

A Country in the Throes of Crime: A Theoretical Focus on the Complexities of Kidnapping in Nigeria

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Abstract

Relying mainly on review of relevant literature to obtain necessary data and information, this research theoretically explored the intricacies of kidnapping in Nigeria. Relative deprivation, frustration-aggression and routine activities theories were integrated to dissect the problem. We found evidence to justify the fact that the crime is on the increase because of the general porous security network and systemic poor economic situation, such as high poverty, unemployment and underemployment rates and their resultant frustration and aggression. Empirical evidence further revealed that politicians equip many jobless, deprived and frustrated youths with lethal weapons during electioneering against their opponents. And many of them were neither disarmed nor engaged in life-improving legitimate livelihood after elections. Thus, availability of arms and ammunition, exposure to aggression and violent behavior, coupled with untold hardship, idleness and lack of capable guardianship, become predisposing factors to kidnapping. It is on this premised that we reached the conclusion that there is a dire need to develop a strong pathway and comprehensive, informative lead/reference material that can assist the government and its policymakers, security agencies and even members of the public in grappling with the complexities of kidnapping. Issues raised suggest a policy direction: that improved general standard of living, particularly meaningful youth socioeconomic empowerment and prosocial political engagements of youths, will suffice in curbing the menace.

Keywords: Complexities, Kidnapping, Nigeria, Theoretical Focus, Throes of Crime.

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Introduction

Kidnapping and hostage-taking are two different but complementary terms in criminology. Yet, the two concepts are often confusing and mistakenly used, in some quarters, to refer to a single act by whereas they are actually two separate offences. Therefore, a clear delineation and clarification becomes necessary to keep the research in perspective and for clear and broad-based understanding, especially in Nigeria where the concepts appear to have not been used or applied in the right context. The word 'kidnapping' is derived from the Old English slang *kid* meaning child and *nap* or *nab*, to snatch. Kidnapping as such was not recognized as a felony under Common Law, but some forms of kidnapping were criminalized by the Status, such as sending any person under the government into parts beyond the seas out of the King's obedience, to be educated in the Romish religion (Adler, Mueller, & Laufer, 1991).

The definition of kidnapping has a number of problems as regards a given nation's legal viewpoint and the availability of other related variables, namely, hostage-taking and hijacking (Mohamed, 2008). This suggests that kidnapping is synonymous with abduction, but different from hostage-taking. Clutterbuck (1987) categorically stated that a definite distinction be made regarding kidnapping, hostage-taking and hijacking: where hostage-taking and hijacking are involved, victims are held in a known location, such as a plane, ship or building. Hijacking may be thought of as a refinement of hostage-taking, that is, when a vehicle of some kind is seized along with its passengers. The theft of container Lorries (with their cargoes but without their drivers) has been referred to as hijacking. However, most jurisdictions would classify and count this as theft and reserve the term 'hijacking' for the illegal seizure of a vehicle and people together.

Otherwise known as abduction, kidnapping is an unlawful and coercive act of taking away of a person or group of persons without their own volition to an undisclosed hostile environment, often in order to demand and obtain a ransom, or to settle political scores or in pursuance of political vendetta before granting them freedom (Nnam, & M. S. Otu, 2015). On the other hand, hostage-taking is sometimes referred to as hostage situation or barricade, which occurs when a person is held and threatened by an offender to force the fulfilment of substantive demands made on a third party. The person being held in a hostage situation is at a location known to the authorities. In hostage situation, victims are held at a known location such as bush, plane, ship, and building (Von Zandt, 1990 cited in Douglas, Burgess, Burgess, & Ressler, 1992; Adler *et al.*, 1991). What distinguishes kidnapping from hostage-taking is patently obvious. Victims in the former situation are confined at a known location and ransom may or may not be demanded while the location of victims in the latter incident is unknown and ransom is almost always demanded and paid before a subject is released.

In Nigeria, most of the incidents of kidnapping are commonly heard, reported on the television, radio, newspapers, and personal communications between and among members of the public. The crime is so rampant that it is almost always

committed on a daily basis, inflicting unbearable social, economic, psychological, medical and physical pains on victims, families and the larger society. From the daily investigative media reports and personal observations about many families whose relatives and friends have been kidnapped in recent times, it is not out of place to argue that Nigeria is currently in the throes of kidnapping, causing siege mentality and moral panic among the population. Ours is a country where people, both the rich and the poor, can be kidnapped at will and ransom obtained with ease and huge success. Kazeem (2010) and Ishaya (2010) corroborated this view when they said that kidnapping has turned Nigeria, particularly the South East geopolitical zone, to a hotbed of tension and crime. Consequently, many investors living in the region are now relocating to other States in the country for safety while citizens of the South East living outside the region are unable to come home and invest for fear of being kidnapped.

Criminologists and sociologists, when not conducting data-based studies, lay prime emphasis on theory building, reconstruction and deconstruction in their analysis of crime, including kidnapping. This is in consideration of the fact that no one form of crime can best be explained using a single theory or model. The approach is a basis for resolving crime etiological and epidemiological crisis regarding the 'what', 'why' and 'how' of criminality. Scholars of social problem across cultures believe that rarely does a single theory exhaust all interesting possibilities of a problem, but rather a systematic combination or integration of theories (see, for example, Linde, 1978; Johnson, 1979; Johnstone, 1983; Downes, & Rock, 1988; Nnam, & S. E. Otu, 2015; Ordu, & Nnam, 2107a).

Although there is a growing research interest on the subject of kidnapping, we agree with S. E. Otu and Nnam (2018) that there has been a lack of rigorous efforts to develop a strong theoretical framework for understanding this social problem in Nigeria. Even whenever there is expression of interest in advancing a theory, S. E. Otu and his colleague further observed, the conventional approach and method has been to focus on one particular theory/model or another in what clearly passes as a monolithic and/or disaggregated approach to theoretical expostulation. The danger, as we recognize in this article, is that the subject under investigation may not be accounted for in great detail and clarity in order to strengthen the evidence base for policy and practice. Conducting this research is a response to the global call in the criminological world for researchers to almost always adopt integrated theoretical approach in explaining complex social problems such as kidnapping. In order to further move the scholarship on African criminology forward for better understanding on the global scale, we set out to integrate three sociological/criminological theories, aimed at providing in-depth analysis of the predictors, incidence and consequences of this offending behavior in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

Because kidnapping is a complex social problem, with a multiplicity of causative factors and implications, adopting integrated theoretical framework becomes necessary. Based on the nature of the subject matter, frustration-aggression,

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relative deprivation and routine activities are favored as suitable theories to elucidate the core of the problem. Van Impe (2000) explained that some conventional theories and methods suggest that strategies to conduct research on a complex social phenomenon require multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches, thus informing the basis for integrating the three theories. Lanier and Henry (2004) argued that an integrated approach is required to analyze the sequential chain of events when a crime is an outcome of several different causes, so the purpose of integrating theories is to present an interaction of probabilities from different theoretical perspectives that could explain why some people commit crimes. The development of frustration-aggression is traceable to Dollard, Dood, Miller, Mowrer and Sears (1939), who defined frustration as an external (social, economic) condition that prevents a person or group of persons from obtaining the pleasure (rights and privileges) they had expected to enjoy.

Kidnapping is a criminal behavior that is triggered by many factors, notable among which, is frustrating circumstances such dysfunctional political economy and social structure, arising from human and system-induced abject poverty, unemployment and underemployment. Committing the crime is not without its attendant consequences, as both the 'haves' and the 'have nots' (the bourgeoisie, upper/ruling class and the proletariat, lower class) now take advantage of the poor economic situation in Nigeria to kidnap for ransom. Ayegba (2015) posited that unemployment and poverty are major factors blocking access to quality technical education, frustrating the youths from both northern and southern parts of the country, creating insecurity and predisposing people to crime and violence. In today's society, according to Ucha (2010), there are many Nigerian youths roaming the streets with frustration and anger due to lack of employment, becoming rebels, and taking to crime and violence as gateway to creating a better future.

Implicit in the preceding paragraph is the fact that kidnapping is not only motivated by privation, hardship but also borne out of greed and crass materialism, as well as a revolutionary action to right wrongs or reclaim deprived rights, privileges, goods and services—hence relative deprivation theory. To illustrate insatiability and lust for wealth acquisition as predictors of kidnapping, Ishaya (2010) acknowledged that, while most of the kidnapers are involved in the shady business owing to poverty, some are in the kidnapping business because of their insatiable desire to acquire wealth. A case in point is one Mr. Omotayo Mobolaji Johnson, a Geologist and a member of staff at Chevron Public Liability Company (CPLC), who was arrested by the police in connection with the attempt to kidnap a bank Executive based in Lagos State of Nigeria. Despite the fact that Johnson earns ₦1.2 million monthly, he still masterminded the kidnap which was foiled by the Lagos State Police Command, Ishaya argued. Another illustration is the apprehension of a notorious billionaire kidnapping kingpin, Chukwudi Dumeme Onuamadike (also known as Evans), in his exquisite mansion situated in Magodo, a Lagos suburb in 2017. Evans' kidnapping escapade was monumental and was reported to be behind the several high profile kidnappings in Nigeria using his well-organized and funded gang that operates across the country (Gaffey, 2017; S. E. Otu, & Nnam, 2018; S. E. Otu, Nnam, & Uduka, 2018a).

It seems clear, therefore, to continue the earlier analysis of relative deprivation theory in relation to kidnapping as a backlash, reaction to deprivations that culminates into frustration. This theory was propounded by Judith Blau and Peter Blau in 1982; according to the Blaus, people who feel deprived because of their race or economic class eventually develop a sense of injustice and discontent. The less fortunate among this class of people will begin to distrust the society that has nurtured social inequality and obstructed their chances of progressing by legitimate means and, as a result, may indulge in criminality as adjustment and coping mechanisms (Blau, & Blau, 1982; Siegel, 2008). Nonetheless, Robert Gurr had earlier used the concept of relative deprivation in 1970, which he psychosocially defined as a perceived discrepancy between men's value expectations and their value capabilities, to explain why frustration that is caused by deprivations usually finds expression in crime and violence, kidnapping. While value expectations refer to those goods and conditions which people believe they are rightfully entitled to, the value capabilities are the goods and conditions people think that they are capable of achieving if given the right means available to them (Gurr, 1970; Agboti, & Nnam, 2015). Consequently, kidnapping is likely to occur when individuals, particularly the youth population, are structurally deprived of meaningful, live-improving legitimate opportunities or socially excluded from the wealth of nation and prosocial political engagements.

At this juncture, the predictions of frustration-aggression intertwines with relative deprivation variables to draw specific attention to the second subtype of Agnew's (1992) strain postulation 'denial or removal of previously attained achievement,' which according to him and his advocates (see Nnam, 2014a), is produced by stressful events. Examples include breaking up with a political patron/matron and being fired or laid off from a job, leading to unemployment and frustration. The implication is that the plight of many affected individuals who are left in the lurch is compounded due to chronic unemployment. Confronted with bleak future (unending hopelessness, wretchedness and frustration), this particular population may join campus and secret cults, drug culture and hooliganism and thereby making them more vulnerable and available tools in the hands of disgruntled politicians and political godfathers. Majekodumi (2009), Ikoh (2011), and Nwadiaro and Nkwocha (2011) affirmed that jobless youths recruited by politicians as political thugs are abandoned after elections without retrieving the arms and ammunition that they were provided with for the purpose of electioneering campaigns and elections. The guns and ammunition now become operational tools for armed robbery, kidnapping, and hired assassinations. Such transition from political thuggery to organized gang criminality and street hoodlums represent a realignment of interest and readjustment of economic strategies rather than a clean break from the original motive behind engaging in violence.

Little wonder therefore, that gun-carrying is common among cultists and political thugs, addict population, and during and after elections. Some of their unlawful activities are unrestrained due to their apparent affiliation and attachment to those

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who use them to manipulate the system and have their way into political positions. The State security forces, both the military and the paramilitary, seems helpless but they are not left out of the blame for their obvious failure (to checkmate the trend), if not, complicity. This has given rise to general insecurity that makes the crime of kidnapping a less-risky behavior and all-comers affairs, with law-abiding citizens bearing the brunt of it all. This was supported by S. E. Otu, Nnam and Uduka (2018b) whose recent study on the modus operandi of kidnappers, conducted in two prisons in the South East Nigeria, revealed that the respondents (detained kidnappers) maintained that the sources and means of obtaining arms vary. But there is a general agreement among them that police remain a potential source, by means of either hiring, selling or outright connivance. The narratives of kidnappers who participated in the trio's study are shocking and intriguing, as the vast majority of them indicted the police and politicians for facilitates their unwholesome activities in one way or another:

...channel this particular question to the police, because 'na them dey' (they are the one that) supply kidnappers these guns and ammunition. But sometimes 'na' (it is) police officers' children 'wey' (that) supply them. It is not all that easy to get these 'irons' (guns). Before you get a good machine (gun) for operation, you must identify with an officer . . . *W-K/MO/Ac/01* (S. E. Otu *et al.*, 2018b, p. 18).

Kidnappers don't manufacture guns, and kidnapping is not a business you can just start without 'capital' (gun and other lethal weapons). Some of these guns are provided during the election times, especially in 2003, 2007 and 2011 by politicians and their godfathers—*W-K/MO/Ac/02* (S. E. Otu *et al.*, 2018b, p. 18).

Research shows that corruption and other systemic challenges in the Nigerian criminal justice administration contribute to the persistence of kidnapping in the country (Ugwulebo, 2011; Osumbah, & Aghedo, 2011; Obarisiagbon, & Aderinto, 2018). Since kidnapping victimisation are mainly caused by opportunities directly or indirectly—consciously or unconsciously—created by politicians and State security personnel, the above expressions draw attention to the importance of routine activities theory of Cohen and Felson (1979) in understanding kidnapping in Nigeria. The theory explains that tripartite variables converge to determine the occurrence of crime. These include the availability of suitable targets (such as exposing one's financial transactions, ostentatious lifestyle and display of wealth, careless conversations in public, exposure to deviant/criminal neighborhood, and unguarded chats and comments on social media), the absence of capable guidians (such as sophisticated security gadgets, functional security personnel, and effective security checks and beats), and the presence of motivated offenders (such as the unemployed, drug addicts, cultists, and gun-carrying youths). Siegel (2008, p. 63) posited that "every society will always have some people willing to break the law

for revenge, greed, or some other motives...the presence of these components increases the likelihood that a predatory crime (such as kidnapping) will take place”.

The proponents of routine activities theory (Cohen, & Felson, (1979) and other advocates (see Van den Hoven, & Maree, 2005; S. E. Otu, & Nnam, 2018; S. E. Otu *et al.*, 2018b) postulated that certain routine lifestyle such as flamboyant display of wealth, careless and absent-minded attitude, unguarded discussions, and lack of effective guardianship are some key factors which explain kidnapping of many Nigerians and foreigners for ransom in contemporary Nigeria. And it is possible that kidnappers, drawn into the kidnapping ring, know victims whose lifestyles and their interface instead of selecting victims from unfamiliar places. S. E. Otu and Nnam (2018) particularly reiterated that the mobility of Nigerians from one place to another as a result of their routine activities, accessibility of the victim to the potential kidnappers, as well as the ineffectiveness of the criminal justice system in arresting, prosecuting and convicting kidnappers could possibly explain the ease of asport and transportation stage of the kidnapping process. For these authors, the same modes of asport and transportation used to transport non-victims of human kidnapping are also used by kidnappers to move victims. The basic tenets of routine activities theory “explains how, where and why accessible, attractive and suitable targets are attacked (kidnapped); targets (people) are prone to attacks (being kidnapped) when they are not properly hardened or where capable guardians of such targets are absent or weak” (Etuk, & Nnam, 2018, p. 6).

Motivations for Kidnapping in Nigeria

Several factors are responsible for the increasing rate of kidnapping in Nigeria. Generally, factors that give rise to kidnapping are, among others, social, political, psychological, religious, cultural, revolutionary, and economic. Most Nigerians, especially the youth population are under intense and prolonged social strains and untold hardships. In specific terms, common among the predictors of this social problem are unemployment, underemployment, poverty, and social exclusion. These are structurally induced and systemic problems and challenges that lead to alienation and frustration. As the deprivations continue with no end in sight, frustration, disenchantment and their attendant aggression also set in. People then become morally entrapped, trying to pattern a way of escape and survival. The alternative means of livelihood or escape routes, according to Nnam (2014b) and Nnam and M. S. Otu (2015), is to choose between evil and good means of success. Unfortunately, the former is often preferred to the latter in most cases, and this speaks volumes about the increasing incidence of kidnapping in Nigeria.

The preceding postulation is in tandem with the central tenets of our theoretical framework, an integration of frustration-aggression, relative deprivation and routine activities theories, which linked the above identified predictors to faulty political economy, social structure and criminal justice system. In several cases of kidnapping, those specific variables have been implicated, with capitalism being

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their ultimate driver. For instance, Odekunle (1978) as recorded in Iwarimie-Jaja (1999) emphasized that capitalist economy, which contemporary Nigeria is predicated upon and operates, is a crime-producing one. This is not really because it produces the economic man that accumulates property, but because it fosters unemployment, marginal and meaningless employment, and obvious relative and unaccented poverty. Specifically, Diara (2010) attested that capitalism creates the necessary conditions which give rise to crimes (such as kidnapping) as social revolutions. Such conditions include: inordinate ambitions of the privileged class to amass wealth to the detriment of the less privileged, gross exploitation, sheer greed, rising rate of unemployment, and marginalization of the working class by the owners of the capital, thereby giving rise to frustration and depression.

Indeed, the violent crime of kidnapping is caused by aggression induced by perpetual unemployment, underemployment and other deprivations. To further Explain why these factors give rise to kidnapping, or how deprivation and aggression co-occur with kidnapping, we deemed it necessary to highlight the current statistics of unemployment in Nigeria to continue to keep the study in perspective. According to the 2016 “United Nations National Human Development Report (UNNHDR), poverty rate in Nigeria’s estimated 170 million people was 62.6%. Another United Nations’ report on Nigeria’s Common Country Analysis (CCC) in the same year described the country as one of the poorest and unequal countries in the world, with over 80 million of its population living below poverty line” (UNNHDR, 2016 & CCC, 2016 cited in Smah, 2017, p. xiv). Of course, statistics of unemployment in Nigeria, especially among youths is alarming, and its relationship with kidnapping and other forms of crime and criminality is clear and convincing. Based on this, Adegami (2013) suggested that the youth, after achieving their University education and still could not make ends meet, frustration sets in over time. The economic misery and woes confronting or frustrating the army of angry unemployed youths create serious state of insecurity in Nigeria.

According to Eso (2009), kidnapping has its roots in the inequality, unemployment, breakdown of the educational system, social structures and value system in Nigeria. The crime is a lucrative business in our society because the entire system is apparently faulty: bad governance, lax legislation and weak law enforcement make kidnapping easy and possible to carry out. There is hunger in the land; unemployment is soaring like the eagle and no concrete plans are made to address the problem. With dangerous weapons at hand, kidnapping as a lucrative business in Nigeria not only becomes easy but also a solution to poverty. For this reason, youth unemployed and availability of arms and other lethal weapons influence some individuals into kidnapping. Lending credence to this particular contention, Inyang and Ubong (2013) asserted that there are uncountable able-bodied men and women in Nigeria roaming the streets in search of none existing job. Out of frustration, coupled with mounting responsibilities to tackle, many idle young Nigerians have ventured into kidnapping. Diara (2010) and Adibe (2012) maintained that the soaring and unacceptable rate of unemployment among youths is one of the causes of kidnapping in the country.

Put differently, the pervasive influence of kidnapping in Nigeria is rather a form of backlash or social reaction to the structures of society that have been tainted by corruption and corrupt practices by successive governments. This odious crime is an indirect requite, payback action and survival technique devised to make money from the political and economic-dominant classes and their relatives. It is a response from those who do not have access to power, and authority in society to those who possess these wealth determinants; the latter category of people alleging the latter group of being insensitivities, oppressive, exploitative and even responsible for their underdevelopment. No wonder the rich, political class and other notable personalities or their relatives are mainly falling victims of kidnapping. Supporting this assertion, Eso (2009) averred that Nigeria has experienced an exponential increase in reported cases of kidnapping since 2007. The risk of kidnapping, particularly in the South East and South South parts of the country has surged, with expatriates and the affluent or their relatives as prime targets.

The problem of kidnapping in Nigeria is not only because it pays high amount of money in one successful trip that stirs people to commit this act, but also the complicity of the police and general porous security network that make the crime less risk and all-comers affairs. Majekodumi (2009) confirmed that the prevalence of kidnapping in Nigeria is a symptomatic of the failure of the Nigeria Police Force whose morale and professionalism have been devastated by low pay, outdated equipment and poor working conditions to the extent that they have become willing accomplice of armed robbers and kidnappers. Ishaya (2010) reported that the most tragic for Nigeria is the involvement of security men, particularly police officers in aiding and abetting criminal elements in the country. For this media pundit, was it not the Inspector-General of Police (IGP) who admitted in 2010 that some of his men were aiding and abetting criminal elements, particularly in the rampant kidnapping cases! In a study undertaken by Nwadiaro and Nkwocha (2011), it was revealed that 61.1% of the respondents in their study decried that the police are ineffective in the fight against kidnapping; hence, the reason why kidnappers are on the loose looking for whom they will prey on.

Still on these, it is implicated in most literature that policing agencies in Nigeria lack the resources to cope with criminal activities, resulting from corruption and undue influences occurring within and outside the system. For instance, Inyang and Ubong (2013) noted that corruption within the law enforcement agencies sometimes thwarts serious effort in crime prevention and control. Given the increasing rate of kidnapping in Nigeria, the federal, State and local governments are advancing policies and security measures to combat the problem. But the systemic corruption in virtually all social institutions in the country, especially the police appear to discourage these plans and efforts (for detail, see S. E. Otu, 2012; Ordu, & Nnam, 2017b). The reason for the unsuccessful 'war on kidnapping' 'lies squarely at the root of corruption and corrupting role of the police and courts

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which make up the criminal justice system” (Obarisiagbon, & Aderinto, 2018, p. 42 citing the following sources: Oputa, 1991; Ukiwo, 2002; Abati, 2002).

Incidence of Kidnapping and its Implications in Nigeria

The incidence of kidnapping, that is, its prevalence, patterns or trends is on the rise, and has been widely reported on the media and in the scientific community. Despite its frequent occurrence and widespread, there is still a dearth of comprehensive government-documented report or statistics on the crime. If such evidential data exists, it could be classified and made available for exclusive usage within and among the State security forces. Raheem (2008) stated that there is no regular comprehensive official record to track the incidence of kidnapping in absolute numbers in Nigeria. However, isolated official records in some scholarly and media reports indicate that over 300 foreigners have been kidnapped in Nigeria as at 2008. On the average scale, Okoli and Agada (2014) summarized that the number of Nigerians and foreigners that have been kidnapped over the years remains a matter of ‘guesstimate’; but commonsense suggests that the number must have been quite alarming.

In Nigeria, authorities in kidnapping (see Otu, & Nnam, 2018; Otu *et al.* 2018a) have found their studies that the crime had suddenly increased, spread to all parts of the society, and became a source of nightmare to many Nigerians and foreigners residing in the country. For these authors, from Nnewi to Aba, Umuahia, Abakaliki in the Southeast, Port Harcourt to Yenogoa, Calabar, Warri and Asaba in the South-South, Lagos to Akure and Ibadan in the Southwest, and Kano to Kaduna and Jimeta in the North, kidnappers are having a field day. The crime is pervasive in virtually all parts of Nigeria; as Perlberg (2013) revealed, Nigeria in 2013 ranked third among the notorious kidnapping countries in the world, with Mexico and India occupying first and second positions, respectively. Nigeria dropped only by two positions in 2016 ranking, suggesting that the country is currently occupying fifth alongside Syria and Afghanistan as the most dangerous countries in the world in terms of kidnapping (see also Global Kidnapping Review, 2016 cited in S. E. Otu *et al.*, 2018a).

In the present-day Nigeria, “kidnapping has put everyone—rich, poor, young, old, foreigners, nonforeigners, male and female—at a constant risk of being a primary, secondary, or vicarious victim of kidnapping. Today, kidnapping takes place at any time and place—at homes, schools, streets, markets, business premises, places of worship, relaxation points, highways, morning, afternoon, and nights” (Otu *et al.*, 2018a). In 2008 alone, reports show that over 300 foreigners have been kidnapped in Nigeria. Research shows that 1,500 persons have been kidnapped in the country in 2009. This was against 512 person in 2008 and 353 in 2007 (Raheem, 2008; Reuters, 2009; Eboh, 2010). According to the United Kingdom and Commonwealth Office, 43 British Nationals and about 200 other foreign Nationals have been kidnapped in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria since January 2006, with one British National killed (Eso, 2009).

The problem has its wide-range of implications on victims, their families and the society at large. It has adversely affected the Nigerian economy, security, and social relations and integration. More to this are untold hardship, torture, trauma and psychological pains inflicted on all forms of victims: primary, secondary and vicarious. In some cases, a primary victim could occur, even after payment of ransom and his or her corpse not released to the deceased relatives. Adibe (2012) is of the view that kidnapping in Nigeria has become so pervasive that people are unsure who will become the next victim, and many casualties and death tolls have been recorded in Nigeria, stemming from severe torture. Kidnappers have killed different classes of people in many instances, especially those whose relatives delayed or refused to pay the demanded ransom or who put up resistance at the time of their kidnapping. Onuoha (2010) narrated that victims of kidnapping who tried to resist abduction or whose relatives or State actors could not pay the ransom as demanded by the kidnappers have been killed. Nwadiaro and Nkwocha (2011) submitted that kidnappers use torture and fear as major weapons of achieving their bohemian intentions, so victims are subjected to torture in their places of captivity, threatened with death and made to undergo serious psychological trauma.

Conclusion and Policy Implications

The uniqueness and strengths of academic research are in their efforts to develop new knowledge or contribute, support and strengthen the body of existing one on a given phenomenon, and this present study is not an exception. We allude to the avalanche of both empirical and theoretical evidence that the incidence of kidnapping in Nigeria is on the increase. Acknowledging the importance of these studies and borrowing extensively from them, however, the present research went a step further to specifically examine the motivation, incidence and consequence of this phenomenon by reviewing and supporting existing related relevant literature and theories that addressed the core of the problem. This paved way for discovering the missing link and filling the void in knowledge. Findings show that unemployment, underemployment and poverty, which are induced by relative deprivations, lead to frustration and aggression. They played important role in predicting this offending behavior by compelling many affected individuals into kidnapping for economic sustenance and as an escape route.

Furthermore, kidnapping is rather a form of social reaction to the harsh and frustration-ridden social structure and political economy in Nigeria, as well as a problem of weak security systems and porous intra and inter-State borders. For this reason, the policy thrust of this article is grounded in the basic principles of relative deprivation, frustration-aggression and routine activities theories which were integrated to form the theoretical framework for this research. Deconstructing the different theories allowed for a more holistic understanding of the complexities of kidnapping and to direct the paths to a successful war on the offence and offenders. From the foregoing analysis, it is apparent that the predictions of the theoretical approach shared strong correlation with the core variables explored. The rationale behind the integration is anchored in their

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comparative lucidity, correlates and ability to dissect the problem in some depth. A synthesis of the three theories provided a more robust thrust, driving force that will assist in developing evidence-based policy approach and action.

Shockingly, it is established that politicians in modern-day Nigeria employ most jobless youths as political thugs and later dumped them after elections. The abandoned youths, political thugs are now busy kidnapping innocent persons and relatives of those they unlawfully assisted politically in winning elections. There is, therefore, the necessity and urgency for developing a strong pathway and comprehensive, informative lead/reference material that can assist the government and its policymakers, security agencies and even members of the public in grappling with the complexities of kidnapping. This is a void the current research filled in by providing further impetus and insights into this vexed issue. The study is a reliable source of literature, from where incisive and practical reforms can be initiated in the social structure and political economy of Nigeria. And this will go a long way in effectively reducing the plight of its citizens and thereby facilitating desistance from and aging out of kidnapping by perpetrators and their partners in crime. Owing to the identified causative factors of this complex problem, efforts should now be focused on the provision of interventions that will ameliorate the poor social, political and economic situation of the people.

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