
Impact of Kidnaping in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria: A Case Study of Akwa Ibom State.

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ABSTRACT

In the Niger Delta Region, kidnapping took its evil root in Port Harcourt River State and spread to other parts of the region including Akwa Ibom State. This paper focused on the impact of kidnapping in the Niger Delta Region in general and Akwa Ibom State in particular. This impact was examined under Physical, Physiological, Political, Economic and Social. Even though, existing literature review are few being in contemporary issues in Nigeria, the available information will be explained. Theories on crime and kidnapping will be adopted to give direction to the writing. The scope of the study was the Public, Security Agents and Victims. The researcher showed the impact created by kidnapping and how it has affected development and created insecurity in Akwa Ibom State. Finally the researcher came up with some recommendations, one of which was that Federal Government of Nigeria should review our criminal justice system, and amend the constitution to take care of kidnapping menace. If adopted will further help to curb the menace of the Kidnapers.

KEYWORDS: Kidnapping, kidnaped Victims

Introduction

At first, kidnapping was not recognized as a felony under English Common Law, it was regarded as a misdemeanor but it was later criminalized by statute due to its adverse effect on the society. In the 18th century, the most frequent form of kidnapping according to the great legal Scholar Sir William Black Stone was stealing of children and sending them to servitude in the American Colonies. It was not until the kidnapping of Charles Lindbergh's infant son in 1932 that comprehensive kidnapping legislation was enacted in the United States of America. In passing the statute, congress made it a felony to kidnap and transport a victim across the state or national border of United States of America. The sanction was Death penalty, which Akwa Ibom State and Rivers state government had just adopted.

In Nigeria, people were kidnapped especially for rituals purpose; the issue of kidnapping for ransom was not common. It was as a result of increase agitation by the youth of Niger Delta for improved development in the area that the kidnapping started as a form of protest and later graduated to criminality. Today, kidnapping in the Niger Delta region has become common

place, ordinary citizens and expatriates are have become increasingly unhappy about the situation and are demanding a change.

The former secretary general of the common wealth and one of the Nigeria's most respected diplomats chief Emaka Anyaoku says that "The increase in kidnappings represents a critical security challenge for the authorities". Today, the phenomenon of kidnapping has spread beyond the Niger Delta region. They had been reported kidnapping and ransom paid for victims in states that are outside the Niger Delta region. The development is posing a key challenge to the Federal, States and Local Government Authorities in the country.

Kidnapping have therefore become a topic of endless fascination glance on the newspaper and television programmes round the country. Crime generally has been striking a kind of horror on the minds of the citizens of Nigeria. In Akwa Ibom State, kidnapping started suddenly and it was on the increase and people feared it was rising at geometrical progression. The situation has created a lot of disorder and fears. It is generally believed that self-preservation is the first law of nature and all activities of man be it political, social, and economic are predicated on the existence of a peaceful atmosphere. Peace in this context means the existence of atmosphere where law abiding citizens carry out their lawful activities without let or hindrance, therefore the control and prevention and control of crime are matter of serious importance to note that no sane person will venture outside the apparent security of his residence, which is regarded as man's castle and last line of defense, if he fears that he kidnapped immediately he step out.

Therefore, the rapid and sustainable development of The Niger Delta Region is of special and continually interest to Nigerians and the world over for we believe that rapid improvement in human development parameters are essential for peace and stability for increased investment and opportunities and for guaranteed future for country generations.

The fear of kidnapping has engulfed the people of Akwa Ibom State, hence the need to access the impact of kidnapping socially, economically, educationally psychologically, physically and emotionally and recommended way out.

Statement of the Problem

Borrowing from the view of a criminologist (Dambazau 2007) crime undermines the social fabric of society by first eroding the sense of Safety and Security. Kidnapping is a recent criminal phenomenon in Akwa Ibom State. Generally, the impacts of kidnapping are enormous, raging from the Costs, Economic, Social, Physical and Psychological The phenomenon of kidnapping, which has raised the issue of Insecurity, Econ0omic and Social crises in Akwa Ibom State and Niger Delta Region as a whole has had implications for National Development and even the safety of foreign investment already in Nigeria and prospective investors.

The issues of kidnapping in Nigeria in the past was mostly a part time for ritualist, now kidnapping has graduated into demand for ransom. Tin their Modus Operandi, kidnappers do not discriminate in terms of age or sex, they have kidnapped kids, Pupils, Student of Higher Institutions, Wives of person perceived to be rich, relatives of politicians, Public office holders, Expatriates and their Relatives.

Kidnapping of large multitude took its root form Port Harcourt city in Rivers State and spread to other parts of Niger Delta Region, including Akwa Ibom State. It has since spread like

wild bushfire with their dragnets' to institution of Higher Learning, snatching victims from wealthy home s and demanding ransom.

It is no exaggeration therefore to hold that kidnapping have succeeded in giving Niger Delta region the picture of a region in perpetual state of war. These problems created by the kidnapping have severally truncated the rapid development of the region, including Akwa Ibom State.

The study therefore seeks to access the impact of kidnapping in Akwa Ibom State and provide suggestion toward curbing these menaces in Akwa Ibom State.

Objective of the Study

The general objective of the study is to assess the impact of kidnapping in Akwa Ibom State. The specific objectives are:

1. To investigate the stiffer law against kidnapping in Nigeria.
2. To examine the impact of kidnapping
3. To investigate the effort by the state Government and security agents in combating kidnapping in Akwa Ibom State.

Research Question

1. What are the stiffer law against kidnapping in Nigeria?
2. What are the modus operandi of kidnapping in Akwa Ibom State?
3. In what ways is the Government responding to kidnapping in Akwa Ibom State?

Hypothesis

1. There is no significant stiffer law against kidnapping in Nigeria.
2. There is no significant impact of kidnapping in Akwa Ibom State.
3. There is no significant effort by the state Government and security agents in combating kidnapping in Akwa Ibom State.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition of Kidnapping

Kidnapping is viewed from different prospective. According to Oxford Concise English Dictionary (1998) kidnapping is the carry off of a person by illegal or deception especially to obtain a ransom, while Black's Law Dictionary 8th edition (2004) defines kidnapping as the crime of forcible abducting a person from his or her own country and sending a person to another country. Kidnapping is also regarded as a crime of seizing and talking away a person by false fraud.

Adler, Mueller and laufer, (1996) define kidnapping as the seizure and abduction of a person by force or threat of force against the victim will, under Federal Law, the taking of a person across state lines and holding of that person for ransom. Siegel, (2006) sees kidnapping as state-defined Crime in the same category as Murder, Gambling, Arson, Robbery, Extortion and Narcotic violations. In whatever way, kidnapping is defined; it is a crime against humanity which threatens human existence and progress.

Motives for Kidnapping

Motives of kidnapping can be divided into two segments; Expressive (i.e. and effort to voice out and/or publicize a grievance or express a frustrated emotion) and Instrumental (i.e. to obtain a particular outcome such as ransom). In reality, it is usually difficult to identify any single motive. For instance, material motives (e.g. ransom) may be masked by alleged Political, Religious, Moral and Selfish motives. In the world over ransom may be used to fund political, Religious and cult activities. In many countries, some insurgency sell hostages to other groups for their own purposes.

The motive here in Akwa Ibom especially Uyo metropolis appears to be largely criminal, for financial gains, rather than being politically motivated. This I will describe to as “Economic Extortion Kidnapping”. One may wonder why kidnapping thrives very well in Akwa Ibom State compared with arm robbery.

First, the evil act called kidnapping is lucrative. For its perpetrators, it obviously, yields far more illegitimate money, with minimal risk, than armed robbery. The perpetrators are certain that families of the victim will pay up especially victims from wealthy families. The kidnapers called the “Mega Coins”.

Secondly, kidnapping is a big business, because of lax legislation and weak law, leaves a minimal sanction for such heinous crime. For a nation already bedeviled by numerous other governance and insecurity problems, the country looks helpless. The criminality in kidnapping is not a debate, whether as an act by an individual, group or ethnic organization, regardless of the guise and rationale behind it all, it is heinous crime and it must be curbed.

It has also been seen that kidnapping is not only for ransom but it has a little political undertone for instance, the daughter of the chairman of Abak Local Government, Miss Aniefon Aneidianabasi was kidnapped on Friday April 2009 and tortured to death, and dumped her remains on the main gate of her school; Obio Okpa in Uruk Anam Local Government Area despite the N10million ransom already collected from the father of the deceased.

The motives here appear to be largely criminal, political rather than financial gains. These events have a demoralizing effect on the families, who may lose all faith in the security agents and government. This goes a long way to challenge the provision of the constitution, which says that government will protect life and property of all citizenry.

Forms and Modus Operandi of Kidnapping

Sutherland, (1960) described kidnapping as an illegal entity, which consists of taking possession of the body of another person against his/her will by force or fraud and in violation of the law. In-depth, kidnapping appears in at least ten forms which are socially distinct and which generally involve different causal processes.

First, kidnapping was the basis of the slave trade, and all those who participated in the slave trade and in slavery were accessory to kidnapping.

Secondly, impressments was a form of kidnapping in which a sailor was forced to leave his ship in which he has a legal right to be, to board another ship and work there as a sailor.

Thirdly, men were shanghai'd by force and compelled to work as a sailor in ships. They received wages, but commissions for the crimps who kidnapped them were deducted from their wages.

Fourthly, girls were kidnapped and used for prostitution. This aroused attention in the period prior to World War 1, and it was referred to as “white slavery”.

Fifth, underworld leaders were kidnapped by underworld criminals and held on ransom, especially during the prohibition period. Since the underworld leaders were not able to appeal to the law for support and did not wish to advertise inability to protect themselves, this kidnapping aroused little public attention.

Sixth, kidnapping of wealthy persons in the upper world by the members of the underworld for the purpose of ransom developed extensively about 1930 as another form of kidnapping.

Seventh, kidnapers took possession of victims on connection with other crimes such as robbery as a means of security for themselves. This was temporary and the victims are always released as soon as the kidnapers are secured.

Eight, illegal arrest is a form of kidnapping. For instance, if a police man takes possession of a person under the condition not authorized by law, he or she is committing a crime of kidnapping. In this sense, police have kidnapped many times as frequent as all other offender combined.

Nine, children have been kidnapped by lonesome and probably psychopathic women in lieu of other methods of securing children of their own.

Ten, a parent has kidnapped his own children who had been assigned by the court to the other parent in divorce proceedings, or under other circumstances.

There are other minor forms of kidnapping but this ten are sufficient number to show that there are various forms of kidnapping. These forms are somewhat interrelated. The forms mentioned slave trade, impressments, shanghaiing, slavery underworld ransom cases and upper world ransom cases, all of them have financial returns or reward as the main objective. In Akwa Ibom, most of the victim were kidnapped either in their home or on the way to the church on Sunday or in their place of work. A case in point is that of a 60years old Pakistanian, Mustaq Ahmad, working with Gitto Construction Company in Uyo.

Authorities Responsible for Kidnapping

The police in Akwa Ibom State have recorded a breakthrough in their effort to rid the state of kidnapping. On February 1, 2009, the police assisted by vigilant and patriotic Nigerians, smashed a kidnapping syndicate at her premises of the Power City International Church, Uyo. The duo of Ifiok Lazarus of Ndot Village in Uruak Anam Local Government Area and Emmanuel Monday Uko of Nsekhe Village in Ukanafun Local Government Area were arrested for attempting to kidnap the wife of Barr. Enoidem, who was already inside the church auditorium and was lured by a gang member and come outside the church where the attempt was made to kidnap her. Sensing danger, she raised an alarm that attracted people who rallied round to rescue her and also helped in arresting two suspects, while their cohorts took to their heels.

The Commissioner of Police, Akwa Ibom state has also stepped up its security operations. For example the Akwa Ibom Police Command made up of anti-crime squad stormed the village of Ikot Ottong Nsit in Nsit Ibom Local Government Area at about 2am and rescued a 60 years old Pakistanian, Mustaq Ahmad working with Gitto Construction Company in Uyo unhurt. The anti-kidnapping squad has appealed to those with useful information regarding kidnapping to volunteer information to the police. The police boss regretted a situation where kidnapped victims and their families would shield information of their kidnap from the police. He said that the police are equipped by training to assist victims in tracking down their captors. He warned that crimes live in perpetuity, meaning that no matter how long a crime takes to be unrevealed that the new Anti-kidnapping and terrorism unit has finished a special training and they are now looking into all pending kidnap cases.

In response to the kidnapping saga legally, Akwa Ibom State House of Assembly recently passed into law the Anti-kidnapping bill which has describe death as a penalty for offenders. The governors empowered by the law to determine the place and means of execution. The bill is titled “The Akwa Ibom State Security and Enforcement Bill 2009”. The law which commence on 12th May, 2009 prescribes Law Enforcement for any person who, with intent to maim or kill or do some grievous harm to any person, unlawful causes a bomb or any explosive substance to exploded, put any destructive or any corrosion fluid or explosive substance in place, cast or throw acid or any such corrosive fluid or explosive substance to any person or sends or deliver any bomb or explosive substance to any person. Life imprisonment also awaits any person who attempt to kidnap another person.

A punishment of 21-years imprisonment is also provided for any person who assist the escape of kidnapers or terrorist. Any person who unlawfully receives or has in possession bombs or other explosives, not being a member of the armed force of Nigeria, authorized to be in possession of such dangerous weapon or explosives, with intent to do any harm to another, is liable to imprisonment for 14 years without option of fine.

The same punishment is provided for any person who unlawfully is in possession of material or substance that can be used in compounding or producing explosive of any sort or for acid bath and for any person who is in possession of dangerous of offensive weapons for the purpose of destruction of lives and property.

The law provides 14 years imprisonment without option of fine for any person who is convicted for any of the following offensives. Causing extreme fear, threatening lives by use of letters, phone calls or other electronic methods or gadgets, threatening to start a fire or cause explosion with the purpose of burning or destroying a building or occupied structure of another, organizing a system of intimidation, becoming an object of dreads or making himself a nuisance.

Any premises where a person is held against his will as a hostage shall be forfeited to the Government without the payment of compensation and the Governor or his authorized representatives shall have power to sign an order authorizing the sealing up of such premises. The law authorizes the governor to demand and collect weekly reports on threats to security from traditional rulers and Local Government Councils in the state and to empower the Nigerian Police Force to break into any premises and seize materials considered militant or terrorist in nature.

The Governors is also empowered by the Law to prescribe and approve new technology for the storage and dissemination of Bio-data or other forensic or scientific method used by Law Enforcement Agencies and to set minimum Security standard for hotels and other public places to be maintained including CCTV and maintained of security tapes or electronic storage device.

The police or other Security Agencies are authorized by the law to arrest and detain a suspected kidnapper, Terrorist or sponsor of violence without warrant. The law gives any person who believes on reasonable grounds that another person is the kidnapper or terrorist the power to arrest and hand him over to the police at the earliest opportunity. Any traditional ruler in whose domain hostages are being held with or without his knowledge may be deposed or suspected for such period as the Government may determine or his Certificate of Recognition withdraw or both.

Any telecommunication company operating within the states that fails to comply within 24 hours of a request by the police or any Law Enforcement Agencies for confidential information upon reasonable suspicion shall be liable upon conviction to a fine of N5 million cash request refused. Offences under the law shall be heard and disposed off by any division of the High Court of the State notwithstanding the place where the offence was committed.

Apart from signing into law the Anti-kidnapping bill, in a further effort to provide security, the state governor chief (Dr.) Godswill Akpabio in his sincere commitment to rid the state of crime has procured more vehicles for the effective policing of the state. In Akwa Ibom today, the effect of kidnapping is eroding away as government and security agents has intensified effort to get rid of all kidnapping activities in Akwa Ibom State. This led to the enactment of the law mentioned above, while security agents are also retrained to check the menace of the kidnappers.

Study Area

The area of this study is Akwa Ibom State. Akwa Ibom State is one of the 36 states in Nigeria. It is made up of Uyo, Ikot Ekpene and Eket Senatorial Districts.

Population of the Study

The population of the study consisted of 3 towns, in each of the senatorial districts, which was Uyo, Ikot Ekpene and Eket Senatorial Districts.

Method of Data Collection

The Researcher visited the aforementioned towns and interviewed identified respondent. The respondent consisted of members of the public, security agents and victims. The researcher interviewed a total of 150 respondents.

Method of Data Analysis

The method adopted was simple percentage method.

Result and Observation

This is the presentation of the data analysis and the finding of the three hypotheses.

Analysis of the Research Question

Hypothesis One

There are no significant stiffer laws against kidnapping in Nigeria.

RESPONSES	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Agreed	110	73.3
Disagreed	40	26.6
	150	100

The analysis here shows that those that agreed out-numbered those that disagreed; it only means that the punishment recommended for kidnapping generally in Nigeria is not stirred.

Hypothesis Two

There is no significant impact of kidnapping in Akwa Ibom State.

RESPONSES	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Agreed	110	73.3
Disagreed	40	26.6
	150	100

The frequency representing the variable in the Hypothesis shared a total of 140 scores for those who disagreed while 10 was for those who agreed. The scores were worked out on percentage basis. Those who disagreed accounted for 93.3%, this indicates that those who disagreed out numbered those who agreed. Hence there is significant impact of kidnapping in Akwa Ibom State.

Hypothesis Three

There is no significant effort of the state Government and Security Agents in combating kidnapping in Akwa Ibom State.

RESPONSES	NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS	PERCENTAGE (%)
Agreed	60	40
Disagreed	90	60
	150	100

In this analysis 60 agreed while 90 disagreed, pointing efforts made in combating kidnapping.

This shows that those who disagreed outnumbered those who agreed. It was seen that there are significant effort made by both the state government and security agents to curb the menace of kidnapers.

Discussion

The data for this paper came as a result of the responses collected from the sample of the study.

The population was made up of members of the public and security agent; who were found knowledgeable on the topic of investigation.

However, it must be stated that almost all of the people engaged in the interview seem quite aware of the weakness of the legislation on kidnapping in Nigeria, impact of kidnapping ranging from physical, psychological, political, economic and social. The knowledge of the respondents in the effort made by the state government was further enhanced through the recent signing into Law of Anti-kidnapping Law by the Akwa Ibom State Government and retraining of Police in Anti-kidnapping strategies.

Conclusion

It is now obvious that kidnapping in the Niger Delta has assumed a very dangerous dimension, which if allowed to continue unchecked might threaten the existence of this Nation.

When kidnapping was confined to foreign in the Niger Delta Region, Nigerians seemed apathetic about it. Now that kidnappers have got used to free money they are getting as ransom, they have now turned their attention to follow Nigerians, Kidnapping, Men, Women and children; they have extended their scope to include firing at helicopters. This nefarious activity has now spread from Rivers State to Akwa Ibom State and other part of Nigeria, hitherto regarded to be safe.

The activity of kidnapers has created great impact in Akwa Ibom State, being the area covered by the case study. It has slowed down the rate of development and creates a state of insecurity. The effort of the Government and Security Agents in Akwa Ibom, need to be saluted, the situation is shameful and we need to device new strategies to deal with this menace. Again the New Anti-kidnapping law with its Stiff penalties for kidnapping is very much welcome.

Recommendations

The study has showed that the problem of kidnapping in Nigeria has assumed a very dangerous dimension. If allowed unchecked might destroy the fabric of Nigerian society. So the following actions are recommended.

- 1 Federal government of Nigeria should review our criminal justice system, and amend the constitution to take care of kidnapping menace.
- 2 The government at all levels should embark on meaningful economic recovery strategies with job creation potentials. Our Economy policies in recent times have favoured mono-culturalism (oil economy). We need to look at the angle of Agriculture to create more jobs.
- 3 Urgent structural programs of policy should be put in place to specifically address the issue of development in place to specifically address the issue of developmental imbalance between the rich and the poor.
- 4 The Youths should be encouraged to learn either Technical, Vocational or university institution in order to equip them with the skills as to be gainfully engaged.
- 5 Drugs abuse leading to irresponsible conduct among youths should be discouraged, and there should be proper education of Youths regarding the danger in drug abuse.

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