



Research Article

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Examining the Social Problem of Kidnapping as a Reaction Against Injustice in Nigeria

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Abstract

Although, studies have shown several cases of kidnapping in both developed and developing countries but the case of a developing country like Nigeria is seems to be pathetic and worrisome, largely because of its contributions to the ancient slave trade that greatly affected several Nigerians for many centuries in the past. With such awful experiences in the past and its contribution to backwardness of the human race, one would have thought that cases of kidnapping would never occur in Nigeria, but the reverse has been the case in the contemporary. Hence, several studies have emerged on the subject of kidnapping in recent times. However, it could be observed that these studies are strongly connected with rituals power, wealth and traditional purposes. While the nature of the Nigerian society which is characterised by injustice and its contributions to the menace of kidnapping has been hitherto neglected in academic literature. The present study intends to address this flaw in knowledge by addressing the three research questions raised. Being a review paper, the study engaged secondary data in collecting relevant information to analyse and illustrate questions raised. The study argues that if the current high level of injustice in Nigeria could be reduced, there may be a corresponding reduction in the cases of kidnapping.

Keywords: Social Problem, Kidnapping, Reaction, Injustice

1. Introduction

In primitive societies, where there was no organised system of government, such as the traditional Yoruba society, South-West Nigeria, security of lives and property was under the custody of 'Obas' (the kings), 'oluode' (the head of hunters), and 'oluawo' (The head of diviners) (Famoye, 2015). Then, primitive tools such as charms, gun, spears etc., that were inadequate to secure human lives and property were normally used to ensure maximum protection. As civilisation commenced however, the quest for adequate security for mankind resulted in the emergence of state (Hobbes, 1962). Since then, security of lives and property has been one of the core responsibilities of the state (Ugwuja & Ubaku, 2014), that informs its enshrinement in the constitution that governs every state.

Despite its enshrinement in the constitution of the land however, insecurity has been regarded as a complex phenomenon that is very hard to crack in several societies. Thus, it becomes intricate to entrust it in the hands of an individual. Man, by his brutish and wicked nature, will always represent his personal interests (Hobbes, 1962) to the detriment of others. Although, such cases may not be prominent in developed countries, but studies have shown the prevalence of such in many developing societies such as Nigeria (Omonijo, Obiorah, Uche, Anyaegbunam, Shaibu & Ogunwa, 2017).

The foregoing notwithstanding, studies have shown that insecurity is a global problem, but it is a common knowledge that its nature in developed nations is less worrisome compared with developing countries. This could be attributed to the fact that the ruling class in the former usually deplore the best of its manpower and resources to protect their nationals with obvious positive results while the ruling class in the latter care less about the security of their subjects due to their selfish interests (Omonijo, *et al.*, 2017).

Despite the complex nature of insecurity, studies have shown its connectivity with every aspect of life (Ugwuja & Ubaku 2014). These authors have shown that security serves as the defensive unit of all other segments in the society. Given to this line of thought, security of lives supersedes lodging, wears and nutrition and it could be meaningless to strive for economic power in a country reputable for deficient delivery of rudimentary safety for her swarming population. This view negates the position of Marx and Engels, (1882) on the supremacy of substructure over superstructure in the society. Actually, the view of Marx and Engels, (1882) has greatly influenced thoughts and write-up the academia in recent past, but the possession of economic power, either legitimately or illegitimately, usually make some persons vulnerable to insecurity in many developing countries and it could give credence to security more than the economic power in such societies.

The Free Online Dictionary, (2019) defines insecurity as the state of being predisposed to impairment or injury. This definition is applicable to a country like Nigeria where legitimate and illegitimate wealthy persons are vulnerable to insecurity majorly from the commonalities who lack the means of sustenance, having satisfied all the conditions that engender a successful life without any positive result. Akpan, (2010) argues that such persons usually explore the advantage of a porous security network in Nigeria to unleash terror on their victims through kidnapping.

Kidnapping could be described as an aggressive way of arresting people, irrespective of age, whisking them away to unknown environments in order to detain them against their wish until they satisfy the desires of their captors which is usually monetary. Apart from the fact that it is an unwelcome act on the part of the victims, the act violates victims' fundamental human rights as entrenched in the constitution, therefore it is punishable under the law (Asuquo 2009). Despite this, kidnapping is on the increase and has earned Nigeria the 4th position in hostage-taking globally from the American Bureau of Investigation (ABI) (Taire, 2011; Abdulkabir, 2017; Ene, 2018).

Besides the huge resources budgeted to security at Federal, State, Local and personal levels, studies have shown the persistence of insecurity across Nigeria (Emanemua & Akinlosotu 2016). Probably, the measures hitherto taken against its escalation were not enough or properly executed, or the resources channelled at security was siphoned by the stake holders like the case of Dasuki and his cohorts who embezzled the funds meant for alms procurement to confront the menace of Boko Haram (Agbugah, 2015). Also, the probability of government functionaries perceiving

insecurity in terms of military threats or external aggression without any consideration for violent and non-violent conflicts that threatens a successful life (Omonijo *et.al.*, 2017) may not be ruled out. The mistake must have prevented government officials from realizing that violent and non-violent insecurity within a country demands serious attention in the same manner with external aggression (Akpuru-Aja, 1999).

In the past and in recent times, Nigerian scholars have concentrated on the social problem of kidnapping. Such include: Ilechukwu, Uchem and Asogwa, (2015), who focused on reducing its occurrence using religious education; Oyewole (2016) examined the connectivity between rituals and kidnapping; Bello and Jamilu, (2017) investigated the consequences of kidnapping and its predisposing factors (terrorism, corruption and poverty); and Emanemua and Akinlosotu (2016), who illustrated how kidnapping has suddenly emerged as a variant profession for armed robbery in Nigeria with high level of proficiency in seizing persons for ransom. While we commend these papers for their contributions to the existing knowledge, we observed that none of them explored the connectivity between kidnapping and injustice which is prevalent in all spheres of life in Nigeria (Chinemerem 2016). It is on this ground that this study was considered worthy of exploration.

Injustice is perceived as a situation in which the major population perpetuate unfairness against the minor populations based on the comparative placement of the two groups in the power structure of the society (Chinemerem, 2016). It could also be perceived as a way in which illegitimate activities are carried out against the innocents with impunity in the society. The paper of this nature could be relevant in contemporary Nigeria where injustice is seemed to be considered a normal part of daily life and a smart way of amassing wealth to the detriment of the masses who are generally perceived as sluggish or not smart.

This paper is divided into three sections: Introduction, literature review and concluding remarks.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Concept of Kidnapping

Scholars have defined kidnapping using various terms (Asuquo 2009; Ogungbola, 2013), and because the concept lacks straight-jacket description, (Walsh & Adrian, 1983; cited in Ene , 2018). However, a few of such descriptions are considered in this section starting with Turner (1998), who contends that kidnapping is an act of capturing people under duress and conveying them to a terminus where they are held in an illegitimate confinement against their wish. Similarly, Asuquo (2009) sees kidnapping as a popular crime against the law and an annoying action carried out against the victims, while Abraham (2010) cited in Ene, 2018), perceives kidnapping as an act of capturing, taking away and keeping people in custody either through force or deceit. Robertson (1968) (cited in Ene, 2018), views kidnapping as an offence relating to capturing, authorizing seizing or taking away of persons coercively and subjecting them to unintentional servitude with the aim of collecting a ransom or in furtherance to another crime. Nwaorah (2009) contends that kidnapping is a deliberate deed carried out by aggrieved persons with an intention of arresting people's value who could be salvaged by those who care for them.

Dwelling on the above various perspectives, it could be observed that most authors united on the fact that kidnapping is a criminal and forceful act deliberately carried out against the wish of the victims for monetary gain, forcefully or deceitfully. However, none of the above views perceived kidnapping as a reaction against injustice. Although, Nwaorah, (2009) perceives the act as the action carried out by aggrieved persons, but the source of their grievances was not mentioned. The paucity of justice in Nigeria since independence could be associated with kidnapping just as it has connected injustice with intimidation, criminality and violence in the study of Ogungbola, (2013). This author advances that such cases persist because the Nigerian government usually denying the populace rudimentary requirements for survival Ogungbola, (2013) by increasing and normalizing suffering for the populace through unemployment, lack of social and infrastructural facilities, poverty, lack of health and educational facilities etc. Thus, the commonalities are frustrated to survive via any means available to them, kidnapping inclusive.

2.2 *The Concept of Injustice*

According to Maus (2015), injustice is perceived as a state in which the main population is acknowledged by the inequality that negatively affect others with reference to the power relation in the structure of the society. This author also argued that injustice constitutes perpetuating unfair activities in a given society and equally contended that it occurs when or where persons of the same status are attended to asymmetrically and persons who are not equal are attended to unfairly. In another development, Webster (1982) viewed injustice as an action which involves unfairness to other persons or violation of people's rights. In other words, injustice has to do with violating the rights of people or being treated unfairly or engaging in things that are indecent.

From the above perspectives, we understand that injustice connotes an indecent behaviour, discrimination, unfairness, wrong doing, violation of human rights etc. In the past and in recent times, studies have shown these factors as correlates of kidnapping in Niger Delta region and other parts of the country where cases of kidnapping is relatively high (Ogungbola, 2013). Apart from that, the rate at which the elite class siphon the resources meant for national development to the detriment of the masses best describe the concept of injustice across Nigeria.

Although, studies have shown the prevalence of injustice in developed (Moellendorf, 2009) and developing countries (Rodeny, 1972), but its prevalence in developing countries, like Nigeria is alarming due to the failure of the people in government to govern the country properly. Consequently, the masses are often maltreated by denying them basic infrastructural, social and developmental facilities, lack of health care and educational facilities via siphoning of resources meant for national development (Edeh & Okafor, 2014).

2.3 *Kidnapping in Nigeria: An Over view*

Prior to colonialism, in the era of slave trade, the problem of kidnapping was a major problem in developing countries because of its economic gains, rituals benefits for power and burying of monarchs. After the eradication of slave trade, kidnapping seized to be the major source of income for traditional rulers and merchants but its engagement for rituals and money has persisted. The strong belief in fetishism and animism is seemed to have given a room for its persistence in Nigeria.

Immediately after independence, political kidnapping was introduced and later became prominent among militants in Niger Delta region who used to target expatriates, mostly Americans and Britons in order to crave the indulgence of the world to the high level of poverty prevailing in the region despite it's richness in mineral resources (Bulwark Intelligence, 2017). It was also propelled by the problem of environmental deprivation of the people of Niger Delta due to oil spillage, gas exploration and production. The intention then was to keep the hostages for a few days and later set them free when a press conference which was usually broadcast by the Cable News Networks (CNN) and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) (Bulwark Intelligence, 2017) must have been organized. The inclination persisted and created the anticipated publicity that led to some positive development (Bulwark Intelligence, 2017).

However, kidnapping took a new dimension in Niger Delta when multinational oil companies began to pay thousands of naira to militias as ransom to ensure the release of their workers, usually expatriates without much negotiation (Bulwark Intelligence, 2017). The militants considered it a good source of income and a plausible means of sourcing funds for arms and ammunition. But the scenario changed when the oil companies reconsidered prompt ransom payment, re-strategized and ensured adequate security for their expatriates, the militias diverted their attention to high profile Nigerians until the Federal Government introduced amnesty programme, which prompted the militias to surrender their arms and ammunition and desist from the act of kidnapping, but the menace had already spread to South-East, South-West, North-West etc., creating tension for the people.

Presently, studies have shown different dimensions of kidnapping in Nigeria. These include political, Ene, (2018); economic and financial (Turner, 1998; Bello & Jamilu 2017); religious, either traditional which involves fetish rituals, wealth or power (Asuquo, 2009) etc. Most of the cases of kidnapping happened on the road, where the security network is very poor (Bulwark Intelligence,

2017). Although, some usually occurred in workplaces and residential quarters, but its occurrence on roads is more common than other places.

3. Discussion on Kidnapping as a Reaction Against Injustice in Nigeria

Unjust allocation of oil resources as illustrated in Table 1 could be strongly associated with kidnapping in Niger Delta that contributes 70.64% to national revenue (Essien & Ema, 2013). It could be regarded as a deliberate attempt to challenge the Nigerian Government over the unfair allocation of resources in the region and to ensure the development of the Niger Delta region known for impoverishment and neglect by the Federal Government (Thom-Otuya, 2010; Akpan, 2010; Inyang & Ubong, 2013).

Table 1: Injustice in Allocation of Oil Resources

| SN | Geo-Political Zones | Contributions | Allocations |
|----|---------------------|---------------|-------------|
| 1 | North-Central | 0% | 20% |
| 2 | North-East | 0% | 16% |
| 3 | North-West | 0% | 21% |
| 4 | South-West | 3.97% | 16% |
| 5 | South-East | 25.07% | 11% |
| 6 | South-South | 70.64% | 15% |

Source: Ministry of Finance, (2013) culled from Asari, (2018)

The high level of impoverishment has aggravated poverty, unemployment, infant mortality, high levels of illiteracy etc. in Niger Delta (Thom-Otuya, 2010). The hardship in the region is worsened by the oil spillage which prevents them from engaging in farming and fishing activities which could have provided food and income for their sustenance.

In addition to the above, the challenge of accountability and political disparity prevailing in Nigeria has resulted in marginalization and biased federalism (Duruji, 2012; Gberevbie, Joshua, Excellence-Oluye; Oyeyemi, 2017), and it could be associated with kidnapping due to dissatisfaction and annoyance of the aggrieved who want to vent their anger (Dode, 2007).

Besides, studies have attributed the high level of looting of state resources by government officials, reckless spending by the elite class to injustice (Nworah, 2009) which could prompt aggrieved persons to engage in kidnapping. Government functionaries or the elite class are supposed to be the custodian of government resources and ensure its judicial allocation among the entities that constitute a nation for sustainable development, but studies have shown the contrary in Nigeria (Ugwuja & Ubaku, 2014). The level of dissatisfaction, anger and annoyance among the populace, mostly the youth population (Nworah, 2009) could prompt them to indulge in kidnapping.

In addition to the above, most religious institutions in Nigeria have failed in their core responsibility of preaching holiness (Irekamba, 2015), ensuring fair judgment in all spheres of life and engaging in non-profitable ventures to better the lot of the poor. Hence, the rate at which some religious leaders accumulate and display wealth instead of distributing it to the needy could contribute to the high rate of kidnapping in the country. Although, God is not against being wealthy but He cherishes its engagement to better the lots of the needy. It could be argued that most businesses owned by religious leaders are being run with core capitalist policies which emphasize minimum cost for maximum profit. As a result many people are underemployed and underpaid in the midst of plenty.

Therefore, the idea of regarding religion as a charitable organization seems to have been defeated in Nigeria with the desire of many Chief Executive Officers (CEO) of such organizations to make maximum profits to the detriment of fair remuneration and benefits of employees. It appears that such religious organizations seize the opportunity of the current high level of unemployment in Nigeria to enslave their workers. Consequently, it also appears that proper attention rooted in welfarism devoted to the less privileged in the past is no longer effective in the present day Nigeria

and it could attract kidnapping from aggrieved persons within and outside the faith.

Apart from the above, it seems Nigerians have thrown morality into the dustbin or garbage can, hence illegal ways of enrichment seems to have suddenly become the order of the day. Thus, many Nigerians strive to be rich irrespective of its sources since criminals are being celebrated and it could be associated with the escalation of kidnapping.

4. The Negative Implications of Kidnapping

Globally and locally it is evident in literature that kidnapping has psychosocial and psychosomatic consequences for individual perpetrators, victims, family, friends and the society in general (Alexander & Klein, 2009; Akwash, 2016). For the individual perpetrator, he or she may have psychological problems such as reinforcement of antisocial behaviors such as theft, violence and aggressions. Victims may experience fear, suicidal ideations, depressive symptoms, distress, panic, and traumatizing situations hence creating psychological imbalance (Akwash, 2016). However, this paper limits its scope to the economic and sociological implications.

4.1 Economic Implications

Studies have shown that economy is the bedrock of national development (Akpan, 2010; Famoye, 2015), but the role of manpower in any developing economy is very crucial. However, before manpower could offer the best of their capabilities, their safety must be secured. In that wise, security could be regarded as the main pillar of national development (Famoye, 2015). It is under a secured atmosphere that all machinery of development can function effectively to achieve desirable results. Since kidnapping is a major issue of insecurity, its economic implications are briefly discussed below.

The negative effects of kidnapping on manpower that produce goods and services for home consumption and exportation cannot be overemphasized (Akpan, 2010). More often than not, it has resulted in the closure of companies / establishments (Dode, 2007), most of which are oil and gas companies (Akpan, 2010). Parenthetically, the sector is the main stay of the national economy, as no other sector generates foreign exchange and local revenue for Nigeria than the sector and other allied services. With this development, the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Nigeria could reduce drastically.

Besides, the negative effect could deter the growth of industrialization, most especially tourism, which has the capacity of attracting employment opportunity for the jobless and a huge resource for the nation's socio-economic development. As cases of kidnapping in Nigeria has continued to attract global attention, governments of foreign countries constantly warn their nationals to desist from coming to Nigeria out of fears of being kidnapped (Ekpe, 2009; cited in Inyang & Abraham, 2013). If the trend continues, prospective development associates could be driven away and Nigeria could be deprived of development alliances and opportunities (Akpan, 2010). It could also hinder the bulk of investments and capital that flow to Nigeria from overseas for national development.

The negative economic effect of kidnapping on the expenditure on security and its agency at government and individual levels should not be waved aside. According to Soyombo, (2009), Lagos state alone spent three billion naira on security within two years. With this amount spent in a state, one could imagine the cumulative effect in all the states in the federation since the commencement of the menace of kidnapping in Nigeria. At individual level, a lot of money that would have been invested on profitable ventures has been diverted to ransom by the victims of kidnapping in order to regain their freedom. According to Kyrian (2009), fifteen billion naira was paid to kidnapers as ransom between 2006 and 2009. With high level of poverty prevailing in Nigeria, the money may not be available but because, the victims valued their freedom, the probability of them selling their valuables to raise ransom or borrow from different sources to set themselves free may not be ruled out.

Previous studies have shown that enterprises are properly organised and managed by the private sector in a development oriented manner (Gberevbie, Ibieta, Abasilim & Excellence-Oluye,

2015), but that can only be achieved in a peaceful atmosphere. The constant cases of kidnapping could negate this submission in states where ban is placed on movement from dusk till dawn. Transporters such as bikes, cabs and bus owners who usually operate within this period could be negatively affected (Soyombo, 2009).

4.2 Sociological Implications

Apart from the economic implication of the menace of kidnapping, its sociological effect cannot be overruled. The importance of Sociology is hinged on social interaction or relationship in the society. Social interaction could be positive or negative, the positive aspect could lead to a successful life while the negative aspect could lead to a life of frustration. The tendency of kidnapping creating high level of mistrust among people may not be ruled out. Trust among mankind could be secured in the way people interact with one another. A faithful interaction should engender trust and since studies have shown that perpetrators of kidnapping usually engage friends, relations, neighbours, co-workers, house helps etc., to solicit relevant information which can be used to abduct victims, there could be high level of mistrust and strain in social interactions among family members (Soyombo, 2009). In such a situation, some persons may want to stop interacting freely and openly discuss with others, within and outside the family. Hence, people may begin to withhold reasonable information which could be of help to their fellow human being due to the fear of being kidnapped. Apart from that, the extension of traditional hospitality to strangers which Africans have been transmitting from one generation to another for many years could suddenly turn to isolation and hostility. Moreover, acknowledgement of greetings from strangers may no longer be necessary and innocent persons who are in serious need of help, either through a free ride or by physical, psychological and financial need may be greatly affected.

Kidnapping could affect people's social relations and movement negatively. Wealthy people in particular may reduce their rate of visitation either to parents, siblings or friends etc. In this regard, important ceremonies such as funerals, naming, marriages etc., could be negatively affected. As the saying goes in Yoruba land, South-West Nigeria, 'eniyan la so mi', meaning "human beings are my clothes". The usefulness of this adage is usually demonstrated in the course of ceremonies, when people give support to their family members, friends and associates during ceremonial functions by surrounding them. However, when and where travelling is inevitable, people usually prefer travelling at night, which is very risky due to armed robbery attack, accidents, breaking down of vehicles on the road.

Due to the menace of kidnapping, the unnecessary demand of private individuals for police escort to protect them and their family members has suddenly increased in Nigeria. This sharp increase has led to the reduction in the number of the available security men saddled with the responsibility of curtailing escalation of criminal activities across the country (Soyombo, 2009)

Some cases of kidnapping have led to the death of the victims. The negative effect of such on the bereaved may not be quantified. In a situation where the bread winner of the family is affected, it could create a wide gap in the family that may be very difficult to fill in a very long time.

5. Solutions to the Problem of Kidnapping Associated with Injustice

According to the Word of God, "righteousness exalts a nation; but sin is a reproach to any people" (Holy Bible, 2018). Thus, the best solution to the problem of kidnapping associated with injustice is the enthronement of justice in all spheres of life by those in places of authority, the elite class and the masses. Wisdom from the Holy Scriptures states again in Proverbs 11: 10 that when the righteous control power the people rejoice but when the wicked rule, the people lament. Given this, Nigerians are experiencing hard times due to systemic failure (Hallary, 2012). Thus, the elite class in their capacities in every institution that makes the whole should ensure fairness in allocation of national resources and political appointments. They should desist from syphoning the resources of the state to the detriment of the masses and always have the interest of the masses at heart. More importantly, the act of selfishness among them should be replaced with altruism and service to humanity which corroborates Danjuma, (2012) who viewed good governance as remedy to socio-

economic crises in Nigeria.

In addition to the above, the act of engaging in dubious transactions, which has now been regarded as the normal way of life in Nigeria (Omonijo & Fadugba, 2011), should begin to attract condemnation and sanction instead of being celebrated. Moreover, the act of voting for persons of questionable character during elections for monetary gain should be stopped to pave the way for persons of impeccable character across Nigeria.

Religious leaders are enjoined to commence emphasizing on holy living as a lifestyle in their sermons. This is because the rate at which much emphasis is placed on wealth accumulation to the detriment of holiness in various religious organisations is alarming (Folarin, 2007). Also, evil activities should always be rebuked instead of treating them with kid gloves.

Traditional rulers in their respective domains are enjoined to stop confirming chieftaincy titles on persons of questionable character. They should encourage people to start imbibing the abandoned African rich cultural heritage, such as: "Orukorere san ju fadaka lo"-a good name is better than silver and gold, "kakaki njale makukuderu"-instead of stealing, I will become a slave etc. henceforth. This could reduce some persons urge for wealth at all cost.

In another development, it could be a good idea to commence probing the sources of people's wealth before any recognition is accorded to them. This could send signals to some persons of questionable character that public reckoning is no longer attached to wealth but moral values, fair play and integrity.

6. Summary and Concluding Remarks

The prevalence of social injustice perpetuated by the government functionaries against the masses and high level of injustice display by the privileged against the less privileged, as well as its connectivity with kidnapping propelled this study. Thus, it examined several cases of injustices arising from the political, economic and religious realms that correlates kidnapping. It also illustrated the psychological and socio-economic implications of kidnapping in Nigeria. The paper called for immediate solutions to several cases of injustice in Nigeria as a matter of urgency, both in government and daily interaction with people. This is because, it has never been established in literature to the best of our knowledge that a society exists peacefully when injustice reigns supreme. Instead, it is evident in literature that the enforcement of social justice and economic equality guarantees peace and tranquility that engenders national development (Dormekpor, 2015). Such societies, certainly, are led by the elite leaders who are expected to have the masses at the peak of its plan. Therefore, we are of the opinion that if Nigeria could be governed impartially by ensuring that the rule of law is strictly followed and fully implemented, relaxing the complaints associated with the existing economic reforms for the masses, ensuring affordable quality education, health care services, empowering the youth via viable employment opportunities and skill development the rate of kidnapping will be reduced to the barest minimum.

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