

PREVALENCE OF KIDNAPPING AND ITS SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS IN TARABA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

Kidnapping has emerged as one of the most pervasive and violent crimes in 21st-century Nigeria, with far-reaching socio-economic implications, particularly in conflict-prone states like Taraba. While the phenomenon of abduction has historical roots, its contemporary expression especially kidnapping for ransom has intensified due to rising insecurity, economic desperation, and the proliferation of arms. This study explores the prevalence of kidnapping and its socio-economic consequences in Taraba State between 2009 and 2025, within the broader context of Nigeria's internal security crisis. Drawing on both documented cases and anecdotal reports, the research highlights the spatial spread of abductions across rural and urban communities, the collusion of informants, and the targeting of perceived wealthy individuals and vulnerable populations. The findings reveal that kidnapping is no longer limited to regions with long-standing insurgency but has become a state-wide phenomenon affecting agriculture, business, education, and mobility. The threat has forced relocation of elites, discouraged economic ventures, and undermined local governance, contributing to widespread fear and a breakdown in social trust.

Keywords: Insurgency, Kidnapping, Nigeria, Ransom, Socio-economic, Taraba State

Introduction

The 21st century has been characterized by several social vices that serve as a threat to human existence and kidnapping is one of these vices. The term 'kidnapping' is relatively new as it is said to have emerged in the 17th century in the Great Britain where 'kids' of the wealthy families were 'napped' (caught in the sleep) for ransom Muhammad Ribadu Ayuba on 03 August 2020 (Tzanelli, 2006). Thus, while the act of kidnapping is established as an old one, the trends and patterns it takes are what gains currency and accounts for variations in its forms as well as the multiplicity of its occurrences across time and space. Even though the motives of kidnapers vary across the globe, extant studies point to reasons ranging from slavery to ritual purposes; sex, trafficking to foreign countries for economic gains, marriage, murder etc. These various motives account for the reason that, there is no mono-causal explanation for the concept of kidnapping as its drivers are determined by the intentions and motives of the perpetrators (Tzanelli, 2006).

In the context of Nigeria, it must be emphasized that kidnapping and abduction for social reasons is not of a recent development. In ancient times, individuals especially strangers were often kidnapped either for ritual purposes or for the burial of prominent chiefs or warriors. This practice seems to have defied the modern criminal justice system even in some contemporary Nigerian societies. While kidnapping for social reasons especially for the purpose of the burial of prominent individuals has greatly subsided, kidnappings for ritual and financial purposes have largely remained on the increase (Tzanelli, 2006).

Since 2009 when the activities of Boko Haram began to intensify in the north eastern Nigeria, unprecedented and hitherto unknown criminal activities in the region such as the kidnappings

and abduction of minors began to rear their ugly heads. Thus, by 2014 large scale kidnappings ensued, particularly the abduction of secondary school girls in Chibok, Borno State, Nigeria which attracted global attention. This incident marked the beginning of notorious kidnappings in northern Nigeria, and since then several other kidnapping cases such as the abductions of the former Comptroller-General of the Nigeria Customs Service and the current District head of Daura, Katsina state, the president's home town, Alhaji Musa Uba, and the father of the Nigerian national team's captain, John Obi Mikel in 2018 to mention but a few, have been making the headlines. According to a report by the United Nations Children Education Fund (UNICEF, 2018) from 2013 to 2018 more than 1,000 children had been abducted by the armed terrorists in the north east Nigeria including the widely publicized abductions of 276 Chibok girls and 113 from Dapchi, Borno, and Yobe states respectively. Yet, this figure represents only a fraction of the incidents of kidnappings in the region as many cases go unreported due to the volatility of the crisis in the region and the poor media coverage (Toromade, 2019).

The global trends of kidnapping tend to depict its prevalence in countries faced with internal conflicts. Thus, there is seemingly a correlation between kidnapping and conflict, insurgency or terrorism (Wittig, 2018). This is evidently clear in countries grappling with humanitarian crisis, particularly in most developing continents like Africa.

In Nigeria, the incidents of kidnapping have become recurrent phenomena making headlines of the country's dailies. Although, kidnapping for ransom began to be more pronounced in the country by early 2000s in the oil rich Niger Delta region by different groups fighting for what they described as marginalization and environmental injustice inflicted on them as a result of the oil exploration activities by the multinational corporations in the region. Consequently, they deployed hostage taking of prominent public officials and expatriates working in the multinational corporations in the region as a way of drawing the attention of government and even international communities to their plights. However, the recent upsurge in kidnappings in northern Nigeria tends to change the narrative as it has taken a horrendous dimension thus attracting attentions of both local and international communities.

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Kidnappings are targeted at the executive, legislative, and the judicial branch of the government, and also their family members in spite of the tight security at their disposal. This has led to some of these officials relocating their families outside the geopolitical zone or outside the country, thereby leaving the civilian population at the mercy of the tight security at their disposal. This has led to some of these officials relocating their families outside the geopolitical zone or outside the country, thereby leaving the civilian population at the mercy of the marauding gangs. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Abuja, and Lagos; that were once

regarded as insecure states, are now destinations of choice for many, and Gana, for those that can afford it.

It is now very risky to run a good business or own large herd of animals or even harvest bags of farm produce in Taraba State as hoodlums would come after those perceived to be wealthy. The hoodlums, usually working in collaboration with informants, visit their potential victims in the day or night to kidnap them for ransom and in some cases kill those who resist to be abducted. Wealthy individuals are relocated to Major towns in Taraba State from villages because of fear of activities of kidnapers are faced with fresh threat as the town is no longer safe. Areas worse affected by high rate of kidnapping in Jalingo metropolis which include BabaYa'u, Sabongari, Takanaban, Mile 6, ATC, Mullum, as well as areas on the outskirts of Jalingo. Similarly, areas outside Jalingo that are seriously affected by high rates of kidnapping include Sunkani, Garin Abba, Namne, Iware, Bali area, Mutum Biyu, Sabongida, Chanchanji, Lau and Karim-Lamido (Daily Trust, 2021). It is in this context that this study will examine prevalence of kidnapping and its socio-economic implications in Taraba State, Nigeria.

Statement of the Problem

The act of kidnapping pose serious security and development challenges to the people, residents and businesses in Nigeria and Taraba State in particular. For some time now many persons especially; businessmen, lecturers, politicians, government workers, security agency, farmers etc in Taraba State have continued to suffer in the hands of the kidnapers. This social milieu has remained unabated and is now a threat to the sustainability of economic activities in the State.

Kidnapping has plagued the socio-economic development of Taraba State and has had spill-over effect on some jobless youths and graduates who see kidnapping 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 Taraba State. The social life of people in Taraba State has been affected and there is mistrust among people due to incidence of kidnapping. Also, the image of Taraba State scene has been shattered as a result of this. It is quite difficult to come up with an exhaustive list of the victims of kidnap for ransom in Taraba state due to the frequency of its occurrence, despite the various security measures being taken by the Jalingo, Taraba State Government. Therefore, it is in this regard that this study investigates the prevalence of kidnapping and it socio-economic implication in Taraba State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine the prevalence of kidnapping and socio-economic development in Taraba State, Nigeria. The specific objectives are;

1. To establish the nexus between kidnapping and socio-economic development in Taraba State.
2. To identify the extent to which kidnaping has impacted socio-economic development in Taraba State

3. To examine government responses to the challenges of prevalence of kidnapping in Taraba State
4. To identify the challenges faced in mitigating the menace of kidnappings in Taraba State

Literature Review

Concept Kidnapping

Like many other social science concepts, kidnapping means different things to different people hence its defiance for a universal definition. It is a concept that bears different meanings and is understood only from the context in which it is used. Several researchers have thus attempted to define it from different perspectives depending on their conception of the term. Inyang and Ubong (2013) define it as the use of force to capture, take away and detain a person unlawfully against his/her will. This definition is in tandem with the conception of kidnapping in the criminal law where it is seen as the unlawful taking away or transportation of a person so as to confine him/her against his/her will. It is usually done with multiple, yet, varying reasons such as extraction of ransom from the victims or his/her relatives or employer, abduction of a child to have a bargaining power especially in marital dispute.

Sometimes, kidnapping is perpetrated in order to advance a course of another crime such as human trafficking and/or slavery. Similarly, Fage and Alabi (2017) see kidnapping as a product of some variables ranging from economic, political, religious and self-determination through coercive or fraudulent abduction of a person or group of persons. Turner's (2018) description of kidnapping lends support to the above conceptions where he describes it as seizing and transporting persons to a destination of unlawful imprisonment against their consent through force or enticement. This implies that apart from forcible capture of persons, kidnapping also occurs by luring away the victims and eventually forcefully confining them into false imprisonment. The conceptions of kidnapping by the above researchers agrees with the English common law website which defines kidnapping as an offence which connotes a forceful or fraudulent taking away of a person by another person without his/her consent or lawful excuse. Furthermore kidnapping is defined by various scholars with varying degree of successes. Firstly, Inyang and Abraham (2013, p. 532) defined it as "the forcible 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 unwanted act on the part of the victim". Another definition is offered by Fage and Alabi (2017, p. 289) who conceived kidnapping as "forceful or fraudulent abduction of an individual or a group of individuals for reasons ranging from economic, political, and religious to [struggle for] self-determination". However, the authors later admitted that the forcefully or fraudulently abducted individuals are carried off as hostages for ransom purposes. This implies that while political and economic factors can instigate kidnapping, the economic reason is the most common predisposing factor of the phenomenon.

Uzorma and Nwanegbo-Ben (2014, p. 132), also defined kidnapping as the "act of seizing and detaining or carrying away a person by unlawful force or by fraud, and often with a demand for ransom. It involves taking a person from their family forcefully without their consent with the

motive of holding the person as a hostage and earning a profit from their family". From the foregoing, the definition of kidnapping has no one best way to describe it, but it is clear that for an act to be deemed kidnapping, it shall involve coercive movement of a victim from one place to another, detention or seizure of that person be it a child or an adult. That is why Inyang and Abraham (2013) added that it is legally regarded as a restriction of someone else's liberty which violates the provision of freedom of movement as enshrined in the constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria, where every other law takes its cue from.

Classification of Kidnapping in Nigeria

Various types of kidnapping have been identified by analysts. Prominent among these are highlighted in more broadly, kidnapping has been classified as criminal, political, or pathological/emotional. These are:

1. **Criminal Kidnapping:** It is motivated by the quest to obtain ransom from the victim's family, business or associates.
2. **Political Kidnapping:** It is motivated by the need to advance a political cause (e.g. militant/militia, terrorist movement).
3. **Emotional/Pathological Kidnapping:** It is committed by people who are emotionally or psychologically disturbed e.g. for rape, child abduction by estranged parents, etc.

Forms of Kidnapping and Abduction in Nigeria

Basically four forms of kidnapping and abduction can be noticed in the Nigeria today.

1. *Kidnapping for Ransom:* This is a kind of kidnapping in which the victims are abducted and concealed until when their relative pay ransom to release them.
2. *Kidnapping for Ritual:* This is a kind of kidnapping in which the perpetrators basically kidnap a person usually minor for ritual purposes. This may be for money ritual or acquisition of power for invincibility or life elongation.
3. *Kidnapping for Trafficking (For Slave Labour or Sex):* This is a kind of kidnapping in which the perpetrators intend to traffic the victims for sex or hard labour.
4. *Kidnapping for Human Spare Parts Harvest:* An interview with Professor Nwolise, he pointed out that there is a new form of kidnapping now which is done for the supply of human spare parts especially abroad. He stated that most victims are killed at home and their organs are harvested for export. Most of the victims are trafficked abroad, where they are placed in coma and suspended in warehouses from where their organs are harvested to serve rich clients in need of (new) organ replacement (Adegoke, 2015).

Targets of Kidnappers

The targets of the kidnappers (the Guardian, Sunday June 28, 2009 P. 27) are:

1. Wealthy local individuals - Expatriate working in the area.
2. Business travellers and tourists who visits hostile areas.
3. Employees of high profile companies, particularly oil companies.
4. Captains and sailors of oil carrying vessels.
5. Relations of top government officials at the local, state and federal government levels.
6. Citizen of nations suspected to be supporting the government with military supplies.

7. Top officials of political parties and their relations.
8. Relations of business moguls.

Consequences and effects of Kidnapping in Nigeria

In Physics, the Newton's Third Law of Motion states that for every action there is a corresponding equal and opposite reaction. This implies that for every action one takes in life there is a consequent reaction. In the same vein the kidnapping activities carried out by kidnappers come with its corresponding consequences and effects, which unfortunately largely affect the third party such as the victim and the society at large. Some of the consequences and effects of kidnapping in Nigeria includes:

1. **Psychological Stress and Trauma:** The traumatic experience that the victims of kidnappings undergo usually leaves an indelible mark on them that lasts a lifetime. This has a negative psychological effect, especially in children, and in most cases leads to depression, anxiety, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) which unfortunately has a long lasting effect. This is very damaging to such victims, and is by far the most negative effect of kidnapping. This is because those who become depressed and traumatised as a result of being kidnapped, they sort of become incapacitated and their productivity level is greatly diminished.
2. **Atmosphere of Fear and General Distrust:** In a society where the incidence of kidnapping is high, there is usually an atmosphere of fear and a general lack of trust, this tends to limit people's lives and actions which translates to reduced economic activities. Everybody tends to be very cautious in this kind of environment, and there is usually a form of curfew that exists in such areas. The rich and very wealthy, who can afford to, surround themselves with security guards, armed to the teeth, because of the fear of getting kidnapped.
3. **Reduced Foreign Investment:** The high rate of kidnappings in certain areas of the country has made such areas high risk zones for foreigners. This scares away foreign investors from investing in that region, as can be seen in the Northern part of Nigeria, where Boko Haram sect where operating. Many expatriate workers in a construction firm working on a project were kidnapped by the sect. This led to the company withdrawing from the country. This also scared away many other foreign investors from investing in the country, especially in the North during that period
4. **Sexual Abuse and STDs:** Child sexual abuse as a result of kidnapping also exposes child to the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Another guised form of sexual molestation of kidnapped children is that the abducted under age victims are often subjected to forced marriage with older men. The child brides are married to older, more sexually experienced men with whom it is difficult to negotiate safe sexual behaviours.
5. **Financial Effect:** Aside from psychological trauma on the victim and the victim's family, kidnapping is also accompanied with huge economic or financial loss for the victims and their families.

Concept of Socio-Economic Development

Socio-economic development is simply a term used to refer to the economic well-being of a country by promoting economic growth and good standard of living. Adams (2006) defines economic development as the elimination or reduction in poverty, inequality, and unemployment within a growing economy. Mansell and Wehn (1998) say that economic development involves economic growth, namely the increase in per capita income and attainment of standard of living equivalent to that of industrialized nations. Musgrave and Musgrave (2004) lend credence to the fact that the requirements for economic development in low-income nations include those needed for consistent economic growth as compared with highly developed nations.

Socio-economic development is seen generally as sustained action of policy makers and communities geared toward promoting and improving standard of living of people in the areas of improved health services, human capital development, infrastructural development, health safety, improved literacy, job opportunities, good road network, good drinking water among others (Fagbemi, 2011).

Socio-economic development can't be achieved when the citizens still lack access to job opportunities, improved living condition and security to life. This prompted the federal government through the Ministry of National Planning (2011) to affirm that though Nigeria has achieved reasonable growth since 1999, that those achievements have no significant effect on poverty alleviation and employment opportunities. The Ministry pointed out that unemployment rate rose from 13.3% in 1999 to 19.7% in 2009 and 21.1% in the final quarter of 2010, while between 1999 and 2009, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) increased from about \$250 billion to \$836 billion, yet the number of unemployed people increased from 5.9 million to 17.5 million (Fagbemi, 2011).

November 20th every year is commemorated every year by the United Nations and the African Union Commission as African Industrialization Day (AID) with the aim of raising awareness and to spur up actions that would lead to ensuring sustenance of industries by African States so as to diversify the economy, improve on the nations socio-economic and infrastructural development which would in turn create jobs and lift the citizen out of poverty line, yet the World Bank Reports have continued to rate the country as one of the 20th poorest countries in the world (UNDP Report, 2017).

Imhonopi and Urim (2010), noted that socio-economic development is the ability of a country or countries to improve the social welfare of the people in the areas of social amenities such as education, healthcare services, power, housing, pipe-borne water, roads, access to means of production, participation in governance among others. They stressed further that the components of socio-economic development in any country include; economic development, socio-cultural development, life expectancy, literacy and level of employment and their impacts on overall human development.

Socio-Economic Development and Implication of Kidnapping

The safety of persons in Nigeria and their property cannot be guaranteed due to kidnapping and abduction. The high incidence rate of kidnapping in Nigeria has affected the nation's image. It has also affected Nigeria's attempt to develop a viable tourism industry as visitors are regularly warned by their countries to be wary of coming to Nigeria. Many would-be investors have also stayed away for fears of being kidnapped and abducted. The undesirable effects of kidnapping in Nigeria are diverse, and include economic, social, physical, medical, political, international, psychological/emotional, and moral effects.

1. **Social Implication of Kidnapping:** The menace of kidnapping has fostered a sense of insecurity in Nigeria. Kidnapping affects the social life and social relations of many people who are held hostages in their homes from dusk to dawn, for the fear of being kidnapped. As a result of kidnapping, night travel has become a high-risk venture. Furthermore, many people have been forced out of their newly completed houses by kidnapers. People are compelled to present an unfinished look of poverty by not painting the external walls of their houses. Many people are afraid to buy or use new motor vehicles for the fear of kidnapers. In regards to inter-personal relationship, kidnapping has also contributed to a relatively high level of mistrust among people. Few people still extend the traditional African hospitality to strangers.
2. **Economic Implication of Kidnapping:** The economic implication of kidnapping include direct and indirect costs. At the individual level, the costs include the economic value of money that may be lost to kidnapers, while the indirect economic cost of kidnapping include expenditures on preventive measures, such as the employment of private security personnel. At the governmental level, the economic effects of kidnapping involve the expenditure on security and security agencies. Much money has been spent on ransom payments. The former Inspector General, Sir. Mike Okiro, disclosed that 15 billion naira have been paid as ransom to kidnapers between 2006 and 2009. The large sum of money spent as ransom payment could affect the State economy positively, as it could have been used for investment and economic development.

Some Recorded Kidnapping in Taraba State

It is now very risky to run a good business or own large herd of animals or even harvest bags of farm produce in Taraba State as hoodlums would come after those perceived to be wealthy. The hoodlums, usually working in collaboration with informants, visit their potential victims in the day or night to kidnap them for ransom and in some cases kill those who resist to be abducted. Wealthy individuals are relocated to Major town in Taraba State from villages because of fear of activities of kidnapers are faced with fresh threat as the town is no longer safe. Areas worse affected by high rate of kidnapping is Jalingo metropolis which include BabaYa'u, Sabongari, Takanaban, Mile 6, ATC, Mullum, as well as areas on the outskirts of Jalingo. Similarly, areas outside Jalingo that are seriously affected by high rates of kidnapping include Sunkani, Garin

Abba, Namne, Iware, Bali area, Mutum Biyu, Sabongida, Chanchangi, Lau and Karim-Lamido (Daily Trust 2021)

Jalingo Local Government Area

The informants, residing in Jalingo and towns and villages across the state, are the ones who give directions to the kidnappers to abduct people for ransom because they live among the people and know them better. The rate of kidnapping, it was gathered, has instilled fear in the minds of residents of Jalingo as well as those residing in other parts of the state. The hoodlums in recent weeks have killed five persons including a local government chairman and secretary of one of the chiefdoms in the state, apart from those killed few years ago. Similarly, the hoodlums who operate mostly in the night have abducted several individuals including a member of the State House of Assembly and a special Assistant to Governor Darius Ishaku and collected huge sums as ransom.

Many residents of Takanaban and Baba Ya'u quarters have relocated to the main Jalingotownship because of the activities of the hoodlums. Those who built or own big business and those who ride exotic cars are potential targets of kidnappers in Jalingo and many parts of the state. Similarly, senior government officials and lecturers are also targeted by the hoodlums. In the rural areas, big time farmers are also threatened by the hoodlums as they abduct them on the farms and in their houses. It was further gathered that a businessman who relocated to Jalingo from GarbaChede because of threat to his life by suspected kidnappers was abducted by the kidnappers who trailed him and abducted him few weeks after he relocated.

Gunmen have abducted the lawmaker representing Nguroje constituency in the Taraba State House of Assembly, Bashir Bape. MrBape was kidnapped Tuesday night in his residence in Jalingo, the state capital. "The gunmen who came in numbers overpowered the vigilantes guarding the house and went straight to his sleeping room. "They whisked him away, and on leaving the scene, they shot into the air to scare us." Witnesses said the gunmen rode to the area in a convoy of motorcycles at about 1:00 a.m. "Immediately they entered, they seized all handsets belonging to the people in the compound. "They then dragged the member to their motorcycles and whisked him away without saying anything," said a neighbour who declined to give his name for security reasons. The state police spokesperson was not immediately available for comment on the incident as calls to his phone did not go through. It was the second time a member of the state House of Assembly was kidnapped in recent years. (Premium Times 2021).

The Taraba state police command has confirmed the kidnapping of Umar Buba, a lecturer and Head of the Department of Forestry and Wildlife Management, Faculty of Agriculture in Taraba State University by some armed men. Buba was said to have been kidnapped from the staff quarters of the university in the early hours of Sunday morning. The Vice-Chancellor Vincent Ado-Tenebe told newsmen that the armed men fired gunshots sporadically to displace the security officials attached to the staff quarters before going away with the lecturer. He lamented that despite the heavy presence of military and civil security operatives mounting surveillance around the school premises Buba was still kidnapped.

This is a very sad story, and it has not happened in the past two to three years ago when we had our Director of Information kidnapped after which we put so many strategies on the ground to prevent ugly situations in the future. “I am so surprised that this happened again, and I know that we have police personnel, that of NSCDC, our security outfit, and vigilante group members hired by the institution to keep the place safe and despite all of these, the former Dean of Students Affairs has been kidnapped (Ado-Tenebe 2021).

The vice-chancellor, however, gave an assurance that more efforts would be put in place for more security operatives to be deployed, and stressed the need for more arms and ammunition to fight criminals. He stated that staff and students living on campus cannot challenge armed men with bare hands, noting that the management would engage concerned authorities to grant licences for staff to have their guns for their protection and that of the students. Confirming the incident, the Police Public Relations Officer in Taraba, David Misal, said the police were on the trail of the kidnappers to rescue the lecturer. He also called on the residents to provide the police with useful information that would aid the rescue of the abducted lecturer.

Wukari Local Government Area

Along Wukari-Takum road, 26 youths going to Takum after attending a wedding ceremony in Wukari were abducted. Twenty-two out of the abducted youths were rescued by a joint team of soldiers from Benue and Taraba State while four of the youths are still being held by the kidnappers who operate from a forest in neighboring Benue State. Gunmen dressed in army uniform invaded Chanchangi town in Takum Local Government Area and killed one Mobile police officer. The gunmen, it was gathered, also shot four children who were studying the Qur’an inside a Masjid located close to the palace of the Gara of Chanchangi in the town.

Karim-Lamido Local Government Area

Other incidents recorded in the state include the killing of two policemen at a junction near Jen town in Karim-Lamido Local Government Area by unidentified gunmen. The killing of the two policemen came few months after two cattle merchants got killed by unidentified gunmen at Andame village in the same Karim-Lamido local government area.

Ardo-Kola Local Government Area

In Sunkani town, the headquarters of Ardo-Kola Local Government Area, more than 10 persons were abducted and one person killed by gunmen suspected to be kidnappers. It was in Sunkani town that the Taraba State chairman of the Nigeria Labour Congress was abducted. The chairman of Ardo-Kola Local Government Council, Mr. Salihu Dovo, and his nephew were abducted from his resident in Sabongari area of Jalingo three weeks ago. Dovo and his nephew got killed by their abductors when they realized that they could not take them away as vigilantes gave them a hot chase. Bala Baba Mayo Belwa, a special assistant to Governor Darius Ishaku, was abducted by unidentified gunmen and millions of naira was paid as ransom for his release. It was further gathered that a young businessman Abdulrazak Yola was killed inside his house by gunmen suspected to be kidnappers. Late Abdulrazak, it was learnt, got killed when he resisted to be abducted and the gunmen shot him severally in the chest leading to his instant death (daily trust 2021).

Kunini Chieftdom

Similarly, the Secretary of Kunini Chieftdom, Abdullahi Aboki, was also attacked in his residence at Kunini town the headquarters of the chieftdom. His wife Adama Abubakar and his 3-month-old child were shot by the gunmen. They were however lucky to survive but the 3-month-old child who was shot on the leg, had it amputated. The child and his mother are still on admission at the Federal Medical Centre Jalingo.

Gassol Local Government Area

At Sabongida in Gassol Local Government Area, three farmers were kidnapped while working in their farms and ransom was paid before their release. At a farm near Sabongida, a farmer who went to his farm to supervise labourers working narrowly escaped being abducted. Another farmer in Wurojam was not as lucky as he was abducted and many bags of maize and paddy rice he harvested recently were sold to pay about N10 million ransom for his release. Many of the kidnap cases were not reported to the police because the kidnappers usually warn their victims of consequences if they report their cases to security agents. Both the former police spokesperson DSP David Misal and the new police spokesperson in the state ASP Leha Reform confirmed most of the kidnappings and killings. ASP Leha Reform stated that more police patrol have been deployed to parts of Sunkani and Jalingo to tackle cases of kidnapping and other crimes. (Daniel, 2021)

Ibi Local Government Area

Wadume whose real name is HamisuBala is a Nigerian kidnap for ransom kingpin based in Taraba State but operated across Northeast, Northwest and North central states of Nigeria. He was arrested in August 2019 by the Nigerian Inspector General of Police Intelligence Response Team (IRT). During investigations, it was established that Wadume supplied arms and ammunition to terrorists in the Northeast Nigeria and cattle rustlers across Northern region of Nigeria. Wadume dropped out of school at Junior Secondary School and went into fish business where he established fish ponds. Later, he joined political thuggery.

Wadume was arrested in August 2019 while drinking tea with friends in his house in Ibi Town, Taraba State. While being conveyed to Abuja for further investigation, police vehicle conveying him came under attack at a check point manned by soldiers after passing the first military check point where they reportedly identified themselves as police officers from Abuja and that they were holding a kidnap kingpin (Wadume) reportedly known to the Commander of the military check points. The soldiers at the second check point said they were alerted that the occupants of the vehicle were kidnappers who had just kidnapped Wadume in his house and being taken away to a hideout.

On the order of Captain the soldiers chased after the police vehicle on a rescue mission firing shots at the vehicle. By the time the police vehicle stopped, three police officers and two civilians had been killed and five others injured. Wadume was freed from leg and handcuffs by the soldiers and asked to go home but Wadume went into hiding prompting a fresh manhunt for him. This raised a suspicion of conspiracy. Later the police issued a statement that the police team who arrested Wadume had informed the soldiers that they were on security operations

around the area to effect the arrest of criminals but the military denied that it had been informed before the operation was carried. It was revealed in the course of investigation that the army captain had had 191 phone conversations with Wadume prior to the incident.

On 19 August 2019, Wadume was re-arrested by Police in a hideout at Latin Mai Allo Hotoro in Kano State. On 26 August 2019, four of Wadume's victims identified him as the leader of the kidnap gang that seized them for ransom and said they would testify against him during court trial. The police recovered four AK47 and two K2 rifles from one of Wadume's relations who said the weapons belonged to Wadume. Investigations further revealed that Wadume had purchased 10 AK47 rifles from black market within one year and supplied terrorists in the northeast Nigeria and cattle rustlers across Northern region of Nigeria (Charles, 2021)

Takum Local Government Area

No fewer than 27 persons have been adopted in Taraba State along Wukari/Takum road. Confirming the incident, Takum Council chairman, ShibanTikari, said the victims had attended a wedding in Wukari and were on their way back to Takum. "On seeing the kidnapers in military uniform, the driver stopped, thinking that they were soldiers, only for them to be ordered into the bush by the hoodlums," (Tikari 2021). The Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), David Misal, agreed that some persons, who were on their way home to Takum from Wukari, were missing. "For now, I cannot tell you whether they are missing or kidnapped, but we are already on top of the situation," (Misal, 2021).

Methodology

A research design is a blue print or structure within which research is conducted, (Ajayi, and Amuche, 2015). It constitutes the blue print for the collection, measurement and analysis of data. The research design encompasses the methods for the data collection, measurement and analysis of data related to the research objectives. The research design chosen for this study is survey method. This research relied on both primary and secondary source of data collection. The primary data was collected through focus group discussion, face to face interview, oral interview and used of telephone interview. The secondary data was collected through textbooks, journals, newspapers, magazines and internet.

Theoretical Framework

This study adopted structural functionalism theory as is theoretical framework of analysis. Structural functionalism theory is associated with the works of Emile Durkheim (1917), Robert K. Merton (1968) and Talcott Parson (1979). They described structural functionalism theory as each civilization becomes obsessed with collective object build-up with component and fragments that the entire society regulates upon for their survival. Hence, if any part fails to provide equal service that delivers equity between each component source, the comeback responses are often dysfunctional consequences destabilizing the safety of the entire society (Hustedde & Ganowicz, 2002).

The basic assumption of the theory sees the society as a living organism made up of components part, which functions harmoniously for the survival of the whole system. If any parts fails to contribute to identifiably useful function neither does it promote values consensus

among members of the society – it will not be passed on from one generation to the next (Schaefer, 2002). When applying the theory to explain the social problem of kidnapping in Nigeria, and its implication on the socioeconomic development; structural functionalism assumes that, the economy which is part of the social system is not functioning well. This is due to the mismanagement that occurs within the political sector. This dysfunction within the system causes high level of poverty, unemployment, deprivation as well as marginalization. The result is visualized in the high crime rate of which kidnapping is at the fore front.

The crime of kidnapping has been identified as profitable and functional to its perpetrators. The lucrative nature of kidnapping makes it very attractive. Kidnapping as observed in some parts of Nigeria, is identified as a functional measure of politicians to fight their opponents. The money collected as ransoms are means to destabilize the opponents and as well force them to back-out of the political race. In the Niger Delta, kidnapping of foreign expatriates has drawn government attention to look into the plight of the region. This is visualized in the post-amnesty program initiated by Yar'adua/Goodluck administration in 2009, which is expected to restore the much needed peace in the region and the country at large so that socio-economic activities could be conducted without obstruction.

Structural-functional theory or functional theory states that every part of a society serves a function in maintaining the solidarity and stability of the whole (Parillo, 2012). Ideally, all the parts of a society maintain equilibrium and a state of balance under perfect conditions (Parillo, 2012). However, when problems arise, it is because a part of the social system has become dysfunctional; usually caused by some type of rapid change, which the other parts of the system are not able to adjust to and compensate for quickly enough (Parillo, 2012). At this point, the society must decide if it will adjust by returning to its pre-conflict state or work to find a new equilibrium (Parillo, 2012). Functional theory acts as the opposite of conflict theory because it operates on the premise that humans are inherently cooperative and caring, each playing their role in maintaining the harmony of the society (Schriver, 1998). Functionalists believe that all problems regarding minority groups can be solved by small adjustments in the social system to return to equilibrium (Parillo, 2012).

In the context of kidnapping, functionalist theory explores the economic implications of kidnapping in Taraba State, precisely from the socio-economical viewpoint, and it's transparent that structural functionalism faults the Taraba State economy of being dysfunctional, which led to vicious comebacks and aggression. Also, the theory aims to scrutinize the inability of the Taraba State economic system to provide the essential resources necessary to sustain and re-centralized a productive economy. The implications of the dysfunctional ties such as unemployment, abject poverty, marginalization, and deprivation often disastrously affected the vulnerable masses via insecurity, terrorism, and heinous crimes, and kidnapping in Taraba State.

Discussion of Findings

This study found that the huge amount of money spent as ransom payment could negatively affect both state and national economy drastically. Since many people kidnapped paid a lot of

money as ransom, the situation affects both state and household economy with negative effect on the socioeconomic wellbeing of the family. Kidnapping affects the social life and social relations of many people who are held hostages in their homes from dusk to dawn, for the fear of being kidnapped. As a result of kidnapping, night travel has become a high risk venture. Furthermore, many people have been forced out of their newly completed houses by kidnapers. People are compelled to present an unfinished look of poverty by not painting the external walls of their houses. Many people are afraid to buy or use new motor vehicles for the fear of kidnapers. It was reported that rich people in Taraba State have resorted to riding in taxi cabs and commercial motorcycles popularly called Okada to market, school and social outings as a means to check hostage takers.

In regards to inter-personal relationship, kidnapping has also contributed to a relatively high level of mistrust among people. Few people still extend the traditional African hospitality to strangers. Some people do not acknowledge or return greeting by strangers nor oblige strangers asking for direction most people are unwilling to render help to people in distress for fear of being kidnapped. Few people would venture to stop to assist people calling for help on the express way. Increasingly many people nowadays barricade themselves in their homes.

This study found that Kidnapping severely disrupt local economies. The threat of abduction deters investment, stifles business growth, and creates an environment of insecurity. Businesses face increased costs due to ransom payments, security measures, and insurance, which undermine profitability and economic stability. Areas affected by high kidnapping rates often experience a decline in tourism and trade. The perception of danger deterred tourists and traders, which leads to decreased economic activity and job losses in the state.

Persistent kidnapping issues lead to reduced investor confidence. Investors are less likely to commit resources to regions where they perceive high risks, which can hinder economic development and infrastructure projects. The economic strain caused by kidnapping can exacerbate poverty. Families affected by kidnapping may face significant financial burdens, and the broader economic instability reduced employment opportunities and income levels. Resources allocated to education and healthcare were redirected to security measures. In some cases, families withdraw children from school or avoid healthcare facilities due to fear of kidnapping, which affects long-term human capital development.

High levels of poverty and unemployment driven individuals toward criminal activities, including kidnapping. Economic desperation make the lucrative gains from kidnappings more attractive, especially when legitimate opportunities are scarce. Socio-economic development is hindered when law enforcement and security services are underfunded or ineffective. Inadequate policing and judicial processes can fail to deter kidnapers or bring perpetrators to justice, perpetuating the cycle of crime.

This study revealed that the government responses to the challenges and prevalence of kidnapping in Taraba State have involved a combination of security measures, economic initiatives, and policy interventions. These efforts aim to address the root causes of kidnapping, enhance public safety, and support economic development. The government has deployed

security personnel, including the police, military, and paramilitary forces, to high-risk areas. This increased presence aims to deter kidnappers and respond more effectively to incidents. Security outposts and checkpoints have been set up in strategic locations to monitor and control movement, particularly in areas with high kidnapping rates. Specialized units, such as anti-kidnapping squads, have been created to focus specifically on tackling kidnapping cases. These units are trained to handle hostage situations and negotiate with kidnappers.

The government has promoted community policing to foster cooperation between law enforcement agencies and local communities. By involving local residents in crime prevention efforts, the government seeks to gather intelligence and build trust. Public awareness campaigns have been conducted to educate citizens on safety measures and the importance of reporting suspicious activities. These campaigns aim to create a more informed and vigilant public. The government has enacted and revised laws to address kidnapping more effectively. These include harsher penalties for kidnappers and provisions for the protection of victims and their families. Efforts have been made to streamline the judicial process for handling kidnapping cases. This includes ensuring faster trials and improving the overall efficiency of the legal system.

This study found that mitigating the menace of kidnappings in Taraba State involves a complex array of challenges that impact the effectiveness of intervention strategies. These challenges were broadly categorized into security, socio-economic, governance, and community-related issues. Law enforcement and security agencies faced a shortage of personnel and inadequate equipment. This limits their ability to respond swiftly and effectively to kidnapping incidents. Effective coordination among various security agencies (police, military, local vigilante groups) is often lacking. Poor coordination leads to inefficiencies and missed opportunities in combating kidnappings.

High levels of poverty and unemployment contributed to the prevalence of kidnapping. Economic desperation which derived individuals toward criminal activities as a means of financial survival. Inadequate infrastructure, such as poor roads and limited communication networks, complicates law enforcement efforts and hampers economic development, which in turn affects overall security. The high ransom payments associated with kidnappings is a significant incentive for criminals. The financial gains from kidnappings can outweigh the risks for some individuals. Corruption within law enforcement and government institutions undermined efforts to combat kidnapping. Corrupt practices lead to inefficiencies, lack of accountability, and even collusion with criminals. Limited funding for security and crime prevention programs affects the implementation and sustainability of anti-kidnapping measures. Financial constraints hindered the procurement of necessary equipment and training. In some areas, there is a significant level of mistrust between local communities and law enforcement agencies. This mistrust leads to reluctance in cooperating with authorities and providing valuable information.

Conclusion

As shown by the information derived and presented from the primary and secondary data, it can be concluded beyond reasonable doubt that the impact of kidnapping and socio-economic development in Taraba state is imperative. However, this study discussed the place of kidnapping and its impact on the socio-economic development in Taraba state, Nigeria. Persistent kidnapping issues lead to reduced investor confidence. Investors are less likely to commit resources to regions where they perceive high risks, which hinders economic development and infrastructure projects. The economic strain caused by kidnapping can exacerbate poverty. Families affected by kidnapping may face significant financial burdens, and the broader economic instability reduces employment opportunities and income levels. Resources allocated to education and healthcare were redirected to security measures. It has been found that kidnapping is a crime of seizing, confining, abducting, transporting and carrying away of a person by force.

The study found also that high levels of poverty and unemployment contributed to the prevalence of kidnapping. Economic desperation which drives individuals toward criminal activities as a means of financial survival. Inadequate infrastructure, such as poor roads and limited communication networks, complicates law enforcement efforts and hampers economic development, which in turn affects overall security. The high ransom payments associated with kidnappings is a significant incentive for criminals. The financial gains from kidnappings can outweigh the risks for some individuals. Also, corruption within law enforcement and government institutions undermined efforts to combat kidnapping. Corrupt practices lead to inefficiencies, lack of accountability, and even collusion with criminals. Limited funding for security and crime prevention programs affects the implementation and sustainability of anti-kidnapping measures.

Recommendations

- i. Taraba State government should take the issue of unemployment as a matter of concern and create jobs for unemployed citizens.
- ii. In Taraba State there should be adequate policies put in place by government at all levels to combat kidnapping effectively.
- iii. Parents and guardians should encourage their children/wards both literate and non-literate to acquire vocation which provides them with skills, knowledge and attitudes for effective employment in a specific occupation. Members of the society should work hard and be contented with what they have rather than living an extravagant life.
- iv. More security personnel should be deployed to Taraba State, since security in the area is a major challenge.

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