

# The Socio-Economic Cost of Kidnapping in Southwest, Nigeria

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## Abstract

The study examined the socio-economic cost of kidnapping in Southwest, Nigeria. The study specifically examined the causes of kidnapping; the social and economic cost of kidnapping; and the difference in perception of the social and economic cost of kidnapping in Southwest, Nigeria based location of the respondents. The descriptive research design of the survey type was used in this study. The sample for the study consisted of 450 adults from 15 Local Government Areas in 3 States of Southwest, Nigeria. The sample was selected using multistage sampling procedure. A self-designed research instrument tagged Socio-economic Cost and Kidnapping Questionnaire (SCKQ) was used to collect relevant data for the study. The data collected through the instrument were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings of the study revealed that the social cost of kidnapping are sexual harassment of female victims, reduction in quality of social relationship, fear of rendering public assistance and fear of association with strangers while economic cost of kidnapping are ransom paid to kidnappers, capital flight of investors and high budget on security. Also, it was revealed that the perception of the socio-economic cost of kidnapping in Southwest, Nigeria was location biased. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that Government should be firm and fair in its resolution and implementation of decisions to curb kidnapping.

CJAR

Accepted 5 June 2020

Published 8 June 2020

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.3885402

**Keywords:** Socio-Economic, Cost, Kidnapping,

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## Introduction

Kidnapping occurs when a person is abducted and taken from one place to another against their will, or confined to a controlled space without the confinement being from a legal authority. It involves illegal or unlawful taking away of a person or a group of persons, and keeping him or them as prisoner(s) for pecuniary or other selfish gains in return.

Though kidnapping is not new, and has been in Nigeria criminal statutes, kidnapping for ransom is a relatively new trend in Nigeria. It was the Niger-Delta militants who traditionally used the expatriate-oriented model of kidnapping to agitate for the economic and environmental rights of people of the area. Unfortunately, this soon gave way to its use as a tool for financial exploitation as expatriates were released after paying huge ransom in millions of naira. Nigeria's kidnapping problem bounced back to glaring limelight when it became a stock in trade of the Boko Haram and other splinter terrorist's groups in the North-East region of Nigeria.

Since then, series of kidnappings have been recorded across the country and has gained traction in the Southwest States of recent. Despite various measures by the government and its security agencies, kidnapping is still a long way from being checked. This act of criminality also facilitates other crimes such as rape, robbery, assault and murder with attendant socio economic cost. It has therefore become necessary to assess the extent to which kidnapping has affected socio-economic development in Southwest Nigeria, an objective which this study sets to fulfill.

Kidnapping seem to have grown into a business venture and a straight enterprise among an emerging class of criminals who now see it as an avenue of getting rich quickly. Every Nigerian is now a target and the safety of persons and their property is no longer guaranteed owing to the near daily incidents of kidnapping. Unfortunately, the South-western States of Lagos, Ogun, Oyo, Osun, Ondo and Ekiti have come under the siege of kidnapers who have made life unbearable for its residents.

According to Efeizomor (2017), the recorded cases of kidnapping in Nigeria shows 1,353 cases occurred in 2016 while The Nigerian Police record revealed that in 2017, kidnapers and hostage keepers got N955 million ransom and about N2.4 billion between 2015 and 2017. Only recently, the Inspector General of Police, Mohammed Adamu stated that 685 Nigerians were kidnapped between January and April 2019. During the period, 1.91 billion naira was demanded by the assailants while 181.33 million naira was eventually paid as ransom by relatives to secure release of the victims.

Apart from this proximate impact on the victims, kidnapping exerts enormous and far reaching economic and social costs. Kidnapping induces and create a palpable ambience of fear and despair for citizens while stultifying economic growth and sustainable development by driving away investment. It has also affected the social relations of many people who are held hostages in their homes from dusk to dawn, for the fear of being kidnapped. People are compelled to present an unfinished look of poverty by not painting the external walls of their houses while many are afraid to buy or use new motor vehicles for the fear of kidnapers. There is a relatively high level of mistrust among people. Only a few people still extend the traditional African hospitality to strangers. Some people do not acknowledge or return greeting by strangers nor oblige strangers asking for direction while most people are unwilling to render help to people in distress for fear of being kidnapped.

At the individual level, the costs include the economic value of money that may be lost to kidnapers. People go as far as borrowing to bail their relatives out from the hands of hoodlums. The victim's work-place is also affected adversely. If the victim was a business man or woman, the business may suffer some setback pending his or her return. In a formal



organization, the challenges appear to be enormous as the absence of the victim may cause problem within the system, and the output might automatically be affected as well. At the governmental level, the economic effects of kidnapping involve the extra budgetary expenditure on security and security agencies. Several meetings, summits, conferences have been held in a bid to curb the menace in the country all to little avail.

Hence, this study investigates the socio-economic cost of kidnapping in Southwest Nigeria and viable ways to arrest the negative trend.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical frame work of this study is based on structural strain theory of Robert Merton (1968) and social disorganization theory of Clifford Shaw and Henry McKay (propounded in 1991) because they capture the thrust of this study. Structural strain theory tries to justify that crime escalate as a result of imbalance between structural goals and means.

Merton proposed that the lower class individuals are most likely to experience strains because they aim for the same goals as the rest of society, and have blocked opportunities for success. Strain as in Merton's formulation can be linked with kidnapping in Nigeria because what produces strain is blocked opportunity to success.

Furthermore, social disorganisation theory posits that crime could become "systematic" (organised and enduring) when the society is "un-organised" for its prevention. For instance, it seems that the institution that are supposed to instruct morals to the young ones such as the family, the school and the church are failing in their responsibility due to the degradation of the entire value system. Therefore taking vocation in crime such as kidnapping becomes relevant.

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

### **Methodology**

Qualitative research methodology was used for this study. It utilizes the historical research method with primary and secondary sources of data collection relied upon. Since kidnapping remains an ongoing occurrence and contemporary social malady, the primary sources of data collection was derived through oral interview from respondents. The study also explores relatively recent publications in newspapers, books, journals and articles relevant to the sources as secondary sources of data collection.

### **Origin of Kidnapping**

Kidnapping is a universal phenomenon and social malady perhaps as old as man in organized societies. The Christian bible recorded that "anyone who kidnaps another and either sells him or still has him when he is caught must be put to death" (Exodus 21:16). From this narration in Exodus; a book which comprise of diverse elements, originating from various sources, ranging from the 8th until the 2nd century BC (Nwadiorah and Nkwocha, 2011), one observes that the act of kidnapping must have been a well-known occurrence in the biblical era for such a law to have been enacted.

Etymologically, the concept of kidnapping derived from two English root words, namely 'kid' (meaning infant) and 'napping' (meaning to be caught sleeping). The practice dates back to 17th century Britain, whence infants of rich families would be 'napped' for ransom (Tzanelli, 2017). In its earliest manifestation, the phenomenon of kidnapping took the



form of child abduction for ransom (Ezeibe & Eze, 2016). In 1874, a four-year-old Charlie Ross from Philadelphia was recorded to have been kidnapped and a ransom of 20,000 US Dollars was requested (Ugwuoke, 2010). Over the years, however, kidnapping has metamorphosed into a sophisticated organized crime, with immense political and economic underpinnings.

The origin of kidnapping in the African continent will of necessity lead us to the bitter and nefarious activity of slave trade and slavery that swept through the continent of Africa. The slave or triangular trade as it was popularly called, that began in the late 16th century was highly rooted in terror and abduction as a means of getting victims. Umukoro (2010) avers that “kidnapping is a sad recrudescence of the obnoxious slave trade when our helpless ancestors were captured by fellow blacks, through organized raids and orchestrated tribal warfare, and sold into white slavery”.

In the early traditional Nigeria society, human sacrifice perpetuated kidnapping. Ugwuoke (2010) asserts that individuals were kidnapped for ritual or social reasons. The African traditional worshipers believed in sacrificing to appease the gods. The sacrifice may transcend animal sacrifice, and the priest could be inspired by the gods to order for human beings; to accomplish this kind of sacrifice, the required person could be kidnapped and killed in a sacrificial procedure.

Kidnapping in modern Nigeria can be said to be an outcome of the “resentment against inhuman treatments and poverty in the Niger Delta of the country” (Ugwulebo, 2011). It was a means of drawing local and international attention to the underdevelopment, environmental degradation and plight of the inhabitants of the area (Ijediogor, 2010). At the beginning ransom were hardly demanded and rarely paid since it was not geared towards economic gains but as a means to drive home their point on the struggle for the region. Victims were originally foreign oil workers, but today many are locals, often employees of international oil and oil service companies, and not necessarily wealthy; anyone whose family might pay a ransom can be targeted.

Kidnappings for ransom have also been attributed to *Boko Haram* and associated groups such as Ansaru, in the northern states, primarily Kano, Katsina, Yobe, Bauchi and Borno with tactics similar to those of al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM). From the unstable situation in the Niger Delta and the North East, kidnapping has spread across the country.

Ugwulebo (2011) asserted that the South-West got contaminated, perhaps through the process of social osmosis occasioned by interaction and association. Thus, kidnapping is not a new or emerging crime as some observers may be wont to hold (Caplan, 2015). It has been around as an important criminal pathology of the contemporary society (Tzanelli, 2017). Extant scholarly thinking on the subject matter is, nonetheless, still evolving.

### **The problem of Kidnapping in South West Nigeria**

Today, no region is free from the menace of kidnapping as most people in the country are directly or indirectly affected by the wave of the crime and its sundry effects. However, South West Nigeria has particularly witnessed an upsurge in the number of kidnapping cases, making it the latest hotbed of kidnapers. Bandits, perpetrating the crime, scout for victims from Lagos to Ondo, Osun to Ekiti, Oyo and Ogun states, using every available space, bush, forest and abandoned properties as their lairs.

Some inter-state roads have been identified as flashpoints. For instance, kidnapers regularly strike on Iwo-Osogbo Road, Ikorodu-Epe Road, the Akure-Ilesa Road via Ondo State, Ijebu-Jesa/Esu-Oke/Erio/Aramoko Road from Ekiti State and a number of other deserted roads within Osun State including Osogbo-Ibokun-Ada Road. Also, cases of kidnap have been recorded recently in Ikirun, Inisa and Okuku communities along the highway leading to





Kwara State. The waterways of areas like Arepo, Ikorodu, Epe among others that link Lagos and Ogun states have also continuously served as their haunts. And in their operations, no class of human is spared: The poor, rich and the powerful have all fallen into their traps at one time or the other.

On 21<sup>st</sup> September 2015, Chief Olu Falae, former Secretary to the Government of the Federation and Presidential Candidate was kidnapped on his 77<sup>th</sup> birthday. Falae was abducted on his farm in Ilado, along Igbatoro road, in Akure, the capital city of Ondo State and was only freed 72 hours later after his family had paid 5 million naira for his release. Seven Fulani herdsmen were later sentenced to life imprisonment by an Ondo State High Court for their involvement in the act.

In April 2019, Rasaki Musibau, Director of Lagos State Fire Safety was abducted by kidnapers. He was driving from home in Ikorodu to Epe, when the kidnapers struck and took him away along with five others. However, he secured his return after a grueling experience in the hands of the kidnapers.

In May 2019, Professor Olayinka Adegbehingbe, an orthopaedic surgeon at the Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Osun State, was kidnapped around Ikoyi/Apomu junction on the Ibadan-Ife Expressway while returning from Lagos. A ransom of 5.04 million naira was paid before he was released.

More recently, Dayo Adewole, son of the immediate-past health minister, Prof. Isaac Adewole, was abducted by a gang of kidnapers while on the way to his farm in Fiditi, in Oyo State. Although he was lucky to be released after 24 hours in captivity, not many have been so blessed. Some stay for weeks and days, while some have been outrightly killed in the process.

Even monarchs have not been spared the onslaught of the kidnapers. On May 30, 2018, a traditional ruler in Atakunkosa West Local Government Area of the state, the Atagunmodi of Itagunmodi, Oba Michael Famadewa-Kosile, was accosted a few kilometres from his domain while returning from a ceremony at Ilesa. The kidnapers shot at his vehicle, forced him to a halt and led him into the bush. The monarch, who is a septuagenarian, however escaped when his abductors fell asleep.

Similarly, a 60-year old traditional chief in Ibokun, the headquarters of Obokun Local Government Area of Osun State, Dunsin Amusa, was kidnapped along the Ilare/Esá Odo Road with a woman simply identified as Tayo. Their abductors collected N1m ransom contributed by groups and individuals in Ibokun before the victims regained their freedom.

Religious leaders are not spared in the nefarious act either. In June 2018, some armed hoodlums kidnapped a Methodist Presbyterian in Osun State, Very Rev Kayode Akande, and two other church leaders along the Iwo-Osoḡbo Road. They also paid an unspecified ransom before they were released.

### **Causes of Kidnapping**

A wide range of causative factors are responsible for the kidnapping that has afflicted the Southwest. These factors can be viewed distinctively, yet they are intrinsically linked to one another as one concept directly leads to another especially when observed from a sociological perspective. They include moral bankruptcy, unemployment and poverty, governmental insincerity, and proliferation of small arms and light weapons, greed and inordinate ambition to amass wealth (Diara, 2010).

Ugwuoke (2011) noted that many unemployed youths in Nigeria are poverty stricken and usually find solace in criminal activities which of course, include participation in kidnapping. In addition, Diara (2010) asserts that kidnapping in Nigeria is a kind of social revolution by the youths especially the unemployed ones who are not satisfied with their



socio-economic lots. Other writers have also agreed that kidnapping is as a result of the rising incidence of unemployment in Nigeria (Adibe, 2017; Inyang, 2009).

Ikpang (2011) argued that the militarization of the election process by politicians in order to influence the results of election provides a tool for the commission of the crime of kidnapping. Erhabour (2012) argued that kidnappers were created by politicians who nurtured thugs for elections and did not settle them, thereby, making the hoodlums to see kidnapping for ransom as alternative means of livelihood.

Kidnapping is also a pointer to moral anarchy in Southwest. A gradual erosion of community spirit has marked the eclipse of the lofty values that kept society on its toes like communalism, altruism, benevolence, empathy, compassion, philanthropy and solidarity (Emeh, 2011) amongst others. In this light, the thoughts of Agha (2010) comes to mind when he noted that, "men have devised wrong ethical tools and chosen vices to enable them attain their insidious objective, money has become an end in itself, money is seen as the most valuable commodity than human life". This view by Agha is essentially true in the South West where the traditional values system have been perverted, as collectivistic and communitarian living that characterized core African values, have given way to egoistic and hedonistic orientations that culminates at materialism.

### **Socio-economic Cost of Kidnapping**

The various constitutions that Nigeria has operated including the 1999 constitutions make provisions for the rights of citizens to include; right to life, right to social security, right to work, right to livelihood, just and favourable remuneration, right to a standard of living adequate for the health, and well-being of individual and his family, including food, clothing, housing, and right to education. Regrettably, successive governments have failed to guarantee these rights and thus the onus is on the individual to seek for means to provide the basic necessities of life for him and his family.

Some redundant individuals therefore see kidnapping and hostage taking as a way out of their predicament and a lucrative alternative means of making money, acquiring economic power and getting social recognition. The seeming inability of government to provide a secure and safe environment for lives, properties and the conduct of business and economic activities has also led to palpable fear, resentment and disaffection among the populace. Some of the victims of kidnapping are killed in the process; some sustain various levels of injuries like bullet wounds which may deform them forever. Many victims suffer various degrees of assault, abuse and torture in the hands of the kidnappers. Some of the female victims are even raped by the kidnappers.

Consequently, the alarming level of insecurity has made the economy unattractive to investors, and this has impacted negatively on economic growth. There is no investor whether local or foreign that will be motivated to invest in an unsafe and insecure environment. In a globalized world, investors are not only looking for high returns on their investments but also safe haven for their investments.

The social life of people has also been affected. The recurrence of kidnapping cases has resulted in panic, tension, feelings of insecurity and weakened citizens' confidence in government and political leadership of the State. There is mistrust among people and this affects or breaks societal linkages. It ensures societal unrest making it obvious to all citizens that there is no social harmony in the society.

The socio economic cost of kidnapping in South West Nigeria can therefore be summed up as follows:

- Social dislocation and population displacement.

- Heightens citizenship question which encourages hostility between “indigenes” and “settlers”.
- Dislocation and disruption of family and communal life.
- General atmosphere of mistrust, fear, anxiety and frenzy
- Dehumanization of women, children, and men.
- Deepening of hunger and poverty in the polity.
- Discourages local and foreign investment as it makes investment unattractive to business people
- Halts business operations during period of violence and outright closure of many enterprises in the areas or zones where incidence of insecurity is rife.
- Increases security spending by business organizations and governments.
- Migration of people from area or region where there is prevalence of insecurity.

### Recommendations

In the absence of security, socio-economic development cannot be sustained as insecurity destroys economic, human and social capital. Hence, effort should be made by government in concert with other stakeholders to tackle the proliferation of small arms and light weapons which fuels violent crimes in the country. Closely related to this is need to address the issue of the nation’s porous borders which has facilitated the influx of not only weapons but criminal elements from neighbouring countries like Chad and Niger. Policies targeted at eliminating poverty and unemployment should be initiated in a bid to promote human development while traditional and religious leaders should encourage the inculcation of moral values of contentment, respect for the sanctity of life and hospitality.

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### Cite this article:

**Author(s)**, OLOFIN, OLUWATOBA OLATUNJI, (2020). “The Socio-Economic Cost of Kidnapping in Southwest, Nigeria”. **Name of the Journal:** Commonwealth Journal of Academic Research, (CJAR.EU), P, 107- 115. **DOI:** <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3885402> , Issue: 3, Vol.: 1, Article: 11, Month: June, Year: 2020. Retrieved from <https://www.cjar.eu/all-issues/>

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