



Does theory matter: Constructing an integrated theoretical framework to describe kidnapping for ransom in Nigeria



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ARTICLE INFO

Keywords:

Analytic-review approach
Integrated/alliance theory
Kidnappers
Nigeria

ABSTRACT

Assumptions and debates on the causes/motives and, by implication, theories of kidnapping in Nigeria for ransom, are legions, and largely speculative, however. This paper engages in a rigorous analytical review of the factors, patterns and processes of kidnapping, and several related theories, to construct an integrated/alliance model of kidnapping in Nigeria. Kidnappers' social constructions and interpretative meanings show that the factors and processes that enable kidnapping to occur are, though, basically economic and space-based, they vary, occurs in chains-spaces in a coordinated, interdependent and interconnected manner. The policy implication suggests (1) that several factors coalesce and intervene at different stages to explain kidnapping (2) future research on kidnapping and meaning construction consider the kidnappers' perspective and those of the other actors and the media (3) a multi-dimensional and interdisciplinary (Epi-criminology) approach to tackle the several different theories/causes animating young Nigerians to engage in the criminal enterprise of kidnapping is a welcome development.

1. Introduction

The criminal behaviour of kidnapping has suddenly risen in Nigeria, forcing many states to enact punitive laws to tackle it. In the South-South and South-East of Nigeria in particular, news of kidnapping for ransom is a recurring decimal. Many individual Nigerians, their families, relations, friends and foreigners alike have experienced either primary, secondary, or vicarious victimisation in the hands of kidnapers. The Economic and Social Council (ESC), an arm of the United Nations, and several other individuals, organisations and nations, have expressed their concerns on several areas which bother on kidnapping for ransom. These concerns include, among others, increased cases of kidnappings in various countries of the world, the noxious effects of kidnapping on both the victims and their families, and the fact that there is a linkage of kidnapping with other various illegal activities. Implied therefore is that kidnapping occurs at multiple levels and dimensions.

From Awka to Nnewi, Aba, Enugu Umuahia, Abakaliki, Onitsha in the Southeast, to Port Harcourt, Yenogoa, Calabar, Warri, Asaba in the South-South, to Lagos, Akure, Ibadan in the South-West, to Kano, Kaduna, Jimeta in the North, kidnappers are prowling on their innocent

predators. By 2013, Nigeria was ranked the 3rd most notorious kidnapping nation in the world, only trailing behind Mexico and India according to Business Insider.com. It ranked 5th alongside with Syria and Afghanistan as the most dangerous countries in the world in terms of kidnapping and hostage taking (U.S. State Department, 2017 <https://www.naij.com/1095962-25-dangerous-countries-world-2017.html>).

NYA). Crisis Prevention and Response (CPR) in its 2016 Global Kidnapping Review observed that Nigeria belongs to a severe category of kidnapping countries in the whole world, ranking 10th among the list of 30 countries (see <http://presswire.com/pr/nya/160203-NYA-January-Kidnap-Review.pdf>). A couple of months ago, both the local and foreign news media were inundated with news of the apprehension of a notorious billionaire kidnapping kingpin, Chukwudi Dumeme Onuamadike, aka Evans, in his exquisite mansion situated in Magodo, a Lagos suburb. Evans' kidnapping escapade was monumental and was reported to be behind the several high profile kidnappings in Nigeria using his well-organised and funded gang that operates across the country (for more on this, see Gaffey, in CNN 2017).

In today Nigeria, kidnapping has put everyone—rich or poor, young or old, foreigners and non-foreigners, male and female—at a constant risk of either being a primary, secondary or vicarious victim of

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kidnapping. In fact, there is no gainsaying the fact that kidnapping in Nigeria has subjected many Nigerians to a palpable fear, especially in the South-South and South-East zones best seen as the Headquarters of kidnapping in Nigeria. Kidnapping in Nigeria takes place at any time and place—at homes, schools, streets, markets, business premises, places of worships, relaxation points, highways, morning, afternoon and nights. Going by confessional statements obtained by the police, it is also being engineered by members of the family, maids, workers, private watchmen, personal drivers and aides, thus heightening the fear and perplexity which characterised the crime.

There is an increasing scholarship attention on the phenomenon of kidnapping and the subjects (kidnappers) themselves, though. What is striking however, is that these attentions are those that focus more on intuitive sociology-cum-criminology narrations of aspects such as causes, implications, epidemiology and patterns of kidnapping (see for examples, Dode, 2007; Ogabido, 2009; Adebayo, Adeyemi, & Adetayo, 2009; David, 2009; Inyang, 2009). That is, apart from this ‘the intuitive sociology-criminology’ description of the processes, practices, and routes of kidnapping, there has been a lack of rigorous efforts regarding the development of a robust theoretical framework for understanding this social problem. Even whenever there is expression of interest in advancing a theory, the conventional approach and method has been to focus on one particular theory/model or another in what clearly passes as a monolithic and/or disaggregated approach to theoretical expostulation. This gap in theory needs not wait further, and it imposes serious limitation to efforts to construct a far more systematic and coordinated theory of the criminal offence of kidnapping for policy purposes.

Deliberate efforts to identify and wield together, concepts, variables and elements of several theories to explain the offence and offenders, in real life experiences in Nigeria, is critical as it can inform researchers and policymakers about the diverse motives, justifications, rationalisations and subsequently, emerging mid-range theory with the potential to offer a more robust explanation of kidnapping in Nigeria. This lies the strength of this paper as it converges and coalesces relevant variables, items, concepts and constructs from some relevant theories, models, perspectives and paradigms to help explain kidnapping and kidnappers. By this, we are provided with the opportunity to understand why young and promising Nigerian males and females get motivated to make a decision to join kidnapping to satisfy their diverse interests. That is, we are better positioned to conceive a broad theoretical framework which considers the broad stages at which kidnapping for pecuniary rewards occurs.

In sum, the purpose of this study and, indeed, its unique contributions, lies in constructing an integrated or alliance (Otu, 2012a, 2012b) theory, which has been lacking, to explain kidnapping, both as an offending behaviour and event in Nigeria. We call the emerging integrated/alliance theory ‘Multiple Reinforcing Social Forces Theory’. The construction of this theory is buoyed by a review of kidnappers’ constructed meaning of kidnapping in relation to the larger cultural ideas, represented by popular media and discourses as made to the police and the media.

Graphic glimpse of some notable kidnapping cases in Nigeria 2007–2010.

Source: Ishaya, I. (2010). The journey into the arms of the gangsters. *Newswatch*, July, p. 19.

S/N	Date of kidnapping	Place/state of kidnapping	Victims and ransom paid
1.	27th January 2007	Nsugbe, Anambra State	

2.	27th January 2007	Nnewi, Anambra State	Hon Ego Cordelia, the then Anambra State Commissioner for Women Affairs, and her son, Kenechukwu, were abducted by hoodlums at Nsugbe in Anambra State with N50 million ransom demanded by the kidnappers. Pius Ogbuawa was kidnapped and a ransom of N20 million was demanded.
3.	26th April 2008	Njikoka, Anambra State	His Royal Highness, Patrick Mbamalu Okeke, a 73-year-old traditional ruler of Abagana in Njikoka Local Government Area of Anambra State was kidnapped. Bob Izua, the Managing Director of Bob Izua Motors, was kidnapped and later released after a ransom of N5 million was paid.
4.	8th June 2008	Benin City, Edo State	Kelechi Nwankpa, the Chairman of Obingwa Local Government Area of Abia State, was kidnapped together with his driver who was shot dead in the scene of the incident. The Chairman was released three days after the government paid a huge ransom of N10 million.
5.	25th August 2008	Obingwa, Abia State	Joseph Dimobi, a member of the Anambra State House of Assembly, representing Aniocha II Federal Constituency, was kidnapped and a ransom of N30 million was demanded for his release.
6.	15th November 2008	Aniocha, Anambra State	His Royal Highest, Eberechi Dick, the traditional ruler of Mgboko Ngwa Autonomous Community and the Chairman of Obingwa Traditional Ruler Council, was kidnapped. He was released seven days when a ransom of N10 million was paid.
7.	21st November 2008	Mgboko Ngwa Amaise	Unknown gunmen kidnapped a movie star, Pete Edochie.
8.	16th August 2009	Onitsha, Anambra State	Grace Mamah, the wife of Ifesinachi Transport Chief Executive Officer, was abducted by two unknown gunmen
9.	20th August 2009	Nsukka, Enugu State	Nkem Owoh (aka Osuofia), a veteran Nigerian actor, was kidnapped along Enugu-Port Harcourt expressway and the kidnappers demanded a ransom of N15 million from his family.
10.	20th August 2009	Enugu-Port Harcourt Express	Mr Waje Yayok, Secretary to the Kaduna State Government (SSG), was kidnapped in his country home. The kidnappers asked for N40 million as ransom for his release. It was the first high-profile kidnapping in Kaduna State.
11.	16th September 2009	Kaduna, Kaduna State	
12.			

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