KIDNAPPING AND BANDITRY: A CRITIQUE OF THE NIGERIAN SECURITY, 1999-2022

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Abstract

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, is grappling with significant security challenges, among which kidnapping and banditry stand out as particularly pervasive and alarming issues. Kidnapping and banditry are not new phenomena in Nigeria. However, their prevalence has surged in recent years due to a combination of factors, including economic hardship, political instability, and inadequate law enforcement. The epicenter of banditry and kidnapping has shifted from the oil-rich Niger Delta to other regions, particularly the North-West, North-Central and the Eastern states. The perpetrators range from organized criminal syndicates to opportunistic individuals, with victims spanning all demographics, from schoolchildren and rural farmers to urban professionals and expatriates. The theoretical work by which this paper is hinged on is the Situational Action Theory (SAT).The study critically examines the phenomena of kidnapping and banditry within Nigeria, focusing on the effectiveness of the Nigerian security network in addressing these challenges. The methodologyused is case study method which is complimented by contentand qualitativemethod using primary and secondary sources. Findings reveal thatsystemic corruption, inadequate funding, poor training, and lack of coordination among security agencies significantly hinder efforts to combat kidnapping and banditry. It also highlights the socio-economic factors that fuel these criminal activities to include poverty, unemployment, illiteracy, inadequate government presence and regional inequalities. This research underscores the urgent need for a holistic approach that not only strengthens security measures but also addresses the underlying socio-economic conditions contributing to the rise of kidnapping and banditry by critiquing the current strategies against those seemingly intractable menaces. This research recommends comprehensive reforms which would target the development of more effective and sustainable security policies in Nigeria.

Keywords: Socio-economic, kidnapping, Banditry, Social vices,Security

Introduction

Kidnapping and banditry have become pervasive issues in Nigeria, posing significant threats to national security, economic stability, and social harmony. This critique examines the underlying causes, the operational dynamics of these criminal activities, and the effectiveness of the Nigerian security network in addressing them.Kidnapping often involves abductions for ransom, targeting wealthy individuals, expatriates, and even schoolchildren. Victims are typically held in remote locations while banditry involves large groups of armed individuals conducting raids on villages, highways, and public transportation for economic gains, often resulting in significant casualties and property loss.Kidnapping initially was limited to the Niger Delta region when kidnapping in Nigeria became a tool for militants demanding greater control over oil revenues and environmental protection. Over time, it has spread across the country, evolving into a lucrative organized criminal enterprise. Banditry was traditionally associated with rural areas and cattle rustling. Overtime, banditry has expanded to include large-scale attacks on communities, highways, and even urban centers. The proliferation of armed groups has exacerbated the situation in every region of Nigeria.

These social vices which appears to be beyond solution stems from key factors such as economic disparities, weak governance, proliferation of light weapons, terrorism, ethnic and religious tensions. The inability of the Nigerian security network to track down and eliminate these twin social vices not minding the prime attention the sector enjoys in the nation's annual budget; becomes a paradox in national security issues while citizens are forced to sleep with eyes wide open and government pay ransom to kidnapers and bandits to secure deal of release for captives. The situation has left many Nigerians not only helpless but hopeless as loss of lives to kidnappers and bandits has become norm. Disruption of agricultural activities, trade, and transportation, leading to increased economic chaos are all dividends of these social vices in question.

Statement Of the Problem

This research;"Kidnapping and Banditry: A Critique of the Nigerian Security" examines the causes and the aftermath of kidnapping and banditry in Nigeria. The persistence of those vices raises several questions regarding the effectiveness of Nigeria's security apparatus. Key issues include the adequacy of intelligence gathering and sharing, the coordination among different security agencies, the role of community policing, and the impact of socio-economic factors such as poverty and unemployment on crime rates. Additionally, the legal and judicial responses to these crimes and the extent to which corruption within the security sector undermines the efforts to address the problem poses a conundrum in Nigeria security question.

Kidnapping and banditry have emerged as significant threats to the security and stability of Nigeria, causing widespread fear, economic disruption, and loss of life. These criminal activities have escalated over the past decade, affecting various regions of the country and posing severe challenges to the Nigerian security network. The data sourced from the National Security Tracker (NST), an initiative of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), and the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), showed that an average of 11 Nigerians were killed and 12 people kidnapped daily in violent attacks reported in the media in 2023 (Uthman & Oluwafemi, 2024). This data does not include cases of murders and kidnappings that were not publicized by the media. It is noteworthy to state that many cases of killings and abductions in Nigeria usually go under the radar of the media. Despite the efforts by the government and security agencies to combat these crimes, the situation appears to be deteriorating, highlighting critical gaps in the existing security framework.

This critique using qualitative research method;utilizing primary and secondary source data with focus on the provision of a comprehensive analysis of the Nigerian security network's response to kidnapping and banditry whilealso identifying their weaknesses and proposing strategic improvements. By understanding the underlying causes and evaluating current strategies to tackle the menace.This study offers actionable recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of the Nigeria's security measures and restore public confidence in the country's ability to protect her citizens.

Theoretical Framework

Situational Action Theory (SAT): This theory was popularized byPer-Olof Wikström in 2004. The theory postulates that a person's personality and the environment in which they live are what motivate them to commit crimes, (Wilkstrom, 2006). SAT affirms that

People commit an act of crime because they see it as an acceptable action alternative in the circumstance (and there are no relevant and strong deterrent), or they fail to adhere to their own morality (i.e., fail to exercise self-control) in circumstances when they are externally pressurized to act otherwise.The central question is thus why people, and some more often than others, come to see crime (specific kinds of crime) as an acceptable action alternative and/or are vulnerable to external pressure (e.g., peer pressure) to commit acts of crime.The key to effective policy and prevention is to develop interventions that influence people not to see crime (specific kinds of crime) as action alternatives and helps them resist external pressure to engage in acts of crime.

Situational Action theory offers the following specific statements about a person's surroundings, circumstances, setting, and behavior; affirming that a person will either engage in criminal activity or live up to the law, depending on how these factors interplay. However, the propensity to commit crime will not only emanate from personal disposition but can also be fueled depending on the environment, engagement, and interaction with close relatives. Society and traditional authorities within the enclave form part of the environment and setting that can either encourage or discourage violent young people from getting involved in violent crime. Banditry, terrorism, insurgency, militancy, and piracy are all manifestations of the post-colonial state's inability and incapacity (across all tiers of government, from the federal to the state and local levels) to advance the welfare and security aspirations of the populace, (Oyewole & Omotola 2022).

Using SAT to dissecting the issue of kidnapping and banditry as well as the ineffectiveness of Nigeria security in tackling those vices and bringing it to its lowest ebb is apt. This is because both the people that indulge in those crime and the security operatives meant to combat such crime and; as well as the environments where the crime occurs are culpable. They are all part and parcel of Nigeria and as such are being affected by their environment which is riddled at all levels with poverty, corruption, illiteracy, unemployment, favoritism, nepotism and ethnicism. The increasing high cost of living without corresponding increase in wages and salaries in Nigeria no doubt affects the security operatives. This has driven some to engage in reckless bribery and corruption; mortgaging their conscience, thereby compromising the standard in dealing with crime and criminals in Nigeria. Security operatives mount roadblocks in Nigeria not for a stop and search operation as they claim but to extort money from motorists and travelers; then look the other way without any interest on who they are, where they are going to and whether they have dangerous weapons in their custody.

Methodology

This research,"Kidnapping and Banditry: A Critique of the Nigerian Security"is carried out using case study method. It employs case studies to analyze specific incidents of kidnapping and banditry in Nigeria thereby providing an in-depth insight into the subject matter.Those key incidents illustrate various aspects of the problem; the response from security forces; and the broader social, economic and political implications and they include:The Chibok Schoolgirls Kidnapping- an incident which occurred in April 14, 2014 when Boko Haram militants kidnapped 276 female students from the Government Girls Secondary School in Chibok, Borno State (Punch Newspaper, 2013). The slow and ineffective response the Nigerian government and the military was met with wild criticism. International assistance was eventually sought, leading to the rescue of some of the girls over time. The Implication of this incident highlights the vulnerabilities in the Nigerian education system, the impact of insurgency on civilian life, and the limitations of Nigerian security forces. Other case studies include:

The Kankara Schoolboys Kidnapping ofDecember 11, 2020 where armed bandits kidnapped over 300 boys from the Government Science Secondary School in Kankara, Katsina State. Unfortunately, security response was ineffectual instead the government engaged in negotiations with the kidnappers, leading to the release of the boys after about a week. The incident raised questions about the rationale of government to engage in negotiation with criminals rather than intervention of security operatives (Hamidu, 2022).This case underscored the growing threat of banditry in northwest Nigeria and the challenges faced by security forces in combating these groups.

The Greenfield University Kidnapping of April 20, 2021 orchestrated by bandits who in broad day light abducted 20 students and staff from Greenfield University in Kaduna State yet the incapacitation of the Nigerian security manifested clearly as several of the abducted students were killed as a warning, and the kidnappers demanded and got paid a significant ransom (Akpan, 2022).This incident highlights the increasing audacity of bandits and the severe impact on educational institutions, student safety and the general public.

The Niger Delta Kidnappings for ransom became a prevalent issue in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria, primarily targeting oil workers and expatriatesThe ineffectiveness of the effort of Nigerian Security on the issue forced the Nigerian government to adopt and implement other strategies, particularly the Amnesty programs introduced for militants and the establishment of the Niger-Delta Development Commission (NDDC) (Wilson, 2012).This case highlights the intersection of economic motives, environmental degradation, and militant activities, providing a broader context for understanding the motivations behind kidnappings and the effectiveness of different security strategies.

Qualitative method complemented by the use of content analysis with data drawn from primary and secondary sources is also used in this study to explore how kidnapping and banditry have shaped the Nigerian socio-economic, religious and political landscape overtime.

Review of Related Literature

The roots of hostage-taking in Nigeria can be traced to the return to Civilian rule in the year 1999 when tension started to heighten between the people of the oil-rich Niger Delta and the oil companies in their communities over issues relating to environmental degradation and lack of basic social amenities in these communities. Between 2007 and 2008, armed groups within the Niger-Delta started to engage in kidnapping by abducting foreign oil expatriates as a way to pressure the government to address their concerns about oil pollution in their communities and for commercial reasons (Albert, Danjibo and Olumayowa 2020, p.212). Since then, scholars and researchers have written considerable but inconclusive literature on the issues of kidnapping as well as banditry in Nigeria.

Writing on how kidnapping and banditry in Northwest Nigeria, it highlights that the federal government's increasing loss of revenue through Foreign Direct Investment. Nigerian insecurity deters commerce and investment because it has the potential to make both domestic and foreign investors undesirable. By raising the cost of doing business in the nation, such as the expense of safe-guiding business hazards and uncertainty, insecurity in Nigeria has resulted in the loss of products and property (Chibuzor, Otohinoyi and Oboromeni,2010, p.107).

In another literature, Opakunbi, Mohammed and Osah (2023) state that most youths have engaged in these societal ills as a result of poverty, high level of unemployment, the influx of arms proliferation and illiteracy and greed while arguing the need for the Nigerian government to come up with more realistic

and meaningful employment programs for the youth. The authors extol the Nigerian Military to brace up to their jobs byfinding workable and effective approach to tackle banditry and kidnapping in Nigeria (p.176).

Rosenje and Adeniyi (2022) writing on the insecurity posed in the Northwest Nigeria by the activities of kidnappers and bandits states that, the presence of scarcely governed spaces, the high level of unemployment with the attendant poverty, weak security system, porosity of Nigeria's borders and arms proliferations, among others, are the driving factors accelerating banditry in the region. They argue that banditry pervading Nigeria's northwest undermines the security; peace and development of the region. Unfortunately, the effort of security operatives has not yielded the desired result and therefore suggests a more proactive measure that could be adopted by the federal government to defeat the criminals.

Igbini (2022) affirms that the problem of banditry in Nigeria especially in the Northwest borders onfarmers-herders conflict and the inability of the federal government to address decisively the issue of open land cattle grazing. Over the few years, banditry has crated widespread insecurity in Nigeria, notably in states such as Katsina, Borno and Kaduna which invariably led to increased tensions between various ethnic communities, interrupted development activities; inflamed religious tensions; upset the nation's social cohesion and frightened off foreign and local investors Kidnapping, armed robber, cattle rustling, and lotting constitute breach of national peace and securityespecially in the aforementioned states thereby raisingthe fundamental question of the ability of the Nigerian security to address the menaces (p.55).

Okwuwada (2023) while asserting the hazardous nature of kidnapping, banditry and other terrorist acts going unchecked in Nigeria, faults the government's inability to arrest the situation which have triggered displacement of people and disruption of social and economic activities. The literature highlights that in the quest to provide the ransom to kidnappers and bandits, many families have sold their valuables while some have lost their source of livelihood to effect the release of their relatives unfortunately, paying ransom does not end the menace but exacerbates the crime.

Kidnapping/Banditry in Nigeria

According to Merriam Webster, kidnapping is an act or instance or the crime of seizing, confining, inveigling, abducting, or carrying away a person by force or fraud often with a demand for ransom or in furtherance of another crime. Kidnapping is a major problem in Nigeria since the early 21st century.Kidnapping by bandits and insurgents is among the biggest organized crime in Nigeria and constitute one of the biggest national security threats. Kidnapping involves abductions for ransom, targeting wealthy individuals, expatriates, and even schoolchildren. Victims are typically held in remote locations while banditry involves large groups of armed individuals conducting raids on villages, highways, and public transportation, often resulting in significant casualties and property loss.Kidnapping in Nigeria, is primarily categorized into: Political kidnapping, commercialized kidnapping, terrorists/insurgents kidnapping and kidnapping by ritualists.

Political Kidnappings: Refers to the political kidnapping which started in the petroleum industry in Nigeria's oil-rich Niger Delta region in the early 2000s: The Niger Delta agitators took expatriates working with multinational oil companies; hostage to force oil companies operating there to carry out community development projects for the benefit of the host communities or force government into

negotiations for more of economic benefits accruing to the federal treasury for the region. Political kidnapping also occurs when political opponents indulge in kidnapping of their rival, their rival's family member or relatives and uses the kidnapped to threaten the opponent to relinquish their political interest. Political kidnappers could kill their victim or demand and receive ransom to release their captives (Wilson, 2012).

Boko Haram/Bandits Kidnappings

Kidnappings by the terrorist group, Boko Haram in Nigeria's northeast and northwest began in 2009 and has continued to linger till date. Abductions by Boko Haram are to further its agenda, recruit fighters, instill fear, gain more international popularity and force the government to negotiate with it for ransom which is one of the means of generating funds for its terrorist operation. Boko Haram have committed several mass kidnappings of students notably; their 2014 kidnapping of about 276 teenage girls from a secondary school in Chibok, Borno State. Boko Haram often demand that victims' families or the government pay them ransoms, or that the government release prisoners from their group. Boko Haram has brainwashed and forced some of the young people it has kidnapped into joining them and carrying out attacks, including suicide bombings. Boko Haram force many young female victims to marry them (Punch Newspaper, 2013).

Banditry and kidnapping are inseparable. Banditry is a type of organized crime committed by outlaws typically involving the threat or use of violence. A person who engages in banditry is known as a bandit and primarily commits crimes such as extortion, robbery, and murder, either as an individual or in groups. Banditry is a vague concept of criminality and is synonymous to gangsterism, brigandage, marauding, terrorism, piracy and thievery. The nefarious activities of bandits in Nigeria are manifested in their nationwide social vices and criminal activities like cattle rustling, kidnapping, armed robbery, use of hard drug, arson, rape, and the blatant and horrifying murder of members of agrarian communities with high-tech weapons by suspected herdsmen and the 'unknown gunmen.'

Commercialized Kidnappings/Banditry

Kidnapping is the act of seizing, carrying away and holding such a person hostage by unlawful force often with a demand for ransom. It involves taking a person from their family forcefully without their consent with the motive of holding the person hostage to earn a profit from their family, friends, relatives or government.

Kidnapping for ransom on a commercial scale became rampant in Nigeria in 2011 spread across all the 36 states and the country's capital, Abuja.[16] Since 2021, the rate of kidnappings for ransom has been on a galloping rate in Nigeria. The Nigerian journalist, (Nwaubani, 2023)writing for the BBC News decried that: "The Nigerian government seems to have suggested that it can no longer be relied on to keep citizens safe." In 2020, it was reported that in the span of the decade covering 2011-2020, kidnappers have gotten at least $18.5 million in ransom payments. In 2022, that figure stood at $1.12 million while $387,179 was paid in 2023"(Nwaubani, 2023). There are pockets of commercial kidnappings across the length and breadth of Nigeria with the predatory kidnappers demanding and receiving ransoms in millions depending on the perceived financial or social status of their victims. No part of the country is safe from

kidnappers: the roads, offices, homes, churches, mosques, markets, schools et are infested by kidnappers. The Nigerian security operatives have displayed high level incapacitation in decisively dealing with this social vice.

Factors Responsible for Kidnapping and Banditry in Nigeria

There are several and interconnected factors responsible for kidnapping and banditry in Nigeria. They are as follows:

Unemployment: This refers to a situation where a person actively searches for employment but is unable to find work. In Nigeria at present, unemployment has reached its crescendo. Torkwembe (2024) notes that;

> Every year,Nigerian universities graduate millions from higher institutions of learning. Since this administration/government came into existence, how many jobs has it created in the Federal Civil Service? The thing boils down to unbridled unemployment in the country. If people are empowered, if people are given jobs to do, if you provide one million jobs in this country, most of these crimes would be reduced. Even at times when one wants to be creative, there is no government incentive to empower them. The Nigerian government lacks vision and that is why the country has so degenerated that nobody is interested in the welfare of the citizens. It is no longer news that the unemployment factor in Nigeria with its alarmingly increasing rate is among the country's top five headaches; neither is it news that this evil monster, unemployment, has succeeded massively in pouring into the minds of its victims, bright but negative thoughts and ideas on how to make fat cash, by ignoring all cautions (p.145)

Both the highly educated and the less educated suffer the same fate of unemployment in Nigeria. It is estimated that the number of gainfully employed Nigeria youths in the various sectors are lesser than the unemployed.Consequently, unemployment has promoted youth restiveness and 'gangsterism'. Many Nigerian youths have taken to violence, armed robbery, kidnapping, car snatching, illegal bunkering and fuel black-market sales, and illegal importation of arms, most of which have reached alarming levels in several Nigerian cities Unemployment problem, which now seems beyond remedy, has produced army of idle hands and some of them have decided to punish the society that fails to provide them with means of livelihood and dignity by robbing its members of their property at gunpoint in the form of banditry while some are kidnapped for ransom(Ezeajughu, 2023, p.56).

Poverty: Numerous studies have shed light on the socio-economic factors driving the prevalence of banditry and abductions in Nigeria. At the heart of this social malaise lies poverty, which serves as a fertile breeding ground for criminal activities.(Bello,2024) contends that among the various socio-economic factors that contribute to banditry and abduction in Nigeria, poverty is the major cause. Daily, innocent citizens are dying not of ailment or accident, which are rampant in our climate, but at the hands of kidnappers and bandits. The bandits and kidnappers are on the prowl, and they kill people with impunity. Kidnapping is pervasive in every nook and cranny of this country. Many innocent citizens have been killed and vanished without traces. There is indeed a nexus between poverty and the current wave of kidnapping, killings, and banditry.

Anyone living below \$1.25 a day is living below the poverty level. Poverty can propel people toward crime as a way to make ends meet. Sometimes, a person who is poor might believe that kidnapping or

banditry among other illegal acts could provide the needed resources to start a new life devoid of crime (Torkwembe, 2024, p.145).Economic desperation among millions of impoverished Nigerians drives some to resort to criminal activities like kidnapping or banditry for financial gain. Lack of economic opportunities pushes others into crime for survival. Criminal networks exploit poverty by offering incentives, recruiting vulnerable individuals to escape economic hardships thereby fostering the cycle of crime.

Greed: Greed or avarice is an insatiable desire for material gain be it food, money, land, or animate/inanimate possessions or social value, such as status, or power. Greed has been identified as undesirable throughout known human history because it creates behavior-conflict between personal and social goals. Some people are not contented with what they have and wish they could buy more and more things – whether it relates to clothes, cars, houses or jewelry. These persons may turn to crime to make more money. There are several cases where kidnappers were not people in poverty. They were people driven with greed. There are cases were businessmen kidnap their business rival for a large ransom just to become richer. The get-rich-quick syndrome not minding the illicit and illegal way it is acquired is a greed driven syndrome that has become contagious among many Nigerian youths. Seeing that kidnapping and banditry to an extent enriches their pocket, they chose to continue in such line of illicit 'business' (Opakunbi,Mohammed and Osah, 2023, p.181).

Lack or InadequateGovernment Visibility: The issue of inadequate government visibility and control in remote areas is a significant factor contributing to banditry and kidnapping in Nigeria. These areas often serve as breeding grounds for criminal activities and hideouts for escaping criminals. The lack of government social or economic initiatives in these regions leads to frustration among residents, who feel abandoned by federal, state, and local governments. This disillusionment can turn these areas into nurseries for future kidnappers, cattle rustlers, armed robbers, bandits, and terrorists who may target nearby cities (Ojewale et al., 2022; Ojo, 2020; Olalekan et al., 2018).

Furthermore, the federal government's failure to bolster the presence of military and other security agencies exacerbates the problem. This lack of security forces allows kidnappers, bandits, terrorists, and other illegal groups to operate with impunity, aiming to harm others. According to The Tribune Newspaper (2022), Nigeria needs an average of 2.5 million police officers nationwide to ensure efficient policing and safeguard lives and properties.

Politics: Corrupt politicians may arrange for the kidnapping of their opponents. Sometimes, they do this so that their opponents would make concessions or change their votes on the issue. Political opponents indulge in kidnapping of their rival, their rival's family member or relatives and uses the kidnapped to threaten the opponent to relinquish their political interest. Political kidnappers could kill their victim or demand and receive ransom to release their captives.[9]Political Kidnappings also refer to the political kidnapping which startedin the Niger Delta as agitators took expatriates working with multinational oil companies; hostage to force oil companies operating there to carry out community development projects for the benefit of the host communities or force government into negotiations for more of economic benefits accruing to the federal treasury for the region.

Illiteracy/Lack of Handiwork: Illiteracy significantly contributes to the prevalence of kidnapping in Nigeria through several interconnected factors. Firstly, illiteracy limits individuals' job prospects and earning potential, leading to higher poverty levels. People in impoverished conditions might turn to kidnapping as a means of survival or financial gain. Uneducated individuals are more susceptible to manipulation and recruitment by criminal gangs. Without critical thinking skills or awareness of the legal and moral implications, they might be more easily lured into participating in kidnapping and banditry.

Additionally, illiterate individuals may not fully understand the legal repercussions of their actions or the severity of the punishment for kidnapping. This lack of awareness reduces the deterrent effect of laws. Illiteracy can perpetuate a cycle of poverty and crime across generations, as children growing up in illiterate households are less likely to receive an education, increasing their chances of turning to crime, including kidnapping, as they grow older (Ik-Iloanusi and Mbagwu, 2023).

Moreover, the saying "an idle mind is the devil's workshop" holds especially true in this context. Educated individuals or those skilled in any handiwork are more likely to be engaged in productive ventures, whether as employees or self-employed. In contrast, illiterates and those without skills or handiwork are more readily available to be used by criminal elements to orchestrate social vices. Without education or skills, these individuals are more prone to engage in illegal activities, further perpetuating the cycle of crime and poverty.

Corruption and Bad Governance: The Nigerian state, through its corrupt leadership, poor governance, and continued neglect of its responsibilities to the people, significantly contributes to the prevalence of kidnapping and banditry. Compromised and weak political, judicial, and security institutions exacerbate these issues. The connection between security and development is crucial; economic failures and social crimes in Nigeria largely stem from the state's institutional and administrative deficiencies, corruption, inconsistent economic policies, external shocks, poor rule of law, rising ethnic conflicts, and the inability to implement policies effectively due to corruption and the influence of ethnic and sectional interests. This environment often drives sections of the population toward criminal activities, including kidnapping (Arewa, 2013).

The state of insecurity in Nigeria is fundamentally a result of government failure. Despite having the resources to meet the needs of its people, the government's inability to deliver basic amenities has created an army of frustrated individuals who resort to violence at the slightest provocation (Igbuzor, 2011). The failure to provide essential services and opportunities contributes to widespread disillusionment, making it easier for individuals to be drawn into criminal activities.

Implications of Kidnapping and Banditry

Insecurity: Kidnapping and banditry create a lot of insecurity and social disharmony. Workers and businessmen, politicians and past public office holders, clergymen and in deed people from all cadres and works of life are plagued by this social menace. People move about their daily tasksin constant fear for the unknown. Such actions negatively affect the productivity of diligent workers and reduces social and recreational activities. Insecurities caused by kidnapping discourages investors and expansion of businesses especially to volatile areas known for the activities of kidnappers and bandits.

Economic Implications: Kidnapping is a major economic issue. The negative effects of kidnapping on manpower that produces goods and services for home consumption and exportation cannot be overemphasized. Kidnapping and banditry in Nigeria constitute serious setback to the activities of company workers, businessmen, air/land/sea travels, construction workers, bankers, high-ranking politicians. This poses a cog in the wheel of economic development. More often than not, it has resulted in the closure of companies/establishments, most of which are oil and gas companies. Parenthetically, the

sector is the mainstay of the national economy, as no other sector generates foreign exchange and local revenue for Nigeria than the sector and other allied services. Apart from that, the negative effect could deter the growth of industrialization, most especially tourism, which has the capacity of attracting employment opportunity for the jobless and a huge resource for the nation's socio-economic development (Dode, 2007).

Social Implications: Apart from the economic implication of the menace of kidnapping, its sociological effect cannot be overruled. The tendency of kidnapping creates a high level of mistrust among people; trust among mankind could be secured in the way people interact with one another. A faithful interaction should engender trust and since studies have shown that perpetrators of kidnapping usually engage friends, relations, neighbours, coworkers, house helps, etcetera, to solicit relevant information which can be used to abduct victims, there could be a high level of mistrust and strain in social interactions among family members. In such a situation, some persons may want to stop interacting freely and openly discuss with others, within and outside the family. As a consequence, people may begin to withhold reasonable information.

A Critique of the Effort of the Nigerian Security in Tackling Kidnapping and Banditry

Security of lives and property of her citizenry is one of the most cardinal and crucial elements of every government. The failure of a state or the government of a state to provide her citizens with ample security necessary for their peaceful and smooth conduct of their day-to-day activities breeds lack of confidence in the supposed ability of the state as a sovereign entity. The strength or might of a state is usually clearly reflected in such state's military might and the presence of more than enough other security agencies that work independently but in synergy to ensure that the citizens are free from both external and internal aggression. Unfortunately, Nigeria security network is not only porous but compromised and as such incapable of eradicating the menace of kidnapping and banditry plaguing the populace. The loopholes in the Nigerian security network which have helped to give the social vices in question the air of immortality is highlighted below.

Inadequate Armed Forces Representation and Visibility: One factor contributing to the rise of terrorism in Nigeria, including banditry, kidnapping, and other criminal activities, is the inadequate ratio of military and police personnel to civilian populations. The combined number of 350,000 police officers and 223,000 soldiers for a population of approximately 230 million is insufficient. Akpede (2019) emphasizes that the Nigerian police are a crucial strategic partner in combating crime, but their numbers are inadequate relative to the population distribution, compounded by endemic corruption.

According to Global Firepower (2023), Nigeria has 220,000 military personnel, 370,000 police personnel, 18,000 air force personnel, 25,000 navy personnel, and various paramilitary agencies. These numbers fall short of the globally recommended ratio of military personnel to civilians. The current police personnel are far below the United Nations' 2016 recommendation of one police station per 100,000 people.

The insufficient number of security personnel is especially problematic given the increasing number of bandits, terrorists, and kidnappers. This shortage highlights the need to boost personnel to effectively counter these threats. Additionally, there is a significant gap in the application of modern technology to

identify hotspots and proactively prevent or respond to attacks. In many cases, the technology is either lacking or the security operatives lack the necessary training and knowledge to use it effectively.

Technology could play a crucial role in reducing organized violent crime through partnerships between personnel, the community, and equipment. However, the current lack of technological resources and training among security operatives hampers these efforts. Enhancing the representation and visibility of armed forces and police, coupled with better technology and training, is essential to combating crime and improving security in Nigeria.

Structural Challenges: The Nigerian security apparatus is plagued by inadequate funding, poor training, and lack of modern equipment as highlighted above. This has birthed nothing but poor performance of the armed forces and other security outfits.The poor performance of the military and security apparatus in guarding the nation's main military installations and facilities has led to a lack of confidence between the federal government and other stakeholders. For example, in2023, hoodlums, bandits, and terrorists have attacked the foremost Nigerian Defense Academy, killing and abducting military personnel. The burgling of the presidential palace, the kidnapping and killing of officers at the military officers' base, the burning of police stations by unknown gunmen in eastern Nigeria, the attack on correctional and prison facilities across the nation, and the freeing of staunch criminals; all serve as proof that the national security system needs overhauling in terms of approach, strategy, and implementation.

Community Policing: For some time now, there has been argument over the necessity of state policing which by extension would boost effective community policing yet nothing positive has been achieved to that effect. It is a truism that security is everyman's business yet the government have remained indecisive on localizing security to address the security challenges from the grassroots. Limited engagement with local communities undermines the effectiveness of security operations. The issue of intelligence gathering remains focal if the success security operatives are to successfully wage a proactive war against kidnapping and banditry but intelligence gathering by security operatives has remained insufficient thereby offering them reactive rather than proactive measures against the hoodlums.

Lack of Operational Synergy Among the Security Outfits: Lack of effective coordination between various security agencies hampers efforts to combat kidnapping and banditry in Nigeria. Security operatives instead of working in synergy, gathering and sharing intelligence, act differently thereby reducing their ability to defeat their common enemy which lies in a joint effort. There is totally no shared vision of tackling insecurity jointly rather each security outfit work independently and sometimes at cross purpose.

Patronage, Nepotism, and Favoritism in the Recruitments and Appointments: The political elite have made significant contributions to Nigeria's moral and social decadence, which is in a worrying state in which wealth, power, and corruption have replaced effort, hard work, and commitment, (Dode, 2007). For instance, the Nigerian political system has completely abandoned meritocracy, federal character, due process, and due diligence in appointments and instead is mired in the politics of nepotism, ethnicity, patronage, and favoritism (Ojo, et al., 2023). Attacks against the country have escalated, and one of the principal factors is the concentration of the nation's wealth in the clutches of a privileged few. The political elite's exploitation of the populace and disregard for their fundamental duty to create a society

free from corruption, intolerance, and ethnocentrism is largely a factor that is aggravating kidnapping and banditry.

Possible Solutions/recommendations

Economic Development: Implementing policies to alleviate poverty and create employment opportunities to reduce the allure of criminal activities. As part of measures to tackle the rising lawlessness in the country, the federal and state governments should frontally address the problem of unemployment and attendant poverty in the country. There is no doubt that unemployment and poverty must have largely contributed to the escalation of the security challenges in the country. In order to save the country from the looming total anarchy, government must strive to generate jobs for citizens, especially for the youth; an action which can have a huge impact in the fight against crime. When people are gainfully employed, they do not need to commit crimes.

Strengthening Governance: Addressing corruption and improving governance at all levels to create a more conducive environment for security operations. When leaders are held accountable for their policies and administration, it will go a long way to ensuring quality policy making and implementation. Corrupt leaders if prosecuted will deter future leaders from toeing the line of corruption, looting of public treasury and squander mania.

Security Sector Reform: Enhancing the capacity of security agencies through better funding, training, and equipment. In addition, Training Anti-Kidnapping Agents: Any country that wants to fight kidnapping successfully must hire and train capable agents to combat the issue. When law enforcement agencies are actively involved, the incidence of this crime would be lessened. Public security agents in Nigeria should be exposed (by way or periodic training) to the globally tenable best practices and know-how of counter-banditry in order to boost their operational efficiency. Above all, a Private Public-Partnership (PPP) framework, involving also area vigilantes and public security agents should be put in motion to ensure a better result in anti-robbery campaigns.

Community Involvement: Promoting community policing initiatives such as the training of local vigilante groups to man the respective communities who would also work in synergy with the state police and other security outfit by sharing intelligence and taking concerted action against criminals would reduce kidnapping and banditry to its barest minimum. This will build trust and cooperation between security forces and local populations.

Decentralization of the Police: The rising insecurity has made the call for state police more imperative now than ever before. It is generally believed that the decentralization of the police will go a long way in curbing most of the crimes in the country. In the United States, the police are decentralized along the various federal, state and country authorities. In Britain, there are over 20 police jurisdictions. The situation is not different in France, Canada and many other countries. Reports show several indexes of police involvement in kidnappings due to notable news from some of the surviving victims. Eliminating the criminals from within the ranks of law enforcement is key.

Judicial Reforms: Streamlining judicial processes to ensure the swift and effective prosecution of criminal cases is essential. Enacting stringent punishments for offenders into federal law is necessary because mild punishments fail to deter criminals. Harsher treatments, such as death or life sentences, could significantly reduce the incidence of kidnapping and banditry. For instance, some southern states have passed laws criminalizing kidnapping and abduction. Section 1 of the Kidnapping (Prohibition) Laws of Lagos State 2017 defines "kidnap" as the unlawful removal or abduction of persons by force, offensive weapons, firearms, or deception, with the intent to demand ransom or for other unlawful purposes. Section 2 stipulates life imprisonment for abduction and a death sentence if the kidnapping results in death. Such laws aim to instill fear of severe consequences among potential kidnappers.

Right Attitudes of Righteousness: According to the Christians' holy book, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." Therefore, the solution to kidnapping and injustice lies in the enthronement of justice in all spheres of life by those in authority, the elite class, and the masses. Proverbs 11:16 states, "When the righteous control power, the people rejoice; but when the wicked rule, the people lament." Nigeria's hard times are a result of systemic leadership failure. The elite class, in their capacities within various institutions, should ensure fairness in the allocation of national resources and political appointments. They should desist from siphoning state resources to the detriment of the masses and prioritize the interests of the people (Danjuma, 2012). Ensuring justice and righteousness in leadership can help address the root causes of crime and promote national prosperity.

Conclusion

This paper observed the problems of armed banditry and kidnapping as social scourges inimical to all round development of the country. Addressing kidnapping and banditry in Nigeria requires a multifaceted approach that goes beyond mere security measures. It necessitates addressing the root causes of these issues, such as economic disparities and governance weaknesses, while also reforming existing legislative and punitive measures while enacting same where there is none so as to curb the threat in the country thereby ensuring the protection and safeguard of the Fundamental Human Rights of citizens. Strengthening the security network to effectively combat and prevent criminal activities is a cardinal step that will not only minimize the cases of armed kidnapping and banditry but also give enough security to the citizens to invest, develop and live peacefully in the country.

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