Causes of Kidnapping in Nigeria and Proposed Solutions

Yusuf Kamaluddeen Ibrahim[*]
Department of International Relations, Faculty of Law and international relations, Universiti Sultan Zainul Abidin (UniSZA), Kuala –Terengganu, Malaysia

Abdullahi Ayoade Ahmad
Department of International Relations, Faculty of Law and international relations, Universiti Sultan Zainul Abidin (UniSZA), Kuala –Terengganu, Malaysia

Abstract

Nigeria is a complex society with a rapid growing population of roughly 200 million people. The country has around 500 different languages and 250 distinct ethnic groups. Thus, uniting these complex groups into one unified political entity since the amalgamation of the country in 1914 proved difficult. Comparatively, Nigeria is one of the secured and peaceful nations in the West African sub-region; however, contemporarily, this endowed nation suddenly plunged into waves of kidnapping and other heinous crimes such as armed robbery and banditry. The phenomenon has escalated and led to numerous lives lost, which also crippled socio-economic activities. Generally, as enshrined in chapter 2, section 14(2b) of the 1999 Constitution of Nigeria, the security of lives and property is one of the primary responsibility of the state. This study aims to identify the causes of kidnapping in Nigeria and offer some strategic solution to the problem. The study adopted a Qualitative method and also adopt both Marxian and strain theories of crime. The study`s findings through descriptive and historical method shows that abject poverty, corruption and fraud, political influence, joblessness, terrorism, lack of capital punishment by the government, the changing value system and quick-money syndrome are the major causes of kidnapping in Nigeria. Finally, the study went further to profound remedies that will stop the ugly menace of kidnapping in Nigeria, such as job creation, New policy adaptation and implementation, public awareness and empowerment programs, Sim cards registrations, quitting ransom payment, re-modified community policing and stoppage of small and light arms proliferation in the country. Considerably, by adopting such measures, we hope that the menace will perish in Nigeria for a better and productive society.

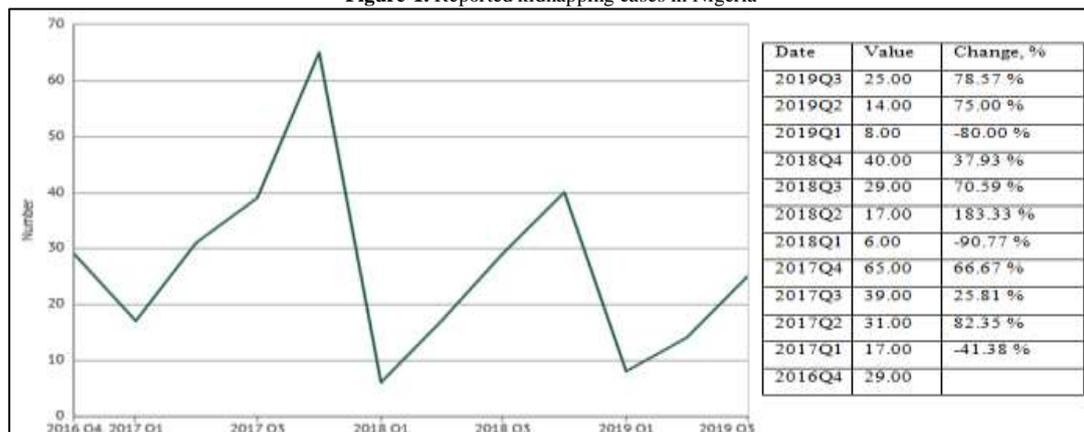**Keywords:** Kidnapping; National security; Nigeria.

1. Introduction

Globally, the criminal phenomenon and behavior such as kidnapping, is not new. It's a worldwide phenomenon with criterial differences and scenarios. In the Nigerian context, prior to 1990s, the issue of abduction was rare, and it has not been reported in the Eighth United Nations Survey on Crime Trends and Operation of Criminal Justice System conducted in 2002 by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime,(Obarisiagbon and Aderinto, 2018). The current wave of kidnapping in Nigeria started on 25th February 2006 by the abduction of expatriates working for the oil companies in the Niger Delta area. Kidnapping displayed as an open message to the world for many years of injustice, marginalization, alienated, and underdevelopment of the area (Akpan, 2010). Since then, the menace becomes boldly commercialized in several parts of the country. In contemporary Nigeria, the implications of kidnapping are not only on the foreigners; sadly, it now includes locals, such as; adult females and males, the poor and the rich, the aged, and children.

Figure-1. Reported kidnapping cases in Nigeria

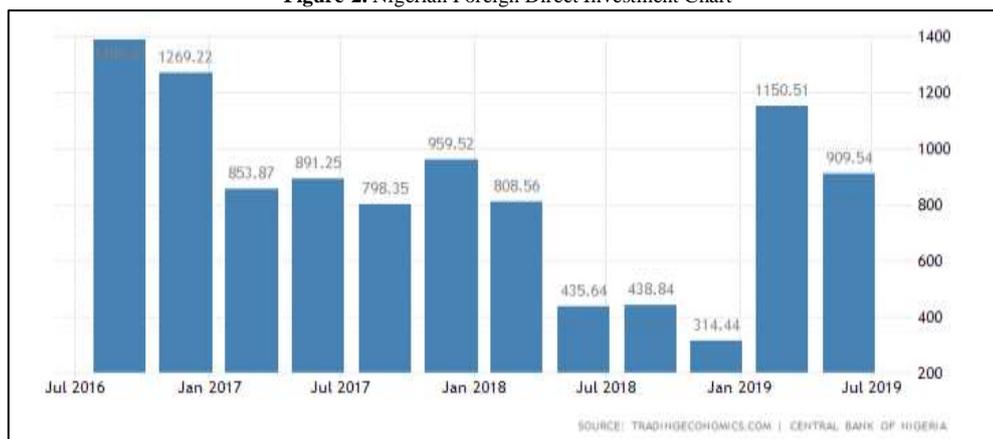| Date	Value	Change, %
2019Q3	25.00	78.57 %
2019Q2	14.00	75.00 %
2019Q1	8.00	-80.00 %
2018Q4	40.00	37.93 %
2018Q3	29.00	70.59 %
2018Q2	17.00	183.33 %
2018Q1	6.00	-90.77 %
2017Q4	65.00	66.67 %
2017Q3	39.00	25.81 %
2017Q2	31.00	82.35 %
2017Q1	17.00	-41.38 %
2016Q4	29.00	

Source: Knoema (2019a)

*Corresponding Author

The wave of kidnapping phenomenon has become so absurd and terrible. The diary of the recent major kidnaps in Nigeria has however revealed that the deteriorative rate of kidnapping at National level is 0.001 per 100,000 populations in 2013, it also escalated from 29 in 2016 to 40 in 2018, evolving at an average annual rate of 42.84%, even though the incidents is fluctuating substantially, from 2017 to 3rd quarter of 2019 it tends to decline to 25 and changed at 78.57% (Knoema, 2019b). Nigeria was 3rd in Africa and the top 14th in the world according to crime index report mid-year (2019). The most unfortunate victims of these menace of kidnapping in Nigeria often die in the process while the luckier ones are released after severe torture and payment of huge ransom.

Evidently, as recognized insecurity in Nigeria is the main reason terrorizing the investors to look for more suitable business chances elsewhere in Africa. For instance, the deteriorated militancy actions from the Niger delta, concerning the petroleum region, perpetrated to the declining of about $5.85 billion in 2006 from $13.96 billion in 2005 based on a recent United Nations report (Nwozar, 2010), Royal Dutch shell by the first quarter of 2009 noticed the declination of their products from 1million (BPD) to around 250,000bpd. Disruption, oil bunkered and kidnapping expatriate's oil staffs by so-called rebels crippled the production of the multinational companies and rotten the economy of Nigeria Uma and Ikpe (2016). Frequently in the petroleum sector, about $5.85 billion sank in 2007 from $13.96 billion in 2006, according to a recent United Nations report (Makinde, 2018).

Figure-2. Nigerian Foreign Direct Investment Chart

Source: Trading Economic (2020)

According to Trading Economics and Central Bank of Nigeria 2020, the FDI in 2017 was 1269.22 which drop to 959.52 in 2018 and also declined to 909.54 in 2019, due to deteriorative insecurity incidences such as kidnapping, Banditry, Boko haram and others. Based on the IMF report; World economic outlook (WEO), the GDP of Nigeria in 2011 is 414.10 billion USD, also $568.50 in the year 2014, but unfortunately declined to $376.36 in 2007, and $398.19billion in 2018 due to the heated kidnapping incidences (Knoema, 2019a).

Furthermore, FDI inflow promotes the developmental prosperity of the host country in multiple ways. Also, FDI has subsidized positively to the growth and development of the Nigerian economy. Nwogwugwu et al. (2012) speculates that there is a very positive synergy concerning multinational direct investment and Nigeria`s economic development, "1% increase in multinational direct investments will source as up to 80% growth in the gross domestic product (GDP)". This deadly crime occurs in both urban and rural areas. In fact, kidnapping is being perpetrated in almost all parts of Nigeria. The most worrisome and frightening aspect of this deadly crime is not just the humiliation and torture that the victims experience at the hands of the captors or the monetary exaction in the name of ransom that often follows, but the lack of adequate response from the security agencies to tackle the menace. This study is of the view that more than ever before, Nigeria has a serious and urgent need to critically re-observed her security outfit concerning the structure and capacity of the nation`s policy system. These are specifically necessary in the context of the present emphasis on crime avoidance as against the unpopular crime-fighting strategy act of (1943) as inherited from colonial masters (Oputa et al., 1975).

Furthermore, responding to the existing high-profile kidnapping in the country, The Nigerian senate president urges the need to reform and restructure the Nation's security architecture due to deteriorative deadly insecurity challenges terrorizing the country (Umoru, 2019). The issue has been widely heard to the extent that the United States imposed a visa ban on Nigeria (Olaniyi, 2020). The Senate President warned that the current insecurity situation in the country was crippling the socio-economic activities and scared away investors, which left the development of Nigeria in stagnation. Thus, he called for a concerted effort from all arms of the government to tackle the problem (Umoru, 2019).

It is in addition to the situation above that this study offered some measures, such as the job creation, New policy adaptation and implementation, public awareness and empowerment programs, Sim cards registrations, quitting ransom payment, consolidation and adoption of a modified system of community policing and stoppage of small and light arms proliferation in the country. These could be an effective strategy that can assist the policy-makers in dismantling the menace of kidnapping in Nigeria.

2. Methodology

This study adopted descriptive and historical methods, which precisely pursued to highlight related literatures such as books, journals, and current media reports on deteriorative kidnaps in Nigeria. This method was adopted because it was reflected as the most effective strategy for attaining authentic information on this heinous crime in Nigeria, it is also viewed as the best method for understanding the magnitude and danger of high-profile kidnapping in Nigeria.

3. Theoretical Underpinnings

In an attempt to illustrate on deteriorated kidnapping incidences in Nigeria, the study adopted both the strain and Marxian conflict theories of crime; these two theories are undeniably potent on sufficient enlightenment and insight about this vicious act in Nigeria. The crime and conflict relations have been conceptualized in many scenarios in criminological literature. However, this study adopted the Marxian strand on this viewpoint. As according to (Bridges *et al.*, 1996) crime is law violations by basically normal persons in developing realistic conflicts of interest, arising from a " criminal activities as almost entirely a function of an unstable and ill-equipped economic structure, supporting selfishness and resulting in misery for many and uncertainty for all, or conflict between those who pursue to preserve a certain authority structure and those who are trying to destroy or modify it."

A critical analysis of the Nigerian crime condition especially as it relates to heinous crimes which include kidnapping would eagerly indicate that the above statement delivers useful insights in the enlightenment of these crimes, many Nigerians would approve that structural poverty created by injustice and exploitation by the Nigerian political authorities are the foundations of heinous crimes in relation to kidnapping. As explained before, the strain theory also offers a useful insight into the crime situation in Nigeria, precisely concerning kidnapping. The erudite French sociologist and scholar Emile Durkheim had, according to Blackburn (1993), theorized that under each social condition, traditional societal rules and norms lose their power over behaviour. Durkheim had discussed this condition as 'anomie". Blackburn argues that this major statement provided a stand for Robert Merton's strain theory of criminal behaviour, Robert Merton had reasoned that society installs in its people aspiration for certain goals and advocates socially appropriate means for attainment of such goals. He recognized five different ways by which individuals change themselves, especially in a capitalist environment with strongly clear distinctions and prescribed goals between deviant and standardized means of attaining such goals. The fourth adaptation method in Merton's analysis, "Innovation," is what matters most in this discussion. In the rich overnight Nigerians dream of today, where everybody is desperate for treasure fortune, innovative methods have turned to shortest cut to wealth, as deviant strategies include; corruption, robbery, kidnapping for ransom, and all forms of fraud. In fact, innovative methods in Nigeria have turned into what (Umez, 2000) defined as a prevalent value system that encourages illegal and corrupt practices as sufficient and necessary means to survive.

4. Historical Exploration of Kidnapping

The kidnapping of human beings is not of a recent phenomenon; this disastrous crime has many motives that can largely be classified under; social, political, and economic reasons. According to Cyriax *et al.* (2009), the first crucial kidnapping incident reported for economic reasons was the one of 4-years-old Charlie Ross from Philadelphia in the United States of America. These authors have further described that the word 'kidnap' comes from the English practice of seizing children in the seventeenth-century and transferring them as slaves to the tobacco farmsteads in the colonies of America (Cyriax *et al.*, 2009). He precisely noted that aggravated kidnappings were mostly occurred to achieve any or a combination of the following objectives: Obtaining hostage for ransom, Robbing, Terrorize, Blackmail or Murder the victim, Sexual invasion and Achieving political aims (Samaha, 2011).

In the Nigerian context, it must be considered that kidnapping for social reasons is not of recent development. In ancient times, individuals, especially strangers, were often kidnapped either for ritual or burial purposes of prominent chiefs and warriors. Reasons for this trend can be ascribed to a set of factors that are greatly interlinked but are separated here for analytical purposes. These include; excessive greed for power and wealth by politicians, Misplacement of our value system with emphasis increment on material gains at the expense of respect and hard work for constituted authorities, Unemployment, Abject Poverty, fraud and Corruption. Now We shall explain briefly how each of these factors becomes a contributed component to kidnapping in Nigeria.

5. Factors Contributing to the Problems of Kidnapping in Nigeria

Dodo (2010), Ugwuoke (2011), have elaborate on the causes of kidnapping in Nigeria, such as abject poverty, corruption and fraud, political influence, joblessness, terrorism, lack of capital punishment by the government, the changing value system and quick-money syndrome.

5.1. Abject Poverty

The poverty situation in Nigerian is another reason that triggered people to partake in the kidnapping. They view it as a means of exit from the track of poverty for riches. These is because when an individual is kidnapped, a huge ransom is being demanded, and until that ransom is delivered to the kidnappers, the kidnappee will never be released to his people. When the kidnappers secured the ransom, they suddenly turn rich compared to their former miserable poverty state (Umez, 2000).

5.2. Corruption and Fraud

Corruption and fraud are two associated factors that contribute enormously to economically motivated kidnapping in contemporary Nigeria. The Nigerian leader's corrupt influences must have ignited vices such as kidnapping in the country. According to Transparency international, transparency perception index (2019), Nigeria is globally transitioning from 26 since 2015 to 2019 on the persistent corruption rank countries. Evidently, as reasoned by Adibe (2012) that the agitation of Niger Delta and other Nigerian youths generally might not have led to kidnapping if our national resources were shared wisely. As the business of kidnap booms in Nigeria, it team-up with a corrupt police force, bankers, etc.

5.3. Political Influence

There is no gainsaying in the fact that lots of politicians in Nigerian are hungry for power and are indeed resolute to kill in order to acquire power by all means. The incidence escalations of political assassinations in the country is transparent that most politicians turn evil, by kidnapping fellow Nigerians for ritual purposes and political assassinations to attain their goals. It is surprising and in fact unfortunate to observe that as election approach's children's and individuals with abnormalities such as imbeciles and psychologically-ill people are the targeted subject for rituals, Parents and relatives are strictly warned about the whereabouts of individuals and to take precautions because of the ritual kidnappers who are often agents of politicians, these type of kidnapping usually occurred in Nigeria as a preparation for a political campaign for election (Dodo, 2010).

5.4 Joblessness

As the wise-adage goes, "An idle mind is the devil's workshop." In Nigeria, many unemployed youths are poverty afflicted and usually find comfort in heinous crimes such as kidnapping because they are unemployed and poor in the sense that school drop-out and graduates roam around the streets, both unemployed for years(Ugwuoke, 2011).

5.5. Terrorism

Some jobless and hungry youths in Nigeria have taken it upon themselves that terrorism is the solution to their numerous problems, as exemplified through the Nigerian government's long period exploitation of the Niger Delta people, which reflect on other agonized youths to used kidnapping as an alternate remedy to their problem. (Odey, 2000) had also observed that the youth's exclusion triggered their obsession in heinous crimes as a means of survival.

5.6. Lack of Capital Punishment by the Government

Most traditional legal systems in African used capital punishment as the last option for capital crimes; the lack of strict penalty on kidnappers is why the menace is deteriorating in Nigeria. Kidnappers see this unlawful business as rich fortune and therefore find it difficult to quit (Dodo, 2010)"this is because there is little risk of an action for traffickers; hence, the trade thrives on." as an effective deterrent the National Assembly should, as a matter of urgency, legislate an enable law that would impose capital punishment for kidnapping in Nigeria.

5.7. The Changing Value System in Nigeria

According to Umez (2000), the governing value system in contemporary Nigeria is one that endorses and glorifies illegal and corrupt means as necessary and sufficient means to earn, it now re-shapes most Nigerians moral integrity, including the youths, is a whole reverse of the traditional system, which was basically predicated on good morals and hard work. Odey (2000) has stated that; 'a society that is keen on condemning its youths for being dishonest and lazy, and for instituting a menace to the rest of the people such as kidnapping, armed robbery and materialism should equally be keen on providing better economic, social, and moral alternatives that will dissolve immoralities to be less attractive and thus drain their current drift to criminal life.'

5.8. Quick-Money Syndrome

According to Dodo (2010), "one of the causes of kidnapping in Nigeria is the rich-quick syndrome," Most Nigerians are not willing to strive. At the same time, survival of the fittest is the norm in contemporary Nigeria. Thus, you cannot harvest what you did not plant. Most Nigerian youths are people with big dreams; through rich-quick syndrome without working, they decide to achieve those dreams upon kidnapping for ransom.

6. Conclusion

This study has found that kidnapping resulted in a multi-million-naira criminal business in Nigeria, and it further elaborates on the concept of kidnapping in its historical context. The study broadly identified causes of kidnapping through a descriptive and historical method, which include abject poverty, corruption and fraud, political influence, joblessness, terrorism, lack of capital punishment by the government, the changing value system, quick-money syndrome. As a result of that, this study`s submission is to ensure that government has significantly played a major role in stemming the tide of kidnapping, to also reposition the constitutional capability over the menace of kidnapping, rediscover the political implications of the phenomenon and provide the panacea to stem the tide of kidnapping in Nigeria.

The study went further to profound remedies that will stop the ugly menace of kidnapping in Nigeria, such as job creation, New policy adaptation and implementation, public awareness and empowerment programs, Sim cards registrations, quitting ransom payment, re-modified community policing and stoppage of small and light arms proliferation in the country. Lastly, with such recommendations, we hope that the menace will perish in Nigeria for a better and productive society.

7. Proposed Solutions to the Problem of Kidnapping in Nigeria

The paper has reviewed deteriorative crime incidents in Nigeria with special reference to kidnapping, and it is a pity to observe that Nigeria is still dangling to stand on its feet, it is hoped that the recommendations of this paper will be able to offer a panacea to security problems of our great nation with special reference to heinous crimes such as kidnapping.

7.1. The Responsibilities of the Government
7.1.1. Job Creation

The issue of the death penalty as a panacea to the menace of kidnapping by some affected states in the country is not peculiarly enough and only solution, because some criminals are willing to change, such as those that embark into the kidnapping act as the only means of survival. Therefore, the government and other relevant agencies need to come up with a jobs creation scheme for idle minded graduates and provide a productive business environment that will attract investors to invest in order to restructure and re-configure safety for a better and productive society. The foreign and local investment into the Nigerian economy would provide jobs for the people, and would re-energizes the generation of a progressive economy.

7.1.2. New Policy Adaptation and Implementation

The Nigerian government should endorse a strict anti-kidnapping law, where kidnapping should be indicted as a capital offense, though kidnappings are of different types and levels. Therefore, punishment should be assigned accordingly. Relatively, the government officials must avoid corruption and flashy wealth display, and should provide the new policies that will economically sustain peoples demand and empower them. The focus must be re-energizing on good leadership with transparency, responsibility, and equality. By applying this, hostage-taking will be eliminated and replace with patriotism, nation-building, and sustainable development.

7.1.3. Public Awareness and Empowerment Programs

The three arms of government, particularly the federal government, should embark on a public awareness campaign on the need to shun kidnapping. Less-privileged inclusion in the Poverty alleviation programs, especially in the rural areas, will ease the economic hardship as well as the Establishment of Micro-industries in the rural areas to empower the youths. This will re-locate the attention of youths away from kidnapping.

7.1.4 SIM Cards Registration

The service providers have to re-check their policy effectively to ensure every line is registered before it started working, that will enable them to track in and out-going call by every customer in the Network, as well as track their location using GPS network, in order to traced and intercede every call from the kidnappers and track their location which is detectable by the network provider. After all, the perpetrators used phone-based operation for negotiation of ransom.

7.1.5. Quitting Ransom Payment

The kidnappee's family should refrain from paying ransom in desperation and delays a little longer or quit the ransom payment to the kidnappers because it often serves as a motivational element for the perpetrators to keep exploring in the vicious act.

7.2. Consolidation and Adoption of a Re-Modified System of Community Policing

The consolidation and adoption of a modified system of community policing idea would be a veritable security information source to the security agencies. The new security outfits formed to police the community should be recurring and reporting any suspicious movement about kidnapper's hideouts. They should be provided with vehicles and communication devices and synergic relations with the security agencies in order to attain their required operations. After all, the kidnappers are human beings, and the security forces are not supernatural; they required information to enable them to work properly and diligently.

(i)Any government official, public office holder, or politician set up-relations with kidnappers. Such traitor supposed to be ban from vying and contesting any governmental position, and it will be rest assured discourage others not to part-take in the criminal act.

(ii) Any complete/uncompleted house caught accommodating kidnap victims should be seized or destroyed for future occurrence and better safe society.

7.3. Stoppage of Small and Light Arms Proliferation

Based on the African Union summit concerning silencing gun (2020), the rise and escalation in light and small arms trade have implicates on the safety of the vulnerable society, including children, women, and the ages as well as the infrastructure. Additionally, the illegal flow of arms creates a culture of violence and unstable society through criminal influence and illegal smuggling. Small and light arms possession present power, without even fulling the trigger. This weapons coercive potent exploited by the perpetrators to treat their kidnapees to compel with their demand without resistance and hesitation. The government needs to control it porous borders to content illegal flows of weapons. Also, the local black-smith have to be supervised and monitored on their production because they often produce weapons that end up in the wrong hands or with the perpetrators such as kidnappers and other criminals.

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