

THE OFFENCE OF KIDNAPPING IN NIGERIA: CHALLENGES AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES

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Abstract

The phenomenon of kidnapping has emerged as a significant security concern on a global scale, with particular concern in the recent past within Nigeria. The paper seeks to assess the phenomenon of kidnapping in Nigeria, focusing on its challenges and mitigation strategies. This paper extensively analyses the seriousness of kidnapping as a critical security issue in contemporary Nigeria, seeking to explore the factors contributing to this phenomenon through a quantitative survey based on citizen perceptions, as they endure the impacts of kidnapping within their communities. The findings indicate that, as the frequency of kidnapping is rising, poor police handling of kidnapping cases, worsening economic conditions, community safety concerns, ethnic marginalization, and low ethnic trust significantly predict the perceived severity of kidnapping in Nigeria. The paper pointed to the need for more collaborative, networked governance that puts people at the centre of policies and actions to tackle kidnapping in Nigeria. The paper recommended that government at all levels should provide employment opportunities for the large number of unemployed youths in Nigeria, particularly in light of the increasing poverty rates among the civilian population. This can be done through deliberate collaborative efforts between the government and the private sector to generate job opportunities for the country's expanding population, particularly for the younger generation. The government

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should create conducive atmosphere for the expansion of businesses to retain those in paid employment.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Kidnapping, hostage-taking, abduction or by any other name it may be called, is a pervasive historical phenomenon that has existed since ancient times. This maladaptive behavior has been prominently observed in Nigeria in recent years. It may even rank second only to drug trafficking in the worldwide list of criminal activities.¹ Practically, every state in Nigeria appears to have encountered this widespread social problem. Widely known as 'The Giant of Africa', Nigeria seems to have undergone a shift in political authority, with kidnappers exerting control over the course of events in recent years², as the surge of criminal activities resulting from the malicious actions of kidnappers has continued without interruption. Previous efforts by relevant and concerned government entities to arrest this social problem have been largely unsuccessful. This unlawful crime infringes upon a basic human right, protected by the UN Charter and the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, which is the freedom of transit. The frequency of occurrence of kidnapping raises the primary issue of the government's apparent incapacity to effectively control this criminal behavior. Kidnapping as a criminal behavior has been a persistent global social issue, exhibiting varying degrees and intensities across different geographies. Its manifestation occurs in both less and more fragile countries, posing a transnational security challenge, particularly in the latter, where porous border regimes make them more vulnerable. Countries that have faced the issue of kidnapping include Mexico, Pakistan, Canada, Germany, Russia, the United States of America, Iraq, India, the Philippines, Venezuela, Cameroon, and Nigeria, among others. Notably, Nigeria's

¹ Abdulkabir, O.S. 'Causes and incisive solutions to widespread incidence of kidnapping in Nigeria's current administration: Under scholastic scrutiny', *Journal of Political Science & Public Affairs* 2017 5:258

² Oarhe O.; I. and Aghedo 'The open sore of a nation: Corruption complex and internal security in Nigeria'. *African Security* 3(1) 2020.: 127147

recent history has been marked by various security threats that undermine societal civility, and the state has faced the monumental task of securing lives and property within its borders³.

This study explores the growing trend of kidnapping in Nigeria through a quantitative lens. Prior research, which focuses on elite narratives and structural explanations but rarely captures how ordinary Nigerians understand kidnapping, has found that kidnapping has become an effect of other forms of organized crime, such as terrorism or banditry, in addition to being a standalone crime of its own⁴. The varying toll that kidnapping imposes on the lived experiences of victims and other people in environments where it is commonplace, such as Nigeria, has shown that the phenomenon extends beyond isolated criminal acts. It reflects deeper structural issues tied to governance failures, socioeconomic inequality, and insecurity. These need to be addressed.

The growing epidemic of kidnapping in Nigeria, driven by various factors including political, economic, sociological, and psychological factors, has led to a heightened multidisciplinary approach to understanding the rise in its political economy. This has spurred a significant increase in multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary research across various domains within the social sciences, as well as the development of trans disciplinary frameworks for deeper understanding and policy to tame the tide.

Interdisciplinary studies, such as the 2009 study by Alexander and Klein, highlight the concerted endeavors to comprehend both the immediate and enduring consequences of kidnapping and hostage-

³ Adenuga G) 'State Responses to the Menace of Kidnapping in Nigeria' in Omotola, JS, & Oyewole, S (eds) *The Political Economy of Kidnapping and Insecurity in Nigeria* Advances in African Economic, Social, and Political Development. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland 2024, pp. 265-284.

⁴ Osumah O, Aghedo I 'Who wants to be a millionaire? Nigerian youths and the commodification of kidnapping'. *Rev Afr Political Econ* 38(128) 2011:277–287

taking, necessitating the insights of mental health experts regarding strategic and clinical approaches.⁵

This paper is divided into parts. Part One deals with the introduction. Part two clarifies the various concepts under review. Part three analyses the various causes of kidnapping in Nigeria. Part four examines the legal framework on the prohibition of kidnapping in Nigeria. Part five examines the elements of the offence of kidnapping. Part six reviews the judicial attitude in cases of kidnapping. Part seven reviews the consequences of kidnapping. Part eight highlights the challenges faced by institutions in the fight against kidnapping. Part nine proffers' recommendations on the way forward, and Part ten concludes the paper.

2.0 CONCEPTUAL CLARIFICATION

2.1 Kidnapping

Kidnapping is the act of unlawfully imprisoning and holding someone hostage without their consent, or unlawfully holding someone captive in a way that hinders their ability to seek release from a court or reveal the location of their imprisonment to others, or in a manner that prevents anyone entitled to access this information from discovering the place of their captivity. Kidnapping is a deliberate decision, rather than an inevitable reaction to a desperate situation.

As a pervasive phenomenon in Nigeria, kidnapping has significantly impacted our collective moral compass. It constitutes a prevalent violation of both the law and the victim. Furthermore, it imposes limitations on the mobility of the victims, which makes nonsense of the constitutional guarantee of freedom of movement in the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

Kidnapping has evolved beyond mere ransom demand as death is typically the inevitable outcome for those who are unable to produce the often-exorbitant sum demanded a ransom, even after a humiliating

⁵ DA, Klein S 'Kidnapping and hostage-taking: a review of effects, coping and resilience'. *J R Soc Med* 102(1) 2009:16–21

bargain or negotiation process. Kidnapping, as defined in legal and criminological literature, refers to the unlawful abduction or confinement of a person against their will. The term often encompasses acts carried out for financial ransom, political leverage, or personal vendettas. In the Nigerian context, kidnapping has been conceptualized as a reflection of broader socio-economic inequalities and systemic failures, including unemployment, poverty, and weak law enforcement structures.⁶

The Nigerian Criminal Code⁷ criminalizes kidnapping, prescribing severe penalties, including life imprisonment. Despite these legal provisions, the crime persists and has evolved into a lucrative business for criminal syndicates. The structural weaknesses in Nigeria's criminal justice system allow kidnapping to thrive, with perpetrators often escaping prosecution due to corruption and lack of evidence.

The Black's Law Dictionary⁸ defines kidnapping, thus:

i. 'at common law, the crime of forcibly abducting a person from his or her own country and sending the person to another.' This offence amounts to false imprisonment aggravated by moving the victim to another country.

ii. The crime of seizing and taking away a person by force or fraud
Fage and Alabi⁹ defined kidnapping thus: 'forceful or fraudulent abduction of an individual or a group of the individual for a reason ranging from economic, political and religious to (struggle for) for self-determination.'

There are different types of kidnapping.

i. Kidnapping for ransom is the offence of unlawfully seizing a person and then confining the person, usually in the secret place, while

⁶ Eze, O. *Criminality and Security Challenges in Nigeria*. Lagos: Frontier Books 2023.

⁷ Section 364 Criminal Code

⁸ *Black's Law Dictionary* (9th ed, 2009) 948

⁹ Fage and Alabi, *Nigeria Government and Politics*, Basfa Global Concept Ltd Abuja. 2017) 289

attempting to extort ransom. This grave crime is sometimes made a capital offence. In addition to the abductor, a person who acts as a go-between to collect the ransom is generally considered guilty of the crime.

ii. Child-kidnapping is the kidnapping of a minor, often without the element of force or fraud (as when someone walks off with another's baby). This is also termed child stealing, baby-snatching; child napping.

iii. Kidnapping by cesarean is the kidnapping of a newborn baby by a person who causes the unlawful and forcible delivery of the baby by cesarean section without the mother's consent. The kidnapper is usually a woman of childbearing age who has lost a baby or is unable to bear one.

iv. Parental kidnapping is the kidnapping of a child in violation of the other parent's custody or visitation right.

v. Simple kidnapping refers to kidnapping not accompanied by aggravating factor.

vi. Political kidnapping¹⁰ is a kidnapping activity motivated to advance the interest of another political party of a political opponent. This is achieved by kidnapping an opponent and thereafter demanding a ransom, the proceeds of which will be used to advance or finance the political fortune of an opponent

Kidnapping for ransom is one of the biggest organized crimes in Nigeria and is seen as a national security challenge. Thousands of Nigerians have fallen victim of the crime and have had to pay exorbitant amounts in ransom for their freedom. The current wave of abductions across the country makes every person a potential target regardless of social class or economic status. Kidnapping for ransom

¹⁰ Catlin Group. 'kidnap and ransom today' (A report by Catlin Group limited London UK. 2012)12

on a commercial scale became rampant in Nigeria from 2011 and has spread across all 36 states and the Nigerian capital, Abuja.

3.0 CAUSES OF KIDNAPPING IN NIGERIA

Kidnapping in Nigeria is caused by various factors, among which are:

3.1. Moral degradation and the need for rapid accumulation of wealth

The challenge of moral decadence and the quest to get rich quick syndrome are some of the causative factors of kidnapping. In Nigeria, nobody asks questions on how people make their wealth as a poor person today can show up with an expensive car tomorrow, and nobody dares to question the source of the sudden wealth. He further asserted that people of questionable backgrounds who donated money to develop their communities are rewarded with chieftaincy titles, thereby creating a wrong impression in the minds of some Nigerian youths, who thereafter take to kidnapping. Some citizens of Nigeria have taken this violent criminal activity called kidnapping as a career and source of permanent means of livelihood. A good example of this category of professional kidnappers includes Chukwudi Dumeme Onwuamadike, popularly called Evans whom report had it that the billionaire kidnap kingpin started his kidnap business in 2012 and had continued it as a career till 2018 when the Nigeria police force arrested and he is currently facing criminal charges at a High court in the Lagos State of Nigeria.

3.2 The proliferation of small arms and light weapons

Small and light weapons are the arms used by kidnappers in carrying out their nefarious activities. The category arms have become so numerous in the hands of civilians through the activities of smugglers across the Nigerian borders with her neighboring West African countries. This smuggling venture is further facilitated by the porous borders security system. The arm builds up in Nigeria illegally acquired proliferated small and light weapons; intending kidnappers find it easy to acquire small sophisticated weapons to execute this crime. The rate at which these sophisticated AK 47 riffles get into the hands of kidnappers is alarming within the years under review.

3.3 Unemployment cum poverty

Poverty is a global phenomenon which is a recurring problem in Nigeria. It is evident that despite its abundant resources and oil wealth, Nigeria is ravaged by poverty. Kinoti, in Oyewole¹¹ posited that poverty is directly related to crime. He contends that if people do not have enough to eat, they steal to survive. Poverty in Nigeria is generally believed to be prime cause of kidnapping in the country.

Unemployment is a state of idle hands, not finding a job to do even when the person concerned is willing and able to engage himself in productive activities for survival. Poverty and unemployment are twin brothers that induce persons into criminality. Thom Otuya¹² posits that poverty is a grave factor luring people into criminal activities all over the globe. An idle mind is the devil's workshop goes the popular saying.

4.0 LEGAL FRAMEWORK ON PROHIBITION OF KIDNAPPING IN NIGERIA

The legislation against kidnapping in Nigeria, just like other laws, has its root from the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999, United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime 2000 and the Protocol thereto, Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment Act) 2013.

4.1 The Nigerian Constitution

The Constitution is the basic law or the grundnorm. Section 35 (1) specifically states:¹³

'Every person shall be entitled to his personal liberty and no one shall be deprived of such liberty save in a manner permitted by law'.

¹¹ Oyewole, S. 'Kidnapping for rituals: Article of faith and insecurity in Nigeria', *Africology: The Journal of Pan African Studies*, 9 (9) 2016: 35-52

¹² Thom Otuya BN, 'Poverty luring people into criminal activities all over the globe' (2010) vol.2 No.8 *International Journal of Social sciences* 107-136

¹³ Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria 1999 as amended

This being the case, any attempt by any person to forcibly or without force take away a human being from his lawful abode or custody and prevent such a person from having his liberty against his wish or the wish of the person having custody of such person, has violated the Constitution and has, by that action, stepped into the offence of kidnapping.

Section 364 of the Criminal Code Act in Nigeria also criminalizes kidnapping and provides as follows:

Any person who-

(1) Unlawfully imprisons any person, and takes him out of Nigeria without his consent; or

(2) unlawfully imprisons any person within Nigeria in such a manner as to prevent him from applying to a court for his release or from discovering to any other person the place where he is imprisoned, or in such a manner as to prevent any person entitled to have access to him from discovering the place where he is imprisoned, is guilty of a felony and is liable to imprisonment for ten years.

4.2 Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2013 (Amendment)

In strengthening the fight against kidnapping and terrorism in Nigeria, the Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2013 (Amendment) Bill was passed by the Nigerian Senate in 2022. This is an amendment to the existing anti-kidnapping law which prescribed 10 years jail term for kidnapping. However, the new law prescribes a death sentence for kidnapping in a case where the abduction leads to loss of life and life imprisonment where there is no loss of life.

Despite the constitutional provisions guaranteeing liberty of persons, inhuman or degrading treatment, torture or slavery or servitude and forced labor, Sale of newborn babies, kidnapping, killing and harvesting of human organs have persisted in Nigerian society. Nigeria, which is a member of the United Nations and also a signatory to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime 2004 and the protocol thereto, had to take a further step in

domesticating the Convention by passing the Kidnapping in Persons (Prohibition) Act: Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act, 2013.

There is no doubt that it is a step in the right direction. Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act, 2013 provides as follows:¹⁴

Any person who knowingly: (a) seizes, detains or attempts to seize or detain, (b) threatens to kill, injures or continues to detain another person to compel a third party to do or abstain from doing an act, or (c) gives an explicit condition for the release of the person held hostage, commits an offence under this Act and is liable on conviction to life imprisonment.

4.3 Other Laws

The Lagos State Anti-Kidnapping Law added that if death results by an act of kidnapping, the convict is liable to a death sentence.¹⁵ The federal parliament of Nigeria chooses to classify kidnapping under terrorism; hence; the Act did not specifically use the word kidnapping. It classified the offence as terrorism in whatever shades the offence appears. The Lagos state legislature on its part called the offence as kidnapping. The big question is, to what extent have these legislations against the kidnapping of persons stem the tide of the crime of kidnapping in Nigeria? It is our humble submission that kidnapping is not just an offence contrary to the domestic and international legislations, kidnapping amounts to a crime against humanity in general. Several states in Nigeria also have domesticated kidnapping Prohibition Law, notably the Lagos State kidnapping Prohibition 2017 which is one of the legal frameworks upon which this article is hinged. Several States also have their anti-kidnapping laws set to punish kidnapping and related offences. The Rivers State Kidnapping Prohibition Law (2015) prescribes death sentence for kidnapping. In Oyo state, any kidnapper whose victim dies while in captivity is liable to death upon conviction while a kidnapper whose victim is released or rescued unhurt upon the payment of a ransom, is liable to life imprisonment and be compelled to pay back the ransom upon

¹⁴ Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act, 2013 s 15 (1)

¹⁵ Lagos kidnapping prohibition law 2017, s 2 (3)

conviction. Also, anyone who attempts to kidnap, aids or abets kidnapping will be sentenced to not less than 15 years imprisonment, amongst other punishment for related offences as stipulated in the Oyo State Kidnapping Prohibition Law (2016). The Lagos State Kidnapping Prohibition Law (2017) prescribes death sentence for kidnapping where death occurs as a result of the kidnap and life imprisonment where there is no loss of life. The law further prescribes that where two or more people conspire to commit the act of kidnapping, on conviction is liable to twenty (20) years imprisonment while attempt and threat to kidnap also attracts life imprisonment.

The Edo State Kidnapping Prohibition (Amendment) Law 2025 was passed by the State House of Assembly and signed by Governor Monday Okpebholo, introducing the death penalty for kidnappers. This law strengthens the previous 2013 legislation, requiring the confiscation and demolition of any property used for kidnapping, following a rise in abductions.¹⁶ Under this law, there is a mandatory death penalty for kidnappers, especially where a life is lost. Section 4 of the principal law has been amended as follows:

Any person who contravenes section 2 (1) and (2) of this law wherein a person is kidnapped, restrained, abducted or seized shall on conviction be sentenced to death and his property and assets treated as proceeds from crime as well as any property used in the perpetration of the act, confiscated and demolished by the state government.

Section 6 of the principal law has equally been amended as follows: Any person who aids and abets another to commit the act of kidnapping or abduction under this law, commits an offence and shall be liable on conviction to death and his property and assets treated as proceeds from crime shall be confiscated and demolished by the state government.

The Edo State Government recently demolished a residential property in Aduwawa, Benin City, after it was linked to a notorious kidnapping

¹⁶ It amended the Kidnapping Prohibition Amendment Law 2013

syndicate, despite the fact that the house belongs to a woman currently residing in Italy.”¹⁷

The act of kidnapping has become both a social and economic challenge in Nigeria. This has affected the country because most foreign countries have resorted to warning their citizens to be wary of visits to Nigeria. Thus, many would-be investors have stayed away from the country for fear of being kidnapped or killed in the process.

It is therefore the obvious and appalling state of social and security confusion in Nigeria that fuelled the recent legislative reactions both by the federal government and some state governments in Nigeria. This however, resulted in the enactment of laws with more stringent provisions than the ones contained in the Criminal Code Act applicable in the southern part of Nigeria, and the Penal Code which is applicable in the northern part of Nigeria respectively, with a view to stamping out the menace from existence as a social and security problem in Nigeria.

Notwithstanding these legislative efforts, this research interrogates the effectiveness of such laws in deterring and curbing the menace of kidnapping in Nigeria. The study undertakes a comparative examination of the relevant statutory provisions on kidnapping in selected states within Nigeria, alongside comparable provisions in certain foreign jurisdictions. It further evaluates the practical utility of these laws in light of the prevailing realities of kidnapping in Nigeria and concludes by offering policy recommendations aimed at strengthening the legal and institutional framework for combating the offence.

¹⁷ The Nigerian Observer “Edo govt demolishes house owned by Italy-based woman over brother’s role in kidnap gang” <https://nigerianobservernews.com/2025/05/edo-govt-demolishes-house-owned-by-italy-based-woman-over-brothers-role-in-kidnap-gang/> accessed on 22/04.16

5.0 ELEMENTS OF THE OFFENCE OF KIDNAPPING

Understanding the elements of a kidnapping charge involves examining specific components. These include the wrongful actions (*actus reus*) and criminal intent (*mens rea*), the nature of unlawful confinement or restraint, and issues surrounding intent and consent. In criminal law, the *actus reus* and *mens rea* are two fundamental elements that must be proven to establish a defendant's guilt. The *actus reus* refers to the physical act or unlawful conduct, while the *mens rea* refers to the mental state or intent behind the act.

The *actus reus* of kidnapping is unlawfully and forcibly taking another person, or unlawfully and forcibly detaining another person. This means that the physical act of the crime involves either taking or detaining another person against their will. The mental requirement could be established by proving any of the following; intention, motive, recklessness, inadvertent negligence, and knowledge.

In kidnapping cases, unlawful confinement involves restricting a person's freedom, even without moving them over long distances. Simply preventing someone from leaving a space can meet this element of the crime. When coercive restraint, such as threats or force, is used, it underscores the illegal nature of the confinement and further highlights the severity of the offense by violating the victim's personal autonomy.

A classic statement of the doctrine of *mens rea* was made by Wright J. in *Sherras V. Rutzen*¹⁸ as follows:

There is a presumption that *mens rea* or evil intention or knowledge of the wrongfulness of the act, is an essential ingredient in every offence; but that presumption is liable to be displaced either by the words of the statute creating the offence, or by the subject matter with which it deals, and both must be considered.

In kidnapping cases, intent and consent play crucial roles in determining whether the act is criminal. For the act to be considered

¹⁸ (1895) 1 Q.B. 918

kidnapping, there must be unlawful intent, such as holding someone against their will or demanding ransom. However, if the victim consents to the movement or restraint, the charge may not apply, highlighting the importance of both factors in legal proceedings.

In relation to the essential elements of the crime of kidnapping and when the offense is considered complete, the case of *Lucky v. State*¹⁹ is illustrative. In the case under review, on the evening of October 9, 2012, Alhaja Muibat Salaam was driving home with her daughter after closing her shop when she noticed another Honda Accord trailing her. Upon reaching Oke-Oye after Union Church, Ejigbo, she realized the trailing car was trying to overtake her. Acting quickly, she parked her car and attempted to flee on foot. However, the occupants of the trailing car chased her, captured her, and bundled her into their vehicle before driving into the bush. The kidnappers, including the appellant, demanded a ransom of N200, 000,000.00 from her husband. Fortunately, Alhaja was rescued on the fifth day by a combined effort of local vigilantes and the police. During her ordeal, she identified the appellant as one of her captors, who was later apprehended in the bush and handed over to the authorities. The appellant and five others were arraigned before the High Court of Osun State on charges of conspiracy, kidnapping, and unlawful possession of firearms. Except for one individual who was struck from the charge, the appellant and his co-accused were convicted and sentenced to 7 years for conspiracy, 10 years for kidnapping, and 10 years for unlawful possession of firearms, with the sentences running concurrently. Dissatisfied with the trial court's decision, the appellant appealed to the Court of Appeal, which upheld the conviction and sentence. Further appeals to the Supreme Court also affirmed the lower courts' judgments. The court, relying on past precedent,²⁰ stated that for a conviction for kidnapping, the prosecution must establish certain elements beyond a reasonable doubt which includes that the victim was seized and taken away by the accused, the victim was taken away against their consent

¹⁹ (2024) LPELR-61783(SC)

²⁰ such as *Okashetu v. State* (2016) 15 NWLR (Pt. 1534) 126; *Ewugbav. State* (2018) 7 NWLR (Pt. 1618) 262; *Afolabi v State* (2013) 13 NWLR (Pt. 1371) 292

and that the victim was taken away without any lawful excuse. It is noteworthy that the offence of kidnapping is complete when the victim is carried away against his or her wish.²¹

The prosecution presented clear evidence showing that the victim was forcibly taken against her will and detained in the bush. The absence of a lawful excuse for her abduction further solidified the case against the kidnappers. It is important to note that in cases involving kidnapping, issues of conspiracy and identification parades are often raised and considered. Kidnapping cases frequently involve conspiracy, where several individuals work together to carry out the crime. This collaborative nature of kidnapping makes it essential to accurately identify everyone involved. In Nigeria, identification parades are commonly used to ensure that the correct suspects are apprehended and prosecuted. These parades allow witnesses or victims to identify the perpetrators from a lineup, helping to confirm the identities of those responsible for the crime.

6.0 JUDICIAL ATTITUDE IN CASES OF KIDNAPPING

In *State v Theophilus Friday*²² the Supreme Court affirmed the sentencing of a man, Theophilus Friday to death by hanging for his involvement in the kidnap, murder and mutilation of a year and half old girl, Rachael Akingboye. In a judgment on Friday, February 23, a five-member panel of the Supreme Court was unanimous in dismissing the appeal filed by Friday. Justice Tijjani Abubakar, in the lead judgment on the appeal, marked: SC/CR/1462/2022 held that the appeal was without merit. Justice Abubakar affirmed the judgment of the Court Appeal, which upheld the March 20, 2014 decision of the High Court of Ondo State, convicting and sentencing Friday and two others – Olusegun Obaro and Jonah Lase to death by hanging. According to the prosecution, Obaro and Lase kidnapped the victim while she was sleeping beside her mother on the night of June 17, 2011, in their home at Ikorigho in Igbokoda, Ilaje local government area of Ondo state. Obaro and Lase later handed the kidnapped child to

²¹ *Ewugba v State* (2017) LPELR-43833(SC)

²² (2024) JELR 111596

Friday, who was said to have sent them. Upon discovering her child missing, the mother raised the alarm. After a search was conducted, the victim's mutilated corpse was later found dumped within the vicinity of her mother's house. It was discovered that her right ear, right eye, right breast and right part of her scalp were removed. Obaro, Lase and Friday were subsequently apprehended by residents of the community, who handed them over to police personnel at the Igbokoda Police Station. After the police investigation, the three were arraigned before the High Court of Ondo State in Akure on a two-count charge of kidnapping and murder. They were charged under Section 3 of the Ondo State Anti-Kidnapping and Abduction Law 2010 for the offence of kidnapping and murder, under Section 316 and punishable under Section 319 of the Criminal Code Laws of Ondo State. They pleaded not guilty during their arraignment, following which a trial was conducted. In his judgment on March 20, 2014, Justice Olusegun Odusola of the High Court of Ondo State held that the totality of the evidence before the court showed that the prosecution proved its case beyond reasonable doubt. Justice Odusola further held the prosecution established that the three defendants were responsible for the death of the deceased. The judge found the three guilty and convicted them. He convicted Obaro and Lase on the offences of kidnapping and murder, while Friday was convicted solely on the offence of murder. The judge said: "The offences for which the accused were charged are strict liability offences. "Death penalty would be the punishment for each of the counts. "Having found the 1st and 2nd accused guilty of both counts, the 3rd accused is guilty of murder. "In sum, I hereby sentence you Olusegun Obaro, Jonah Lase and Theophilus Friday to death by hanging."

In *Ifeyanyi Abanobi v The State*,²³ the Appellant was arraigned before the High Court of Abia State, Isuikwuato Judicial Division, on a one-

²³ SC/CR/264/2022, delivered On Friday, the 13th day of June, 2025 *John Inyang Okoro, JSC*

count charge of kidnapping contrary to Section 3(a) of the Abia State Prohibition of Terrorism, Kidnapping, Hostage Taking, Use of Offensive Weapons or Explosives and Other Threatening Behavior Law, No. 10 of 2009. The case of the Respondent (Prosecution) was that on 26th October, 2014, the Appellant, Ifeanyi Ananobi, acting in concert with others, kidnapped a certain Madam Lydia Acho, a 98-year-old woman (*“the victim”*), from her residence in Isuikwuato Local Government Area of Abia State, and held her hostage. The victim was later rescued on the same day at Ikwuano Local Government Area of the State following a Police chase. The Appellant and a co-accused were subsequently apprehended at the scene, with the Appellant sustaining gunshot injuries in the process.

Following his arrest, the Appellant made a statement at the Police station which was admitted in evidence as Exhibit “B”. He testified as the sole witness in his defence. The Appellant’s defence was that he was travelling from Aba, when he conveyed some passengers in his vehicle. By his testimony, some of the passengers later alighted from the vehicle, leaving two persons who allegedly took over the vehicle and used it to carry out the kidnapping. The Appellant claimed that the Police pursued the vehicle, forcing the alleged kidnappers to crash into a tree and abandon the vehicle. The Appellant further testified that he was released by the fleeing kidnappers during an exchange of gunfire, during which he was shot. That he hid in the bush overnight and came out the following morning with the intention of reporting the incident at the police station. However, upon coming out of the bush, he was apprehended by the Police and subsequently, charged with the offence of kidnapping.

At the conclusion of trial, the court delivered its judgment, wherein it convicted the Appellant and sentenced him to death. Dissatisfied, the Appellant appealed to the Court of Appeal which court unanimously dismissed the appeal. Thereafter, the Appellant filed a further appeal to the Supreme Court.

In resolving the sole issue, the Supreme Court raised two questions as germane for its determination – (i) does the demand for ransom

payment constitute an indispensable element, a sine qua non, for the offence of kidnapping to be established? and (ii) how is intention proved?

The Supreme Court reiterated the settled position of law that, the prosecution discharges its burden of proving the offence of kidnapping beyond reasonable doubt when the evidence adduced demonstrates the unlawful taking of the victim, against his or her wish. The Apex Court relied on *Bello Okashetu v State*²⁴ in which it held that “In order for the Prosecution to succeed under this count, it has to prove the following facts beyond reasonable doubt: (a) That the victim was seized, and taken away by the accused person; (b) that the victim was taken away against his consent; and (c) that the victim was taken away without lawful excuse. The offence of kidnapping is complete. when the victim is carried away against his wish”. The Apex Court held that the essential element for the offence of kidnapping is the non-consensual deprivation of liberty through the physical removal of the person from his or her chosen location. Thus, the intention of the perpetrator is not the necessary element, for the completion of the actus reus of kidnapping in all its forms. The jurisprudence on the offence of kidnapping extends beyond instances solely motivated by demand for payment of ransom.

However, in considering the specific provision of Section 3(a) of the Abia State Prohibition of Terrorism, Kidnapping, Hostage Taking, Use of Offensive Weapons or Explosives and Other Threatening Behavior Law, No. 10 of 2009, which provides that: “Any person who, for the purposes of payment of ransom, kidnaps and takes another person hostage is guilty of an offence”, the court held that where the definition of kidnapping includes abduction for some specific purpose, the mens rea that the prosecution must prove in order to obtain a conviction must include the specific purpose. Therefore, it is not enough to prove that the Defendant intended to abduct the victim. In order to secure a conviction of the Defendant, the prosecution must prove that the Defendant abducted the victim with the specific

²⁴ (2016) LPELR-4001 (SC) at pages 15–16, paras. E–A,

intention of obtaining payment of ransom. The prosecution has to prove beyond reasonable doubt that the accused intended to detain the alleged victim, in order to demand and obtain a sum of money for the alleged victim's release. It does not matter whether the Defendant succeeded in obtaining any money. There must be some overt act manifesting that intention. To determine if there was intention to demand for ransom, the Supreme Court held that a Defendant's intention can be inferred from his conduct, surrounding circumstances and intervening events, within which he acts. It is from the manifestation of his conduct, that his intention can be ascertained.

The Supreme Court held that from the fact of the case, it was undisputed from the evidence of PW2 who identified the Appellant as one of the kidnappers that the Appellant was part of the gang that broke into the house of the victim and demanded for the money the victim's son sent to her, at gun point. Their Lordships held that on a community consideration of the Appellant's conduct, coupled with the entire circumstances of the case, as well as the events leading to same, it was clear that the intention of the Appellant was in tandem with "for purposes of payment of ransom, kidnaps and takes another person hostage."

With regard to the Appellant's attempt to discredit the testimony of PW2 in his Appellant's brief, the court held that the legally designated arena for such an assault on the credibility of a witness has always been the trial court, during the heat of the proceedings, and not in the sterile confines of a written brief. Their Lordships held that PW2 remained steadfast under cross-examination that the accused was among those that she saw from the lights they were flashing. This piece of evidence was not rebutted by the Appellant, and was rightly accorded probative value by the trial court and the Court of Appeal.

In conclusion, the Supreme Court held that kidnapping in any form is a heinous offence; it instils fear, erodes trust, and undermines the sense of security that should prevail in our communities. Accordingly, the Apex Court resolved the sole issue for determination against the Appellant, and affirmed the conviction and sentence of the Appellant.

In *Alufohai v. The State*,²⁵ the Supreme Court explained that an identification parade is necessary only when there is doubt about the victim's ability to recognize the suspect or when the suspect's identity is disputed. However, if there is certainty about the perpetrator's identity, an identification parade is not required. For example, in this case where the counsel for the appellant raised the issue of identification, it was noted that the victim, referred to as PW2, spent four days with the appellant and other co-defendants while held in captivity in the bush. During her rescue by the vigilante group and the Nigerian Police Force, the appellant was arrested at the crime scene. This provided ample time for PW2 to become familiar with the identity of her kidnappers, making the need for an identification parade unnecessary. The Supreme Court emphasized that the purpose of an identification parade is to ensure that no mistakes are made in identifying the accused. Given the circumstances and the time PW2 spent with her kidnappers, she could clearly identify the appellant, rendering the issue of mistaken identity raised by the appellant an afterthought and immaterial. Both lower courts were correct in dismissing this argument.

It is noteworthy that the offence of kidnapping is complete when the victim is carried away against his or her wish. In *Ewugba v. State*,²⁶ the prosecution presented clear evidence showing that the victim was forcibly taken against her will and detained in the bush. The absence of a lawful excuse for her abduction further solidified the case against the kidnappers.

It's important to note that in cases involving kidnapping, issues of conspiracy and identification parades are often raised and considered. Kidnapping cases frequently involve conspiracy, where several individuals work together to carry out the crime. This collaborative nature of kidnapping makes it essential to accurately identify everyone involved. In Nigeria, identification parades are commonly used to

²⁵ (2015) 3 NWLR (1445) 172,

²⁶ (2017) LPELR-43833(SC)

ensure that the correct suspects are apprehended and prosecuted. These parades allow witnesses or victims to identify the perpetrators from a lineup, helping to confirm the identities of those responsible for the crime.

7.0 CONSEQUENCES OF KIDNAPPING

a. Citizens of Nigeria move about in fear and anxiety, especially during festive periods

Citizens of Nigeria move nearly in fear and anxiety especially during festive periods in kidnap prone zones like Lagos state, Benin City in Edo state, Ondo state, Abia state, Imo state, Bayelsa state, Rivers state and the federal capital territory Abuja. Due to large vehicular movements from one part of Nigeria to the other during festivities of Easter, Christmas and various Islamic celebrations, kidnappers keep many Nigerians in intense fear of being kidnapped. Some people remain in their homes, especially the affluent citizens, to reduce the chances of being captured in public places.

b. Torture and death of victims

There is no doubt that kidnapping is a moral bankruptcy, cancer that has eaten deep in the fabrics of the Nigeria national life, inflicting pain, torture and leading to the death of so many victims. Such emotional torture was the case of the one hundred and ten (110) students of Government technical and science college, Dapchi in Yobe state Nigeria who were abducted by the dreaded Boko Haram Islamic insurgents on 19th February 2018. Incidentally, due to torture and maltreatments, five of the students were reported dead.²⁷

c. The wrong image at the international arena for Nigeria

The frequently reported cases of kidnapping in Nigeria create a bad image for Nigeria. Tourists, researchers and investors or even students who may wish to undertake their studies in Nigeria will be scared away for the reason of the growing trend of insecurity, especially crime of kidnapping, which has become prevalent.

²⁷ 'Boko Haram released chibok school girls,' *The Punch Newspaper* (Lagos 28 October 2018) 2

d. Psychological and Social Trauma

Kidnapping imposes significant psychological burdens on victims and their families. Survivors often experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and anxiety, which can take years to overcome. Families of victims live in constant fear, while communities subjected to repeated kidnappings experience increased social distrust and instability²⁸.

e. Economic Consequences

The economic ramifications are equally severe. Families are drained of their savings through ransom payments, with kidnappers demanding sums as high as ₦5 billion. Businesses in kidnapping-prone regions suffer disruptions, discouraging local and foreign investment. Additionally, ransom payments sometimes exceed ₦305 Billion annually, further straining Nigeria's struggling economy²⁹. The findings suggest that unfavorable macroeconomic conditions in Nigeria impact individual economic situations, potentially increasing anxiety regarding alternative income sources for survival, which may compel individuals to affiliate with criminal gangs involved in kidnapping, thereby fostering a burgeoning underground economy. This nascent profit-oriented paradigm centres on a new economy prioritizing kidnapping for ransom. Bandits and terrorist groups brandished in semi-military regalia, parading on social media, requesting ransom or displaying ransom paid for the release of hostages as if their act brings them legal funds without regard or fear of state authorities tracking them down. The government's inability in security governance and unfulfilled obligations toward development has resulted in the unrestrained increase of kidnapping, predominantly perpetrated by unemployed youth affiliated with criminal

²⁸ SBM Intelligence. 'The economics of Nigeria's kidnap industry. Retrieved from SBM Intelligence 1 August, 2024, Agbu, O. 'Kidnapping in Nigeria: Patterns and Policy Responses'. *African Security Review*, 32(2) 2023, 120-136.

²⁹ The Guardian Nigeria. 'The economics behind Nigeria's kidnap epidemic'. Retrieved from The Guardian Nigeria July 23, 2023, SBM Intelligence. 'Kidnapping Trends in Nigeria: A Statistical Analysis'. Lagos: SBM Intelligence 2022

organizations³⁰. The government's ineptitude and corruption within security institutions have exacerbated this illegal economy.

It is crucial to acknowledge that the involvement of individuals, and at times criminal organizations, in unlawful economic activities like illegal oil bunkering, highway road robbery, community or targeted school raids, where people are carted away, has generated substantial revenues in the black market of kidnapping for ransom. The omission of these earnings from official economic metrics such as the balance of payments and gross domestic product highlights the constraints present in formal economic evaluations and the symbolism of state-sanctioned economic activities. As such, the emergence of the underground economy highlights the significant impact of crime on society and its economy, as resources that could be allocated for legitimate productive purposes are diverted to rescue kidnapped victims, ultimately reinforcing the activities of the groups.

It is crucial to think economically of the impact of kidnapping in Nigeria, as the global estimates of kidnapping are huge, and the trend is worrying. According to reports from data firm SBM Intelligence³¹, between June 2011 and the end of March 2020, a total of \$18.34 million was disbursed to kidnappers, primarily bandits and Boko Haram, as ransom. Particularly alarming is that a significant portion (just under \$11 million) was disbursed between January 2016 and March 2020, suggesting that kidnapping has become increasingly profitable in recent years. Moreover, these unregulated funds serve as alternative financing sources for individuals engaged in organized criminal networks, thus enabling the growth of high-profit, high-risk crimes like kidnapping and other associated crimes across Nigeria.

³⁰ Ojo JS 'Governing "ungoverned spaces" in the foliage of conspiracy: Toward (re) ordering terrorism, from Boko Haram insurgency, Fulani militancy to banditry in northern Nigeria'. *Afr Secur* 13(1) 2020:77–110

³¹ SB Morgen Intelligence 'The economics of the kidnap industry in Nigeria'. *SB Morgen Intelligence*. https://www.sbmintel.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/202005_Nigeria-Kidnap.pdf 2020

The government's inability to establish a conducive environment for economic growth and the challenges of externally engineered political and economic constraints on Nigeria exacerbate unemployment, leading individuals to engage in kidnapping, followed by government ransom payments for the release of the abducted³². The rising prevalence of kidnapping in Nigeria is substantial and warrants attention, particularly due to the interaction of economic and social factors linked to these criminal activities³³. The insurrection in Nigeria by Boko Haram marks a significant milestone in two decades of insecurity, driven by the economic marginalization of a large youth population facing bleak socioeconomic prospects and the political exploitation of these issues. The public discourse surrounding insecurity has focused heavily on kidnapping and its relationship with facilitating other crimes.

f. Disruption of Education

Targeted attacks on schools have forced closures, particularly in northern Nigeria, leading to setbacks in educational attainment. The 2021 mass abduction of schoolchildren in Zamfara and Kaduna highlights the risks, discouraging parents from enrolling their children in school due to safety concerns. This trend exacerbates educational inequality and weakens human capital development.³⁴

³² Aleyomi MB, Olajubu A 'Kidnapping for Ransom in Nigeria' In Omotola, JS, & Oyewole, S (eds) *The Political Economy of Kidnapping and Insecurity in Nigeria* Advances in African Economic, Social, and Political Development. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland pp. 135-150. 2024

³³ Bamidele S, Ajisafe D, Ajiboye BM 'Kidnapping and Hostage Negotiation in Nigeria'. In Omotola, JS, & Oyewole, S (eds) *The Political Economy of Kidnapping and Insecurity in Nigeria* (pp. 299-313). Advances in African Economic, Social, and Political Development. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland 2024 pp. 135-150).

³⁴ Abdulrahman, I., Abubakar, M., & Yusuf, M. 'Educational Disruption Due to Kidnapping in Northern Nigeria'. *Journal of Education and Security Studies*, 5(3) 2021 45-58

8.0 CHALLENGES FACED BY INSTITUTIONS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST KIDNAPPING

i. Inadequate Funding and Resources: Security agencies often lack sufficient funds, modern equipment, vehicles, surveillance technology, and communication tools needed to combat kidnappers effectively.

ii. Poor Intelligence Gathering and Sharing: Weak intelligence networks and inadequate coordination among security agencies hinder the timely detection and prevention of kidnapping operations.

iii. Corruption and Insider Collaboration: Corruption within some institutions may lead to the leakage of sensitive information, compromise investigations, and facilitate kidnappers' activities.

iv. Insufficient Personnel and Training: A shortage of well-trained security personnel reduces the capacity of institutions to respond effectively to kidnapping incidents.

v. Weak Border and Territorial Control: Porous borders and ungoverned spaces provide safe havens for kidnappers and make tracking and apprehending them difficult.

vi. Slow Judicial Processes: Delays in investigation, prosecution, and adjudication of kidnapping cases weaken deterrence and may encourage criminal activities.

vii. Poor Inter-Agency Cooperation: Rivalry, jurisdictional conflicts, and inadequate information sharing among law enforcement agencies undermine coordinated anti-kidnapping efforts.

viii. Technological Sophistication of Criminals: Kidnappers increasingly utilize modern communication technologies and digital platforms, making detection and surveillance more challenging.

ix. Public Distrust and Lack of Cooperation: Fear of retaliation and lack of confidence in security institutions discourage citizens from providing useful information.

- x. **Socioeconomic Factors:** High unemployment, poverty, and social inequality contribute to the recruitment of individuals into kidnapping networks.
- xi. **Political Interference:** Undue political influence may obstruct investigations, prosecutions, or institutional reforms aimed at tackling kidnapping.
- xii. **Insecurity in Rural and Remote Areas:** Difficult terrain, poor road networks, and limited security presence in rural communities make rescue operations and law enforcement efforts challenging.
- xiii. **Inadequate Legal Frameworks and Enforcement:** Gaps in legislation or weak enforcement mechanisms may limit the effectiveness of anti-kidnapping measures.
- xiv. **Fear of Reporting and Witness Protection Challenges:** Victims and witnesses are often reluctant to cooperate due to fears for their safety and the absence of robust witness protection programs.
- xv. **Ransom Payments:** The frequent payment of ransoms can sustain kidnapping enterprises and incentivize further abductions.

9.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

To curb the menace of kidnapping in Nigeria, there is need for implementation and enforcement of laws on kidnapping. The amended terrorism act which criminalizes payment of ransom to kidnappers is there to make kidnapping less lucrative. Implementation of this law will contribute to ending the menace of kidnapping for ransom in the country. Capital punishment should also be applied where necessary. This will serve as deterrent to others who may want to consider kidnapping.

There is also the need for judicial reform in Nigeria. Prosecution of kidnap suspects should be pursued within short period of time. This may be achieved through appointment of more judges and building of additional court rooms or the establishment of special courts for

kidnap cases across the country as judges have many cases on their necks.

There should be a significant improvement in the security settings of the country. The security situation of Nigeria is so serious that kidnappers perpetrate their acts even at daylight. The creation of state policing is long overdue. Insecurity in the south west Nigeria saw to the creation of the Western Nigeria Security Network known as Amotekun by states in the South West Nigeria. Although the federal government kicked against it, Amotekun is putting a lot of effort into fighting various security challenges in the region. This can be replicated in other regions where kidnapping and other security problems are on the rise.

The police and other security agencies should work with the National Identity Management Commission to come up with strategies that can be adopted in combating kidnapping in areas of identifying kidnappers. Technological tools that aid in tracking individuals should be prioritized.

To prevent kidnapping effectively, enhancing institutional responses by creating better economic opportunities and encouraging individuals to pursue legal employment, such as through small and medium-sized enterprises or positions in public and private sectors post-education, is essential. Job creation for the population is paramount and should become official state policy to combat crime and enhance Nigeria's strategic economic power in the global economy. It promises to reduce brain drain within the country among opportunistic youth who have flown abroad for greener pastures, and crime engagement among those who remain idle in the country. This approach aims to deter idleness and reduce the risk that individuals will be drawn into criminal organizations involved in kidnapping. Additionally, it is crucial to improve government accountability, reform policing practices, and guarantee fair treatment for all ethnic groups, as all these factors contribute to kidnapping in Nigeria. The role of a national identity is also crucial to reduce ethnic marginalization and the feeling of alienation that impacts the severity of kidnapping. By addressing these

structural weaknesses, we can mitigate the factors that facilitate kidnapping and help rebuild public confidence in the effectiveness of state institutions.

Proactively enhancing the capabilities and responsiveness of security agencies to investigate and dismantle kidnapping networks, alongside ensuring prompt rescue operations and the prosecution of offenders, will convey that Nigeria is an unfavorable environment for kidnapping and help reduce the trend. Furthermore, establishing dedicated anti-kidnapping units within law enforcement, enhancing intelligence collection, and developing robust victim support frameworks can effectively mitigate immediate consequences and deter future occurrences. Similarly, removing security from the exclusive legislative list to the concurrent list to accommodate the creation of state police forces enables more effective measures to protect the population against the menace of kidnapping in Nigeria³⁵. A conscious shift in mindset among the policymakers, security operatives, and even the population on the long-term effects of kidnapping on the victim and society provides the understanding required to make necessary progress toward its prevention.

To address the growing problem of kidnapping in Nigeria, the federal and state governments must focus on thorough economic reforms that target poverty alleviation, corruption reduction, and low unemployment rates. Furthermore, a unified approach is essential to improving the capabilities and professionalism of law enforcement agencies, as these modifications are vital for rebuilding public confidence in the system, given the results of this study, which showed low public trust in both the government institutions and the policing actors. Advancing fairness and justice across diverse ethnic and regional communities, as well as promoting economic justice, through an enabling business climate that encourages engagement, is a crucial

³⁵ Adenuga G 'State Responses to the Menace of Kidnapping in Nigeria'. In Omotola, JS, & Oyewole, S (eds) *The Political Economy of Kidnapping and Insecurity in Nigeria* Advances in African Economic, Social, and Political Development. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland 2024, pp. 265-284.

strategy that can significantly reduce societal weaknesses and foster a safer, more inclusive environment for everyone.

Furthermore, future research can look at the impact of kidnapping on gender and women in Nigeria, which is a significant issue that warrants attention, since this paper barely hinted at a connection. The economic landscape of Nigeria is significantly influenced by gender, with the dynamics of demand and supply closely linked, often resulting in the exploitation of women as either agents or victims of kidnapping and other forms of insecurity³⁶. The abduction of women or their exploitation by insurgent groups poses a significant risk to human security and obstructs the achievement of sustainable development goals. Women experience increased susceptibility to sexual exploitation during captivity as victims and often contribute to this dynamic when they assume the role of agents.³⁷

10.0 CONCLUSION

This paper began with the following question: To what extent do perceptions of economic hardship, institutional performance, and governance explain the prevalence and severity of kidnapping in Nigeria? It aims to investigate the factors driving this trend through a quantitative lens using a citizen-perception-based survey, as they live and experience the burden of this form of insecurity in their communities. The evidence, based on the statistical analysis of the ninth round of the Afrobarometer survey, points to a growing trend of kidnapping in Nigeria, as most respondents consider it both severe and frequent within Nigerian society—84.1% of respondents think it a serious issue, and 75.7% of respondents consider it a frequent issue. Hence, it is a crime in the consciousness of the populace.

³⁶ Agara T. 'Gender Dimensions of Kidnapping in Nigeria'. In Omotola, JS, & Oyewole, S (eds) *The Political Economy of Kidnapping and Insecurity in Nigeria*, Advances in African Economic, Social, and Political Development. Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland 2024 (pp. 205-225).

³⁷ Ibrahim B, Mukhtar JI 'An analysis of the causes and consequences of kidnapping in Nigeria'. *Afr Res Rev* 11(4) 2017:134–143

The genesis of kidnapping in Nigeria could be traced to scramble to get a fair or the lion share of petroleum and other natural resources endowed by nature in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. The people of the Niger Delta region, especially the youths, felt that they were marginalized in the distribution of the rich oil deposits in their land. The youths felt that they were not benefitting sufficiently from their God-given resources; hence in protest of what they perceived as injustice began to indulge in hostage-taking, hijacking and kidnapping of the prominent workers of the oil companies and in some instances their children were kidnapped to drive home the agitation for resource control or fair distribution of natural resources deposits in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria.³⁸ In conclusion, kidnapping is a grievous crime with significant consequences for victims and society. The collaborative nature of kidnapping often involves multiple individuals, making accurate identification crucial. While identification parades are typically used to ensure correct identification, they are not necessary when the victim can clearly recognize the perpetrator.

The Nigerian government has taken a number of actions to stop kidnapping, from stepping up military operations to passing new laws. A stronger legal basis for prosecution was made possible by the Terrorism (Prevention) (Amendment) Act, 2022, which designated abduction as an act of terrorism. In order to improve local security, state governments have also introduced community policing programs, especially in the Northwest. Despite these initiatives, kidnapping has not abated. Anti-kidnapping efforts are less effective when security agencies are corrupt. Furthermore, the abduction economy is sustained by ransom payments, which are frequently made by desperate families. Olawale³⁹ asserts that in order to address the underlying reasons of kidnapping, a multi-stakeholder strategy involving the government, civic society, and international partners is desperately needed.

³⁸ Essien, A.M and Ema, E B. 'The socio-religious perspective of kidnapping and democratic sustainability in Akwaibom state Nigeria' (2013), vol. 3, N.4 special issue-February, *International journal of humanities and social sciences*.

³⁹ Olawale, S. "Rethinking Counter-Kidnapping Strategies in Nigeria." *African Journal of Security Studies*, 18(2) 2024, 112-128.

Conclusion In Nigeria, kidnapping is still a serious problem that is influenced by many socioeconomic, political, and security variables. Such variables have been interrogated in this study. The study notes that while recent government initiatives have produced some encouraging results, much more needs to be done. A comprehensive strategy that incorporates strong law enforcement, socioeconomic improvements, and community involvement is needed to address the underlying causes of kidnapping.

One interesting finding is that religion does not play the same significant role it does on its own when all other variables are held constant at the multivariate level. But ethnicity does. This provides a cogent rationale to understand the kidnapping incidents in the Niger Delta and other southern areas, where the emblematic ethnic marginalization in oil resource exploitation by the government, tribal chiefs, and multinational corporations has ravaged agriculture and fishing. The decimation of the two vital economic pursuits for the local populace ultimately culminates in militancy for environmental and economic justice.

This paper has shown that kidnapping, studied through a quantitative methodological lens, provides a complementary and robust understanding of its qualitative trends, manifestations, and areas to be targeted (economic empowerment, government handling of crime and corruption, and police handling of kidnapping cases) to mitigate its impact in Nigeria. As the result indicates, the challenges that foster kidnapping, in the opinion of respondents, include poor economic conditions, the issue of safety within the neighborhood, police handling of kidnapping cases, and ethnic marginalization. What this tells us is that kidnapping, as a manifestation of social malaise, results from weak governance by state institutions to curb broader insecurity through both preventive and reactive measures.