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Kidnapping and Rise of Insecurity in Nigeria: A Case of Kaduna State

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Abstract

In recent years, Kaduna state is experiencing an upsurge of kidnapping activities for ransom. The frequent occurrences of this new insecurity in the last few years of 2016 and 2017, has put the country and Kaduna state in danger, and have become a source of worried and concern with tenths of people from different socio-economic category are being kidnapped for ransom on daily bases. The study is to critically look at this growing criminal act, possible motives and to streamline the complexities in its control. Motives such as economic hardship, political and moral decay have led to its upsurge. Hence, proactive economic and political policies and programs are measures to address the situation.

Keywords: *Kidnapping, Abduction, Hostage-taking, insecurity, Kaduna and Nigeria*

Introduction

The concept of 'kidnapping' has possesses a definitional problem, this is because of the societal variations in moral and legal point of view as well as availability of other terminologies alike such as: *hostage-taking, abduction* and *hijacking*. In different societies therefore, these concepts are used interchangeably while in other societies, there is variation in meaning and usage. For instance, in Malaysia according to Akpan (2010), kidnapping of an adult within its territorial boundary comes under abduction while in other counties such as Nigeria, the terminologies are used as the same with slight differences in terms of moral and legal punishment attached to. Inyang & Abraham (2013) has clarified that, in hostage-taking and hijacking, the victims are seized and detained probably in a known location such as plane, ship or in a building apartment. For instance, the holdup (seizure) of a loaded vehicle or a container alone without persons is mostly seen as hijacking, while in most jurisprudence and juristic interpretation, it will be termed as theft and leaving hijacking to an illegitimate seizure of both the loaded container and the persons together. But in a broader sense, the concept of kidnapping could mean any situation of forceful disposition or taking away of an individual against his 'free will' or by luring such a person for illegal hostage (Uzorma & Nwanegbo 2014).

As a serious criminal tendency, kidnapping is soundless and quietly unheard among academic

researchers in the contemporary world, than the other form of criminality like robbery and burglary. Okoli & Agada (2014) has attributed the insignificant of the area to contemporary researchers due to fewness instances of the event, and uneasy access to kidnapers as well as limited data in the area. However, Akpan (2010) highlighted how kidnapping started, accordingly, it originated in England in the 17th century, where children are kidnapped and sold for either slavery or to work in the farm. With the emergence of organized crime around 1931, kidnapping activities had increased in the USA. Historical fact has proven that, kidnapping has little or no connection to political interest or motivation. However, from 1970s, many kidnapping for political reasons has been on till the present time.

Classification of kidnapping

The office of drugs and crime of the united Nations (UNODC, 2017), has put kidnapping in different form and purposes as follows: Kidnapping for extortion of either ransom or to influence decision making process, kidnapping between and amongst criminal groups to recover a lost or gain advantage over a rival group, kidnapping for sexual exploitation i.e. spouse or children, Kidnapping for political or ideological reason, and Kidnapping for a vengeance purpose. It is important therefore to note that the above classifications have put kidnapping as either for criminal tendencies, political or economic gains. Though, Chidi (2014) has further looked at it from cultural perspective of 'bride capture' in some social milieu. Over time, the dishonorable act has grown to become an industry of its own motivated by numerous factors in today's social life. However, studies on the area is relatively new with much of its occurrences mainly in Europe, America and Asian continent. Nevertheless, in recent years, there has been a media reports of kidnapping incidence from African continent. One of such country which the incidence become a daily event going by the media reports according to Ezeonu (2013) is Nigeria, with the oil rich Niger-delta been the first region to have started experiencing kidnapping incidence early 2000, due to poor infrastructures, land degradation and community deprivation amidst of abundant natural resources in the area. Consequently therefore, various forms of crimes have sprang-up



in the area including oil bunker and kidnapping of oil-workers for ransom.

Kidnapping in Nigeria

Kidnapping might relatively have a long history in Nigeria perpetrated at low level for ritual money-making, considered to be primitive behavior and activities aimed at acquiring illegitimate wealth (Akpan, 2010 & Badiora, 2015). The targeted victims were mostly young children or isolated persons from the public scene who are been killed mercilessly. The perpetrators then are generally referred to as 'children snatchers or thief' and are distinguished from armed robbers or minor thieves who are only after money and other valuable items. In fact, they are being feared more than the armed robbers. The reason is that, while robbers appeared well armed physically, kidnappers (child snatchers/thieves) uses charms to overpower their victims or tempt them with attraction ornament to have them taken off to their hideouts (Ani & Nweke, 2014). The victims are murdered and have some of their body organs cut off for ritual purposes. Many a times, corpses of the victims are discovered somewhere else with the culprits escaped and nowhere about.

Indeed, it's a terrifying criminal activity which today has different dynamics, with hardly kidnapping for ritual purposes in a primitive manner as it was in those days. Rather, the practice has transformed from ritual purposes to modernize venture for large sum of money-making, thorough negotiation processes for forceful extortion of the victim's family. The intent of the practice has remained, but in a newer operational method of 'armed' kidnapping for ransom. Modern 'armed kidnapping' in Nigeria started around 2005, with the emergence of militancy activities in the oil Niger delta region as stated earlier. Rightly or wrongly, Ukwai, Agba & Michael (2011) have stated that, the criminal act later became an enterprise with victims rarely get killed, but to forcefully extort money in high demand, from the multinational oil companies in the case of oil-rich Niger delta. It gradually over time evolves into kidnapping of local indigenes with varied targets by the emerging of more notorious groups. Thus, the Niger-deltant's continued to live in fear despite security effort, until 2009 when the late president Yar'adua introduced youth's rehabilitation program through Amnesty in July same year. Consequently, large quantum of arms was recovered from the

surrendered militants for optional training and development programs locally and abroad (Dodo, 2010). For this reason, kidnapping shifted ground from south-south (Niger-delta) to the southern-eastern region, from where it spread to the northern Nigeria. For instance, the first major terror kidnapping incidence in the north was on the 14th April 2014, where over 200 Chibok secondary school girls in Borno state were abducted by the acclaimed Islamist terrorist group Jama'at Ahl as-Sunnah lid-Da'wah wa'l Jihad popularly known as 'Boko-Haram' (Oyewole, 2016). The situation at present requires national emergency action, because it's no longer a regional problem any more. In today's Nigeria, kidnapping has become a national cancer, it drags the very flower of the nation into a boiling pot with youths now happily involved, because of the economic downturn of the Nigerian state in early 2015, and the financial gains attach to it. Teaming unemployed youths and students have illegally venture in, which have become as a bargaining weapon against poverty by those involved, and the situation has continued spreading with its reoccurrences in Kaduna state. This new form of security challenges in Kaduna state is disturbing, and it is endangering the welfare of the citizens in the state, thereby creating anxiety and tension. Thus, the study is to identify the security challenges of kidnapping phenomenon in Kaduna state, through documentations, media and newspaper reports, as well as victims and witnesses account of the incidence. The study starts with introduction and discussion on subject matter in Nigeria, the background of kidnapping in Kaduna state, accessing the forms and why kidnapping incidence in the state, its implications on security and remarks.

The location of Kaduna state in Nigeria

Kaduna metropolis was founded by the British colonialist in 1913, which became the administrative center of the northern region in 1917 until 1967 when regional arrangement was abolished to give way for the creation of new states. Kaduna is in the north-western Nigeria, it is a trade as well as a major transportation hub for the nearby agricultural areas, with availability of road and rail networking that linked Lagos-Nguru and Port Harcourt-Maiduguri. The rapid urbanization and population growths of the cities in the past few decades, was due to its industrial nature for textile production, steel, machinery, aluminum as well as petroleum products.



Fig. 1. Nigeria's Map showing Kaduna state

Kidnapping in Kaduna State

At present, kidnapping in Kaduna state is taking a frightening dimension giving way for unsafety and uncertain atmosphere, and a security deterioration in the state and the nation at large. Its emergence, occurrences and striving as an industry in the state in 2016 and 2017, have become a source of worried and concern with hundreds of people from different socio-economic category are being kidnapped for ransom on daily bases. The good people of the state are no longer secured and safe in their homes, farmlands, offices and even commuters and passerby on major and minor roads within the state. As earlier stated that, the devilish ack of kidnapping has been on in the coastal area of Niger-delta targeting mainly oil-workers, which has drawn international attention due to presence of multinational oil companies of shell and chevron in the region. The degree proportion of the incidence has made people in the various settlement within and outside Kaduna metropolis to go asleep with one only eye closed, while the other is on the watch. Indeed, the police commissioner in the state have testify the increase of criminality such as rubbery, gangsterism, cultism, theft, burglary, ritual killings and kidnapping, with assurance of intensifying effort to curb the menace. Some of these criminalities i.e. kidnapping for instance, is carried out in certain areas in the state, and in broad day light of either early morning or late evening time.

The Prone Areas of kidnapping in Kaduna

The central location of Kaduna state with availability high-ways that linked northern and southern Nigeria, brings about commuters and passerby on their journey. This study has identified three-major road areas regarded as hotspots for the kidnapping in the state, these include: The Kaduna-Birnin gwarri highway, Kaduna-Abuja highway, and Kaduna-Zaria highway. In these highways, many high-profile kidnappings have taken place in recent time, which has indicated a rising wave of the crime in and around Kaduna metropolis. A ransom in millions of Naira were demanded by the kidnappers for the victim's freedom.

Kaduna-Abuja high-way

Kaduna-Abuja highway is about 211km road, it is a gateway to the federal capital territory for most states in the north-west zone of Nigeria. For sometimes now, the poor road network, incessant kidnapping and robbery along the ever-busy highway have combined to make it unattractive for the motorist to fly the road. In the last one year, no fewer than 7 prominent persons been kidnapped along the highway. Among the kidnapped ones includes a former minister, serving state and federal lawmakers as well as foreign expatriates. Apart from the high-profile persons, travelers are also not safe as armed bandits abduct their victims randomly, with some victims narrating their experiences (channels Television, 2017). According to a victim as reported by channels television June 2017, "These men are wearing army uniforms, after stopping a car thinking they are military



officers on duty to check the passing vehicles, not knowing that they are kidnappers''. Sadly enough, instead of the incidence to be abating, the crime is increasing by the day with the latest abduction of 10 persons along the way same year. Danjuma Sarki, a relative to one of the kidnapped victim had complained to Kaduna police command of his brother's abduction. The highway in the last few years from the last quarter of 2016 up to present time is hot because of kidnapping activities (TVC, 2018). Kidnapping report has dominated print and electronic reports particularly because of the status of the people taking, and the regularity upon which the incidence occurs. NTA news (April 14, 2017) has reported a different model of kidnapping taking place in Kaduna state by a kidnap Gang headed by Dominic Nwafor. The gang has taken their activity to the level of business by renting an expensive apartment to use as hideout of their victims. Instead of taking them to bush area as usual, high-profile persons are kept in a mansion. One of these mansions used as hideout was located at Mararan-Rido, a new settlement along Kaduna-Abuja highway, as reported by the Salisu Rogo of NTA. It is clear therefore to say that new settlements along the busy highway is giving hideout to criminals, whom (kidnappers) prefer been a quiet place to keep their hostage victim.

Furthermore, Vanguard newspaper of June 24, (2017) have reported that, a serving member of parliament (MP) from one of the northern states was abducted along Kaduna-Abuja highway, and N10Million was reported to have been paid before his released. Few days after, same national daily have also reported that, four family members were kidnapped at a relaxation spot on same highway before were later released. Similarly, a report of Dr. Abdul Malik Durun-guwa, who was kidnapped by a gang and later his wife, have settled the kidnappers N7million to gain his freedom. The victim was blind folded for seven days while negotiation is on with his brother vis GSM, and the money was paid cash in the day time before he was released (victim confessed, NTA news (April 14, 2017). In their stop and search action, the police command in the state has arrested 31 kidnaper's suspects in their hideout at Rijana-village along Kaduna-Abuja highway, 18 of the suspect have confessed to the crime, while investigation is still on. Channels television 9 Jan. 2017 reported the arrest of suspected kidnappers who has confirmed the abduction of former minister Ambassador Bagudu Mamman on the 20th Nov. 2016, in his house in Kaduna, and collected ransom before he was released. Moreover, a report by the police command unit in Kaduna has confirmed the

kidnapping of the Sieraleonan diplomats along with top rank executive of a private company around Jere-Kateri along Kaduna-Abuja highway (NTA News, 2016). Accordingly, the gangs operated in uniform to deceive motorist and terrorize federal capital territory Abuja and Kaduna state, by mounting road blocks who appear in military uniform. They conduct surprise attacks on suspecting motorist, after grabbing a victim, they keep relocating from one point to another in the forest. Also reported by the liberty station, was the kidnapping and killing incidence of Yusuf Bello around Mando area in Kaduna metropolis (TVC, 2017).

Similarly, Silverbird station on the 1st April 2017 has reported the abduction of three clergymen including the president of the united church of Christ Rev. Emanuel Dzigga, Rev. Yakubu Darma and Rev. Leah Antoh on 20th Match 2017 along Kaduna-Abuja highway by gunmen, and only regained freedom after 10 days in captivity with one of the captives died. TVC news Nigeria has on 23th February 2017 published the abduction of a German archeologist, professor Peter and his associate Johan Boring at Gangala-village in Kagargo local government area of Kaduna. The professor was leading a four men team from Frankfort university Germany, studying the relics of the Nok culture in Nigeria, when five gunmen ambushed them and were ask to lie-down with a sporadic gun shorts on the air.

kidnappers organized themselves into different cell groups for easy operation, in a disguise approach for difficult tracing. Furthermore, the incidence is carried out in different modes of operations: either by blocking a highway using heavily armed weapons to abduct large number of persons in a swoop, or by blocking road for selective abduction of high-profiles. Another mode of operation is by attacking a community and whisk-away the targeted victim from home. Normally, the victims were held in captives for days before release after payment is made. People in their community as well as commuters, and frequent road users are moving in fear especially around the specific areas known as flashpoints including: Gonin-gora, Rijana, Jere and Marab-Rido along Kaduna-Abuja highway.

Kaduna-Birnin-gwari high-way

The forest density of Kaduna-Birnin gwarri axis neighboring Katsina and Zamfara states, have become another notorious hideout of kidnappers and other criminal gangs. The increasing security effort by the military to assault the hideout made the axis to be unsafe for the motorist and nearby



villages. Hard criminals often on drugs dependent with limited regard to humanity kidnap passerby for ransom. Worst kidnapping therefore is frequently in occurrence along the highway with little or no public attention. More so, every person irrespective of his economic status could be kidnapped along the axis attributing the incidence to the presence of robbers in the area.

Kaduna-Zaria high-way

Kaduna-Zaria highway is another competing axis for notoriety by kidnapers, especially around small towns such as Mararaba, Birnin Yero and Jaji, home of military formation. The situation is becoming scarier as even army officers (off-duty) are becoming victims. Vanguard June, (2017), has reported that a serving officer on course at Jaji military cantonment was abducted a few kilometers after Mararaba, and the kidnapers demanded for N1.5million from the family to secure his freedom. It is unfortunate as reported by the national daily that, some serving police personnel was part of the negotiation process of the kidnapped army officer Vanguard June 24, (2017). Moreover, kidnapping on these three highways are easily reported, not because of the high profiles involves, but because of the rush-hour traffic of roads users and existence of smaller towns and villages along the way.

A report by Tvc news (Jan 5, 2018) on the uniqueness of Kaduna kidnapping is that, the abductors were mostly illiterates as testified by the freeing victims. High profile such as businessmen, politicians and top civil servants were often kidnaped for ransom. Thus, the frequent occurrences of the incidence might be attributed to the following motives:

➤ ***Economic motive for kidnapping***

On common ground, human life is regulated by the forces of demand and supply, in this regard therefore, kidnapping is a social action intended to employ the most efficient means to achieve a desired goal. As a rising industry and enterprise for that sense, kidnapers are businessmen only happened to be in the illegitimate sideway of it... (Akpan, 2010 & Nwede 2017). Thus, the economic benefit derives from it motivates the perpetrators to sustain it and get easily involved in the first place. It requires fewer individuals and resources to get one involved in the act of kidnapping a victim in a well-coordinated and executed manner, and the victim's family are then contacted for ransom subject to negotiation. In this case therefore, the financial benefits of the whole operation (immediate pay-off) is a 'pull' and motivating factor of the incidence (Ani & Nweke, 2014). On

the other hand, there are 'push' motivating factors, such as: the rising poverty, joblessness and unemployment among the teeming youths of productive age amidst of abundant natural resource, makes kidnapping an alternative industry for the kidnapers to forcefully get a share of the abundant wealth. Moreover, the pervasive corruption that has eaten deep into the fabrics of Nigerian state, has contributed in fueling kidnapping activities in the state. The mentality of nothing is sacred, by legitimizing any means of wealth achieving has gained traction syndrome for getting rich at all cost among Nigerians. The political leadership in the country lacks ethical suasion to discourage itself from plundering the common patrimony (Ottu, 2017; Nwede, 2017 & Akpan 2010). For this reason, kidnapers justified their criminal act, for most of their targeted victims (in selective instances) are those plundering on the nation's economy. Similarly, the existing poor infrastructure in the country has aggravated criminal tendencies such as kidnapping in the Niger delta region with large quantum of oil deposit. Failure in infrastructure has led to a dysfunctional economic system, increases poverty and poor standard of living, which serves as a self-motivation for criminal tendency.

➤ ***Political motive for kidnapping***

In the word of Turner (1998) in Akpan study (2010), 'where there is politically motivated kidnapping, but where certainly ransom is demanded'. It is therefore observed by Nnam (2014) that, most recent kidnapping of top or high-profile individuals, are instigated by either government officials, unrewarded persons out of government or by political opponents who will opt for kidnapping as a political vendetta for scoring political marks. In this situation therefore, the act is targeted to political heads or foreign diplomats/contractors as the case may be for negotiation of weighty ransom. When target is achieved, the ransom is used to settle the political aggrieved party.

➤ ***Kidnapping as a new Habitual crime***

Kidnapping has now taking over the hitherto existing crimes in the country such as armed-robbery and pick-pocketing. Jobless youths involved in indiscriminate kidnapping of any potential individual, whom something could be retrieved in return. Every average person including young, teens and adult could fall a victim of the idle-minds for ransom to be paid. Criminal robbers have now venture into kidnapping of this category to make a living, with increasing cognition of the public but only when, where and who could be the next target is unknown. For instance, this category



of kidnapper's demand for little ransom before a victim gains freedom. In some cases, small children of poor farmers and beggars (*almajiris*) were taking off from their farms and roads for days until ransom is paid for their release

➤ ***Proliferation of arms and the collapse of security apparatus***

Failure of the security apparatus of the Nigerian state over time, with incessant conflicts occurrences has largely boldened the courage of kidnappers. According to Ibrahim & Mukhtar (2017), many youths find themselves becoming kidnappers because they were victims of ethnic or religious conflict situation who had been radicalize and lost their belongings, in that regard lost hope in the competent of law enforcement agencies. The kidnappers accessed weapons either from their ethnic, religious or political champions against their opponents in a conflict situation, or through compromising security personnel from which they later use for kidnapping.

Implications of kidnapping in Kaduna state

Kidnapping in Kaduna state has an obvious implication on the enthusiastic foreign investors in the state and the nation in general. On the account of the frequent occurrences of the incidence, traveler's advisory is being issued by countries to their citizens discouraging them not to travel to some volatile states in Nigeria including Kaduna, due to upsurge kidnapping in the state. This will therefore, have an adverse effect on economic potential development of Kaduna state. Kidnapping does not only scare away foreign investors, but also pulled down the image of the state in eyes of local investors, travelers as well as those who may wish to settle in the state.

The upsurge of the nefarious incidence the state in 2016 and 2017, has affected the morale and confidence of the people especially when it comes to issue of safety. The good people of Kaduna state are no longer paying visit to their own relatives in the villages, even farmers scared going to the farm for fear of falling a victim. This will in turn affect the agricultural productions and food supply despite the availability of maximum rainfall. Furthermore, there is growing suspicion that ransom paid to free the victims are used to acquire more weapons by the kidnappers for other forms of criminality such as robbery and cattle rustling in the state. Poor economic conditions of the Nigerian economy, unemployment and inadequate citizen-security ratio resulted to internal aggression against higher and lower average living citizens in the state. Kaduna state government in 2017 budget was

reported to have spent about two billion naira on security alone (Sahara reporters, 2017).

The life style of many residents within and outside Kaduna metropolis has changed due to growing insecurity, with many residents imprisoned (indoor) themselves in offices and homes. Many have built houses, but purposely failed to finish the exterior fittings, presenting their economic inability in effort to prevent becoming victim of kidnapping. Those with luxurious vehicles, resort to using commercial riders called 'achaba' to hide their economic status in their daily activities. The situation has affected the mutual trust and hospitable African attitudes among people, with some hardly respond to courteous greetings to unknown persons. The use of GPS device for guide to unknown places as obtained in similar developing countries such as Malaysia is not feasible due to low technology advancement and inadequate energy supply in the state and by extension Nigeria. Hence, people on the road would hardly be willing to assist for direction guidance, due to mistrust and fear to risk kidnapping. Since its escalation from 2016, many residents of Kaduna metropolis and environs have only confine their movement around their vicinity, which in turn impacted on business activities in the state.

Remarks

The situation therefore need synergy between and among the security agencies and the people in state, through inter-agency approach and community policing. The inter-agency should embark on aggressive intelligence gathering to track and intercept criminal hideout in the state. In their synergy with the citizenry, security consciousness and cooperation's should be encouraged through free telephone numbers for communication. Moreover, there should be operational training of the state security out-fit (operation Yaki), and the Nigerian police by the military to be as good as the army itself in matters of handling security issue. The security agencies in the state i.e. police, operation-Yaki and even the army, should do away with inter-agency pride and pomposity to save the life of the people as the primary function of any government.

Based on the present circumstances in Kaduna state, there is need for the state assembly to enact laws regarding kidnapping and other criminal practices peculiar in the state. For instance, Anti-kidnapping law to stipulate death penalty, will certainly deter those wanting to join the act, if it carries this capital punishment. It will amount to irresponsiveness for any government to allow the



case to be prolonged by the poor and inefficient judicial system, knowing that victims are losing their lives in captivity subjected to serious agony. Additionally, enacting the law alone will not be sufficient, government must be able to deal with the conditions and circumstances that led to those crimes in the first place. The teaming jobless youth must be provided with legitimate job, through definite steps to accommodate the graduating youths and discourage the perceived economic profitability of kidnapping, knowing the consequences attached to it.

There should also be a grass-root sensitization by government in the state (after making the stringent law), to prevent people from unknowingly assisting kidnapers. For instance, domestic staffs or housemaids should be made to know that there is no room for ignorance, we should all be conscious about the information we pass or discuss with other people even those we know.

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At individual level, people should be abreast in taking care of oneself because security is everyone's business. For instance, people should not be too flamboyant in life style by driving flashy cars or having a sticker on your car that tells where you work i.e. Bank, oil companies, CBN etc. or wearing tag except when is necessary. Little things like this could help to protect oneself at individual level, and at community level, there is need for regular town hall meeting to brief oneself with happenings around, this will complement the efforts of the security agencies.

Conclusion

It is unfortunate therefore to say that kidnapping has seized our country to jugular, there was never a time when kidnapping was rampant in Kaduna state and Nigeria by effect like the present time. There is a saying that, every society gets the criminal it deserves by preparing crimes which criminals perpetrate.



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