

## Socio-Economic Implication of Kidnapping and Hostage Taking in Southern Nigeria

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper examines the phenomenon of kidnapping and hostage taking in Southern Nigeria and its socio-economic implications. The paper posits that kidnapping and hostage taking has become ubiquitous in Nigeria, however more prevalent in the South-South and South-East part of the country. Inefficient and ineffective strategy being adopted by the security agents and policy inconsistencies of the government has led to a security gap which the culprits are taking advantage of in perfecting their crime. This has resulted to a security challenge to the country and has caused the economy to dwindle. The paper utilized secondary data and was anchored on functionalist theory. Amongst other factors the paper argues that the issue of kidnapping and hostage taking has been on the increase due to leadership failure, unemployment, poverty and corruption among security agencies. The study therefore recommends that government at all levels should make policies that will attract both local and foreign investors which will create employment opportunities for the youths especially the vulnerable ones, also there is need to review the current strategy of dealing with the issue of kidnapping and hostage taking in Nigeria. In particular, there is the need to explore the extant laws and the extent to which they are being enforced with a view to establishing their efficacy.*

**Keywords:** Hostage taking, Kidnapping for ransom, Kidnapping, Socio-economic

### INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is facing myriad of challenges which are affecting the socio-economic development of the country. One of such problems bedeviling the socio-economic development of the country is the issue of kidnapping and hostage taking. Kidnapping and hostage taking in Nigeria has turned into a social problem which is affecting virtually every member of the Nigerian society in one way or the other. According to Uzorma and Nwanego (2014), kidnapping and hostage taking is among the terrorizing crimes in Nigeria which is mostly common in the southern part of the country (South-South, South-East and South-West). Practically, the duo entails abduction. Thus, it occurs when a person is abducted and taken from one place to another against their will, or a situation in which a person is confined to a controlled space without the confinement being from a legal authority. Consequently, when the transportation or

confinement of the person is done for an unlawful purpose, such as for ransom or for the purpose of committing another crime, the act becomes criminal (Uzorma & Nwanego, 2014).

Asuquo (2009) noted that the term “kidnapping” is difficult to define with precision, because it varies from State to State and jurisdiction to jurisdiction. It is the forceful seizure, taking away and unlawful detention of a person against his/her will. It is a common law offence and the key part is that, it is an unwanted act on the part of the victim. It is a restriction of someone else’s liberty which violates the provision of freedom of movement as enshrined in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, where every other law takes its cue from. For this reason, Siegel (2002) sees it as a serious offence. Abraham (2010) defined kidnapping as an act of seizing, taking away and keeping a person in custody either by force or fraud.

However, it includes snatching and seizing of a person in order to collect a ransom in return or settle some scores of disagreement among people. Walsh and Adrian (1983) also noted that, kidnapping varies from country to country; therefore the term is uncertain and devoid of any straight jacket definition. That is, it depends on who is defining it and from what perspective and for what purpose. They viewed kidnapping as unlawful seizure and detention of a person by force against their will. According to them, it an act of seizing a person and taking him/her to another country for involuntary servitude or the impressments of males into military or naval service by force or fraud. They further cited the view of Robertson (1968), who saw kidnapping as a crime of seizing, confining, abducting or carrying away of persons by force or fraud often subjecting him or her to involuntary servitude in an attempt to demand a ransom or in furtherance of another crime.

Thomas and Nta (2009) defined kidnapping as robbery of the highest rank. According to them, it is an organized and systematic robbery which is not as deadly as armed-robbery, but more profitable than the former. The profitability has encouraged those that indulged in it to carry on with the act although there is a law prohibiting it. In criminal law, kidnapping is defined as taking away of a person by force, threat or deceit with intent to cause him/her to be detained against his or her will (Asuquo, 2009). Whereas Nwaorah (2009) viewed kidnapping as an act of an angry man who wants to take any person of value hostage, and who could be rescued by loved ones. In most cases, victims are often released after payment of ransom. According to Ogabido (2009), “kidnapping” means to abduct, capture, carry off, remove or steal away a person(s). The Chambers 21<sup>st</sup> Century Dictionary (1996) defined kidnapping as the seizing and holding of someone prisoner illegally, usually demanding for a ransom for his/her release. Dode (2007) saw kidnapping as a process of forcefully abducting a person or group of persons perceived to be the reasons behind the injustice suffered by another group. It is “a low-cost, high-yield terror tactics”. This was the initial case in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.

Kidnapping and hostage taking is increasing daily in Nigeria and they are often used by

armed groups, particularly terror inclined groups as mechanisms of achieving their demands. According to Nwanunobi (2017), kidnapping for ransom (commonly reported) is more prominent in the South-East and South-South (Niger-Delta), kidnapping for ritual purposes (uncommonly reported) is more prominent in the South-West and North-Central regions, while abduction (mostly unreported) is more prominent in the North-East and North-West region. Prominent cases among the victims of high profile kidnapping in southern Nigeria includes: the father of the popular novelist, Chimamanda Adichie; Mother of former Finance Minister, Ngozi Okonko-Iwella; Olu Falae; a Reverend Father John Adeyi and the princess of Akoko in Ondo State, Toyin Omosowon (Nwanunobi, 2017).

### THE ORIGIN OF KIDNAPPING AND HOSTAGE TAKING IN NIGERIA

The root of kidnapping in Nigeria, according to Townsend (2008), can be traced to “natural resources nationalism” – the tendency for an ethnic nationality to seek bigger shares of the returns from natural resources found in their locality. That is, the clamour by aborigines of the oil producing Niger Delta region to better and bigger share of the fortune made from the resources gotten from their land (Essien & Ema, 2013). This problem is worsened by accumulation politics which is the tendency for the ruling class to engage in endless accumulation of natural resources and rents accruing from the region, in the face of deliberate acts of marginalization and deprivation of the people (Akpan, 2010). Concerns for the development of the Niger Delta region are age-old phenomenon. The communities of the region have been protesting the injustices peacefully for decades, until recently when such protests took on a violent form (Essien & Ema, 2013). The parties involved in the conflict do not only include the federal government but also the oil multinationals (Chidi & Uche, 2015).

Turner (2008) opined that the phenomenon of kidnapping and hostage taking began in the Niger Delta region as a freedom fight by militants protesting the degradation of their environment by oil industrial activities. Demola (2011) argued that it soon turned into a money making avenue through kidnapping of expatriate oil workers for huge ransoms. Since then,

kidnapping has become a daily occurrence and it has spread throughout the South-South states of Edo, Bayelsa, Rivers, Cross Rivers, Akwa Ibom and the South-East States of Abia, Imo, Ebonyi, Enugu and Anambra. The South-West has not been left out. Kidnapping is also common in Lagos and other Western States. Many Youths have taken to the business of kidnapping with some godfathers working behind the scene. People no longer sleep with their two eyes closed. To Akpan (2010), kidnapping emerged as a consequence of total neglect of the Niger Delta by the multinational corporations and the failure of Governance in the fourth republic. The persistent failure of the state to ensure equitable distribution, neglect and alienation on the part of the Niger Delta people also culminated into higher level of militancy in the fourth republic.

The phenomenon of kidnapping and hostage taking has scared both the local and foreign investors away which has not only affected the socio-economic development of the southern part of Nigeria and Nigeria in general but has invariably increased the social vices in Nigeria. According to Oyemwinmina and Osazuwa (2016), foreign investors as well as citizens are scared to operate businesses in Nigeria because no investment thrives in an atmosphere of insecurity and this contributes to unemployment which leads to economic meltdown. The conduct which could be best described as notorious started with the kidnapping of white oil company expatriates, later moved towards the direction of men of God and their family, the politicians and their businessmen, then any potential target. Most of the kidnapping occurs in the South-East and Niger-Delta regions which harbour the Africa's biggest oil and gas industries. Most of the hostages are released unharmed after the payment of ransom, but some are killed even after the payment of ransom or without ransom.

### STATISTICS OF KIDNAPPING AND HOSTAGE TAKING IN NIGERIA

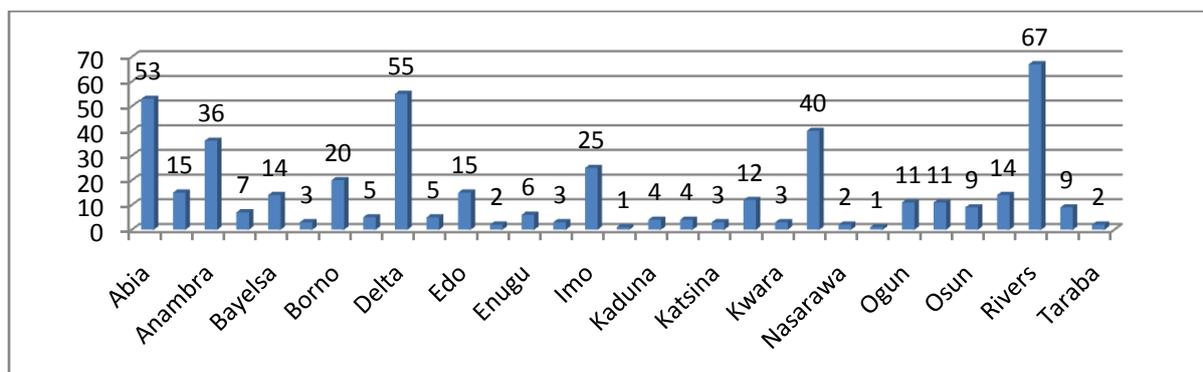
According to Hiscox Group (2001), Nigeria is ranks the 6th highest recorded kidnapping cases in the world. Adetuba (2016) argues that kidnapping of foreign nationals in exchange for ransoms was most prevalent in Nigeria before militants from the Niger Delta region were

granted Amnesty by the government in 2009. However, in 2014, Nigeria's kidnapping problem bounced back to glaring limelight when over 200 school girls were abducted by Islamic Jihadists in the North-East region of Nigeria. Since then, a series of high profile kidnappings have been recorded across the country. Adetuba (2016) argues further that no fewer than seven people, including five foreign expatriates were reportedly kidnapped by suspected militants in Calabar. They were said to be on their way to work at the Lafarge Holcim plant in Mfamosing to work. In the process of the kidnap, a local driver was fatally shot by the kidnappers. The above scenarios show that kidnapping and hostage taking has now turned into a business venture and a daily affair in southern Nigeria.

Currently, the targets are no longer oil workers or foreigners alone; every Nigerian is now a target. In fact, the safety of persons in Nigeria and their property cannot be guaranteed owing to the near daily incidents of kidnapping. According to Efiuzomor (2017), gunmen abducted a Catholic priest in-charge of St. Patricks Catholic Church, Eku in Ethiope East Local Government Area of Delta State, Rev. Fr. Joseph Oghenekevwe Ojatorotu and demanded for a ransom of 10 million. Edike (2009) observed that South Eastern States of Abia, Anambra, Enugu, Ebonyi and Imo have been under the siege of kidnappers who have in the last one year made life unbearable for the residents especially the wealthy and foreign nationals.

According to Chidi and Uche (2015), the recorded cases of kidnapping in Nigeria shows that 353 cases of kidnapping were recorded in 2008 and 512 cases of kidnapping and 30 dead persons in kidnapping den was recorded in 2009. The Nigerian Police record shows also that in 2009, kidnappers and hostage keepers got N15 million ransom and about N100 million between 2006 – 2008. Apart from this proximate impact on the victims, kidnapping exert enormous and far reaching economic and social costs. It induces and creates a palpable ambience of fear and despair for all citizens and stultify economic growth and sustainable development. It is thus one major development challenge bedeviling Nigeria today. It drives away investment, both domestic and foreign direct investments and consequently slows down growth.

Table 1: Kidnapping and Hostage taking statistics in Nigeria (June 2006-September 2015)



Source: (Ukoki & Okolie, 2016).

From the above statistics, the indicators have shown that Rivers state has witnessed the highest number of kidnapping and hostage taking since 2005, followed by Delta, Abia, Lagos, Anambra, Imo etc.

According to OSAC (2010), Between September 15, 2009 and November 30, 2009, 42 reported incidents of kidnapping occurred in Nigeria, including seven incidents involving multiple hostages. On November 9, a total of nine separate kidnapping incidents were recorded. Press reports citing the Nigerian Police claim that by early November more than 500 people had been held for ransom in 2009, a substantial increase over the 353 incidents registered in 2008. Some observers speculate that kidnapping is becoming more common because the use of credit cards and electronic payments among the rich has made armed robbery less lucrative; others believe it is the latest fad in crime, reflecting better police response to armed robbery cases.

### SOCIO-ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF KIDNAPPING AND HOSTAGE TAKING IN SOUTHERN NIGERIA

Kidnapping and hostage taking has plagued the socio-economic development of southern Nigeria and has had spill-over effect on some jobless youths and graduates who see kidnapping and hostage taking as a lucrative alternative means of making money, acquiring economic power and getting social recognition. This has had adverse effect on the socio-economic development of the southern Nigeria. The social life of people has been affected and there is mistrust among people due to incidence of kidnapping and hostage taking in southern Nigeria. Also, the image of the country in the global scene has been shattered as a result of this.

Inyang and Ubong (2013) classified the economic effects of kidnapping as direct and indirect costs. Direct Cost of Kidnapping involves the economic value that individuals and government may lose to kidnappers, much money has been paid as ransom. According to the former Inspector General of Police, Sir Mike Okiro, N15 billion have been paid as ransom to the kidnappers between 2006 and 2009 (Kyrian, 2009). The large sum of money spent as ransom payment could affect the state economy drastically. Many people kidnapped paid a lot of money as ransom. This situation affects both state and household economy. Some people usually go as far as borrowing to bail their relatives out from the hands of hoodlums. Inyang and Ubong (2013) pointed out that in many cases, it is often the bread winners of families that are usually targeted. The implication is always felt particularly within the family, whereby members of such families will have to feed themselves and adjust to their normal daily activities, until they secure the release of the victim. If the victim is a businessman or woman the business will suffer, if he is a civil servant or an artisan, his place of work will be affected adversely. In both cases there is going to be some setback. If he works in an organization, the challenges to be experienced are enormous as the victim's absence will impact in the system and the output may drop. Victims of kidnapping also suffer indirect cost from the incidents. Some of the victims are killed in the process of kidnapping, some sustain various levels of injuries like bullet wounds which may deform them forever. Many victims suffer various degrees of assault, abuse and torture in the hands of the kidnappers. Some of the female victims are even rapped by the kidnappers. Generally, most victims suffer severe traumatic pains from their experiences in the hands of the kidnappers.

The spread of kidnapping activities in most parts of the country has created crime waves that have affected Nigerian National Security services at the National, State and Local Government Levels (Thom-Otuya, 2010). Soyombo (2009) reveals that the federal government budget for 2009 for police formations and command was N195 billion. The Lagos state government was reported to have spent three billion naira in two year on security (Soyombo, 2009). He further pointed out that the present security spending can under develop the economy of the country, by diverting scarce financial resources and trained personnel from projects that can create wealth and benefit the poor. If this continues, there is no doubt that it is likely going to prevent the improvement of the economy and the welfare of the population. Apart from increase in the defense budget, Inyang and Ubong (2013) also pointed out that the nation loses a lot of revenue when expatriates working in the multinational oil companies are kidnapped. This leads to fear, and out of fear many people tend to stay clear from the working environment and the adverse effect is always on the economy. Dode (2007) argued that in 2006 when kidnappers abducted six foreign expatriates from Shell Oil company premises, the company was forced to close down and this led to loss of millions of standard cubic feet per day of gas production for the country. All these show that kidnapping has great adverse effect on the nation's socio-economic development.

### CHALLENGES IN COMBATING KIDNAPPING AND HOSTAGE TAKING IN SOUTHERN NIGERIA

1. Poor control of our territorial waterways: According to Thom-Otuya (2010), most of the kidnap cases carried out by the Niger-Delta militants are done through the waterways. She further asserts that the Nigerian navy does not have enough functional equipment to monitor and secure the porous waterways. The Navy, according to her, has only about ten (10) combat ships with about twelve (12) defender boats, none of this ship is below thirty years. The Navy is inadequately equipped to police her sea lanes, and this makes her incapable to monitor sea pirates and kidnap activities. The Navy is inadequately equipped to patrol and familiarize herself with the creeks and tributaries in the Niger Delta. This makes kidnapping in Niger Delta to be endemic.

2. Corruption: Corruption is an endemic issue in Nigeria and it has infiltrated all the nooks and crannies of the country. Security agencies have been viewed as symbols of corruption by the members of the public and it has, to an extent, hampered the security of the country. Some officers and men of security agencies negate the responsibilities entrusted on them and focus on what they will gain.
3. Lack of adequate information to the security agents by citizens when kidnapping incidents take place or when kidnapers have hideouts in their vicinities. This could be as a result of fear or mistrust between the people and security agencies.
4. Misunderstanding and poor synergy among security agencies: Misunderstanding and unhealthy interaction among security agencies has made the issue of kidnapping and hostage taking difficult to tackle. This has created a loophole among the security agencies and the criminal offenders capitalize on this loophole to perpetrate their evil.
5. Lack of sophisticated equipment for tracking down criminals: Security agencies lack modern equipment that aid in fast and accurate investigations of hostage-taking and kidnapping incidents. Some of the ammunitions in the various armouries of the security agencies are outdated, disused and obsolete. They cannot match the sophisticated weapons used by the dare-devil kidnappers that torment innocent citizens endlessly.
6. Poor motivation of the security officers is one of the major challenges facing the combating of kidnapping and hostage taking in southern Nigeria. Officers and men of the security agencies have lost the desire and will to tackle kidnapping and other social vices due to poor motivation.
7. Despite Nigeria being the most populated country in Africa, The country lacks proper recording of births, deaths and migrations of its inhabitants and citizens. To this effect, the country lacks digitized and interconnected authentic identification models in which information about every citizen and inhabitant could be assessed. This inefficiency of population management makes syndication by criminals easy and onslaught tedious for the security agencies.

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for this paper is Talcot Parson's model of structural functionalism. Structural functionalism is an approach in Sociology which was developed at the wake of 19th century's industrial revolution. This theory was sociologically developed as an adequate tool for dealing with the interrelatedness of various traits, institutions, groups, and so forth, within the social system. Structural functionalism is as old as the history of sociology. This is evident in the works of the founding fathers of the discipline like Auguste Comte (1798- 1857) and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903). Coser (1976) attempts a definition of structural functionalism. He saw structure as referring to a set of relatively stable and patterned relationships of social units, while he perceived functions as referring to the consequences of social activities which make for adaptation or adjustment of a given structure or its component parts.

The functional approach in Sociology was borrowed from the analogy of organism in the biological sciences in which all the body organs, in any living organism, have a kind of interconnectivity which links them together. Each of these organs plays a certain role for the survival of the organism. In any situation where any of the organs malfunctions, it is believed that this malfunctioning might affect the life of the organism. The functionalists, therefore, argue that the society is made up of groups and institutions which constitute the whole. They state further that each of these institutions that form the society plays a part for the survival of the system (Ritzer & Barry, 2001).

From the foregoing, functionalists view society as a system, a set of interconnected parts which, together form a whole. This makes society the primary unit of functional analysis. The focus of attention is how the basic parts of the society, that is, the various institutions, such as the military, police, religious organizations, family, political, economic, legal, and educational institutions co-relate and function for the survival of the entire society.

The main interest of the functionalists is the question of order. That is, how social order would be achieved and sustained for the smooth running of the society. The functional approach to the study of society tends to be conservative in nature because it seems to a large extent, against social change. Functional ideology believes that there are basic needs of a society which must be met for social life to go on.

These basic needs or necessary conditions of existence are known as functional prerequisites of society. Functional prerequisites refer to the fulfillments of the broadest conditions which are necessary for a system's existence and which, therefore, prevent its termination. To the functionalist school of thought, what constitute the basic needs of society must be identified and met before a society can survive.

In the position of Talcott Parsons, every system has four functional imperatives. They are: adaptation (A), goal attainment (G), integration (I), and latency (L) or pattern maintenance. This is known as the AGIL scheme. Each of these imperatives has implications in this study.

#### Adaptation

The system must cope with the external situational exigencies. It must adapt to its environments and adapt the environment to its needs. By implication, the economy which is expected to solve the problem of goal attainment in Nigeria is not performing as it is supposed and expected to be performing which has caused misery among people. Marginalization, poverty and unemployment are rife which results in increasing rate of kidnapping and hostage taking in the country particularly in the southern part of the country.

#### Goal Attainment

The system must define and achieve its primary goals. The political structures and systems established in the society, have the mandate of setting target goals for the society. These goals are geared towards the maintenance of descent life styles and the dignity of the citizens. However, it appears that government has failed to achieve these set goals. There is also government's failure in making policies that would have attracted investors which will create employment opportunities and ameliorate the suffering of people and which will invariably reduce the incidence of kidnapping and hostage taking. The southern Nigeria is therefore, prone to kidnapping and hostage taking due to neglect and policy summersault by the government.

#### Integration

The system must regulate the interrelationship of its component parts. It must also manage the relationship among the other three functional imperatives (Adaptation, Goal attainment and Latency). Government's failure to protect the fundamental human dignity and other set goals triggers off among individuals, behaviour which

ran contrary to social order and social justice. This is worsening with the increasing rate of corruption among the judicial arm of government where judgment is now bought and sold. With this, hardened criminals and kidnapers are allowed to escape justice which runs against the principles of natural justice and social order.

### Latency (Pattern Maintenance)

A system must furnish, maintain, and renew the motivation of security agencies in order to phase away corruption in the system. Through churches and mosques, families and quality education, social norms and values are inculcated into the life of citizens to make them useful members of the society. But, this has failed as a result of corruption which has permeated every part of the country and loss of morality. However, the structural functionalism theory is criticized for not being capable of explaining change and also for addressing the issues of a system as “closed” concept (Charles, Ikoh, Iyamba & Charles, 2005). Despite these criticisms, the theory is justified for its ability to highlight the functional aspect of crime in our society.

### CONCLUSION

Kidnapping and hostage taking is one of the social problems that is endemic in the southern Nigeria and it has adverse effect on the socio-economic development of the country. The phenomenon of kidnapping and hostage taking has assumed an unprecedented dimension in Nigeria and there seem to be no end in sight (Ngwama, 2014). The origin of kidnapping has been traced to the agitation and struggle by the people of Niger-Delta region to seek bigger shares of the returns from natural resources from their land. This problem is worsened by unemployment, use and dumping of the youths by politicians, greediness, poor control of our territorial waterways, lack of adequate information to the security agents by citizens when kidnapping incidents take place, lack of sophisticated equipment for tracking down criminals, poor motivation of security officers, misunderstanding and lack of synergy among security agencies and lack of proper recording of births, deaths and migrations of habitants and citizens in Nigeria. The issue of kidnapping and hostage taking has affected the social life of people, also government and private individuals have lost huge amount of money and properties

as a result of the practice. Consequently, both local and foreign investors have lost the will to invest in the country because no investor will like to invest in a porous security environment.

### RECOMMENDATION

- 1 There is need to review the current strategy of dealing with the issue of kidnapping and hostage taking in Nigeria. In particular, there is the need to explore the extant laws and the extent to which they are being enforced with a view to establishing their efficacy.
- 2 Government at all levels should make policies that will attract both local and foreign investors which will create employment opportunities for the youths especially the vulnerable ones.
- 3 There is need to sensitize and engage members of the public by the security agencies in tackling the issue of kidnapping and hostage taking.
- 4 There should be proper protection of identities of the public members that supply useful information to the security agencies and officers and men of the security agencies.
- 5 There is need to equip the security agencies with modern equipment and obsolete ones should be discarded.
- 6 Employment into the security agencies should be based on merit not by nepotism or tribalism as what is mostly obtainable today.
- 7 Officers and men of security agencies that are found to be corrupt should be dealt with accordingly.
- 8 Any body found conniving with kidnapers should be dealt with no matter how wealthy, politically or religiously exposed the person may be.

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