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THE CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF KIDNAPPING IN CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA.

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Abstract
This study examined the causes and consequences of kidnapping in contemporary Nigeria. Kidnapping is a vice and an illegal act that is abhorred by the Nigerian state. Unfortunately, kidnapping as a crime has continued to soar across the six geo-political zones of the country. Part of the reasons why many criminals take to kidnapping as an occupation is because of poverty, unemployment and the prolonged period of suffering and neglect of the citizens by government. More so, lack of moral education from the family and society and the drive to make quick money have engineered some young men and women into engaging in hostage taking and kidnapping as a lucrative and profitable business. In recent time, kidnapping has spread like wide fire in the country and human lives are traded for money or ransom, some victims are freed after hard bargaining and payment of ransom, while the unfortunate ones are tormented, tortured, persecuted or killed. This is a sickening, disgusting, dishonorable, offensive, distasteful and vile business that provides income for the rich (the sponsors) and the unemployed youths who commit these callous crimes on behalf of their employers. This study adopted the descriptive methodology. It drew upon primary and secondary sources, primarily sources include oral information and testimony where secondary sources include newspapers, magazines reports and relevant books.

Keywords: Kidnapping, Social Vices, Causes, Consequences, Nigeria.

Introduction

Kidnapping is the act of forceful abduction, enslavement and seizure of a person by a criminal or criminals to demand for the release of the person by payment of ransom from one's relation, friends, family members or government. Kidnapping can also be referred to child stealing and women abduction by a criminal to demand for ransom/money from the parent or family members. In the process of child stealing and women abduction, the women folk, unfortunate victims are being raped, abused, defiled, maltreated or assaulted sexually by the kidnapper. In the recent history of Nigeria, kidnapping is a lucrative job for the men and women of the underworld and criminals. In the process of kidnapping, breakdown of law and order is evident, as victims' right to living and freedom is threatened, bullied, endangered, jeopardized, and terrorized.

As Levi Obijiofor (2019) aptly pointed out, "Today in Nigeria, kidnappers now determine where we can go to, when we can go to those places, and how we can reach our destinations, what the kidnapper have been able to communicate to the Nigerian citizenry is fear, danger, distress, panic and misgiving of lack of government effort to protect the citizens as enshrined in Nigeria's constitution". Kidnapping is happening in Nigeria because the government and security agents are weak, corrupt and fearful to dire the dreadful, and law abiding citizens. Kidnapping thrive in Nigeria because the kidnappers and their sponsors collide with the high profile elites and the security agents who are in their pay list. Kidnapping is happening in Nigeria because there is mis-governance and insecurity in the country. More so, the people that supposed to fight kidnapping are benefiting from the lucrative job. Kidnapping and its allied criminal vices has done irreclaimable and irrecoverable dent to Nigerian image and good name. Kidnapping threatens foreign investors and tourist who want to come and invest and do potential business in Nigeria. Bad news are abound of stories of kidnapping in the country that scare away investors, hence, the isolation and dissociation of Nigerians by potential business partners.

This makes Nigeria business men and women to suffer business disconnection, loneliness, seclusion and incommunicable from business partners abroad.

Kidnapping in Nigeria started in the Niger Delta, the oil rich region, when militants kidnapped oil workers to demand for ransom as a measure of agitation for source control, unfortunately, the government and the security agents did not check or stop the vice of kidnapping in the region. Later the vice of kidnapping spread to the South-East region, especially the Aba axis, where criminals abduct people to demand for ransom. Unfortunately the security agents were not strong enough to curb the menace. As the evil of kidnapping spread to the South- West Region, especially in the urban centers of Lagos and Ibadan, including Benin City of Edo State where criminal abduct people and demand fat ransom claim. Yet the security agents failed to clamp on kidnappers as the vice spread like wild-fire across Nigeria. Including Northern Nigeria that became notorious for kidnapping with the emergence of Boko Haram Islamic terrorist group that kidnapped school girls, a case of note was the Chibok and Dapchi school girls' abduction by Boko Haram group in Northern Nigeria that attracted national and international concern.

Causes of Kidnapping in Contemporary Nigeria

It is unfortunate to note that the cause of kidnapping in the recent history of Nigeria is because the architects of the flourishing abduction industry are well connected and linked up to the high profile Nigerians and security agents; these are the elites and untouchable in the society that are above the law of the land. They can commit offence and go free because they have the ill-gotten money and influence of the corrupt. For example, as evidence by the daring actions of the Taraba state kidnap top dog, Hamisu Wadume. He showed Nigerians that he was untouchable because he had networks in high places that provided him security and intelligence. He also had ready supplies of weapons. In general, the kidnap masterminds pay attractive salaries or allowances to their infantry men. It reveals that the government and the security agents collide, albeit, collaborate, connive, conspire and plot to commit kidnapping and ridding innocent Nigerians lives and property. (Obijiofor, 2019).

Kidnapping business has today spread in Nigeria like wide-fire. The country is now seen as a center for the training and dispatch of kidnappers. Kidnapping is a well-paid trade. Many poor and unemployed youth are lining up to enroll in the forest where kidnappers are trained, armed and rewarded. Many youths that are immoral believes why should they carry university degree certificates that are useless in the employment market while a few nights of successful hostage taking would generate millions of naira in their first month of operation? Many ill-advised youths now believe that there is more money in masterminding the successful abduction of citizens and their family members than hard work and sincerity. These are some of the causes of kidnapping in Nigeria and many developing countries in Africa. This is as a result of failed government and societal institutions that denied its citizenry moral education, values and development.

In the recent history of Nigeria, kidnappers are earning huge amounts of money because of the failure of the government to provide for the safety of citizens. Kidnappers and their masters continue to take their chokehold on Nigerians because the government and security agents are corrupt, weak and unpatriotic to protect the nation and its citizenry. (Obijiofor, 2019).

In every democratic society, the government has the obligation to look after the society, welfare, and wellbeing of the citizens. That duty is non-negotiable. In Nigeria today, government and the security agents have not achieved these obligations. That is the reason or cause kidnapping thrive as a trade. Because of kidnapping and its allied criminal vices abhorred by the society, many have taken to self-defense, while the weak perished at the mercy of kidnappers and killers. It is this culture of master-servant relationship that explains why Nigerian government refuses to address insecurity and other social problems, such as kidnapping, poverty, unemployment and homelessness.

The poor masses in Nigeria are weak and subjected to penury by the corrupt elite. Moreso, the poor masses do not query why they consistently treated as second-rated citizens in their fatherland. They settle for the less, for the fragments that falls off the tables of their political leaders. They accept to serve political leaders while in practice politicians are elected to serve the people. In Nigeria, the police and other security agencies have failed to match the resistance of kidnappers and their masters. These are the causes and reasons some victims are packed up like ants in the comfort of their homes,

and on their way to or from work. Other victims are kidnapped in the church premises while serving and worshipping their God.

Kidnapping is rampant in Nigeria because the government has failed to address the challenge of unemployment. Unemployment is the propeller that fans poverty. And poverty drives people to kidnapping and other crimes (Obijiofor, 2019). Unemployed youths are forced to find ways to survive in the country's hash economic condition. Since independence, the government of Nigeria failed to plan for the massive youth population; the system did not cater adequately for the needs of the unemployed youth, thus crime offers some therapy, indeed an option, cure, healing and treatment for survival. This is where the successive Nigerian government failed the future generation. And today the nation is ripping the whirlwind of kidnapping because of the rash, impetuous and faulty foundation and system the Nigerian elites offered their youths. Many Nigerian youths are into kidnapping because they are trapped in an endless cycle of poverty which the government did not provide a lee-way space and room of enabling environment to survive. They have plans they cannot fulfill, they have families they cannot assist. Many Nigerians have school fees and yearly rents they cannot afford to pay. They are desirous to buy basic cloths and shoes for family members. They have to pay the high cost of transportation every day. They have financial commitments that cannot be accomplished. These are the terrible and unpleasant economic harsh conditions that frighten and drive many people into kidnapping and other allied crimes in contemporary Nigeria.

There is a correlation between the failures of government and kidnapping that thrives in contemporary Nigeria. Hence the breakdown of law and order results to kidnapping and its allied crimes. Another issue that encourages kidnapping in Nigeria is the lame judicial framework and its attendant ineptitude in providing justice for the victims of kidnapping. These have contributed to its perpetration in large scale. Offenders are not prosecuted nor are they punished most of the time. (Ele, 2019). Another factor that encourages kidnapping in Nigeria is its long porous borders with neighboring countries, especially in Northern Nigeria. These unchecked porous borders allow kidnappers from other countries to enter Nigeria to commit kidnapping of Nigerians for fat ransom claims. It is unfortunate to note that the huge expanse of land, ungoverned and undeveloped, like Sambisa forest in Northern Nigeria provide a breeding den and ground for kidnapping, and Boko Haram insurgency and terrorism. More so, the land porous borders in the Northern Nigeria also encourage arms proliferation in the region that causes kidnapping business to thrive. It is also important to note that some Nigerian politicians also import arms through the country's porous borders to give their thugs to enable them win election for them. After the elections, some of the arms are not disarmed from the thugs; they used them to kidnapped opponents and enemies of their godfathers to forcefully collect ransom from them. Another factor that encourage kidnapping in Nigeria is drug abuse addicted victims. When youths take in drugs they become "high" and courageous to kidnap the wealthy people for fat ransom claims from their relations and parents. (Ele, 2019).

In Nigeria, kidnappers abduct their victims to settle politically motivated plan to frustrate opponent politicians who are threats to their plan to secure political power. Kidnapping is criminal, devilish and cruel, yet kidnappers see abduction as a business to make money through ransom claims. In the Niger Delta region, kidnappers also abduct oil workers and demand ransom worth millions of naira under severe threats to life from their loved ones, oil companies and government. In the oil rich region, kidnapping is also regarded as an instrument of the struggle for ethnic politics and resource control agitation from the government; they used it to speak their message of freedom to government and to power.

In Nigeria, there are some kidnappers who abduct children and adults and sell them to ritual occultic dealers. Other kidnappers also abduct people is children to sell them to childless parents and to private and secrete orphanage homes. In some cases, the kidnapped children are sold to child traffickers abroad; some of them are used as child labour and prostitute to their dealers who used them to make ill-gotten money. These are some of the vices abhorred by society, where human beings are used to make blood money, in the name of business. (Ezinwa, 2015).

The Consequences of Kidnapping in Contemporary Nigeria

Kidnapping has made Nigeria to become an insecure country literally; the fear of kidnappers is real. Everyone is a primary target, previously, kidnappers tended to mark out the rich of the society. Today, the rich are no longer the main target or focus of kidnappers, ordinary people are targeted too According to Obijiofor (2019), Across Nigeria, the poor and the rich, men and women, boys and girls, lawmakers and judiciary officers, Nollywood actors and musicians, pastors and politicians, students representatives and labor leaders have become easy prey for rapacious abductors. Kidnappers are earning huge amount of money because of the failure of the government and security agents to provide safety of citizens

Kidnapping makes Nigerian politics a do or die affair, as politicians can use their thugs as kidnappers to abduct their victims to settle politically motivated plans to frustrate opponents politicians who are threats to their plan to rig election to secure power, for example, in 2010 governorship elections in Anambra state, kidnappers abducted the father of Professor Charles Soludo, the governorship aspirant of People's Democratic Party, PDP, not until they collected ransom before Professor Soludo's father was released. Politically, this evil act weakened Prof. Soludo to secure power in Anambra state. Kidnapping is a sin that causes the death, suffering and frustration of many families in Nigeria. It is terror, oppressive and grief to the good people of Nigeria. Kidnapping makes criminals to exploit the rich and the affluent in the society. Kidnapping brutalized society. And distorted values in the Niger Delta region and the Sambisa forest, a dane of kidnappers in the North East geo political zone. Kidnapping is an evil alliance of criminals against the hardworking people of Nigeria. It is an illegal business that brings shame and ill-gotten money that attracts curses to many families in Nigeria. Kidnappers always keep people frightened and fearful of the unknown to happen; as people sleep at night in their houses with one eye open. Kidnappers confront families, communities and government to achieve their goal forcefully.
(Ezinwa, 2015).

Kidnapping gives Nigerian people bad name and scare away foreign investors and tourist to Nigeria. Sometimes offensive launched against kidnappers by the security agents in their hideout result in the killing of innocent citizens, the outcome often cripples the economy and peace of the North East and the Niger Delta region that witnessed regular cases of kidnapping, kidnapping is an incendiary epidemic that discomforts the peace of the Nigerian people (Ezinwa, 2015).

Kidnapping of children makes parents to undergo psychological trauma or a brutal human psyche, for example, the abduction of the Chibok/Dapchi school girls in Northern Nigerian by Boko Haram frustrated the peace of many families in the region. Kidnapping makes children to be suspicious of strange adults within school and church premises. It is a sin that causes the death, suffering and frustration of many children and their parents. In Nigeria, kidnapping has continued to worsen in recent times because of the participation of security agents, some of the security agents are part of the kidnapping. They are involved; they are in the pay list of the kidnappers.

Strategies to Curb Kidnapping in Nigeria

If the federal government comes strongly and partner the state government they would be able to fight and defeat kidnappers in their hide out. Security in Nigeria should not be politicized. The security agents in Nigeria should be serious with their surveillance job to curb kidnapping. The government should adequately provide capacity building for law makers and security agents to fight insecurity in the land. Every Nigerian should be prayerful and security conscious to safe themselves from the threat of kidnappers.

To curb kidnapping in Nigeria, the security agents must ensure they starve off weapons and arms to enter the hands of kidnappers. The police should arrest kidnappers who are in possession of different weapons and drugs, such as guns, long knives, short knives, axes, and cutlasses, bottles of codeine expectorants, Indian hemp, cocaine and crack, as well as sophisticated weapons, such as AK47.

The security agents should use drones to locate kidnappers in teir hideout and den and then use intelligence information to take the fight against kidnappers in their den to destroy their network. The idea of Gov. Umahi of Ebonyi state to treat foreign Fulani herdsmen who kill farmers, rape women and kidnapped people as terrorists would help curb kidnapping in Nigeria. The banning of terrorist herdsmen with AK47 is the right strategy to fight kidnapping in the rural areas of farming communities in Nigeria. (Umahi, 2019)

More so, the formation of the state police, community policing and neighborhood vigilante groups would go a long way to curb kidnapping. The time has come when the Nigerian state must live up to its responsibility and confront the brazenness of kidnappers and allied criminals. The government and security agents should not wait until a governor or the president is kidnapped before they know that the country is confronted with a danger. This is not a future danger, but something that is challenging the citizenry in the face.

It is time the security agents lived up to their responsibilities and uphold Nigerians rights to live, liberty and own property.

The government should plan to ban those using sophisticated weapons like AK47 to kidnap people. The government should also plan to monitor crime locations with helicopters; as well as heavy presence of security agents to arrest and prosecute offenders of kidnapping and allied criminal vices (Ezinwa, 2015). Furthermore, the government should develop youth empowerment centers in all the local government areas in Nigeria where youths can acquire entrepreneurship skill and talents to reduce unemployment and poverty in Nigeria, so that kidnapping can reduce drastically. More so, the government should also implement true federalism and resource control to reduce the level of agitation, kidnapping and other allied criminal vices in Nigeria, especially in the Niger Delta region, so that states would develop their natural resources to empower the rising youths population. Another strategy that can help curb kidnapping is for the government and the judiciary to penalize severe punishment and imprisonment to any kidnapper found guilty of the offence to discourage others from the crime. Likewise, there should be dreaded Anti-Terrorism and Kidnapping Squad of the Nigeria Police to fight terrorism and kidnapping.

Conclusion and Recommendation

To fight the vice of kidnapping and allied criminal vices in Nigeria, parents should invest in the spiritual virtues of their family to build the moral character of their children, so that when they grow up they would not join gangs of kidnappers and allied criminals vice abhorred by society. This will reduce kidnapping and sundry crimes in Nigeria. Furthermore, parents, villagers and city dwellers should not part and parcel of the crime. Parent should not collect money from their children that are kidnappers, to show that it is a vice society and family abhorred.

To further reduced kidnapping in Nigeria, the leaders and people should be patriotic and advocate a new Nigeria build on justice, fairness, equality and to build bridges across tribes, religion and political affiliations, such that our collective vision would evolved a more equalitarian nation, so that no ethnic group would feel marginalized to resume attacks, kidnapping, terrorism, militancy and bomb blast. Another strategy to curb kidnapping in Nigeria is for the government to encourage youths participation in sports, and talents hunt competition across the six-geo political zones of Nigeria; it would help reduce kidnapping in the country (Ezinwa, 2015)

The challenge of rampant kidnapping in Nigeria reveals that government and the private sector need to create employment for the nation's terming population, especially for the youths. The government have to create an enabling environment for business to grow.

The biggest issue Nigeria have today is that Nigerian youths are frustrated by the state of the economy. Nigerian commercial bank are not doing what they should do to assist in the growth of micro, small and medium scale enterprises (MSMES), they have abandoned this major responsibility, unlike their counterparts in other countries. Instead they are busy chasing fat accounts of government agencies. Nigerian commercial bank should begin to extend loans to the private sectors with ease. The MSMES are the engine of growth in any economy as they create millions of employment opportunities. (Okonkwo and Adekole, 2019)

As a way forward to curb kidnapping in Nigeria, caused by unemployment that let to poverty, the federal government should declare national emergency on employment and put lace a scheme for job creation that would be driven by the private sector, not government. Then funds will be provided to the bank of industry to fund the MSMES through the banks. Each bank will create a special window for qualified MSMES to access the funds at very low interest rate. It must be a deliberate well thought out program design to succeed, and which must serve as a form of political patronage. In this direction, another strategy that would help curb kidnapping and empower Nigerian youths is for the state governors to liberalized the process of securing certificates of land occupancy, the title would enable

the least holder to access credit and source necessary equipment on affordable lease arrangement under the affordable of the state. Again, state governments can work with other credible and established entrepreneurs to create clusters of micro-enterprises in the country (Okonkwo and Adekole, 2019).

Skill acquisition centers can train young people on how to fix phones and computers and other skills and government providing start-up funds for them to earn a living. This would help curb kidnapping and insecurity in Nigeria. With rampant kidnapping on the rise in Nigeria caused by the upsurge in angry, unemployed youth and extremely poverty, the way forward is for the Nigerian government to declare a state of emergency on all aspects of youth development: education, technology, technical skills, job creation (not the N-power type), sustainable employment, development and other sustainable engagements for the nations teeming youths. Nigeria needs the right leadership and the political will to ensure the people, especially the youths to benefit from government policies and programs, especially those at the grassroots. The Nigerian government should have sincere and honest plan that would benefit its youths. The youths are angry; Nigeria is sitting on a ticking time bomb, and a keg of gun powder. The solution to Nigeria's economic problem is the creation of micro, small and medium scale enterprises; it is the engine of employment generation in a growing economy. In the face of the troubling unemployment, poverty and kidnapping situation that has beset the country operators in Nigeria is micro small and medium scale enterprise (MSMES). The youths should be trained on viable skills and be empowered to venture into business that would employ others. (James, 2019).

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