

FACTORS INFLUENCING KIDNAPPING AND THEIR SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS FOR KOGI STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the global menace of kidnapping but with a focus on Kogi State in Nigeria. The study finds that the drivers and social and economic implications of kidnapping in Kogi State are substance abuse, proliferation of small arms and light weapons, security lapses, and the complication of security personnel in ransom payment. It was determined that the socio-economic implications are these are discouragement of investors and expatriates, social effect/dearth of social life, adverse effects on budget planning, obstruction of business activities, work place insecurity among others. It was thus recommended that government should enact a law that would prevent an individual to pay ransom intelligence security agency, bad eggs in the security agencies be fished out through intelligence gathering and face the consequence of the law among others. It was also recommended that citizens have a role to play in terms of security of the state as well as the government.

Keywords: Kidnapping, Social, Economic, History

Introduction

Kidnapping is one of the most heinous crimes in history of mankind (Adegbe 2019). According to Evans (2018) he stated that, a young Julius Caesar was at the center of one of Rome's most unusual kidnapping cases. The incident unfolded in 75 B.C., when a band of Cilician pirates waylaid the 25-year-old as he was sailing to the Mediterranean island of Rhodes. Also, the story of Saint Patrick would be incomplete without the accounts of his career as a Christian missionary sparked by act of kidnapping. Born into a wealthy family in Roman Britain in the late fourth century, Patrick was abducted by a band of raiders at age 16 and taken away to Ireland, where he was held as a slave (Evans 2018). The above cases were listed among the eight most notorious kidnappings in history (www.history.com).

Empirically, in Nigeria, kidnapping occurred in Oboro community Delta State in 1999 when three expatriates working with Shell Company were kidnapped (Vanguard 13th August, 1999). In that same year, ANCOG Construction Company at Ughelli, Delta State experienced a sad event when two (2) Indians nationals were kidnapped. Moreover, Bristow Helicopter that was rented by Texaco Oil Company (TOPCON) was seized by the youths of Ogbotobo community along with six members of staff in it and one million five hundred thousand naira was demanded as ransom before setting the captives free (Vanguard 13th August, 1999).

Davidson (2010) explained that, the wide spread of insecurity in Nigeria calls for declaring state of emergency because the rate at which kidnapping occurs within interval of time is worrisome. Schools has become the main target of kidnappers now, some victims are being kidnapped from their homes and highway (Amar 2021). It is now the usually modus operandi of criminal elements in Nigeria to waylay motorists on highways with guns and dangerous weapon which they employ to coarce people and move them into captivity against their will thereby, demanding ransom through phones calls before their release (Adegbe 2019). Kidnapping has become endemic in Nigerian society; it is fast becoming a lucrative business to armed robbery and the gravity of kidnapping is so intense that it has virtually permeates through all states in Nigeria. The focus of this paper is on global and Nigeria historical trends

of kidnapping. Also, the paper delves into origin of kidnapping in Kogi State and its drivers. Lastly, the paper examined the social and economic implications of kidnapping in Kogi State.

Conceptual Review

Kidnapping is an act in which kidnapers chose and strategically planned before been carried out by them (Adegbe 2019). In perspective of classical criminology, kidnapper is viewed as a criminal, and it is an action of a free will because there are criminal acts that criminologists classified as a freewill action that are characteristically planned and executed by criminals (Void 1979). In classical criminology, behaviour of a kidnapper is a product of free will or the choice of the individual, who access the potential benefits of committing the crime against its potential cost. In criminal law, kidnapping is illegal taking of person into a confine place against the victim's will usually for ransom or other reasons known to the culprit i.e. transporting people away forcefully without having authority to do so and keeping them in a secluded place. The English common law website defines kidnapping as offence requiring that one person takes another person away; by force or fraud without the consent of the person taken and without lawful excuse.

Similarly, Garner, (2009) sees kidnapping as a crime of illegal seizing and moving a person away by threatening to kill them with gun so that the victim can succumb against his or her will with the intent to collect ransom in later time. Also, Goldberg (2000) argues that kidnapping is a crime against humanity involving seizing and confinement of victims. Furthermore, the act of kidnapping involves abduction, subjection, forcefulness, threats, terror and servitude. That means kidnapping can be infer to be de-humanisation of an individual or group of persons which is totally an aberration to the spirit of fundamental human rights. In line with the above, there are also kidnapping for religious reasons which has not been heard of in Kogi state but in the North East of Nigeria where Boko-Haram members held victims' hostage as a result of their religious backgrounds depriving them their fundamental human right of choice of religion. Thus, in any form or reason, kidnapping is a crime infringing on another person's fundamental human rights of freedom.

In view of the above, Nigeria criminal code's punitive prescription for kidnapping is that, anyone who illegally put another person into confinement against the person's wish within Nigeria in such a way to deprive the fellow access to court and people that can help him or her to gain freedom or preventing people to know the place of confinement; the culprit has committed offence of felony and it may attract ten (10) years imprisonment (Tar Hon, 2004).

Theoretical Framework

The paper was anchored on anomie theory which was introduced by the French sociologist Emile Durkheim in 1893 (Durkheim 1893). Anomie or normlessness, is the breakdown and blurring of societal norms which regulate individual conduct (Schubert 2021). Anomie theory explains reasons for breakdown of societal norms or why rate of normless is high in various societies when compared to different historical epoch (Jon 2014). According to the theory, crime is usually driven by unequally distribution of resources in the society; this put pressure on individuals to jettison societal norms and use illegal means to acquire resources (Charlotte 2022). Anomie can be seen as obstruction of stability in the society due to inequality in social structure or lack of individual or collective strategies for adapting to changing social circumstance.

This theory aptly described the situation of kidnapping in Kogi State where those engaged in it do not regard the societal norms that discourage negative behavior. Norms are expectations that are socially enforced encouraging positive attitude but the kidnappers had jettisoned this social order for their inordinate pleasure. Generally, in 21st century Nigeria, our society norms of contentment, do not cheat, do not steal has been abandoned by so many people; arms are proliferated and youths are into hard drugs, cultism, corrupt security agents among other because of lack of enforcement of societal norms.

Also, the current reality is that government cannot provide jobs for all the unemployed youths and the successive governments have failed to create enabling environment for citizens to create employment for themselves. These changing circumstances which some persons

cannot adapt to may exert pressure on them to find a means of wealth creation through kidnapping. Moreover, some persons may be under pressure to make money through kidnapping as a result of the unequal distribution of wealth and inequality in the structure of the society that has created huge gap between the rich and the poor.

Historical Perspective of Kidnapping in Nigeria

In pre-colonial era in Nigeria, kidnapping was a means of sourcing for slaves to be sold for foreigners. During the 15th and 16th centuries, the indigenes kidnapped their brothers, sisters, relatives, notorious criminals and sold them out to slave traders (Dode, 2007). After the abolition of slave trade, kidnapping for rituals continued in many countries and regions in West Africa. Fetish and animist beliefs have allowed such practices especially in Nigeria. Dennis (2017) explained that evolution of kidnapping in Nigeria has matured into varying forms that were hitherto uncommon. There are different types of kidnapping beside the one for ransom that is prevalent now. There are kidnappings for political reasons, human trafficking, body parts harvest, for rituals, for religious reasons and of course the original type which is the kidnapping of children by a parent, because of custody issues.

In recent past, political kidnapping was introduced by Niger Delta militants who targeted foreigners, especially Americans and British, mainly to draw attention to their plight of environmental degradation caused by oil and gas exploration and production. The hostages were usually kept for sometimes and released after press conference, which will be carried by CNN or BBC. This trend continued and actually brought the desired publicity to the Niger Delta kidnapping menace. Apparently, in 1999, kidnapping operation began in Oboro community in Niger Delta when some expatriates were kidnapped working with ANGOG construction company at Ughelli, in Delta state. Nevertheless, one of the foremost recorded of kidnapping that drew both national and international attention around 2005/2006 for example, when the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) kidnapped nine (9) foreign workers in Delta state to bargain for the release of detained Mujahid Asari Dokuubo, leader of the Niger Delta People Volunteer Force, (NDPYF) and the arrow head of the Niger Delta

struggle, for a fair deal in this cycle. They do not ask for ransom, only that their leader should be released in exchange for the hostages (Amaize 2010).

The government of Yar'adua granted amnesty to Niger Delta militants in a bid to end the violent crimes in the region, but the main effect was diversionary according Essien and Ema (2013). Therefore, the crime of kidnapping escalated from targeting Oil workers and multinationals to targeting politicians, clergy man, entrepreneurs and business owners. Also, Arewa (2013) noted that while the crime is abating to tolerable level in the South -South where it first assumed its present notoriety, after general amnesty granted to the militants, it has spread like wide fire to the remaining parts of Nigeria especially the South East region in states like Abia, Imo and Anambra states that kidnapping was also very prevalent.

Boko-Haram members have also attacked schools and universities, for instance, the kidnapped of 250 female students from Government Girls' Secondary School Chibok Borno state and on February 19, 2018, 5:30 pm, one hundred and ten school girls aged 11-19 years old were kidnapped by Boko Haram terrorist group from the Government Girls Science and Technical College (GGSTC), Dapchi, located in Bulabulin, Yunusari Local Government area of Yobe state in the north east part of Nigeria (Onuah 2018). Another associated group, Ansaru, has also targeted Western nationals, kidnapping Christians and government officials in Kano and Kastina in North West region (Barna 2014). The South west geopolitical zone of Lagos, Ondo, Ogun, Ekiti, Oyo and Osun are not exempted especially the notable case of a billionaire kidnapper Chukwudi Onuamadike a.k.a Evans, where he made open confession when he was paraded in Lagos police headquarters about his kidnapping exploit in Lagos states and its environs (Uche 2017).

North central zone in which Kogi state our area of study is situated have also have its own share of kidnapping activities from Benue to Jos, Kwara to Nasarawa, Kogi to Abuja and Niger States. For instance, in Benue state, kidnap cases have been on the rise in which a middle age woman was arrested in Alede, Benue state for kidnapping of two siblings on her way to Onisha, also, a Journalist with Radio Benue was kidnapped in her home in Makurdi, Mrs.

Iyuadoo Tor Agbidye who was kidnapped on December 2, 2016 by four-man gang suspected to be kidnapers. (Temi, 2016).

Kidnapping in Kogi State

In Kogi state, kidnapping that is relatively known compared to its prevalence in Niger delta or southern parts of the country has become a threat and phenomenon of discourse or research among intellectuals that desire to delve into it. As a result of this, residents, visitors and travelers using Kogi state to other states are under perpetual fear. A lot of people are known to have suffered in the hands of kidnapers since kidnapping found its way to the state in the late 2000. According to one of the vigilante officers that was interviewed in Dekina Vigilante Command:

kidnapping started in Idah Local Government Area in Kogi East and their operations move to Ankpa Local Government Area before the occurrence in Dekina Local Government Area and as it is now the prevalent rate in Dekina is equivalent to that of Idah now.

In February, 2014, the wife and daughter of the former chairman of Adavi local government, Salihu Adaviruku were kidnapped from their home. The woman and her daughter spent over three weeks in captivity before they were released after undisclosed ransom was paid to the captors (<https://kogireports.com>). Also, in March, 2014, two sons of the former speaker of the state House of Assembly, Momoh Jimoh Lawal were kidnapped from his residence in Okene and were released after two days following the payment of ransom. In May, 28, 2014, Hajia Hawawu Bello, mother of the incumbent Governor of the state, Alhaji Yahaya Bello was kidnapped from her Nagazi residence in Adevi local government area. She was also released after the payment of a ransom (www.thepost.ng.com). Before now, indigenes and other residents of the state agreed that the state was only known for political violence and thuggery, as well as other forms of crime, but not kidnapping, which was only heard of in Edo, Anambra, Ondo, Enugu and other states. They wondered why it has now become rampant in Kogi state (Usman, 2015).

Finally, from 2010 till 2018, there are several cases of kidnapping in Kogi state that is not captured here leaving one to wonder if the government or the police truly exist in Kogi state. Commenting on the ugly development, a public commentator, Idris Miliki wondered why nobody is doing anything to stop the trend, which is killing the economy of the state, among other ugly influences. Miliki blamed the continued cases of kidnapping on ransom payment, which according to him, encourages the criminals to dare security agencies.

Drivers of Kidnapping in Kogi State

Drugs and alcoholic

Okoli (2009) linked the upsurge of kidnapping in Nigeria to high consumption and trafficking of hard drugs. Vigilante commander in Okene also stated that: “hard drugs and alcoholic are illicit substances that craft irreversible problem such as kidnapping, unnecessary violence, and many others imperil atrocities in Kogi state”.

Hard drugs and alcohol are toxic substance that affects wide range of body organs and fabricate harmful risks to the health especially the brain cavity yet these substances are consumed by majority of youths in Kogi state which easily drive them into crimes and criminal acts like kidnapping. Hence, the psychoactive effects they produced include sedation, euphoria, mood changes, figment of evil imagination, perceptual and other cognitive distortions with direct effects on motor neuron, thus, a man under the influence of hard drugs or alcohol is susceptible to crime.

Proliferation of small arms and light weapons (SALWS) and the abuse of military uniform

Inyang (2009) believed that the proliferation of arms as a result of political patronage of miscreant who were dumped after elections by the politicians may indirectly encourage and enhance kidnapping. Some politicians that normally employ idle youths as political thugs and armed them with arms and ammunitions during electioneering period. Therefore, after winning election, the politicians will abandon the youths and the next strategy by the youths is how to use the weapons or ammunitions in their hands to kidnap innocent citizens and the relative of those they perceive are wealthy (Iyang and Ubong 2013). More so, that some of the

thugs use fake army uniform as a camouflage to deceive unsuspecting victims pretending as if they are real army officers before carrying out their notorious activities. The Inspector of police in Lokoja police headquarters, supported this view in an interview when he said that: “some of the kidnappers disguised in military uniform to operate”.

Security lapses by the victims of kidnapping

According to Okpanachi and Agagu (2017), they argued that, inappropriate security measures have also been cited as being responsible for the kidnapping of certain people. The police on their part have chided some members of the public of not reporting or exposing strange faces sighted in their neighborhood.

Sometimes, these strange faces only come around to gather initial information about their targets social and geographical environments. Also, the populace has equally been of not being cautious enough before opening up to strangers. These malfeasants have cost many people their lives or belonging to kidnappers.

Role of security agents in ransom payment

the involvement of some security agents such as police officers as intercessors between kidnappers and relatives of their victims had equally been suspected to be a motivating factor to the escalating trend of kidnapping in Kogi state. Some kidnap victims, their friends and relatives alleged that kidnapping continued unabated because some police officers are also part of the kidnapping cartel as they give information to the kidnappers. They believe is so because they observe the police officers are often quick to offer themselves as go between for affected families in negotiating ransom with the kidnappers (Okpanachi and Agagu 2017).

Refusal to involve the police

In the other way round, the inspector in Lokoja police headquarters stated that:

hasty payment of ransom by relatives and other well-wishers of abductees without involving the police have made the tracking and eventual arrest of suspected kidnappers difficult.

Although they do this out of fear not to lose their love ones just like the case of Mustapha that was adopted from his home at Ihima in Okehi local government area of Kogi state but he was

later found dead and buried in a shallow grave in the forest (Obahopa 2016). Also, Okpanachi and Agagu (2017) mentioned that hasty payment of ransom by victim's family without involving the police has also contributed to the growth of kidnapping menace in Kogi state".

Unemployment and general socio-economic

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, Nigeria's unemployment rate increased to 23.9% in 2011 compared with 21.1% in 2010 and 19.7% in 2009. The country has a youth population of 80million, representing about 60% of the total population with a growth rate of 2.6% per year, and the national demography suggest that the youth population remains vibrant with an average annual entrant to labour force at 1.8million between 2006 and 2011. In 2011, 37.7 percent of Nigerians were aged 15-24 years and 22.4% of those between ages 25 and 44 were willing to work but did not get jobs, by this development at the national level and narrowing it down to Kogi State without proper economic planning, youths are tending to devise other means as a means of survival (Ewetan, 2013).

Social and Economic Implications of Kidnapping

Loss of investments

As a result of increase in the rate of cases of expatriates that are been kidnapped in Kogi state, this portends negative signal to investors that might have interest in investing in the state. For example, Mrs. Phylis Sortor, a 75 years old American Missionary, was kidnapped from her office at her school at Emiwooro community in Ajaokuta local government area of Kogi state, she operates a primary and secondary school known as Hope Academy, which is meant for less privilege people in the area. Being an America, her case attracted international attention and it nearly result to diplomatic fracas between Nigeria government and the US government before the woman was later released by her captors and she later left Nigeria. Moreover, two Chinese national working in a construction company in Lokoja were kidnapped at Zango-Daji community in Adavi local government area in March 2015. Three other Chinese nationals were kidnapped in another construction company at crusher area of Lokoja Local Government Area; another two Chinese nationals working in Dangote Cement Company were kidnapped

at Obajana community in Kabba Local Government Area. In April, 27, 2015, another Chinese national, Yang Zhengming, working in West African Ceramic Company Ajaokuta, was also kidnapped. Therefore, with the rate of kidnapping of expatriates, it is capable of driving investors away and those on ground might relocate which ultimately affect the socio-economic development of the state (Usman, 2015).

Diminished socio-cultural activities

Generally, insecurity normally affects social life (Abubakar, 2012). Kidnapping affects the social life and social relations of many people in Kogi state who are forced to stay at home from dusk to dawn for the fear of being kidnapped. As a result of kidnapping, night, travel has become a high-risk venture. Also, many people have been forced out of their newly completed houses by kidnapers in Lokoja metropolis in the areas that development is just springing up along Salem University area. Also, aspect of interpersonal relationship, kidnapping has also contributed to a relatively high level of mistrust among people. Few people still extend the traditional African hospitality to strangers. Some people do not acknowledge or return greeting by strangers nor oblige strangers asking for direction because most people are unwilling to render help to people in distress for fear of being kidnapped (Soyombo, 2009). In Okene for instance, night life is no longer fashionable for the fear of been kidnapped because in Okene, a pastor narrated the issue of attempted kidnap on him by kidnapers that: “there were attempts to kidnapped him and this has affected the way the church schedules their programmes not to go into the nights for the fear of been kidnapped”.

General work place insecurity: the incessant kidnapping in Kogi state as increase the insecurity sensitivity of the workers while going about their daily routine in the working place they constantly watch their back. It is difficult to work freely in an area an establishment is located and kidnapping is rampant. The kidnapping activities around the workers working environment normally affect their productivity negatively, whether at work or at leisure all Nigerians are entitled to their fundamental human right including right to movement, which kidnapers have threatened in Kogi State.

Conclusion

Kidnapping is a global phenomenon that can be traced to history. No epoch of history that is without one form of security challenge or the other. Therefore, Nigeria being a part global village has been experiencing the steady rise in the anomies of kidnapping and Kogi State is not exempted. One of the major security problems in Nigeria today is kidnapping which started as a tool for economic emancipation in the Niger Delta. But today, it has turned to means of money making by criminal gangs as a result of lack of enforcement of societal norms. The driver of this anomies can be traced to proliferation of arms, intake of hard drugs, inequality in wealth and structure of the society, unplanned economy among others.

There is therefore empirical evidence of social and economic implications of kidnapping in Kogi State in form of discouragement of expatriates and investors, wealthy indigenes avoiding the State, work place insecurity, dearth of social life, adverse effect on budget planning among others. However, with the collaborative efforts of all stakeholders in Nigerian society and government the anomies of kidnapping can be eradicated.

Recommendations

- i. Religious organization messages that centered on materialism and physical prosperity as true evidence of serving God should be modified or dissuaded.
- ii. Government through the various orientation agencies should focus on reviving the norms of the society and its enforcement.
- iii. There should be a deliberate measure to flush out bad eggs in security organizations in Nigeria and any culprit among them should be sacked and convicted to serve as deterrent to other corrupt officials.
- iv. Government should enact a law that stipulates that paying ransom without leveraging on appropriate intelligent institution of government would be deemed as an offense.

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