



ENUGU STATE UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES

**Volume 8
Number 1,
2023**

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PUBLISHED BY

**Faculty of Social Sciences,
Enugu State University of Science And Technology**

Averting Kidnapping as Threat to Human Freedom and Development in Bukkuyum Local Government Area, Zamfara State

Dickson Ogbonnaya Igwe

Department of Criminology and Security Studies

Faculty of the Social Sciences

National Open University of Nigeria

Email: igwedickson@gmail.com

Abstract

There have been serious threats to the country's national security, as well as individual security. Threatening human and national security like never before are cases of organized crimes virtually in every part of the country. These range from political violence, insurgency, oil bunkering banditry and kidnapping to mention but a few. Against this background, this study presents an assessment of the causes and consequences of kidnapping in Bukkuyum Local Government Area of Zamfara State. It underscores the view that the issue and problem of kidnapping in Bukkuyum Local Government Area of Zamfara State could be assessed when viewed from the perspective of the general insecurity in Nigeria. Using differential opportunities theory, descriptive and analytical methods, the study underscores the inadequate security measures and the collaboration of corrupt law enforcement officials are significantly responsible for the causes of kidnappings. Further, it points to the illegal proliferation of arms and ammunitions as a major determinant of the outbreak of kidnapping in the area, also highlighting the Nigerian porous borders with neighbouring countries as a causative factor of kidnapping in the area under consideration. It concludes that the government must be proactive in ensuring that the right steps are taken within its powers to checkmate the menace of kidnapping and other crimes. Among others, this study recommends that there should be a synergy between the security structure and the legal framework in order to achieve success in the fight against the crime of kidnapping and the myriads of security challenges in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Development, Kidnapping, Human freedom, Bukkuyum local government area, Zamfara State*

Introduction

Kidnapping as an aspect of Insurgency, generally, is occasioned by acts of arms struggle by usually faceless actors against the state, group or individuals in recent time is increasingly evolving into a new normal across climes with shades of patterns and directions that interrupt individual rights to freedom and development. Consequently, the statutory monopoly right of state to the use of fire arms for coercion and enforcement of its laws for peace and security of life and property of citizens is most often brought to question. The seizure or abduction of government officers for the purpose of pressuring government against unpopular policies by pressure groups called hoodlum has metamorphosed into a money-spinning venture where victims are deliberately seized or kidnapped for ransom. In fact, state, group and individual are complicit in kidnapping as evident in Mike Ozhekome (SAN) versus States, an international dimension described as unlawful abduction and rendition of his client by Nigerian from another state (Kenya). The state often argues in favour of its act of seizure as legitimate action to ensure national security (Amzat, 2016). But when individual or group do same action to pressure state to change its unpopular policy, it is classified as illegal kidnaping by terrorist or bandits. Both state and dependents of victims of kidnapping pay ransom to avert the danger of dearth of the victim. The irony therefore, is that the state kidnaps also do the non-state actors.

In Nigeria, despite constituting serious threats to the country's national security and freedom of movement, kidnapping has spread so rapidly affecting almost all zones at various intensity and frequency with northeast and west mostly hit (Adagba Ugwu & Eme, 2012). There are cases of organized crimes virtually in every part of the country. These range from political violence, insurgency, oil bunkering banditry ritual killings and car snatching among others and kidnapping to mention but a few. The causes, intensification and consequences of kidnapping in the area under study perhaps reflect the inability of government in providing adequate security for its citizens. In line with this, therefore, it could be said that successive governments have not invested adequately in procuring weapons for fighting crime, especially kidnapping and associated crimes in the country.

The case of the Chibok school girls kidnapping is another major incident of kidnapping in Nigeria with over 200 school girls abducted from Government Girls Secondary School Chibok, Borno State in 2014. This abduction was carried out by the Boko Haram insurgents at the time, thus sparking both national and international condemnations. (Amzat, 2016). Similar incidents of varying magnitude mainly carried out by Boko Haram terrorists, occurred in several parts of the country. These included, the ABU students kidnapping, Borno aid worker's kidnap, kidnap and execution of ICRC workers, Nigerian-Turkish College students' teacher abduction, Dapchi School girls kidnapping, Babington Macaulay Schools girls' abduction and UNIMAID Lecturer kidnap (Alagbe, 2021). This invariably questions the efficiency of security agencies in the country, as many have become collaborators with criminals to perpetuate criminality in the area under study. the issue of providing adequate social amenities for the people, as well as the empowerment of the populace by the government could go a long way in discouraging the youths especially into engaging in crime. This calls to question the issue of corruption by government officials in the public space.

Between the year 2021 and 2022, a report has it that about 653.7 million Naira was paid in various ransom payments made by relatives of kidnapped victims in several incidences of kidnappings in Nigeria. The menacing insecurity development also witnessed about 500 incidents of kidnappings out of which 3,420 people were taken hostage or abducted across Nigeria. These ugly incidents also led to the killings of about 500 persons in related violence and abductions in the same year. (Musa, 2013). The Abuja-Kaduna train incident, which involved the kidnapping of train passengers along the Abuja- Kaduna axis is perhaps one of the most publicized incidents of kidnapping in Nigeria. It was also reported that a large sum of money was paid as ransom in this incident. (Sanni, 2022).

In Nigeria, abduction instances have typically involved in a wide range of victims, including humanitarian workers, politicians, wealthy individuals, drivers, farmers, member of faith-based organizations (FBOs), and security personnel. The Kuje area council in FCT Abuja is well-known for abduction. (Nextier, 2023). For instance, the country's capital has suddenly received increase case of kidnappings. According to data from the Nextier Violent Conflict Database, (2023), which shows two cases in May 2023 and three in June 2023. Two people were abducted in the Mpape area on July 16, 2023, according to the most recent event. In FCT Abuja, 40 kidnapping occurrences involving 236 victims have been reported between January 2021 and June 30, 2023.

According to research, the confirmed ransom payment made between 2021 and 2022 represent 653.7 million of the economic damages resulting from kidnapping. Even with initiatives to lessen the hardships of instability, the threat of kidnapping endures. (Nextier, 2023). Hence, the focus this study is to examine how to avert kidnapping as threat to human freedom and

development in Bukkuyum Local Government Area, Zamfara State. Arising from the foregoing, are the following questions begging for answer. What is the nature of kidnappings prevalence? What local concerns sustain kidnapping? How can kidnapping be eradicated by the state? How can the local contribute to averting kidnapping?

Methodology

Research Design

Using exploratory and descriptive design and the theory of Delinquent Gangs, authored by Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin as theoretical framework, the qualitative data gathered from purposively drawn sample respondents in Bukkuyum LGA, and subjected to editing, coding and transcription before critical interpretation.

Literature Review

The nature/feature and characteristics of Kidnapping

The nature of kidnapping has been noted by Ajayi, Haastrup and Osalusi, (2010), to include the use of smuggled illegal importation of arms and ammunitions obtained from neighbouring countries. This criminality has made possession of arms by individuals and groups very easy. This is related to the increased destructive activities of cultists in virtually every part of Nigeria, (Igbo and Ikpa 2013), who also engage in criminal activities such as kidnapping. According to Ezeoba, (2011), kidnappings are mainly carried out by criminals such as bandits, terrorists and other armed individuals or groups. These criminalities occur especially through violent activities that could arise from the consequences of abduction, robbery insurgency and so on.

Furthermore, Ogbonnaya, (2020), opines that the illegality and general corruption in government quarters, alongside bad governance and lack of political will serve as another major cause of kidnapping as well as its type and nature in Nigeria. Thus, he expresses the view that illegal mining business that has also featured as a dominant crime in Nigeria, provides a fairly easy access for kidnappers and bandits to thrive in the area. In case whereby community members, for instance, resisted the attacks from the bandits and terrorists, Uche & Iwuamadi (2018) highlighted the consequences thereafter to include mass killings, maiming, kidnapping and arson among other heinous violent crimes. Many of the bandits and terrorists look for any way possible to initiate violence and chaos in targeted communities, killing innocent people and abducting others including women, children and men.

Victims in this kind of crime are thereafter taken into the forests or hidden locations anywhere in the country where they now demand for ransom from their victim's relatives' friends and acquaintances. Notable among these are the issues of youth unemployment, corruption, ethno-political rivalries, lack of adequate political will by governments and the proliferation of arms among others. The issue of porous borders, considering the Fulani herders and insurgents has also been highlighted as a major factor in the causes of kidnappings in the various communities in Nigeria. These factors all provide a direct need for strategizing kidnappings by unscrupulous elements in the area to carry out their heinous crime violence, banditry and kidnapping among others. (ICIR, 2023; Olmstead, 2021). Imperatively, in 2006, widespread kidnappings started. It was thought that these kidnappings had political motivations. Many contributed to the passage of laws that will help Nigerians all throughout the nation. People also desired to oppose the President in some way. But kidnappings have expanded beyond their originally political purpose.

Kidnappings are become a popular means of rapid wealth accumulation. Regardless of the social standing of the victim, kidnappers always demand a ransom. They know full well that families will stop at nothing to ensure their loved ones return home safely. (Abdulrasheed, 2020).

In addition, kidnappers frequently use up to 20 gunmen to invade schools in order to abduct children. They also frequently experience little to no interference from the authorities. A number of persons have occasionally been kidnapped from their cars when they were stopped on the highway. For days, months, or even years, kidnappers hold their captive's captive. In addition, the relatives of victims usually have difficulty covering the ransom. On the average, these ransoms total \$1,222. The debts victims acquire in order to pay the ransom can loom over them for years. Thus, kidnappings cause material harm in addition to bodily harm. (Olmstead, 2021). It is important to note that during the four months between December 2020 and March 2021, at least five distinct events involving groups of bandits abducted over 760 children from boarding schools and other educational facilities in northern Nigeria. (ICIR, 2023; Aljazeera, 2022). Generally, cases of kidnappings have been noted virtually in the norther region of Nigeria. (ICIR, 2023).

Nigeria is now dealing with one of its biggest problems, which is kidnapping for ransom. To combat this, the government is punishing families who agree to pay ransom. However, many don not think this will do anything to address the issue. The nation's public infrastructure has been the target of multiple bombings and attacks by the Islamic terrorist group Boko Haram since 2009. The group has pledged to turn Nigeria into an Islamic state and is especially against western education, which they claim draws people away from Islamic teaching as a way of life. (Onireti, 2023).

Following these assaults, Boko Haram targeted boarding schools, villages, churches, and government buildings in a number of kidnappings for ransom. The abduction of 276 Chibok schoolgirls, aged between 16 and 18, from their boarding school in Borno state, in the northeast of the nation, in 2014 was one of the most notable of these. The #BringBackOurGirls movement and rallies in significant cities around the world were the results of this atrocity, which sparked international anger against Boko Haram and condemnation of the Nigerian government's handling of the security situation. More than 100 of the girls are still unaccounted for, and others are thought to have passed away (ICIR, 2023; Onireti, 2023).

According to a recent modification to Nigeria's Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2013, families and friends of kidnap victims may now be sentenced to up to 15 years in prison if they attempt to liberate their loved ones. The legislators think that this will deter kidnappings and kidnappings for ransom. Additionally, it has rendered kidnapping crimes punishable by death in situations where the victims pass away. The government has already implemented other steps, such as restricting the movement of citizens in some states, deploying the military, and shutting down certain mobile telecommunications networks to hinder terrorists from communicating with one another (Onireti, 2023).

On his part, Ayantoye, (2023), examines the huge burden the increasing level of kidnapping has placed on the incoming government and steps that should be taken to tackle the menace. He noted that the increasing rate of armed robbery, kidnapping and other forms of crime, not a few have expressed the fear that the government may faced with severe insecurity challenges. While the government has continued to blow its trumpet on how it had reduced insecurity to a bearable level, the rate of killings and kidnapping in the country has continued to swell without

abating. A total of 12,426 persons were abducted in Nigeria between January 1, 2021 and May 2, 2023, according to a Nigeria Security Incidents Tracker report by Beacon Consulting, a security firm. A recent report by Punch (2023) revealed that no fewer than 333 people were seized in some parts of the country within a period of six weeks with over N7m collected by the kidnappers.

Local Concerns and Kidnapping

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 harsh 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 as well as 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 kidnapers 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 encourages 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, kidnapers 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 kidnapers see abduction as a business to make money through ransom claims. In the Niger Delta region, kidnapers 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

If the federal government comes strongly and partner the state government, they would be able to fight and defeat kidnapers 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 kidnapers. To curb kidnapping in Nigeria, the security agents must ensure they starve off weapons and arms to enter the hands of kidnapers. The police should arrest kidnapers 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 kidnapers in their hideout and den and then use intelligence information to take the fight against kidnapers in their den to destroy their network. The idea of seating state governor treating foreign herdsmen who kill farmers, rape women and kidnapped people as terrorists of a specific identity complicate the problem than solving it. 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).

Insecurity, such as kidnapping, banditry and other crimes in Nigeria are generally characterized by violence alongside the destruction of lives and properties. For this research, some literatures are hereby reviewed to enrich our understanding of the causative factors of kidnapping and related crimes in Nigeria. To start with, kidnapping is a major challenge to the security of the country, and especially the area under study. The perpetrators of these crimes, especially kidnapping, do not spare anyone in this new wave of crime that seems to have supplanted armed robbery and other non-contact crimes. Since this act of kidnapping began in Nigeria, aged, children, male and female have been kidnapped for ransom. This has made life caused fear and anxiety to the citizens of the country in general. Citizens now live in fear of falling victims to these criminals who could be found in virtually every community in contemporary Nigeria. This is against the background that accurate unemployment rates are difficult to obtain and generally mean little in a society where many who work are marginally employed, and where begging is a socially accepted occupation. (Igbo & Ikpa, 2013).

According to Igbo and Ikpa (2013), as well as Chukwuemeka, (2009), the rise in crime wave generally in Nigeria since the mid-1990s was as a result of unemployment, economic decline, and social inequality. Apparently, without jobs, many youths are easily recruited into militant groups, cultism, and trained as armed robbers, political thugs to rob, kill, kidnap, smuggle, and highjack, among others. (Ajayi, Haastrup and Osalusi, 2010). Militancy, insurgency and Nigeria's porous borders are equally important sources of insecurity in Nigeria. Other forms of criminality such as militancy and insurgency are also enmeshed in violence, illegal force or the illegal use of unjustified force or the intimidating effect created by the threat of this act. The activities of the Niger Delta militants, bandits, as well as the Boko Haram insurgents, are notable in this discourse.

Chukwuemeka, Anazodo and Nzewi, (2011) have highlighted the fact that the aforementioned factors have particularly been a major source of insecurity to Nigerians. This is worsened by porous borders. The free flow of migrants from other countries to Nigeria through our unguarded borders allows criminals to enter the country without check. Meanwhile, Igbo and Ikpa (2013) have opined that the citizen's distrust in government policies and actions serves as another major cause of insecurity Nigeria. What the current trend of violence is imprinting on the psyche of Nigerians is that the government security apparatus is incapable of guaranteeing

the safety and security of its people. This has therefore, impacted on the general human security of the people as the situation promotes fear, limits the peoples' ability to trust government actions as well as having adverse effect on the economy.

Another major cause of kidnapping has been noted by Ajayi, Haastrup and Osalusi, (2010), to include the illegal importation of arms and ammunitions. This criminality has made possession of arms by individuals and groups very easy. This is related to the destructive activities of cultists in virtually every part of Nigeria. (Igbo & Ikpa 2013). Ethno- religious intolerance has been among the major cause of insecurity in Nigeria. The recent incidences of attack on churches and Christians, generally in the Northern part of the country by Moslem extremists have rendered several states in the north unsafe for life and properties (Alubo, 2009; Egwu, 2004). To Olawale (2016), the impact of youth unemployment serves as major causative factor of kidnapping in Nigeria. Instructively, the issue of unemployment in Nigeria has caused enormous social, economic, cultural and political upheavals such that have all affected the development of the nation. In his publication, he was able to provide some suggestions after a general overview of the causes and challenges of the unemployment among the youths, in large numbers in the area under study. However, current developments on the subject matter were not analyzed in the work.

Meanwhile, Ibrahim (2008) underscores the challenges of youth unemployment in Nigeria, thereby highlighting such issues as violence, restiveness, conflicts and high crime rates among others as major consequences in the country. He particularly emphasized on the adverse effects this has on the Nigerian economy dating back to over a decade ago. He however shows some of the methods that could be adopted to attain development. Quite Relatedly, Oliha (2014) examines the implications of drug abuse on the Nigerian youths. He further assesses the negative impacts of drug abuse on the youths as well as highlighting the ways through which both the government and the public could intervene in the social menace thereby ensuring a crime free society and overall youth development. The publication by NAPTIP (2016), has noted the economic benefits of engaging the youths in the society, owing much of it to the availability of a conducive business environment where the youths could thrive. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the number of people within the labour force who are unemployed or underemployed in Nigeria stood at 27.11 million in 2016 but rose to 31.26 million 2017. This increase depicts an increasing trend in the rate of unemployment and underemployment. In 2018 unemployment came down to 20.9 million (NBS, 2016).

This according to NBS was because of addition of new jobs and huge fund spent by politicians ahead of the 2019 general elections, notes that unemployment tend to be higher among graduates as they often times depend on white collar jobs or make plans to travel outside the country rather than doing anything available. This is contrary to the situation in rural areas or among low skilled unemployed persons who are ready to do any work that is legal. He also states that unemployment and Underemployment rates also varied according the nature of economic activity predominant in the state. States with higher focus on seasonal agriculture tend to have higher rates of underemployment compared to unemployment and may swing from high fulltime employment during periods of planting and harvest when they are fully engaged on their farms to periods of underemployment and even unemployment at other periods in between. These states tend to have higher proportion of their economically active population outside the labour force thereby reducing the number looking for work and hence the number that can be unemployed. Unemployment is a visible phenomenon in the country. According to National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2016), majority of youths are unemployed and as a result become a threat to society.

It is common to see jobless youths in major towns and communities in the country clustering from morning to noon waiting for any job opportunity. They are always ready for mixing sands and cement for block industry, to clear grasses or to do any other type of work that may come up. Often times, majority of them after long waiting end up not getting anything. They go home dejected not even having any money to care for themselves and their families. One of the major causes of unemployment therefore is the rapid growth of population including increasing number of graduates from Nigerian universities and polytechnics and colleges of education among others (NAPTIP, 2016).

There has been an increase in the growth of the labour forces along with the inadequate supply of jobs. This has increased the population in major cities thereby raising the level of joblessness. Another major factor and related challenge involved in youth unemployment is poor leadership and high level of corruption in Nigeria. The failure of the government to perform their constitutional duties of job creation has resulted in the high level of unemployment. Also, corruption among politicians has resulted to the mismanagement of the funds and resources supposed to be used for the creation of job opportunities for the people. Ndioye, (2005), identifies lack of reasonable youth empowerment scheme in most states across the country as a major cause of unemployment. Furthermore, there is high level of unemployment due to absence of reputable firms and industries that employ people. (Nwosu, 2013) since many industries have relocated to neighbouring countries like Ghana among others. He notes that the firms available only employ few persons and most of the firms are on contract with government. Once their contract ends, employment for the workers equally come to an end.

In addition, most firms cannot operate long because of harsh economic conditions in the country, occasioned by low patronage, high and multiple taxes as well as epileptic power supply. He equally noted that most employment opportunities from government are hijacked by politicians who convert the position to their family members already working somewhere elsewhere. All these issues have continued to cause the increasing number of unemployed persons in the state who quickly seek for job in places when there is an announcement of vacancies. Abdul-Raheem, (2003) enumerates some of the major impacts of drug abuse on youths and the elderly in society generally. Moreover, it examines the main reason for youth restiveness at an early stage of youth development in general. It thereby maintained that without the intervention of policy makers on the illegal use of drugs, more youth perpetuated restiveness and other crimes associated with the youths will be on the increase in the country starting from students in secondary schools. Similarly, Ayoola et al., (2015) basically provides an assessment of the causes and cases of crimes among the youths in Nigeria, particularly citing the south west geopolitical zone as a case study.

Notably, the factor of drug abuse and unemployment among others are major issues discussed in the publication. However, a detailed review with regards to the challenges faced by the youths in the area of study was not made prominent. Just like Nwosu (2013) who noted that adequate funding should be given to the youth to start small and medium scale businesses in their respective domains so that violence, conflicts and insecurity will be averted to a large degree. Onyebor (2016), attempts a correlation between the youth unemployment and poverty in Nigeria. He looked at the causes and challenging factors which have entrenched poverty among the youths in the country and the efforts by government to address it. Moreover, this research which addresses the challenges affecting societal safety in Nigeria, with special

reference to the impact of youth unemployment in Lagos State, is an addition to the ongoing discourse.

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 kidnapers 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 youth's 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.

Governments Interventions / Responses

They have no doubt being government's responses to securing lives and properties, as well as tackling kidnappings, banditry and other forms of crimes in Nigeria generally. (Mbachu & Bature, 2013). Against this backdrop, some forms of diplomatic moves were made in 2019 for instance, by some northern governors such as the governors of Katsina, Sokoto, and Zamfara, to agreeing to a peace deal with the leaders of these bandits in the territory. Thus, according to the Governor of Katsina State, Aminu Bello Masari, negotiations was the best way to achieve lasting peace against the insecurity caused by the bandits. According to Shuaibu (2020), these diplomatic moves brought about the signing of some agreements between the government and the criminals. This involved disarmament, the release of kidnapped victims, and amnesty for the bandits.

It must be noted however that the agreements was short-lived. Although there was a little reduction in violent attacks in Northern Nigeria towards the end of 2019, these attacks were later re-ignited again in 2020. Some state governors in the northern Nigeria recently admitted that the bandits had reneged on the terms of their agreement. Following the apparent failure of the governors' peace deal, Nigeria's chief of army staff, Lieutenant General Tukur Buratai said recently that dialogue is not a good military option for tackling banditry, kidnapping, and other heinous crimes currently bedevilling the North-West. (Aliyu, Ikedinma, & Akinwande, 2018).

Among other developments in this regard, the Nigerian government, in January 2021, issued an order to the naval forces to halt the frequent kidnappings. Nigeria has a sizable and more powerful naval force that can assist in resolving this issue. At the start of the year, Nigeria named Rear Admiral A.Z. Gambo as its naval leader. Regarding the kidnapping problem, he intends to take a tough, no-nonsense stance. Gambo intends to take strong action against any

kind of illegal activity related to kidnappings. Gambo further mentioned that he is aware of the corruption in the Navy and that sailors frequently help carry out kidnappings. He therefore intends to make combating this corruption his top priority. (ICIR, 2023). Only a few days had passed since pirates took control of a Turkish-manned vessel when this new, strict plan was put into action. Thus, fifteen people were abducted and one crew member was killed by pirates. The crews of foreign navy warships, including those from France and Spain, were rendered powerless on Nigerian territorial seas due to an earlier law prohibiting them from carrying firearms.

In 2020, the government decided to repeal the statute. However, kidnapping is still on the rise. (Shuaibu, 2020); Olmstead, 2021). Nigeria's efforts to stop kidnappings have not been very effective. Consequently, 2020 saw the largest number of kidnapping cases in the history of the country. The government has not disregarded this issue, though.

If politicians, government officials, and corrupt navy personnel are taken down by the government, there is a chance that the number of kidnapping cases may decline. (Olmstead, 2021). According to an Aljazeera (2022), the Nigerian Senate passed a bill that makes kidnapping punishable by death in cases when victims pass away and imposes jail terms of at least 15 years for those who pay a ransom to liberate someone who has been kidnapped. It is believed by government that by enforcing severe jail sentences for ransom payments would, according to the Nigerian Senate's justice, human rights, and legal committee, "discourage the rising spate of kidnapping and abduction for ransom in Nigeria, which is fast spreading across the country."(Aljazeera, 2022).

According to Obiezu (2023), Nigerian President Bola Tinubu has ordered security forces to rescue an unspecified number of female students being held by armed kidnappers following an attack at the Federal University Gusau in northwest Zamfara State. Police officials say some victims have been rescued, but the incident is the latest in an escalating wave of violence targeting schools in northern Nigeria. By and large, this only tends to show that the government have at various times intervened in curbing the menace posed by the perpetrators of kidnapping in Nigeria as a whole.

Implications of other (NGOs) Interventions and prospect for curbing Kidnapping

Although there seems to be efforts by governments, international contributors and Non-Governmental Organizations among others to tackle the spate of insecurity challenges by providing an opportunity for amnesty in some cases, arrests, use of military force and dialogue among others, however, nothing seems to work with regards to reducing or eradicating banditry, kidnappings, insurgency, armed robbery, ethnic tension, religious intolerance, political violence and so on and so forth.

Moreover, the resultant effect is among other indices the overall underdevelopment of the country, such as economic recession, high inflation, high cost of living, depreciation of the naira and political instability. Recently, there have been high incidences of insecurity that have resulted in deaths and psychological trauma for individuals and families in the country. This requires the citizens to be much more security conscious considering the threat by religious extremists to bring about greater insecurity than those that preceded them. (ICIR, 2023). Meanwhile, other security indices also include the persistent tension between the north and the south of Nigeria, growing unrest in the Niger Delta area and other parts of the country resulting in rise in violent incidents and kidnappings. Ethnic tensions, religious differences, unemployment and numerous social and political grievances are all fueling the unrests in

Nigeria and contributing to flashpoints for violence and creating insecurity in the country.

The level of government's intervention alongside the level of success took the center stage in the analysis of the work by Brenner, (2021); Musa, (2013); Iyare, (2008); Inyang & Abraham, (2013); Egbefo & Salihu, (2014). In these aforementioned publications, the notions of corruption by public officials and agencies, sabotage and bad governance have been highlighted as key factors in the continued cases of kidnappings and other similar crimes in the country. They noted, in separate analysis that in spite of governments interventions such as those in Katsina, Kaduna and Zamfara, among others, through the use of military force, amnesty and negotiations with kidnappers, insurgents and bandits, not much has been achieved with regards to the problem posed by kidnappers in the area under consideration.

Prospects for Curbing Kidnappings

Abdulrasheed (2020), basically expresses his view on the menace posed by kidnappers, armed bandits, as well as other criminals in the north west zone of Nigeria. It also highlights the ways by which interested parties, governments and other stakeholders could chart a workable approach to curbing the menace in Nigeria. Brenner (2021) presents the processes adopted by government military forces, in combating banditry, kidnappings and killings in Nigeria. In his analysis, Brenner (2021), mainly expresses a proactive approach to ensuring that violent crimes such as banditry, kidnapping and killings among other crimes are actively tackled to a halt. He, however, also expressed his views on the challenges involved in the process thus highlighting the activities of collaborators involving members of the armed forces as well as the kidnappers and bandits to mention but a few. Furthermore, there should be a synergy between the security structure and the legal framework in order to achieve success in the fight against the crime of kidnapping and the myriads of security challenges in Nigeria.

Result and Discussion of Major Findings

This research has presented an assessment of the causes and consequences of kidnapping in Bukkuyum Local Government Area, Zamfara State. This chapter thereby embarks on the discussion of the major research findings. This research found that the causes of kidnappings are actually prevalent in Bukkuyum Local Government Area. Accordingly, majority of the respondents agreed that youth unemployment is a major causative factor of kidnapping. In the same vein, all the respondents agreed that inadequate security measures and the collaboration of corrupt law enforcement officials are significantly responsible for the causes of kidnappings. Majority of the respondents also noted that the illegal proliferation of arms and ammunitions as a major determinant of the outbreak of kidnapping in the area. Moreover, majority of the respondents responded positively to the notion that the Nigerian porous borders with neighbouring countries is as a causative factor of kidnapping in the area under consideration.

Extensively, notable scholars also support the above findings with more facts in their works. Thus, according to Igbo and Ikpa (2013), as well as Chukwuemeka, (2009), the rise in crime wave generally in Nigeria since the mid-1990s was as a result of unemployment, economic decline, and social inequality. Apparently, without jobs, many youths are easily recruited into militant groups, cultism, and trained as armed robbers, political thugs to rob, kill, kidnap, smuggle, and hijack, among others. (Ajayi, Haastrup and Osalusi, 2010). The problem of porous borders along the Nigerian border with Nigeria, Cameroon and Chad also remains another major challenge. Ajayi, Haastrup and Osalusi, (2010), also stressed that to include the illegal importation of arms and ammunitions. This criminality has made possession of arms by

individuals and groups very easy. This is related to the destructive activities of cultists in virtually every part of Nigeria. (Igbo & Ikpa 2013).

As regards whether there have been government interventions at curbing the menace of kidnapping, this research found that a significant majority of the interviewees agreed to the fact that there have been government interventions at curbing the menace of kidnappings in the study area. In addition, majority of the informants buttressed their responses by expressing that it is apparent that the government has at different times applied the use of military and police force to curb kidnappings in Bukkuyum Local Government Area. It is also shown that the government applied diplomacy as a method in dealing with kidnapers and other criminals in the area, as against the notion that there are adequate security personnel manning the Nigerian borders with those of other West African countries. In other words, there are no adequate security personnel manning the borders. Majority of the respondents also agreed that there has been government's collaboration with foreign institutions or government in the fight against kidnappings and other related crimes. This research work asserts that weak governance style and approach are characteristics of government's interventions in curbing the menace of kidnapping in the area under study. The opinions of Aliyu, Ikedinma, & Akinwande, (2018), on this issue is still relevant as the failure of the governors' peace deal failed. However, these writers opined that it is not a good option for curbing criminal activities and their perpetrators.

However, they opted for the military option for tackling banditry, kidnapping, and other heinous crimes currently bedeviling the North-West (Aliyu, Ikedinma, & Akinwande, 2018). As to whether the interventions of government have been effective in curbing kidnapping and other related crimes, majority of the informants buttressed their responses by expressing that corruption in both public and private sectors has influenced the efficacy of government's intervention in curbing the menace of kidnappings and other violent crimes in the area. This research showed that government has not been able to curb the illegal dealings and transfer of small arms and light weapons in the area. Importantly, also, the distribution reveals that there has not been a reduction in the incidences of kidnappings in Nigeria. The study shows that there are saboteurs among the law enforcement agents saddled with the responsibility of fighting crimes in the area under study. In the foregoing analysis, the majority of the respondents stated that corruption is a major challenge that affects the extent of government's intervention in curbing kidnapping not only in Bukkuyum Local Government Area, but also in Nigeria.

These findings give credence to those of Brenner (2021), Inyang and Abraham, (2013) who mentioned the fact that the level of government's intervention alongside the level of success took the center stage in the analysis of the works by Brenner, (2021); Musa, (2013); Iyare, (2008); Inyang & Abraham, (2013); Egbefo & Salihu, (2014). In these aforementioned publications, the notions of corruption by public officials and agencies, sabotage and bad governance have been highlighted as key factors in the continued cases of kidnappings and other similar crimes in the country. The level of government's intervention alongside the level of success took the center stage in the analysis of the work by Brenner, (2021); Musa, (2013); Iyare, (2008); Inyang & Abraham, (2013); Egbefo & Salihu, (2014). In these aforementioned publications, the notions of corruption by public officials and agencies, sabotage and bad governance have been highlighted as key factors in the continued cases of kidnappings and other similar crimes in the country. According to the responses of respondents, this study realized that majority of the respondents were of the view that victims and their relatives could be assaulted, killed or made to pay heavy ransom as a result of kidnapping in the area under consideration.

In this connection also, there could be the inevitability of socio-economic underdevelopment and the destruction of properties and infrastructures as a result of kidnapping in the area under consideration. Just as earlier stated, all the respondents maintained that violence and conflict are major characteristic features of kidnapping in Bukkuyum Local Government Area. Furthermore, majority of the interviewees responded by agreeing to the above question. This response shows that the crimes of kidnapping and banditry among other violent crimes go hand in hand in Bukkuyum Local Government Area.

In addition, all the informants buttressed their responses by expressing that there has been an increase in the proliferation of small arms and light weapons as a result of kidnapping in the area under study. In line with the above finding, this research further stresses the views of some writers who are in support of the analysis of this finding. Thus, the works of Ezeoba (2011), Eme & Onyishi (2011), Dickson, (2016) to a very great extent, addresses some of the causative factors involved in the cases of criminality involving the high number of kidnappings and killings in Nigeria. (Egbefo & Salihu, 2014).

Furthermore, Ogonnaya, (2020), Uche & Iwuamadi (2018) highlighted the consequences thereafter to include mass killings, maiming, kidnapping and arson among other heinous violent crimes. In addressing the prospects for curbing kidnapping in the area of study, majority of the interviewees responded to the above questions positively. The informants buttressed their responses by expressing the view that a synergy between the security structure and the legal framework in curbing the crime of kidnapping and other security challenges in Nigeria could be considered by the government so as to curb or completely eradicate the menace. The research show that all the respondents that were interviewed suggested that a proactive approach should always be employed by law enforcement agencies and the government to ensuring that violent crimes such as banditry, kidnapping and killings among other crimes are actively tackled to a halt in the area under study.

Similarly, there submissions revealed that there should be constant investigation into the nefarious activities of collaborators involving members of the armed forces, as well as the kidnapers and bandits. By this action, it is believed that banditry and kidnapping would be reduced to barest minimum. Essentially, this study showed that by enforcing severe jail sentences for ransom payments would, according to the Nigerian Senate's justice, human rights, and legal committee, "discourage the rising spate of kidnapping and abduction for ransom in Nigeria, which is fast spreading across the country (Aljazeera, 2022). Also, it showed that the judiciary could be effectively integrated into action plans instituted by the security agencies in fighting the crime of kidnapping in particular in the area under study. Essentially, respondents noted that the provision of adequate social welfare services and employment for citizens could help in reducing the problem of kidnapping in the area under study.

Summary

In all, this study found that in spite of the challenges such as weak governance style, and inadequate security personnel manning the borders, there have been government's interventions at curbing the menace of kidnapping in the area under study. Instructively, the works concurs with this finding of the opinions of Aliyu, Ikedinma, & Akinwande, (2018) they have been vociferous in showing the nature of crimes and the championing of the better way to be adopted by Nigerian stakeholders and policy makers. Majority of the respondents affirmed that the interventions of government have not been effective in curbing kidnapping and other related crimes in the area under scrutiny. This affirmation was arrived at going by the

fact that corruption in both public and private sectors has influenced the efficacy of government's intervention in curbing the menace of kidnappings in Bukkuyum Local Government Area. In the same connection, there are saboteurs among the law enforcement agents saddled with the responsibility of fighting crimes such as kidnapping in the area. Also, the decision that government has not been effective in curbing kidnapping could be ascribed to the issue of corruption. This problem remains a major challenge that affects the extent of government's intervention in curbing kidnapping in the local government and country in general.

In all, this study found that in view of the responses of majority of the interviewees, this research work reveals that a proactive approach should always be employed by law enforcement agencies and the government to ensuring that violent crimes, that the judiciary could be effectively integrated into action plans instituted by the security agencies in fighting the crime of kidnapping. Also, it follows that a synergy between the security structure and the use of legal framework in curbing the crime of kidnapping and other security challenges in Nigeria could be considered by the government among others, there are prospects for curbing kidnapping in the area of study. Other sources support this finding as they express a proactive approach to ensuring that violent crimes such as banditry, kidnapping and killings among other crimes are actively tackled to a halt. He however, also expressed his views on the challenges involved in the process thus highlighting the activities of collaborators involving members of the armed forces as well as the kidnapers and bandits to mention but a few.

Conclusion

The study confirms that the causes of kidnappings are prevalent in Bukkuyum Local government area and that there have been ineffective government interventions at curbing the menace in the society. It also, establishes the fact that the nature of the impact of kidnappings in the study area is characterized by violence, conflicts and killings among others.

Recommendations

To fight the vice of kidnapping and allied criminal vices in Nigeria, parents should invest in the social 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 kidnapers 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 kidnapers, 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 evolve 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.

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