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Kidnapping: A Lucrative Crime in 21st Century Nigeria

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Kidnapping: A Lucrative Crime in 21st Century Nigeria

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I. Introduction

The interstate synergy advocated over the years by nations of the world in their quest to achieve global peace and development appears to be threatened by the ever-increasing cases of high profile crimes and delinquency in several parts of the world. On a daily basis, domestic and foreign news media are replete with reports of criminal activities that tend to send fear and shiver down the spines of many, thereby creating doubts about the possibility of the globe ever being peaceful and united. Uncontrolled crimes affect peaceful co-existence in society, distort peace and development since in its absence, social life can hardly be predicted (Nwolise, 2005). In societies where people cannot predict the future, many are bound to live in disillusionment, while the hope of investment will be slim. Like many nations of the world, Nigeria popularly described as a geostrategic player, the geopolitical pivot of Africa, the giant and the most populous African country (Kolapo, 2006) has had to contend with numerous crimes in the recent past.

Criminal cases such as terrorism, robbery, arson, assassination, thuggery, kidnapping, hostage taking to mention but a few, pervade our national dailies and crime diary, with our security operatives working round the clock, but unable to mitigate the onslaught of these enemies of our society (Ajayi and Aderinto, 2008). Consequently, Nigeria has been adjudged to be a dangerous and unsafe nation for business and investment. The unsavory rating of Nigeria as a crime haven no doubt scares both domestic and foreign investors from investing in the resource studded Nigerian economy (Odoma, 2011).

However, of all the reported criminal cases in Nigeria, kidnapping seems to 'stand tall' as the undisputed champion. Abduction, which until the 1984 aborted abduction of Umaru Dikko, former second republic Minister of Transport, was strange to Nigeria and Nigerians, has become a daily phenomenon in the country with dire consequences. The frequency of holding people captive in Nigeria is probably caused by the enormous monetary gains the perpetrators enjoy from the crime and the apparent inability of the nation's security operatives to arrest and promptly punish offenders. The entire Nigerian landscape appears to be under the siege of kidnappers as virtually every part of the country has suffered from the menace. Scholars have argued that aside from the kidnap related crime statistics, several kidnap cases often go unnoticed because the victims did not report such cases (Chidi, 2014). The reason for the unreported kidnap cases is not far-fetched as victims, and their loved ones prefer to play along with the kidnappers to guarantee the release of victims from captivity alive. Even with several unreported cases, kidnapping no doubt appears widespread and is fast becoming very lucrative in Nigeria. This paper examines the menace of kidnapping as a profitable crime in 21st century Nigeria.

II. The Problem

One goal that Nigeria as a nation has vigorously pursued since her return to representative democracy in 1999 is the attempt to woo international investors into the resource studded economy (Thomas, 2015). The drive by successive governments to create enabling environment for investment derives from the belief that, without foreign investors and investment, the nation can hardly make any quantum leap in her developmental strides, her enormous human and material resource endowments notwithstanding. No sooner had the government's efforts in this direction started yielding results than foreign investors considered to possess kidnap values were abducted by hostage takers in several parts of the country for ransom (Okoli and

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Agada, 2014). This ugly development, apart from scaring potential foreign investors has also forced those with investments in Nigeria to relocate to more secure and investment friendly African countries.

Given the strategic position of Nigeria on the African continent, repeated cases of kidnapping as well as other heinous crimes in the country will no doubt have adverse spin-off effects on other countries looking unto a secure Nigeria to fast track their economic growth and accelerate the pace of their own development (Odoma,2011) Arising from the foregoing problems, the authors seek to raise the following research questions: What is the level of public awareness of the menace of kidnapping in 21st century Nigeria, what are the factors responsible for the rising incidence of abduction in 21st century Nigeria and what are the experiences of kidnap victims in the hands of their abductors? The study will attempt to ascertain the level of public awareness of the menace of kidnapping in 21st century Nigeria: examine the factors responsible for the rising cases of hostage taking in 21st century Nigeria and ascertain the experiences of kidnap victims in the hands of their abductors.

To properly situate the discussion, this paper is structured into several parts. After an introduction, a statement of the research problem, conceptual clarification and theoretical framework, the second part deals with the broad issues of understanding kidnapping; methods/techniques and targets of kidnappers; kidnapping in Nigeria; reasons for hijacking and Nigerian government's intervention in the fight against kidnapping. Part three examines the consequences of abduction, while the fourth segment discusses the method of study. The fifth part deals with the results/ discussion of findings while the sixth section closes the paper by way of conclusion and recommendations.

III. Conceptualization

Two concepts: kidnapping and crime are critical to this study; they are at this moment defined as used in the study.

a) Crime

Providing a single and acceptable definition of the concept has been a difficult task among criminologists and scholars of society. The difficulty in providing acceptable definitions of crime is due to the fact that they are time bound. For instance, a behavior considered a crime by a people could change over time even in the same society, while what used to be a norm could be criminalized with time (Bohm and Harley, 1997). Although no country is static or rigid about its position on crime, no known society denies its presence and thus frowns at the wilful violation of its norms. The difficulty in coming to terms with an acceptable definition of crime notwithstanding, crime refers to infraction or deviation from the approved standard of behavior by a people to the extent that, it threatens the very existence of such a people or group. In other words, crime if not checked, has the potential of disrupting social relation in society because its impacts on the members are often very telling. For a criminal act to take place a form of deviation from an acceptable mode of behaviour, whether formal or informal, must have been established by a group.

b) Kidnapping

The word kidnap is a compound word. It is a product of two separate English words: 'Kid' (meaning young or child) and 'nap' (meaning short sleep). Kidnapping originally implied the act of abducting children of influential parents in their period of short sleep or rest to compel them to act in some ways. In Nigeria, kidnapping has evolved into a form of organized crime that has its essence in the unlawful intentional deprivation of a person's freedom of movement in an attempt to criminally exploit the situation to extort money or other economic advantages from victims or their family members or associates.

IV. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this paper is drawn from a combination of the Queer Ladder and Frustration/Aggression theories.

a) Queer Ladder

The Queer ladder theory (QLT) was popularised by the American sociologist, Daniel Bell (1919), who coined the idea of 'queer ladder' in an attempt to explain the instrumental essence of organized crime as a desperate means of economic empowerment and social climbing (Okoli & Agada, 2014). The QLT has three assumptions: (i) Organized crime is an instrumental behavior; it is a means to an end; (ii) It is an instrument of social climbing and/ or socio-economic advancement (iii) It is a means to accumulate wealth and build power (Mallory, 2007; Okoli & Orinya, 2013, as cited in Okoli & Agada (2014)). Implicit in the Queer ladder theory according to (Nwoye, 2000; Lyman, 2007; Okoli & Orinya, 2013), is the notion that organized crime, in this case, kidnapping, thrives in the contexts where the government's capacity to detect, sanction and deter crime is weak; where public corruption is endemic; and where prospects for legitimate livelihood opportunities are slim. Under such circumstances, the incentive to indulge in crime is high, while deterrence from criminal living is low. In other words, the benefits of committing a criminal act (such as kidnapping) surpass the costs and risks, thus, creating ample pretext and motivation for criminal impunity and franchise (Okoli & Orinya, 2013).

Applied to this study, the QLT has validity because it enables one to come to terms with the fact that the criminal quest for economic accumulation is a

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big motivation for the phenomenon of kidnapping in a social environment such as Nigeria that is grappling with an ever-worsening socio-economic quagmire and livelihood crisis.

b) Frustration/Aggression theory

The Frustration-aggression theory which was developed by John Dollard and colleagues in 1939 and modified by the duo of Berkowitz and Aubrey (1962) appears to provide the most common explanation for violent criminal behavior, apparently stemming from the inability to fulfill needs (Ugwuoke, 2015). According to the theory, frustration, defined as the state that emerges when circumstances interfere with a goal-response, often leads to aggression. The theory assumes that hostility is the result of blocking or frustrating a person's efforts to attain a set goal. It explains further that frustration causes antagonism, but when the source of the frustration cannot be challenged, the bellicosity gets displaced onto an innocent target. In Nigerian social and cultural life, the emphasis is on success defined purely in monetary terms and wealth has become the yardstick for measuring success. However, there is no corresponding emphasis on the approved or legitimate means of attaining the much-cherished goal of success. For example, every year, Nigerian universities and other tertiary institutions churn out hundreds of thousands of graduates. Many of these graduates have little or no prospects of securing paid employment in the already saturated Nigerian labor market. Confronted with a bleak future but desirous of making ends meet and be accorded celebrity status in a society that glorifies and even worships wealth, many of these jobless youths resort to heinous crimes such as kidnapping, armed robbery, hostage-taking, prostitution, etc.

The relevance of the frustration-aggression theory derives from the thesis that the activities of kidnappers appear to be the by-products of the frustrations they encounter in their socio-cultural, economic, and political environments. The incidence of kidnapping in Nigeria is traceable in part, to the outpouring of accumulated frustration and grievances motivated by unemployment, poverty, and the get-rich-quick syndrome.

V. Understanding Kidnapping

Etymologically, the concept of kidnapping derives from two English root words, namely, 'kid' (meaning infant) and, 'napping' (meaning to be caught sleeping). The practice of kidnapping dates back to 17th century Britain, whence, infants (kids) of wealthy families would be 'napped' (caught in the sleep) for ransom (Tzannelli, as cited in Okoli and Agada, (2014, p.139)).

Kidnapping is a form of violent crime cum organized crime commonly identified with the illegal seizure of persons against their will for several criminal reasons (Chidi, 2014).Yet Zannoni, (n.d) and Eze and Ezeibe (2012) as cited in Okoli and Agada (2014) perceive kidnapping as an organized crime that has its essence in the unlawful intentional deprivation of a person's freedom from movement in an attempt to exploit the situation to extort money or other advantages.

According to Okoli and Agada (2014, p.138), three elements are needed to establish the act of kidnapping. These elements are:

(i) Taking a person away without his consent;

(ii) Holding a person in false imprisonment or illegal detention/confinement;

(iii) Extortion of the victim through ransoming or forced acquiescence.

Oladeinde (2017) categorizes kidnapping into three broad categories, such as target, spontaneous, and aggravated. Other forms of abduction include bride, express and tiger kidnappings (Okoli and Agada, 2014).These latter forms of hostage taking are examined below:

(i) Bride kidnapping: This entails taking a bride /bridegroom against the will (consent) of his or her parent to an unknown destination to marry;

(ii) Express kidnapping: This type of kidnapping is motivated by pecuniary interests, and,

(iii) Tiger kidnapping: kidnapping done in an attempt to perpetrate another crime; e.g., holding a bank manager hostage to get him to instruct his staffers to effect an illegal transfer.

Zannoni, cited in Okoli and Agada (2014) also identified three broad categories of kidnapping, thus: criminal, political, and emotional/psychological kidnapping. Again, for purposes of better understanding, these typologies are illustrated as follows: (i) Criminal kidnapping – this is a type of holding people that is motivated by the quest to obtain ransom from the victim(s)' family, business or associates; (ii) political abduction – kidnapping driven by the need to advance a political cause (e.g. militant/militia, terrorist government) and, (iii) emotional/pathological kidnapping – seizure committed by people who are emotionally or psychologically disturbed, e.g. for rape, child abduction by estranged parents, etc.

The different forms of kidnapping notwithstanding, they center on criminal and unlawful reasons to achieve an economic advantage.

VI. Methods / Techniques and Targets of Kidnappers

As a violent crime, kidnappers usually employ weapons such as guns, knives, and other offensive items in carrying out their mission. Kidnappers are rational actors who are trained, equipped, tactful, and calculative. They always have viewed the outcome of

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their actions to be beneficial to their group members before they strike (Fiedman and Hetcher, 1988; as cited in Ritzer, 1996). It is not everyone found on the street that has the potential to be kidnapped. Kidnap victims must be seen by kidnappers to possess kidnap value (Okoli and Agada, 2014; Mutum, 2016), which is the main target of kidnappers.

Kidnap Ransom Value (KRV) is the strategic net worth of a kidnappee, which, in essence, makes him/her a kidnap target. The underlying logic of kidnapping business is that the victim is worth a ransom value and that he/she can pay, whether by self or proxy. Okoli and Agada (2014) aver that this value is determined by several factors as presented in tabular form below:

Table 1: Factors determining Kidnap Ransom Value (KRV)

S/No.	Factor	Illustration
1	Personal affluence of victim	This has to do with the material standing of the target victim
2	Family premium on victim	The fact that the victim is an only child or the only male/female child raises KRV
3	Corporate premium on victim	Business executives and strategic stakeholders of firms are accorded much value
4	Public stake/relevance	Political office holders, paramount rulers, etc, are seen as possessing high ransom value
5	Social connections/networks	Members of eminent social friendship networks are also high targets
6	Type of kidnappers involved	Petty kidnappers are likely to accept cheap ransom
7	The negotiation process	The quality and terms of negotiation process is likely to help in determining the KRV

Source: Adapted by authors from Okoli and Agada (2014)

In a nutshell, the socio-economic status of a potential victim on the one hand and the kidnappers' perception of the victim on the other hand, determines his/her KRV. An individual may not directly posses kidnap value, but still, stand the risk of being kidnapped if he/she is linked to someone perceived by kidnappers to posses kidnap value. In this case, a relation of a wealthy person, politician, influential figure, criminal, etc. whether young or old, male or female, may be kidnapped even when he/she is not the direct target of kidnappers. As soon as such a person has been kidnapped, his/her wealthy relations who would not want him/her harmed are expected to rally round to provide the requested ransoms. Good examples are those of Mrs. Kamene Okonjo on December 9, 2012, and Mrs. Margaret Emefiele in September 2016 (Mutum, 2016). Mrs.Kamene Okonjo is the mother of Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Minister of Finance under the administration of former president Good luck Jonathan of Nigeria while Mrs. Emefiele is the wife of Mr. Godwin Emefiele, the current Central Bank Governor of Nigeria.

a) Kidnapping in nigeria

Until the 1980s, abduction was a crime that was alien to many Nigerians. The first kidnap case linked to Nigeria as a nation occurred outside the shores of the country on July 4, 1984, in London (*Nairaland*, 2014). It was a case involving Umaru Dikko, a onetime Minister of Transport in the defunct civilian regime of President Shehu Shagari. The act was allegedly planned and executed by a joint Nigeria-Israeli kidnap gang believed to be the handiwork of the then military junta of Major-General Muhammadu Buhari who was bent on fighting the corrupt politicians he had ousted. The botched Umaru Dikko kidnap saga which then sounded strange to most Nigerians has since paled into insignificance as kidnapping has become a recurrent decimal in Nigeria in recent times.

Evidence in the literature showed that kidnapping became a repeated crime in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria in 2006 when the people of the area, spearheaded by their militant youth began the agitation against perceived inequality and the supposed unfair treatment by the Nigerian state and oil explorers. The feeling of deprivation by the angry Niger Delta youth manifested in the abduction of expatriates and senior oil workers, politicians and the clergy, to extort money from them as a ransom (Chidi, 2014). The ease with which the act was carried out and the bounties that regularly ensued with little or no resistance from law enforcement agencies led to the expansion of the heinous act to South-Eastern Nigeria, with Abia State as the 'defacto kidnap headquarters' of the region. The height of the onslaught of kidnappers in South-Eastern Nigeria was the kidnap of Dr. Chris Ngige, then, a sitting governor of Anambra State (Awuzie, 2004). Thus within a spate of three years, the entire Southern Nigeria was overtaken by the malaise of kidnapping. The menace eventually spread to other parts of present-day Nigeria.

Following the kidnap of two hundred and seventy-six (276) secondary school girls in Chibok community of Borno State in North-Eastern Nigeria by Boko Haram terrorists on April 14, 2014, kidnapping became a lucrative criminal venture embarked upon by hoodlums from virtually all the states of Nigeria.

In recent times, Kogi, one of the states in North-Central Nigeria, has been in the news for kidnap-related

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cases. The Lokoja-Okene federal highway has become the den of kidnappers with high profile Nigerians falling victim. For instance, a lawyer, barrister Ozavize, was abducted on the road on July 14, 2017 (Alex, 2017). Ogundele and Hanafiz (2017) also reported the kidnap of Senator Arinse along the same high way during which his abductors reportedly demanded a ransom of eighty million Naira for his release. Several cases of kidnapping were reported to have taken place along the Lokoja-Okene axis in 2017 (*Nairaland Forum*, 2017). Roads in other parts of the state such as the Idah-Itobe road, Anyigba-Ankpa road, and Lokoja-Kabba road have experienced several unrecorded kidnap cases in recent times. The caliber of persons kidnapped and the need to play along with the kidnappers to ensure the safe release of the victims ostensibly account for the non-publicity of some of the cases (Chidi, 2014),

This and similar acts of criminality, have earned for Nigeria, the unfortunate description as a violent nation and one of the most unsafe countries to do business within Africa (Odoma, 2011; Ugwuoke, 2015; Aremu and Dzever, 2015). The above gloomy assertion must have been as a result of the fear and apprehension caused by the unabated activities of kidnapping and kidnappers. No doubt, violent crimes like kidnapping attract or engender fear in society and thus scare tourists and investors with the attendant negative consequences on the economic performance of such a nation (Reid, 1997; Conkline, 2007; Ugwuoke, 2015). As rightly noted by Ugwuoke (2015) and Aremu and Dzever (2015), these categories of crime are mostly responsible for the notorious image associated with Nigeria among the league of nations of the world today.

Table 2: Some Reported Kidnap Cases in parts of Nigeria in the recent Past

S/No.	Name	Year Kidnapped	Place Kidnapped	Ransom Demanded/Paid	Released/ Killed
.1	Mr. Ohunyom Ernest	Nov, 2011	Lagos	N85 Million	Released
.2	Mr. Ojukwu Cosmas	21/1/2012	FESTAC Town, Lagos	$1Million	Released
.3	Mr. Mbarikatta Williams Uboma	16/6/2012	FESTAC Town, Lagos	N20 Million	Released
.4	Mohammed Jamal (Lebanese)	19/8/2012	Ajah, Lagos	N17 Million	Released
.5	Mr Leo Abraham	20/8/2012	Badagry, Lagos	N15Million	Released
.6	Mr. Paul Cole	23/8/2012	FESTAC Town, Lagos	N20 Million	Released
.7	Mr. Kingsley Nwokenta	19/9/2012	FESTAC Town, Lagos	N15 Million	Released
.8	Mr. Anthony Ozoanidobi	10/10/2012	Satellite Town, Lagos	N15 Million	Released
.9	Mr. Tom	2012	Benin	N100 Million	Released
10.	Owner of Kings Paint	2012	Benin	N40 Million	Released
11.	Mr. Randaki	2012	Benin	N30 Million	Released
12.	Mr. Dan Odiete	2013	Benin	N100 Million	Released
13.	Owner of Uyi Technical	2013	Benin	N100 million	Released
14.	Elias Ukachukwu	Nov, 2015	Lagos	$1 Million	Released
15.	Chief Raymond Okoye Oduna-Ichinda	2015	Lagos	$1 Million	Released
16.	Mr.Uche Okafor	2015	Alaba Int'l Market, Lagos	$1 Million	Released
17.	Mr. James Udoji	2016	FESTAC Town, Lagos	$1 Million	Released
18.	Mr. Francis Umeh	July, 2016	Rasaki Estate, Lagos	$1 Million	Released
19.	Col. Samaila Inusa	27/3/ 2016	Kaduna	Unknown	Killed
20.	Rev. Fr. John Adeyi	24/4/ 2016	Benue	Unknown	Killed

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21.	Margaret Emefiele	29/9/2016	Delta	N1.5 Billion	Released
22.	Mr & Mrs Pius Mallam	3/10/2016	Kaduna	Unknown	Released
23.	Amb. Bagudu Hirse	20/11/ 2016	Kaduna	Unknown	Released
24.	Isa Achuja (HRM)	1/1/2017	Kogi	N20 Million	Released
25.	Mr. Donatus Duru	14/2/2017	Lagos	N150 Million	Released
26.	2 German Archaeologists	22/2/ 2017	Kaduna	Unknown	Released
27.	Oba Joel Daodu	17/4/2017	Ondo	N15 Million	Released

Source: The Punch 21/11/2016; Vanguard 4/10/2016; Daily Trust 1/10/2016; Premium Times 12/1/2016; Premium Times 30/9/2016; Nairaland 21/2/2017; Premium Times 25/2/2017; The Punch 18/4/2017; naij.com, 2017.

Table 2 above speaks volumes about the worrisome rising incidence and prevalence of kidnapping as a lucrative crime in contemporary Nigeria.

b) Reasons for kidnapping

Kidnapping is not a new crime. It has been around as an important criminal pathology of the contemporary society (Gallagher, 1985; Schiller, 1985; Warren, 1985; Tzannelli, 2009). Several scholars have conceived kidnapping as being driven by (i) criminal motivation (ii) primitive accumulation, and (iii) perverse capitalist exchange and/or exploitation (see Tzannelli, 2009; Hobsbawn, 2000; Detotto, McCannon & Vannini, 2012).

Chidi (2014) agrees with the above assertion. In the specific case of Nigeria, he noted that kidnappers who engage in such criminality do so for reasons bothering on unemployment, loss of societal value, idleness, vengeance, rituals, monetary gains, and political considerations. Of the reasons cited by Chidi (2014), unemployment and loss of societal value appear to be at the heart of kidnapping in Nigeria. These two factors are herby briefly interrogated:

Unemployment: Nigerian universities and other tertiary institutions produce hundreds of thousands of graduates every year. Successive poverty alleviation and youth employment interventions by both federal and state governments have not significantly addressed the youth unemployment situation in the country. A December 2017 report by the National Bureau of Statistics disclosed that 7.9 million Nigerians lost their jobs between the fourth quarter of 2015 and the third quarter of 2017, thus worsening an already bad unemployment situation (Pulse.ng, 2018). Chidi (2014: 139) draws a correlation between unemployment and criminality, particularly kidnapping noting that "if people are empowered and provided jobs , most of these crimes will be reduced" Similarly, Okolo (2010) cited in Chidi (2014) identified the alarming rate of unemployment in Nigeria as one of the country's top five headaches. He avers that the evil monster of unemployment has succeeded massively in pouring into the minds of its victims, bright but negative thoughts and ideas on how to make fast cash and one of the surest options is 'kidnapping'.

Loss of societal value: Some commentators are of the view that many Nigerians have jettisoned the time-honored respect for our culture, love for human lives and hard work in exchange for western values and ostentatious orientation, which birthed the modern crimes and social evils destroying the core value of the society. Onovo (2009), for instance, attributed the rising crime wave in Nigeria to the elevation and celebration of fraudsters by many Nigerians. He also took exception to the celebration by religious leaders and traditional rulers, of people who embezzled or misappropriated public funds. According to him, celebrating such people is not only an indictment on societal and moral values but serves as an impetus to kidnapping as people who celebrate criminals end up encouraging them to do more.

c) Nigerian Government's Intervention in the fight against Kidnapping

Successive Nigerian governments have made several attempts to tame the monster of kidnapping, albeit with debatable degrees of success. Large sums of money are often budgeted annually to give the anti-kidnapping fight the necessary fillip as part of government's drive to provide a secure ambiance for its citizens as well as encourage local and foreign investors/investments.

By far, the most significant push in the battle against kidnapping appears to have come from the nation's national assembly. Disturbed by the notorious activities of kidnappers vis-à-vis their implication on the country's local and international image, the Senate, the highest law-making organ of government, unanimously approved the death penalty for anyone caught in the act of kidnapping. The Senate adopted the resolution in favour of capital punishment on Wednesday, May 5, 2016, following the receipt of the report by the organ, of its joint committee on public affairs and national security and intelligence (Ogunmade, 2016).

The lawmakers had on November 19, 2015, mandated the committee to engage with the country's Inspector-General of Police and the Director-General of the Department of State Services, on the recurrent cases of kidnapping and hostage-taking and recommend its findings to the chamber. According to Ogunmade (2016), the senators while adopting the death penalty urged governors of the 36 states in Nigeria to equally initiate laws that would outlaw kidnapping and empower security agencies to prosecute kidnappers and culprits of related offenses in their domains. However, almost two years after the

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Senate adopted the death penalty, the anti-kidnapping bill is yet to receive presidential assent.

Lagos State, the commercial hub of Nigeria and arguably one of the worst-hit cities in terms of kidnap cases, has equally adopted the death penalty for kidnapping. Mr Akinwunmi Ambode, the immediate past Governor of the State, on February 2, 2017, signed the anti-kidnapping bill into law. The bill stipulated the death penalty for kidnappers whose victims die in their custody and life imprisonment for the act of kidnapping. According to the specifics of the anti-kidnapping bill, any person who kidnaps/abducts, detains, captures, or takes another person by any means or trick, with intent to demand ransom or do anything against the victim's will commits an offense.

Okogba, Akoni, and Olowoopejo (2017) reported that the Governor while signing the bill lamented that in recent times, kidnapping had become a big threat to the safety of people in Lagos state and therefore required decisive action by the government. Several state Governors in Nigeria are believed to be stepping up efforts to nip the scourge of kidnapping and other heinous crimes in the bud within their jurisdictions.

d) Consequences of kidnapping

Kidnapping is a global problem affecting large numbers of victims. It is increasingly becoming a lucrative crime and therefore, worrisome. Nigeria, as a global player, has had her 'fair share' of the menace to the extent that the country is seen by many as one of the emerging kidnapping capitals of the world. This characterization has serious implications for investments, development, and the quality of governance, generally. Chidi (2014) avers that kidnapping does not only affect the psychology of the direct victims and their families but also spreads the fear that hinders direct economic investment thus resulting in declining economic productivity, spiraling unemployment and a serious threat to the government's foreign direct investment drive.

The exit of companies from kidnap prone areas further results in loss of huge revenues that would otherwise have been used to provide critical infrastructure and enhance the development of the country's social capital. Okoli and Agada (2014) summarized the consequences of kidnapping in Nigeria to the effect that:

(i) It leads to loss of life, a threat to public safety;
(ii) It sabotages economic growth and development by way of capital and investment flight;
(iii) It results in a negative perception of Nigeria on the international scene with its negative consequences on trade, tourism, and foreign direct investment (FDI);
(iv) It creates an atmosphere of public insecurity, thereby endangering the prospects of societal progress and,
(v) It has often led to the loss of investment capital, closure of businesses and unemployment, etc.

e) Methods

This study made use of both primary and secondary sources of literature. The primary data were generated from In-depth interview (IDI) with seven kidnap victims who narrated their ordeals from a 'who feels it, knows it all' perspective, while research reports, institutional publications, journals, magazines, newspapers and the internet, constituted the secondary data. The paper deployed the in-depth interview method to elicit information from seven respondents in Anyigba, a fast-growing town in Kogi State, north-central Nigeria because of the sensitive nature of the phenomenon under study. The smallness of the sample size is because of the difficulty in convincing most kidnap victims to volunteer information about their captivity for fear of being subjected to further victimization.

f) Study Location

Anyigba is a popular town in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State. It is situated in the Eastern Senatorial District and is about two hours driving from Lokoja, the state capital. Anyigba is the nerve-center of political and socio-economic activities of the Igala nation (Kpaleko, 2016).

Anyigba plays host to the state-owned Kogi State University, established in 1999 by the first civilian governor of the state, late Mr.Abubakar Audu. The university commenced academic activities in the year 2000 with a student population of 700, a figure which has since grown to 23,000 (ksu.edu.ng, 2017). The establishment of the university, and the resultant improvement in economic activities, has encouraged migration as people move into Anyigba town, either temporarily or permanently to take advantage of the situation. The influx of people of diverse backgrounds has led to the upsurge in criminal and other antisocial behaviors, notably, armed robbery, burglary, theft, and kidnapping, among others. Incidentally, all the seven respondent victims of hostage-taking interviewed for this study are the staff of the Kogi State University, Anyigba.

g) Research Instruments

The In-depth interview guide was used to elicit information from the respondents. The guide consisted of eighteen open-ended questions comprising socio-demographic information and other enquiries about the informants' awareness of the menace of kidnapping, causes of abduction, and their experiences while in captivity. The qualitative data generated from the interview were analyzed using content analysis and ethnographic summaries.

VII. Results/Discussion of Findings

The data from the IDI showed that six of the respondents were male, while one was a female. Two of

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the respondents were between forty and forty-four years; two others were within the age range of forty-five to forty-nine years, while three were within the age bracket of fifty years and above. All the kidnap victims had tertiary educational qualifications. All the respondents were married, as shown in table 3 below:

Table 3: Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

Sex	Frequency
Male	6
Female	1
Age (Years)	
40- 44	2
45 – 49	2
50+	3
Education	
Tertiary	7
Marital status	
Married	7

Source: Authors' Field Survey, 2018.

Question One: Are you aware of the menace of kidnapping in Nigeria?

All the respondents answered in the affirmative. One of the respondents retorted that it is only those who had no access to both traditional and the new media that could feign ignorance of the menace and prevalence of kidnapping in Nigeria,

Question Two: What is your perception of the phenomenon of kidnapping?

All the respondents were unanimous in their response about the phenomenon, which they described as one of the greatest threats to the nation's quest for sustainable economic development. The respondents asserted that hostage-taking is not only a threat to life but also has attracted for Nigeria, a very negative international image as well as serve as a disincentive to foreign direct investment in the country. According to one of the respondents:

Kidnapping is a threat to the country as a whole, and if it is not checked, it may lead to degeneration in the life of the society both internally and externally (*Male/IDI/49 years/Anyigba*).

Another of the respondents added:

Kidnapping has not just become a serious problem but a very lucrative crime fetching the perpetrators huge quick returns. Daily, the number of kidnappers and their victims is on the increase, while it appears security operatives are short of ideas to tame it (*Male/ IDI/ 50 years/Anyigba*).

Another respondent posited that:

It is the most deadly social problem of our time, which appears to be fast spreading to every state of the Federation. If stakeholders do not take proper and timely actions, kidnapping has the potential to destroy our unity, peace, and development (*Male/IDI/47 years/ Anyigba*).

The positions canvassed by the above respondents about the menace of kidnapping in Nigeria cohere with views expressed in the literature. For instance, Odoma (2011) noted that given the strategic position of Nigeria on the African continent, repeated cases of kidnapping as well as other heinous crimes in the country will no doubt have a negative spin-off effect on other countries looking unto a secure Nigeria to fast track their economic growth and accelerate the pace of their development.

Question Three: In your opinion, what are the factors for the rising incidence of kidnapping in Nigeria?

The respondents advanced a variety of reasons for the prevalence of kidnapping in the country. However, the prominent reasons which ran through the entire gamut of the submissions of all the respondents are grinding poverty, youth unemployment, greed, and police complicity. One of the respondents put the factors for the rising kidnapping cases this way:

To me, several factors could be responsible. They range from unemployment of employable youth, widespread poverty in the land, connivance of security operatives with kidnappers, erosion of our cultural values of hard work, and respect for the sanctity of human life. A combination of two or more of these factors has caused this daunting problem (*Male/IDI/50/Anyigba*).

Another kidnap victim had this to say:

I think unemployment is a key contributor. But from my experience as a victim, it is not unlikely that the police are either directly involved or provide kidnappers training and weapons with which they operate. Again, that we drove on the express road for several kilometers where there are known police checkpoints, and they did not stop or arrest those boys, shows that they (police) have prior knowledge of the act (*Male/IDI/47years/ Anyigba*).

For those familiar with the situation in Nigeria, such factors as mentioned above, are well known. Despite great natural and human resources, Nigeria is poverty-stricken and "the level of social development limited: 6 out of every 10 Nigerians live on less than $1 a day" (National Economic Empowerment and Development Strategy, NEEDS, 2005). This figure falls far short of the world average of $6,500 (Igwe, 2010). The depth of the nation's poverty and associated crisis reflects in the massive youth unemployment and absence of opportunities for economic growth, poor living standards and a seeming failure of the state to meet the health, food, and security needs of the majority of Nigerians. Such an atmosphere of uncertainty breeds frustration, which, as argued by proponents of the frustration/aggression theory pushes some people, especially the youth into crimes like kidnapping, hostage taking, armed robbery, etc. Evidence in the literature also supports this thesis. Chidi (2014) asserted that

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kidnappers who engage in such criminality do so for reasons associated with unemployment, loss of societal value, idleness, vengeance, rituals, monetary gains, and political considerations.

Question Four: What are your experiences in the hands of your abductors?

All the kidnap victims painted horrific, gory, traumatic, and terrifying pictures of their experiences in the hands of their kidnappers while in captivity. The experiences range from torture, being masked, having to trek long distances on foot for hours into thick forests, going without food for several days to threat of rape. Others included demand for huge ransom ranging from N850, 000, N10m, N30m to N60m with the threat of being killed should they fail to pay such amounts. One of the respondents recalled his ordeal with tearful eyes thus:

It was horrific; I don't want to remember it. As I am talking to you now, mere reflection about the incidence gives me trauma. It is not a thing you think about and be happy. For the rest of my life, I doubt if the pain will go away. To travel a long distance in my car all alone is now a problem for me because I have had to contend with the fearful thought that someone will come out of the bush and kidnap me. I am presently suffering from what psychologists refer to as Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (*Male/IDI/52 years/Anyigba*).

Another respondent told of how a gang of kidnappers dressed in police fatigue uniform in a Volkswagen Gulf car stopped by where he was and greeted him familiarly only for them to open the door and ordered him in. He recalled that at the point of his being picked up, one of his assailants brandished an AK 47 gun and when he tried to call his bluff, others in the car with their riffle subdued him, and in the process, blindfolded him and drove off.

Another kidnap victim narrated his experience as follows:

As I attempted to enter my car at the end of my visit to a friend, two stern-looking young men in their twenties accosted me with guns. They fell me down flat on the ground and quickly blindfolded me. They attempted to drive us away in the car belonging to my host, but the key to the car was with the husband who was not at home at the time. They then led me to my car and ordered me to open it. It was in my car that they whisked us away to an unknown destination that fateful night (*Male/IDI/50 years/Anyigba*)

His friend, a female, also kidnapped with him, described her ordeal in the following words:

I went without food or water for four nights. We were at the mercy of those godless and heartless young men who subjected us to all manner of inhuman treatment and made ridiculous demands. Our experience was a bitter and painful one (Female/IDI/41 years/Anyigba).

Question Five: Why were academics the target of the kidnappers?

All the respondents acknowledged that the kidnappers being familiar with the economic profile of Anyigba see academics and many staff of Kogi State University, as possessing kidnap ransom value (KRV) thus ostensibly accounting for their focus on such targets. This assertion is coterminous with the views of Okoli and Agada, (2014) and Mutum, (2016), to the effect that kidnaps victims must be seen by kidnappers to possess kidnap value which is the main target of kidnappers. One of the respondents asserted that:

There seem to be insiders giving information about the economic potentials of academics. From the way the kidnappers questioned me, it was clear that they knew how much my capital was in the Co-operative thrift society operated by Academic staff of the University. Our colleagues in the University community are my suspects. They could have told the kidnappers details of members' contribution to the Co-operative Society (*Male/IDI/50 years/Anyigba*).

Another respondent equally corroborated the above position thus:

I don't know if it was a coincidence, but it looked like they knew I had money on me. I had just made a withdrawal from the bank when they kidnapped me. Furthermore, the kidnap came only a day after the Staff Co-operative Society granted me a loan of one million Naira and they collected seven hundred Naira that I had not spent before my abduction (*Male/IDI/49years/ Anyigba*).

Question Six: What sanctions would you suggest be imposed on kidnappers when apprehended?

All the respondents recommended the death penalty for kidnappers. They opined that capital punishment would have a deterrent effect on potential kidnappers. One of the kidnap victims had this to say:

When apprehended, kidnappers should be killed because they would not spare the lives of victims who cannot afford to pay the enormous ransom they usually demand (*Male/IDI/44 years/Anyigba*).

Another victim said:

The national assembly has spoken in favor of the death penalty. I will go for the maximum punishment, which is the death penalty (*Male/IDI/51years/Anyigba*).

VIII. Conclusion

This study interrogated the phenomenon of kidnapping as a heinous but lucrative crime in 21st century Nigeria. The study noted that kidnapping is not only a threat to life but a big disincentive to Nigeria's foreign direct investment drive. It also sought to ascertain the factors responsible for the persistence of the phenomenon. The study posed a number of questions, among them were; what is the level of public

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awareness of the menace of abduction in 21st century Nigeria, what are the factors responsible for the rising incidence of kidnapping in 21st century Nigeria and what are the experiences of kidnap victims in the hands of their abductors?

The study established poverty, grinding unemployment, the quest for criminal acquisition and weak security architecture as some of the major push factors for kidnapping. The study also discovered that kidnap victims suffer untold hardships while in captivity. The following recommendations are made to stem the tide:

1. Part of the motivation for kidnapping is the specter of poverty and youth unemployment. Federal and state governments should initiate and implement sustainable pro-poor poverty eradication programs since it appears that the National Directorate of Employment, the NAPEP and N-Power interventions which constitute the central pillars of governments' poverty eradication programmes have hardly contributed to poverty reduction in Nigeria. The training of youth in ICT and other skill acquisition programs should be scaled up to make them IT-compliant and self-reliant;
2. Given the weakness of the nation's security apparatus to comprehensively and decisively deal with the menace of kidnapping, governments should enact laws to prosecute kidnappers while security agencies should synergize and scale up inter-agency intelligence gathering mechanisms.
3. Given the ordeal that kidnaps victims suffer, there is the urgent need to impose harsher and more severe punishment on kidnappers. The death penalty adopted by both the national assembly and the Lagos state government and also recommended by some of the interviewed kidnaps victims is the surest antidote to the menace.

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