PREVALENCE AND CONSEQUENCES OF KIDNAPPING IN SOUTHERN TARABA STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Kidnapping is one of the security challenges Nigeria is faced with and Taraba State is not an exception. Extant literature on kidnapping have mostly captured the discourse on kidnapping from the prism of its historization and causes with paucity of research with regards to the prevalence and consequences especially as it affects Southern Taraba State, Nigeria. This paper therefore, examines kidnapping from its prevalence and consequences on the citizenry in Southern Taraba State Nigeria. The study was anchored on routine activity theory. Exploratory research design was adopted using qualitative method (key Informant Interview and In-depth Interview) for the collection of data. The sample size for this research comprised groups that were either directly or indirectly affected by the cases of kidnappings within the study area. Two sampling procedures involving purposive and snowballing sampling procedures guided this research in the selection of participants.

The study found kidnapping to be very high in Southern Taraba giving it a 'Hobbesian state'- of life been 'brutish, nasty and short'. It results to waste of human and material resources, increased social disharmony and fear, decline of agricultural trading and commercial activities - which has consequences on youth employment, poverty eradication and food security. The study suggests increased security surveillance, community policing, increased youth employment and poverty eradication as a panacea.

Introduction

Globally, kidnapping is not a new phenomenon as the trend is on the increase all over the world, with myriads of associated consequences. Kidnapping as a violent criminal offence, is a rather complex phenomenon which began with the origin of man since time immemorial (Adewale, 2009). It takes place in various contexts and for various reasons. It is the forcible seizure, taking away and unlawful detention of a person against his/her will irrespective of the person's socio-demographic characteristic. As posited by Inyang and Abraham (2013), it is a criminal offence because of the fact that the victim is kept without his consent.

To show the global representation and reflection of kidnapping, the Global Slavery Index (2014) reported that in several European countries, the percentage of kidnapping varies. For example, in Ukraine it is 34%, Yemen 53%, Syria 48%, Estonia 33%, Iraq 45%, Norway 37%, and Denmark 32%. Similarly, as reported by News Telegraph (2021), Nigeria currently is witnessing one of the highest rate of kidnapping for ransom aside countries like Venezuela, Mexico, Yemen, Syria, the Philippines, Iraq, Afghanistan and Somalia. The involvement of organized militant groups such as militants, bandits, and Boko-Haram in kidnappings and the usage of abduction as the oxygen of their insurgency births the upsurge of this criminality. These groups engage in mostly group abduction as means of generating funds to sustain its activities (https://www.tori.ng/news/178580/kidnappers-bandits-make-n20bn-in-just-two-years-re.html).

In Nigeria, kidnapping is one of the major security challenges that have ravaged the country in the recent past. As averred by Ogbuehi (2018), Ibrahim and Mukhtar (2017) and Adewale (2009), kidnapping is becoming the new 'normal' in Nigeria and this is worrisome because many people have continue to suffer from this malady. This form of criminality as posited by Thomas and Nta (2009) is the highest form of robbery. They view kidnapping as a systematic robbery that comes with more profit than armed-robbery (Thomas and Nta, 2009). The gain from this form of criminality serves as a motivation for both the active and passive participants.

Kidnapping started gaining popularity in Nigeria when the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger-Delta (MEND) began the kidnapping of expatriate oil workers. This began in the late 2005 as way of drawing the attention of both the local and international community to the perceived injustices, exploitation, marginalization and underdevelopment of the oil rich region by the Nigeria government (Onduku, 2001).

The cases of kidnapping have been on a steady ascendancy in the last decade since it began in the Niger Delta region (Chidi, 2014). Between 2008 and 2010, the Nigerian police force recorded 887 cases of kidnapping across the country (Action on armed violence, 2013). In an attempt to give a representation of the motives behind kidnapping by regions in Nigeria, Uzoma and Nwanegbo (2014) contend that kidnapping in south eastern Nigeria is limited to economic issues, while the dominant factor for kidnapping in the south-south region is environmental struggle.

Today, every region of the country is faced with this menace, recording massive attacks on daily basis. As contended by Chidi (2014), kidnapping - a scourge which was hitherto not obtainable in Nigeria has now gained prominence and is spreading throughout the six geo-political zones of the country. Recent major cases of kidnapping include the Boko-Haram kidnap of Chibok School Girls in 2014 and Dapchi school girls in 2018. Others recent ones carried out by bandits in 2021 include the Unity School Birnin Yauri students' abduction, Greenfield University students, and Federal College of Forestry Mechanization Kaduna students among several other cases of both group and individual kidnappings. To show the prevalence of this menace Ogbuehi, (2018) reported that Nigeria recorded 1177 cases of kidnappings between the years 2016 and 2017. Recent report indicates that Nigerians have paid billions to kidnappers and bandits from different parts of the country. It was reported by Telegraph that kidnappers and bandits from 500 attacks between January 2019 to May 2020 collected over N20 billion as ransom. This is up from N9 billion it made between June 2011 and March 2012 (https://www.tori.ng/news/178580/kidnappers-bandits-make-n20bn-in-just-two-years-re.html).

In Nigeria and many other developing countries of Africa and Asia, political factors, poverty, limited employment opportunities among the youths serves as drivers to the involvement and ascendancy of this menace. Economic deprivation, greed and quest for money also serve as a push factor to kidnapping (Catlin Group, 2012). The widening scale of insecurity in Nigeria is a cause for concern as all are affected by it, including Churches, Mosques, markets, schools, homes and highways. The abductees and their families are left traumatized by the ordeal of kidnapping and foreign investors are scared away from Nigeria.

As a result of the rising spate of kidnapping, Nigerians are paying the price for the failure of its government whose responsibility is to safeguard the people. As opined by

Davidson (2010) the general state of insecurity in Nigeria has no doubt reached a stage where virtually everybody is now worried about the direction the country is going. Presently, hardly can people sleep because of the fear of being robbed or kidnapped and no day passes without the news of an abduction.

Pertinently, scholarship on the phenomenon of kidnapping in Nigeria, captures mostly the history and origin (Ogbuehi, 2018), its prevalence (Tade, Ojedokun and Aderinto2019; Chidi 2014), typology and nature (Okoli and Agada, 2014) causality such as poverty, politics, greed, quest, terrorism (Ibrahim and Mukhtar, 2017; Uzorma and Nwanegbo-Ben, 2014; File-Muriel, 2013), and consequences (Tade, Ojedokun and Aderinto, 2019) mostly in Southern Nigeria. While these extant studies delves mostly on the foregoing issues mostly in Southern Nigeria, there is dearth of literature on the prevalence and consequences of kidnapping especially in Taraba state Nigeria as most of the reports are anecdotal (newspapers). This study is therefore, premised on the aforementioned gap and specifically examines the prevalence and consequences of kidnapping in Southern Taraba State Nigeria.

Theoretical Anchorage

In order to understand the prevalence and consequences of kidnapping, this study adopted the routine activity theory (RAT), to appreciate why kidnapping is prevalent in southern Taraba. The routine activity theory was first propounded by Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson (1979). Routine activity theory remains one of the most influential theoretical approaches in criminology.

The theory opines that for crime committal, there must be convergence of three elements in time and space which are central. These three elements include motivated offenders, suitable targets and the absence of capable guardian (Yikwabs, 2019). As averred by Knepper (2007) Routine Activity Theory asks why people engage in crime rather than why people become victims. Unlike the psychological, biological, and other social factors that motivate crime committal, the routine activity theory views crime as an event, emphasizing its relations to space, ecological nature and the implications (Cohen, 1979).

This theory as posited by Madero-Hernandez (2012) “opportunity makes the thief” indicates that opportunity is very important for crime to occur even when there is a willing offender. This shows that crime cannot take place even when the most motivated offender is present except where he finds opportunity to do so. This theory gives an explanation of how chances for crime arise from the daily activities people carry to meet their needs (Madero-Hernandez, 2012). People are engaged in different daily routines like going to farms, churches, mosques, markets, ceremonies, travels, etc.- and these activities influences the possibility of their being kidnapped in this case (Madero-Hernandez, 2012).

Drawing from this theory it is glaring that the prevalence and consequences of

kidnapping in Southern Taraba is a direct product of the absence of capable guardianship. In the context of this study, the absence of security agents whose duty is to safeguard the people leads to the ascendancy in kidnapping. With different criminal elements who are motivated to commit crime and absence of capable guardianship, kidnapping becomes very rampant within the study area.

The suitable targets in this context are the inhabitants who engage in their daily routine of going to markets, churches, ceremonies, farms and travelling to meet ends need. Cases of kidnapping on farms, people traveling, in churches etc. shows the daily routine of the study population. Absence of capable guardians on the highways for example has led to series of kidnappings on the Wukari-Takum road. Therefore, the presence of capable guardian (security) has a major role to play in the prevention of this menace.

Literature Underpinnings

Kidnapping involves the unlawful abduction of individuals or group against their wish for either political or economic reasons. This menace is now very common in Nigeria such that hardly a day passes without any media reportage of one form of kidnapping. In showing the prevalence of this menace Catlin Group (2012), reported that more than 1,000 kidnappings occur yearly in Nigeria with many instances of under-reporting. The 'business' of kidnapping in Nigeria can be traced to what Townsend (2008) referred to as "natural resource nationalism" which is the tendency to seek bigger shares of the returns from nation's natural resources. From the foregoing, it is glaring that the view of Townsend was informed by the Niger Delta involvement in kidnapping of oil expatriates. However, this view may not be completely true today because this menace has moved beyond quest for appropriation of national resources. Other reasons now account for involvement in this form of criminality.

As opined by Omeje (2010), kidnapping trade is a form of "accumulation politics". This suggests the possibility of the ruling class to be involvement in endless accumulation of natural resource rents accruing from the owner's region through deliberate act of marginalization and deprivation. Ironically, the fear of kidnapping has again contributed to the high demand for police escort by diverse public officials in the country, which in itself has led to depletion of the available police personnel that could have helped curtail the crime among the 'ordinary' populace (Soyombo, 2009).

A former Inspector General of Police, Mike Okiro, revealed that over 15 billion Naira have been paid as ransom to kidnappers between the year 2006 and 2009 (Kyrian, 2009). The huge sums of money spent as ransom could affect any state economy tremendously, as it could have been used for meaningful economic development. Also, the nation loses a lot of revenue when expatriates working in the multinational oil companies are attacked. Out of fear, people tend to steer clear from their work places

and the adverse effect is always on the economy. Dode (2007) corroborated that, in 2006, when kidnappers abducted six foreign expatriates from Shell Petroleum Development Company premises, the company was forced to close down and this led to the loss of millions of standard cubic feet per day of gas production for the country. At a more individual level, people live in perpetual fear as a result of this scourge. Many in rural communities cannot freely go to their farms or engage in their local trading activities because of fear of been kidnapped.

The issue of "moral decadence" and the "quest to get rich quick" syndrome has been identified as one among the causes of kidnapping. Inyang, (2009) asserted that, in Nigeria nobody ask questions on how people make their wealth; to him, a poor person today can show up with an expensive car tomorrow and nobody dare to question the sudden wealth. Also, people who have donated money to develop their communities are rewarded with chieftaincy titles thereby creating a wrong impression in the minds of Nigerian youths who thereafter take to kidnapping. The inconsistency between economic transparency and accountability in the running of normal government affairs and the desire to amass wealth among public office holders at different levels of government often also contribute to influencing kidnapping. They believe that, when those in government settings loot government treasury openly without fear, they too can as well take the laws into their hands by abducting people for ransom in order to live in luxury.

Further high rate of unemployment serves as a harbinger to kidnapping in Nigeria. Nigeria tertiary institutions churn out graduates at different levels yearly. These graduates only finish their education to realize that employment is a mirage. As averred by Inyang (2009), the prevalence of kidnapping in Nigeria is as a result of youth unemployment. Inyang captured this submission aptly with a saying that "an idle mind is the devil's workshop" to present glaring reality of the unemployment situation in Nigeria. These youths become source of recruitment for all forms of crimes experienced in the country. The frustration that accompanies unemployment births the motivation for youths to join all manner of ills to meet ends need. When the society and the government fail its citizens, it serves as catalyst to plethora of criminalities.

The proliferation of arms as a result of political patronage of miscreants who were used and dumped after elections may indirectly encourage and enhanced kidnapping (Inyang, 2009). Indeed, the activities of thugs used and dumped by politicians has aggravated kidnapping. These youths who are usually given all manner of weapons during elections are left with these weapons which they later used to perpetrate different heinous crimes such as banditry, kidnapping armed robbery among other social vices.

There is no doubt that poverty is the foundation for most of the challenges facing

people across the globe. Poverty and unemployment constitute a major social problem with dire consequences to security. This view is accentuated by Mukhtar, Mukhtar and Abdullahi, (2014), they opined that poverty is complex and multi-dimensional, encompassing material deprivation, unemployment, ill-health, and lack of education, vulnerability, powerlessness and social exclusion. The foregoing definition views poverty as the foundation for crimes such as kidnapping which is particularly true. Poverty and unemployment combined, increases the susceptibility of youths to joining activities of kidnapping, banditry and armed robbery.

From the foregoing, it is clear that literatures on the phenomenon of kidnapping captures mostly the origin, consequences and causes vis-à-vis southern Nigeria and recently northern Nigeria with little or no study on this discourse in southern Taraba state. This is the gap in knowledge that this study intends to fill.

Area of Study and Research Method

This study was carried out in Southern Taraba State in Nigeria. The Local Government Areas that make up the Southern Taraba State include Ussa, Wukari, Takum, Ibi, Donga and Yangtu Development Area. The region has different ethnic groups spread within the Local Government areas highlighted above. The major ethnic groups include Kuteb, Wapan, Ichen, Chamba, Tiv and Kpanzun among other ethnic groups. Most of these ethnic groups are popularly referred to as the Jukun.

Other ethnic groups found in this region are Hausa, Ibo, Ogoja, Idoma and several others. The traditional headquarters of Southern Taraba and the Jukun people is Wukari. It has an area of 4,308 km². It has the Kwararafa University and the Federal University located therein. The predominant occupations among the inhabitants of Southern Taraba State include civil service, farming, fishing and trading.

An exploratory research design was adopted using qualitative method (key Informant Interview and In-depth Interview) in the elicitation of data for this study. The sample size for this study was 19. These 19 respondents were purposively selected and they comprised persons that were either directly or indirectly affected by the cases of kidnappings within the study area. These included the direct victims, indirect victims (friends/relations) community leaders, and security personnel. These include 2 direct victims of kidnap, 1 indirect victim whose father was kidnapped, 2 security agents, 1 traditional leader, 3 politicians, and 10 members of the communities spread in three of the six local governments that make up southern Taraba.

Two sampling procedures involving purposive and snowballing sampling procedures guided this research in the selection of participants. This is as a result of the security situation of the state as well as the nature of the study. Therefore, persons who have been direct victims of

kidnappings were reached through snowballing. Community leaders were also used in getting to those they believe will have knowledge of the issue. Since it is a security problem, security personnel were selected to form part of the participants for this study.

Specifically, the study conducted 10 In-depth Interviews (IDI) and 9 Key Informant Interviews (KII). The KII was conducted among the direct victims and Security Personnel, politicians, and traditional leaders, while the IDI was conducted among members of the general public specifically from Wukari, Takum and Ibi Local Government Areas. These Local Government Areas were selected purposively because it registered higher incidences of kidnapping in Southern Taraba.

In the analysis of data, first, coding was done for recurrent words such as 'lion's den', 'kidnapping on daily bases' 'kidnapping everywhere' to form the theme 'prevalence of kidnapping'. Coding was also done for recurrent words like "affects farming", "markets affected" "no free movement" to form the sub-theme "effects of kidnapping in Southern Taraba." These were then subjected to thematic analysis and descriptively presented.

Prevalence of Kidnapping in Southern Taraba

The study found that kidnapping is very common in Southern Taraba. This menace take place in different locations like farms, places of worship, in houses, in business places to mention a few. Kidnappings on the highways account for most of the cases of kidnapping in this region as revealed by this study. Commenting on the prevalence of kidnappings in Southern Taraba, one of the Key Informant Interviewees who is a security agent puts it this way:

Southern Taraba state is a Lion's den; it is the most fearful region in the state. Kidnappings occur on weekly basis because there is never a week that there won't be reports of either an attempt of kidnapping or successful kidnapping. It is no longer news and it is frequently reported to us.

The kidnappings that take place on the highways, occurs mostly when commuters are stopped by the kidnappers and victims are diverted in to the forest. One of the victims of kidnappings in this region who is a student of Federal University Wukari recounted her experience in one of the incidences. In her words:

It happened around Chanchanji-Amadu village along Wukari-Takum road. Our car was stopped by three gun-men, who we thought were armed robbers but they were actually kidnappers…… They drove the car themselves after removing the driver, and then they took three of us, one male and two ladies to a forest. On our way the man started struggling to open the car door and somehow he managed to open it and came out. This made them stop the car and all the gun-men went down to chase him. They chased him into the forest shooting sporadically. Amidst the whole drama, the

two of us that were left in the car used that opportunity to escape.

From the above submission it shows that even students are not spared. Everybody is a potential victim irrespective of his/her ethnic, political, religious and class affiliation. What matters is the motive of the kidnappers which as will be discussed later could either be political, economic or ethnic related.

The contemporary security problem in Southern Taraba can best be understood against the backdrop of existing evidence which shows that every member of the society irrespective of his/her social status is not left out. Government officials whether executive, legislative and judiciary are targeted despite the tight security at their disposal. Religious leaders, traditional leaders and even commoners are not spared. This has led to some of these officials relocating their families outside the senatorial district thereby leaving the ordinary people at the mercy of the marauding gangs.

To foreground the above narration is the case of the kidnap and killing of a serving state legislative member in the person of Hosea Ibbi at Takum in 2017 (www.dailytrust.com.ng). The Taraba State House of Assembly Member was abducted in his house, located opposite the Nigerian Army barracks in Takum, the constituency he represents at the State legislative chamber. He was later brutally killed by his abductors even after ransom was paid for his release. Another case worthy of note is that of Alhaji Usman Mayo, a business man in Takum local government area who was also kidnapped in 2019 from his office at a filing station he owns in Takum (www.dailytrust.com.ng) .Similarly, the provost of the School of Health Technology Takum Mr. Fred Wayas was kidnapped on his way between Takum and Benue in Abwagei village in 2018. The Principal Medical Officer of Takum General Hospital Dr. Sunday Udoniyi was abducted in Kufai-Amadu along Takum-Wukari road and Barrister Obadiah Yabura, a Wukari based senior legal practitioner was also abducted on the Wukari-Takum road in 2019. Again, Dr. Audu the son of late Ukwe of Takum was travelling along Katsina-Ala-Takum road and was abducted (www.dailytrust.com.ng). These are few amongst many cases of kidnappings that took place within the study areas which has left the abductees and their families traumatized.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the incidences of kidnappings in Southern Taraba are manifested in different forms such as diversion of motorist on the highways and abduction of victims from their homes, farms, offices, and business places. This explains the reality of Southern Taraba senatorial district which has witnessed series of kidnappings running across all classes of the social strata. The rich and the poor have all been kidnapped. In the following section this study further examines the consequences of the prevalence of kidnapping in southern Taraba.

Effects of Kidnapping in Southern Taraba

The study found some of the effects of kidnapping among other things to include: increased fear and disharmony, declined economic and trading activities as well as a general decline in agricultural activities which is the linchpin of the region's economy.

i. Increased Fear and Social Disharmony

People in Southern Taraba are now living in perpetual fear of either being kidnapped or robbed. Interview with one of the participants whose father was kidnapped recounted her experience thus:

My father was kidnapped in Abwagei village between Takum and Benue State in 2019. I thought everything about my life and future was over because I lost my mum and didn't have anyone else to pay my fees again. I felt so bad to the extent that I told my elder sister that if anything happens to him I will just commit suicide because I don't know how my life will be without my dad. I was so touched and when my father was eventually released, we all continue to live in perpetual fear.

Another female in-depth interview participant opined that, kidnapping has affected free movement and speech in the zone. People are afraid of talking freely because they believe the kidnappers have spies everywhere. This increased fear in the people sometimes result to negative health consequences for individuals, especially those with existing health conditions.

The ordeal of the above participants depicts the fear and the psychological pain families of victims go through. Whenever a "bread winner" of a family is abducted, the relations and the immediate family members are left in despair and fear of what would happen next. The thought of whether the victim will be released or killed, further places the family in a very fragile state which could have social, health and psychological repercussions.

Kidnapping does not only instill fear at the level of individuals in Southern Taraba but also leads to suspicion, mistrust, hatred and stigmatization. This study also found that the kidnappings in Southern Taraba births ethnic mistrust which sometimes leads to ethnic violence. As a result of the ethnic dimension of kidnapping in Southern Taraba state, there is sharp social disharmony between the indigenous ethnic groups in the region. An in-depth interview participant asserts that, kidnapping in Southern Taraba state increases ethnic mistrust, ethnocentrism, hatred and primordial sentiments, deepens cycles of revenge, reduced cultural exchanges and erodes tolerance.

Another Key Informant Interviewee observed that:

It brings about ethnic disharmony in Southern Taraba. For example most of the victims in Ibi Local Government Area keep mentioning the name of a particular ethnic group as the perpetrators and that has made

the people to hate that ethnic group generally. It means stigmatization of even the innocent ones who are not involved in kidnapping.

The above narration only helps to picture the reality of how kidnapping has led to general ethnic mistrust, hatred, prejudices and reduced cultural exchanges between the ethnic groups. This indeed is a recipe for violence. It has led to social tensions along ethnic and religious lines which is now a time bomb.

ii. Decline in Trading and Economic Activities

There is a general consensus among the participants for this study on the fact that kidnapping has led to the general underdevelopment of Southern Taraba State. This underdevelopment is both social and economic. For example there is a general decline in the economic and trading activities in the district. Businesses in form of local trading that exist within this region have since declined as a result of the activities of kidnappers. Usually, traders travel to villages within the zone to buy and sale goods and services. But all these have taken a dip. A Key Informant Interview participant for this study who is a security agent observed that: kidnapping has weakened economic development of Southern Taraba. There is fear among potential investors because of the loss of lives and properties in the region.

Another Key Informant Interviewee commenting on the consequences of kidnapping in the region stated that:

As a result of kidnappings in Southern Taraba a lot of rice and 'Madrid' wood buyers who usually come from different parts of the country and the world have stopped coming to the zone because their safety is no longer guaranteed.

Businessmen and business outlets are taken to flight with their businesses for fear of the unknown in Southern Taraba State. This fear has economic, social, health and psychological implications. In Wukari for example, Skye Bank now Polaris Bank and GTBank have taken to flight as a result of the insecurity in the region.

No one will want to invest in a place where security is not guaranteed. This further increases the unemployment rate which is high in the country already. As businesses closedown, those who were hitherto gainfully employed lose their jobs and join the teaming unemployed youths back in the labour market.

The Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in March 2009 released a report that indicates that about 10 million Nigerians are without job. It defined the unemployed as the totality of persons who have the wherewithal to work but have none. This high rate of unemployment can be argued to have been partly the consequence of kidnapping as the menace has made businesses to fold up.

In a Key Informant Interview, a participant who is a Politician from Takum Local Government Area revealed that; kidnapping in the zone has affected commercial activities in the area and also leads to

forceful migration of some residents to areas of more clemency outside the region

Movement to places that are considered clement is necessary or coping strategies employed by some of the residents of Southern Taraba. All these has fertilized to economic instability and backwardness of the region. It has also led to political instability. Relocation of some residents, increased poverty, brought untold hardship among the inhabitants and has crippled the economic growth of the region.

iii. Decline in Agricultural Activities

This study found that there is a general decline in agricultural activities as a result of kidnappings. The linchpin of the economy of this region is agriculture. However, with the incessant kidnappings ongoing in this region, agricultural activities have been reduced drastically. People no longer feel safe going to their farms very early and leaving very late like it used to be. This study again found that because people have been kidnapped on their farms, there is a drastic reduction in the number of hours spent on the farms. To also cope with this precarious situation, some persons have devised a way of ensuring that they go to their farms in groups. This they believe helps avert abduction. What this means therefore is that, some persons will rather not go to farms when there are no persons to go with, - a "securitized" form of agriculture just to cope with cases of kidnapping.

The general implication from the above narration is that there is a general decline in the number of hours put into farming which could consequently and ultimately affect farm output. This could negate the zero hunger goal of sustainable development goal. Another key informant interviewee observed that: it has led to underdevelopment of the region. Nobody feels safe to invest his money when both he and the money are not safe. For example Sarkin-Kudu in Ibi Local Government Area has vast land. So many farmers all over the country come here to acquire land for farming. They come with modern equipment and open the vast forest for farming. But after sometime, kidnappers began kidnapping them and so they have all abandoned the farming and fled for their lives. The activities of these farmers would have opened up the area, increased employment and reduced youth redundancy. However, the reverse is the case as this has led to more youth unemployment which further has implications on the security of the region.

Discussion of Findings

The first objective of this study is to ascertain the prevalence of kidnapping in southern Taraba State, Nigeria. This research found kidnapping in Southern Taraba as very common. Cases of kidnappings are very high. The situation is similar to the general alarming state of kidnapping in the country. This study further gives credence to an earlier submission by scholars like Davidson (2010) and Chidi (2014) who contend that the general state of security in Nigeria is frightening. It is now worrisome that people no longer have peace. People are now afraid of the unknown. It is

gradually drifting into a Hobbesian state where life is becoming short, nasty and brutish. The prevalence of kidnapping as revealed by this study indicates the absence of capable guardians as put forward by the routine activity theory. The central argument of the routine activity theory is that where there is surveillance or presence of security there is less likely to be crime compare to where there is no security presence. Therefore, as put forward by the routine activity theory, the prevalence of kidnapping in Southern Taraba as found from this study is indicative of the inadequate security presence.

The present reality of the security situation of the country is so obvious looking at the raste at which government and traditional council officials are being kidnapped despite the tight security at their disposals (Chidi, 2014). Both the 'low' and 'mighty' are not spared in this cruel act. This further lends credence to an assertion by Ogbuehi (2018) that when it comes to issues of kidnapping in Nigeria, everyone is a potential target irrespective of one's socio-economic status. This study also found increased fear and social disharmony as one of the negative consequences of kidnapping in Southern Taraba. This is in tandem with the observation made by Davidson (2010) that the general security challenge in Nigeria has no doubt reached its zenith such that everyone is afraid if the country is gradually drifting into a state of anomie.

Mistrust among the various ethnic groups in southern Taraba is one of the consequences of kidnapping. This submission is in line with the argument of Achimugu, Ata-Agboni, and Aliyu (2013) that ethnic distrust and tension is prevalent in Nigeria. No wonder, social tension in a complex society with avalanche of ethnic groups affects their social bonding and threatens collective progress; as well as having the possibilities of leading to communal violence (Rohner, 2010; Miguel and Gugerty, 2005). This is why Çanci and Odukoya (2016) observed that ethnic violence or disharmony increases gaps in social relations among ethnic nationalities, which is detrimental to nationhood.

The study made some revelation in respect to how kidnapping has affected commercial activities in the study area. Businesses are closing down and so also potential investors are staying away from the region. This corroborates an earlier finding by Chidi (2014) that fear affects the productivity of workers in a work place and serves as a threat to industrial harmony. Residents of Takum and Wukari have all continued to express their fear of the unknown. This is again in consonance with Okolo (2010) where he averred that the rising tide of kidnappings is making both local and foreign investors to flee the country and those that may have intention of investing in the country will not come in to invest.

Enunciating on the implications of kidnappings on labour, Fajana (2000) also argued that people migrate for economic and social reasons and hence, kidnapping can serve as a push factor as people may be forced to leave their original places to other places to sale their labour. Again the study

reveals that kidnapping has affected farming which is the basic economic activity of most of the inhabitants of this region. Residents in this region now securitized farming as well as reduction in the time put in for farming in order to stay safe.

Conclusion

The outcome of this research has generated important and unique insights into the prevalence and consequences of kidnapping. Previous studies on this phenomenon in Nigeria have mostly x-rayed the issue drawing from its origin, causes and effects but paucity of research on this discourse in Southern Taraba account for a redirection of study to contribute to the gen of literature on this phenomenon. This paper therefore, found the menace so prevalent that the region is gradually drifting into a 'Hobbesian state'. The study found kidnapping as highly detrimental to the unity and socio-economic progress of the district. It results in waste of massive human and material resources, increased social disharmony and fear, stimulates clashes and skirmishes, and increases economic instability and disinvestment. It also leads to decline of agricultural and commercial activities which has consequences on youth employment, poverty eradication and food security.

The absence and or failure of capable guardianship (police) and other security agencies account for the prevalence of kidnapping in this region. Therefore, there is the need for increased surveillance and presence of security agencies within the study area. This will serve as neutralizer to the plans and potentialities of any crime by motivated offender.

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