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The Social-Economic Impediments to Kidnapping Eradication in Southern Nigeria

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Abstract

Many families had gone through the trauma of being guests of Kidnappers. Apart from paying hefty ransom, many of the victims did not live to tell their stories. Since 2007, Nigeria has witness increased increasingly spate of kidnapping in the South, particularly South-South and South-East geo-political zones. In spite of the security agencies investment in intelligence gathering to get advance information to nip their activities in the bud and also the formation of the various special Task Force on kidnapping, the business still strives. This paper examined the Social-economic factors hindering the abolition of this illicit business in the southern Nigeria. The sources of data is secondary. It was discovered that the menace has been on the increase due to

its lucrative nature of the business people pay ransom to get their relative released, and this encourages the crime to thrive, that unemployment, corruption, poverty, leadership failure and loss of societal value are the major obstacle to its eradication. The following recommendations were made: Any political or public office holder caught conniving with kidnappers should be relieved of their position. There should be effective governance that enhances improved standard of living for the people, by providing employment, and ensuring adequate security of lives and properties.

Key Words: Kidnapping, values. Unemployment, poverty, victims

Introduction

Kidnapping involves unlawful taking away of an individual by violence against his or her will, with the ultimate aim of achieving a specific goal including financial, political, social or religious. It is a criminal offence which entails holding a person against his will, depriving his freedom and subjecting him to the threat of murder or assassination, demanding a ransom before his release.

According to Turner (2008), The phenomenon began in the Niger Delta region as a freedom fight by militants protesting the degradation of their environment by oil industry activities. According to Demola (2011) it soon turned into a money making avenue through kidnapping of expatriate oil workers for huge ransoms. Since then, kidnapping has become a daily occurrence and it has spread throughout the South-South states of Edo, Bayelsa, Rivers, Cross Rivers, Akwa Ibom and the South-East States of Abia, Imo and Anambra. The South-West has not been left out. There are occasional brushes with the daring young men in Ondo and Lagos States. Many Youths have taken to the business of kidnapping with some godfathers working behind the scene. People no longer sleep with their two eyes closed.

Foreign investors as well as citizens are scared to operate business in Nigeria because no investment thrives in an atmosphere of insecurity and this contribute to unemployment which leads to economic meltdown. The concept which could be best described as notorious started with the kidnapping of government expatriates moved toward the direction of men of God and their family, the politicians and their businessmen. Most of the kidnapping occurs in the South-East and Niger Delta regions which harbour the Africa's biggest oil and gas industry. Most of the hostages are released unharmed after the payment of ransom.

Kidnapping for ransom is a common occurrence in various parts of the world today. In the past and presently in some parts of the world such as Southern Sudan, It is a common means used to obtain slaves and money through ransom. According to Briggs (2009) Economic kidnapping is one of the fastest growing industries in the world. It is estimated that kidnapping globally take home in the regions of 500 million each year in ransom payment. The hostage is a commodity with a price on the head.

Reliable statistics are hard to come by, but it is estimated that there are approximately 10,000 kidnappings each year worldwide. The undisputed kidnap capital of the world is Colombia, where the activity has been described as a cottage industry. In 2000, the Colombia's National Police recorded 3,162 cases. The kidnapping activities often cross over to Venezuela and Ecuador to take hostage. Both countries feature in the top ten. Latin America is an important hub for kidnapping, though over the past decade, it is risen in some part of Africa, most notably Nigeria and South African.

Kidnapping emerged as a consequence of total neglect of the Nigeria Niger Delta by the multinational corporations and the failure of Governance in the fourth republic. The persistence failure of the state to ensure equitable distribution, neglect and alienation on the part of the Niger Delta people also culminated into higher level of militancy in the fourth republic (Akpan 2010).

Incidents of Kidnapping in Southern Part of Nigeria

The kidnapers who in most cases dress in Military uniform and intimidate their victims with guns sometime they shoot gun for a reasonable period of time before abducting their victims. Thus to compel compliance. They rape their female victims, and kill those that recognized them. And for hasty payment of ransom, the victims are subject to some inhuman treatment which is relay to their relatives.

According to Demola (2011), kidnapers descended on Chinwe Onyekaozuru, a female customs officer and Chizoba Christian her sister in their home at Etteta Ita Street, Calabar. The kidnapers took their laptops, phones, cash and car to an unknown destination. In the next morning, they demanded N75 million from the husband. He parted with three million Naira to secure their release on December 9, 2010.

On April 29, 2011 a seven months pregnant Ifeoma Ugochukwu with her one and half year-old son were kidnapped at the gate of their residence No. 37B Nkomib Layout, Ikot Ansa, Calabar at about 9.45 p.m. The following day, the kidnapers called Chijioko Ugochukwu her husband to pay \$1 million or N150 million for the release of his wife, her pregnancy and son at N50 million each. After a protracted negotiation spanning one month, the kidnapper smiled away with N10 million paid in two installment of N5 million each through a priest at Abak, Akwa Ibam State.

Men of God also have had test of the ordeal. Those kidnapped in the state include Ntia Ntia, the young and upcoming Senior Pastor of Full Life Ministries, Uyo. Ntia was taken after a much publicized visit to his Church by Governor Akpabio, who announced a donation of N10, million to the Pentecostal Church. Ntia abductors allegedly tied him to a tree in the bush for days, but released him after his members paid a N10 million ransom.

The wife of Sam Ewang, retired Air Commodore and former Military Administrator of River State and Ogun States, was kidnapped at the peak of Political

Campaigns 2001 elections. The kidnappers allegedly did not ask for money but insisted that her husband, who was a gubernatorial candidate of the All Nigeria Peoples Party, ANPP give up his ambition.

The list of those kidnapped includes Edet Akpan, retired army general and former director of National Youth Service Corps. The kidnappers have waited for him inside Qua Iboe Church, Irook, his village on a Sunday morning. They pounced on him as he mounted the platform to preach, killing three persons in the process. The Vice-Chancellor of University of Uyo has also been kidnapped.

In Imo State, the people have been living in great fear and anxiety following an unprecedented upsurge in kidnapping. The State that parades itself as Eastern Heartland has literally been reduced to “heartland of kidnapping” with an average record of 10 cases per week. Victims cut across gender, social status and position. The former Commissioner for Information, Emman Owuamanam had a terrible counter with kidnappers. He regained his freedom after paying a princely amount as ransom. Within the same week, the kidnappers took away Pa Nwajiuba, father of Chinedu and Emeka, a Professor and lecturer in the State University and former member of the House of Representative, respectively.

In Abia State, kidnap victims included Felix Anyasi Agwu, Chairman of Enyinba Football Club and other numerous victims. More pathetic was the abduction of a gynecologist and the Proprietor of Victory Christian Hospital, Abia, who was later killed by his abductors. The doctor was kidnapped along with Miriam, his wife, in the presence of their children. They were accosted by the kidnappers on their way to their village in Mbano, Imo State for the burial of a cousin. Miriam was later released for a N10 million ransom. The height of the lawlessness in the zone was displayed when the kidnappers on September 27, 2010 abducted 15 pupils of Abayi International Nursing & Primary School and Magnet Secondary School, Aba, while they were being conveyed to school in a bus.

According to Onuegbu (2015). The paramount ruler of Nsit Ibom Local Government Areas of Akwa Ibom State, Edidem Solomon Etuk has lamented the incessant abduction of children in the area, saying no fewer than 180 had been kidnapped in the last two years.

In Enugu State, victims included Fred Ifeora, Zonal Director of Federal Inland Revenue Service, FIRS, and his wife, who were later killed, Igwe Uche Chukwuka, traditional ruler and Enugu based hotelier. He was killed and his body abandoned at a refuse dump near Enugu State Waste Management Agency.

In Edo, Delta and Ondo States many have been guests of kidnappers. In Edo State, Osamede Adun, Managing Director of Bob Izsua Transport Company Limited and Chieftain of the People Democratic Party, PDP in Edo State, Friday June 5, at about

9 pm was kidnapped by a 19-man gang all of them dressed in Military Uniform at his residence in Benin City. Henrietta Omoregie was abducted by a gang to which her son belonged. She died in their den. The father of This Day Editorial Page Editor, Eddy Odvwri was killed by his abductors because he recognized his kidnapers as the boys from his neighborhood. On the 14th of June 2009, Mrs Iyabo Basaru, wife of the Ondo State Commissioner for Lands Sikiru Basaru Iyabo was kidnapped along with her Friend. Sola Alli, wife of the newly appointed Permanent Secretary in the State, by gunmen in front of Basaru's house at Ajipawo area Akure. (Thom-Otuya 2010).

Wealthy politicians and businessmen in Benin City, Edo State capital, have started fleeing the City for fear of being abducted by kidnapers. Their fears heightened after two prominent businessmen in the City, Chief Dan Odieta, an Estate valuer and Chief Omoruyi Oloton popularly known as Uyi Technical, were kidnapped by unknown gunmen dressed in Police Uniforms (Vanguard, 2012).

A building Contractor identified as Engr. Adewale Akindehinde was on Sunday, December 5, 2015 abducted by some unknown men in Ijebu Ode Ogun State. The source confirmed that the kidnapper demanded N10 million. (Naija News, 2015).

Social-Economic Hindrances to The Eradication of Kidnapping in Southern Part of Nigeria

Unemployment

There are lots of youths, especially the graduates from the various institutions of learning in Nigeria that are not gainfully engaged for survival. As a result, they have become idle. As well all known that "An idle mind is the devils workshop". Without meaningful source of livelihood which ensure dignity, confidence, self-esteem and after a long time may lead to aggressive behaviour and criminality due to frustration.

According to Okoro (2010). It is no longer news that the unemployment factor in Nigeria with its alarmingly increasing rate, is among the country's top five headaches. Neither is it news that this evil monster. Unemployment has succeeded massively in pouring into the mind of victims, negative thoughts and ideas on how to make fast cash, ignoring all cautions. Today the newest idea seems strongly to be kidnapping.

According to Oluyinka (2001) the ex-president Olusegun Obasanjo acknowledged that the crusade against crime in the country will not only be tackled by the government through the law enforcement agents, but also on economic fronts. According to him, "if the economic is doing well, particularly in the building or construction industry, many Nigeria would be gainfully employed. Job creation is a major ingredient that would help eliminate crime in the country.

Naija news (2015) Obasanjo cried out. Speaking at the 10th anniversary and 6th and 7th convocation ceremonies of Tai Solarin University of Education Tasued Yagun, Ijebu Ode. The former Nigeria President, “If there is no job for unemployed to feed themselves and also to contribute to the development of the country, then, we will be sitting on gun powder, if University education was not for development then, it was not serving any useful purpose. It must be for development, personal, local, national and even global and that is very important”.

A 33-year-old man Anthony Egidi in his confession at his arrest, he joined kidnapping business at Port Harcourt, Rivers State out of frustration. In a declaration after the release of victim of kidnapping, he identified his kidnappers as young graduates who did not have employment and were looking for how to survive. According to him, if the activities of kidnapping are not checked, everybody will become a potential target”. If the Government fails to address the unemployment situation in the country, soon the entire country may have to go for a ransom at one time or another.

Leadership Problem and Corruption

Our political leadership is too engrossed with issue of power acquisition because of what they personally get out of it and negates the responsibilities expected of them. The character of our political leadership at all levels contradicts the logic and philosophy of governance. The increasing rate of kidnapping and other criminal activities is a direct consequence of failure of leadership. The leadership failure has resulted in mass poverty and unemployment in the country.

The greatest and most pitiable obstacle to political and socio-economic development in Nigeria is corruption. Corruption has reached unprecedented height, eaten deep into the fabric of the Nigerian political system.

Over the years, money allocated to various tier of government have been diverted or misused to the detriment of the citizens. Bad governance and corruption have contributed in no small measure to a situation where the helpless youths have taken to any means of survival available to them such kidnapping, robbery etc.

The Nigeria elite are known worldwide for this heartless greed, avarices, mindless wickedness, inhuman and insensitivity to the plight of the average common man as a result of bad governance and corruption and most of the youth have also learnt that hard work does not pay but the only way to quick wealth is through the short cut like kidnapping, looting etc.

The Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Africa

Small arms and light weapons have become one of the greatest threats to human security and peace in the 21st century as they are at the centre of the conflicts and come in the world.

The proliferation and misuse of small arms is a worldwide progressively complex and multifaceted phenomenon that affects people worldwide. By virtue of their easy availability, low cost and manageability, small arms and light weapon have become the weapons of choice in most conflicts in the world today and have helped raise levels of armed violence even in areas of peace Putak (2010). These weapons are the leading contributors to the escalation of a culture of violence and crime, kidnapping, robbery etc.

According to the OAU (2000) the proliferation and illicit trade in small arms and light weapons have adverse effects on human security, in particular, on women, children, and other vulnerable groups, and on infrastructure. Furthermore, the misuse of arms promotes a culture of violence and destabilizes societies by creating a propitious environment for criminals and contraband activities. Violence caused by small arms undermines good governance, jeopardizes fundamental human rights, and hinders economics development. It exacerbates armed conflicts, the displacement of innocent populations and threatens international humanitarian law.

Small arms confer power, even without being fired. The coercive potentials of these weapons are exploited by the kidnapers to intimidate and compel their victims to compliance without resistance.

Loss of Societal Value

Onovo (2009) attributed the rising crime in the difference regions to the celebration of fraudsters by leaders. He frowned at the appointment of individuals indicted of corruption as head of parastatals and various ministries of government. He also condemned the practice in the country, where people who embezzled or misappropriated public funds are celebrated by religious and traditional rulers, celebrating people of questionable character is an indictment on the societal and moral value which such rulers should represent. He pointed out that one of the obvious reasons which encourages kidnapping to thrive, is the celebration of criminals in the society.

The craving for materialism at all cost in the country generally, has led to the high wave of crime in the country. People are ready to do anything to get rich and be celebrated in the society and a lot of the youth considered kidnapping as the one of the short means to actualize this purpose.

Poor Security System

The acts of criminality is on the geometric progression while the acts of combating is in arithmetic progression. The modern technology for crime fighting is grossly inadequate in Nigeria. One has to imagine how the incompetent security agencies armed with the outdated gadgets can outsmart criminal abductors. There is a

great need for the Federal Government with the exclusive security power to put a mechanism for ending the lucrative kidnapping in the country.

The Economic Implication of Kidnapping

Insecurity at Work Place

Kidnapping has resulted in the unpeaceful state of mind in the various workplaces as workers daily constantly watching their back executing their various operation with fear. The effect of kidnapping on production could be enormous. Such action negatively affects the productivity of diligent workers as it raises fear concerning the work place. The menace and impact have created a faulty economic situation in the areas as businesses in the affected part of the country began a journey down the abyss of economic decline.

Labour Market Implications

The labour market represents aggregate supply and demand for manpower, through the interaction of the two that the two economically active portion of the of the population deployed in various sphere of economic activity. And it helps to bring the workforce together with the means of production. With the threat of kidnapping, many workers are willing to resign their jobs and relocate to other state for the fear of being a victim. It has also led to the exit of firms and organization in these areas dominated by the kidnapping activities, thereby sends numerous workers to labour market and worsen the unemployment situation.

The Threat to Industrial Harmony and Unemployment

According to Okolo (2010) the ugly development is scaring away both local and foreign investors and portends grave danger for Southern parts of the country stressing that “if industries are closing shops and investor are not forthcoming because of insecurity and other attendant problem faced by businesses. The thread of kidnapping has worsening the current unemployment problem in the country.

Implication on the Image of the Country

The increasing spate of kidnapping in Nigeria has dented the image of Nigeria in the entire world. This menace has scare away potential investors out of the country in general. And all Nigerian are seen as dubious in the eye of other countries.

It Exposes the Nigeria Security Lapse

The incessant rate of kidnapping in Nigeria has exposed the weakness of the Nigeria police and navy respectively for their inability to curtain fully criminality in the land and the country water ways.

Recommendations

(a) The Responsibilities of the Government

(i) Job Creation

The crusade against kidnapping in the country cannot only be tackled by government through the law enforcement agents but through job creation. It is major ingredient that would help eliminate crime in the country. The government should create job for the unemployed and as well create enabling environment for the business to thrive. This will attract private investors that will complement the government establishment in catering for employment.

Investment by local and foreign investors into the nation's economy could generate employment for the people. Unless such huge investment into the economy, what the government may be doing in term of employment generation may be scratchy.

- (ii) Government should make policies that will cater for the needs of the people and empower the citizen economically, as this will reduce poverty. And also operate administration that is characterized with element of good governance; accountability, transparency in the management of resources, political stability, provision of basic needs and services and absent of corruption.
- (iii) All the network providers have a great role in curtaining the menace of kidnapping in Nigeria for effective check, all sim card must be registered, every call made by the kidnapper during the negotiation for ransom can be intercepted and location detected by the network provider. Since the kidnapping operation is phone based.
- (iv) The families and relatives of victims should not be swift in the payment of ransom to the kidnappers instead reject the payment of ransom (though painful). It has been established that ransom payment is a major motivational factor for this criminal act.

(b) **Value Re-Orientation**

Moral and standard ethical conduct of living has been throw into the dust bin. The greed for making money at all cost has lead the Nigerian astray. And to reverse this ugly mindset and attitude, it is imperative to re-orientate the citizenry of Nigeria about money making and integrity. They should shun every illicit means of acquiring wealth and refused to celebrate ill-gotten wealthy Nigerian. The religious leaders no matter the believe divert their preaching to righteous from prosperity preaching while the traditional rulers desist from celebrating the dubious reveals that tactical sophistication with which kidnappers has been carrying out their task can be only be explained by sophisticated technology and communication gadget linked to some set group of kidnappers The Nigeria law enforcements should be properly equipped with

good firing power and communication gadget more sophisticated than that of kidnappers and terrorists. Their personnel should be retrained on the latest act of cubing every form of criminality. The intelligence units of forces should spread their tactics to every look and crannies of the countries and also be pro-active.

(c) **Community Based Policing**

An ideal community based policing could be a veritable source of security information to the police. The people should be encouraged to cultivate the habit of passing security information to the police without delay. Information is the engine to the vehicle of security management. Kidnappers are not spirits. They are human beings; security agents are neither magicians nor miracle workers. Security personnel need information to work with.

(d) Any house found used for accommodating victims of kidnapper should be demolished.

(e) Any political or public office holder caught conniving with kidnappers should be relieved of their position.

Conclusion

Kidnapping as a business originated as a reaction to the long period governmental neglects of the Niger Delta Region, causing its people to aggressively adopt militant confrontation in a bid to force government attention to the plight of the region. It is one of the major problems being experienced in Nigeria today. All shades of criminals are abandoning the various means of money making to this quickest means of making fabulous amount of money. This social vice further worsens the unemployment level at the southern part of Nigeria as some business men have relocated from their states for the fear of being kidnapped. This has led to the closure of some industries.

Kidnapping which is man inhumanity to man has caused untold economic hardship to the people of Nigeria, insecurity and demeaned or a dent to the entire country's image. There are many causes of kidnapping amongst are unemployment, poverty, quest for prosperity and eroded societal value. And to combat the menace. It involves collective responsibilities of the Government, Security agencies and the citizen of the country.

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