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PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF KIDNAPPING IN DEKINA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF KOGI STATE

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ABSTRACT

Kidnapping of all manner of persons has gained ascendancy among communities in Nigeria and has instilled fear which has affected communal living and functionality. More so, the police who are mandated to provide security for the people are often unprepared for the task at hand. This has made the populace to lose confidence in criminal justice systems and other law enforcement agents' ability to secure their lives and properties. Based on the above, this study examined the public perception of kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria. The specific objectives were to examine the prevalence of kidnapping; an evaluation of the public perception on the causes of kidnapping; an examination on the effects of kidnapping on socio-political and economic activities and then bringing to light the strategies for mitigating the prevalence of kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area. The study used cross sectional survey research design and was anchored on structural strain theoretical framework. Multi-stage sampling technique was utilized to randomly select participants from the sample size of 511 in their respective communities. The study found that there was a high prevalence of kidnapping in the study area arising from the causative factors such as attractive ransom payment, non-cooperation with the police, insufficient model with strong moral standard, and too much emphasis on material gains, poverty, greed and unemployment among others. Arising from the findings, it was recommended among others that religious organisations and parents should strongly inculcate morals in their children as people perceived to be involved in kidnapping are affiliates of varying religion; It also recommended that government should engage unemployed youth in jobs and empowerment programmes.

KEYWORDS:

Kidnapping, Public Perception, Crime, Criminal Behaviour, Nigeria



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INTRODUCTION

Kidnapping is one of the current social problem that is negatively affecting the free movement of people and the socio-economic development in Nigeria today. Although, kidnapping as an organized crime was rare in Nigeria, the global rating of kidnapping by Hiscox Group places Nigeria at the 6th ranking among ten countries where kidnapping is rampant (John, 2020). Furthermore, the sudden rush in kidnapping over the years has been attributed to the Niger Delta crisis, where the Niger Delta militancy degenerated. Forthwith, kidnapping became rather entrenched as one of the untoward legacies of the struggle. The reasons behind kidnapping has been observed by The Office of Drugs and Crime of The United Nations (UNODC, 2017) to range from ‘Kidnapping for extortion of either ransom or to influence decision making process, kidnapping between and amongst criminal groups to recover a lost or gain advantage over a rival group, kidnapping for sexual exploitation, that is, spouse or children, Kidnapping for political or ideological reason, and Kidnapping for a vengeance purpose’. It is important, therefore, to note that reasons for kidnapping is either for criminal tendencies, political or economic gains (John, 2020).

Akpan (2010) highlighted a historical insight into how kidnapping started. He noted accordingly, the origin in England, around the 17th century, where children were kidnapped and sold for either slavery or to work on the farm. However, with the emergence of organized crime around 1931, kidnapping activities had increased in the United State of America and historical fact proves that kidnapping has little or no connection to political interest or motivation but from the 1970s, many kidnapping for political reasons has been on till the present time. According to Odoma and Akor (2019), Kogi which is one of the States in North-Central Nigeria, has been in the news for kidnapping-related cases. The study shows that the Lokoja-Okene Federal highway has become the den of kidnapers with high profile Nigerians falling victim. For instance, a lawyer, barrister Ozavize, was abducted on the road on July 14, 2017 (Alex, 2017). Ogundele and Hanafiz, (2017) also reported the kidnapping of Senator Arinse along the same high way during which his abductors reportedly demanded a ransom of eighty-million naira for his release. Several cases of kidnapping were reported to have taken place along the Lokoja- Okene axis in 2017 as well as roads in other parts of the state such as the Idah-Itobe road, Anyigba-Ankpa road, and Lokoja-Kabba road. Significantly, the caliber of persons kidnapped connotes a political and economic undertone (Chidi, 2014).

As a result of political and socioeconomic advancement, any geographic location or social community attracts an influx of people (kpaleko, 2016) and the attendant effect has been the basis for the upsurge in criminal and other antisocial behaviours like kidnapping, armed robbery, burglary and theft among other others. As such, the perception of the public in terms of kidnapping and other criminal activities in society has been researched (Adegbami, 2013; Alemika & Chukwuma, 2000; Obarisiagbon & Omage, 2018; Oputa, 1991).

Kidnapping remains a major cankerworm in the society and it is responsible for a lot of political, social, cultural and economic downturns. This study is intended to explicate on the issue as a search for better understanding of kidnapping and dimensions of avoiding been caught up by the menace among both the highly placed individuals and the common members of the society. Among various scholars in the academics, kidnapping is not only a global syndrome but a complex nature of modern society that has made it a weaponry of organized criminal activities that is employed for a variant of purposes (Emeh, 2011; Inyang & Ubong, 2013; Ugulebo, 2011). The identified gap in knowledge is the peculiarity of study on public perception of kidnapping in Dekina local government area of Kogi State. It is against this background that this study on the public perception of kidnapping in Dekina local government area was of great contributions to the body knowledge.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The recurrence of kidnapping in Dekina Local Government of Kogi State tend to induce fear on road transport users in the area. A 2013 survey conducted by the CLEEN Foundation with the support of the United States-based Macarthur Foundation shows that on a consistent basis, people have either been kidnapped outright or attempts have been made to kidnap them (Okenyodo, 2013). Okenyodo maintained that the spate of kidnapping has continued to bloom in Nigeria as there was never a month that cases of kidnapping are not reported either in the print or electronic media in Nigeria. The very worrisome aspects include the age bracket of the perpetrators, the varying targets, and the brazen manner in which the attacks are carried-out. The society, at large, is becoming so dreadful, and gripped by the pervasive fear of who may become the next victim of kidnapping. Individuals are not safe as there are cases of people being kidnapped right in their abodes both in the day-time and at nights.

On the other hand, kidnapping of all manner of persons has gained ascendancy in Nigeria because it seems easier compared to other forms of serious crimes. According to Davidson, (2010) a group of criminals armed with guns and cell phones apprehend unsuspecting victims and drag them into a secluded spot and began to make phone calls to whomever and demand for a ransom. Additionally, the police who are mandated to provide security for the people are often unprepared for the task at hand. They think their job is done if they manage to secure the kidnapped, but of the kidnapers nothing much is ever heard. As we all know, the police are poorly trained and poorly equipped, but beyond these inadequacies there are worrying signs that their loyalty is suspected (Ngwama, 2014).

Furthermore, there is a general effect of an unsecured socio-economic environment which not only scares the people but the various enterprises and investors in Nigeria. Davidson (2010) points out that the general state of insecurity in some parts of the country has no doubt reached a stage where virtually everybody is now worried the direction the menace is going. Presently, hardly can people sleep because of the fear of being robbed or kidnapped. Businessmen have taken flight with their businesses for fear of being kidnapped or robbed.

The pitiable state of kidnapping in Nigeria and states affected by it is what Adejumo (2011) sees as the nonchalant attitude of the Nigerian government which is supposed to uphold citizens right to safety and life. In the view of Bankong-Obi (2011) the situation will remain if not worse because the law enforcement agencies appear unprepared for the present challenges. For Adegami (2013) the Nigeria populace has lost confidence in the ability of the law enforcement agents to secure their lives and property. This study therefore is aimed at assessing the public perception on Kidnapping in Dekina Local Government, Nigeria.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In an attempt to address the above stated problem, this study sought to provide answers to the following questions:

- What is the rate of kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area?
- What is the public perception on the causes of kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area?
- What are the effects of kidnapping to socio-political and economic activities in Dekina Local Government Area?
- What are the strategies for mitigating kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area?

AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study mainly focused on the public perception of kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To examine the prevalence of kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area.
2. To ascertain the public perception on the causes of kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area.
3. To examine the effects of kidnapping to socio-political and economic activities in Dekina Local Government Area.
4. To examine the strategies for mitigating kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The study focuses mainly on the public perception of kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area. The study was limited to the information obtained from the research setting about the subject matter which ascertained the causes, the effects and possible the panacea to the menace of kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The study is of immense significance in the academics by adding up to the body of knowledge about matters arising from kidnapping. This is especially peculiar in terms of comparing the activities of kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area with other geographical locations, if at all there are similarities or differences in pattern of occurrence. The findings of the study will enlighten, broaden and persuade governments, institutions and the society at large on the proactive policy steps towards combating kidnapping to the barest minimum.

Practically, the findings on the public perception of the causes and effects of kidnapping will help policy makers to formulate policies that will discourage kidnapping and improve the wellbeing of citizens. This study is also beneficial to law makers, law enforcement agencies and government officials in their decision making for improvement on protecting the lives and properties of the citizens.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of relevant and related literature for this study was done in accordance with the aim and objectives of the study under the following subheadings:

CONCEPTUAL REVIEWS

The major concepts as used in the context of this study are highlighted and clarified as follows:

Concept of Kidnapping

Just as other concepts in social sciences, there is no a universally accepted or adopted definition of kidnapping because it varies from state to state and jurisdiction to jurisdiction. However, it literally means the forceful seizure, taking away and unlawful detention of a person against his/her will. Mohammed (2008) sees kidnapping as a common law offence and the key part is that, it is an unwanted act on the part of the victim. A restriction of someone else's liberty which violates the key fundamental of the freedom of movement as enshrined in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, where every other law takes its cue from. For this reason, kidnapping is a serious offence. Mohammed maintained that kidnapping is also seen as a crime of seizing, confining, abducting or carrying away of persons by force or fraud often subjecting him or her to involuntary servitude in an

attempt to demand a ransom or in furtherance of another crime. Therefore, it is an act of snatching and seizing of a person in order to collect a ransom in return or settle some scores of disagreement among people.

On the other hand, Thomas and Nta (2019) termed kidnapping as robbery of the highest rank. To them, it is an organized and systematic robbery which is not as deadly as armed-robbery, but more profitable than the former. The profitability has encouraged those that indulged in it to carry on with the act although there is a law prohibiting it.

Brief History of Kidnapping in Nigeria

Prior to the crisis of the militants in Niger Delta, kidnapping as an organized crime was rare in Nigeria. The sudden rush in the crime over the years has been attributed to the Niger Delta crisis. As the Niger Delta militancy degenerated, kidnapping became rather entrenched as one of the untoward legacies of the struggle. Expatriate oil workers were then targeted and kidnapped for handsome ransom. Overtime, a lot of social metamorphosis took place that led to the extension of the crime which got viral and also became a tool of political vengeance. Therefore, close relations of some political opponents became targets, just to retaliate the offences of their political opponents and make some money out of the process (John, 2020).

However, Kidnapping has become a daily routine in Nigeria and they are often used by armed groups as mechanism for achieving the demands of the abductors or kidnappers. The proliferation of kidnapping in Nigeria has scared a lot of local and foreign investors away which also affected the socio-economic development of the country and give chance to other social vices in Nigeria. Foreign investors as well as citizens are scared to operate businesses in Nigeria because no investment thrives in an atmosphere of insecurity and this contributes to the joblessness and poverty of some youths who before now were absorbed by some of the companies or factories that have been closed down in the country which leads to economic meltdown. Nigeria is ranked the 6th highest recorded kidnapping cases in the world. The kidnapping of foreign nationals in exchange for ransoms was most prevalent in Nigeria before militants from the Niger Delta region were granted Amnesty by the government in 2009 (Akpan, 2014).

From the unstable situation in the Niger Delta, kidnapping has spread across the country. These kidnappings can either be for financial or political gain. Victims were originally foreign oil workers, but today many are locals, often employees of international oil and oil service companies, and not necessarily wealthy; anyone whose family might pay a ransom can be targeted. In June 2012, police rescued international footballer Christian Obodo who had been kidnapped in front of a church (Catlin Group, 2012).

There remains a high threat of kidnapping and other armed attacks targeting oil and gas facilities and workers. This also applies to ships and oil rigs at sea off the coast of the Niger Delta. In January 2012, kidnappers abducted a US citizen from his vehicle in the Delta and killed his security guard. In April 2012, criminals kidnapped a US national in Imo State and a Spanish citizen in Enugu State in separate incidents. In May 2012, criminals kidnapped an Italian national in Kwara State. On the 7 May a Lebanese national was kidnapped in Kaduna State and his Lebanese colleague was mercilessly killed during the abduction. More on the kidnapping incidences in Nigeria, it was also reported that two engineers – one British and one Italian – were killed by their captors in March 2012 when Nigerian security forces, with support from Britain, attempted to rescue them. They had been held by elements of the Islamic fundamentalist group Boko Haram for ten months (Catlin Group, 2012).

Prevalence of Kidnapping in Nigeria, Kogi State and in Dekina Local Government Area

The sudden surge in the crime over the years has been attributed to the Niger Delta crisis, where people are agitating for a better socio-economic and infrastructural development of the oil-rich region. Media accounts showed that militant youths of the region started kidnapping as a way of getting the international community to develop interest in the agitation (Raheem, 2020). From the unstable situation in the Niger Delta, kidnapping has spread across the country. These kidnappings can either be for financial or political gain. Fast forward to 2021, an average of 13 persons were abducted daily in Nigeria in the first half of 2021, according to a report by Skill Base Management (SBM) Intelligence, bringing to 2,371 the number of persons kidnapped in the country within the first six months of the year. SBM Intelligence is a leading research consultancy group, versatile in the area of primary data gathering, and analyses of data that provides clarity relating to political, economic and social issues in Nigeria and West Africa. This came as the former senator representing Kaduna central, Shehu Sani said yesterday that the north-west would be a better place, if the Federal Government could deal with bandits with the same vigour used against secessionists. This is even as the abductors of the Emir of Kajuru, Alhassan Adamu, yesterday released the monarch but held on to his family members. Similarly, Gombe State government said yesterday it had deployed local security in all institutions in the state to compliment the efforts of the police and other security agencies in efforts to ward off bandits (SBM, 2021).

On the number of people kidnapped in the last six months, the SBM report covered abductions from January to June. It indicated that a total of 2,371 persons were abducted across 36 states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory, FCT. The tally was derived from media reports and the national security tracker of the Council of Foreign Relations. According to the report, N10 billion (\$19.96 million as of June 30) was demanded as ransom for the kidnap victims. However, the report did not state the total amount paid. The highest number of kidnap victims, about 605, was recorded in February. This was closely followed by March with 534 kidnap victims; May, 355 kidnap victims; while April, January and June had 316, 284 and 277 respectively.

The report indicated that Niger State recorded the highest number of persons abducted, with 643 victims in 28 kidnap incidents, while 58 people were killed during the abductions. This was followed by Zamfara State with 519 kidnap victims in seven incidents, leading to the death of 22 people, while Kaduna State recorded 360 kidnap victims in 26 incidents, leading to the deaths of 41 persons. The kidnap victims in other states are; Abia (6), Abuja (50), Adamawa (3), Akwa Ibom (2), Anambra (14), Bauchi (3), Bayelsa (7), Benue (6), Borno (1), Cross River (4), Delta (51), Ebonyi (5), Edo (18), Ekiti (14), Enugu (15), Gombe (1), Imo (25), Jigawa (2), Kano (3), Katsina (236), Kebbi (81), Kogi (31) and Kwara (10). Others include: Lagos (6), Nasarawa (44), Ogun (26), Ondo (17), Osun (23), Oyo (61), Plateau (10), Rivers (14), Sokoto (10), Taraba (46), and Yobe (4).

Schools were often targeted in the abductions that took place in the first half of 2021, with hundreds of students taken hostage in the north-west. Reacting to the high incidents of kidnapping in the country, particularly by bandits, Shehu Sani, a former senator representing Kaduna central said, the north-west will be a better place if the Federal Government could deal with bandits with the same vigour used against secessionists. The north-west had been the hotbed of banditry in recent times, with over 500 students kidnapped in the region by bandits this year alone. The latest is the abduction of 121 students in Bethel Baptist Secondary school in Damishi, Chikun LGA of Kaduna State, on July 5. Less than a week later, the Emir of Kajuru and 13 members of his household were abducted at his palace (Fage & Alabi, 2017).

Many people have been kidnapped and only released after the payment of ransom while in some cases dead bodies were recovered. Some unknown gunmen abducted a traditional ruler in Kogi. The monarch, the Ohi of Ajaokuta, whose name was given as Isah Achuja, was returning from Lokoja, the state capital, on Saturday when his vehicle was intercepted on the Lokoja-Ajaokuta road at gunpoint and the ruler taken to an unknown destination. Mr Azubuike Iheanacho, a medical doctor who owns Peace Hospital located along old Egume Road, Anyigba, Kogi State was abducted at his residence in Anyigba (Mohammed, 2021). And in the same manner the Chief Medical Director at Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba, Dr. Simon Akokwu was also kidnapped in the Month of November, 2023 while on official trip to Lokoja the State capital before he was later released after paying ransom.

In a recent, incident a lecturer with the Kogi State University, Anyigba Prof. John Alabi was kidnapped. Alabi is the current Dean of the Faculty of Management Sciences at Kogi State University. He was kidnapped by unknown gunmen. The incident was said to have happened when the lecturer was about to enter his apartment. DAILY POST gathered that the kidnappers who were fully armed accosted the University Don with a Mercedes Benz car and whisked him away to an unknown destination (Daily Post, Sept, 28, 2021). Payment of ransom, tragic recovery of dead bodies and other facts and events as a result of kidnapping shapes people's perception of the crime. Kidnapping remains a major cankerworm in the society and it is responsible for a lot of political, social, cultural and economic downturns.

Public Perception on the Causes of Kidnapping in Nigeria

Kidnapping, as a violent criminal offence, is a rather complex phenomenon. It takes place in various contexts and for various reasons. Its causes and consequences are also many. Hazen and Horner (2007) observe that hostages have been taken for two primary reasons: political bargaining and economic gain. This broad classification of kidnapping is very important for understanding the underlying factors for the problem, especially kidnapping for ransom. But beyond these broad typologies, persons are kidnapped and abducted by criminals for various reasons and intentions, such as for adoption, begging, camel racing, illicit intercourse, marriage, prostitution, ransom, revenge, sale, selling body parts, slavery, unlawful activity, murder and for other purposes (NCRB, 2014). Considering the influence of globalisation on the expansion on the increase in crimes as transcending national borders, termed as trans-border crimes, like commercial sex by under-age and human trafficking (Ibrahim & Mukhtar, 2016) today physical movement across the borders by (il)legal organised syndicates has become commonplace.

In Nigeria and many other developing countries of Africa and Asia, political factors, poverty, lack of legal/available employment opportunity among the youths are also playing fundamental role in the rise of kidnapping (Tepperman, 2006). Ibrahim and Mukhtar (2016) observed that Nigeria has a large number of adolescents living and making a living on the streets. This has been attributed to economic factors and exposure to all forms of risks. Closely related to Hazen and Horner's typology is that given by Zannoni (2003) who mentioned that motivations and mode of operation vary, but generally there are two main kinds of kidnapping for ransome. These can be roughly categorised as "criminal kidnapping", where the main motive is to obtain a ransom from the family or business of the victim. This category includes instances where criminals take hostages as a shield to help them escape from the scene of a crime, or use them to obtain money or valuables, or the keys or secret codes needed to access areas where these are stored. The other type of kidnapping, according to Zannoni (2003), is "political kidnapping", where the foremost objective is to further the political aims of a particular political group or movement. In this case, a ransom is usually demanded to obtain money for the group to fund their activities. This made the dividing line between economic and political kidnappings

so blurred. In addition, religious and other political extremists use kidnapping as political weapons and as a means of financing their activities (Catlin Group, 2012).

Economic deprivation and a sense of desperation have planted the seeds of kidnapping as a way of getting money in poor communities. It can then become a way of life, even when legal options become available (Catlin Group, 2012). The disparity between rich and poor is growing, and thanks to the internet and global media, everyone can see how the rich are living. It fuels resentment and a desire for a bigger share (Catlin Group, 2012). Youth unemployment, greed and inordinate ambition to amass wealth, poverty, unemployment, morale decadence and corruption among the Nigeria police and politicians (Diara, 2010) have been identified as some of the causes of kidnapping.

Effects of Kidnapping on Political and Socio-economic Activities

Crimes pose serious threat to humanity. Kidnapping just like any other crime affects all sectors of the society which experiences it. The African Insurance Organisation (as cited in Nike, 2012) stated that in the first half of 2011 Africa's proportion of global total increased from 23 per cent in 2010 to 34 per cent, owing to the fact that Nigeria account for a quarter (25%) of the globally reported cases. The above proportion of kidnapping is a threat to Nigerians internationally. It is also a well-known fact that the socio economic and political milieu of a community or society changes as a result of the existing realities of the society. Consequently, Ikpang (2011) noted that kidnapping drives away investors, as no investor would be ready to invest in a crises-ridden environment. Nigeria is therefore seen as a country in which insecurity to lives and property looms large and were criminality has assumed notoriety. He further asserted that the Niger Delta region in particular and Nigeria generally, appear not to be investment friendly. Moreover, the kidnapping of foreign nationals poses a lot of questions to the ideal sustainable democratic government in Nigeria that should engender economic development (Chukwuemeka et al., 2011). Ojukwu (2011) in his own submission asserts that the goal of generating at least 6000 megawatts in Nigeria can only be achieved if the life of investors who are working with the power sector will not be threatened by the kidnappers.

In addition, there are psychological and physical effects of being kidnapped. Psychologically, the victim may have confusion, disorientation, shock, anxiety and withdrawal. Physically, the victim may have an exacerbation of pre-existing physical condition such as asthma and diabetes (Alexander & Klein 2019). Many Nigerians have lost their lives as a result of beating, torture and inhumane conditions they are subjected to by the kidnappers (Nwadiora & Nkwocha, 2019). It is therefore, a fact that, kidnap victims, their families and relations always have serious psychological trauma, because of fear that the victims could be hurt or even killed.

With regards to inter-personal relationship, kidnapping has also contributed to a relatively high level of mistrust among people. Few people still extend the traditional African hospitality to strangers. Some people do not acknowledge or return greeting by strangers nor oblige strangers asking for direction. Also, most people are unwilling to render help to people in distress for fear of being kidnapped. Few people would venture to stop to assist people calling for help on the express way. Increasingly, many people nowadays barricade themselves in their homes (Soyombo, 2019). Most devastatingly, it has been noted that, it is the fear of kidnapping that has contributed to the current high demand for police escort by diverse public officials in the country, there by further depleting the inadequate police personnel that could have been deployed to street crime control (Soyombo, 2009).

The former Inspector General of Police, Sir Mike Okiro, disclosed that 15 billion have been paid as ransom to kidnappers between 2006 and 2009 (Kyrian, 2009). The large sum of money spent as ransom payment could affect any state economy drastically, 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 stay clear from their work place and the adverse effect is always on the economy. Dode (2007) noted 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. Kidnapping human beings produce significant psychological, sociological and financial impacts on the lives of the victims, victims' relatives, and the nation at large (Onyishi, 2011). The following effects are examined:

Traumatic Effect: Kidnapping a person or holding an individual hostage is very traumatic. The kidnappers traumatize their victims by blindfolding their eyes and sometimes hide the victims in the trunk of their vehicles and transport them to unknown locations. The kidnappers sometimes use inhalant tranquilizers to make their victims become tranquil so that they would remain asleep until they get to their hidden destinations (Onyemaizu, 2006). When the victims realize their predicament, their psychological trauma ranges from depression, emotional attack, anger to fear of unknown.

Victims' Families Emotional Effect: The victims' families are normally emotionally traumatized. The emotional impacts get the families deeply involved as financial negotiating partners with the kidnappers in order to secure their release from their captors. Kidnappers place heavy financial burden on victims' families. In an effort to secure the release of the victims, the families may go on solicitations for fund from friends, relatives, and well-wishers.

Nation's Negative Effect: The kidnapping activities create negative headline news on the World News Report. This type of report depicts the country as one of the most dangerous places to travel in the world. As a result, many tourists, manufacturing companies, investors, and business communities boycott the country and the economic effect are disastrous. The frequency of these criminal models has created popularity for the criminals and exposed the nation as the most dangerous part of the world to dwell (Onyishi, 2011).

Fear and Insecurity: Kidnapping creates fear among the indigenes and foreign nationals. People live in fear of being kidnapped. Some foreign multinational oil companies, construction companies, production sectors, and foreign investors closed down offices due to fear of being abducted.

Strategies for Mitigating the Prevalence of Kidnapping in Nigeria

Views on solving the problem of kidnapping are usually envisaged on a number of issues which are assumed to be useful in eliminating the recent spate of kidnapping in Nigeria. In September 2017, the National Assembly passed into Law the Kidnapping Abduction Act, which provided for a 30year term of imprisonment for anyone caught colluding with an abductor to receive ransom for any person wrong fully confined. A death sentence was equally provided by the Act for anyone whose kidnapping activities led to the death of any person. At least 15 States have made kidnapping a capital offence. They include Anambra, Enugu, Abia, AkwaIbom, Imo, Bayelsa, Bauchi, CrossRiver, Ebonyi, Kogi, Rivers, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo and Oyo. Nwadiora and Nkwocha (2019) on their part opined that the enactment of laws will also go a long way to eliminate the crime of kidnapping. Ikpang (2011) asserted that judgment is often influenced by the politicians in the law court. Anosike (2019) added corruption on the side of police, court and judiciary as another factor that influences conviction of kidnappers.

The registration of SIM cards is an effort to curb the incidence of kidnapping in Nigeria. Ugwulebo (2021) therefore noted that the global system of mobile (GSM) telephone service providers should fast-track their data capturing exercise. Ugwulebo opined that this will help the security agents to know who is making the call and the location of the call and once ownership of numbers can be

identified, handsets can be tracked, and their geographical locations become identifiable – then any call made to solicit for ransom would help to locate the kidnappers. Meanwhile, in some countries, when telephone calls are made, the police have access to the calls but it is not the same in Nigeria (Ikpong, 2011). Furthermore, kidnappers could switch off their phones; change location, or simply throw their phone away to acquire another because unlike other jurisdiction where every phone is registered and identity of the owner properly documented, habitual phone purchase is the trend in Nigeria.

Osaghea (2011) opined that the relatives of the kidnapped persons should co-operate with the security agents, because they can be of great help. However, the Police Force has been accused of aiding and abetting kidnappers, as a result people detest using police against kidnappers (Ugwulebo, 2021). Meanwhile, the police will not have information to react if cases of kidnapping are not reported to them.

In order to combat insecurity problems that emanate from the crime of kidnapping, Onyeishi and Eme (2017) suggested that government should re-organize the security agencies to take them through a new re-orientation via training. Meanwhile, one of the major problems of security agents is training in order to match the well-armed criminals. Osaghea is therefore of the view that police training must include infantry, weapon handling, and ant-terrorist training in order to match the well-armed criminals. He also opined that prison warders must be co-opted in the fight against kidnapping because criminals that act outside are known by the inmates. But, Nigerian prisons are faced with many problems and challenges.

Furthermore, Ugwuoke (2019) argued that the application of community policing initiatives in Nigeria villages would obviously allow the various communities and police departments to work together to reduce crime of violence such as kidnapping and to improve the quality of life of Nigerian citizens. In addition Nwadiora and Nkwocha (2019) opined that the public should report any suspicious activities of strangers within their neighbourhood to the police to forestall kidnapping.

Furthermore, Erhabor (2012) acknowledged that the university campuses which are expected to play a major role in the countries human development and to serve as vibrant centres of productive research and academic excellence are not spared from the vestige of violent crime rocking the national scene by ethnic militant groups (Arjesuyo, 2014). Oni (2011) noted that, the university should develop a policy of providing a well-articulated and comprehensive programme of guidance and counseling to identify violent suspected cult members. However, violent associations appear to be training ground for kidnappers.

Empirical Review

Nkwocha (2011) carried out a research to examine the prevalence of kidnapping as an urban pandemic in Imo State. The population of the study consists of people selected from the urban centres and rural areas in Imo State. Structured questionnaire were distributed to 100 respondents randomly selected from the target population after which 90 were filled and returned. The data collected were carefully analysed by the use of simple percentages and chi-square statistical method was used to test the hypotheses. Findings show that urbanization process has a lot to do with the pervasion of kidnap cases in Imo State; it is as well obvious from the study that the ineffectiveness of the police has negatively affected the fight against kidnapping. The findings also indicated that unemployment and leadership failure ranked among the major causative factors of kidnapping for ransom.

Ocheja (2019) carried out a research on unburdening the burden of kidnapping and security challenges in Idah local government, Kogi state Nigeria (2008 - 2018). This work was undertaken

with a view to ascertain the effort made so far in the area of combating crime and insecurity as it poses greater challenge on the development of local governments in Nigeria with a focus on Idah Local Government Area of Kogi State covering 2007 to 2017. The degree at which kidnapping is growing in Nigeria in general and Idah to be specific is too alarming and if this continues, the future of Nigeria is getting darkened because of the immense rate of this criminal trade and practice emanating from every nook and cranny of the Nigerian society.

Ocheja (2019) in the study adopts the "Theory of Class Struggle" in analyzing this concept of Kidnapping and assessed the problem of insecurity and its attendant consequences on Idah Local Government and beyond. The research adopts both primary and secondary sources of data collection as a framework of analysis. The triangulation was descriptively analyzed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Findings of the study showed that, not only Idah Local Government Area but also Nigeria is currently engrossed in insecurity issues, there is a significant relationship between the effects of insecurity and development in Nigeria, the level of insecurity in Nigeria is high and its effects on national development is high. The study argues that the abysmal failure of successive administrations in Nigerian Local Governments to address challenges such as poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, kidnapping, inequitable distribution of wealth, cultism, armed robbery and others had brought us to this level of insecurity. The study submitted and recommends the need for inclusive governance whereby all segments of stakeholders have the benefit of empowerment and capacity building as opposed to the current practice of elitist governance. A re-ordering of our societal values and provision of functional education among others could serve as a measure in combating kidnapping and insecurity in our local government areas.

John (2020) examined the proliferation of kidnapping in Nigeria: Causes and Consequences. The paper unveiled some common causes of kidnapping and their consequences in Nigeria as a nation state that is characterized by poverty, unemployment, insecurity, corruption, weak constitutional framework and poor policies implementation. Kidnapping simply connotes an act of illegally and forcefully capturing and detaining of human beings for the purpose of generating financial benefits from the relations of the detainee(s). Kidnappings has become a common criminal exercise and lucrative business in Nigeria of which the perpetrators often receive huge sum of money from their victims, sometimes the kidnappers' victims are murdered whenever the amount of money needed from them are paid and to some extent not redeemed. Poverty, unemployment and moral decadence are said to be the commonest causes of the evil called kidnapping in Nigeria. Content analysis/qualitative sources of data collection were employed for the realization of this scholarly work. Amongst other recommendations it is recommended that government should create jobs for the unemployed youths in tandem with skills development training that will help curtail the high levels of idleness as the mother of evil thoughts, evil plans and evil actions among Nigeria youths; Federal and State governments should properly equip and deploy forest guards into our forests that are serving as safe habitats for the kidnappers in order to curb the menace.

Abolaji and Kayode (2021) studied the trends of kidnapping and hostage taking in 21st century Nigeria: a reflective discourse. Kidnapping and hostage taking activities have geometrically increased across the world, taking different forms. These activities for money and other reasons have contributed immensely to the state of insecurity of average Nigerian from within and outside the territory. It is on this note that this paper addresses the trends of kidnapping and hostage taking in Nigeria, its causes, implications and how best to arrest the worrisome situation. Relevant existing body of knowledge were reviewed according to the objectives of the paper. The research design for the paper was explanatory in nature where rational choice theory, routine activity theory and situational crime prevention were adopted to buttress the understanding of the subject matter. Based

on the reviewed literature, it was found that the trend of kidnapping and hostage taking in the 21st century Nigeria is on the “high” side thereby needing urgent attention from all stakeholders; Nigerian government, non-governmental organisations, private bodies and all citizens. It is, therefore, recommended that increased effort to fight kidnapping and hostage taking should be made possible by the Nigerian government. This would make the risk of involving in kidnapping related activities higher than the expected benefit; to deter offenders and potential ones from committing such act. Also, capturing the geographical boundary of Nigeria with sophisticated gadget will help reduce the chances of being a victim of kidnapping. These strategies would make kidnapping unattractive to the motivated offender since the opportunity to commit such crime no longer exists.

Caleb (2021) examined the Impact of Terrorism, Banditry and Kidnapping on Human Security in Nigeria. The 2020 report of the Global Terrorism Index ranks Nigeria third among 163 countries on the scale of key global security trends and patterns of terrorism. This paper examines the impact of terrorism, banditry and kidnapping on human security in Nigeria. The paper posits that Nigeria continues to experience increasing insecurity and violence through frequent attacks by terrorist, bandits and kidnapers. These criminals continue to attack, rape and kill unarmed civilians, especially women, across the country, which has impacted negatively on human security in Nigeria. The paper then gives the primary purpose of government, which is to protect lives and property, our ranking on the global terrorism index 2020, the conceptual clarifications of human security, terrorism, banditry and kidnapping; factors that are responsible for such social ills and their impact on Nigeria and Nigerians. The documentary research method was used in gathering and analyzing data for this work. The paper asserts that between terrorists, bandits, and kidnapers, there is very little differences as one set of activities apparently service the other. The paper concludes that the indices that point to national security in which human security is the chief has been challenged seriously by terrorism, banditry and kidnapping.

Owagbemi and Olaseinde (2021) examined The Perception and Measures towards Curbing Kidnapping in Ondo State, Nigeria. The study examines the public perception and measures towards curbing kidnapping in Ondo State, Nigeria. The study adopts both qualitative and quantitative methods of research. A structured questionnaire was administered on 1872 respondents from the three Senatorial Districts in Ondo State, while IDI’s was used to collect qualitative data. The quantitative data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences(SPSS) and presented using descriptive techniques, while the qualitative data were analysed using content analysis. Findings show that members of the public perceive kidnapping as Illegal detention to extort money; a social crime and violation of human right. They agreed that kidnapping is about 16 years above and it's usually carried out by a syndicate. Majority of the respondents reported that the victims of kidnapping were people of the middle economic class. They concurred that kidnapping has made their community insecure and that everyone is worried by the heightened level of insecurity. The following measures were suggested: institutionalizing neighbourhood watch/vigilante group in high-risk areas; moral authority return to community to inculcate indigenous value of hardwork and integrity; reviewing the legal punishment. The paper concludes that the respondents in Ondo State demonstrated a good knowledge of what constitute kidnapping. Therefore, the study recommends that, the measures that were suggested should be looked into by the Federal government of Nigeria with a goal to incorporating them into future policies aim at curbing kidnapping and the teaching of the indigenous values should be encouraged at home and in schools.

All of the empirical works reviewed above toed almost the same line with this current study but none of such was carried in Dekina Local Government and consequently, the researcher replicated the

research work in Dekina Local Government Area to ascertain the people's perception on the concept of kidnapping.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: Structural Strain Theory

Strain theory (also known as Mertonian Anomie), advanced by American sociologist Robert Merton (1968) suggests that mainstream culture, especially in the United States, is saturated with dreams of opportunity, freedom and prosperity; as Merton put it, the American Dream. Most people buy into this dream and becomes a powerful cultural and psychological motivator. Merton also used the term anomie, but it meant something slightly different for him than it did for Durkheim, whose work is fundamental in his theory. Merton saw the term as meaning a dichotomy between what the society expected of its citizens, and what those citizens could actually achieve. Therefore, if the social structure of opportunities is unequal and prevents the majority from realizing the dream, some of them will turn to illegitimate means (crime) in order to realize it. Others will retreat or drop out into deviant subcultures, gang members, urban homeless drunks and drug abusers (Siegel, 2008).

According to Farthworth and Leiber (1989) Merton argued that Cultural goals of success are proposed for all members of the society, but not all groups have equal access to the means for their attainment. This dysfunction between cultural prescription and access to desired goals create an acute sense of strain on the individual level. Merton proposed that individual strain is most likely among lower-class members who internalize cultural goals of wealth and statues but recognize blocks to conventional means for their attainment.

In American society, the culture places great emphases on economic success, but many people are prevented from achieving it. This is so because, being born in a lower socio- economic class infringes on individual's ability to acquire higher education, thus, the chances of achieving economic success in the generally accepted way is reduced. In this context deviance is often in the form of alternative unacceptable and sometimes illegal means of achieving economic success (Ritzer, 2008). Ugwuoke (2010) affirmed that the only means of achieving success according to Merton is by acquiring good education. Merton identified five modes of response which are conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion. The conformist accepts the goals and means of society. The innovationist rejects the normative means of success while holding fast to the goals. The ritualism abandons the commonly held success goals and accepts the means while adopting a goal quite different from the prescribed goal. Retreatism applies to those who internalize both success goal and institutionalized means but are unable to achieve success because they don't rely on the institutionalized success goals. The rebellion rejects both the success goals and the institutionalized means and adopts different goals and means. They are the revolutionary group (Haralambos and Holborn, 2004).

Structural strain theory is very relevant to this study as it tries to justify that crime escalate as a result of inbalance between structural goals and means. Put differently, the theory brings out an economic interest as the pursued quest for an individual which may gravitate into negative actions like kidnapping, fraud, armed robbery and the likes in order to fulfill a dream life of opportunity.

The structural strain theory becomes relevant in explaining a form of attainment in life desires when an 'ideal or normal way of achieving life's quest fails. It means that individual who are deterministic of better life for themselves will resort to inordinate practices eventually. Farthworth and Leiber, (1989) argues that due to inequality in society in terms of achievements causes an acute sense of strain on an individual. Consequently, when proposed structures for attainment of opportunities, freedom and prosperity fail, it is termed a dysfunction. Structural strain results when societies members are denied of the common good of life. Hence, the need to strategies only negative means to an end. The theory explicates a gap in society's organs of rule to be faulty and cripple of dispensing a more

welfares system that addresses inequality of social good. Diara (2010) noted that a society that does not provide for the economic and political needs and desires of most of the members is politically a fertile ground for revolution. Ugwuoke (2011) points out that high level of unemployment and poverty especially among the youths, exploitation of the poor by the few rich individuals and government apathy to the needs of the youths are important contributing factors to kidnapping in Nigeria.

RESEARCH DESIGN

The study used cross-sectional survey research design because eliciting public opinions on kidnapping in Dekina Local Government area of Kogi State.

DESCRIPTION OF STUDY SETTING

The area of the study was Dekina Local Government area in Kogi State. It's headquarter is in the town of Dekina in the Middle Belt area at 7°41'41"N 7°01'20"E. The north easterly line of equal latitude and longitude passes through the southeast of the LGA. It has an area of 2,461 km² (950 sq mi) and a population of 260,312 at the 2006 census. Dekina Local Government Area consists the districts of Birdu, Dekina, Anyigba, Egume and Okura; villages and wards such as Adoma, Ajebido, Adum, Agada, Agbajo, Agidibai, Agojeju, Ahojori, Aje-Kelega among others. Dekina Local Government Area is one amongst the 21 local government areas of Kogi state under the Eastern senatorial district of the state. This LGA forms a federal constituency with Bassa local government area and is made up of 12 electoral wards which are under the control of elected councillors for each. Dekina LGA was created out from former Igala local authority for the socio-economic and political restructuring as the pave way for faster development in the state. The study area lies within the humid semi-hot savannah zone. The climate is dominated by two major air masses; the warm and the dry tropical continental wind from the Sahara Desert and the hot, humid tropical maritime wind from the Atlantic zone (the south West Monsoon wind). The wet/rainy season starts from middle of April to October while the dry/cool season runs from November to March. The study area has mean annual rainfall of about 1100mm while the mean temperature ranges between 28OC to 34 OC.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The target population for this study comprises of both male and female adults aged 18 years and above resident in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State. The decision to use this age bracket was justified by the fact that individuals within the age bracket were best suited to give relevant information on the subject matter of this study. The study area, Dekina Local Government has a proposed population figure of 352,300, with the annual growth rate of 3.0% in 2021, comprising 131,394 males and 129,574 females (Office of Statistics, Dekina Local Government Council, 2021).

SAMPLE SIZE

The sample size for this study was determined using the statistical method of Cochran (1975) who developed the equation to yield a representative sample for proportions of large sample.

$$n = z^2 (pq)/e^2,$$

n = sample size

z = level of significance (95% which is 1.96),

p = percentage of African proportion of global increase of kidnapping (34%),

$q =$ (66%) compliment of q , gotten from the percentage of increase across the globe.

$e =$ error margin (.04)

$$n = 1.96^2 (.34)(.66)$$

$$.04^2$$

$$\frac{3.84 (0.22)}$$

$$.0016 = 528$$

SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

Multi-stage sampling technique was used by the researcher to choose the samples in stages until the required sample was gotten. The multi-stage sampling according to Asemah et al., (2012) is a sampling procedure which aim at a high level of precision through sampling intensity.

In the first stage, stratified sampling was used to cluster Dekina local government into two groups. Dekina North-West and Dekina South-East. Dekina North-West which is made up of 8 communities namely Adokolo, Adum, Agbada, Iyale, Abocho, Odu, Ajiyolo and Dekina Town were selected from cluster A, while Anyigba, Egume, Okura-Olafia, Ochaja, Igu, Ola and Olaji were selected from cluster B.

Simple random sampling technique was applied in Dekina North-West to select wards. Names of all the wards within the Local Government were written on sheets of paper through balloting. The dish containing the names of the wards were thoroughly shuffled and three wards were randomly selected for the study at the interval of four, without replacement. The same procedure were repeated in Dekina South-East to select three communities for purpose of the study at the interval of three. Dekina, Iyale and Abocho were drawn from Dekina North-West. Anyigba, Egume and Okura was drawn from Dekina South-East. Two streets were selected from each of the three wards that were selected and two villages were selected from each of the three communities that were drawn using the same procedure. In each chosen streets and villages all the dwelling units or compounds were numbered out of which a sample of 44 dwelling units was selected using systematic sampling technique. In each selected dwelling unit, one eligible respondent was selected, taking into accounts their ages and level of education.

Table 1. Sampling Schedule

Clusters/ LGA	No. of Communities Sampled	No. of Villages Sampled	No. of Housing Units Chosen	No. of Respondents Sampled
A: Dekina North-West	3 (Dekina, Iyale, Abocho)	6 (2x3)	264 (44x6)	264 (1x26)
B: Dekina South-East	3 (Anyigba, Egume, Okura- Olafia)	6 (2x3)	264 (44x6)	264 (1x264)
Total	6	12	528	528

METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION

The study adopted quantitative method of data collection in which questionnaire was used as a method of collecting the primary data, while text books, journals, research reports and the internet based documented materials were used to collect desired secondary data for the study. Questionnaire was designed and administered to the respondents. The questionnaire was divided into two sections; section A and section B. Section A was about the socio demographic characteristics of the respondents. While section B focused on the specific issues of the study, views and attitudes of people based on the causes, effects, reasons and solutions to kidnapping in Nigeria. Each questionnaire administered consist of two sections. The first section consists information on personal data while the second section shall deal with the substantive issues of the study. To make the collection of data easy the researcher recruited three male and three female research assistants who were undergraduate students of the Department of Sociology, Prince Abubakar Audu University, Anyigba. A day was set aside for training of the research assistants to ensure compliance with research standard and ethics of non-compulsion. Each of the recruited research assistants were sent to administer the questionnaire in Dekina, Iyale, Abocho Anyigba, Egume, and Okura-Olafia. The administration and retrieval took three weeks for the required number of questionnaire needed for analysis to be achieved.

Validity of Research Instrument

The instrument used was content validated by experts in the field of study, such as the researcher's supervisor, lecturers and other experts. This was aimed to ascertain that the instrument was free from errors, ambiguity of instruction or wording, time inadequacy and measurability of construct. The test of validity was done with the aid of data obtained in a pilot study. The pilot study was conducted among the residence of Dekina Local Government Area who did not participate in main study. Thirty-three copies of questionnaires was distributed for participants to provide answers from which validity and reliability was ascertained.

Validity was analysed with the use of Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) where the item communality and item loading of 0.7 was considered acceptable; also, inter-item correlation or item total correlation determined construct validity while Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) used to measure variable adequacy to which 0.7 and above is considered acceptable (Beaves et al., 2013; El hajjar, 2018; Robinson et al., 1991). Cohen (2013) states that if inter-item correlation lies within 0.10 and 0.29, then there is a weak correlation for both positive and negative values, and when inter-item correlation lies within 0.30 and 0.49 a medium correlation, and lastly if inter-item correlation is between 0.50 and 1.00 a strong correlation. Moreover, Robinson et al (1991) recommends that, in an empirical approach and as a rule of thumb, if the score of the item-total correlations is more than 0.50 and the inter-item correlations exceeds 0.30, the construct validity is satisfied.

Table 2: Validity Test

S/N	Measure Name	Number of Items	Item Communality range	Construct Validity (<i>Item total Correlation range</i>)	KMO Measure of Variable Adequacy
1	Rate and prevalence of kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area	5	0.77 - 0.88	0.75 - 0.93	0.90

S/N	Measure Name	Number of Items	Item Communality range	Construct Validity (<i>Item total Correlation range</i>)	KMO Measure of Variable Adequacy
1	Rate and prevalence of kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area	5	0.77 - 0.88	0.75 - 0.93	0.90
2	Public Perception on the Causes of Kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area	9	0.74 - 0.95	0.87 - 0.97	0.93
3	Effects of Kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area	9	0.75 - 0.96	0.87 - 0.98	0.92
4	Strategies for mitigating kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area	7	0.74 - 0.95	0.82 - 0.97	0.85

Source: Researchers SPSS Computation, 2023

Based on Table 2, four different scales (Prevalence of kidnapping, Public Perception on the Causes of Kidnapping, Effects of Kidnapping and Strategies for mitigating kidnapping) that were used to assess various aspects perception of Kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area in Dekina Local Government Area. For each scale, Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was used where item communality of item loading was obtained at figures between 0.75 to 0.98, which is considered acceptable (El hajjar, 2018); also, inter-item correlation or item total correlation using bivariate analysis was used to determined construct validity and figures obtained ranged between 0.70 to 0.87 which was also considered acceptable (Robinson et al., 1991); while Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) was used to measure variable adequacy to which figures range of 0.80 to 0.94 obtained were acceptable (Beaves et al., 2013).

In this study, all the scales have good content validity, which means that the items in the construct accurately represent the content domain of perception of Kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area in Dekina Local Government Area. The instrument also have good construct validity, which means that they accurately measure the underlying constructs or concepts they are intended to measure. Furthermore, the measures have acceptable criterion validity, which means that they are related to external criteria or standards scale for assessing perception of Kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area in Dekina Local Government Area.

RELIABILITY OF THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

Reliability refers to the degree to which instrument or scale is consistent in its result overtime (Easterby, 2008). To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, a pilot study was conducted. In this study 30 participants (different from the participants of the main study) were recruited to complete questionnaire that hitherto has been vetted by four lecturers and expert in the fields of study. Cronbach Alpha Coefficient was used in estimating the reliability. According to Nunnally (1978) the major way to tests internal consistency reliability is Cronbach's alpha. A general accepted rule is that α of 0.6-0.7 indicates an acceptable level of reliability, and 0.8 or greater a very good level (Hulin et

al., 2001; Wim et al, 2008). Cronbach Alpha Coefficient is chosen as it gives a numerical coefficient of the internal consistency of the variables under study.

Table 3: Reliability Test

S/N	Measure Name	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
1	Prevalence of kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area	5	0.90
2	Public Perception on the Causes of Kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area	9	0.98
3	Effects of Kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area	9	0.98
4	Strategies for mitigating kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area	7	0.96

Source: Researcher's SPSS Computation, 2023

Table 4 shows the four different scales (Prevalence of kidnapping, Public Perception on the Causes of Kidnapping, Effects of Kidnapping and Strategies for mitigating kidnapping) that were used to assess the various aspects of perception of Kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area in Dekina Local Government Area. For each measure, the study conducted a reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha as the reliability coefficient. The table showed the number of items in each measure and the corresponding Cronbach's Alpha value, which indicates the internal consistency of each measure. Note that a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 or higher is generally considered acceptable for research purposes. In this study, all the scales have a Cronbach's Alpha value greater than 0.70, which suggests that they are reliable scales for assessing the various aspects perception of Kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area in Dekina Local Government Area.

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

Statistical Package of the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used in running the statistics for the study. Simple percentage and frequency distributive analysis was used to analyze the data derived from the demographic characteristics of the respondents. The information obtained from the questionnaire were coded, classified into tables to determine the variations as to the views held by the respondents for interpretation, analysis and general discussions.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

According to Bryman and Bell (2007), the following points represent the most important principles related to ethical considerations in dissertations. As social researchers who are bound to protect the interest of the respondents. The researcher took into cognizance the issues in research ethics. The researcher sought the consents of the respondents before their participation in the research. The participants were also informed the purpose of the research and were encouraged to participate out of volition. The participants were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their response.

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

A total of 528 copies of questionnaire were administered out of which 511 was retrieved, making a response rate of 97%. The analysis was therefore, based on the 511 sample.

Table 4: Percentage Distribution of Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variables	Category	Frequency (N=511)	Percentage (%)
Sex	Male	257	50.3
	Female	252	49.7
Age in year	18-24	111	21.7
	26-32	86	16.8
	33-39	61	11.9
	40-47	78	15.3
	48-53	82	16.1
	54-60	93	18.2
Marital Status	Single	187	36.6
	Married	230	45.0
	Separated	29	5.8
	Divorced	32	6.2
	Widow/Widower	33	6.4
Level of Education	No formal Education	150	29.3
	JSS	105	20.4
	SSCE	48	9.3
	OND	5	1.0
	B.Sc/HND	160	31.2
	Post Graduate	43	8.8
Religion Affiliation	Christianity	387	75.7
	Islam	57	11.2
	African Tradition	67	13.1
Occupation	Farming	93	18.2
	Trading	15	24.7
	Public service	30	11.9
	Civil service	21	16.6
	unemployed	30	28.6

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 4 shows that there were 50.3% of male and 49.7% of female respondents; 21.7%, 16.8% and 11.9% of the respondents' fall into the age range of 18-24, 26-32 and 33-39 while 15.3%, 16.1% and 18.6% fall into the age range of 40-47, 48-53 and 54-60; 36.6% of the respondents were single, while the remaining were separated (5.8%) divorce (6.2%); and widowhood (6.4%). This means that the

majority of the respondents were married followed by those in single category. On religion, majority of the respondents 75.7% were Christians, 11.2% (Muslims), African traditional religion (13.1%); on occupation, 18.2% were farmers, traders (24.7%) public servant (11.9%) and civil servants (16.6%), while the majority 28.6% were unemployed.

Research Question 1. What is the prevalence of kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area?

Table 5: Percentage and Frequency Distribution of Rate and Prevalence of Kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area.

Variables	Category	Frequency (N=511)	Percentage(%)
1. How spread the incidence of kidnapping in Dekina Local government?	Very High	61	11.9
	High	300	58.7
	Low	150	29.4
2. Do you know of anybody who has been kidnapped?	Yes	388	75.9
	No	123	24.1
3. How would you rate the incidence of kidnapping in your area?	Very High	60	11.7
	High	301	58.3
	Low	149	29.4
4. Which of these age groups do you consider as being more involved in kidnapping?	18-24	61	11.9
	26-32	86	16.8
	33-39	111	21.7
	40-47	108	20.3
	48-53	92	16.1
	54-60	13	9.2
5. Which of these groups of individuals do you think are less involved in kidnapping?	Those with degree or more qualification	185	36.2
	Those with secondary education as highest qualification	201	39.3
	Those with no educational qualification	125	24.5

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 5 reveals that the incidence of kidnapping in Dekina Local government was high (300: 58.76%); 388 (75.9%) of the respondents admitted that they knew of people who have been kidnapped, whether the kidnapped victims were their close relative is not revealed by the study. Table 5 also reveals that participants rated the incidence of kidnapping high (301: 58.3%); age bracket 33-47 (early adulthood) are perceived to be more involved in kidnapping (219: 42.0%); while those with more education were perceived to be less involved in kidnapping (326: 63.8%).

Research Question 2: What is the people perception on the causes of kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area?

Table 6. Percentage and Frequency Distribution of Perception on the Causes of Kidnapping

Statement	Category	Frequency (N=511)	Percentage (%)
Do you think that lack of instruction of moral values contributes to the incidence of kidnapping in Dekina Local government?	Yes	280	54.8
	No	231	45.2
Which of the following do you think is a constraint to effective transmission of morals in your area?	Poor role model	45	8.8
	Greed	46	9.1
	Juicy political appointment	198	38.7
	Societal economic inequality	55	10.6
	Inflation	39	7.6
	Family hardship	128	25.2
Do you think that a weak leadership system is a cause for kidnapping in Dekina Local government?	Yes	298	58.3
	No	213	41.7
Neglect of public interest is a cause for kidnapping	Yes	390	76.3
	No	121	23.7
Unequal distribution of resources is a cause for kidnapping	Yes	341	66.7
	No	170	33.3
Kidnapping is as a result of government failure in its responsibility	Yes	300	58.7
	No	211	41.3
Repressive style of leadership is a cause for kidnapping	Yes	354	69.3
	No	157	30.7
Educational imbalance is a cause for kidnapping.	Yes	270	52.8
	No	241	47.2
Poor cultural and moral upbringing is a cause for kidnapping	Yes	370	72.4
	No	141	27.6

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 6 reveals that majority of the people of Dekina Local government think that lack of instruction of moral values contributes to the incidence of kidnapping (280: 54%); among the constraints to effective transmission of moral values examined, it was discovered that juicy political appointment (198: 38.7%), family hardship (128: 25.2%), societal economic inequality (55: 110.6%), greed (46:9.1), poor role model (45: 8.8%) and lastly inflation (39: 7.6%) are perceived by respondents as

the causes of kidnaping in Dekina. Among other causes of kidnaping discovered in the study are weak leadership system (298: 58.3%), neglect of public interest (390: 76.3%), unequal distribution of resources (341: 66.7%), failure of government in her responsibility (300: 58.3%), repressive style of leadership (354: 69%), educational imbalance (270: 52.8%) and poor cultural and moral upbringing (370: 72.4%).

Research Question 3: What are the perceived effects of Kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area?

Table 7: Percentage Frequency Distribution on the Perceived Effects of Kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area.

Statement	Category	Frequency (N=511)	Percentage (%)
Kidnapping is a threat to peoples' freedom in Dekina Local government	Yes	450	88.1
	No	61	31.3
People of Dekina Local government live, sleep and go about their daily businesses under fear of being kidnapped	Yes	331	64.8
	No	180	35.2
Kidnapping makes Dekina Local Government Area unfriendly for investment	Yes	289	56.6
	No	222	43.4
Kidnapping brings about lack of economic progress.	Yes	392	76.7
	No	119	23.3
Kidnapping usher in Political instability	Yes	326	63.8
	No	185	36.2
Kidnapped victims live under psychological trauma	Yes	401	78.5
	No	221	21.5
Kidnapped victims live suffer from depression	Yes	304	59.5
	No	207	40.5
Kidnapped victims suffers from family instability	Yes	280	54.8
	No	231	45.2
Kidnapped victims suffer from occupational instability	Yes	313	61.2
	No	198	38.8

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 7 indicates that respondents perceived kidnapping as major threat to peoples freedom (450: 88.1%); it was also revealed that people in Dekina lived, slept and went about their businesses under the fear of being kidnapped (311: 64%); other effects of kidnapping revealed as perceived by the people of Dekina local government were unfriendly environment for investment (289:56.6%), lack of economic progress (392: 76.7%), political instability (326: 63.8%), psychological trauma (401: 78.5%), depression for victims (304: 59.5%); family instability for victim of kidnapping (280: 54.8%) and occupational instability (313: 61.2%).

Research Question 4: What are the strategies to mitigating the prevalence of kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area?

Table 8. Percentage and Frequency Distribution of Strategies for mitigating kidnapping

Statement	Category	Frequency (N=511)	Percentage (%)
Tackling corruption on the side of the judiciary is a strategy for mitigating kidnapping.	Yes	351	68.7
	No	160	31.3
Tackling corruption and adequate appropriation of resources on the side of the executive is a strategy for mitigating kidnapping.	Yes	361	70.7
	No	150	29.4
Reducing the excess money paid to elected government officials is a strategy for mitigating kidnapping	Yes	450	88.1
	No	61	11.9
Life imprisonment is a strategy for mitigating kidnapping	Yes	341	66.7
	No	170	33.3
Death penalty is a strategy for mitigating kidnapping	Yes	330	64.6
	No	181	35.4
Tackling Corruption on the side of security agents is Strategies for mitigating kidnapping	Yes	290	56.7
	No	221	43.3
Tight security and the willingness of the public to cooperate with the security agents is a strategy for mitigating kidnapping	Yes	380	74.4
	No	131	25.6
Delivery on the dividends of democracy	Yes	400	78.3
	No	111	21.7

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 8 equally indicates that tackling corruption on the side of the judiciary was a strategy for mitigating kidnapping (351: 68%), other solutions to the menace of kidnapping as perceived by the

people of Dekina Local Government Area included adequate appropriation of resources on the side of the executive (360: 70.1%), reducing the excess money paid to elected government officials (450: 88.1%), life imprisonment for the culprit (341:66.7%), death penalty for the culprit (330: 64.6%), tackling corruption on the side of security agents (290: 56.7%), tight security and the willingness of the public to cooperate with the security agents (380: 74.4%), and delivery on the dividends of democracy (400: 78%); the dividends of democracy here included but not limited to suggested ones such as creation of jobs, tight security, youth empowerment and proper training of security agencies as better ways of solving the problem of kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

This study examined public perception of kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State, Nigeria. The study was conducted among 511 participants and majority of which were male representing 50.3% and female 49.7%. The study revealed that the incidence of kidnapping in Dekina Local Government was high, that they know many people who have been kidnapped, though whether the kidnapped were their close relative was not revealed by the study. As the incidence of kidnapping was high, early adulthood were perceived to be more involved in kidnapping, those with more education were perceived to be less involved in kidnapping. These findings is consonance with the positions of Abolaji and Kayode (2021) who postulated that the prevalence and trends of kidnapping is high and kidnapping has caused widespread consequences among majority of families in Nigeria.

The study also revealed that majority of the people of Dekina Local Government reported that lack of instruction of moral values contributed to the incidence of kidnapping, constraints to effective transmission of moral values, juicy political appointment, family hardship, societal economic inequality, greed, poor role model, inflation, weak leadership system, neglect of public interest, unequal distribution of resources, failure of government in taking responsibility for good governance, repressive style of leadership, educational imbalance, and poor cultural and moral upbringing were major causes of kidnapping. These findings corroborate with the submissions of Hazen and Horner (2007); Ibrahim and Mukhtar (2016) who observe that hostages have been taken for two primary reasons: political bargaining and economic gain. This broad classification of kidnapping is very important for understanding the underlying factors for the problem, especially kidnapping for ransom. But beyond these broad typologies, people are kidnapped and abducted by criminals for various reasons and intentions, such as for adoption, begging, camel racing, illicit intercourse, marriage, prostitution, ransom, revenge, sale, selling body parts, slavery, unlawful activity, murder and for other purposes. This could be true because in Nigeria and many other developing countries of Africa and Asia, political factors, poverty, lack of legal/available employment opportunity among the youths are also playing fundamental role in the rise of kidnapping.

On the consequences of effects of kidnapping, it was discovered that kidnapping was major threat to peoples' freedom, people in Dekina Local Government Area lived, slept with their eyes opened and go about their businesses under the fear of being kidnapped and so presenting Dekina L.G.A an unfriendly environment for investment, lack of economic progress, political instability, psychological trauma, depression for victims; family instability for victim of kidnapping and occupational instability were the effects. This is in line with the study of Ikpang (2011) who noted that kidnapping drives away investors, as no investor would be ready to invest in a crises-ridden environment. Dekina L.G.A was therefore seen as a place in which insecurity to lives and property looms large and were criminality has assumed notoriety. Ojukwu (2011) in support of the findings of this study asserts that the goal of generating at least 6000 megawatts in Nigeria can only be achieved if the life of investors who are working with the power sector will not be threatened by the kidnappers. This Irma fact

because today many Nigerians have lost their lives as a result of beating, torture and inhumane conditions they are subjected to by kidnapers subjecting the victims, their families and relations to serious psychological trauma, because of fear that the victims could be hurt or even killed.

The study also revealed that tackling corruption on the side of the judiciary is a strategy for mitigating kidnapping. Other solutions to the menace of kidnapping as perceived by the people of Dekina Local Government were adequate appropriation of resources on the side of the executive, reducing the excess money paid to elected government officials, life imprisonment for the culprit, death penalty for the culprit, tackling corruption on the side of security agents, tight security and the willingness of the public to cooperate with the security agents, and delivery on the dividends of democracy such as creation of jobs, tight security, youth empowerment and training of security as better ways of solving the problem of kidnapping. These findings is in tandem with the assertions of Osaghae (2011) who posits that capital punishment has been proposed as a punishment for kidnapping in Nigeria . It is believed that by imposing stiffer penalty on kidnapping, people will be deterred from committing it and so capital punishment is an effective means of deterrent for capital crime like kidnapping.

Interestingly the structural strain theory as used to buttress the study justifies the findings as it explains that crime escalate as a result of imbalance between structural goals and means. Put differently, the theory brings out an economic interest as the pursued quest for an individual which may gravitate into negative actions like kidnapping, fraud, armed robbery and the likes in order to fulfill a dream life of opportunity.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Raising from the findings of the research, it can be deduced that there are different perceptions on the causes, effects and solutions to kidnapping in Dekina Local Government Area of Kogi State, but the major cause of it according to the findings of this study is lack of instruction on morals of what is generally called moral decadence. Therefore, the following recommendations were made:

1. State-of-the-art operational facilities related to crime management especially intelligence gathering on kidnapers should be given to the police to assist in their proper functioning to combat the menace of kidnapping in the country. The joint security forces instituted to check kidnapping should be sustained and given free role to report kidnapers' hideouts.
2. Non-governmental organisations and the government can help to reduce the crime of kidnapping by organising workshops and seminars for parents, which will guide them in modelling youths to be disciplined and useful to the society. Religious leaders can make their own contributions through their teachings by instructing parents on the need to guide the youths in their custody to achieve better skills.
3. The federal government should create avenue to engage jobless youths in things that are creative and as such it will limit the level at which youths engages in kidnapping as a means to cushion the effects of poverty and lack of money among themselves.
4. Poverty alleviation programmes should also be directed towards addressing high incidence of poverty among women and children, who are a vulnerable segment of the population mostly kidnapped by terrorists or insurgents. These people are always trapped by organized criminals.
5. Religious organisations such as different churches and mosques should constantly preach against kidnapping in their various church programmes. Members should be made to know the consequences of kidnapping as a crime. This is vital as most men and women sampled are members of one form of religious affiliation or the order and more so that kidnapping is perpetrated by people of varying ages and genders.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The limitation of this research work is that it was limited to adopting only questionnaire as instrument of data gathering which may definitely not be enough for diverse responses. Instead, In-depth Interview and/or Focus Group Discussion (FGD) would have helped in getting more detailed responses from the target populations in the Dekina Local Government Area.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION

Mary Uloko carried out the major research work

Edime Yunusa, M.Sc. drafted parts of the manuscript

Thomas Imoudu Goment, Ph.D. supervised the entire research work.

All authors drafted the manuscript, proofread and approved the final manuscript.

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