

UNBURDENING THE BURDEN OF KIDNAPPING AND SECURITY CHALLENGES IN IDAH LOCAL GOVERNMENT, KOGI STATE NIGERIA (2008 - 2018)

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ABSTRACT

Kidnapping is a global and historic issue in Nigeria and other parts of the world and good government does everything humanly possible to ensure that the kidnappers are apprehended and punished. 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. 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.

Introduction:

The Nigerian socio-political and economic landscape has been blighted by the endemic evil of kidnapping. This crime is the fourth most lucrative evil commerce in Nigeria after oil bunkering, prostitution, and child trafficking. Kidnapping has become a life-threatening ailment, for instance, there is no month in Nigeria that we do not read on the pages of newspapers about cases of kidnapping.

Kidnapping appears easier to commit as compared to other forms of serious crimes. As put forward by Davidson (2012), a group of criminals armed with guns and cell phones apprehend unsuspecting victims, drag their victim into a secluded spot, and begin to make phone calls to whomever and demand for a ransom. On the contrary, the police with a mandate to secure the people are often ill-prepared for this mandate. The much they could do is manage to secure the release of the kidnapped (victim), but of the kidnappers, nothing much is ever heard thereafter. The police poor training and poor equipment is no longer news in Nigeria, however, beyond these deficiencies, there are worrying signs that their loyalty is in doubt. The provision of security for the citizenry is a primary role of the government, but in Nigeria, that role has been largely ignored. The large scale insecurity in the Nigerian state has become a serious concern for everyone as it plays out in our susceptibility to kidnapping in various locations such as churches, mosques, markets, schools, homes, and the highway. Kidnappers, armed robbers and hired killers belong to common criminal

terrorists (Igbo, 1999:116). It appears that with easy accessibility to firearms, more criminals venture into violent crime like kidnapping. This was succinctly put by Ayeni (1999), the problem of easy availability of firearms; handgun in particular is a major one. It is revealed that violent crimes nearly threefold and the number arrested for weapons violation increased by 117%. The same problem now currently rears its ugly head in some parts of Nigeria, for example, Niger delta States, cities like Port-Harcourt, Warri, Yenegoa, and Kogi State of Nigeria.

Kidnapping has become notorious and disgusting as this menace in this dispensation witnessed a lot of pandemonium as victims cut across government officials, Politicians, influential people, lecturers, royal families, kinsmen and even kings were reported to have been kidnapped from their palaces, Nwama (2014)

Unsecured environment as well as its attendant challenges posed on local government hinders meaningful development at the grass-root. The demand for social services delivery at the grass-root is on the increase due to population rise. Apart from the persistent mismanagement and misappropriation of fund currently witnessed in most local government which hinders development, security challenges vis-a-vis kidnapping has stalled development. Fear discourages people in the conduct of business and economic activities at the grass-root. Leaving unpalatable consequences on local economy and growth. A malady previously unknown to the people has rapidly become domesticated in the last ten years, Kogi State had witnessed series of kidnapping cases across the three senatorial districts with Idah local government having a very high score in its occurrence.

Statement of the problem

Incessant kidnapping cases in Nigeria have dashed the hope of many people that Nigeria would be a better place. It has become rife in Nigeria that the situation appears more dangerously sophisticated as the days go by. More worrisome is the fact that kidnapping is carried out by the youths as evidenced by the testimonies of victims and the cases of arrest of kidnapers by law enforcement agents.

Youths are the supposed leaders of tomorrow, and if they pre-occupy themselves in kidnapping, there will be no hope of a better future for Nigeria and the case study in particular. Day-by-day, careers crash, kidnapers face stiff penalties at arrest yet the incidence of kidnapping continues unabated and the situation does not call for optimism.

Kidnapping and security challenges have burdened people on a daily basis with psychological and emotional trauma resulting from gory sights of lifeless and mutilated bodies of beloved family members, close associates, investors and colleagues littered on the streets, public squares and even in the bush. These are people who are contributing to the development of the local government one way or the other and the termination of their lives truncate their role in the part of progress of the local government. More importantly, these ugly incidences scare prospective investors from coming to the local government while those who were domiciled there take solace in other safe local governments, states or even nations as the case may be.

Except this is brought under control, development will be a mirage in Idah local government and the little development witnessed in the past will definitely be a timing of the past.

Historical background to the study

Kidnapping has become a lucrative venture in Nigeria in recent times. Kidnapping first attracted national attention on 26th February, 2006 when Niger Delta militants kidnapped foreign oil workers to press home their demands. Kidnapping has since become ubiquitous, politicized and commercialized. It has spread from the Niger Delta to virtually all nooks and crannies of Nigeria (Ugwuoke, 2011). At the global level, kidnapping was reported in 2014 via village raids and victims were held as slaves by militias in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (Global slavery index, in Haruna, 2018). In Nigeria, kidnapping has been on-going since the early 1990s (Hazen and Horner, 2007) in the Niger Delta, contributing to a climate of insecurity. In recent times, Northern Nigerian states have also witnessed hostage taking. Between 2008 and 2010 in Nigeria, 887 cases of kidnapping were reported by the police. Kidnapping has eaten deep into the fabric of Nigeria (Dodo, 2010 in Haruna, 2018:8).

Tzanelli(2006) shows that the modern usage of the term ‘kidnapping’ dates back to 17th century Britain where infants (‘kid’) of rich families have been ‘napped’ (caught in the sleep) for ransom. Beyond that, religious parables found in the Bible and Quran about the abduction of Joseph are indications that kidnapping is as old as human history.

The kidnapping of 250 girls in a Girls’ Secondary school in Chibok, Borno state in 2014 and many more by the Boko Haram represent the growing incidence of kidnapping in Nigeria. Subsequently, kidnapping continues to spread to other parts of Nigeria, with Idah Local Government having its own fare share.

The Concept of Kidnapping

Kidnapping occurs when a person is abducted and taken from one place to another against his will, or a situation in which a person is confined to a controlled space without the confinement being from a legal authority. Consequently, when the transportation or confinement of the person is done for an unlawful purpose, such as for ransom or the purpose of committing another crime, the act becomes criminal (Uzorma and Nwanegbo, 2014)

In this regard, the Nigeria criminal code’s punitive perception for kidnappers is that:

Any person who lawfully imprisons another person against his or her will and without his or her consent or unlawfully imprisons any person within Nigeria in such a manner as to prevent him or her from applying to court for his or her release or from disclosing to any other person where he or she is imprisoned, or prevent any person’s entitlement to have access to him or her place of imprisonment is guilty of a felony, and is liable to ten(10) years imprisonment (Okonkwo, 1990:45)

In spite of this punitive measure against kidnapping, the incidence continues to be on the rise due to poverty, unemployment, political, cultural, and other pecuniary factors.

The Concept of Insecurity

They are common descriptors used to define insecurity. They are; “want of safety, danger, hazard, uncertainty, lack of protection, lack of stability troubled and unsafe situation and environment” (Achumba and Akpor-Robaro, 2013). Beland (2003) would describe insecurity as “the state of fear and anxiety stemming from a concrete or alleged lack of protection”.

Typology of Kidnapping

The United Nations office of Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2003, in Haruna, 2018:20) has classified kidnapping as follows: kidnapping for extortion (for ransom, to influence business decisions or to obtain commercial advantage; kidnapping between or within criminal groups (for debt recovery or to secure advantage in a criminal market); kidnapping for sexual exploitation; kidnapping linked to domestic or family disputes (spouse or child abduction); revenge kidnapping; and kidnapping for political or ideological purposes.

From these classifications, it is seen that kidnapping has criminal, political and economic reasons.

Historical Background of Idah local Government Area of Kogi State in Brief

Idah Local Government Area was created in 1976 with a land mass of 39.79 square kilometres with a population of 79,815 by the 2006 population census estimates (Kogi State, [http://en.wikipedia.org](http://en.wikipedia.org;);). It has Idah as the headquarters and doubles as the traditional headquarters of the Igala people. The Local government has 58 public primary schools, 35 private secondary schools, 18 Government colleges, 21 private colleges, and 3 Tertiary institutions (Federal polytechnics, College of Health Sciences and National Open University), a Government Zonal hospital and 37 other Health institutions.

The Local Government has 3 administrative districts - Idah native town, Egah district and Ichalla Edeke district and 10 council wards-Igala-ogba, Ukwaja, Egah, Owoli-Apa, Igechaba, Sabongeri, Ede, Ogegele, Ugwoda and Ichalla wards

Insecurity and its implications on sustainable development in Nigeria

Insecurity hinders sustainable development (Call, 2000, Ujah and Eboh, 2006, Igbuzor, 2011). Development is the primary goal of every well-meaning government and it is essentially dependent on the level of economic activities which is in turn enhanced by peaceful co-existence of people. Businesses are the vehicle for economic activities that would lead to national economic development. This is however, hindered by absence of adequate security.

Insecurity in Nigeria has however, been caused by the following factors;

- Lack of institutional capacity resulting in Government failure: This results from what Fukuyama(2004) described as the corrosion or breakdown of institutional infrastructures. Insecurity is therefore greatly a failure of the government. When this happens, crime rate is bound to rise and the security of lives and property cannot be guaranteed in a situation of paradox of plenty-government generates much revenues but fails to provide the needs of the people.
- Loss of socio-economic value system: the values of collectivism, love for others, tolerance, hard, and honesty that made society secured and safe have been thrown away. Modernity and civilization ingrained making it at all cost , no matter who is affected.
- Weak security system: The population outweighs the security agents and their obsolete equipment. Corruption nailed it all.
- Unemployment and poverty factor: These made youths restive and criminally tuned hence, insecurity.
- Politically based violence: Politics charged the already tensed environment for insecurity.
- Systematic and Political corruption: the privatization of public life disproportionately burdens the poor and undermines the effectiveness of investment and aid, hereby leading to insecurity.
- Rural-Urban drift: This creates poor quality of life in urban areas and the frustration takes youths into crime.
- Leadership factor: personal enrichment, thuggery sponsorship and promotion of hooliganism and thereafter dumping of youths create insecurity.

Cost of Insecurity in Nigeria

Over and above all, insecurity and kidnapping lead to loss of revenue to the government; loss of income to individuals and groups in the society; increase in budgeting allocation to fight insecurity.

Theoretical Framework

This study was anchored on the theory of Class struggle of Karl Marx and Frederick Engels which was first expressed literally in the communist manifesto of 1848. Marx declared that:

The history of all hitherto existing society is a history of class struggles. Free man and slave, politician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another to carry on uninterrupted now hidden now open fight, a fight that each time ended either in a revolutionary reconciliation of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.

This struggle between the Bourgeoisie and the proletariats is anchored on the control of the state in order to allocate resources and values. While the oppressed agitates for a new social order, the oppressors preoccupy themselves with maintaining their class advantage hence, the kidnapping and insecurity in Nigeria.

Findings

The study found the following majorly:

Nigeria is currently facing insecurity challenges and other social vices.

There is a relationship between insecurity and underdevelopment of Idah Local Government area.

The level of insecurity in Nigeria is high.

The effects of kidnapping on development is very high

Recommendations

This study recommends the followings to reduce the incidence of kidnapping and insecurity for the development of Idah Local Government in particular and Nigeria at large;

Good governance: strong and responsive government will definitely address issues that generate kidnapping and insecurity in its polity.

Justice and the Judiciary: professionalism of justice dispensation devoid of prejudice and corrupt practice entrenches peaceful and harmoniously safe environment.

The Legislature: proactive legislation for greater transparency and accountability in public funds and the culture of governance and decisiveness in tackling security challenge will give room for effective development.

Functional poverty Alleviation programme: this would really target the poorest of the poor.

Special trainings and equipment against kidnapping for law enforcement agents.

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