



Kidnapping in Nigeria: The Way Forward

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Received Date: October 29, 2018; Published Date: November 02, 2018

Abstract

There has been a surge of kidnapping incidences in recent time in Nigeria. This act of criminality is perpetrated by established and emerging criminal groups as well as individual criminals for various degrees of reasons. The Boko Haram Terrorists group has proven that "kidnapping for ransom" is one of the ways of growing its economy with the Kidnap of Chibok and Dapchi girls among other prominent cases of kidnapping orchestrated by the sect. Kidnapping cuts across all regions of Nigeria and anyone could be kidnapped at any time depending on the immediate security situation. This research studied the nature and causes of kidnapping operations carried out by the Boko Haram sect, the Niger-Delta militants, the Fulani herders, armed bandits, and individual gangs. The scope of the research is on major kidnapping incidences from 2015 to 2018. The study found that while the motives of kidnapers differ; many of them indulge in the act for its pecuniary gains. Factors such as bad governance, unemployment, greed, poverty, intolerance, and vengeance were identified as being responsible for the growing rate of the crime.

Key words: Kidnapping; Crime; Insecurity

Introduction

Kidnapping is one crime that Nigerians are beginning to get used to as its spate of occurrence has sadly made it a conspicuous way of Life in the country. The essence of this paper which is "doctrinal" is to understand the actual meaning of kidnapping from a historical perspective. The study also seeks to unravel the history of the menace in Nigeria and the many incidences of kidnapping in the country. Since kidnapping in contemporary Nigeria is not peculiar to any state or region, a study of its incidence in the whole country is not practicable in this single study. The thrust of this study, however, is an expose' into to some of the kidnappings perpetrated by Niger-Delta militants, the Islamist terrorist sect Boko Haram, Fulani Herdsmen, Armed Bandits, and Self-Kidnap incidences. No one is safe from kidnapping in Nigeria whether in the upper or lower class. Everyone is a vulnerable and a

potential victim. While the poor are mostly kidnapped for ritual purposes, the rich are kidnapped for extortion through the payment of ransoms which runs from thousands to millions and billions of naira depending on who's involved.

According to a Presidency source, Nigeria recorded 1177 cases of kidnapping in a space of 14 months from 2016 to 2017. While 525 suspects were prosecuted, 652 are still being investigated (The Eagle Online, 2017). The fact that over 1000 persons were arrested as kidnap suspect within such a short time speaks volume of the extent which the crime has eroded the security fabrics of the country. This paper did not take the kidnap for "ritual purposes" into consideration. However, it gives an insight into some of the high profile cases of kidnapping recorded in the country since 2015. It also provided an overview of the modus operandi in the kidnap of the poor where

buses conveying passengers are often diverted with the activities of armed bandits on Abuja-kaduna highway as a case study. In the course of the analysis, the likely causes of the escalating rates of kidnapping was examined with the aim of proffering lasting solution to the menace through the recommendation of workable policy approach.

Conceptualizing Kidnapping

Kidnapping like other terms in the academia, do not have a generally accepted definition and has been defined differently by pundits. The online New World Encyclopedia [1] defined kidnapping as the crime of taking away of a person by force, deceit, or threat and detaining that person against their will. The word kidnapping was first recorded in 1673 as coined from two different words kid which means “child” and nap from “nab”. There are no known records on when the first case of kidnapping was reported in the world, but “kidnapping” has been used to mean the stealing of children for use as servitudes in American colonies as early as 1673 (Chidi, p.134) [2].

According to Walsh and Adrian (1983), as cited by Chidi et al. p. 29 [3] kidnapping is the unlawful seizure and detention of a person(s) by force against their will. It is also an act of seizing a person and taking him/her to another country for involuntary servitude or the imprisonment of males into military or naval service by force or fraud. The USLEGAL.com [4] has defined kidnapping as the abduction of a person by another for any or a combination of the following purposes - Hold him for ransom or reward; or Use him as a shield or hostage; or Accomplish or aid the commission of any felony or flight there from; or Inflict physical injury upon him, or to violate or abuse him sexually; or Terrorize him or a third person; or Interfere with the performance of any governmental or political function. I consider the definition by USLEGAL most comprehensive because it took cognizance of the various reasons why people or group of people may adduce for perpetrating the act. The definition shows that motives differ depending on the type of kidnapping and the expected end of the criminals. For example, some kidnap to murder as in the case of Amber Hageman who was kidnapped and killed in 1996 by unknown captors while Adam Walsh was decapitated two weeks after she was abducted at a departmental store in 1981.

Jessica Lunsford's corpse was found a month after her abduction from her home in 2005. Charles A. Lindbergh Jr. corpse was found in the woods weeks after he was kidnapped from his bed in his home and a ransom of

\$50,000 demanded for his release. Some kidnap to subject their captors to sex slavery. A classic example of this type of kidnapping was the case of Jaycee Lee Dugard who was abducted at the age of eleven in 1991 and was held in captivity for 18 years. In the course of her ordeal, her captor Garrido raped her on a daily basis. She had her first pregnancy at the age of thirteen and her second child at the age of sixteen. Similar to the case of Jaycee was the absurd kidnap of Elizabeth by her father who locked her up in the basement and fathered seven children with her in the cause of her incarceration. While three of those children were brought to live with the family upstairs, the others were left in the basement with Elizabeth throughout the period [5].

In the case of Zephany who was kidnapped by another family who needed a child in South Africa. She was raised in Cape Town with love by the family that stole her as a child. Zephany was discovered when she enrolled at the same school as her biological sister, and the striking resemblance gave the abductors away leading to her reuniting with her biological parents [6]. The abovecases underscore the fact that the reasons for kidnapping differs across the board. Kidnapping for ransom was first recorded in the United States of America when two little boys aged eight and six years respectively were kidnapped at the front of their family mansion in [7].

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on two sociological theories of crime. The first is the Strain theory! This theory of crime is a product of conflict that exists between ends and wants. Nigerians are generally desirous of the good life which entails material possession, wealth, power, and recognition. Everyone longs for good things of life regardless of their social standing (Siegel, 2010, p. 182) [8]. “Strain is related to criminal motivation, people who feel economically and socially humiliated may perceive right to humiliate others in return” (Siegel, 2010, p. 190) [8]. These theorists are of the opinion that the members of the lower class who are unable to achieve their live goals legitimately get angry and frustrated. This situation puts them in a position of taking to crimes such as kidnapping to make ends meet (Siegel, 2010, p. 183) [8]. The second theory is the Rational Choice Theory which anchored its argument on the economic principle of “cost-benefit analysis”. According to these neoclassical criminologists, people commit crimes after weighing their options and being convinced that the benefits of committing the crime outweigh its risks and costs. They insist that “crime will decrease when the opportunities are limited, benefits are reduced, and costs are increased” (Schmalleger, 2012, p. 64) [9].

Kidnapping in Nigeria

In Nigeria however, the first recorded case of kidnapping was perpetrated by the government in its 1984 attempt to repatriate from London an Ex-Minister UmaruDikko who was alleged to have stolen \$1b during his time as the Minister in-charge of Transport [10]. Nevertheless, there is a consensus by several authors that kidnapping in Nigeria originated from the Niger-Delta region where agitations have been ongoing against environmental degradation caused by the exploration activities of multinational oil companies in the region. It is estimated by (ACBC-FM 10 am News: 12th November 2018) as cited by (Akpan, 2010, p.37) [11] that 200 expatriate oil workers have been kidnapped so far in the Niger-Delta region. Today, kidnapping has spread beyond the Niger-Delta region to other parts of Nigeria. Initially, the targets of kidnapers in the N/D region were foreign nationals leading to the outcry by Britain that an estimated 25 British and dual citizens of British origin have been kidnapped alongside two hundred other nationals since 2007 (Ibrahim & Mukhtar, 2017, p.138) [12]. According to Otuya (2010) as quoted by (Chidi et al., 2015, p.31) [3] one of the foremost cases of kidnapping in the Niger-Delta region was the kidnap of nine foreign workers in an oil company. The captors were to negotiate the release of one of the arrowheads in the Niger-Delta struggles – MujahidAsariDokubo. The militants' motive, in that case, was not to receive any ransom in exchange for the release of its victims. Today everyone regardless of nationality or economic status risks being kidnapped with the crazy statistics that has revealed that Nigeria records 1000 cases of kidnapping on a yearly bases with an unknown unofficial statistics since not all kidnap cases are reported (Ibrahim & Mukhtar, 2017, p.138) [12].

Kidnapping by Niger-Delta Militants

The first recorded case of kidnapping by gang of Niger Delta youths was in 1998 when an armed men demanding for job creation and provision of electricity by the oil companies operating in the region abducted eight Chevron and Texaco workers of British, American, and South African origins according to a BBC report. By 1999 a British Shell worker was kidnapped alongside his two-year-old son in Warri. It is important to note, however, that these acts of kidnappings were perpetrated by random groups and continued in that manner until the emergence of the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) [13]. In 2003, the militants abducted about 270 persons, 97 of these persons were foreign nationals nonetheless the hostages who were captured after the seizure of four oil rigs in the region regained their freedom after negotiations. In January 2006, the

militants kidnapped four expatriate workers after blowing up the pipeline feeding the export terminal. In February, it kidnapped three Americans, two Thais, two Egyptians, a Briton and a Filipino working for Shell (Chidi, 2014. p.137) [2].

By May 2006, the separatist kidnapped three oil workers who were released after 24 hours; in June - six Britons, an American and a Canadian working for Norwegian-run drilling rig were abducted. By 20th June, it was reported that two Filipinos working for PGF Exploration had been kidnapped by unknown gunmen. In November, a British oil worker who was kidnapped alongside six workers of Saipem Oil rig was killed in cross fire (Chidi, 2014. p.137) [2]. In October 2017, the news of the kidnap of British humanitarian workers who have lived and carried out their charity works for over ten years in Delta state made the rounds [14]. One of them a 56-year-old Ian Squire was reportedly killed by the militants in November same year [15]. On September 18, 2017, an undisclosed Militant group kidnapped two military personnel although they were later rescued alongside four other kidnapped victims by the Operation Delta Safe. In January 2018, the case of the kidnap of five workers who were en route to an offshore location by a rebel group Niger Delta Avengers was reported.

Kidnap Operations by Boko Haram and Ansaru Terrorist Groups

According to the CNN library [16], Militants suspected to be Boko Haram militants kidnapped about 20 women in Nigeria's northeast village of Garkin Fulani from 7 to 8 June 2014; From June 18 - 22 2014, sixty females including children were kidnapped after the sect held the village of Kummabza in Borno northeast Nigeria hostage for five days. In 2013 Ansaru a faction of the Boko-Haram sect claimed responsibility for the kidnap of 7 foreign nationals including a Lebanese and their European counterpart in the northern state of Kano in an email statement sent to journalists (Vanguard Newspaper, 2013). In 2014, the news of the kidnap of over 200 school girls from the government secondary school Chibok in Borno N/E Nigeria became fodder for the press with many people joining the Bring Back Our Girls (BBOG) movement in campaigning for their release and safe return [17]. Few months after the release of some of the girls, the terrorist group struck again by abducting over 100 girls in a boarding school in Yobe state northeast Nigeria [18,19]. UNICEF Nigeria in marking the fourth anniversary since the abduction of Chibok girls in April 2014 stated that over 1000 children had been kidnapped by the Islamist sect in northeast Nigeria since 2013 [20].

Kidnapping by Fulani Herders

MuritalaUmaru while being interrogated for his role in the multiple kidnap cases in Edo axis of Nigeria admitted that he had made over N100m from kidnapping activities in a few years [21]. Umaru's assertion goes to show that the act is such a money-spinning venture where benefits outweigh the expected risk. There was also a reported case of a 22-year-old AbubakarMojumba a Fulani herder who kidnapped a 22-year-old married woman and kept her in the forest where she was repeatedly raped by Mojumba's gang for three days before her eventual rescue (Ojo, 2017).

In December 2017, Four Fulani herdsmen were arrested for kidnapping the wife of another herdsman and demanding for a ransom of N200, 000 but while the negotiation for the payment was ongoing, the victim HadijatSaliu escaped from custody leading to their arrest [22]. Still, in 2017, the kidnap of a Delta monarch who was on a trip with some of his relatives by Fulani herders flooded the news wave. The attack was a success because the herders mounted a "roadblock" disguising themselves as security operatives on duty [23]. When they kidnapped an octogenarian retired police divisional officer in Edo state in 2017, they demand a ransom of N25m from his son for his release [10]. In February 2018, four police officers who were on their way back from confidence – holding mission were ambushed by Fulani herdsmen in Benue. Their operational van was set ablaze after their abduction [24].

Kidnapping by Armed Bandits Along Kaduna – Abuja Road

It was recently reported that notorious armed bandit operating along Abuja Kaduna express way had kidnapped 87 passengers traveling along the route. The bandits were said to have selected their victims based on appearances [25]. In May 2018, unknown shooters attacked Mangada in BirninGwari LGA of Kaduna state where they kidnapped the three wives of a famous business man AdamuNakwana [26]. According to [27,28], some armed bandits kidnapped 32 passengers along the BirninGwari axis of Kaduna state striping the female passengers naked as they moved them to the bush. In

another incidence that took place between Kiryoyi and Maganda villages in BirniGwari LGA 25 persons were allegedly kidnapped by the bandits disguised as security operatives at visible "roadblocks".

Self-Planned Kidnapping

Today, kidnapping has metamorphosed into one of the quickest means of being wealthy. Over the years, we have heard in the news cases of wives conniving with kidnappers to be kidnapped to extort their husbands. The same tactics apply to children who have masterminded their abduction to extort their parents/guardians. Some of the perpetrators justify their actions with desperate financial needs and the fact that their targets were stingy and will never oblige them any monies except they are tricked. In 2017, a woman planned with her accomplices to be kidnapped in her home. Four hours after the incidence, the kidnappers demanded a ransom of N10m for her reason. Upon her arrest, she justified her act by insisting that she wanted her husband to relocate her to the United States of America [29]. Recently in August 2018, the Nigeria Police Force arrested one Hadijat Kabir for faking her abduction with the intent of defrauding the husband to the ton of N15m [30]. In 2017 a Pastor's wife named Victoria ElijaNdu was arrested and detained the same day that she was rescued by officers of the anti-kidnapping squad after an investigation implicated her in her kidnap. She confessed that she orchestrated the act to extort N3m from her church members since she was an orphan from a poor home and wanted to raise the money to support her siblings in giving their parents the befitting burial they deserved [31,32].

In another incidence, one 19-year-old Dorcas faked her kidnap with the corporation of some of her friends at school to extort N600, 000 from her father. She eventually claimed that she was released by the kidnappers when she suspected that the police was closing up on them [18,19]. This is an issue that is not peculiar to any gender as was seen in the case of Mr. Udom who planned his abduction in 2017 to extort N60m from his elder brother [33].

The content of the table below was sourced from Nigeria Bulletin [34], Onegeria [35] and Chika Jones (Table 1).

S/No	Personality	When	Where	Perpetrators	Ransom N& \$
1	John Mikel Obi's Father	2015 and 2018	Undisclosed	Unknown Gunmen	Undisclosed
2	Toyin Owosowon, the Reagent of Akungba-Akoko in Ondo State	June 2015	Ondo State		Undisclosed
3	Professor James Adichie (The father of ChimamandaAdichie	May 2015	Undisclosed	Unknown Gunmen	N50m demanded, an undisclosed sum paid

4	Olu Falae, Former Finance Minister	September 2015	Ondo State	Fulani Herdsmen	N100m demanded, an undisclosed sum paid
5	Madam Beauty Siasia (The mother of Samson Siasia – ex-Super Eagles Coach)	November 2015	Odoni Village Bayelsa	Unknown Gunmen	Not Disclosed
6	Ex-Senator Patrick Ani	2015	In his Calabar farm	Unknown Gunmen	Not Disclosed
7	Sheik Adam Idoko (UNN's Chief Imam)	2015	Enugu Ezike	Unknown Gunmen	N20m demanded, N2m paid
8	Rev. Father John Adeyi	2016	Otukpo Benue State	Unknown Gunmen	Murdered after a ransom of N2m was paid
9	Lagos Monarch Oba Oniba of Ibaland	2016	Lagos state	Suspected Niger Delta Militants	Undisclosed
10	Colonel Samaila Inusa	March 2016	Eastern Bypass Kaduna	Unknown Gunmen	Murdered, no ransom was paid
11	Ngozi Okonjo Iweala's mother	2016	Her husband's palace in Delta	Unknown Gunmen	Undisclosed
12	Mrs. Margret Emiefele (The wife of Nigeria CBN Governor)	2016	Benin – Agbor Road	Unknown Gunmen	Undisclosed
13	Mr. Pius and Mrs. Laurentia Mallam (Mrs. Mallam was an ex- minister of Environment)	2016	The Bwari-Jere axis of Abuja/Kaduna road	Unknown Gunmen	Undisclosed
14	Two wives of Nasarawa state commissioner	2016	Lafia	Unknown Gunmen	Undisclosed
15	Mr. Bagudu Hirse (Former Foreign Affairs Minister)	2016	Kaduna state	Unknown Gunmen	Undisclosed
16	Three Osun State Government Officials	2016	Kogi state	Unknown Gunmen	Undisclosed
17	Senator Iyabo Anisulowo	2016	Ogun State	Unknown Gunmen	Undisclosed
19	Four residents of Lekki Gardens in Isheri	2016	Lagos	Unknown Gunmen	N2bn demanded, an undisclosed sum paid
20	Sierra Leone's Deputy High Commissioner to Nigeria	-	Abuja	Unknown Gunmen	\$40m ransom demanded but an undisclosed sum was paid for his release.

Table 1: Table Showing Some High Profile Kidnap Cases since 2015.

Causes of Kidnapping in Nigeria

From the study, it is evident that factors such as greed, vengeance, intolerance, acute unemployment and poverty, poor governance, and inadequate crime-fighting equipment/technology coupled with poor synergy among security agencies are some of the factors responsible for the increasing incidences of kidnapping in the country. If we must win the war against kidnapping, all these issues will have to be addressed as a matter of national security urgency. It is important to note that recent statistics show that Nigeria is the wealthiest country on the African

continent with the latest GDP figures put at \$594.257 billion and a foreign exchange reserve of \$ 40.560 billion [36]. Unfortunately, this record has not been replicated in the standard of living of the Nigerian masses considering the fact that Brookings Institution report of June 2018 shows that Nigeria had overtaken India as the poverty headquarters of the world with 87m poor citizens living below the poverty line of less than \$1 a day. The report as sourced from the World Poverty Clock (WPC) also adds that six Nigerians became poor every minute [37]. If Nigerians are not struggling with poverty because they lack the resources to live comfortable lives, then

something else must be responsible for the “lack in the means of abundance”. This was underscored in a statement by Nigeria’s former Minister of Education Dr. Oby Ezekwesili that “Nigeria is perhaps the best-known example of Africa paradox with the land rich in natural resources but a large percentage of her citizen poor” [38]. According to Dr. Ezekwesili, bad governance manifested in “corruption” is responsible for Nigeria’s pathetic state. Another factor that has fuelled kidnapping in the country is greed and the quest to make quick money syndrome. In a country where the rich receive the uninterrupted accolade for doing something as usual as a “handshake” – unscrupulous persons will scramble to join the league regardless of the means, after all, no one is interested in the means as much as the end. There is also the issue of intolerance among Nigerians; a country that is divided along political, ethnic, religious, tribal, and cultural lines. Some persons tend to use kidnapping as a tool for spite and vengeance provided their objectives are achieved.

Furthermore, the alarming rate of unemployment in the country is daring. Seeing the end of kidnapping at this time may be a mirage with the active population (the youths) not gainfully employed. A recent report from the National Bureau of Statistics shows that 7.53 million out of 85.08 million Nigeria labor force were unemployed; a record that is considered a threat to national development by Nigeria Labour Congress [39]. Finally, it is essential that the Chief Security Officers of all Nigeria Law enforcement agencies paid priority attention to channeling their budgets to equipping their agencies with modern crime fighting facilities to ease the workload of the officers. Many of these CEO's are regularly accused of high-level corruption were monies meant for enforcement duties are embezzled for selfish purposes. It is also evident that the security agencies in Nigeria lack synergy especially concerning information sharing which puts them in a permanent reactive position instead of being proactive. Nevertheless, the NPF has done a great job in the arrest of some of the leaders arrested in Imo [40]; an arrest of a gang leader in Lagos for kidnapping a four year old [41]; the capture of Nigeria's wealthiest kidnapper Mr. Chukwudumeme AKA Evans and a gang suspected to be led by a dismissed DSS of Police Abdulraheed Maigari whose group have terrorized Nigerian states and Abuja [42]. The force will do better if provided the enabling environment at par with their contemporaries internationally.

Conclusion

Living in denial that kidnapping does not constitute a part of everyday living in Nigeria will be tantamount to being irrational and perhaps lifeless. This paper is a revelation

that the industry of Kidnapping has grown in geometric progression over the last two decades with its end far in sight at the moment considering the factors responsible for the escalation.

Policy Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, the following measures are recommended in the effective and efficient fight against the hydra-headed monster – kidnapping

Employment opportunities

With the too many young and agile Nigerians rooming the streets idly on a daily basis, the risk of the frustrated joining the already thriving criminal industry becomes imminent. The government at all levels should develop programs aimed at creating jobs for zealous and hardworking Nigerians to get engaged positively. The more they can't beat the challenges associated with desperate hardship in Nigeria; the more their availability to take up any available job offer legitimate or not.

Creation of the code of conduct bureau for nonpublic and non-civil servants

The need for an independent government agency that will be mandated to make persons in the private sectors (organized or not) disclose their assets and their means of livelihood from time to time has arisen. The country is currently flooded with so many ill-gotten wealth and the owners of this wealth are celebrated in all ramifications without questioning. As long as there isn't value reorientation and change of public perception about making a living, Nigeria will continue to celebrate criminals an attitude which undermines people that genuinely source their livelihood through dignified means.

Strategic and transparent governance where leaders can honestly account for their stewardship to the Nigerian people

Majority of Nigeria leaders have proven that they are in government for their selfish interests. This is manifested in the ways in which the nation's wealth is amassed shamelessly by those in authority with absolute disregard for their titles – Honorable, Distinguished, His/hers Excellency, et al. They loot for generations yet unborn and get away with it as long as they are in the good books of the government in power. There is the need for sensitive governance where those in the helm of affairs are meant to resign, sacked and possibly shamed publicly for the misuse of public trust.

The passage of the anti-kidnapping act by the national assembly

Nigeria does not have a national law on kidnapping, and it is hoped that the 9th National Assembly (House of Representative and the Senate) will make the enactment of the Act a priority upon assumption to office. Once this becomes a reality, states that are yet to enact their laws against kidnapping will rely on the Act of National Assembly in tackling the many challenges of kidnapping.

Provision of visionary security architecture aimed at protecting Nigerians and aliens within its territory

It is no longer news that many Nigeria heads of security agencies are in service to steal thereby ignoring the acquisition of modern crime-fighting equipment, officers training, and officers' welfare. Without hardware, training, and generous welfare packages; the task of crime fighting will be significantly undermined. The Chief Executive Officers of security agencies should as a matter of responsibility give an account of their stewardship to their supervising ministers from time to time. The report should include how monies appropriated to them were expended in the course of their duties with a feedback mechanism in place where the officers are allowed to confirm or refute whatever account was given without the fear of harassment, intimidation, and possible retrenchment. The office of the National Security Advisor (NSA) has to come up with a blueprint on the need for corporation among all the security agencies in Nigeria and the need for circulation of intelligence in real time among them whenever the need arises. Again, it is essential to make sure that defenseless Nigerians are aware of how to identify the difference between Kidnappers and bandits on the highways erecting roadblocks as government security agents and the actual government agents. As much as this will be practicable, it is advisable to dismantle all barricades on Nigeria roads and substitute them with heavy patrol activities in areas that have been identified as risky (black spots) like the – Kaduna/Abuja expressway. Finally, Nigeria needs to completely transition to fighting crimes digitally with the use of technology as against heavy reliance on manual and personal alone - a methodology that has failed the people repeatedly.

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