

THE ROLE OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES IN CURBING KIDNAPPING AND BANDITRY IN TARABA STATE

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Abstract

This paper examines the role of law enforcement agencies in curbing kidnapping and banditry in Taraba State. The objectives of the study are to assess the effectiveness of the law enforcement agencies in preventing, detecting, and responding to kidnapping and banditry attacks, identify their challenges, and to examine their relationship with the affected communities in addressing the problem. The paper employed qualitative descriptive research and relies on secondary sources of data. The paper is anchored on structural functionalism as a theoretical framework of analysis. The findings in the study reveals that efforts at preventing and detecting kidnapping and banditry were hampered by inter-agency rivalry, inability of the people to provide intelligence information to the law enforcement agencies, lack of modern technological gadgets, and corruption of the judiciary undermines the fight of preventing, detecting and responding to kidnapping and banditry in Taraba State. The paper concludes that kidnapping and banditry were caused by harsh economic conditions and poverty and lack of employment opportunities. The paper recommends interagency cooperation and sharing of intelligence, citizens and community support by providing information on criminal activities and hideouts and punishment of kidnapers and bandits.

Keywords: *Law Enforcement Agencies, Banditry, Kidnapping, Structural-functionalism*

Introduction

Kidnapping and banditry have become a pervasive and devastating global phenomenon, with a history spanning decades (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), 2019). This scourge has affected various regions, including Asia, Europe, and Latin America. In Nigeria, kidnapping has evolved from a rare occurrence in the 1990s to a commercialized industry, starting with the abduction of expatriates in the Niger Delta area in 2006 (Vanguard, 2019).

Notable cases worldwide include the Chibok schoolgirls' kidnapping in Nigeria (2014) (BBC, (2014), Daniel Pearl's abduction in Pakistan (2002) (CNN, (2002), the kidnapping of oil workers in Algeria (2013) (Al Jazeera, (2013), ISIS's beheading of hostages in Syria and Iraq (2014-2015) (The New York Times, 2014-2015), and the kidnapping of tourists in Mexico (2019) (BBC, (2019). These examples illustrate the global nature of kidnapping and banditry, highlighting the need for international cooperation and effective strategies to combat this heinous crime (UNODC, 2019).

The implications of kidnapping are far-reaching, with the former Senate President, Ahmad Ibrahim Lawan, calling for a comprehensive reform and restructuring of the nation's security architecture to address the deteriorating security challenges. The issue has gained international attention, with the United States imposing a visa ban on Nigeria (US Department of State, (2020). Lawan emphasized the need for a concerted effort from all arms of government to tackle the problem, which is crippling socio-economic activities and scaring away investors, thereby stagnating Nigeria's development (Vanguard, 2020).

Taraba State, located in the North-Eastern part of Nigeria, has been plagued by the menace of kidnapping and banditry in recent years. These crimes have resulted in the loss of countless lives, displacement of communities, and a general sense of insecurity among the populace. The role of law enforcement agencies in curbing these crimes is crucial, as they are the primary institutions responsible for maintaining law and order. One of the key variables in addressing kidnapping and banditry is the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies. This includes their ability to prevent, detect, and respond to these crimes. Factors such as adequate funding, training, and equipment are essential in ensuring that law enforcement agencies are equipped to handle the challenges posed by kidnapping and banditry.

Another variable is the level of cooperation between law enforcement agencies and the community. Building trust and fostering collaboration between these stakeholders is vital in gathering intelligence, preventing crimes, and bringing perpetrators to justice. Corruption within law enforcement agencies is another significant variable. Corruption can hinder efforts to combat kidnapping and banditry, as it can lead to complicity, sabotage, and a lack of accountability. The geographical terrain of Taraba State is also a variable that must be considered. The state's vast forests and rural areas provide a conducive environment for kidnapers and bandits to operate, making it challenging for law enforcement agencies to effectively patrol and respond to incidents. It is against this backdrop that this paper seeks to assess the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies role in preventing, detecting, and responding to kidnapping and banditry in Taraba State.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria is grappling with a significant kidnapping problem, earning it a reputation as a global hot spot for this crime. In the first half of 2021 alone, over 3,000 people were reported kidnapped in the country. This issue is attributed to various factors, including the involvement of militants, youth gangs, insurgents, and organized crime groups operating nationwide. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), between 2020 and 2022, more than 1,436 children were abducted in Nigeria, with school children comprising a significant portion of the victims (Okoli, 2022; UNICEF, 2022) Nigeria is grappling with a significant kidnapping problem, earning it a reputation as a global hot spot for this crime. In the first half of 2021 alone, over 3,000 people were reported kidnapped in the country. This issue is attributed to various factors, including the involvement of militants, youth gangs, insurgents, and organized crime groups operating nationwide. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), between 2020 and 2022, more than 1,436 children were abducted in Nigeria, with school children comprising a significant portion of the victims (Okoli, 2022; UNICEF, 2022).

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Nigeria is grappling with escalation of kidnapping for ransom. It has earned Nigeria a position of the hot spot of kidnapping because of the incessant nature of the crime and its threat on national security and images over the years. Over 3000 people have been kidnapped in Nigeria in 2021 (Mohammed & Ayodele, 2024; UNICEF, 2022).

Despite the efforts of law enforcement agencies in Nigeria, kidnapping and banditry continue to persist in Taraba State, resulting in significant human, economic, and social losses. The inability of law enforcement agencies to effectively curb these crimes has led to a breakdown of trust between the agencies and the community, further exacerbating the problem. The persistence of kidnapping and banditry in Taraba State raises critical questions about the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies role in preventing, detecting, and responding to these crimes. This paper examines the role of the security agencies in preventing and responding to kidnapping and bandit criminal activities in Taraba State.

Objective of the study

These objectives will guide the study to achieve its aim of examining the role of law enforcement agencies in curbing kidnapping and banditry in Taraba State.

- i. To assess the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies in preventing, detecting, and responding to kidnapping and banditry in Taraba State.
- ii. To identify the challenges faced by law enforcement agencies in curbing kidnapping and banditry in Taraba State.
- iii. To examine the relationship between law enforcement agencies and the community in preventing and responding to kidnapping and banditry.

Conceptual Clarifications

Concept of Law Enforcement Agencies

Law Enforcement Agencies' Efforts refer to the strategies and actions taken by law enforcement agencies to prevent, detect, apprehend, and prosecute criminal activities, including kidnapping and banditry. These efforts are crucial in maintaining public safety and security. Prevention involves proactive measures to prevent kidnapping and banditry from occurring. Law enforcement agencies can Conduct regular patrols in high-risk areas (Haberfeld, 2018), Engage with the community through outreach programs (Skogan, 2006), and Provide education and awareness on safety measures (Boba, 2017). Detection involves identifying and investigating kidnapping and banditry incidents. Law enforcement agencies can Utilize intelligence gathering and analysis (Ratcliffe, 2016), Employ forensic science and technology (Saferstein, 2017) and conduct thorough investigations and interviews (Osterburg & Ward, 2014).

Apprehension involves arresting and taking into custody perpetrators of kidnapping and banditry. Law enforcement agencies can Conduct sting operations and raids (Barker, 2016), Utilize surveillance and monitoring (Taylor, 2017) and collaborate with other agencies and units (Mastrofski, 2016). Prosecution involves ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable through effective prosecution. Law enforcement agencies can Work closely with prosecutors to build strong cases (Worrall, 2016), Provide testimony and evidence in court (Braswell, 2017) and ensure that perpetrators receive appropriate sentences (Clear, 2016).

Nigeria's law enforcement agencies face a complex array of 21st-century security challenges rooted in historical, socioeconomic, and political contexts, including terrorism, cyber threats, economic crimes, and communal tensions. Addressing these challenges comprehensively and proactively will enhance Nigeria's security, protect its citizens, promote stability, and safeguard national interests in the dynamic 21st-century landscape.

Nature of Incidence of Kidnapping and Banditry

The incidence of kidnapping and banditry refers to the frequency and prevalence of these crimes within a given population or geographic area. Understanding the incidence of kidnapping and banditry is crucial for Developing effective prevention and response strategies (Ratcliffe, 2016), Allocating resources and prioritizing efforts (Boba, 2017), Evaluating the effectiveness of interventions (Haberfeld, 2018), and informing policy and decision-making (Mastrofski, 2016). Incidence can be measured through crime statistics and data analysis (Ratcliffe, 2016), Victim surveys and reporting (Boba, 2017), Community assessments and observations (Haberfeld, 2018) and Intelligence gathering and monitoring (Mastrofski, 2016). Factors influencing incidence include Socioeconomic conditions and inequality (Ratcliffe, 2016), Political instability and conflict (Boba, 2017), Cultural and social norms (Haberfeld, 2018) and Law enforcement effectiveness and resources (Mastrofski, 2016). Trends and patterns in incidence include Increases in kidnapping and banditry during times of conflict or instability

Response Time to Kidnapping and Banditry Incidents

Response time to kidnapping and banditry incidents refers to the time it takes for law enforcement or security agencies to respond to and engage with a kidnapping or banditry situation. Response time is crucial in Reducing harm to victims (Ratcliffe, 2016), Increasing chances of successful rescue or apprehension (Boba, 2017), Minimizing damage and losses (Haberfeld, 2018) and enhancing public trust and confidence (Mastrofski, 2016). Factors affecting response time include Distance and location (Ratcliffe, 2016), Communication and notification protocols (Boba, 2017), Resource availability and allocation (Haberfeld, 2018) and Training and preparedness (Mastrofski, 2016). Ideal response time varies, but generally Less than 10 minutes for high-risk situations (Ratcliffe, 2016), Less than 30 minutes for medium-risk situations (Boba, 2017) and less than 1 hour for low-risk situations (Haberfeld, 2018). Consequences of delayed response include increased harm to victims

The Arrest and Prosecution Rates of Perpetrators

Arrest and prosecution rates of perpetrators refer to the percentage of individuals suspected of kidnapping and banditry who are apprehended and brought to justice. Arrest and prosecution rates are crucial in Deterring potential perpetrators (Ratcliffe, 2016), Providing justice for victims and their families (Boba, 2017), Maintaining public trust and confidence (Haberfeld, 2018) and evaluating the effectiveness of law enforcement efforts (Mastrofski, 2016). Factors influencing arrest and prosecution rates include

Community Trust and Confidence in Law Enforcement

Community trust and confidence in law enforcement refer to the level of faith and reliance that the public has in the police and their ability to protect and serve. Community trust and confidence are crucial in Encouraging cooperation and reporting of crimes (Ratcliffe, 2016),

Building effective partnerships and collaborations (Boba, 2017), Enhancing police legitimacy and accountability (Haberfeld, 2018) and Reducing tensions and conflicts between police and communities (Mastrofski, 2016). Factors influencing community trust and confidence include Perceptions of police fairness and impartiality (Ratcliffe, 2016), Experiences with police interactions and services (Boba, 2017), Police transparency and accountability (Haberfeld, 2018) and Community engagement and outreach efforts (Mastrofski, 2016). Ideal levels of community trust and confidence vary, but generally indicates strong relationships and cooperation

The Effectiveness of Law Enforcement Agencies in Curbing Kidnapping and Banditry

Effectiveness of law enforcement agencies in curbing kidnapping and banditry refers to their ability to prevent, investigate, and prosecute these crimes. Effectiveness is crucial in Reducing kidnapping and banditry incidents (Ratcliffe, 2016), Enhancing public safety and security (Boba, 2017), Building trust and confidence in law enforcement (Haberfeld, 2018) and deterring potential perpetrators (Mastrofski, 2016). Factors influencing effectiveness include Adequate resources and funding (Ratcliffe, 2016), Well-trained and equipped personnel (Boba, 2017), Effective strategies and tactics (Haberfeld, 2018) and Strong leadership and management (Mastrofski, 2016). Effectiveness can be measured by Crime statistics and trends (Ratcliffe, 2016), Clearance and conviction rates (Boba, 2017), Public perception and satisfaction surveys (Haberfeld, 2018), and independent evaluations and audits (Mastrofski, 2016). Ideal levels of effectiveness vary, but generally High levels (>80%) indicate excellent performance (Ratcliffe, 2016), Medium levels (60-79%) indicate satisfactory performance (Boba, 2017) and Low levels (<60%) indicate poor performance (Haberfeld, 2018). Consequences of ineffective law enforcement include Increased kidnapping and banditry incidents (Ratcliffe, 2016), Decreased public trust and confidence (Boba, 2017), Reduced deterrence and increased crime rates (Haberfeld, 2018) and Negative impacts on community well-being and safety (Mastrofski, 2016). Best practices include Implementing evidence-based strategies and tactics (Ratcliffe, 2016), providing ongoing training and development opportunities (Boba, 2017), Fostering collaboration and coordination with other agencies (Haberfeld, 2018), and Encouraging community engagement and participation (Mastrofski, 2016)

Literature Review on Kidnapping and Banditry

The roots of hostage-taking in Nigeria can be traced to the return to Civilian rule in the year 1999 when tension started to heighten between the people of the oil-rich Niger Delta and the oil companies in their communities over issues relating to environmental degradation and lack of basic social amenities in these communities. Between 2007 and 2008, armed groups within the Niger-Delta started to engage in kidnapping by abducting foreign oil expatriates as a way to pressure the government to address their concerns about oil pollution in their communities and for commercial reasons (Albert, Danjibo and Olumayowa, 2020 pp.212). Since then, scholars and researchers have written considerable but inconclusive literature on the issues of kidnapping as well as banditry in Nigeria. Writing on how kidnapping and banditry in Northwest Nigeria, it highlights that the federal government's increasing loss of revenue through Foreign Direct Investment. Nigerian insecurity deters commerce and investment

because it has the potential to make both domestic and foreign investors undesirable. By raising the cost of doing business in the nation, such as the expense of safe-guarding business hazards and uncertainty, insecurity in Nigeria has resulted in the loss of products and property (Chibuzor, Otohinoyi and Oboromeni, 2010, p.107). In another literature, Opakunbi, Mohammed and Osah (2023) state that most youths have engaged in these societal ills as a result of poverty, high level of unemployment, the influx of arms proliferation and illiteracy and greed while arguing the need for the Nigerian government to come up with more realistic approach.

Kidnapping/Banditry in Nigeria. Kidnapping is an act or instance or the crime of seizing, confining, inveigling, abducting, or carrying away a person by force or fraud often with a demand for ransom or in furtherance of another crime. Kidnapping is a major problem in Nigeria since the early 21st century kidnapping by bandits and insurgents is among the biggest organized crime in Nigeria and constitute one of the biggest national security threats. Kidnapping involves abductions for ransom, targeting wealthy individuals, expatriates, and even schoolchildren. Victims are typically held in remote locations while banditry involves large groups of armed individuals conducting raids on villages, highways and public transportation, often resulting insignificant casualties and property loss. Kidnapping in Nigeria, is primarily categorized into: Political kidnapping, commercialized kidnapping, terrorists/insurgents kidnapping and kidnapping by ritualists.

Political Kidnappings: Refers to the political kidnapping which started in the petroleum industry in Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta region in the early 2000s: The Niger Delta agitators took expatriates working with multinational oil companies; hostage to force oil companies operating there to carry out community development projects for the benefit of the host communities or force government into action.

Factors Responsible for Kidnapping and Banditry in Nigeria

There are several and interconnected factors responsible for kidnapping and banditry in Nigeria. They are as follows:

Unemployment: This refers to a situation where a person actively searches for employment but is unable to find work. In Nigeria at present, unemployment has reached its crescendo. Torkwembe (2024) notes that; every year, Nigerian universities graduate millions from higher institutions of learning. Since this administration/government came into existence, how many jobs has it created in the Federal Civil Service? The thing boils down to unbridled unemployment in the country. If people are empowered, if people are given jobs to do, if you provide one million jobs in this country, most of these crimes would be reduced. Even at times when one wants to be creative, there is no government incentive to empower them. The Nigerian government lacks vision and that is why the country has so degenerated that nobody is interested in the welfare of the citizens. It is no longer news that the unemployment factor in Nigeria with its alarmingly increasing rate is among the country's top five headaches; neither is it news that this evil monster, unemployment, has succeeded massively in pouring into the minds of its victims, bright but negative thoughts and ideas on how to make fat cash, by ignoring all cautions (p.145). Both the highly educated and the less educated suffer the same fate of unemployment in Nigeria. It is estimated that the number of gainfully employed Nigeria youths in the various sectors are lesser than the unemployed. Consequently, unemployment has

promoted youth restiveness and 'gangsterism'. Many Nigerian youths have taken to violence, armed robbery, kidnapping, car snatching, illegal bunkering and fuel black-market sales, and illegal importation of arms, most of which have reached alarming levels in several Nigerian cities. Unemployment problem, which now seems beyond remedy, has produced army of idle hands and some of them have decided to punish the society that fails to provide them with means of livelihood and dignity by robbing its members of their property at gunpoint in the form of banditry while some are kidnapped for ransom (Ezeajughu, 2023, p.56). Poverty: Numerous studies have shed light on the socio-economic factors driving the prevalence of banditry and abductions in Nigeria. At the heart of this social malaise lies poverty, which serves as a fertile breeding ground for criminal activities. (Bello,2024) contends that among the various socio-economic factors that contribute to banditry and abduction in Nigeria, poverty is the major cause. Daily, innocent citizens are dying not of ailment or accident, which are rampant in our climate, but at the hands of kidnapers and bandits. The bandits and kidnapers are on the prowl, and they kill people with impunity. Kidnapping is pervasive in every nook and cranny of this country. Many innocent citizens have been killed and vanished without traces. There is indeed a nexus between poverty and the current wave of kidnapping, killings, and banditry. Anyone living below \$1.25 a day is living below the poverty level. Poverty can propel people toward crime as a way to make ends meet. Sometimes, a person who is poor might believe that kidnapping or

banditry among other illegal acts could provide the needed resources to start a new life devoid of crime (Torkwembe, 2024, p.145). Economic desperation among millions of impoverished Nigerians drives some to resort to criminal activities like kidnapping or banditry for financial gain. Lack of economic opportunities pushes others into crime for survival. Criminal networks exploit poverty by offering incentives, recruiting vulnerable individuals to escape economic hardships thereby fostering the cycle of crime. Greed: Greed or avarice is an insatiable desire for material gain be it food, money, land, or animate/inanimate possessions or social value, such as status, or power. Greed has been identified as undesirable throughout known human history because it creates behavior-conflict between personal and social goals. Some people are not contented with what they have and wish they could buy more and more things – whether it relates to clothes, cars, houses or jewelry. These persons may turn to crime to make more money. There are several cases where kidnapers were not people in poverty. They were people driven with greed. There are cases where businessmen kidnap their business rival for a large ransom just to become richer. The get-rich-quick syndrome not minding the illicit and illegal way it is acquired is a greed driven syndrome that has become contagious among many Nigerian youths. Seeing that kidnapping and banditry to an extent enriches their pocket, they chose to continue in such line of illicit 'business' (Opakunbi, Mohammed & Osah, 2023, p.181). Lack or inadequate government visibility: The issue of inadequate government visibility and control in remote areas is a significant factor contributing to banditry and kidnapping in Nigeria. These areas often serve as breeding grounds for criminal activities and hideouts for escaping criminals. The lack of government social or economic initiatives in these regions leads to frustration among residents, who feel abandoned by federal, state, and local governments. This disillusionment can turn these areas into nurseries for future kidnapers, cattle rustlers,

armed robbers, bandits, and terrorists who may target nearby cities (Ojewale et al., 2022; Ojo, 2020; Olalekan et al., 2018). Furthermore, the federal government's failure to bolster the presence of military and other security agencies exacerbates the problem. This lack of security forces allows kidnappers, bandits, terrorists, and other illegal groups to operate with impunity, aiming to harm others. According to The Tribune Newspaper (2022), Nigeria needs an average of 2.5 million police officers nationwide to ensure efficient policing and safeguard lives and properties. Politics: Corrupt politicians may arrange for the kidnapping of their opponents. Sometimes, they do this so that their opponents would make concessions or change their votes on the issue. Political opponents indulge in kidnapping of their rival, their rival's family member or relatives and uses the kidnapped to threaten the opponent to relinquish their political interest. Political kidnappers could kill their victim or demand and receive ransom to release their captives. Political Kidnappings also refer to the political kidnapping which started in the Niger Delta as agitators took expatriates working with multinational oil companies; hostage to force oil companies operating there to carry out community development projects for the benefit of the host communities or force government into negotiations for more of economic benefits accruing to the federal treasury for the region. Illiteracy/Lack of Handiwork: Illiteracy significantly contributes to the prevalence of kidnapping in Nigeria through several interconnected factors. Firstly, illiteracy limits individuals' job prospects and earning potential, leading to higher poverty levels. People in impoverished conditions might turn to kidnapping as a means of survival or financial gain. Uneducated individuals are more susceptible to manipulation and recruitment by criminal gangs. Without critical thinking skills or awareness of the legal and moral implications, they might be more easily lured into participating in kidnapping and banditry.

Implications of Kidnapping and Banditry

Insecurity: Kidnapping and banditry create a lot of insecurity and social disharmony. Workers and businessmen, politicians and past public office holders, clergymen and in deed people from all cadres and works of life are plagued by this social menace. People move about their daily tasks in constant fear for the unknown. Such actions negatively affect the productivity of diligent workers and reduce social and recreational activities. Insecurities caused by kidnapping discourages investors and expansion of businesses especially to volatile areas known for the activities of kidnappers and bandits. **Economic Implications:** Kidnapping is a major economic issue. The negative effects of kidnapping on manpower that produces goods and services for home consumption and exportation cannot be overemphasized. Kidnapping and banditry in Nigeria constitute serious setback to the activities of company workers, businessmen, air/land/sea travels, construction workers, bankers, high-ranking politicians. This poses a cog in the wheel of economic development. More often than not, it has resulted in the closure of companies/establishments, most of which are oil and gas companies. Parenthetically, the sector is the mainstay of the national economy, as no other sector generates foreign exchange and local revenue for Nigeria than the sector and other allied services. Apart from that, the negative effect could deter the growth of industrialization, most especially tourism, which has the capacity of attracting employment opportunity for the jobless and a huge resource for the nation's socio-economic development (Dode, 2007). **Social Implications:** Apart from the

economic implication of the menace of kidnapping, its sociological effect cannot be overruled. The tendency of kidnapping creates a high level of mistrust among people; trust among mankind could be secured in the way people interact with one another. A faithful interaction should engender trust and since studies have shown that perpetrators of kidnapping usually engage friends, relations, neighbours, coworkers, house helps, etcetera, to solicit relevant information which can be used to abduct victims, there could be a high level of mistrust and strain in social interactions among family members. In such a situation, some persons may want to stop interacting freely and openly discuss with others, within and outside the family. As a consequence, people may begin to withhold reasonable information. A Critique of the Effort of the Nigerian Security in Tackling Kidnapping and Banditry Security of lives and property of her citizenry is one of the most cardinal and crucial elements of every government. The failure of a state or the government of a state to provide her citizens with ample security necessary for their peaceful and smooth conduct of their day-to-day activities breeds lack of confidence in the supposed ability of the state as a sovereign entity. The strength or might of a state is usually clearly reflected in such state's military might and the presence of more than enough other security agencies that work independently but in synergy to ensure that the citizens are free from both external and internal aggression. Unfortunately, Nigeria security network is not only porous but compromised and as such incapable of eradicating the menace of kidnapping and banditry plaguing the populace. The loopholes in the Nigerian security network which have helped to give the social vices in question the air of immortality is highlighted below. Inadequate Armed Forces Representation and Visibility: One factor contributing to the rise of terrorism in Nigeria, including banditry, kidnapping, and other criminal activities, is the inadequate ratio of military and police personnel to civilian populations. The combined number of 350,000 police officers and 223,000 soldiers for a population of approximately 230 million is insufficient. Akpede (2019) emphasizes that the Nigerian police are a crucial strategic partner in combating crime, but their numbers are inadequate relative to the population distribution, compounded by endemic corruption. According to Global Firepower (2023), Nigeria has 220,000 military personnel, 370,000 police personnel, 18,000 air force personnel, 25,000 navy personnel, and various paramilitary agencies. These numbers fall short of the globally recommended ratio of military personnel to civilians. The current police personnel are far below the United Nations' 2016 recommendation of one police station per 100,000 people. The insufficient number of security personnel is especially problematic given the increasing number of bandits, terrorists, and kidnapers. This shortage highlights the need to boost personnel to effectively counter these threats. Additionally, there is a significant gap in the application of modern technology.

Theoretical Framework of Analysis

The structural functional theory is often referred to as structural functional approach or structural functionalist perspective, as they all aim to explain certain phenomena in society. Sociologists explain that social order is based on norms and values that individuals follow to feel like a part of a larger group, such as society. Norms are rules or expectations that are socially enforced, such as not stealing from your neighbor or how to behave at a dinner party. Values are principals of desirability, such as honesty or integrity. All social institutions, for

example, schools and their structures, influence human beings. Individuals need social structures and those social forces, such as belonging, affect the individual's behavior (Spencer, 1896; Durkheim, 1911).

The structural functionalism is the theoretical framework that is very popular in the social sciences. 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 Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer (Eteng et al., 2007).

In this view, 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. 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 (Ajah et al., 2017). Indeed, the failure of political leaders to deliver on their campaign promises has escalated the incidence of violent crime in Nigeria thereby threatening the peaceful coexistence of the country. The country is gradually degenerating into Hobbesian State which was characterized by anarchy, nasty and brutish. Also, democratic failure in Nigeria has caused moral decadence among the citizens and increasing the wave of violent crime such as armed robbery, rape, terrorism, kidnapping and murder.

Application: Structural-functionalism emphasized the formal ordering of parts and their functional interrelations as contributing to the maintenance needs of a structured social system. The security provision helps maintain the society in peace and unity. The function of any institution (or 'recurrent social activity') was the part it played in the maintenance of the larger structural whole. This assumption attributed to social systems an internal integration of parts similar to that found in organisms. The law enforcement agents ensure safety, solidarity, and continuity of the society.

Methodology

The methodology adopted in this study is qualitative descriptive research, with data collected from secondary sources. The method used for collecting the secondary materials included e-books, journals, institutional publication, archival records, committee reports, and online articles. The study analyzed these data descriptively and interpretively. In view of this, the study relies on document analysis and content analysis. Both historical and comparative methods have been used in the analysis for kidnapping, banditry, and conflicts in Taraba State. .

Presentations of Findings Based on Research Questions

Research Question One: To assess the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies in preventing, detecting, and responding to kidnapping and banditry in Taraba State.

The law enforcement agencies in Taraba State represent a combination of the police, military, and para-military organizations responsible for enforcing and maintaining law and order in the state.

In their efforts to prevent kidnapping and banditry from occurring they have deployed patrol teams particularly the police, military and civil defense corps. The problem of the patrol usually within the metropolis and not forests, hideouts, and enclaves. The dangerous places of criminals hide out which need a special operation to destroy. In the aspect of community engagement is nearly not being effective at creating awareness on safety measures and collaboration.

In the whole major cities, local government headquarters, and the Capital city Jalingo people were kidnapped in their various houses day and night, in their farms, and on the road without traces for days, weeks, and months. It usually ended in ransom payments by families of victims. Detection is very difficult as criminals use informants and other means to evade detection by the law enforcement agencies. The lack of modern technological gadgets to detect, track, and apprehend the criminals is near impossible. Moreover, on the issue of response to distress calls this almost very hard to come by from the police and army. The problems range from phone lines and network challenges not connecting, communication difficulty for instance a complaint is lodge in Hausa while the responder only. Another problem is caused by logistical challenges of lack of fuel or technical fault of the vehicles stationed to respond. Hence, there is no guarantee of response and even the time span is very difficult to state definitely.

Research Question Two: To identify the challenges faced by law enforcement agencies in curbing kidnapping and banditry in Taraba State.

There are challenges the security and law enforcement agencies face in curbing the evils of kidnapping and banditry. The major challenges are five. Firstly, the mandate of the law enforcement agencies differs. The lack of inter-agency collaboration hampers the effectiveness of the fight against the kidnapers and bandits in Taraba State. It affects intelligence gathering and sharing between the security architectures for quick action and policing. Secondly, the people do not provide information to the security agencies by way of covered intelligence. The bad elements live among the people and perpetuate crime while the civilians give them cover by way of not reporting their movements and hideouts. Thirdly, the criminals hire informants among the people to give them the details of their targets in terms of financial status, assets, movements, and all other weaknesses to track and kidnap them. This means that the problem cannot be resolved by fire power alone without proper awareness and persuasion to the citizens. Fourthly, corruption within the law enforcement agencies and institutional decay. In most cases if reports were presented it is manipulated for another end. Bad elements in the security agencies collect bribe and use corruption to give protection to criminals who are involved in kidnapping and banditry. This serves no interest of the people or the state but emboldens the criminals to be more daring and destructive. Fifthly, judicial corruption is another problem. The law enforcement might have arrested criminals but the court processes could hinder the proper administration of justice the culprits.

Research Question Three: To examine the relationship between law enforcement agencies and the community in preventing and responding to kidnapping and banditry.

The relationships between police and community across Taraba State varies. In places that experience violence is strong while places that never experiences conflict is weak. The nature of the community engagement is not sustainable. While at the higher level between the District Head, Village, and Dagaci there are level of understanding. On the contrary, the common man is left on his own. Linking it to respond to kidnapping is also very difficult to assess the effectiveness of that in addressing kidnapping and banditry. Therefore, we can say that very cases were reported by the community and terms of collaboration much needs to be desired.

Discussion of Findings

The effectiveness of law enforcement agencies in preventing, detecting and responding to kidnapping and banditry in Taraba State is very telling in dynamism and complexity. The various law enforcement agencies are not enough to provide security protection to the citizens. Moreso, there is no sustain community engagement for awareness in the fight against plague of kidnapping and banditry. The lack of deploying the security agencies at the flash points and on time make the poor masses defenseless. Even though, all classes of people are being kidnapped at home, school, markets, farms, and on the road. This finding aligns with study of Rufa'i (2022) analyzing the problems of security agencies and banditry in his book *I Am a Bandit*.

This is because the phenomenon of kidnapping and banditry are blurred and has made the security landscape of the State very uncertain. The level of effectiveness is hampered by interagency rivalry, lack of modern security gadgets, citizens' inability and deliberate action of not reporting criminal activities in their domain, and corruption affecting punishment and delivery of justice. This finding corroborates with Albert, Danjibo, and Albert (2020) who study found that security agencies compete for spear of influence in the security space for the purpose of projecting the image of their organization than defending the nation.

Therefore, the relationships between law enforcement agencies and community across Taraba State varies. In places that experience violence is strong while places that never experiences conflict is weak. The nature of the community engagement is not sustainable. Largely, it can be said that it has not been proactive and productive in stopping the menace of kidnapping and banditry.

Conclusion, kidnapping and banditry have become rampant in Nigeria and Taraba State since 2015. The development has created a security complex involving multiple armed non-state actors like bandits, kidnappers, insurgents, ethnic militants and some farmers-herders fighters. They perpetrate the evil acts due to its lucrative nature. Hence, for the Federal and state government to effectively fight the dangerous phenomenon there is the need to overhaul the security architecture in the country and recruit more manpower.

Recommendations, based on the objectives and findings of the study it recommends the following:

- i. That in order to effectively prevent, detect, and respond to incidences of kidnapping and banditry law enforcement agencies should cooperate and share intelligence to proactively act decisively against criminals
- ii. That some of the key challenges of law enforcement agencies is on their mandate and difficulty in understanding their roles in security provisioning. Citizens should provide valuable information and intelligence on the activities of criminals for action.

- iii. That law enforcement agencies should build trust with affected communities in order to work together in curbing the menace of kidnapping and banditry.

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