KIDNAPPING IN THE SOUTHEASTERN STATES OF CONTEMPORARY NIGERIA: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION INTO THE SOCIAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF OFFENDERS

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Abstract

The study empirically investigate salient social and demographic characteristics as determinants of kidnapping in the South-eastern States of contemporary Nigeria using inmates detained on the grounds of kidnapping in Abakaliki and Umuahia Prisons as a unit of analysis. The study adopted a cross-sectional research design. A specific non-probability sampling technique known as the 'respondent-driven-sampling' was used in selecting a sample of 86 from a total population of 123 inmates in the two prisons. Data collected from in-depth oral interview were analyzed using thematic analysis. The study revealed that certain social and demographic characteristics such as age, occupation, gender, social backgrounds, marital status, and the like are responsible for kidnapping in Nigeria; kidnapping enterprise is dominated by men in their youthful age; and weak/lack of strong religious attachment exerts undue pressure on some people, thereby luring them into kidnapping. The study recommends that youth empowerment should be vigorously pursued and earnestly considered in the national development plans; conscientious efforts should be made by all levels of Government in Nigeria to combat social inequality and exclusion; and provision of social security for the teeming unemployed youths and the disadvantaged in the country pending when they will be gainfully employed.

Keywords: Empirical Investigation, Kidnapping, Social and Demographic Characteristics, Contemporary Nigeria, Offenders.

Introduction

Traditionally, kidnapping is subsumed under organised violent crime in the sociology/criminology literature. Organised crime is a violent and clandestine racketeering that is carried out by a syndicate of criminals who adopt measures to protect their group members by ensuring that their illicit business is not thwarted in any manner. Organised crime encompasses all professionals: lawyers, security agents, presiding officers, politicians and government officials who assist in facilitating the

crime. Some studies, however, tend to suggest a specific classification since there are many kinds of crimes that are organised. For instance, Qadri (2005: 436) uses the term "organised gang criminality to refer to the following crimes: bank robbery, hijacking, murder, kidnapping, and automobile and jewel thefts".

Nonetheless, kidnapping has no one putative definition the world over. Individual scholars and schools of thought rather approach the problem from different perspectives and socio-cultural milieu. Akpan (2010) suggests that the definition of kidnapping poses a number of definitional problems in relation to country's legal and moral viewpoints as well as the availability of other variances such as hostage taking and hijacking. But Mohamed (2008) attempts some clarifications of the definitional position of the kidnapping with respect to the legal point of view of some countries. He used Malaysia to illustrate that the kidnapping of adults within the borders of Malaysia comes under the heading of abduction in sharp contrast to the United Kingdom's meaning. Some terminological differences between kidnapping, hostage taking and hijacking have been clarified by Clutterbuck (1987 cited in Mohamed, 2008): where hostage taking and hijacking are involved, victims are held in a known location, such as a plane, ship or building. But hijacking may be thought of as a refinement of hostage taking, when a vehicle of some kind is seized along with its passengers. The theft of container lorries (with their cargoes but without their driver) has been referred to as hijacking. However, most jurisdictions would classify and count this as theft and reserve the term hijacking for the illegal seizure of vehicle and people together.

Although a number of people mistakenly believe that 'hostage taking and kidnapping' refer to a single criminal act, they are really two separate crimes. In their concerted efforts to dispel the popular but erroneous notion about kidnapping, Douglas *et al*. (1992) affirm that kidnapping involves the seizing and detainment or removal of a person by unlawful force or fraud, often with the demand of ransom. The victim is taken against his will by possibly unknown subject(s) and is detained at a location unknown to the authorities. Negotiations involving a kidnap situation may include the victim's family, government officials, business leaders, law enforcement authorities, and the offender(s). On the other hand, a hostage situation/barricade is when a person is held and threatened by an offender to force the fulfilment of substantive demands made on a third party. The person being held in a hostage situation is at a location known to the authorities. This is the major difference between these two situations (see also Von Zandt, 1990 cited in Douglas *et al*., 1992).

In this study, the researcher defines kidnapping as an unlawful and coercive taking away of a person or group of persons without their own volition to an undisclosed hostile environment often in order to demand and obtain a ransom, or to settle a political score (political vendetta) before granting them freedom. Against this backdrop, the study sets out to empirically investigate the social and demographic characteristics as determinants of kidnapping in the South-eastern States of Contemporary Nigeria using inmates detained on for the offence of kidnapping in Abakaliki and Umuahia Prisons as a unit of analysis.

Theoretical Framework

The anomie theory of Robert Merton seems best to explain the crime of kidnapping in contemporary Nigeria. The word 'anomie' is of the French origin, which denotes *normlessness* (lawlessness). It was anglicised and conceptualised in the 20th Century by a Sociologist, Emile Durkheim (1858–1917), in his groundbreaking Thesis to mean generally, the absence or violation of norms (laws) and core values guiding human actions in society. Nevertheless, the anomie-strain theory of Emile Durkheim was modified to means-end paradigm by Robert K Merton in 1938. The anomie theory argues that society creates its own brand of crime and criminals by defining its goals, standards and values without providing corresponding legal opportunities for achieving them. All societies, according to Merton (1938), have a cultural system which embodies the socially approved values and goals and the institutionalised means for achieving them.

Regrettably, the prescribed goals and means do not permit all members of the society to pursue only the success in legitimate ways. This exerts undue pressure on some segments of the society in a non-conforming (criminal) way as they struggle to achieve the success goals and values. This happens when the goal of success is over-emphasised more than the acceptable ways of achieving it. Conversely, Merton acknowledges that not all the people are deviants or criminals; this he did by identifying five adaptive ways people tend to respond when under structural strains. Merton's typology of individual adaptations to structural pressures is referred to as the 'plus-minus paradigm', namely, Conformity: (+ +), Innovation: (+ −), Ritualism: (− +), Retreatism: (− −), and Rebellion: (± ±). The plus (+) sign stands for acceptance, the minus sign (−) represents rejection, and plus and minus (± ±) signs signify rejection of both the institutionalized goals and means and substitution of new goals and means (Merton, 1938).

Innovation, the thrust of this study, explains a situation whereby individuals accept the culturally defined goals of the society (+) but reject the legitimate means of achieving them (−). The innovator rather assumes criminal roles by adopting illegitimate means to achieve material success. Merton suggests that innovation in particular is a characteristic of the lower class, the location in the class structure of American society (as applicable to contemporary Nigerian society) where access to legitimate means is limited and the 'strain towards anomie' is most severe. Encumbered by structural blockages, the researcher observes, individuals in the base of the social ladder then employ unlawful means in an attempt to achieve the culturally over-emphasised goal (success) of the society. This class of people is believed to have been inveigled into kidnapping by environmental pressures and economic deprivations that are commonplace in Nigeria. The relevance of anomie theory to the study lies in its far-reaching impact and analytical dissection of kidnapping and kidnappers in relation to 'innovation' as progressively demonstrated. Igbo and Anugwom (2002) applaud this theory when they say that social problems (such as kidnapping) are often associated with changes induced by the adoption of innovations in society.

The anomie theory is relevant to this study owing to the fact that wealth acquisition is a common feature in contemporary Nigerian society. The meteoric rise in

kidnapping incidence in the South-eastern States of the country is, to say the least, a concomitant effect of certain socio-political and economic backlogs in the nation's social structure and political economy, which limit and frustrate people of this region from effectively competing for the overstressed success. Akinyemi (2002) explains that when people are asked to pursue economic success and at the same time denied means of achieving it, there is a goal blockage; the aspiration is frustrated and may lead individuals to choose illegitimate means (such as kidnapping) to achieve their goals. No wonder many interviewees in our study averred that people take to kidnapping in order to eke out a living.

The study agrees with Igbo (2007) that Merton's postulation aptly describes the situation in many developing countries today, particularly in Nigeria where material wealth has become the major yardstick for measuring success and where people have little or no regard whatsoever for the rules of the game. Nigerians have come to glorify and even worship wealth, regardless of how it was acquired, whether by fair means or foul. The research adds that this type of society coupled with weak formal and informal social control is usually a breeding ground for kidnapping and kidnappers. Little wonder that our Western-borrowed crass materialistic culture and anti-egalitarianism tendencies have inescapably resulted in emerging forms of organised crime and criminals, particularly kidnapping and kidnappers.

Methodology

This is a qualitative research, which follows a cross-sectional research design to explain how social and demographic characteristics predispose individuals in the South-eastern States of contemporary Nigeria to kidnapping. Inmates detained on the grounds of kidnapping in Abakaliki (Ebonyi State) and Umuahia (Abia State) Prisons are the target population of this study. Durkheim's (1999) 'sampling to redundancy' method, which permits a researcher to sample as many respondents as possible until sufficient relevant information and data on the subject of discussion are obtained, was used in the sample size determination and selection. The Umuahia prison shelters 78 (71 males and 7 females) kidnap inmates while the Abakaliki prison houses 45 (40 males and 5 females) inmates detained for the offence of kidnapping, thus totally 123 inmates. Of these 123 inmates targeted for this study, 30 refused to be interviewed while 93 willingly participated in the exercise. We discovered a consistent incoherence in the responses of seven (7) inmates and therefore were rejected, and this certainly brought the final sample size of the study to 86: 55 (48 males and 7 females) and 31 (26 males and 5 females) inmates in Umuahia and Abakaliki Prisons respectively.

The study used a specific kind of non-probability sampling technique known as the 'respondent-driven-sampling'. Erickson (1979), while referring to chain-referral sampling as the same thing with snowball sampling, simply defines respondent-driven-sampling as a technique that focuses on hidden population (as in our case). Van and Maree (1999) admit that non-probability sampling technique becomes useful when there is no available sampling frame. That is, when there is no list of all the people to be sampled and researchers are planning or doing an in-depth qualitative research (such as this present study). Data for this study were extracted using in-depth oral

interview. The 23-item-interview guide was open-ended/unstructured, which paves way for in-depth responses to be elicited from the subjects to give our study a more scientific outlook.

The in-depth oral interview was interactive in nature. It took the form of word association and sentence completion; a situation whereby certain statements were made halfway and the interviewees allowed to contextually respond to the sentence. Each respondent's interview lasted between 30 and 45 minutes. The responses of our interviewees were not taped or recorded in any electronics device as instructed by the management of the two prisons we studied. Only handwritten notes were taken during the interview sessions. The interview schedule lasted for two weeks, and it was held at the Records Unit and Assistant Superintendents' (ASP's) Office in Umuahia and Abakaliki prisons respectively. A letter stating clearly the broad objective of the study was written to the Comptrollers of the two prisons, and informed consent of our target population were sought and obtained before carrying out the interview sessions. Thematic analysis was used in analysing the data.

Discussion of Findings

Social and demographic characteristics in this context are concerned with the general compositions, profile, descriptions and factors that relate to the social and psychological make ups of kidnappers. Although there are many variables that constitute social and demographic characteristics, only those ones that are of greatest concern and imperative in the current study are considered herein, namely, age and kidnapping, gender and kidnapping, marital status and kidnapping, religion and kidnapping, education and kidnapping, social class and kidnapping, and occupation and kidnapping.

Age and Kidnapping

The age of offenders is an important socio-demographic variable because it tends to define the type of crime to be involved in, the role to play and the decision for either continuity or to recluse oneself (Otu, 2004 quoting Sutherland, 1939; Gibbons, 1965; Adler *et al.*, 1991). No wonder a preponderance of the kidnap inmates interviewed in Abakaliki and Umuahia Prisons fall within the age grouping where youthful bravado and exuberance, and intense energy take their extravagant course in human growth and development. For instance, the findings of this study revealed that none of the respondents was less than 20 years of age. They were twenty-seven interviewees (31.3%) in the 21-25 age bracket, forty (46.5%) in the 26-30 age grouping, fifteen (17.4%) in the age category of 31-35 and four (4.6%) were between 36 and 40 years of age. It is on this basis that the study concludes that agility and great strength are the requisite skills for kidnapping business. This is because kidnapping requires an element of force or coercion and violence to outwit both the victims and law enforcement agents.

Igbo (2007) posits that the 18-30 years age group accounts for most crimes in almost all societies. This is the youthful age when young men and women are full of energy and always on the look-out for excitement and trouble. Persons in this age

group may indulge in armed robbery, rape, burglary, arson, looting, and kidnapping. These are mostly offences that require stringent skills and great courage to accomplish. This idea was corroborated by the findings of this study: fewer relatively older inmates interviewed in both Abakaliki and Umuahia Prisons account for 4 (4.6%) of the total population while 82 (95.3%) fall between the ages of 21 and 35. This implies that active participation in kidnapping activities heightens in youthful age, but gradually plummets as one is ageing. Agnew (2003) admits that the peak in criminal activity can be linked to essential features of adolescence in modern, industrial societies. This is because adolescents are given most of the privileges and responsibilities of adults in these cultures as well as experience a reduction of supervision; an increase in social and academic demands, participation in a large, more diverse, peer-oriented social world; an increased desire for adult privileges; and a reduced ability to cope in a legitimate manner and increased incentive to solve problems in a criminal manner.

Gender and Kidnapping

Official crime statistics and research studies strongly indicate that crime is mainly the profession of men. In all known societies, the crime rate for males is far in excess of that for females. This trend is found to be true for all types of crime, except those peculiar to women such as abortion (where it is an illegal act), infanticide, and sex offences (Igbo, 2007). The findings of this study showed that kidnapping business is mainly dominated by men. About 86.0% of the kidnap inmates interviewed in both Abakaliki and Umuahia Prisons were males whereas only 13.9% were females. Most crime scholars agree that male crime rates much higher than those of female, and cases and corroborative evidence abound where victims reported that their assailants were male in more than 80% of all violent personal crimes (Siegel, 2007).

Similarly, we found in this study that kidnapping is a male-dominated profession, though with very few females playing passive roles. Women do not participate directly or actively in kidnapping operations. Opinions of the 5 female inmates interviewed in Abakaliki Prisons were parallel with that of the 7 in Umuahia Prisons. Majority of them claimed that they were into one legitimate business or another prior to their arrests by law enforcement agents. Below are summary of typical opinions expressed by various female inmates interviewed in the two prisons:

> *I am a restauranteur, and not a kidnapper. All classes of people do come to my restaurant to eat. It happened one fateful evening when two young men came into my 'office' thinking that they came to patronize me. Scarcely had they sat down when they engaged me in a buyer-seller discussion. Suddenly, a team of Military and Police Force stormed my restaurant and behold, one of the purported customers pointed a pistol at me. That was how some of my customers and I were arrested and labeled kidnappers.*

> *I run a flourishing Pub in the heart of the town. But because of my high patronage and sales, people begin to envy me. They instigated the police against me, and I was arrested on the grounds that my joint*

is an anchor point for kidnappers and other criminal elements in Abia State.

It is my boyfriend that caused me this ordeal. I didn't know he was into the runs (kidnapping) not until the police broke into his room and arrested both of us. They (police) said that conclusive evidence in their disposal reveals that my guy is a kidnapper while I'm an accomplice.

However, responses of the male inmates we interviewed were contradicting; it countered the opinions of the female respondents–women do participate in kidnapping activities–this they do by stalking potential victims while furnishing the male kidnappers with vital information on such victims' whereabouts and the nature of available risk-factors present in a particular time and location. Women act as informants to kidnappers, and their so-called joints and restaurants serve as rendezvous for virtually all kidnapping transactions, as these male respondents vividly expressed: "kidnapping is mainly by information and rarely by mere coincidence, and ladies provide this clandestine services; but this should not vitiate the fact that men also serve as informants. These intelligence services are gathered by someone who knows the victims and their family very well". Another interviewee interjected: "Kidnappers normally patronize female joints more than those manned by men…where they usually converge. The ostensible purpose for their gathering is to drink while criminal transactions remained their hidden agenda". "Kidnappers often embark on morning jogging and evening football training. As the exercise is going on, they pass signals to one another through argots and nonverbal forms of communication. Thereafter, they converge at their female accomplices' joints or restaurants to transact businesses under the guise of chilling out". "Women serve as cooks and supply kidnappers with 'weeds' (cigarettes and marijuana), alcohol and 'Babes' (girls for sexual pleasure). They not only cook for kidnappers but also kidnap victims to keep the latter alive pending when they will be ransomed".

Marital Status and Kidnapping

The marital status of offenders has much influence on the manner and frequency with which they participate in kidnapping. This is because a vast number of our interviewees in both Abakaliki and Umuahia Prisons were single whereas very few of them were married: 84.8% of them were not yet married while only 15.1% were married. Perhaps, the lack of a strong commitment to familial ties and obligations predispose certain constituent of the society more to crime, and this is in agreement with previous studies of Sociologists and Criminologists in Nigeria (see Nkpa, 1994; Iwarimie-Jaja, 1999; Otu, 2004).

By implication, individuals who do not have family are believed to be less emotionally attached, and indeed, less likely to consider assuming parental role and responsibilities are more susceptible to engage in kidnapping activities than those who are married. In addition, people who are not yet married (single individuals) are

presumably said to lack pro-social and psychological bond that could guide and guard their discernment as well as insulate them against taking to kidnapping. Implicitly, those that are married, especially with child(ren) are so conformed or attached to the social norms and core values of their society that they are, to a great extent, deterred from indulging in kidnapping. Nonetheless, this does not imply that old men and women do not participate in kidnapping or other organised criminal activities. This category of people often play passive role in perpetrating this heinous crime by acting as informants and custodians to kidnappers and, more importantly, procure foods and other life-sustaining items to victims until they are released from the kidnappers' den.

Religion and kidnapping

Findings of this study showed that all the respondents are Christians by religious affiliation. The reason for this is not far-fetched; the people of the South-eastern States of contemporary Nigeria are predominantly Christians. In this study, efforts were made to determine whether the inmates we interviewed participated actively or passively in religious programmes prior to their arrest and committal. Active involvement in ones' religious beliefs entails earnest adherence to religious teachings and general observance of moral rectitude while reverse of this is what we meant by passive participation. We found in this study that a greater number of our sample played passive roles in religious programmes before they were arrested. Nevertheless, most of them are now religious to enable them ease off the pains of imprisonment and to easily inure themselves with the unnecessary bureaucracies and deeply regimented world of prison. Apparently, weak or lack of strong religious attachment exerts undue pressure and influence on certain individuals and their consequent involvement in kidnapping as a coping mechanism.

Below are some opinions on religiosity and kidnapping as expressed by the inmates we interviewed in both Abakaliki and Umuahia Prisons:

I am a Christian, though I don't always participate in my church programmes, except on Sundays. But I don't think this could be the cause of my problem. I believe it is bound to happen and there is nothing anyone could have done to avert it.

I have learnt a big lesson from this. I don't use to take my religious activities very serious. I was supposed to be in a church programme the time I was arrested; I was at the wrong place at the wrong time, in my usual pub. Sincerely, this place (prisons) *has really changed my religious belief. It has broadened my horizons in prayers and knowledge of God. As you can see, inmates in here spend more time in moral instruction than any other activities.*

Religion or no religion, if anything 'won' (want) *happen e go* (it will) *still happen, make I* (let me) *tell you. Forget say me na once in a while I dey go church. My man* (referring to the researcher)*, na me dey tell you, no*

be religion matter, na bad influence o...guy you suppose know wetin dey for campus... (The respondent flared up and stopped talking).

Education and Kidnapping

There is a high correlation between educational background and kidnapping in Nigeria. Educational qualifications of inmates we interviewed were assigned the following values: Degree/HND, NCE/OND, SSCE, FSLC, Students, and No Formal Education. Findings of this study revealed that all the respondents were either literate or semi-literate. Of the 86 interviewees, thirty-one (36.0%) had Senior Secondary School Certificate (SSCE) as their highest educational qualification and fifteen (17.7%) obtained First School Leaving Certificate (FSLC). Thirty-Two (37.2%) were Postsecondary Students while Four (4.6%) had Degree/HND and NCE/OND respectively. Hence, low or no formal educational attainment is a major factor that predisposes people to poverty, and studies revealed that this low education leads to limited employment opportunities, low income and an increased propensity to get involved in crime (Iwarimie-Jaja, 1987; Ekpeyong, 1989; Nkpa, 1994).

Obviously, primary and secondary school certificates in contemporary Nigeria are not strong enough to fetch holders of such qualifications a sustained and rewarding employment. The situation, with undue emphasis on excellent and higher paper credentials as a measuring rod or yardstick for workers' assessment and applicants to be gainfully employed, became exacerbated as those (particularly lower class people who are on the receiving end of this ugly development since they cannot afford such academic requirements) that are caught up with this structural encumbrance resort to kidnapping for livelihood. It therefore follows that FSLC and SSCE holders almost always secure mundane jobs with meager income. Regrettably, this condition speaks volume about considerable number of these certificate holders engaging in kidnapping in contemporary Nigeria.

Social Class and Kidnapping

The findings of this study showed that social backgrounds exert much influence on people getting involved in kidnapping. Substantial number of the kidnap inmates we interviewed in both Abakaliki and Umuahia Prisons came from the lower class, and many of them are not gainfully employed. The result of this study indicates that individuals from low socio-economic background (lower class) are more predisposed to the crime of kidnapping than their upper class counterparts. Given their consistent reference to social backgrounds, our interview sample was divided into three major classes, viz: Lower, Middle and Upper. All the respondents that had FSLC and SSCE (including students) hailed from the lower class families (70.9%) while the middle class ones representing 29.0% had obtained Degree/HND and NCE/OND respectively. We also found in the study that Zero percentage (0%) was recorded against Upper Class.

In contrast, the affluent and the political class, who directly or indirectly make and implement laws, are protected by these laws. This class of people is known to have in one way or another indulged in kidnapping activities in pursuance of their political vendetta and personal aggrandisement which is endemic in Nigerian body politics. An

obvious example is the case of Omotayo Mobolaji Johnson, a Geologist and staff of Chevron PLC, who was arrested by the police in connection with the attempt to kidnap a bank Executive based in Lagos. Despite the fact that Johnson earns ₦1.2million monthly, he still masterminded the kidnap which was smashed by the Lagos State Police Command (Ishaya, 2010). Akpan (2010) conceives kidnapping as a political tool. Alluding to the seminal work of Turner (1998), Akpan describes political kidnapping as money and politics, where there are political motivations for kidnapping but where ransom is also demanded. Such ransom is often used to further the political objectives of the kidnapping organisation. Clearly, it seems acceptable that most famous kidnapping operations are masterminded by the rich, government officials, political opposition groups, and disgruntled elements that were used to rig elections in Nigeria.

The basic assumptions of anomie theory which formed the theoretical framework to this study lent credence to our findings. For instance, anomie theory stressed that in the absence of legitimate means (limited opportunities) people become innovative in criminal activities, such as kidnapping (Merton, 1938); social problems (such as kidnapping) is often associated with changes induced by the adoption of innovation in society (Igbo & Anugwom, 2002). Consequently, the downtrodden or the people in the lower echelon then use whatsoever means and opportunities, both fair and foul, their class position offers to kidnap for survival. This does not in any way suggest that the upper class people do not indulge in kidnapping; they do, even to a large extent. The study rather agrees with Chambliss (1969) when he argues that the lower class people are more likely to be scrutinised and therefore observed in any violation of the law; arrested if discovered under suspicious circumstances; spend time between arrest and trial in jail, to come to trial, to be found guilty; and if found guilty, receive punishment than their middle or upper class counterparts.

Supporting the above viewpoint, Igbo (2007) avers that law enforcement agents are biased against the lower class people who are generally viewed as a 'bunch of criminals'. Thus, if and when a crime is committed, law enforcement agents usually select lower class people for interrogation and judicial processing. This graphically described scenario is typical of and true situation in Nigerian society, as this radical graduate under detention in Abakaliki Prisons for the crime of kidnapping bluntly expressed:

> *Do you think that everybody you see here is a criminal! All these people in here are innocent, including me; God knows that one. Kidnapping is an organised crime with godfathers and high class politicians as sponsors. But these people cannot be arrested because they are 'above' the law. But, but… you know; in fact, no wahala (there is no problem). Do you know the President of the so-called Ebonyi State Youth Assembly, his name is Comrade Chinedu Ogah (AKA Chiboy)? He is the one that put me here because of his political position and might. I had issues with him immediately I completed my National Youth Service in February 2012. As a result, he conspired with his like-minds in the State and labelled me a kidnapper. Truly speaking, I am not a kidnapper, and I pray that God will soon release me from this dungeon and put my enemies to shame.*

Employment Status/Occupation and Kidnapping

Opinion varies in the sociology/criminology literature that unemployment may not be related to crime. Iwarimie-Jaja (2003), citing Taft and England (1964), Friday (1970), and Wadycki and Balkin (1979), observes that Western Criminologists do not perceive unemployment as a phenomenon that has an absolute relationship with criminality. Specifically, Friday carried out an empirical study on this area and could not discern a positive correlation between unemployment and youth crime in Sweden. Even Wadycki and Balkin could not discover any relationship between unemployment and the total number of index crime recorded by the Federal Bureau for Investigation (FBI). Others, however, believe that unemployment contributes to crime in one way or another.

Notwithstanding, the study suggests that employment status is a major determinant of people getting involved in kidnapping. The previous occupation of our respondents prior to their apprehension, as contained in this study, was assigned the following values: Public/Private Servants, Artisans, Traders, Farmers, Unemployed, and Students. Our findings showed that high proportion of our sample population are Postsecondary school Students and the Unemployed representing Thirty-two (37.2%) and Thirty (34.8%) respectively, Fifteen (17.4%) of them were Artisans while Nine (10.4%) were Traders. Zero percent (0%) was recorded against Public/Private Servants' and 'Farmers' respectively. We deduce from the findings of this study and predictions of the theoretical framework that people who are not gainfully employed carry out kidnapping business to improve their living conditions and socio-economic status. Iwarimie-Jaja (2003) attests that the unemployed persons are often poor, frustrated, physically and psychologically to adhere to any societal demands of orderly behaviour; and based on their economic circumstance, it would be proper to conclude that most of them are likely to commit crime (like kidnapping).

Critically assessed, however, unemployment per se does not lead to kidnapping, and can never be invoked upon as an excuse or a 'neutralization technique' by kidnappers and their accomplice. This is because not all who are unemployed will resort to kidnapping or any other criminal activities to eke out a living. Rather, unemployment creates the necessary social pressures that impel people—only those who cannot manage or cope with such strains into kidnapping—but it does not necessarily do so at all times and circumstances. Perhaps, against this background, scholars like Ekpeyong (1989) and Iwarimie-Jaja (1999) contend that intervening or mediating variables such as crime-ridden neighbourhoods, subculture, peer influence and pressure, among others often play a major role in crime causation and not really because people are not gainfully employed.

Conclusion

Thus far, kidnapping has been explained with regard to social and demographic characteristics of offenders. The responses of our interviewees in Abakaliki and Umuahia Prisons lent credence to the predictions of anomie theory which formed the framework to this study. Through the discussion of findings, major predictors of kidnapping were unraveled: age, gender, religion, occupation, social class, and marital

status. A core insight advanced by this study is that kidnapping business is the profession of the male folk. It is mainly perpetrated by undergraduates in their youthful age, between 21 and 35 years, and lower class people who are often denied legal opportunities that can improve their lives without resorting to kidnapping.

The study established that the social and demographic characteristics of individuals have strong implications on kidnapping in Nigeria. Yet studies to date in the country have not examined this heinous crime using these variables. In addition, efforts were made to determine the influence of religion and kidnapping. We conclude from the study that although all the 86 kidnap inmates in our sample were Christians, a preponderance of them was not committed to religiosity or moral rectitude prior to their apprehension and detention. Again, considerable number of our respondents is not yet married, thereby lacked familial ties which could insulate them from getting involved in kidnapping. The study therefore infers that this category of people have high propensity to engage in kidnapping enterprise compared to those that are married, especially with child(ren) and convivial and pro-social lifestyles.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are hereby made:

- The Federal Government of Nigeria should realize that youths are leaders of tomorrow, and catalysts for social engineering and political reconstruction in any society. Therefore, youth empowerment should be vigorously pursued and earnestly considered in the national development plans.
- Conscientious efforts should be made by all levels of Government in Nigeria to close the social inequality, exclusion and yawning chasm between the poor and the rich (social poverty) in society.
- The Federal Government of Nigeria should, as a matter of urgency and necessity, provide proactive social security to the teeming unemployed youths and the disadvantaged in the country pending when they will be gainfully employed. This will certainly deter a remarkable number of unemployed youths from taking to kidnapping and other criminal activities for livelihood or survival.
- The theoretical framework and findings of this study revealed that a number of people, especially the lower class are not given equal legal opportunities in the struggle for the over-emphasized wealth acquisition entrenched in contemporary Nigerian society. Encumbered by limited opportunities and oppressions, the downtrodden then use whatsoever means and opportunities, both fair and foul, their class position offers to kidnap for survival. The study thus recommends a level playing field for all classes of people in the quest for achieving societal goals and values (success).

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