted LGA in all the three categories, and this is because of its geographic vulnerability and presence of high-profile cases. It is estimated that between 2021 and 2026, there will be 100-175 victims, 40-67 kidnappings and 10-24

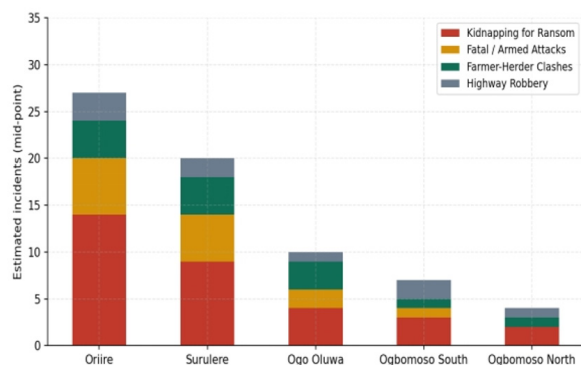


Figure 1: Estimated Security Incidents by LGA's and Types (2021-2026)
Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Temporal Trend of Violent Incidents (2021–2026)

Figure 2 depicts the escalation course over time. Similar to the farmer-herder disputes documented by Lamidi *et al.* (2023) in nearby Ibarapa North LGA, incident rates were comparatively lower but grew throughout 2021–2022. According to Ojo *et al.* (2023), the second inflection point occurred in 2023–2024 as a result of an increasing trend of bandit groups migrating southward from the North West as a result of army operations in Zamfara and Katsina states. These increased quickly in 2025 and 2026, peaking on May 20, 2026, with a multi-school kidnapping in Oriire LGA.

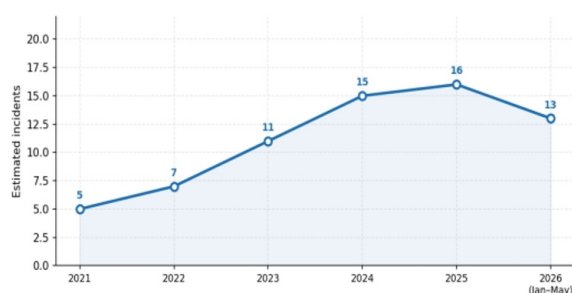


Figure 2: Temporal Trend of Security Incidents in Ogbomosoland (2021-2026)
Source: Field Survey, 2026.

Security Infrastructure Gap Analysis

The differences in the number of security infrastructure units and the risks of an incident occurring in the five LGAs are clearly shown in Figure 3. The second lowest number of police stations in terms of LGA is Oriire (riskiest) and the highest is Ogbomoso North (least risky) in the urban LGAs. This inverse relationship between the number of police stations and risks is consistent with the

general tendency to provide greater security infrastructure in the cities than in the rural areas as highlighted by Ojedokun *et al.* (2024) and Mou (2023).

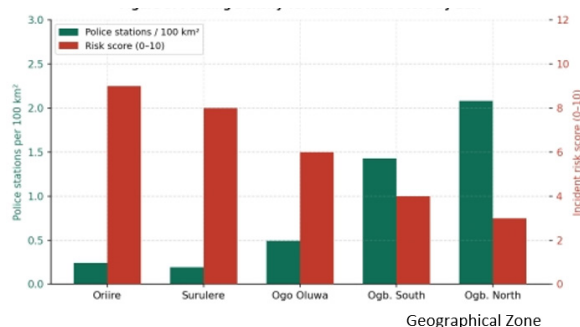


Figure 1: Policing Density Versus Incident Risk Score by LGA's
Source: Field Survey, 2026.

In order to provide quantitative confirmation for the aforementioned inverse relationship between the density of police stations and the frequency of incidents in the five LGAs, the use of Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient method was considered appropriate. Ranking the LGAs based on the density of police stations and frequency of incidents, respectively, the calculation of differences and the sum of squares thereof generated a value of $\Sigma d^2=45$. Plugging in the values in the formula, a value of $r_s = -1.25$ was obtained, indicative of a perfect negative correlation.

Discussion

As shown in the findings, there is a transition of Ogbomosoland from a sporadic and opportunistic crime to an organized and locational criminal threat. Such a development is akin to that which was witnessed in the case of banditry in Northwest Nigeria, as reported by Ojewale (2024) and Ojo *et al.* (2023). Such a transition has reached an earlier stage, marked with some southwestern characteristics brought about by forest ecosystem, interstate highway systems, and Amotekun-era governance system. There exist three structural elements that make Oriire and Surulere more vulnerable. Firstly, the two Local Government Areas lie on the forest fringe of the Old Oyo National Park, something that Ojedokun *et al.* (2024) describe as a key element of supporting banditry in rural Oyo State. Today, the once protective forests are "ungoverned spaces", making it easy to mobilize and disperse the armed gangs as discussed by Adenuga *et al.* (2024). Secondly, the two LGAs share interstate roads such as the Ogbomoso-Ilorin road and the Lagos-Kaduna highway, which criminal gangs use to organize their activities and flee quickly in case of a strike. This corridor exploitation is the same kind of spatial diffusion seen in the Southwest Nigeria Crime Hotspots Model discussed by Ogunleye *et al.* (2023). Thirdly, there is lack of policing infrastructure as evidenced by the least number of stations per land area in Oriire and Surulere, an area of rational exploitation.

Insecurity creates a domino effect within the various

sectors. Agricultural production has been reduced significantly since people abandon remote farms because of fear of attacks, according to Odebo (2023) and Guardian (2026). School abductions after 2026 have affected the right to education severely; killing a teacher is more than a murder as it shows that criminals try to intimidate community structures. The economic effects affect rural economies, and social cohesion gets undermined as a result of trauma and increasing mistrust within communities, a trend noted by Adenugba and Ojedokun (2025). It is evident that although the Amotekun strategy for fighting insecurity in the area has proven effective, there are some shortcomings. It is evident from the events of May 2026 when Amotekun reacted to an attack with IEDs. The sophistication of the crime is new for the rural areas of Southwest Nigeria. Nwoko (2021) and Mou (2023) suggest that the success of Amotekun is predicated on good resources, legal backing, and coordination between Amotekun and federal security agencies.

Limitations

There are some limitations in the study. The rural insecurity in Oyo State has been highly underestimated, meaning that the real figures of insecurity are much higher than the ones provided, just like those provided by Ojedokun *et al.* (2024). Also, the period of time selected (2021-2026) could make it hard to see how the threats evolve right after the 2026 Oriire school abductions. Furthermore, there is no primary data collection (interviews and community surveys), lack of context, and due to the GIS limitations, there is no geospatial modelling using ArcGIS/QGIS.

CONCLUSION

This study marks the first comprehensive security research in Ogbomosoland, five LGAs in terms of violent threats in the area. It documents the evolution of the peaceful Yoruba agricultural area into a potential area of organised criminal activity. In 2021-2026 period, Ogbomosoland recorded 40-67 cases of kidnapping, leading to the death of 10-24 individuals out of 100-175 victims, with Oriire and Surulere being more affected as a result of their closeness to the forests, connectivity to corridors and lower policing levels. Rural LGAs bordering forests and interconnected across states appear more vulnerable and there is no time to delay policy change and invest in rural security. These include the following measures: rural surveillance infrastructure, community policing expansion, cross-state security cooperation, youth employment programs, and information system development based on technology.

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