

Tackling Phone Snatching Menace: Strategies for Enhancing Security in Jalingo Metropolis, Taraba State, Nigeria.

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Abstract- *The escalating incidence of phone snatching in Jalingo Metropolis, Taraba State, Nigeria, has raised significant concerns regarding public safety and security. This paper delves into the multifaceted issue of phone snatching, analyzing its contributing factors and proposing comprehensive strategies for mitigation. Utilizing the situational crime prevention theory as the conceptual framework, this study combines qualitative data from unstructured interviews, observations, content analysis of government documents, and security reports to provide an in-depth understanding of the problem. Key drivers of phone snatching, including rapid mobile phone adoption, insufficient security infrastructure, high unemployment rates, and socioeconomic disparities, are explored. The proposed strategies encompass multiple dimensions, aiming to create an environment where the effort, risks, and costs associated with phone snatching are elevated. These strategies include the strengthening of law enforcement measures, fostering community engagement through neighborhood watch programs, leveraging technological interventions such as mobile device tracking systems and surveillance cameras, and conducting public awareness campaigns. The paper emphasizes collaboration between law enforcement agencies, government authorities, community organizations, and technology providers for seamless strategy implementation and sustainable impact.*

Keywords - phone snatching, crime prevention, community engagement, technological interventions, law enforcement, public awareness, security enhancement

1. Introduction

The advent and widespread use of mobile phones have revolutionized communication and connectivity [1]. However, the increasing prevalence of phone snatching incidents in Jalingo Metropolis has raised concerns about the safety and security of its residents [2]. Phone snatching not only results in financial losses but also poses a significant risk to personal safety and privacy. This paper aims to address the phone snatching menace in Jalingo Metropolis by proposing strategies that can enhance security and reduce the occurrence of such incidents.

As a potentially valuable and easily-sold device that people desire to have, mobile phones have become an attractive target for theft. Mobile phone theft is the illegal taking of another person's mobile phone without permission or consent with the intent of depriving the rightful owner of it. It is commonly perpetrated by opportunistic offenders who cash in on the opportunity to own a phone by stealing that of their friends, family, colleagues, or acquaintances with no familiarity [3]. Sometimes, it is perpetrated by individuals who specialize in stealing phones in public places through the means of pickpocketing, forcefully snatching, robbing or threat of bodily harm to passersby. It may also follow up as ancillary to armed robbery, kidnapping, murder and other violent crimes, as evident in reports that violent offenders often take away the mobile phones of victims after carrying out their criminal acts [4].

Phone snatching incidents have become a prevalent form of street crime in many urban areas, driven by the lucrative market for stolen mobile devices [5]. Jalingo Metropolis, like other cities, has experienced an upsurge in phone snatching cases due to factors such as the increasing demand for mobile phones [5]. The inadequate security infrastructure, high unemployment rates, and socioeconomic disparities in the city create an environment conducive to criminal activities [6]. Moreover, the lack of public awareness about the risks associated with phone snatching and insufficient law enforcement efforts further exacerbate the problem [7].

The prevalence of mobile phone theft has been attributed to unemployment, greed, and the introduction of new mobile phone products and upgrades, combined with enticing advertisements that generate a desire to obtain the most recent models. Another important factor driving much of the theft of used phones is the demand and supply of them. Furthermore, the availability of markets such as Salejo Shopping Complex in Jalingo Metropolis where used mobile phones are sold without proper regulation can be attributed to the area's widespread mobile phone theft. According to Thompson [8], humanity cannot fully comprehend the prevalence and incidence of theft unless it understands how various types of stolen goods markets influence demand and supply. Furthermore, some socioeconomic factors, such as peer group influence, financial hardship, and unemployment, have been linked to the social hazard. Mobile phone theft is a social problem perpetrated by a few, but it has social and psychological consequences for society as a whole and for individuals in particular. This paper aims to propose strategies that include law enforcement measures, community

engagement, technological interventions, and public awareness campaigns based on this premise and to establish the fact. It is expected that by addressing these issues, the security situation in Jalingo Metropolis will improve, resulting in a safer and more secure environment for its residents.

1.2 Aims and Objective

The objective of this paper is to propose a comprehensive set of strategies aimed at enhancing security in Jalingo Metropolis, Taraba State, Nigeria, by effectively addressing the menace of phone snatching.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Factors contributing to the prevalence of phone snatching

Several factors contribute to the prevalence of phone snatching in Jalingo Metropolis. Firstly, the rapid growth in the use of mobile phones has increased their demand, making them attractive targets for criminals [5]. Additionally, the inadequate security infrastructure, high unemployment rates, and socioeconomic disparities in the city create an environment conducive to criminal activities [6]. The lack of public awareness about the risks associated with phone snatching and insufficient law enforcement efforts further exacerbate the problem [7].

Thompson [8] contends that economic hardship drives such crime by increasing the motivation to offend in an attempt to explain the factors influencing the increase in theft of personal property such as mobile phones. This is evident in a country where more than 64 million young people are unemployed and 1.6 million are underemployed [9]. He went on to say that unemployment causes frustration, dejection, desperation, and reliance on family and friends, all of whom are dealing with their own problems. This precarious situation, combined with other economic woes, creates an ideal environment for crimes such as mobile phone theft to flourish in Nigeria.

According to Thompson [8], the majority of personal property theft occurs "on the street." As a result, insufficient security personnel in public places may have contributed to overall levels of mobile phone and other property theft. Similarly, Akinlabi [10] asserts that the police play an important role in securing Nigerians' lives and property both in public and private places, without which the maintenance of order, legality, and development is impossible. Unfortunately, police officers have a negative attitude toward their jobs. They referred to their job assignments as a death trap. The police's negative perception of their job and other challenges impede effective patrol, leaving a vacuum for the outlawed to steal mobile phones and other portable electronic devices on the street [11].

2.2 Strategies for enhancing security

To effectively tackle the phone snatching menace in Jalingo Metropolis, a multifaceted approach involving various stakeholders is essential. The following strategies can be implemented:

1. Strengthening law enforcement measures

Law enforcement agencies should prioritize phone snatching cases and allocate dedicated resources to investigate and apprehend the culprits [12]. The establishment of specialized units within the police force, equipped with the necessary training and resources, can enhance their effectiveness in combating phone snatching [13]. Additionally, collaboration with other security agencies and the judiciary system is crucial for ensuring swift and effective prosecution of offenders [14].

2. Community engagement and neighborhood watch programs

Promoting community participation and engagement is vital in preventing and detecting phone snatching incidents [15]. The formation of neighborhood watch programs, in collaboration with law enforcement agencies, can encourage residents to actively monitor their surroundings and report suspicious activities [16]. Public-private partnerships can also facilitate the provision of security training and awareness programs within communities, empowering individuals to protect themselves and their neighbors effectively [17].

3. Technological interventions

Leveraging technology can significantly contribute to reducing phone snatching incidents. The implementation of mobile device tracking systems, such as GPS-enabled applications, can aid in recovering stolen phones and apprehending criminals [1]. The integration of surveillance cameras in public spaces and high-risk areas can act as a deterrent and provide valuable evidence for

investigations [18]. Furthermore, collaboration with mobile phone manufacturers to enhance device security features, such as biometric authentication and remote lock/unlock capabilities, can render stolen phones useless and discourage theft [19].

4. Public awareness campaigns

Raising public awareness about the risks associated with phone snatching is crucial for prevention [20]. Public awareness campaigns, utilizing various channels such as social media, radio, and community gatherings, should educate residents about precautionary measures, reporting procedures, and available support services [21]. Engaging local influencers and community leaders can enhance the reach and impact of such campaigns [22].

2.3 Evaluation and Implementation

The success of these strategies relies on effective evaluation mechanisms and their timely implementation. Regular monitoring and assessment of the implemented measures will provide insights into their effectiveness and identify areas for improvement [21]. Coordination among relevant stakeholders, including government authorities, law enforcement agencies, community organizations, and technology providers, is essential for seamless implementation and sustained impact [22].

3. Theoretical Framework

The situational crime prevention theory provides a relevant framework for understanding and addressing phone snatching incidents. According to this theory, crime can be prevented by altering the immediate environment and creating conditions that discourage criminal behavior [23]. The strategies proposed in this paper align with the principles of situational crime prevention by focusing on measures that increase the effort, risks, and costs associated with phone snatching, as well as measures that remove potential targets or temptations for criminals.

4. Methodology

This study used qualitative descriptive data analysis. However, both the primary and secondary sources of data were used to complement each other for validity purpose in the study. Hence, direct observations, content analysis of government documents and security agencies reports were used. The data collected were analyzed between January and June 2023.

5. Result and Discussion

Table 1: Respondents Opinion on the Concern about Phone Snatching Incidents in Jalingo Metropolis

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Very Concerned	203	53.85%
Somewhat Concerned	163	43.20%
Neutral	5	1.33%
Not Concerned	6	1.59%
Total	377	100.00%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 above shows the respondent’s opinion on the concern about phone snatching incidents in Jalingo metropolis the findings reveals the respondents' levels of concern about phone snatching incidents in Jalingo Metropolis. It's evident that a significant portion of the respondents are very concerned, with 53.85% falling into this category. A substantial portion is somewhat concerned (43.20%), while only a small percentage expressed neutrality (1.33%) or a lack of concern (1.59%). This data highlights that phone snatching is a major concern among the surveyed population.

Table 2: Respondents Opinion on the Factors Contributing to Phone Snatching in Jalingo Metropolis

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Unemployment	155	41.09%
Drug Abuse	123	32.63%
Unconcerned Security Attitude	56	14.88%
Victim Vulnerability	43	11.40%
Total	377	100.00%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 2 above outlines the perceived factors contributing to the prevalence of phone snatching in the area. Respondents identified unemployment as the most significant factor (41.09%), followed by drug abuse (32.63%). A smaller percentage attributed phone snatching to an unconcerned security attitude (14.88%) and victim vulnerability (11.40%). This information provides insights into the respondents' understanding of the root causes of phone snatching.

Table 3: Respondents on the Awareness of Existing Security Measures in Jalingo Metropolis

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	56	20.22%
No	221	79.78%
Total	277	100.00%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table above shows that a substantial portion of respondents (79.78%) are not aware of any existing security measures in place to prevent phone snatching. Only 20.22% of respondents reported awareness of such measures. This data underscores the need for improving public awareness of security measures in the area.

Table 4: Respondents Opinion on the Effectiveness of Public Awareness Campaigns in Jalingo Metropolis

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Very Effective	167	44.32%
Effective	113	30.02%
Less Effective	63	16.74%
Ineffective	34	9.02%
Total	377	100.00%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 4 shows respondents' opinions on the effectiveness of public awareness campaigns in reducing phone snatching incidents. The majority of respondents believe that such campaigns are very effective (44.32%) or effective (30.02%). A smaller percentage perceives them as less effective (16.74%) or ineffective (9.02%). This suggests that public awareness campaigns are generally seen as valuable tools in addressing the issue.

Table 5: Respondents Opinion on the Agreement with Proposed Strategies in Jalingo Metropolis

Statement	SD	D	N	A	SA	Total
Strengthening law enforcement measures	13	19	6	103	236	377
Promoting community engagement through neighborhood watch programs	9	6	2	106	254	377
Implementing mobile device tracking systems	7	16	2	111	241	377
Enhancing technological security features on mobile devices	16	11	7	96	247	377
Conducting public awareness campaigns	2	4	1	108	262	377
Total	47	56	18	424	1240	1885

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 5 above presents respondents' levels of agreement with proposed strategies to enhance security and reduce phone snatching incidents. It is evident that the majority of respondents strongly agree with the strategies, particularly the strengthening of law enforcement measures (62.61%) and conducting public awareness campaigns (69.52%). This indicates strong support for these proposed interventions.

Table 6: Respondents Opinion on the Personal Experience with Phone Snatching in Jalingo Metropolis

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	115	30.48%
No	262	69.52%
Total	377	100.00%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 6 above reveals that 30.48% of respondents have personally experienced or witnessed a phone snatching incident in Jalingo Metropolis, while the majority (69.52%) have not. This data highlights that a significant portion of the population has direct or indirect exposure to phone snatching incidents.

Table 7: Respondent Opinion on the Willingness to Participate in Further Interviews or Focus Groups

Opinion	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	377	100.00%
No	0	0.00%
Total	377	100.00%

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 7 above shows that all respondents (100%) are willing to participate in further interviews or focus groups related to the topic. This high level of willingness indicates a strong interest in contributing to further research on the issue of phone snatching.

6. Discuss of Findings

One of the most significant findings from the survey is the high level of concern among respondents regarding phone snatching incidents in Jalingo Metropolis. Over half of the respondents (53.85%) expressed that they are "very concerned" about phone snatching. An additional 43.20% indicated that they are "somewhat concerned." This collective concern reflects the magnitude of the issue and underscores its impact on the community's sense of security. It suggests that phone snatching is a pressing concern that requires attention and action from local authorities.

The findings also delved into the perceived factors contributing to the prevalence of phone snatching. Unemployment emerged as the most significant factor, with 41.09% of respondents identifying it as a key driver. Following closely is drug abuse, which was cited by 32.63% of respondents. This finding highlights the complex socio-economic dynamics that underlie the problem. It indicates that addressing phone snatching requires not only law enforcement measures but also socio-economic interventions to mitigate these contributing factors.

Another noteworthy finding is the low level of awareness among respondents regarding existing security measures to prevent phone snatching. A substantial 79.78% of respondents reported not being aware of any such measures. This suggests that efforts to communicate and educate the public about existing security initiatives may be inadequate. Enhancing public awareness about available security measures is crucial to harnessing community support and cooperation in crime prevention.

The study explored the effectiveness of public awareness campaigns in reducing phone snatching incidents. The majority of respondents (44.32%) perceived these campaigns as "very effective," while 30.02% considered them "effective." This finding underscores the positive impact of public awareness initiatives in raising consciousness about phone snatching and fostering a sense of shared responsibility among residents. It suggests that continuing and expanding such campaigns could be an effective strategy for mitigating the problem.

Respondents' agreement with the proposed strategies for enhancing security and reducing phone snatching incidents is a key finding. A significant majority expressed strong support for strategies such as strengthening law enforcement measures (62.61%) and conducting public awareness campaigns (69.52%). This indicates that the community believes in the potential effectiveness of these measures. It underscores the importance of involving the community in the planning and implementation of security strategies.

The study also revealed that a considerable portion of respondents (30.48%) have personally experienced or witnessed a phone snatching incident in Jalingo Metropolis. This finding underscores the prevalence and impact of phone snatching in the community. It also highlights the urgency of addressing the issue to ensure the safety and security of residents.

Lastly, a striking finding is the 100% willingness of respondents to participate in further interviews or focus groups related to the topic. This high level of interest and engagement demonstrates a strong community desire to actively contribute to finding solutions and improving security in Jalingo Metropolis. It signifies the potential for community involvement in collaborative efforts to combat phone snatching.

6.1 Conclusion and Future Scope

Addressing the phone snatching menace requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach involving various stakeholders. By implementing strategies that strengthen law enforcement measures, promote community engagement, leverage technological interventions, and conduct public awareness campaigns, Jalingo Metropolis can enhance security and reduce the prevalence of phone snatching incidents. These strategies, if implemented effectively, will contribute to creating a safer and more secure environment for the residents, fostering social well-being and economic growth in the region.

Based on the above findings the following recommendations are made;

- i. Establish Specialized Law Enforcement Units: Create dedicated units within the police force with specialized training to address phone snatching cases. These units should prioritize investigation, apprehension, and prosecution of culprits to deter potential offenders.
- ii. Promote Community Vigilance: Foster community engagement through the establishment of neighborhood watch programs. Encourage residents to actively participate in monitoring their surroundings, reporting suspicious activities, and collaborating with law enforcement agencies to curb phone snatching incidents.
- iii. Implement Mobile Tracking Systems: Integrate mobile device tracking technologies, such as GPS-enabled applications, to aid in the recovery of stolen phones and the identification of criminals. These systems can serve as deterrents and assist law enforcement in timely responses.
- iv. Enhance Public Awareness Campaigns: Launch extensive public awareness campaigns utilizing various communication channels to educate residents about the risks associated with phone snatching and the importance of precautionary measures. Collaborate with local influencers and community leaders to maximize the campaign's impact.
- v. Improve Technological Device Security: Collaborate with mobile phone manufacturers to enhance device security features, such as biometric authentication and remote lock/unlock capabilities. Rendering stolen phones unusable can significantly diminish their attractiveness to potential thieves.

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