

Kidnapping: A Lucrative Crime in 21 st Century Nigeria

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Abstract

The rising incidence and prevalence of kidnapping in Nigeria have continually generated concern in both academic and non-academic circles. The phenomenon of kidnapping constitutes a serious threat to life and serves as a major drawback to the nation's drive for sustainable economic growth, anchored on direct foreign investment. The paper relies on both primary and secondary sources, and notes that kidnapping is caused by grinding poverty, spiraling unemployment, the criminal quest for material acquisition, and a weak security system. The paper recommends the initiation of pro-poor poverty eradication programs, creation of employment opportunities, strengthening of the security architecture, enactment of appropriate laws and the adoption of capital punishment to stem the tide of kidnapping which has become a lucrative crime in 21st century Nigeria.

Index terms— crime; foreign direct investment; kidnapping; sustainable economic growth; 21st century nigeria.

1 Introduction

he 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 kidnapers 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

45 cases (Chidi, 2014). The reason for the unreported kidnap cases is not far-fetched as victims, and their loved
46 ones prefer to play along with the kidnappers to guarantee the release of victims from captivity alive. Even with
47 several unreported cases, kidnapping no doubt appears widespread and is fast becoming very lucrative in Nigeria.
48 This paper examines the menace of kidnapping as a profitable crime in 21 st century Nigeria.

49 2 II.

50 3 The Problem

51 One goal that Nigeria as a nation has vigorously pursued since her return to representative democracy in 1999
52 is the attempt to woo international investors into the resource studded economy (Thomas, 2015). The drive
53 by successive governments to create enabling environment for investment derives from the belief that, without
54 foreign investors and investment, the nation can hardly make any quantum leap in her developmental strides, her
55 enormous human and material resource endowments notwithstanding. No sooner had the government's efforts in
56 this direction started yielding results than foreign investors considered to possess kidnap values were abducted
57 by hostage takers in several parts of the country for ransom (Okoli and Agada, 2014). This ugly development,
58 apart from scaring potential foreign investors has also forced those with investments in Nigeria to relocate to
59 more secure and investment friendly African countries.

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

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

76 4 III.

77 5 Conceptualization

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

80 6 a) Crime

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

92 7 b) Kidnapping

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

9 Theoretical Framework

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

10 a) Queer Ladder

104 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).

116 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 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.

11 b) Frustration/Aggression theory

121 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.

136 The relevance of the frustration-aggression theory derives from the thesis that the activities of kidnapers 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.

140 V.

12 Understanding Kidnapping

142 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)).

146 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.

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

153 (i) Taking a person away without his consent; (ii) Holding a person in false imprisonment or illegal detention/confinement;

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

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

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

161 (ii) Express kidnapping: This type of kidnapping is motivated by pecuniary interests, and, (iii) Tiger
162 kidnapping: kidnapping done in an attempt to perpetrate another crime; e.g., holding a bank manager hostage
163 to get him to instruct his staffers to effect an illegal transfer.

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

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

173 13 VI. Methods / Techniques and Targets of Kidnappers

174 As a violent crime, kidnappers usually employ weapons such as guns, knives, and other offensive items in carrying
175 out their mission. Kidnappers are rational actors who are trained, equipped, tactful, and calculative. They always
176 have viewed the outcome of their actions to be beneficial to their group members before they strike (Fiedman
177 and Hetcher, 1988; as cited in Ritzer, 1996). It is not everyone found on the street that has the potential to be
178 kidnapped. Kidnap victims must be seen by kidnappers to possess kidnap value (Okoli and Agada, 2014; Mutum,
179 2016), which is the main target of kidnappers.

180 Kidnap Ransom Value (KRV) is the strategic net worth of a kidnappee, which, in essence, makes him/her a
181 kidnap target. The underlying logic of kidnapping business is that the victim is worth a ransom value and that
182 he/she can pay, whether by self or proxy. Okoli and Agada (2014) aver that this value is determined by several
183 factors as presented in tabular form below: In a nutshell, the socio-economic status of a potential victim on the
184 one hand and the kidnappers' perception of the victim on the other hand, determines his/her KRV. An individual
185 may not directly possess kidnap value, but still, stand the risk of being kidnapped if he/she is linked to someone
186 perceived by kidnappers to possess kidnap value. In this case, a relation of a wealthy person, politician, influential
187 figure, criminal, etc. whether young or old, male or female, may be kidnapped even when he/she is not the direct
188 target of kidnappers. As soon as such a person has been kidnapped, his/her wealthy relations who would not
189 want him/her harmed are expected to rally round to provide the requested ransoms. Good examples are those
190 of Mrs. Kamene Okonjo on December 9, 2012, and Mrs. Margaret Emeifele in September 2016 (Mutum, 2016).
191 Mrs. Kamene Okonjo is the mother of Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Minister of Finance under the administration of
192 former president Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria while Mrs. Emeifele is the wife of Mr. Godwin Emeifele, the
193 current Central Bank Governor of Nigeria.

194 14 a) Kidnapping in Nigeria

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

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

214 Following the kidnap of two hundred and seventy-six (276) secondary school girls in Chibok community of

215 Borno State in North-Eastern Nigeria by Boko Haram terrorists on April 14, 2014, kidnapping became a lucrative
216 criminal venture embarked upon by hoodlums from virtually all the states of Nigeria.

217 In recent times, Kogi, one of the states in North-Central Nigeria, has been in the news for kidnap-related cases.
218 The Lokoja-Okene federal highway has become the den of kidnappers with high profile Nigerians falling victim.
219 For instance, a lawyer, barrister Ozavize, was abducted on the road on July 14, 2017 (Alex, 2017). Ogundele and
220 Hanafiz (2017) also reported the kidnap of Senator Arinse along the same high way during which his abductors
221 reportedly demanded a ransom of eighty million Naira for his release. Several cases of kidnapping were reported
222 to have taken place along the Lokoja-Okene axis in 2017 (Nairaland Forum, 2017). Roads in other parts of
223 the state such as the Idah-Itobe road, Anyigba-Ankpa road, and Lokoja-Kabba road have experienced several
224 unrecorded kidnap cases in recent times. The caliber of persons kidnapped and the need to play along with the
225 kidnappers to ensure the safe release of the victims ostensibly account for the nonpublicity of some of the cases
226 (Chidi, 2014). This and similar acts of criminality, have earned for Nigeria, the unfortunate description as a
227 violent nation and one of the most unsafe countries to do business within Africa (Odoma, 2011; Ugwuoke, 2015;
228 Aremu and Dzever, 2015). The above gloomy assertion must have been as a result of the fear and apprehension
229 caused by the unabated activities of kidnapping and kidnappers. No doubt, violent crimes like kidnapping attract
230 or engender fear in society and thus scare tourists and investors with the attendant negative consequences on
231 the economic performance of such a nation (Reid, 1997; Conkline, 2007; Ugwuoke, 2015). As rightly noted by
232 Ugwuoke (2015) and Aremu and Dzever (2015), these categories of crime are mostly responsible for the notorious
233 image associated with Nigeria among the league of nations of the world today. Table 2 above speaks volumes
234 about the worrisome rising incidence and prevalence of kidnapping as a lucrative crime in contemporary Nigeria.

235 15 b) Reasons for kidnapping

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

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

245 Unemployment: Nigerian universities and other tertiary institutions produce hundreds of thousands of
246 graduates every year. Successive poverty alleviation and youth employment interventions by both federal and
247 state governments have not significantly addressed the youth unemployment situation in the country. A December
248 2017 report by the National Bureau of Statistics disclosed that 7.9 million Nigerians lost their jobs between the
249 fourth quarter of 2015 and the third quarter of 2017, thus worsening an already bad unemployment situation
250 (Pulse.ng, 2018). Chidi (2014: 139) draws a correlation between unemployment and criminality, particularly
251 kidnapping noting that "if people are empowered and provided jobs, most of these crimes will be reduced"
252 Similarly, Okolo (2010) cited in Chidi (2014) identified the alarming rate of unemployment in Nigeria as one of
253 the country's top five headaches. He avers that the evil monster of unemployment has succeeded massively in
254 pouring into the minds of its victims, bright but negative thoughts and ideas on how to make fast cash and one
255 of the surest options is 'kidnapping'.

256 Loss of societal value: Some commentators are of the view that many Nigerians have jettisoned the timehonored
257 respect for our culture, love for human lives and hard work in exchange for western values and ostentatious
258 orientation, which birthed the modern crimes and social evils destroying the core value of the society. ??novo
259 (2009), for instance, attributed the rising crime wave in Nigeria to the elevation and celebration of fraudsters
260 by many Nigerians. He also took exception to the celebration by religious leaders and traditional rulers, of
261 people who embezzled or misappropriated public funds. According to him, celebrating such people is not only an
262 indictment on societal and moral values but serves as an impetus to kidnapping as people who celebrate criminals
263 end up encouraging them to do more.

264 16 c) Nigerian Government's Intervention in the fight against 265 Kidnapping

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

270 By far, the most significant push in the battle against kidnapping appears to have come from the nation's
271 national assembly. Disturbed by the notorious activities of kidnappers vis-à-vis their implication on the country's
272 local and international image, the Senate, the highest law-making organ of government, unanimously approved
273 the death penalty for anyone caught in the act of kidnapping. The Senate adopted the resolution in favour of

274 capital punishment on Wednesday, May 5, 2016, following the receipt of the report by the organ, of its joint
275 committee on public affairs and national security and intelligence (Ogunmade, 2016).

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

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

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

294 17 d) Consequences of kidnapping

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

302 The exit of companies from kidnap prone areas further results in loss of huge revenues that would otherwise
303 have been used to provide critical infrastructure and enhance the development of the country's social capital.
304 Okoli and Agada (2014) summarized the consequences of kidnapping in Nigeria to the effect that: (i) It leads
305 to loss of life, a threat to public safety; (ii) It sabotages economic growth and development by way of capital
306 and investment flight; (iii) It results in a negative perception of Nigeria on the international scene with its
307 negative consequences on trade, tourism, and foreign direct investment (FDI); (iv) It creates an atmosphere of
308 public insecurity, thereby endangering the prospects of societal progress and, (v) It has often led to the loss of
309 investment capital, closure of businesses and unemployment, etc.

310 18 e) Methods

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

319 19 f) Study Location

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

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

331 **20 g) Research Instruments**

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

336 **21 VII. Results/Discussion of Findings**

337 The data from the IDI showed that six of the respondents were male, while one was a female. Two of Volume
338 XIX Issue III Version I the respondents were between forty and forty-four years; two others were within the age
339 range of forty-five to forty-nine years, while three were within the age bracket of fifty years and above. All the
340 kidnap victims had tertiary educational qualifications. All the respondents were married, as shown in table 3
341 below: Question One: Are you aware of the menace of kidnapping in Nigeria? All the respondents answered in
342 the affirmative. One of the respondents retorted that it is only those who had no access to both traditional and
343 the new media that could feign ignorance of the menace and prevalence of kidnapping in Nigeria, Question Two:
344 What is your perception of the phenomenon of kidnapping?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

377 For those familiar with the situation in Nigeria, such factors as mentioned above, are well known. Despite
378 great natural and human resources, Nigeria is poverty-stricken and "the level of social development limited:
379 6 out of every 10 Nigerians live on less than \$1 a day" (National Economic Empowerment and Development
380 Strategy, NEEDS, 2005). This figure falls far short of the world average of \$6,500 (Igwe, 2010). The depth of the
381 nation's poverty and associated crisis reflects in the massive youth unemployment and absence of opportunities
382 for economic growth, poor living standards and a seeming failure of the state to meet the health, food, and
383 security needs of the majority of Nigerians. Such an atmosphere of uncertainty breeds frustration, which, as
384 argued by proponents of the frustration/aggression theory pushes some people, especially the youth into crimes
385 like kidnapping, hostage taking, armed robbery, etc. Evidence in the literature also supports this thesis. Chidi
386 (2014) kidnapers who engage in such criminality do so for reasons associated with unemployment, loss of societal
387 value, idleness, vengeance, rituals, monetary gains, and political considerations.

388 **22 Question Four: What are your experiences in the hands of**
389 **your abductors?**

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

395 It was horrific; I don't want to remember it. As I am talking to you now, mere reflection about the incidence
396 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
397 go away. To travel a long distance in my car all alone is now a problem for me because I have had to contend
398 with the fearful thought that someone will come out of the bush and kidnap me. I am presently suffering from
399 what psychologists refer to as Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Male/IDI/52 years/Anyigba).

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

405 **23 Another kidnap victim narrated his experience as follows:**

406 As I attempted to enter my car at the end of my visit to a friend, two stern-looking young men in their twenties
407 accosted me with guns. They fell me down flat on the ground and quickly blindfolded me. They attempted to
408 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
409 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
410 to an unknown destination that fateful night (Male/IDI/50 years/Anyigba) His friend, a female, also kidnapped
411 with him, described her ordeal in the following words: I went without food or water for four nights. We were at
412 the mercy of those godless and heartless young men who subjected us to all manner of inhuman treatment and
413 made ridiculous demands. Our experience was a bitter and painful one (Female/IDI/41 years/Anyigba).

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

415 All the respondents acknowledged that the kidnappers being familiar with the economic profile of Anyigba see
416 academics and many staff of Kogi State University, as possessing kidnap ransom value (KRV) thus ostensibly
417 accounting for their focus on such targets. This assertion is coterminous with the views of Okoli and Agada,
418 (2014) and Mutum, (2016), to the effect that kidnaps victims must be seen by kidnappers to possess kidnap value
419 which is the main target of kidnappers. One of the respondents asserted that:

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

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

430 **24 Question Six: What sanctions would you suggest be imposed**
431 **on kidnappers when apprehended?**

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

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

436 **25 Another victim said:**

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

439 **26 VIII.**

440 **27 Conclusion**

441 This study interrogated the phenomenon of kidnapping as a heinous but lucrative crime in 21 st century Nigeria.
442 The study noted that kidnapping is not only a threat to life but a big disincentive to Nigeria's foreign direct

443 investment drive. It also sought to ascertain the factors responsible for the persistence of the phenomenon. The
 444 study posed a number of questions, among them were; what is the level of public awareness of the menace of
 445 abduction in 21 st century Nigeria, what are the factors responsible for the rising incidence of kidnapping in 21
 446 st century Nigeria and what are the experiences of kidnap victims in the hands of their abductors?

447 The study established poverty, grinding unemployment, the quest for criminal acquisition and weak security
 448 architecture as some of the major push factors for kidnapping. The study also discovered that kidnap victims
 449 suffer untold hardships while in captivity. The following recommendations are made to stem the tide: programs
 450 should be scaled up to make them ITcompliant and self-reliant; 2. Given the weakness of the nation's security
 451 apparatus to comprehensively and decisively deal with the menace of kidnapping, governments should enact laws
 452 to prosecute kidnapers while security agencies should synergize and scale up inter-agency intelligence gathering
 453 mechanisms. 3. Given the ordeal that kidnaps victims suffer, there is the urgent need to impose harsher and
 454 more severe punishment on kidnapers. The death penalty adopted by both the national assembly and the Lagos
 455 state government and also recommended by some of the interviewed kidnaps victims is the surest antidote to the
 menace.¹

1

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 kidnapers involved	Petty kidnapers 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

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

Figure 1: Table 1 :

456

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2

Kidnapping: A Lucrative Crime in 21 st Century Nigeria

S/No.	Name	Mr.	Ohun-	Year	Place	Ransom De-	Released/	Year
.1	yom Ernest	Mr.	Mr.	Kid-	Kidnapped	manded/Paid	Killed	2019
.2	Ojukwu Cosmas	Mr.	Mr.	napped	Lagos	N85 Million	Released	33
.3	Mbarikatta Williams	Nov,			FESTAC	\$1Million	Released	Volume
.4	Uboma Mohammed	2011			Town, Lagos	N20 Million	Released	XIX
.5	Jamal (Lebanese)	21/1/2012			FESTAC	N17 Million	Released	Is-
.6	Mr Leo Abraham	16/6/2012			Town, Lagos	N15Million	Released	sue
.7	Mr. Paul Cole	Mr.	Mr.	19/8/2012	Ajah, Lagos	N20 Million	Released	III
.8	Kingsley Nwokenta	Mr.	Mr.	20/8/2012	Badagry,	N15 Million	Released	Ver-
.9	Anthony Ozoanidobi	23/8/2012			Lagos	N15 Million	Released	sion
10.	Mr. Tom Owner	19/9/2012			FESTAC	N100 Million	Released	I (
11.	of Kings Paint	Mr.	Mr.	10/10/2012	Town, Lagos	N40 Million	Released	C)
12.	Randaki Mr. Dan	2012			FESTAC	N30 Million	Released	Global
13.	Odiete Owner of	2012			Town, Lagos	N100 Million	Released	Jour-
14.	Uyi Technical	Elias			Satellite	N100 million	Released	nal
15.	Ukachukwu Chief	2013			Town, Lagos	\$1 Million \$1	Released	of
	Raymond Okoye	2013			Benin Benin	Million	Released	Hu-
	Oduna-Ichinda	Nov,			Benin Benin			man
		2015			Benin Lagos			So-
		2015			Lagos			cial
16.	Mr.Uche Okafor	2015			Alaba Int'l	\$1 Million	Released	Sci-
					Market, Lagos			ence
17.	Mr. James Udoji	2016			FESTAC	\$1 Million	Released	
					Town, Lagos			
18.	Mr. Francis Umeh	July,			Rasaki	\$1 Million	Released	
		2016			Estate, Lagos			
19.	Col. Samaila Inusa	27/3/			Kaduna	Unknown	Killed	
		2016						
20.	Rev. Fr. John Adeyi	24/4/			Benue	Unknown	Killed	
		2016						

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Figure 2: Table 2 :

3

	Frequency
Sex	
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.

Figure 3: Table 3 :

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(C)

Figure 4:

Figure 5:

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