

## Kidnapping and Internal Security Crisis in the Frontline Areas of Katsina State

By

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### Abstract

Kidnapping pose a serious threat to the internal security of the frontline local government areas, and in fact the whole of Katsina State. This study is conducted against the backdrop of the ragging kidnapping for ransom and the implications it has on internal security of Katsina State in North-western Nigeria. The paper applied the Routine theory and as well employed the Qualitative Document Analysis (QDA) based on the previous reviewed studies conducted on kidnapping such as current literature, media reports, and newspapers to bring out the gaps and come up with new findings on the factors that drive the incidence of kidnapping and its menace. It discovered that most incidence of kidnapping is motivated by the financial inducement attached to it by the demand and payment for ransom. The study recommends public awareness programs, a synergic approach between the security institutions and community policing approach, stoppage of small and light arms proliferation, appropriate sanctions, phone sim-card registration, stoppage of ransom payment, and job creation among others and concluded that to reverse the trend, the government and relevant stakeholders must realize the importance of safety and wellbeing of the citizenry and therefore should provide adequate security for the protection of lives and property.

**Keywords;** - Kidnapping, Internal Security, Frontline, Ransom.

### Introduction

The development of human society from hunting and gathering to a much more complex form of scientific technological advancement, is not without some elements of crime of kidnappings (Bello, and Jamilu , 2017; Ibrahim and Ahmad, 2020; Rufai, 2021; Tznelli, 2006) 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 will until they satisfy the desires of their captors which are usually monetary. The aim of the paper is to examine the phenomenon of kidnapping in the frontline areas of Katsina State with the view to highlight its implications on the internal security of the state.

The entire eight frontline local government areas which consist of Batsari, Jibia, DanMusa, Safana, Sabuwa, Kankara, DanDume, and Faskari have become life-threatening zones as a result of the threat of kidnappings that plague the state. They are theatres of violence, to a large extent; have nearly brought the socio-economic activities of the states to a grinding halt. The reason for choosing Batsari for the study is because it is in the heart of Rumah-kukar-Jangarai forest reserve/ Dajin-Rugu forest (Ladan, 2014). It shares border with Zamfara State and Jibia local government area which share border with Niger republic. It is difficult to comprehend the uncontrolled kidnappings that occurred in these local government areas because it is not equivalent to the well-known farmers'/herders conflict (Okoli and Agada, 2014, Ladan, 2019, Okoli and Atelhe,2014). In societies where people cannot predict the future, many are bound to live in disappointment, whereas the hope of security is very much unlikely. The incidence of holding people captive is probably caused by the huge monetary gains the perpetrators enjoy from the crime and the apparent inability of the

nation's security operatives to arrest and promptly punish the offenders. To this effect, this has earned Nigeria the 4th position in hostage-taking globally (Abdulkabir, 2017; Ballantine & Roberts, 2007; Dami, 2021; Ene, 2018; GTI, 2020; Li et al., 2021).

To properly situate the discussion, this paper is structured into several parts. After an introduction, a statement of the research problem, conceptual clarification and theoretical framework, the second part deals with the broad issues of understanding kidnapping and its consequences, while the third segment discusses the method of study. The fourth section deals with the result of findings and finally, the conclusion and recommendations.

### **Methods**

This study employs the use of both quantitative and qualitative sources of data collection. The primary sources of data were generated from administration of twenty questionnaire and In-depth interview (IDI) with twelve kidnap victims who narrated their ordeals from the point of who feels it, knows it all perspective, while research reports, institutional publications, journals, magazines, newspapers and the internet, make-up the secondary data. The paper deployed the in-depth interview method to elicit information from twelve respondents in Batsari local government area of Katsina state, north-western Nigeria. The smallness of the sample size is because of the difficulty in convincing most kidnap victims to volunteer information about their captivity for the fear of being subjected to further victimization or reprisal attack. The qualitative data generated from the interview were analysed using content analysis and ethnographic summaries.

### **Situating the Problematique**

The rate at which people are held as captives in the frontline local government areas of Katsina state is alarming, which might probably be caused by the enormous monetary gains the perpetrators enjoy from the crime and the apparent inability of the nation's security operatives to arrest and quickly punish the offenders. The entire landscape of the frontline areas is under the siege of kidnapers and virtually every part suffers from the menace. Hence, raising the standard of living of its people is vigorously pursued by the state through internally generated revenue earnings.

As a rural state, the drive to create enabling environment for agriculture to thrive comes first, out of the belief that without market days, it can hardly make any significant leap in her developmental strides. Farms are not cultivated as they are supposed to be because people do not go to the farms for the fear of being kidnapped. This translates to low revenue generation and the consequence of which results in poor conditions of wellbeing for the people due to lack of safety of life and property. These are ugly indicators of the implications of kidnapping on development, apart from scaring potential foreign investors has also forced those with investments in the areas to relocate to a more secured and investment friendly States. Consequently, it translates to low revenue generation and the government would not be able to finance its projects. Evolving from the previous discussions on the problems of kidnapping, this paper seeks to address the following research questions:

- (i) What are the factors that lead to the incidence of kidnapping in the frontline areas?
- (ii) What are the experiences of kidnap victims in the hands of their kidnapers?
- (iii) What are the implications of kidnapping to the internal security of the frontline areas?

### **Conceptual clarifications**

**Kidnapping:** This study adopts the definition of kidnapping by Inyang and Abraham (2019) who defined it as the forceful abduction, taking away and unlawful detention of a person against his/her will. It is a common-law offense and the key part is that it is an unwanted act on the part of the victim (Abimbola et al., 2021; Inyang and Abraham, 2013).

**Internal Security:** This is the freedom from or the absence of those opportunities which could weaken domestic unity and the mutual co-existence in the nation and its ability to maintain its most important institutions for the advancement of its core values and socio-political and economic objectives, to meet the legitimate aspiration of the citizenry. It implies freedom from danger to life, safety of property and the presence of an ideal atmosphere for the people to achieve their legitimate aim and objectives within the society (Imobighe, 1990). The primary objective shall be to strengthen those conditions which allow for the control of crime, eliminate corruption, enhance genuine development, progress and growth and improve the welfare and well-being of the quality of life of the citizenry (Attah, 2018). Generally security is the freedom from danger or threats, and the ability of a nation to protect and develop itself, promote and cherish values and legitimate interests and enhance the wellbeing of its people (Ifeadi, 2012).

**Frontline** is a military terminology, it is the position(s) closest to the area of conflict of an armed force personnel and equipment, an area of potential or actual conflict or struggle the most advanced, responsible, or visible position in a field or activity. For the purpose of this research, it means the area in which a person is prone to kidnapping and not only that it occurs at an alarming rate. These are Batsari, Jibia, Sabuwa, Safana, Faskari, Dandume, Kankara, and Danmusa.

**Ransom;-** For the purpose of this research the term ‘ransom’ is used in a specialized sense to describe the practice of holding a prisoner or item with the intent to extort money or other valuables to secure his/her release (Okoli and Agada, 2014).

### **Theoretical Underpinnings: Conflict Theory and Strain Theory of Crime**

A combination of the conflict theory and strain theory of crime was employed as analytical anchor in this study. It is from these theories that one would be able to explain the reasons why kidnapping has become so incessant in the study area. The two theories as explained by Crutchfield, Bridges and Weis (1996) consider crime as the violation of laws by normal persons in the course of realistic conflicts of interest, originating from either;

- (i) The activities of those involved in organizations, created to satisfy the demand for illicit goods and services, as well as the use of illegal means to control and profit from legitimate economic activity.
- (ii) Opposition by vested interests to legal restraints, especially where efforts are made to modify institutionalized patterns of legitimate economic activity and
- (iii) Criminal behaviour as almost entirely a function of an unbalanced and unstable economic structure promoting selfishness and resulting in uncertainty for all and misery for many, or conflict between those who seek to preserve a given authority structure and those who are trying to modify or destroy it.

The above explanations provide useful insights into the violent crimes of kidnapping that can be linked to structural poverty which has to do with exploitation and injustice by the

ruling class and the politically exposed persons. One can also use the strain theory to give an insight to the problem of kidnapping in the study areas. Blackburn, (1993) observed that Emile Durkheim theorized that rules lose their authority over behaviour under certain social conditions which he referred to as the condition of anomie. Blackburn therefore asserts that, Merton propounded the strain theory of criminal behaviour and that Merton's analysis of crime adopts innovation as the centre of the discussions. The quest for materialism and the desire to desperately become rich overnight have made many people developed innovative methods towards achieving their desire. Some of the deviant strategies innovated include; bribery and corruption, embezzlement, robbery, kidnapping for financial purposes and all forms of criminality. In fact, innovative methods or short cuts to wealth or financial success has been translated into what Ugwuoke (2005) has described as a prevailing value system that encourages tainted, corrupt and illegal practices as necessary and sufficient means to an end (Ibrahim and Ahmad, 2020)

Routine activity theory (RAT) provides explanatory value in the strategies for kidnapping and the treatment met to victims by kidnappers, Felson, ( 2010) theorised that crime is a function of three; (i) Right target, (ii) A disposed offender and (iii) Lack of able leadership. .The importance of this theory in explaining the incidence of kidnapping and the manner in which victims of kidnapping are treated is a function of the coming together of these three factors. The theory projects the importance of the environment of crime to the beginning of criminality that is his crime scene. In other words, the routines of an individual and time of movement may predispose an individual to being a victim of kidnapping. A person who moves into an isolated place and has perceived 'kidnap value' may be kidnapped for ransom (Oludayo; Usman, Ojedokun; and Adeyinka, 2019).

People that occupy high positions, with high monetary value are the targets of kidnappers, hence become captives when there is the no able guardianship that can frustrate the kidnapping episode. In the kidnapping den, the garb ability of the kidnapped person is unveiled through different strategies, including beating, persuasion and other forms of violence, to extract commitment.

### **Factors Responsible for Kidnapping in the Katsina Frontline Areas**

It is no longer news that kidnapping has become the defining characteristic of the frontline local government areas of Katsina state. It has become so endemic in the periods between the years 2018 to date. Several factors could be said to be responsible for the emergence and spread of cases of kidnapping in the study areas. Narrative is full with varieties of explanations as to the causes of kidnappings in the study areas such as:

#### **Corrupt Leadership**

Bad leadership arising from corruption is no doubt responsible for the rising wave in kidnapping in the local government area which is judged to be the richest in human and material resources affirmed by the soil fertility and the turnover in terms of agricultural produce they turn out annually. Rather than harnessing the resources for the development of the area, successive leadership of the state have further impoverished the masses through corrupt enrichment and fraudulent practices. While most people in the area and of course the state, perpetually live in hopelessness and disillusionment, political leaders are busy displaying affluence in the full glare of the impoverished majority. Therefore, if criminals in

leadership are celebrated, what then is the justification for encouraging commitment and diligence or punishing citizens who have the opportunity to do same? Today, Nigerians have no confidence in their leaders and that has given them the impetus to crimes such as kidnapping (Dami, 2021; Odoma, 2019; Onuoha and Okolie-Osemene, 2019).

### **Endemic Poverty**

Evolving from the chain of bad leadership, resources are misappropriated and laundered to other countries by successive leaderships (Adishi, and Oluka, 2018). The ultimate aftermath of financial impropriety and recklessness of our leaders is widespread poverty in the land, while a few privileged individuals who looted our commonwealth are daily parading themselves in affluence and are so celebrated by the society (Dami, 2021). Today, majority of Nigerian citizens live below poverty line of one dollar per day, living in unpredictable and hopeless conditions. The position of poverty in the study area and its dangerous implications are rightly captured as it could be safe to say that hostage taking / kidnapping and other vices that have of recent become the defining characteristics of the study area cannot be separated from the poverty occasioned by bad/poor political leadership that have become the order of the day. From the above submission, one can hardly and justifiably condemn kidnappers for engaging in criminality either because of survival or to share in the conspicuous display of affluence often exhibited by their corrupt and criminal minded leaders (Okoli & Agada, 2014; Ibrahim & Ahmad, 2020; Odoma, 2019)

### **Weak Security Agencies**

The strength of members of the Nigeria police force and other security agencies in the study area to prevent the occurrence of crime before they are committed and detect or arrest crimes when committed have inhibited the control of crime and by extension encouraged criminal activities. The popular perception is that, the security agencies have failed in their duties of protecting lives and property of the people in the area of the study. The same observation has further diminished to a large magnitude the expected cordial relationship between the general public and several agencies of social control in the handling of security threats (Dami, 2021; Ibrahim and Ahmad, 2020; Suleiman, 2019).

### **Lack of Collaboration among Security Agencies**

Globally the provision of security is a colossal task because it is costly by its nature of being multidimensional and complicated. Despite that, it is generally believed to be a necessity because, without it any other thing desired by man becomes secondary. This explains the reasons why no nation toys with security and security delivery (Bohm, and Haley, 2021). The enormity and all time relevance of security require not only the cooperation of all, but also the synergy of the living, body, soul and spirit of all citizens in the state for a robust security system (Odoma, 2019). Agencies of social control in industrial societies are known for their prompt and efficient delivery of security, hence the popular expectation is that, even though the terrain of their operation differs, interagency or operational collaboration is mandatory for adequate delivery of security in the country (Omoigui, 2006). Regrettably, this popular expectation has not been realized in Nigeria, as security operatives have at different times been involved in unhealthy operational rivalries. This explains the serious security challenges faced by the nation in recent times. It is argued for instance that such rivalry has been noticed

between the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) over security duties in several parts of the study area.

### Discussion of Findings

The data from the IDI showed that nine of the respondents were male while three were females. Between the ages of 20 to 25, 25 to 30, 30 to 35, there was one respondent respectively. Two of the respondents were between the ages of 45 to 50, another two between 40 to 45, and finally three were between 50+ years of age bracket. All the kidnap victims had one educational qualification or the other. Two respondents have informal education, one primary school education; five of them have secondary school educational qualifications, another two with vocational education while the rest two have tertiary educational qualifications. Some of the respondents were married and some single.

#### **Question One:** Are you aware of the menace of kidnapping in your area?

All the respondents answered in the positive agreeing to have the knowledge of its existence in the area. One of the respondents responded *“that it is only those who are not from this area that could fend ignorance of the menace and prevalence of kidnapping in this village”*. The respondent affirmed that he is also a victim of kidnapping, and that *“he had to sell his belongings to pay the ransom of 1million; saying “I am now out of business. I do not have capital any more”*. *“I am in a state of confusion (IDI, 2022)*

Another respondent who is also a petty trader could not help, but burst into tears saying, *“is his wife that was kidnapped and that he sold his properties to pay ransom and that not all the goods in his shop belong to him, I am now indebted (IDI, 2022)*

#### **Question Two:** What is the nature of the phenomenon of kidnapping in your area?

*“The kidnapers carry dangerous weapons as they come raiding from one house to another breaking doors and sometimes demolishing buildings and setting some on fire”*.

A respondent attested that the kidnapers *“abduct everyone irrespective of age or ill-health. In fact, they kidnapped a nursing mother with infant a baby of less than one week old (IDI, 2022)*

#### **Question Three:** In your opinion, what are the factors responsible for the rising incidence of kidnapping in the study area?

The respondents offered a variety of reasons for the prevalence of kidnapping in the study area. However, the major reasons which appeared through the entire length of the submissions of all the respondents are unending poverty, youth unemployment, injustice, and police complicity. One of the respondents put the factors that led to the rise in the incidence of kidnapping this way: To me, several factors could be responsible. *“They measure from unemployment of employable youth, widespread poverty in the land, and connivance of security operatives with kidnapers, erosion of our cultural values of earning through hard work, social exclusion and lack of respect for the holiness of human life. A combination of two or more of these factors caused this overwhelming problem (IDI, 2022)*. Another kidnap victim had this to say: *“I think unemployment is the major contributor. But from my experience as a victim, it is not unlikely that the security agents are either directly involved or provide weapons and serve as informants to kidnapers (IDI, 2022)*.

#### **Question Four:** What are your experiences in the hands of your abductors?

All the kidnap victims highlighted horrific, disgusting, traumatic, and terrifying pictures of their experiences in the hands of their kidnapers while in captivity. The experience ranged

from torture, having to trek long distances on foot for hours in the thick forests, going without food for several days to threat of rape and rape for real. Others included demand for huge ransom ranging from hundreds of thousands to millions of naira with the threat of being killed should they fail to pay such amounts.

One of the respondents recalled her ordeal with tearful eyes thus: *“It was terrible; I don’t want to remember it. As I am talking to you now, mere replications about the incidence gives me trauma. It is not a thing you think about and be happy. For the rest of my life, I doubt if the pain will go away (IDI, 2022).*

Another respondent said, *“To go to the farm is now a problem for me because I have had to contend with the fearful thought that the kidnappers would come out of the open forest to kidnap me. I am presently suffering from what psychologists refer to as Post-traumatic stress disorder” (PTSD) (IDI, 2022).*

Another respondent who happened to be a custom officer told of how a gang of kidnappers *“dressed in military and police fatigue uniform numbering about 10 on motorcycles stopped by their duty post where they were and greeted them familiarly only for them to order them to climb on the motor-cycles at gun-point. He recalled that at the point of his being picked up, one of his assailants brandished an AK 47 gun and when he tried to call his bluff, others in the car with their riffle subdued him, and in the process, blindfolded him and drove off”<sup>1</sup>.*

Another respondent mentioned that *“she went to a wedding ceremony of a friend when at about 7.30pm the house was stormed and raided by kidnappers who abducted me, the bride and two others to the forest. We were with them for one month; a ransom of 20 million was paid to them for our freedom”<sup>2</sup>.*

Another female kidnapped respondent described her ordeal in the following words: *“I went without food or water for four nights. We were at the mercy of those godless and heartless young men who subjected us to all manner of inhuman treatment and made ridiculous demands; the experience was a bitter and painful one.*

Question Five: What sanctions would you suggest to be imposed on kidnappers when apprehended?

All the respondents recommended death penalty for kidnappers. They opined that *“capital punishment would have a deterrent effect on potential kidnappers”*. One of the kidnap victims had this to say: *“When apprehended, kidnappers should be killed because they would not spare the lives of victims who cannot afford to pay the enormous ransom they usually demand (IDI, 2022).* Another victim said: *The “National Assembly has spoken in favour of death penalty. I will go for the maximum punishment, which is death penalty.*

### Conclusions and Recommendations

This study interrogated the phenomenon of kidnapping and its implications to the internal security of the study area and the state at large. It noted that kidnapping is not only a threat to life and property but a big disincentive to local and foreign direct investment drive. It also sought to ascertain the factors responsible for the persistence of the phenomenon despite the large amount of resources being spent on it. The study recognized poverty, unending unemployment, the pursuit of criminal acquisition and weak security planning to be some of

the major push factors for kidnapping. The study also discovered that kidnap victims suffer untold hardships while in captivity. The study advanced the following recommendations in order to stem the tide of kidnapping:

Part of the motivation for kidnapping is the danger of poverty and youth unemployment. The governments and other stakeholders should initiate and implement sustainable poverty eradication programs such as private Foundations for the award of scholarships by the privilege few in the society, the S-Power interventions among others which constitute the central pillars of governments' poverty eradication programmes have hardly contributed to poverty reduction in the study area. The training of youth in ICT and other skill acquisition programs should be scaled up to make them IT compliant and self-reliant.

Given the weakness of the nation's security apparatus to comprehensively and decisively deal with the problems of kidnapping, governments should have the will power to enact laws to enforce the prosecution of kidnappers promptly, while security agencies should synergize and scale up inter-agency intelligence gathering mechanisms. Given the ordeals that kidnap victims suffer, there is the urgent need to impose harsher and more severe punishment on kidnappers. The death penalty adopted by both the FG and some state governments and also as recommended by some of the interviewed kidnap victims is one of the surest antidote to the menace of kidnapping.

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