



Government interventions and rate of kidnapping in cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract

In Cross River State of Nigeria, the general state of insecurity over the past three years - 2018 to early 2022 has no doubt reached a stage where virtually everybody is now worried the direction the state is going. Presently, hardly can people sleep because of the fear of being robbed or kidnapped. In the state previously known to be most peaceful in Nigeria, businessmen have taken flight with their businesses for fear of being kidnapped or robbed, most people have left the state and live in fear of driving expensive cars, build good houses and hosting event that may have attracted attention of the public. In a spate of six years, kidnapping and hostage taking have spread from Cross River State and no local government is left out. This dreaded monster has spread and taken deep root into the entire South-South region where the state is located. It is against this background the statistics is designed to investigate government intervention in curbing the rate of kidnaping in Cross River State. The study was designed to review government response toward the formation of community security and establishment of Joint Task Force Like, Operation Akpagwu, Operation Scolumbu, Anti-Cultism and Kidnapping Squad, The Green Sherrif in the fight against kidnapping in Cross River State, Nigeria. The study reviewed literature on related article while the structural strain theory was employed. The design for the study was inferential design with a sample of 400 security personnel selected in 8 Local Governments of the state out of the 18 Local Government Areas of Cross River State. From the study, Findings revealed that formation of community security and establishment of Joint Task Force in the state has significantly contributed to the reduction of kidnapping In Cross River State. From the study it was recommended among others that, for effective combat of kidnapping, the level of laxity in the law implementation process to prosecute offenders should be addressed as urgently as possible. The perpetrators of kidnapping should be arrested for thorough investigation and appropriate punishment, otherwise the menace will still be on the increase. It was concluded that kidnapping has become a social problem in Cross River State, and security agencies have a significant role in preventing and fighting the problem in the state.

Keywords: Kidnapping, operation Akpagwu, operation Scolumbu, Anti-Kidnaping Squad, Cross River State

Introduction

Nigeria is a country in West Africa with a population of about 200 million people (NPC, 2017). It achieved independence from British on October 1, 1960. According to history, Nigeria began a millennium ago. In the past decades, the activities of Nigerian criminal syndicates have caused increasing concern all over the world. According to Transparency International (Ajayi, 2012) ^[3], Nigeria as a country is ranked as one of the most corrupt nations in the world with most sophisticated criminal acts like Kidnapping, Advance fee fraud, Armed robbery, oil theft among others. In all, amongst of these crimes listed in Nigeria and Cross River State to be precise, kidnapping appears to be one of the most technical and most lucrative in nature, considering the fact that a lot of people are involved unannounced. Kidnappers have a powerful mode of operation which creates fear in individuals because they are uncertain of the next person to be kidnapped. The operators of armed robbery can kidnap immediate family members and divulge all round information about whoever is their target. Kidnapping is not new in Nigeria and is one of the challenges facing the country at present.

Though it takes place in all parts of the country, it is most rampant in the South East and South South because of oil business with foreigners.

In recent time, apart from the Boko Haram and Fulani herdsmen terrorism, attention has been turned to the issue of kidnapping and stringent measures have been taken to tackle the menace. Both National and International bodies are coming together to see if the incidence can be curbed. Many engage in kidnapping business for different purposes and missions. Some are politically masterminded, especially among political opponents. Some do it for ritual sacrifice; that is, in situations where the kidnapped persons are never seen again even after huge ransoms are paid. Some engage in this heinous crime solely for the sake of money; in this case, the victims are released after the payment of the agreed ransom. In all, kidnapping can be grouped according to motives into: political kidnapping, kidnapping for marriage, ritual kidnapping and monetary kidnapping.

Investigations have shown that ordinary citizens participate in this atrocious crime in order to fill their pockets, usually the youths employed by rich politicians to carry out this crime as modern business venture. They target rich families and sometimes demand huge amounts of money as ransom. Also, it has been traced among community leaders and religious leaders who are in the business of divulging information with the aim of receiving their share after the deal. This has raised suspense among Nigerians about who to trust or confide in. Kidnapping in Nigeria was centered in the south and the Niger Delta region in the early 2000s. In the years 1991 through 2000, Nigeria was in the ninth position in the ranking of kidnapping countries, behind Columbia, Mexico, the Russian Federation, the Philippines, and Venezuela, among others (Eso, 2009b) ^[12]. Starting from the latter part of 2000, when the advance fee fraud (419) market declined dramatically, the kidnapping business picked up speed. Records show that from January 2008 to June 2009 Nigeria had a total of 512 kidnappings, with the deaths of 30 victims (Anosike, 2009) ^[5]. According to state-by-state police reports released in July 2009, the scores are as follows: (1) Abia State with a total of 110 kidnap incidents, 353 court cases, and three deaths; (2) Imo State recorded 58 kidnaps, 109 arrests, 41 prosecutions, and 1 death; (3) Delta State had 44 kidnappings, 43 released, 27 arrests, 31 prosecutions, and 1 death; (4) Akwa Ibom State recorded 40 kidnappings, 40 released, 18 arrests, and 11 prosecutions; and the list is endless (Anosike 2009) ^[5]. During the latter part of 2005–2006, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) resorted to kidnapping of foreign oil workers to make political statements (Eso 2009a). Today kidnapping seem more lucrative than any other crime, hence this study seeks to investigate the extent to which government interventions helps in addressing the menace of kidnapping in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Statement of the problem

In Cross River State 2018 to 2022, a state formerly addressed as the most peaceful state in Nigeria, has been plagued with a significant increase in Criminal activities and most common is the menace of kidnapping. Furthermore, though ranked among the seven least terrorized States, Cross River State is had been reported recently for its high spate of arson and carnage and looting or kidnapping. This confirmation came on the heels of the present administration under the security watch of Ben Ayade, the Executive Governor of Cross River

State since 2015 till date. While commiserating with the pains borne by the citizens, mostly medical doctors is the state who are the target of kidnapers, there have been reported case of over 21 kidnapped medical doctors in the state between 2015 to 2017 (Cross River Watch, 2017) ^[10]. This menace informed the formation or establishment of Security Joint Task Force to tackle the spate of kidnapping in the state. These established Joint Task Force include; The community Security outfit, The Green Sherrif, Anti-cultism and kidnapping sward, Operation Akpagwu, Operation Scolumbu, Anti-Kidnaping Squad for the fight against Kidnapping in the state.

The formation or establishment of the Joint Task Security Force against kidnapping in the state were charged to engage in a house to house search and fish out unscrupulous elements whose intent are desperately trying to discredit the peaceful disposition of the citizens of Cross River. According to a Calabar Discussants group in a Security Summit held in the state, it was stated that the state's breakdown of security is the cause of high perpetration of Kidnapping activities in the state. The discussant, an all-embracing group, comprises security experts, academics, security operatives, clergymen, traditional rulers, and students.

The effect or impact of this security outfit formation to fight the spate of kidnapping in the state had since its establishment in the state been effective in curbing the spate of kidnapping despite few reports of kidnapping in the state in 2022. In the same vain, report from Cross River Watch, 2021) state that since the formation of Joint Security Task Force against kidnapping in Cross River State, over 69 kidnapping incidences have been apprehended by the state great effort. In addition, as part of effort to curb the menace of kidnapping in the state, the Cross-River State Government licensed all wooden, fibre engine boats and vessels operating in its waterways in December 1, 2021. This effort was made because security intelligent report that kidnapers in Calabar have reportedly used the waterways to escape to the creeks with their victims.

However, despite the significant progress reported by these security task force against kidnapping, in 2022 many other cases of kidnapping were still reported. It is against this background this study is designed to access Government Interventions and rate of Kidnapping in Cross River State, Nigeria

Research objectives

The study was designed to examine government intervention and the rate of kidnapping in Cross River State, Nigeria. Subsidiary objectives seek to:

1. Examine the impact of community security formation on the fight against Kidnapping in Cross River State, Nigeria
2. Examine the impact of government establishment of Joint Task Force like, Operation Scolumbu, Operation Akpagwu, The Green Sherrif and Anti-Kidnapping Squad on the fight against kidnapping in Cross River State, Nigeria

Research hypothesis

1. There is no significant impact of community security formation on the fight against Kidnapping in Cross River State, Nigeria
2. There is no significant impact of government establishment of Joint Task Force like, Operation

Scolumbu, Operation Akpagwu, The Green Sherrif and Anti-Kidnapping Squad on the fight against kidnapping in Cross River State, Nigeria

Review of Literature

Conceptual framework

The word kidnap means to seize and detain a person unlawfully and usually for the payment of ransom. Generally, kidnapping is the taking of a person against his or her will (or from the control of a parent or guardian) from one place to another under circumstances in which the person so taken does not have freedom of movement, will, or decision because of violence, force, threat, or intimidation (Hill & Hill, 2005) ^[17]. According to Inyang and Abraham (2013) ^[19], kidnapping is defined as “the forcible seizure, taking away and unlawful detention of a person against his/her will”. In another definition, Fage and Alabi (2017) ^[14] presented kidnapping as the “forceful or fraudulent abduction of an individual or a group of individuals for reasons ranging from economic, political and religious to (struggle for) self-determination”. In agreement with the two definitions above, kidnapping is usually motivated by financial gains or political benefits. Thus, opportunists or regular criminals as well as political opponents can resort to kidnapping in order to illegally obtain economic benefits or have their demands granted. In many cases, kidnapping is a business involving which demand for ransom may vary considerably depending on the victim’s personal status.

Likewise, Uzorma and Nwanegbo-Ben (2014) ^[33] defined kidnapping as the “act of seizing and detaining or carrying away a person by unlawful force or by fraud, and often with a demand for ransom”. For an act to be deemed kidnapping, it must involve coercive movement of a victim from one place to another. The detention or seizure of that person—be it a child or an adult—is for a period of time, depending on the willingness of the relatives to respond positively to the negotiations. In most cases, the victims’ eyes are blindfolded so that they cannot see or locate the place of detention. Many are detained in places far away from their families. In their forceful movement, a lot of gunshots may be released into the air to create fear and tension, especially in the victim who would be dragged without his consent. Consequently, resistance, struggling and refusal to obey and follow the kidnapers have led to the untimely death of some victims. The perpetrators are often tempted to shoot sporadically for safety in order to accomplish the mission, not minding who gets affected. From the foregoing, there is no best way of defining kidnapping. However, in a nutshell, kidnapping refers to the abduction and captivity of a person, typically to obtain a ransom. Sometimes, kidnapers hold their captives longer in order to demand more ransom from the victims’ relatives or friends. Some families go as far as borrowing money from outsiders or selling their properties in order to save the lives of their beloved ones. The danger of not responding immediately could lead to the untimely death of the victim. Many have died during the time of torture, especially those with health challenges. Inyang and Abraham (2013) ^[19] added that it is allegedly regarded as a restriction of someone’s liberty, which violates the provision of freedom of movement as stipulated in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, where every other law takes its root.

Causes of Kidnapping in Nigeria

Kidnapping, as a heinous crime, is a complex issue. That is why both scholars and concerned individuals have engaged in intense speculations and investigations or studies, so as to know the various reasons and causes of kidnapping. Hazen and Horner (2007) ^[16] noted that people commit this crime for two obvious reasons which are: political bargaining and economic gains. These two aspects give a broad and vivid classification of kidnapping in order to clearly understand the underlying factors of the menace, especially regarding the idea of ransom. However, apart from these two broad reasons stated above, many have been kidnapped and abducted by criminals for different reasons and intentions, which include illicit intercourse, rape, selling of human parts for ritual sacrifice, political revenge, slavery, ransom-begging, marriage, murder or assassination, sale, unlawful activities, and for other purposes (NCRB, 2014).

Considering the type of kidnapping recently experienced in Nigeria, it is obvious that unemployment is a major cause of kidnapping. Some frustrated graduates, after searching for jobs for up to three or more years, decide to engage in this atrocity for the sole aim of survival.

Ibrahim and Mukhar (2016) ^[18] maintained that lack of available employment opportunity among the youths also plays a fundamental role in the rise of kidnapping. Similarly, Inyang and Abraham (2016) observed that Nigeria has a large number of adolescents living and making a living on the streets without any help from the government and besides, the government is not interested in helping. The fact that they are neglected gives them the morale to terrorize the society without any remorse.

In Nigeria and many other developing countries in Africa and Asia, the political factor is another cause of kidnapping. Many politicians engage the services of kidnapers to deal with their political opponents and their political power, popularity and economic muscles. Zannoni (2003) ^[34] called this type “political kidnapping” where the overall objective is to promote the political aims of a particular political group or movement. In this case, a ransom is usually demanded to obtain money for the group in order to fund their campaign and other activities. This is in line with Catlin Group (2012) ^[6] who added that political extremists use kidnapping as a political weapon and as a means of financing their activities. Closely related to unemployment is poverty, which has ravaged the masses. Nigeria has the highest number of people in Africa living below average lives. Zannoni (2003) ^[34] categorized people compelled by poverty to get involved in kidnapping as criminal kidnapers, whose main motive is to obtain ransoms from families or business enterprises for survival. In this type of kidnapping, any person with or without criminal intention can join especially as it appears to be profitable, not minding the mortal consequences. Many in this category are not professionals, meaning that they are not well trained and equipped; they are only being led by trained ones. They get easily arrested by the security personnel who are on patrol exercise. Poverty is on the increase because those at the corridors of power are yet to consider the plight of the masses; hence, the disparity between the rich and the poor keeps growing day by day. This economic deprivation has planted the seeds of kidnapping as a way of getting money—by these poor youths—from various communities.

The poor masses, out of resentment and in a bid to get their own share of the national cake, decide to terrorize the rich men even when the legal implications are grievous. Religion in Nigeria is a threat to the peaceful existence of the country. It is obvious that two religions are practised in Nigeria but these two religions have never been in harmony due to issues of beliefs. Dodo (2010) ^[11] noted that the Islamic religion has never been in agreement with the Christian religion. Each religious group is making frantic efforts to be on top, especially the Islamic religion. In most cases, Christians are kidnapped and killed secretly just to reduce their number. Severally, sudden disappearance of Christians living in the Northern part of Nigeria raises tension.

Boko Haram's kidnappings are both political and religious, according to their leaders and the Nigerian government

Kidnappers' Targets

Politicians

As already pointed out, kidnapping is not a new problem in Nigeria, and it is one of the biggest challenges. The country faces many problems, including unemployment, corruption and poverty. But what bothers many people is, who are the targets of kidnappers? According to Nseabasi (2009), the top kidnapping operations are masterminded by government officials, opposition groups, unrewarded or uncompensated members of election rigging, militant groups and others. This is prominent especially during political elections, as often observed. The ambitious political candidates aspiring for one position or the other tend to kidnap their opponents as a way of silencing them or as a measure to drain their financial muscles. In this case, after the victim pays the ransom, he or she cannot have enough for political campaign. This has been the fate of many political aspirants. So, kidnapping is seen as an instrument for political vendetta and settling of political scores.

Businessmen and Religious Leaders

Apart from the politicians, another set of people who are kidnappers' targets are the businessmen. Several cases of businessmen, who were kidnapped, have been recorded recently, in which large sums of money were expected as ransom. This has affected many, especially the importers, who cannot stand on their feet anymore after spending in the hands of the kidnappers. It is unfortunate that the perpetrators of this menace have equally extended their operations to religious leaders. Oftentimes, Pastors, Reverend Fathers and Bishops have been kidnapped. In 2016 and 2017, it was reported that two catholic Reverend Fathers in Orlu Dioceses were kidnapped and huge ransoms were demanded. The same happened in Catholic diocese of Aba where two priests were kidnapped to an unknown destination, though through the prayers of the members, they escaped. It is obvious that kidnappers do not have respect, not even to men of God. The operation is also organized and targeted at foreign workers or contractors working directly for the government. Many foreign contractors, as it stands, find it difficult to receive contracts here in Nigeria, especially the South-South and South East. Due to this experience, the government gives them military men as their security officers.

Kidnappers' Modes of Operation

The lucrative nature of kidnapping in recent times has made many young people to join the business. This time, there are different groups with different modes of operation.

Investigations carried out confirmed that each group has a gang leader and specified operations within its jurisdiction, as assigned by their overall leader in the state. So, a person could be kidnapped by one group today and by tomorrow, another group would kidnap him again. This is why many victims have been kidnapped more than once or twice, though this depends on the information received about the victims before their kidnapping. If two or three groups receive the same information by their respective informants, the tendency that more than one group will kidnap the person becomes obvious.

Most of the victims of kidnapping who narrated their experiences made it known that kidnappers' camps are usually lonely zones like deserted bushes, forests or buildings in different villages, where people hardly visit. Anywhere such places are located, they make them their abode and they become danger zones; they are ready to shoot at any person they see within that area. Each group of kidnappers is divided into three 3 teams, namely the tax force, the operation team and the guards. The business of the tax force is to negotiate with the family of the victim on what should be the ransom; the people in this team are mainly the leaders of the gang. The work of the operation team is to kidnap the victims; the people in this group are well trained and fortified with sophisticated guns. During operation, they are willing to kill provided they succeed in their mission. The work of the guards is to keep watch on those already kidnapped. They receive instructions from their gang leader(s) either to release or to kill the victim, depending on the outcome of the negotiation.

Kidnappers do not operate in isolation, they have networks—groups that are strategically positioned in different localities and streets. It has been observed that some street boys belong to kidnapping groups. Their work is to monitor and give accurate information about the rich or businessmen in the street. They study their movements and report regularly to their gang. Some jobless men and women equally serve in this capacity. They roam the streets just for the purpose of investigating some individuals who are well-to-do. Sometimes, you see them in different churches, especially in weddings. Their work is to study who makes the highest donation of money during launching and other project donations.

It is on record that most kidnappers work for politicians who supply them with ammunition during political elections. Those sophisticated arms are never retrieved after elections. In a situation where the guys are not well compensated, they resort to using the arms for kidnapping, armed robbery, etc. Apart from that, those who have specialized in the business go as far as buying their guns secretly, while some get their arms from security agents like the police, military and other armed forces in Nigeria. The idea of holding sophisticated guns equips and prepares them to challenge any opposing force during operations. Most of the kidnapping activities are carried out in a clandestine manner. But in a situation where they are faced with a challenge, they start shooting sporadically either to scare people away or to challenge their opponents, squarely.

According to Ibrahim and Mukhtar (2017), kidnappers make extensive use of phones. Every transaction is through cell phones. During negotiations, numerous sim cards are used and discarded. The idea behind this is to avoid tracking by network companies. Sometimes, kidnappers hold their captives longer in order to demand more from the relatives of

the victims. During the process of negotiation, the victims are tortured severely and in the course of the excruciating pains, they desperately appeal to their relatives to respond or agree to the terms of their abductors. In most cases where the ransom is exorbitant, the family resort to selling their properties in order to pay for the release of their loved one. In their networking transaction, negotiations are made at different strategic locations by those in the tax force team. In their smart nature, once an agreement is reached, they dribble the person coming to supply the money for a longer time and from one place to another, just to make sure that he/she is not accompanied by any other individual. Sometimes, the victims die before their release either because of illness or as a result of severe torture.

Effects of Kidnapping in Nigeria

In all areas, the effects of kidnapping are devastating, no matter the type of kidnapping one encounters. Victims are humiliated and dehumanized irrespective of their age, position, socio-economic status, level of education and popularity. The psychological trauma alone can increase the blood pressure of the victim and this can lead to stroke (Kaylor, 2015) ^[20]. Generally, there are grievous effects of kidnapping both on the victims, relatives, associations, community and society at large. The forceful removal of a person traumatizes the victim as well as his/her relatives and friends. Such ugly news creates tension among the relatives who are then given one possible solution to effect the release of the victim. During this period of abduction, the victim loses the contact of his relatives and friends (Orset, 2008).

In most cases, female victims are sexually abused as a result of kidnapping. This act exposes the person to the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases. Many ladies get impregnated by the criminals. Any form of resistance or refusal could lead to the death of the victim. This issue of constant rape by kidnapers is an ugly experience female victim cannot forget easily. Some, after their release, conceal that information in order to avoid having a contemptible reputation before their husbands and relatives (Clark, 2004) ^[8].

It has been severally reported that many victims lose their lives in the hands of kidnapers, without a trace of their corpses. Some lose their lives during the kidnapping operation while some that need medical attention die during severe torture. In some cases, some victims are used for ritual sacrifice by ritualists or politicians. This goes to confirm that kidnapping is carried out for different purposes. Hence, one can imagine what the experience can be when one loses his or her lovely relative. In 2006, such a case happened in Aba, Abia State, where a medical doctor died as a result of carelessness and the hardened nature of most kidnapers. The medical doctor was in charge of Victory Medical Hospital, Aba. In fact, after a long negotiation and payment, upon his release, he was found dead and abandoned in the bush. Nigeria has lost some professionals and notable figures in the hands of kidnapers (Freeman, 2006) ^[15].

According to Catlin Group (2012) ^[6], it has been estimated globally that ransom payments could be US\$500 million annually. So, kidnapping is also accompanied with huge economic implications; the Nigerian Government spent billions of Naira to release the Chibok Girls. Money which should have been spent on the masses and development projects is now diverted to payment of ransom to criminals. Similarly, parents and relatives suffer financial distress

seeking to borrow money to pay the ransom. This aspect can take a family into abject poverty. This economic implication, according to Clark (2004) ^[8], is a worldwide experience that has ravaged most developing countries in the world.

Similar to the economic implication of kidnapping is the injury the victims sustain during violent operations or while in detention. Many are hospitalized for adequate treatment after abduction and release. The treatment does not go without corresponding hospital bills. Another consequence of kidnapping is sexual molestation of kidnapped children, especially the underaged victims, who are often subjected to forced marriage with older husbands. This has rendered many young girls useless in 29 countries across Africa and Latin America (Clark, 2004) ^[8].

In a nutshell, kidnapping leads to insecurity in the country-a situation where the citizens of a nation are not sure of their protection and existence. It is obvious that insecurity is part of corruption in the society. How can one expect development when kidnapping is the order of the day?

Government interventions and rate of kidnapping

A number of factors have occasioned the emergence of community security known as vigilante groups in Nigeria state. Chukwuma (2001) asserts that the inability of the police to protect the lives and properties of members of the society has given rise to community effort at ensuring their own security. Okoro (2007) ^[25] identified corruption, brutality, oppressive and repressive postures, high level of extortion, high cost of assessment to police services, poverty, non-personal relationships, as some of the factors that made the people lose faith in the police and their consequent preference for informal policing structures. Shaw (2002) ^[29] is of the view that there is a rise in crime because of the perceived inadequacies of the police in the society to provide safety and security to citizens. To him, crime is on the rise and the police are not coping very well with the demand for protection by the citizens who are active in countries undergoing dramatic transformation in the economic and political spheres. Community security is beneficial as a policing approach to address a range of different crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour. For example, community security approaches have been used to address graffiti and property damage to gang violence and organised crime (Skogan & Hartnett, 1997; Ukwai, Igwe-Okomiso, & Angioha, 2018) ^[31, 32]. More recently it has been an approach adopted to deal with anti-terrorist activities in some communities (Pickering, Wright-Neville, McCulloch & Lentini, 2007) ^[28]. Adegbusi (2009) ^[2] in a study conducted in Ondo State of Nigeria on „Vigilante groups and the task of policing“ with 500 respondents found that vigilante service groups are important in preventing crime such as Kidnapping, arm robbery, as majority of the respondents indicated that vigilante service groups can partner with the police to control and prevent crime in the state such as kidnapping, arm robbery and other crimes. In his analysis of a study conducted by Etim (2001) he observed the positive impact of the vigilante group to include a drop in “violent crime rates such as kidnapping and arm robbery in Aba and Onitsha and a surge in the crime rate of adjoining States of Edo, Delta and Rivers”, suggesting the relocation of criminals. Although the effectiveness of community security practices has not been clearly documented, it is widely believed that it can have a positive effect on community attitudes such as fear of crime and neighbourhood satisfaction (Cordner, 1999; Palmiotto, 2005) ^[9]. Skogan

(2006)^[30] argues there is evidence to suggest that increasing community police interactions are associated with lower levels in fear of crime

Minig and Maanew (1978) maintained that the role of the police and other security agencies is all channeled to protect lives and property which is also best understood as a mechanism of distribution of non-negotiable coercive force employed in accordance with the dictate of the laws that guide the situation. Olurotami (2012) is of the opinion that the Nigerian police is known to be corrupt organized crime kingpins are known to bribe the police to turn a blind eye as they perpetrate their crime on the population of the country. Odekunle (2004)^[24] also maintain that poor police remuneration for officers of the Nigerian police is another reason for their poor performance of crime prevention. Odekunle (2004)^[24] maintain that crime prevention is a collective responsibility between the police and the general public. But the vast majority of Nigerians do not believe that the police have their best interest, either because of past experience or for some other reasons known to them.

Unlike the police, Abolurin (2008)^[1] is of the view the Civil Defense corps, Immigration and Navy wide function includes to investigate and take every necessary step to forestall any act of terrorism and report same to appropriate federal security agency; provide necessary warning for the civilian population from danger areas; provide and manage shelters for the civilian during period of emergency; assist in the decontamination and in the taking of precautionary measures during any period of emergency; carryout rescue operations and control volatile situations; assist in the provision of emergency medical services, including first aid, during any period of emergency; detect and demarcate any danger area; assist the federal and state fire service in fire-fighting operation; assist in the distribution of emergency supplies; provide assistance to resolve and maintain order in distressed areas in any period of emergency; assist in repairing indispensable public utilities during any period of emergency; provide intelligence information to the military on any matter relating to crime control generally, riot, disorder, revolt, strike or religious unrest; subversive activity by members of the public aimed at frustrating and government programme or policy; industrial action and strike aimed at paralyzing government activities, any other matter as may be directed by the minister and have power to arrange and mediate in the settlement of disputes among willing members of the public among others. Chidozie (2009)^[7] observes that Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps have recorded a significant achievement and commitment in discharging their duties. According to him, Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps has done satisfactory work in the area like public security of well-meaning Nigerian and foreigners, carrying out anti-canalization, arresting and prosecuting of vandals, restoration of riot prevention of robbery and kidnapping and conflict areas among others. Oche (2006) opines that, the Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps has done well in providing security. He stresses that, because of the presence of Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps there are fair elections and violent free election in Nigeria through the provision of adequate security at various polling centers and also within and around the vicinity. Nkanga (2009)^[23] postulates that worried by the proliferation of unregistered security companies, Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps is saddled with the responsibility of monitoring and supervising the activities of

the private guard companies in Nigeria. He further maintains that; the charter aims at publishing among other things requirements for renewal grievance redress mechanism among others.

Theoretical framework

Structural Strain Theory

Robert Merton developed the structural strain theory as an extension of functionalism. Deviance is traced to tensions caused by the gap between cultural goals and the means people have available to achieve the goals (Andersen & Taylor, 2009)^[4]. Societies are characterized by both culture and social structure. Culture sets goals while social structures design ways to attain goals. In a well-integrated society, people adopt accepted and appropriate strategies to attain societal goals. Here, the goals and means of the society are in balance. When both goals and means are not balanced, deviance occurs. This imbalance between cultural goals and structurally available means lead individual into crime. In Nigeria, economic success is a goal that everybody strives for. The legitimate means to economic success are education and jobs. The youth and other socially disadvantaged groups do not have equal access to these means because of their socio economic status. The result is structural strain that produces crime. They experience these strains because they aim for the same goals as the rest of society, but their opportunities for success are blocked due to poverty and unemployment. Thus, they turn to crime and deviance as a way to achieve economic success.

Methodology

The design employed the descriptive design. The study was carried out in Cross River State which lies between latitude 6.167 and longitude 8.6601 East of the Greenwich meridian within the tropical rainforest belt of Nigeria estimated at 9° 28'. The study area has 18 Local government areas The area also lies with the Cross River Basin with a total area of 53,855 km² from which about 44,105 km² is in Nigeria and Cameroon which lie 9750 km². The choice of this study is due to kidnapping in the area. This kidnapping activities could be as a result of deprivation, unemployment amongst other socio-economic variables.

The study population comprised of youths between the ages of 18 to 35 years in Cross River state. According to the National Population Census Projection and National Bureau of statistics (2016) the population of southern senatorial district is 3.866,269 million people. However, due to the non-availability of statistics to determine the population of youths from 18 to 35 years, the general population of cross river state was used to determine the study sample using the Taro Yamane's sample determinant.

A total number of 400 youths between the ages of 18 to 35 years in Calabar South Local Government Area of Cross River State, Nigeria constituted the study's sample. The sample was decided using the Taro Yamane's sample size determination. The formula is presented below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

N = Sample size

N = Total population

E = Error limits (0.05 on the basis of 95 per cent confidence level).

Therefore:

$$n = \frac{3,866,269}{1 + 3,866,269 (0.05)^2}$$

$$= \frac{3,866,269}{1 + 3,866,270 \times 0.0025}$$

$$= \frac{3,866,269}{9,665.675} \quad n = 400$$

For this study, a multi-stage sampling procedure with the help of a purposive and simple random sampling procedure was used in choosing or selecting eight Local Government Area from the eighteen local government areas were chosen for the study. In order to select the eight Local Government Areas from the eighteen local government area in Cross River State, a purposive sampling procedure was employed. First, a multi-stage sampling was used to randomly delineate eight Local Government Areas which include Obudu and Ogoja in Northern Senatorial district, Ikom and Yakurr in Central senatorial district while Calabar Municipal, Calabar South, Akpabuyo and Akamkpa Local Government Area were chosen from the Southern Senatorial district. However, the choice of these local government in each senatorial district is due to the spate of kidnapping reported in those local government areas. The researchers used a Cluster sampling technique to select a sampling frame in the study population. Due to the nature of this study, only participants with relevant information like the police, civil defense, army, air force, navy and immigration officers were contacted for the study.

Across the 8 Local Government Areas selected for the study, an equal representative sample of 50 was chosen from the selected areas to arrive at the total sample of 400. The collected data was statistically analyzed using inferential statistics. To draw inference and establish relationships between variables, linear regression and Pearson product moment correlation statistical test was adopted.

Data analysis

Hypothesis one

Ho: There is no significant impact of community security formation on the fight against Kidnapping in Cross River State, Nigeria

Hi: There is a significant impact of community security formation on the fight against Kidnapping in Cross River State, Nigeria

Decision Rule

Accept Ho if calculated r value of ≤ 0.086 0.146 at 2 degrees of freedom (df) and 0.05 level of significance. Otherwise, reject the Ho and accept the Hi. To test hypothesis one, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was used. From the analysis, the calculated r value of 0.146* was greater than 0.086 critical value at 0.05 level of significance. Since the calculated r of 0.146* is greater than the critical r-value of 0.086 at .05 level of significance with 2 degree of freedom with this result, the null hypothesis which states that, there is no significant impact of community security formation on the fight against Kidnapping in Cross River State, Nigeria, was rejected while the alternate was accepted, this implies that, there is a significant impact of community security formation on the fight against Kidnapping in Cross River State, Nigeria

Table 1: Pearson product moment correlation coefficient analysis for the impact of community security formation on the fight against Kidnapping in Cross River State, Nigeria (N=393)

| Variables | M | SD | $\sum x$ | $\sum x^2$ | $\sum xy$ | r-value | Sig. |
|------------------------------|-------|------|----------|------------|-----------|---------|------|
| | | | $\sum y$ | $\sum y^2$ | | | |
| community security formation | 12.17 | 2.56 | 5421 | 76612 | | 0.146* | 0.00 |
| fight against Kidnapping | 11.45 | 2.42 | 5130 | 71638 | 74175 | | |

Source: Field Survey, 2022/SPSS (Version 21.0 for Windows Output)

**significant at 0.05 level, df = 391, critical r 0.086

Hypothesis two

There is no significant impact of government establishment of Joint Task Force like, Operation Scolumbu, Operation Akpagwu, The Green Sherrif and Anti-Kidnapping Squad on the fight against kidnapping in Cross River State, Nigeria. In this hypothesis, the Independent variable is government establishment of Joint Task Force like, Operation Scolumbu, Operation Akpagwu, The Green Sherrif and Anti-Kidnapping Squad while the dependent variable is the fight against kidnapping in Cross River State. To test the hypothesis, linear regression was employed to test the effect of of government establishment of Joint Task Force like, Operation Scolumbu, Operation Akpagwu, The Green Sherrif and Anti-Kidnapping Squad on the fight in Cross River State. Furthermore, the dependent variable was disaggregated into four- Operation Scolumbu, Operation Akpagwu, The Green Sherrif and Anti-Kidnapping Squad.

From the Decision rule: if P value is greater than 0.05 accept Ho reject H₁ Results of regression analysis carried out reveal a P value of 0. 087 with df (2,388) and an F value 113.772 This further followed by the t-value of 6.736 as against the critical t-value of 3.723 to determine the independent influence of government establishment of Joint Task Force like, Operation Scolumbu, Operation Akpagwu, The Green Sherrif and Anti-Kidnapping Squad on the fight against kidnapping in Cross River State, Nigeria. Furthermore, since P value is less than 0.05, thus we reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternate hypothesis. This implies that there is a significant relationship impact of government establishment of Joint Task Force like, Operation Scolumbu, Operation Akpagwu, The Green Sherrif and Anti-Kidnapping Squad on the fight against kidnapping in Cross River State, Nigeria.

Table 2: Regression Model Summary for government establishment of Joint Task Force like, Operation Scolumbu, Operation Akpagwu, The Green Sherrif and Anti-Kidnapping Squad on the fight against kidnapping in Cross River State, Nigeria (N=393)

| Model | R | R Square | Adjusted R Square | Std. Error of the Estimate |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | .604 ^a | .365 | .362 | .784 |

a. Predictors: (Constant), Operation Scolumbu, Operation Akpagwu, The Green Sherrif and Anti-Kidnapping Squad

Table 3: ANOVA Regression Model Summary For for government establishment of Joint Task Force like, Operation Scolumbu, Operation Akpagwu, The Green Sherrif and Anti-Kidnapping Squad on the fight against kidnapping in Cross River State, Nigeria (N=393)

| Model | Sum of Squares | Df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
|------------|----------------|-----|-------------|---------|-------------------|
| Regression | 139.987 | 2 | 69.994 | 113.772 | .000 ^b |
| Residual | 243.622 | 390 | .615 | | |
| Total | 383.609 | 388 | | | |

a. Dependent Variable: fight against kidnapping

b. Predictors: (Constant), Operation Scolumbu, Operation Akpagwu, The Green Sherrif and Anti-Kidnapping Squad

Table 4: Regression Coefficient Model for government establishment of Joint Task Force like, Operation Scolumbu, Operation Akpagwu, The Green Sherrif and Anti-Kidnapping Squad on the fight against kidnapping in Cross River State, Nigeria (N=393)

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | T | Sig. |
|---|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | 1.373 | .204 | | 6.736 | .000 |
| Commercial kidnapping hostage taking | .286 | .044 | .312 | 6.524 | .000 |
| Kidnapping arising from political marginalization | .412 | .053 | .375 | 7.850 | .000 |

Source: Field Survey, (2022)

Dependent Variable: fight against kidnapping

Discussion of findings

The study revealed that there is a significant impact of community security formation on the fight against Kidnapping in Cross River State, Nigeria. In line with the above findings Chukwuma (2001) who asserts that the inability of the police to protect the lives and properties of members of the society has given rise to community effort at ensuring their own security. Community security is beneficial as a policing approach to address a range of different crime, disorder and anti-social behaviour. For example, community security approaches have been used to address graffiti and property damage to gang violence and organised crime (Skogan & Hartnett, 1997; Ukwai, Igwe-Okomiso, & Angioha, 2018) ^[31, 32]. More recently it has been an approach adopted to deal with anti-terrorist activities in some communities (Pickering, Wright-Neville, McCulloch & Lentini, 2007) ^[28]. Adegbusi (2009) ^[2] in a study conducted in Ondo State of Nigeria on „Vigilante groups and the task of policing“ with 500 respondents found that vigilante service groups are important in preventing crime such as Kidnapping, arm robbery, as majority of the respondents indicated that vigilante service groups can partner with the police to control and prevent crime in the state such as kidnapping, arm robbery and other crimes. In his analysis of a study conducted by Etim (2001) he observed the positive impact of the vigilante group to include a drop in “violent crime rates such as kidnapping and arm robbery in Aba and Onitsha and a surge in the crime rate of adjoining States of Edo, Delta and Rivers”, suggesting the relocation of criminals. Although the effectiveness of community security practices has not been clearly documented, it is widely believed that it can have a positive effect on community attitudes such as fear of crime and neighbourhood satisfaction (Corder, 1999; Palmiotto, 2005) ^[9]. Skogan (2006) ^[30] argues there is evidence to suggest that increasing community police interactions are associated with lower levels in fear of crime.

Furthermore, findings of the second hypothesis revealed that, s that there is a significant relationship impact of government establishment of Joint Task Force like, Operation Scolumbu,

Operation Akpagwu, The Green Sherrif and Anti-Kidnapping Squad on the fight against kidnapping in Cross River State, Nigeria. The Joint Task Force establishment in Cross River State include the police, Civil Defense, Army, Airforce, Immigration and Navy to fight the spate of kidnapping in the state. However, the findings agrees with Minig and Maanew (1978) maintained that the role of the police and other security agencies is all channeled to protect lives and property which is also best understood as a mechanism of distribution of non-negotiable coercive force employed in accordance with the dictate of the laws that guide the situation. Olurotami (2012) is of the opinion that the Nigerian police is known to be corrupt organized crime kingpins are known to bribe the police to turn a blind eye as they perpetrate their crime on the population of the country. Odekunle (2004) ^[24] also maintain that poor police remuneration for officers of the Nigerian police is another reason for their poor performance of crime prevention. Odekunle (2004) ^[24] maintain that crime prevention is a collective responsibility between the police and the general public. But the vast majority of Nigerians do not believe that the police have their best interest, either because of past experience or for some other reasons known to them.

Unlike the police, Abolurin (2008) ^[1] is of the view the Civil Defense corps, Immigration and Navy wide function includes to investigate and take every necessary step to forestall any act of terrorism and report same to appropriate federal security agency; provide necessary warning for the civilian population from danger areas; provide and manage shelters for the civilian during period of emergency; assist in the decontamination and in the taking of precautionary measures during any period of emergency; carryout rescue operations and control volatile situations; assist in the provision of emergency medical services, including first aid, during any period of emergency; detect and demarcate any danger area; assist the federal and state fire service in fire-fighting operation; assist in the distribution of emergency supplies; provide assistance to resolve and maintain order in distressed areas in any period of emergency; assist in repairing

indispensable public utilities during any period of emergency; provide intelligence information to the military on any matter relating to crime control generally, riot, disorder, revolt, strike or religious unrest; subversive activity by members of the public aimed at frustrating government programme or policy; industrial action and strike aimed at paralyzing government activities, any other matter as may be directed by the minister and have power to arrange and mediate in the settlement of disputes among willing members of the public among others. Chidozie (2009) ^[7] observes that Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps have recorded a significant achievement and commitment in discharging their duties. According to him, Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps has done satisfactory work in the area like public security of well-meaning Nigerian and foreigners, carrying out anti-canalization, arresting and prosecuting of vandals, restoration of riot prevention of robbery and kidnapping and conflict areas among others.

Conclusion and Recommendations

In Cross River State or across its environs, kidnapping is still on the increase because the government's effort is not enough to curb the menace despite the formation or establishment of community security outfits and the Joint Task Force against kidnapping. Such inhuman treatment and hostage taking has in recent times has rendered most families bankrupt. In spite of its dreaded effect on the socio-economic development of the nation, the willingness of the government to combat corruption will help to reduce the rate of kidnapping and other criminal activities going on in the country. It is obvious that criminal opportunists also commit kidnapping for ransom. Investigation recently carried out confirmed poverty as a contributory factor in the increase of kidnapping in Nigeria. From the findings, it was revealed that, kidnapping has become a social problem in Cross River State, and security agencies have a significant role in preventing and fighting the problem in the state. As a result of the findings made, the following recommendations are made for the study:

1. For effective combat of kidnapping, the level of laxity in the law implementation process to prosecute offenders should be addressed as urgently as possible. The perpetrators of kidnapping should be arrested for thorough investigation and appropriate punishment, otherwise the menace will still be on the increase.
2. Provision of suggestion boxes at some strategic corners in the streets should be provided in anonymous places where informants can write suspected locations or houses/bushes/hotels that kidnappers hides or stay to carry out their nefarious activities
3. The use of tinted glasses in vehicles should be abolished whether official or private vehicles
4. To reduce the level of fear on being kidnapped, people should be very observant on the type of persons that comes around and their going out and coming in should be secret to them and their family members
5. Community security organizations should be heavily funded through community security levy to every adult in the community
6. Wealth and affluent living and exposure on social media should be reduces as this often sends signals to kidnappers of the financial standing of people.
7. The law enforcement agents such as the police and other security agencies meant for anti-human trafficking,

should be adequately trained and equipped with sophisticated ammunition against kidnappers. The training should address how to identify victims and rescue them from the kidnappers without them being hurt.

8. Educational institutions should offer counseling on how to avoid being kidnapped or offer therapeutic lessons for primary and secondary victims of kidnappings.

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