

**ANTECEDENTS OF KIDNAPPING INCIDENCE IN NIGERIA: PERCEPTION OF SECURITY PERSONNEL IN KWARA STATE, NIGERIA**

**BY**

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**Abstract**

*This study examined antecedents of kidnapping incidents in Nigeria from the viewpoint of security personnel in Kwara State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study and purposive technique was used in selecting the 372 respondents for this study. Researcher's self-designed questionnaire entitled "Antecedents of Kidnapping Questionnaire (AKQ)" was employed to collect data for the study, with 0.74 test re-test reliability co-efficient value. Eventually, 243 responses were valid and analysed using percentage, mean ranking, t-test and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistics. All hypotheses were tested at .05 alpha level. The findings revealed that, the topmost antecedents of kidnapping incidence in Nigeria as perceived by security personnel in Kwara State are inequality distribution of common wealth, high prevalence of poverty and political apathy of the politicians to the basic needs of citizens. It was also found that a significant difference exists in the perception of the respondents on the antecedents of kidnapping based on gender; while no significant difference was found based on educational level. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended among others that, government should ensure equal distribution of the wealth among the citizens and provide for the basic needs of the people; thereby, eradicating kidnapping incidence in the nation.*

**Keywords:** *Antecedents, Kidnapping incidence, Perception, Security personnel, Kwara State*

**Introduction**

Kidnapping has become a global burden and concern for the governments of all countries and their law-abiding citizens in the present time. This monstrous act seems to be escalating like a wide fire that knows no bound into all parts of Nigeria nowadays. With fearful and threatening experiences in the dens of dare-devil kidnapers by some individuals who had at one time or the other been kidnapped, no one would wish to fall victim of this dastardly act. The term 'kidnap' has been conceptualized differently by a crop of authority in the recent time. Kidnapping connotes an act of illegality which involves taking away any individual to a particular destination by the use of force, and demand for ransom from his people as a condition for his release. Ugwulebo (2011) defined kidnapping as an organized crime where the victims' relations or important persons to them are forced to bringing the ransom for their release.

The crime started in the country like a problem that affects the only well-to-do individual alone, until recent time, when it perpetrators spear nobody again no matter what one's socio-economic status is in the society. Inyang and Abraham (2013) defined kidnapping as an act of seizing, taking away and keeping a person in custody either by force or fraud in order to collect a ransom in return or settle some scores of disagreement among people. Okoli and Agada (2014) also viewed kidnapping as a means of taking away a person against his will with the intent to holding him in illegal confinement in order to elicit a ransom,

or in furtherance of another crime. In reference to the above definitions, there are three components that are involved. These include; force taking of an individual (abduction inclination); holding an individual into hostage (that is; false confinement); and demand for ransom or certain term of preference as a condition for the release of the person kidnapped from other person or people. By the above analysis, it can be argued that kidnapping is premised on four criteria which are; use of force, abduction of the victim, held in captivity and ransom demand. However, there is no universally agreed definition of the term kidnapping due to its multifarious ways of execution.

There are several antecedents that led people to kidnapping their fellow human-beings. These reasons give room for categories of kidnapping that researchers have advanced in their various empirical studies in the recent past. According to Okoli and Agada (2014), the reality of kidnapping has been variously conceived from the three major viewpoints that is; (i) motivation for crime (ii) primitive accumulation; and (iii) perverse capitalist exchange and/or exploitation. Ibrahim and Mukhtar (2017) maintained that kidnapping is a violent criminal offence which is so complex in its occurrence for various reasons such as for political bargaining and for economic gains. However, beyond the two broader topologies mentioned in the above, there are other more specific reasons or intentions for which some people kidnap their fellow human-beings, such reasons and intentions include; for illicit sexual intercourse, slavery, human trafficking, prostitution, ransom, revenge, sale, selling parts of human body among other heinous and criminal reasons (Ibrahim & Mukhtar, 2017).

Moreover, antecedents of kidnapping could be unexhaustive in nature, and differ from region to region or even person to person at every point in time. Other factors responsible for kidnapping incidence in Nigeria may include, poor security network, lust for material wealth, poor governance, corruption, psychopathological condition, easy access to arms and ammunitions, uncurtailed drug abuse, loose laws on criminality, poor family background, weak conscience, desperation for achieving certain thing, immorality, idleness, and bad modelling among others impulsive factors. These factors can be broadly categorized under; psychological, socio-economic, environmental, political and religious factors or any other category feasible.

Fifteen different categories of kidnapping were summed up in the study of Okoli and Agada (2014) as follows: (i) Hostage situation (ii) Domestic relation kidnapping (iii) Plot or abortive ransom kidnapping (iv) Developmental ransom kidnapping (v) Miscellaneous kidnapping (vi) Kidnapping for robbery (vii) Kidnapping for murder (or other non-sexual assaults) (viii) White slavery (ix) Child stealing (x) Ransom skyjacking (xi) Romantic kidnapping (xii) Ransom kidnapping hoax (xiii) Ransom threat for extortion (xiv) Classic ransom and, (xv) Kidnapping for rape or sexual assault.

The list makes some enduring and extensive information that can describe most of the common types of kidnapping activities that are perpetrated in the contemporary society, but this does not mean a conclusive list. Hence, the phenomenon of kidnapping has become a nightmare situation in the present Nigeria; which hardly allowed many people to sleep with their two eyes closed. Consequently, Nigerians have suffered economically, psychologically, socially and politically from the persistent increase in kidnapping incidence in the country.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Happenings and literature have shown that kidnapping in Nigeria has become a persistent occurrence with attendant terrifying consequences that need an urgent attention. Major highways have become scary for commuters and individuals who ply those roads. Incessant attack on the Nigerian highways and villages has become most of the dailies headlines in Nigeria and hardly a day will pass without hearing news of kidnapping or the other. Kwara State is not spared from this rot as the state has equally witnessed cases of kidnapping in recent times through the Northern part of the country. The abduction of many foreigners has been reported by the media and several rescued operations had been launched by the security

personnel against the perpetrators; yet the situation seems unabated. For instance, In May 2012, criminals kidnapped an Italian national in Kwara State (Catlin Group, 2012). The BBC News (2019) also reported that four Turkish (who are construction workers), were kidnapped by gunmen at a bar in Kwara State on one Saturday night. Adejumo, Hammed, Ikoban, Job, Adeniyi, Oguntunde, et. al. (2017) discovered in their study that kidnapping is one of the more prominent crimes Kwara State as at the years 2012 and 2013. This situation still persists till date.

In addition, empirical research is inadequate on antecedents of kidnapping incidence in Nigeria seeking the opinion of security personnel, with the view of proffering relevant solutions to the identified factors. Many of the available literature are qualitative study or opinion papers, yet they seem not to have brought the security personnel view of the situation into focus. For instance, Akandu (2011) carried out a study on positive roles of religion on kidnapping among the population of Abia State. Iyang and Abraham (2013) study investigated the social problem of kidnapping and its implications on socio-economic development of Nigeria, a case study of Uyo metropolis, Akwa Ibom State. Studies by Abdulkabir (2017), Bello and Jamilu (2017), and Wajim (2020) were qualitative analysis on causes, consequences and solutions to kidnapping prevalence in Nigeria.

In the light of the above and to the best knowledge of the researchers, there is a little or no such studies whose focus has entirely been centred on security personnel perception in Kwara State regarding the antecedents of kidnapping incidence in Nigeria. The present study thus deemed it imperative to bridge the vacuum observed from the previous literature; thereby, contributing to frontier of research knowledge in the realm of insecurity in Nigeria, so that the attention of stakeholders in every sphere of life could be called to address the menace before it degenerates into a full blown war and total destabilization of the country.

### **Research Objectives**

This study aims at examining:

1. the antecedents of kidnapping incidence in Nigeria as perceived by the security personnel in Kwara State.
2. the relative influence of gender on the respondents' perception of antecedents of kidnapping incidence in Kwara State.
3. the relative influence of educational level on the respondents' perception of antecedents of kidnapping incidence in Kwara State.

### **Research Question**

The study answered the question:

1. What are the antecedents of kidnapping incidence in Nigeria as perceived by security personnel in Kwara State?

### **Hypotheses**

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested in this study:

**H0<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the perception of security personnel on the antecedents of kidnapping incidence based on gender.

**H0<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the perception of security personnel on the antecedents of kidnapping incidence based on educational level.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a descriptive survey method. The descriptive survey design helps the researcher to describe and present the phenomenon under study as it appears within the time frame of the study. The population of this study comprised the security personnel in Kwara State (officers in Nigeria police, NSCDC and Nigeria Immigration). These security institutions and the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics were

consulted to collect the total number of security personnel in the state; but despite all plea and explanation that such data is meant for a research purpose, they were head bent in releasing the figure due to security reason and sensitivity to crime perpetration by the citizens in recent time. However, they all gave their consent and cooperated with the researchers, during the questionnaire administration. Therefore, specific figure or estimation could not be provided to represent the population of this study. In the light of this, a purposive sampling technique was used to select 372 security personnel to participate in the study. However, 287 copies of the questionnaire were retrieved; while 234 responses were eventually valid for data analysis.

The instrument used for carrying out this study was a researchers-designed instrument entitled “Antecedents of Kidnapping Questionnaire (AKQ)”. The instrument consisted of two (2) sections that is; A and B. Section A involves demographic data of the respondents while section B comprises twenty (20) items on antecedents of kidnapping. Four Point Likert-Type response format was used for items on this section as thus; Strongly Agree = SA; Agree = A; Disagree = D; Strongly Disagree = SD. The instrument was validated by experts in the field of Educational Psychology and Counselling; and Measurement and Evaluation. The instrument was therefore affirmed valid for the purpose it was designed for. The instrument yielded 0.74 test re-test reliability coefficient value.

### Results

The compilation of the respondents’ demographic profiles showed that, out of the 234 valid responses, 177 (75.6%) of the respondents were male; while 57 (24.4%) were female; so, majority of the participants were male. With respect to the respondents’ educational level, 103 (44.0%) of them have had between primary and secondary education, 56 (23.9%) have NCE/ND certificate; while 75 (32.1%) have first degree and above.

**Research Question 1:** What are the antecedents of kidnapping incidence in Nigeria as perceived by security personnel in Kwara State?

**Table 1:** Mean and Rank Order of Respondents’ Opinion on Antecedents of Kidnapping

| S/N | As a security officer, I believe the following are the antecedents of kidnapping Incidents in Nigeria: | Mean | Rank             |
|-----|--|------|------------------|
| 4   | Inequality distribution of wealth among ethnic nationalities   | 3.47 | 1 <sup>st</sup>  |
| 11  | High prevalence of poverty in the country  | 3.38 | 2 <sup>nd</sup>  |
| 20  | Political apathy to the basic needs of the poor  | 3.33 | 3 <sup>rd</sup>  |
| 13  | Political instability in the country   | 3.26 | 4 <sup>th</sup>  |
| 17  | Ploy of desperate politicians to cause political instability in the country                            | 3.21 | 6 <sup>th</sup>  |
| 15  | Negligence on the part of the well-to-do in families on the offenders                                  | 3.20 | 7 <sup>th</sup>  |
| 9   | Desperation to become rich by the perpetrators   | 3.15 | 8 <sup>th</sup>  |
| 14  | Lack of stiffer punishment by government on the offenders  | 3.13 | 9 <sup>th</sup>  |
| 6   | Offenders’ aim to request for ransom   | 3.11 | 10 <sup>th</sup> |
| 8   | Lack of love among different ethnic groups   | 3.10 | 11 <sup>th</sup> |
| 7   | Intention of the people to take revenge  | 3.04 | 12 <sup>th</sup> |
| 2   | Motivation for criminality   | 3.02 | 13 <sup>th</sup> |
| 10  | Kidnappers’ intention to use people for slavery  | 2.88 | 14 <sup>th</sup> |
| 1   | Fragility of the children  | 2.87 | 15 <sup>th</sup> |
| 19  | Wide spread of social injustice  | 2.80 | 16 <sup>th</sup> |
| 12  | Lack of employment opportunity for the teaming youth   | 2.78 | 17 <sup>th</sup> |
| 16  | The escalating of activities of terrorists   | 2.75 | 18 <sup>th</sup> |
| 3   | Curiosity to satisfy sexual urge   | 2.72 | 19 <sup>th</sup> |
| 5   | Motive for human trafficking   | 2.63 | 20 <sup>th</sup> |

Table 1 presents the mean and rank order of respondents' responses on antecedents of kidnapping incidence. The table shows that all the twenty (20) items have mean scores that are above the average (benchmark) mean values of 2.50 for determining the main antecedents of kidnapping incidence. However, items 4, 11 and 20 with mean values of 3.47, 3.38 and 3.33 preceded others and were ranked 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> respectively. This means that the antecedents of kidnapping incidence in Nigeria are numerous but the topmost among them, as regard the perception of security personnel in Kwara State, are equitable distribution of wealth among ethnic nationalities, high prevalence of poverty in the country and political apathy to the basic needs of the poor.

**H0<sub>1</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the perception of security personnel on the antecedents of kidnapping incidence based on gender.

**Table 2:** Independent t-test Result Showing Difference in Respondents' Perception of Antecedents of Kidnapping Incidence Based on Gender

| Gender | N   | Mean  | SD   | df  | Cal. t | p-value |
|--------|-----|-------|------|-----|--------|---------|
| Male   | 177 | 62.55 | 5.54 | 232 | 7.26*  | .000    |
| Female | 57  | 56.14 | 6.48 |     |        |         |

\* Sig. at  $p < .05$

Table 2 shows that, at the degree of freedom (df) of 232, the calculated t-value of 7.26 is higher at .05 alpha level ( $p = .000 < .05$ ). This indicates that there is a significant difference in the perception of security personnel in Kwara State of the antecedents of kidnapping incidence in Nigeria based on gender; hence, the hypothesis was rejected. Therefore, male and female respondents are differed in their perception of kidnapping incidence.

**H0<sub>2</sub>:** There is no significant difference in the perception of security personnel on the antecedents of kidnapping incidence based on educational level.

**Table 3:** ANOVA Result Showing Difference in Respondents' Perception of Antecedents of Kidnapping Incidence Based on Educational Level

| Source        | Sum of Square | df  | Mean Square | Cal. F | p-value |
|---------------|---------------|-----|-------------|--------|---------|
| Between group | 15.543        | 2   | 9.771       | .23    | .789    |
| Within group  | 9525.419      | 231 | 41.236      |        |         |
| Total         | 9544.962      | 233 |             |        |         |

Table 3 shows that, at the degrees of freedom (df) of 2 and 231, the calculated F-value of .23 is lesser at .05 alpha level ( $p = .789 > .05$ ). This indicates that there is no significant difference in the perception of security personnel in Kwara State of the antecedents of kidnapping incidence in Nigeria based on educational level; hence, the hypothesis was retained. Therefore, security officers with different educational level are differed in their perception of kidnapping incidence.

## Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that the causes of kidnapping are numerous but topmost among them are inequitable distribution of wealth among ethnic nationalities, high prevalence of poverty in the country and political apathy to the basic needs of the poor. The study revealed that unequal distribution of wealth has been identified in this study as one of the factors responsible for kidnapping incidence in Nigeria. The findings are in line with the findings of Inyang and Abraham (2013); Abdulkabir (2017); Adejumo, Hammed, Ikoban, Job, Adeniyi, Oguntunde, et. al. (2017); Ene (2018); Wajim (2020) which revealed that inequality in the distribution of resources, neglect of basic needs of the masses and poverty as among the antecedents of kidnapping incidents in Nigeria. This suggests that people, particularly, the



youths are involving in kidnapping because they believe the Nigerian government has failed to distribute the national resources accordingly, and the fact that polity is not in favour of the masses, which has resulted into high level of poverty among its populace. In Nigeria, there are three major tribes of Yoruba, Hausa and Igbo; the Igbo and the so called Niger-Delta believe that the main sources of Nigerian resources are being tapped from their soil and as a result, they must receive the largest share than the other geo-political zones. These have resulted into the abduction of the foreign oil explorers in the aim of demanding their rights from the government and to break the shackle of poverty they were entrapped.

The first hypothesis tested revealed that there was a significant difference in the perception of security personnel in Kwara State on the kidnapping incidence based on gender. This means that the opinion of male security personnel is different from their female counterparts on the antecedents of kidnapping. The finding of this study is similar to the finding of Badiora, Popoola and Fadoyin (2014) which revealed that gender is a significant variable in explaining the perception of crime such as kidnapping. This might be that the male security agents are more exposed to different cases of kidnapping than the female security personnel which might have broadened their knowledge of varying factors leading to kidnap.

Hypothesis two showed that there was no significant difference in the perception of security personnel in Kwara State on the antecedents of kidnapping based on educational level. This means that variation in the respondents' work experience has no influence on their opinion of the antecedents of kidnapping incidence. The finding of this study is in contrast with the finding of Nweke (2014) which revealed that a significant influence of education on respondents' perception of kidnapping. The finding of this study suggests that kidnapping incidence has become rampant that every security personnel are aware of level of occurrence irrespective of their level of education.

### **Conclusion**

This study concluded that the antecedents of kidnapping incidence in Nigeria are numerous as perceived by security personnel in Kwara State, but some of the topmost among them are inequality in the distribution of wealth, high prevalence of poverty in the country and political apathy to the basic needs of the masses. Hence, all stakeholders in all facets of economic development have immense role to play in eradicating kidnapping incidence in the country by remedying the above antecedents and establish good governance.

### **Counselling Implications of Findings**

Having realized the prominent causes of kidnapping in Nigerian society, there are certain responsibilities that are saddled on counselling profession which the professionals in the field must be alive to. Every action is premeditated by emotional responses and perhaps, every emotion has three components which are physiological change (for instance, accelerated heart rate), behavioural response (for instance, feeling of escape, suicidal actions, and plans to commit crimes and so on) and subjective experiences such as feeling angry, moody, unhappy and so on. The counsellor can help diagnose the state of emotion of an individual before he or she results into criminal activity such as kidnapping. Counsellors have to leave up to their responsibilities by helping the nation develop standardised psychological instruments on kidnapping tendency based on the available data and record which can be used to detect as a earlier as possible such personality traits in individuals which can result into kidnapping of fellow human-beings in the future.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that:

1. The Nigerian government should ensure that they distribute the resources and wealth of the nation on equal basis to all ethnic groups in Nigeria; so that there can be love and harmony among individuals, thereby, preventing all forms of kidnapping incidence across the states.

2. The Nigerian government should restructure the economy of the nation and provide for basic needs of the masses, in order to alleviate poverty and discourage youths from resulting into kidnapping as a means of meeting their basic needs.
3. The Nigerian government should empower the Nigerians so that they can be able to provide for their families and be able to avoid temptation of involving in the act of kidnapping.
4. The Nigerian government should adopt a policy of given incentives to the unemployed individuals in order to prevent resulting into kidnapping act; thereby, preventing or curbing the incidence of kidnapping in the nation.

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