



### Kidnapping in Nigeria: A Threat to National Security

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#### **Abstract**

Kidnapping in Nigeria is a serious security threat, it is usually perpetrated by bandits and insurgents, it is an organized crime that Nigerian security agencies have not been able to stop or reduce the prevalence. The current wave of abductions across the country makes everyone a potential victim irrespective of social or economic class. Kidnapping for ransom thrives in Nigeria because material incentive and opportunities are there, the security system is abysmally inadequate therefore criminals are incentivized to continue their criminal acts without any visible consequence and accountability. Kidnapping is the act of holding a person captive to make them offer something (cash/ransom) for their release or freedom. The motivation for kidnapping could be driven by monetary gain or politics. There are different types of kidnapping however in Nigeria, the main form of kidnapping is for ransom or ritual. This paper reviewed literature on the topic to understand the increasing trend of kidnapping in Nigeria and why Nigeria security agencies have not been able to curb kidnapping crimes. It used secondary data collected in the 36 states in Nigeria and Abuja from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022 on kidnapping. These data were also used to compare data collated by SBM Intelligence, in ten states in Nigeria, 2020. Findings revealed similarities in the outcome in 2020 and 2022 kidnapping data. It identified a high level of insecurity



in Nigeria, and ineffectiveness of the security agencies, which continue to foster kidnapping crime including associated problems with the 2023 general election. Nigeria has endemic and deteriorating socio-economic, political problems, and impact of major natural/human-induced disasters are also triggers of kidnapping. Recommendation and conclusion identified early warning systems as one of the mechanisms to prevent kidnapping and willingness of FGN (Federal Government of Nigeria) to keep peace and maintain safety to protect the nation from disasters and emergencies.

**Keywords:** Kidnapping, National Threat, National Security

### **Introduction**

Kidnapping has become a reoccurring disaster in Nigeria, Fage and Alabi (2017) defined kidnapping as the “forceful or fraudulent abduction of an individual or a group of individuals for reasons ranging from economic, political and religious to (struggle for) self-determination”. According to Hostage US (2017), kidnapping is described to be continuously evolving, spreading geographically and numerically on the international stage. An international security company, Constellis revealed non-conflict developed countries with sizable economies and effective government framework are ranked as either high or very high in kidnapping (Grimm 2017).

Kidnapping is not new in Nigeria, Okoli (2021) ranks Nigeria among the kidnapping hotspots of the world. Kidnappers create fear in individuals and most often people innocently divulge information to kidnappers, which they use to carry out their criminal acts. As Nigeria continues to experience a surge in crime, kidnapping for ransom and robberies, which formally predominated security threats in the Southeastern states in Nigeria have now spread across other states in the country. Idam and Emeh (2022) reported “Bandits have taken over the entire country, kidnapping and maiming innocent Nigerians who are already enmeshed in an unprecedented economic hardship that has seen a dollar rise to ₦682 and price of things in the market tripled”. Ekechukwu and Osaat (2020) responded that among other cases of criminal activities in Nigeria, kidnapping is identified to be most lucrative yet technical in nature; however, it is mostly widespread in the North East and South South of the country due to oil business relations with foreigners.



Kidnapping is a capital offence punishable by law in Nigeria, and it would have been expected to find the Nigerian Police Force (NPF) to be at the forefront curbing and controlling the growing trend of kidnapping across the nation. According to Karimu (2014) researchers are of the view that criminals and kidnapers are beating the NPF in the criminal game. Premium Times (2022) reported that kidnapping for ransom has become attractive because about 95% of those involved go scot-free and enjoy the derived monetary rewards. Hence combination of all these has made kidnapping a threat to national security in Nigeria.

This study becomes relevant considering the level of insecurity in Nigeria, it has used extensive literature review and secondary data to understand the increasing trend of kidnapping in Nigeria and why Nigeria security agencies have not been able to curb kidnapping crimes. Data is collected over six months on trends of kidnapping in all the 36 states and Abuja, (Federal Capital) from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022. Study also used data on kidnapping from SMB Intelligence in ten states in Nigeria, 2020 for comparison and to identify similarities in the trends of kidnapping in 2020 and 2022 in Nigeria.

Kidnapping is not a recent event in Nigeria; it is a recurring crime and a threat to national security. It was prevalent in the South East and South South of Nigeria, but it has now spread to other parts of the geopolitical zones of the country. Kidnapping a major contributory factor of insecurity, bearing in mind Nigeria is a complex nation with foundational problems since 1914, amalgamation of the country. Nigeria is made up of over 200 million people with over 250 diverse and autonomous ethnicities, and diverse religions. It has initiated ethnic and cultural divisions, corruption, insurgencies, tribalism, and the likes, which makes kidnapping a problem that has attracted involvement of the international benefactors. Nigeria has laws, policies, and frameworks in place to curb crimes in principle, but in practice it is known for poor monitoring, enforcement, policing, and poor collaboration between security operatives, and stakeholders.

Kidnapping and insecurity work hand in hand especially in Nigeria where this evil menace has continued to spread and escalate and has made perpetrators heartened to continue without caution as there is no consequence or penalty and most of them go unpunished and FGN's effort seems not enough.

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Understandably there have been previous research and recommendations on kidnapping in Nigeria with varying topics. However, considering the escalating nature and trend of kidnapping, kidnappers appear to be emboldened to carry out their evil act and Nigerian security agencies have not been able to curb or reduce rate of kidnapping, which has led to significant threat to national security. Therefore, there is need for more research that will guide all stakeholders such as security agencies, policy makers, local government, state government, federal government, NGOs, humanitarian actors etc. to manage this criminal act. Contribution of this study is to get further insight into the reasons, causal factors, and implications of kidnapping in Nigeria and for FGN to develop the desire to prioritize curbing kidnapping in Nigeria.

### **Methodological Approach**

This study utilized secondary data considering the scope and available resources and time to collate data (six months – 1st April 2022 to 30th September 2022). Sources of collection were from television, radio, and social media; however, it was majorly from television - TVC News and Channels TV. Data was also collated from other sources including NTA, Kogi State TV, Amiloated News, Radio Lagos, Platinum Radio (Keffi), and Peace FM.

Television was used in this study as the main source of data because information from television is reliable, it has specialist elements including topic, deliberation, and delivery of content. Television uses personnel who are current on trends on the topic discussed and provides informed reports. As in this study, kidnapped incidents reported on the television data were confirmed via other sources of news such as the internet and newspapers.

Limitation of this study is around the process of data collected over the six months, reason being information and data collated from television are mostly third party, one-way communication and content can be short lived. In addition, as individuals, we all have different backgrounds, which tend to influence our personalities, emotions and how we perceive and report situations. As such there is a high degree of personality influence whereby television presenters may not provide justification to certain topics if it goes against his or her belief. As in this study secondary data utilized are based on the information provided by the two major television stations TVC News and Channels Television.



### **Theoretical Discourse**

There are many contributory factors that lead to kidnapping such as corruption, unemployment, diminishing cultural values, poor leadership/vision, crime, fraud, reduced foreign investment and many more. National Multidimensional Poverty Index Report 2022 revealed Nigeria's poverty has exceeded World Bank projection – where there is hunger, food scarcity, farmers afraid to go to their farms, farm produce damaged and lost to disaster, joblessness, poor moral and the likes; surely there will be high risk and tendency for people to result to crimes.

Due to complexity of kidnapping, especially the recurrent nature without evidence of curbing the menace in Nigeria this study used three theories: Rational Choice, Aggression-Frustration and Separation and Loss Theories. They were used to having in-depth understanding of the act of kidnapping and the psychological impact on the victim. This is to provide a robust theoretical view considering – victim (kidnapped), perpetrator (kidnapper), family of victim and the community.

### **Rational Choice Theory**

The theory expresses how individuals make choices that serve them best, that is every choice made by any individual, such a person will first consider the costs, risks, and benefits of making that decision. Kidnapping is pre-determined, a kidnapper would have premeditated, planned, weighed up before the actual act of kidnapping. Such a choice to kidnap may seem irrational to another individual including the community but to the kidnapper it makes perfect sense because it is based on the kidnapper's desire or meet the planned act. Philosopher Adam Smith is considered the originator of Rational Choice Theory since 1776.

Due to limitations of Rational Choice Theory, there was a need to utilize additional theory to understand the behaviour and reason why a person or group carried out an act of kidnapping. Most of the time the act of kidnapping is carried out by more than 1 person and there is a high possibility that everyone involved do not have full information on the pros and cons of the kidnapping. This demonstrates one of the unrealistic assumptions and shortfall of Rational Choice Theory particularly around volume of information available to kidnapper, ability to process and make informed decision before the act of kidnapping. Hence, not every person/s involved in kidnapping has information readily available before the act.



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### **Aggression-Frustration Theory**

Frustration-Aggression Theory, this is also known as Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis. It is proposed by 5 scholars: John Dollard, Neal Miller, Leonard Doob, Orval Mowrer, and Robert Sears in 1939. It was later developed by Neal Miller in 1941 and Leonard Berkowitz in 1969 (Wikipedia). It is explained that "the occurrence of aggressive behaviour always presupposes the existence of frustration" it suggests that aggression does not occur without any form of prior frustration, and the assertion that frustration "always leads to some form of aggression" implies that aggression is a certain outcome of any frustration.

Social economic factors such as poverty, corruption, unemployment, diminishing cultural values, poor leadership/vision, crime, fraud, and the likes are the common factors that lead to frustration and associated aggressive actions and activities like kidnapping crimes. As rightly postulated by the scholars, the frustrated living condition of Nigeria suggests the violent behavior behind kidnapping. Likewise, Frustration-Aggression Theory has its limitations, arguably frustration does not always lead to aggression. This was demonstrated by Ravinder (1975) who used Mahatma Gandhi's ability to restrain himself from innate desires of frustration through Indian culture Satyagraha, which means "non-violent resistance" – this technique was used to denounce the principle of Frustration-Anger Theory. This succinctly illustrates frustration cannot necessitate or be the trigger for an act of kidnapping.

Combination of the two theories was used to understand some of the reasons behind the behaviour and actions that could have premeditated the act of kidnapping.

### **Separation and Loss Theory**

Separation and loss are at the core of attachment theory. Attachment Theory developed by Bowlby (1969) is a psychological theory. Bowlby used the term maternal deprivation to refer to the separation or loss of a mother, separation from or loss of parents or loved one due to death, divorce, incarceration, or removal to foster care including kidnapping.

Kidnapping is the abduction of a person from his/her family, community, or haven, it has a major impact on the psychology of the kidnapped and their family for ransom. A kidnapped person and family of the kidnapped both suffer psychologically, and it mostly

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leads to mental health including anxiety, depression, memory loss etc. For example, Chibok schoolgirls kidnapping 2014 remains a global shock and has a psychological impact – about 219 were reported kidnapped, to date 178 have been released or rescued and 98 remain in Boko Haram captivity.

### **Historical Search on Kidnapping in Nigeria**

Nigeria has been faced with conflicts, violence, insurgencies for decades traceable to Nigeria's independence, 1960. After the independence, Nigeria became an oil dependent country, which increased its vulnerabilities to oil price and supply shocks. These are contributory factors to government dependency on oil revenues, which has continued to perpetuate corruption, income inequality, crime, insurgencies, kidnapping, and security threats in Nigeria. This acknowledged what Townsend (2008) referred to as 'natural resource nationalism' when striving for returns from exploitation of crude oil.

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria is home to one of the largest world's oil reserves, it is the powerhouse of Nigeria's economy for revenue generation, through foreign exchange, bearing witness to violence, militancy, kidnapping and various crimes (Akpan, 2010). Ibaba (2008) recalled in the Niger Delta region, agitators took expatriates working with multinational oil giant hostage, to force oil companies operating there to carry out community development projects for the benefit of the host communities or force government into negotiations for more of economic benefits for the community/region in addition to accruing revenue to the federal treasury. This was the onset of kidnapping in Nigeria, but remember the oil and gas producing regions have not benefitted or improved the living conditions of the communities or better their lives. In 1990, youth in these oil producing regions embarked on an armed struggle against the government to address the grievances of oil pollution in their communities, poverty, and poor quality of living. Consequently, violence subsided with the Government's amnesty program introduced in 2009, but sadly the agitations have affected regions and they still face periodic violence in the urban areas.

There are still issues of struggle for oil wealth, sabotage/theft through oil siphoning and environmental harm/degradation oil bunkering, ethnic violence, neighbouring villages against each other and continuation of banditry and kidnapping in the regions. Its impacts have fueled violence between ethnic groups, causing the militarization of nearly the entire region by ethnic militia groups, Nigerian military, and police forces, notably the Nigerian Mobile

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Police. However, subsequent amnesty programs including Niger Delta Development Commission, Partnership Initiatives in Niger Delta etc. to foster Development of Security Framework to strengthen rural-urban security, and Security and Peace Element in these regions by the FGN over the years have not had significant progress.

Albert, Danjibo and Albert (2020) categorized evolution of kidnapping into three stages: at the initial stage, expatriate oil workers were taken and political demands made for their release; 2<sup>nd</sup> stage of kidnapping militants collect ransoms for releasing their captives and use money collected to finance their insurgency against the government and the last stage – militant course of kidnapping to negotiate with government was hijacked by some criminal elements and turned it to a form of extortionate terrorism. This has led to current trends/threats of kidnapping, which the Nigerian government no longer has the capacity to curb or manage. Albert, Danjibo and Albert (2020) concluded that not even the amnesty granted to the Niger Delta militants in 2009 and other parts of Nigeria has been good enough to stop what now appears to be career criminality.

Rationale for this study is to evidence historically that, Nigeria have been experiencing kidnapping since the time of oil boom when oil companies have been operating in the country, the trend and threat have increased and there is no evidence that suggest Nigerian security agencies have the strategy or expertise to curb kidnapping or that the FGN has the will to tackle or curb the crime.

### **Current Discourse on Kidnapping**

Due to the prevalence of kidnapping and impact on national security, Mahmoud, Ibrahim, and Mustapha (2021) in their paper reported Nigeria is ranked in the global index as one of the worst places to dwell. Ngwama, (2014) revealed the impact of kidnapping and other associated crimes is becoming worrisome and perplexing not only to Nigerians but to the international community. Kidnapping is an act of holding a person captive to make them offer something in return for their release (Okoli 2021). It is a social problem defined as the illegal act of taking someone against their will and keeping them as a prisoner to acquire money or another form of payment in return for their release (Nwagboso, 2012).

According to Ugwuoke, Ajah and Onyejegbu (2020) Nigeria is internally at discord this reveals present divisions, which demonstrate current violent crime patterns in Nigeria. Ibrahim and Ahmad (2020) brought to light irresponsibility of the Nigerian government addressing

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impaired social structures including quick money syndrome, unemployment, narcotics influence, etc. which influence heinous crimes such as kidnapping in the country. Tukur, Hamza, and Yahuza (2020) study revealed motives for the formation of 'Yan Bula Vigilante Group and other vigilante groups to fight against kidnapping in rural and metropolis of Kaduna State was due to menace and ineffectiveness of security agencies. Correspondingly Oxford Analytica. (2022) discovered in recent months there is high profile of acts of violence in Plateau State (neighboring state to Kaduna) which reflects a trend of growing rural violence in north-central states (referred to as the Middle Belt), this contributes to regional security problems in the country. Tayo (2022) gave accounts of economic and political security threats to the country which are causative factors in banditry and kidnapping in Nigeria. Nigeria's debt sustainability and high unemployment are also major concerns in the increase in trends of criminality. In addition, there is political rift evidenced in the agitations for a Biafran State and an Oduduwa Republic, which has escalated into violent confrontations between the secessionists, security forces and ordinary citizens (Tayo, 2022).

Conversely, kidnapping in Nigeria has spread across the country with concerning implications for national security and Nigeria unity. It is a crime that involves ransom and armed robberies countrywide, the military is overstretched, and the police need deep institutional reform (Ekechukwu and Osaat 2020) at all levels. Considering the surge in kidnapping that cuts across all regions of Nigeria, Boko Haram Terrorists group has proven that "kidnapping for ransom" is one of the ways of growing its economy with the Kidnap of Chibok and Dapchi girls among other prominent cases of kidnapping orchestrated by the sect (NkemdilimOgbuehi, 2018).

The federal and state governments have implemented some measures to curb kidnapping in Nigeria. However, the menace persists due to challenges militating against the efforts of the government, which include Socio-Economic Deprivations, Poor Criminal Justice System, Porous Borders, and Lack of Cooperation and Intelligence Sharing among Agencies (Ikechukwu Anthony KANU and Agbo 2022).

### **Act of Kidnapping**

For kidnapping to take place it involves:

- i. Intention to kidnap
- ii. Unlawfully taking away of a person or group of persons
- iii. Consent is not granted – makes it a crime

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- iv. Persons or group or persons are unlawfully taken away from their home/community
- v. Persons or group of persons taken away are deprived of Human Right

### **Types of Kidnapping in Nigeria**

Kidnapping is a criminal act, it has criminal intent, causation, harm, and an attendant circumstance. It takes place in different shapes and manners, and it involves individuals and groups for whatever reasons known to them for committing such grievous criminal acts hence there are diverse types of kidnapping.

Kidnapping can be social, ransom or ritual it is based on category and intention:

1. Political kidnapping – is conducted to obtain political concessions from security forces or governments (Wikipedia). For example, an opposition party can kidnap an incumbent party into disarray and cause a setback.
2. Boko Haram Kidnapping - Boko Haram is an Islamic sect that continues to wage war against Federal Republic of Nigeria to create a "pure" Islamic state ruled by sharia law. April 2014, Boko Haram kidnapped 276 female students from their school - Government Girls Secondary School, Chibok, Borno State, Nigeria, and other series of mass kidnapping in the country but majorly in the northeastern part of Nigeria.
3. Commercial Kidnapping – large scale kidnapping of people. It can be from offices, buses, trains, etc. involving ransom on a commercial scale.
4. Fulani Herdsmen Kidnapping - Fulani herdsmen or Fulani pastoralists are nomadic or semi-nomadic Fulani people whose primary occupation is raising livestock (definition.net). Sadly, in Nigeria there have been reported incidents of Fulani herdsmen perpetrating and involved in kidnapping for ransom and destruction of farms/farmlands. For example, in Umunneochi Local Government Area, Abia State, the youth leader lamented incidents of herdsmen kidnapping have become a daily routine (Vanguard, July 2022).
5. Kidnapping by Cesarean - is the unlawful kidnapping of a newborn baby by a person who causes the forcible delivery of the baby by cesarean section without the mother's consent.
6. Digital Kidnapping – this is through social media; kidnapers can locate and target anyone who has left a digital paper trail for them to follow. It is a sophisticated way of kidnapping.
7. Child Kidnapping – recent report by UNICEF indicated that about 1,436 children were abducted in Nigeria between 2020 and

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2022 (UNICEF 2022). Children kidnapped from their caregiver or parents.

8. Ritual Kidnapping – ritual kidnapping is on the rise in Nigeria today and has become a pain and deep sorrow for families of the victims. It involves human body parts, such as the head, genitals, breasts etc. used for sacrifice for wealth, fortune, or political positions (Payments, 2022). Nigerian police intermittently expose individuals and groups caught with human body parts who disclosed publicly that they use body parts of kidnapped victims for rituals, or they sell them.

### **Causes of Kidnapping in Nigeria**

Nigeria is a developing country in West Africa with about 202 million population, known to have one of the greatest populations of youth across the globe. It ranked 143 among 163 independent nations and territories, according to the level of peacefulness by the Global Peace Index, 2022. In the paragraphs below are some of the major causes that continue to lure people into kidnapping in Nigeria.

Yusuf and Abdullahi (2020) reported that since the amalgamation of the country in 1914, it had been problematic to unify Nigeria as a society into a unified political entity. Nigeria has a population of over 200million, 500 different languages, 250 distinct ethnic groups and cultures. Due to the complex nature of Nigeria, Yusuf and Abdullahi stated that it remains unattainable to unify all ethnic groups, religions, and cultures in Nigeria. Complexity and nature of Nigeria has made it to be one of the primary causes of all sorts of contemporary crimes including banditry and kidnapping in the country. In the same vein Oluwatobi, (2018) succinctly puts it that “the continued crises in the polity and corrupt practices that characterizes Nigerian state overtime reveals a diminishing state of accountability and ethical values which has its foundation in emergence of the Nigerian state”. In essence it is the primary cause of insecurity in the nation and consequence of poverty, unemployment, brain drain/migration etc. in the country.

Kidnapping in Nigeria is associated with social economic factors including corruption, unemployment, diminishing cultural values, poor leadership/vision, crime, fraud, reduced foreign investment and many more. These are contributory factors that perpetuate banditry and kidnapping in Nigeria, and a major threat and concern to national security. National Multidimensional Poverty Index Report 2022 revealed Nigeria's poverty has exceeded World Bank projection – where there is hunger, farmers afraid to go to their farms and their produce damaged and lost to disaster, unemployment, and the likes; surely there will be high risk and tendency for people to result in



crimes. Kidnapping in Nigeria today is seen as a lucrative 'job' – kidnappers commit their evil acts but when captured it is either they escape or are released through corrupt connections. What happened in Kuje Prison, Abuja is a good example, Premium Times (July 2022) reported that "about half of the escapees are still at large including over 60 Boko Haram terrorists".

Security system in Nigeria is weak. Security personnel especially Nigerian Police lack morale and motivation – they are not adequately trained or equipped for their job and their salaries/benefits have not encouraged them. Nigerian police uniform does not command respect designated to it, Nigerian police are not proactive or perform their duties or secure the people, which is why a typical policeman on a roadblock demands for money publicly from people they are meant to protect. Most of the police stations in Nigeria do not have mode of transportation or communication required to carry out their duties. Level of insecurity in Nigeria has made kidnapping to become the norm such that even employed/unemployed, young, old, poor, rich, including state governors and their security/entourage trail are all vulnerable and possible victims of kidnapping.

Political influence in Nigeria is also accounted as a major cause of kidnapping especially when politicians lure individuals into crime for quick money. In addition, ongoing concerns in Niger Delta region resulting from associated inequity, pollution, hardship, creation of militancy of youth ready to fight for their cause of injustice in the region continue to be causal factors of kidnapping in Nigeria. Lack of effective disaster management is a potent causal factor to the prevalence of crimes in Nigeria. Roy (2010) in his paper identified that crimes are more likely to rise following disasters in the years that are close to an election year - further to occurrence of any type of disaster (natural/human-made), this imposes tremendous economic and social losses on the affected community/regions. This activates provision of incentives and relief from government and other humanitarian actors. Unfortunately, provision of incentives such as food, shelter, health facilities, education system and other humanitarian support attracts corruption, a contributory factor to kidnapping. Globally we have had humanitarian actors kidnapped, according to the Aid Worker Security Database around 461 aid workers were victims of major attacks in 2021 and these are only reported cases.

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## **Impact of Kidnapping in Nigeria**

Considering the prevalence of abduction in Nigeria, the word 'kidnapping' is now domesticated and generic, both young and old, rich, and poor talk of incidents of kidnapping on the street, in the market, church, mosque, offices and communities. Amount of fake and factual news on kidnapping from social media has increased genuine fear and concerns in every household as no one is sure of who will be the next victim of kidnapping. Ekwe (2021) pointed out that the paradox of Nigeria's peaceful co-existence and the smooth conduct of 2023 general elections can only be redressed through decisive actions towards alleviating the suffering of the masses and dissociation from state security apparatuses to suppressing lawful agitations.

Kidnapping has a negative impact on lives, family, communities, regions, government, including diaspora community. In Nigeria, kidnapping is used to settle scores between incumbent and opposition parties especially at locations/regions where they have weak results. Criminal activities including kidnapping are used to deter people from coming out to vote on the day of election. For example, during the last gubernatorial primary election in Ogangan, Atakumosa East Central local government, Osun State April 2022, there was an attempt to kidnap the ruling party chairman of that local government. Kidnappers were reported to have planned to threaten and frighten the community from coming out to vote, but the chairman was sadly killed during the kidnapping operation, and the deceased house was reportedly turned upside down (Daily Post, 2022). In a separate incident close to this community in Odogbo-ljesa, Atakumosa East local government area of Osun State. It was reported that the opposition party pulled out a man from the voting line, waiting to be counted during the gubernatorial primary election and shot him dead (Ripples Nigeria, 2022). These are tactics used to create fear in the communities and deter people from exercising their right to vote or attend to their daily living activities.

For as long as Nigeria has unresolved kidnapping issues traced back to 1990 in the Niger Delta region, this suggests that Nigeria has underlying problems within its National Security Council. In principle the National Security Council is responsible for the management of the national security vital to the very survival of the country including threats from neighboring countries, infiltration from terrorist groups or global economic trends that comprise the nation's socio-economic activities. However, in Nigeria this responsibility appears to be lacking as the department is not acting to expected standards. Clearly



Nigeria is a complex nation that requires a specialist/skilled security system to manage and reduce the dynamic and fluctuating security settings of the country. Presently as kidnapping incidents increase, it escalates national insecurity with direct impact on living conditions, socio-economic and environmental concerns as things continue to get worse daily. It is vital to mention that the recently completed general election in Nigeria (2023) and its associated problems has heightened insecurity and threat to national security.

Failed intelligence and poor communication systems in Nigeria continue to promote kidnapping including other crimes, which makes it a huge threat and concern to national security. Nigeria lacks a unified/inclusive security system, there is no inter-agency collaboration or transparent joint work/force expected to facilitate swift/immediate response to crime incidents, and there is no evidence of consistent empathy to the victims and affected communities in Nigeria. Therefore, there will continue to be a prolonged cloud of uncertainty, increase in fear and people forced to migrate from the country.

Chima and Joseph (2022) pointed out that despite efforts to curb insecurity in Nigeria, and curb the menace of kidnapping, their study revealed that existing digital security solutions in Nigeria are not fit for purpose. They succinctly put it that Nigeria has existing primary challenges including insufficient trained personal, predated ICT equipment, injustice, lack of political will, irresponsibility of government, mismanage priority and a typical Nigeria has lost hope/trust in the government, all these are contributory factors that continue to hinder success of Nigeria's security system.

In addition, Nigeria is a divided nation with varied ethnic/cultural differences and challenges, everyone talks mainly about negative aspects of the nation, nothing about strength or positive aspects, people talk and focus on insecurity, kidnapping, migration, unemployment etc. this creates fear and easily puts the country into depression. A survivor of kidnapping or anyone who has witnessed a kidnapping incident, or a victim of kidnapping most often experience post-traumatic stress disorder and without proper medical intervention it may lead to significant mental health problems with long term impact on the person's quality of life. Kidnapping in the nation, community and in the neighborhood, creates fear and it increases anxiety in the community.

Finally, it is important that the recurring problems in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria are resolved as identified in this paper and other literature. Kidnapping originated from the Niger Delta region of Nigeria

with a disastrous impact to the communities in the region and the whole country at large. It is not good enough for the people in the region to be subjected to systemic injustice, economic hardship, agitation for resource control and growing youth militancy. It can be concluded that identified socio-economic and political factors have increased insecurity and promoted kidnapping and other crimes in Nigeria. This confirms the impact of kidnapping and other crimes, on people and their perceived reaction and attitudes, which is now a threat to national security.

**Findings and Data Analysis** (4 figures are used to explain the outcome):

According to the Global Peace Index, 2022, the level of peace ranked for Nigeria has significantly dropped and cause for concerns for the government, which is why this study is useful for such a time as this in Nigeria with a general election and increase in insecurity. Results collated from this six-month study correlates to SBM intelligence data. The findings are remarkable, a useful outcome as an early warning system to inform and mitigate a peaceful pre and post - general election 2023 and to promote national security.

**Fig 1:** Top 10 states by number of kidnap incidents. Data sources: SBM

STATE	NUMBER OF KIDNAP INCIDENTS
Rivers	120
Kaduna	117
Delta	96
Bayelsa	85
Borno	82
Kogi	59
Edo	55
Ondo	54
Katsina	52
Taraba	47

**Source:** Intelligence, ACLED, CFR (Morgen 2020).

**Fig 2:** Kidnapping Over 6 months – 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022

State	Date	Location	Time	Type of Kidnapping	No of Victims	Security	Media
Anambra	16/5/22	State Assembly	?	Gun men	1	?	Channel TV
Bauchi	20/6/22	Toro		Gun men	2	Comm of Police	Channel TV
	13/4/22	Ahor	06.30	Gun men x 6	7	Special sward	NTA, TVC & Channel
Edo	24/6/22	Farm		Gun men	22		RADIO NIGERIA
FCT	20th Jun, 16th Jul, 3rd Aug 10th Aug	4 LGs	5pm	Bandit, Terrorist	46	Com of Police	
Kaduna	04/9/22	Jibril LG	05.17	Bandit	3		Channel TV
Katsina	6& 8/7/22, 05/08/22	Okene	20.00	Gun men	7	Collaboration Police & Navy	TVC & Kogi State TV
Kogi	05/7/22	Quarry			1	Comm of Police	TVC
Kwara	16/8/22			Gun men	1	Collaboration of securiy	Platinum Radio Keff
Nasarawa	14/6/22 & 22/09/22	Ewekoro			5	Tactical Team of Police	Radio Lagos
Ogun	03/9/22	Ose LG		Terrorist	32	Police	
Ondo	20/6/22	Mangu LG		Bandit	1	State Police	Peace FM
Plateau	28/6/22 & 02/9/22	Maru LG		Bandit	1 + Unspecified No	Police & Tactical Police	Channel TV
Zamfara							

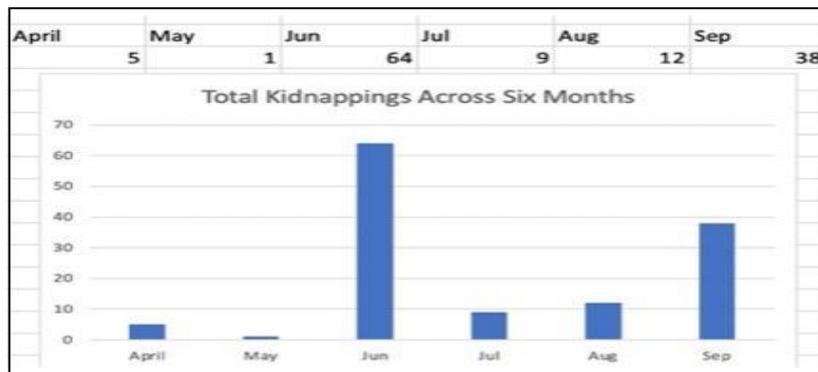
**Fig 3:** Out of the 36 states and FCT, 13 states had kidnapping incidents

1	Anambra	1
2	Bauchi	2
3	Edo	7
4	FCT	22
5	Kaduna	46
6	Katsina	3
7	Kogi	7
8	Kwara	1
9	Nasarawa	1
10	Ogun	5
11	Ondo	32
12	Plateau	1
13	Zamfara	1
14	Total	129

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36 States			
13 States			

**Fig 4: Bar Chart of Kidnapping Over 6 Months**



In Fig 1, is the copy of the table of SBM Intelligence on kidnapping in Nigeria, 2020 showing ten states with the number of kidnapped incidents.

Figure 2 depicted all the states with kidnap incidents for the six months period with incidents dates of kidnapping, location of kidnapping, time of incident, type (gun/banditry/terrorism/kidnapping), number of victims, security operative that attended scene of kidnapping and source of information. Table revealed missing information from collated data, which is part of the limitation of secondary data, however missing information also justified identified concerns in this write up affecting effectiveness of the security system in Nigeria. For example, time of incident is missing for 9 out of the 13 states of reported incidents, and security operatives were not recorded to have attended to some of the scenes. This confirmed some of the causal problems of kidnapping discussed in this study – no arm of security operatives was at some of the kidnap scenes, of course this increases the level of insecurity, it emboldens kidnapers, and increases fear in the community.

Figure 3 clearly itemized all the states affected in the six months of study and out of the 36 states and Abuja, only 13 states had occurrence of kidnapping. Kaduna state had the highest number of

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46 out of 129 of kidnapped victims (33%), followed by Ondo State at 32 victims (25%) and Abuja had 22 victims (17%). Morgen (2020) provided information on kidnapping from June 2011 to March 2020, in their study Rivers State had 120 victims followed by Kaduna with 117 victims. Comparatively, there is a trend and increased concern for Kaduna State with a suggested early warning signal that requires the response and intervention of all stakeholders including Nigerian National Security Council to protect lives and property in the state and the nation.

Bar chart in fig 4 revealed that in the month of June, there was a significant rise in the number of kidnapped victims followed by September. Due to the scope of this study, there is no clear reason for the spike in the month of June, however June 12 is recognized as Democracy Day in Nigeria – further to the annulment of June 12<sup>th</sup>, 1993, election. It remains a remarkable day in the history of Nigeria, with these findings it is inevitable to recommend further research that can identify reasons for the relationship between the Democracy Day and increase in kidnapping in Nigeria in the month of June.

Considering post traumas and upheavals of election 2023, this study is apt and above data analysis revealed evidence and causal factors of kidnapping in Nigeria. It demonstrates significance and occurrence are different from state to state. It also echoed the level of insecurity in Nigeria - security personnel did not attend to all reported incidents of kidnapping in the 13 states. Kaduna came up in both studies and confirms the need to respond to the early warning signals of high activities of kidnapping in Kaduna State.

### **Conclusion**

Criminality, corruption, banditry, terrorism, and kidnapping are not peculiar to Nigeria. This paper will undoubtedly serve immediate and future needs of Nigerian citizens, foreigners and humanitarian actors and benefactors for the advancement of peace, security of persons and mitigation for improving national security.

This paper evidenced lack of patriotism, and communal determination in the nation, and it also revealed lack of individual and collective ownership to bring Nigeria out of the current pit of self-destruction into a better Nigeria. It is important that every Nigerian has a conviction of moral duty, be determined, and strive to rebuild Nigeria – a collective effort. As it has been revealed in this study that

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problems, trends, and impact of kidnapping are significant threats to national security.

Six months data collected over 36 states in Nigeria, highlighted kidnapping concerns in 13 states, Kaduna state had the highest kidnapped victims and month of June had the highest incidents. There are recurring kidnapping incidents across the country, spread of fear, citizens are not sure of who will be kidnapped next – Kidnapping is real! Fear demoralizes, which makes it necessary for an immediate response to the early warning signals from this study a requisite for mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery appropriate to conglomerate highlighted recommendations.

Warning signs have been identified through this study, recommendations have been provided and time for the Nigerian government to rise and protect its citizens. Of importance there is a big scope for scholars and academicians to research the reason for the spike in kidnapping in the month of June and high percentage of kidnapped victims in Kaduna State 2022. Response and mitigation must come up with strategies, policies, legal framework, and monitoring of laws as stated in the study to curb kidnapping, crimes, eradicate or reduce fake news and spread of fear in the country.

### **Recommendations**

Above findings revealed and confirmed threats and trends of kidnapping in Nigeria, this had triggered urgent need for Nigerian government, security, and other stakeholders to adhere to the early warning systems and how to respond to the signals. Bearing in mind Nigeria has witnessed recurring types of kidnapping including abduction of school children, which has challenged the national security, and education development especially in the northeastern part of Nigeria. Ochoga and Nhenne (2022) identified early warning systems as a preventative mechanism to collect intelligence and an application to inhibit crimes in Nigeria.

Utilization of recommendations identified below combined with early warning systems will be beneficial for effective mitigation and response to kidnapping and protection of national security.

- I. Constructive implementation to curb crimes, increase public awareness of consequences of crimes, empowerment programs to stop ransom payment, remodification of community policing, and to put an end to proliferation of

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ammunition into Nigeria – it is believed that this will help reduce incidents of kidnapping.

- II. Inclusive policies for job and economic wealth creation through provision of job opportunities for graduates and non-graduates, skilled and unskilled is urgently required in Nigeria.
- III. Use of technological experts/expatriates and sophisticated gadgets to capture the geographical boundary of Nigeria and monitor the 'nook and corners' of the country to help reduce activities of kidnapping and other crimes. Introduction of automated policing including free telephone texts and alerts to report criminal activities, Closed Circuit Television (CCTV), Automated Fingerprint Information System (AFIS), and so on are also required.
- IV. Need for political will and government determination to curb kidnapping in Nigeria. Government must strive to seek international support and let go of the current pride of capacity and capability of managing crime, especially contemporary disasters including banditry, terrorism, and kidnapping.
- V. Corruption is high and security in Nigeria is porous but personal awareness and protection is required. Public vigilance, cautiousness, and determination to protect self/community cannot be overemphasized. Communities must watch out for anything unusual and reduce their vulnerabilities to kidnapping. Lately people have been sourcing for private/personal security but most often such people have ended up being victims of fraudsters and kidnapers.
- VI. Strategies to make kidnapping unattractive will help curb persons and groups being lured into kidnapping. Abolaji and Obileye (2021) recommended kidnapping must be made unattractive to the motivated offender. Thankfully, Nigerian Senate passed the Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2013 (Amendment) Bill, 2022, into law – Sec 14 was particularly amended to curb kidnapping: *"Anyone who transfers funds makes payment or colludes with an abductor, kidnapper or terrorist to receive any ransom for the release of any person who has been wrongfully confined"*. Michael Opeyemi Bamidele, is of the view that the recent bill to make ransom payment punishable by law will discourage and deter



kidnappers and rising spate of kidnapping in Nigeria (Al Jazeera News, 2022). However, this act of banning ransom payment has caused mixed feelings in the country as some people see it as annihilating kidnap victims and leaving them to their fate in the hands of the kidnappers. For example, in the United Kingdom as part of the country's counter terrorism and security bill they do not tolerate ransom payments.

- VII. In Nigeria of today, it appears that committing a crime is far greater than its risks or hazards – this must stop, criminals should be punished, currently only a few criminals are ever arrested and prosecuted. Aghedo (2015) echoed this and revealed that kidnapping has become a lucrative business employed by many as a survival strategy amidst socio-economic situations in Nigeria. Interestingly, it is almost like there is more opportunity and incentive for criminality in Nigeria as criminals carry on with impunity due to lack of expertise in reprimanding them.
- VIII. Kidnapping is a national problem and requires national intervention from bottom - up and top – bottom. As a matter of urgency Nigerian police stations must be equipped to facilitate and improve their response to crimes - instant security response operatives will help reduce/stop the crime.
- IX. Nigerian government to provide a Specialist Kidnap Response Unit in all police stations across the country, trained and equipped specifically for kidnap crimes. These units must be solely for kidnapping that will collaborate and join force with other kidnap units to promote effectiveness.
- X. Unity and participation of Federal, State, Local Government, and Private Sectors, CSO and NGOs (non-governmental organizations) must come together and develop human capital, health services, improve skills, and an inclusive nation where everybody is free to contribute to the progress of their communities without fear of being kidnapped and killed.
- XI. Finally, the Nigerian government must rise to responsibility, meet its primary role, and protect its citizens and their properties.



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