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## Perception of Security Operatives on Causes, Prevalence and Prevention of Kidnapping in Nigeria: A Case of Nigerian Customs Service

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### ABSTRACT

*The study investigated the perception of Nigeria Customs Service operatives on the causes and prevalence of kidnapping in Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was adopted for a sample size of one hundred and fifty (150) officers of the Nigeria Customs attending the Regimental Training Course 2024. The participants were randomly selected from the 385 participants in the training programme. A self-developed questionnaire was used for data collection. Frequency counts and percentage were used to analyse the demographic data, while inferential statistics of Chi-square were used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 alpha level. The findings showed that there is a significant prevalence of kidnapping in Nigeria, and further revealed that financial gain is a significant motivation for kidnapping in Nigeria. Based on the findings, it was recommended that all segments of society should be enlightened about their roles in safety and security matters and to assist the Nigeria Customs Service operatives. It was finally submitted that intelligent gathering and technology should be deployed to enhance the surveillance capability of the Nigeria Customs Operatives, while economic prosperity becomes necessary to curb the prevalence of kidnapping in Nigeria.*

**Keywords:** Perception, Nigeria Customs Service operatives, prevalence, kidnapping

### INTRODUCTION

Kidnapping has become a monster that is ravaging Nigeria in respect of the geo-political zone. There is no part of the country that is immune to it. In the last two decades of

unchecked and uncontrolled of this heinous act, many lives have been lost, homes of joy have been turned to sorrow, many children have become fatherless, many wives have become widows, Hope of a glooming future has been dashed. Negative outcomes are being recorded daily. Kidnapping is a violent, terrible, sensational crime and poses a national security challenge for the country. In criminal law, kidnapping is the transportation of an individual against the individual's will, typically to bind the individual in bogus detainment without legitimate power (Ashibi & Akintujoye, 2022). It is a wrongdoing of unlawful, powerful seizure and confinement of an individual or people against his/her or their will, fully expecting installment of a ransom or to dole out certain retribution or conflicts.

Uzorma and Nwanegbo-Ben (2014) defined kidnapping as a situation whereby a person or group of persons are forcibly or fraudulently taken away or snatched and detained against their will with the motive of extorting ransom from them. Kidnapping is an organised and systematic robbery, which is not as deadly as armed robbery but more profitable than the latter (Muhammad, 2022). The profitability has encouraged those who indulge in it to carry on with the act, although there is a law prohibiting it (Inyang & Abraham, 2013). Victims of kidnapers have always been the rich in society because of the perceived amount that could be accrued from them. There has, however, been a paradigm shift as no class or group is exempted. Aminu et al (2020) reported that the crime started in the country as a problem that affects only well-to-do individuals alone, until recent times, when its perpetrators target nobody, regardless of one's socio-economic status in society.

The proliferation of kidnapping is a major cause for concern. Though the act and purpose are the same, the dynamics of operation in various geopolitical zones of the country differ. According to Okoli and Agada (2014), the reality of kidnapping has been variously conceived from the three major points: (i) motivation for crime, (ii) primitive accumulation, and (iii) perverse capitalist exchange and/or exploitation. Furthermore, Okoli and Agada came up with fifteen categories of kidnapping: (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. Political, economic and security issues in Nigeria reveal that perpetrators resorted to kidnapping as a response to their joblessness, moral decadence, hopelessness and frustrations. (Yakubu, 2022). Ngwama (2014), Ohwonohwo (2008), Osumah & Aghedo (2011), Ujumadu (2009) report causes or factors responsible for kidnapping. Various perspectives on how the menace could be nipped in the bud have also been brought forward. The focus of this study, however, is

to find out the perception of security operatives on causes, prevalence and prevention of Kidnapping in Nigeria.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Kidnapping poses a major threat to the security and lives of people in Nigeria. A trend of occurrence has proved that no group or class of people is exempt from it. Happenings and available little literature have shown that kidnapping in Nigeria has become a persistent occurrence with attendant terrifying consequences that need urgent attention. Major highways have become scary for commuters and individuals who ply those roads. Incessant attacks on the Nigerian agrarian villages have become most of the headlines in Nigeria, and hardly a day will pass without news of kidnapping (Aminu et al, 2020). Security operatives have been called to action on many occasions with few successes in rescues, and many failed attempts to rescue the victims. More intelligence has to be deployed to put a stop to this menace. Kinetic and unkinetic approaches canvassed by many security operatives have not yielded substantive results. To provide the broad-based attention to solving the problem of kidnapping in Nigeria, there seems to be little empirical data, and the scarce data are not recent, while the social media turns up information that is not substantiated by empirical studies; perhaps because of the clandestine operations of the kidnapers. This inadequate understanding of the details of kidnapping prompted these researchers to investigate the perspective of security personnel who are at the forefront of the fight against kidnapping. Sequel to this, this study is set to investigate the perception of security operatives on causes, prevalence and prevention of kidnapping in Nigeria.

### **Literature Review**

Kidnapping has emerged as one of the most pressing security challenges in Nigeria, posing severe threats to national stability, economic development, and the personal safety of citizens. The prevalence of kidnapping for ransom, political leverage, and other motives has instilled fear across communities and strained the capacities of security agencies. Understanding the perceptions of security operatives on the causes of this phenomenon is crucial for developing effective strategies to combat it. Nigeria's diverse landscape, characterized by its ethnic, religious, and socio-economic complexities, provides a fertile ground for criminal activities, including kidnapping. Security operatives, who are at the frontline of the fight against such crimes, offer valuable insights into the underlying factors contributing to the rise in kidnapping cases. Their experiences and observations can shed light on the multifaceted nature of this issue, ranging from socio-economic disparities and political instability to inadequate law enforcement resources and corruption.

Socio-economic factors are often highlighted as primary drivers of kidnapping in Nigeria. High levels of poverty, unemployment, and lack of education create a pool of vulnerable individuals who may resort to criminal activities as a means of survival. The disparity between the wealthy and the poor exacerbates these conditions, leading to increased frustration and a sense of injustice, which can manifest in violent and criminal behaviors. Political instability and weak governance also play significant roles in the proliferation of kidnapping. Regions plagued by conflict, insurgency, and communal violence often experience breakdowns in law and order, providing opportunities for kidnappers to operate with relative impunity. Additionally, the perceived or actual complicity of some political figures and security personnel in criminal activities undermines public trust and hampers efforts to address the root causes of kidnapping. The operational challenges faced by security agencies further complicate the situation. Limited resources, inadequate training, and poor coordination among various security forces hinder effective responses to kidnapping incidents. Corruption within the ranks of security operatives can also compromise investigations and the enforcement of anti-kidnapping measures, allowing perpetrators to evade justice.

This research explores the perceptions of security operatives regarding the causes of kidnapping in Nigeria, drawing on their firsthand experiences and professional insights. By examining their views, the study seeks to identify the key factors contributing to the prevalence of kidnapping and to propose actionable recommendations for policymakers and law enforcement agencies. Understanding the perspectives of those on the front lines will be instrumental in devising comprehensive strategies to mitigate the risks and impacts of kidnapping, ultimately enhancing national security and public safety. The perspectives of security operatives are indispensable in understanding the complex and evolving dynamics of kidnapping in Nigeria. Their insights can help bridge the gap between theoretical analyses and practical realities, ensuring that interventions are both effective and sustainable.

Through this research, we aim to contribute to a deeper understanding of the causes of kidnapping and to support the development of robust, evidence-based policies and practices to combat this pervasive threat (Nwolise, 2005). Criminal activities such as kidnapping, terrorism, robbery, thuggery, ritual killings, cyber-crimes, arson, to mention but a few, pervade our national dailies with law enforcement agencies doing all they can to eradicate the menace of which they are already overburdened. Currently, Nigeria has been adjudged to be a dangerous and unsafe nation for business and investment. The unsavoury rating of Nigeria as a crime haven no doubt scares both domestic and foreign investors from investing in the resource-studded Nigerian economy (Odoma, 2011).

Despite the fact that the threat of kidnapping is a familiar crime in Nigeria, the scale and pace of its occurrence, as well as the victims, have changed significantly compared to

their nature in times past (Obarisiagbon and Aderinto, 2018). Prior to this, there had been several occurrences of abduction at the local level, with the majority of the victims being minors (Sanyaolu, 2009). Some of "these kidnapping incidents" were linked to "money-making rituals" (Owagbemi and Olaseinde, 2021). Kidnapping has assumed a whole new dimension, with regard to the targets and the motivation of those who engage in it (Inyang and Ubong, 2013). Kidnapping, in the form that it is now perpetrated in Nigeria, cuts beyond "demographic and geographic" borders of states and regions. The fact that it occurs in both an "urban or rural setting is no longer unusual (Badamsi, Ummu, Kamarul, 2019). This incidence of this fatal crime has not only spread across the nation, but it has also been monetised in many sections of the country (Emanemual and Akinlosotu, 2016). With the malicious emphasis turning away from minors and immigrants, the majority of Nigerian adult men and women, regardless of their occupations, faiths, and other affiliations, are now the target of the criminals (Bello and Jamilu, 2017).

Previously, experiences have shown that kidnapping activities are commonly featured in war-torn countries (Wright et al., 2017). Countries with weak security institutions, mainly in Africa and Asia, experience kidnapping, which is a sign that they cannot keep to the terms of the social contract between states and their citizens. This does not translate into making kidnapping a purely African affair, since other countries outside Africa equally have their share of it. Kidnapping is a global threat that affects countries and their citizens directly or indirectly (Campbell, 2020). In addition, Slack (2016) argues that against the original belief that kidnapping is initially considered a problem for the rich and the wealthy, its pandemic spread to significant proportions among the middle class and the poor is a pointer that it should be today be everybody's concern in Nigeria and beyond.

Kidnapping in Nigeria has become a critical security issue, involving the unlawful abduction and detention of individuals, typically for ransom, political leverage, or other illicit gains. The phenomenon has escalated over recent years, affecting people from various socio-economic backgrounds, including both locals and foreigners. (Inyang & Abraham, 2013; Onuoha & Okolie-Osemene, 2019). Pharoah (2005) postulates that another crucial defining characteristic is the current trajectory of kidnapping in Nigeria as multi-level, consisting of different actors, often done in a clandestine style, with prominent actors acting outside the black box while the field operators abduct, hijack, and take away people.

Just as other concepts in social sciences, there is no universally accepted or adopted definition of kidnapping because it varies from State to State and jurisdiction to jurisdiction. However, it is the forceful seizure, taking away and unlawful detention of a person against his/her will. The concept of kidnapping seems to have originated around 1682 among those who perpetrate this crime (Mohamed, 2008). It is a common law offence, and the key part is that it is an unwanted act on the part of the victim. It is a restriction of someone else's

liberty which violates the key fundamental of the freedom of movement as enshrined in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, where every other law takes its cue from (John, 2020). Hence, kidnapping is adjudged a serious offence in Nigeria. Kidnapping is also seen as a crime of seizing, confining, abducting or carrying away of persons by force or fraud, often subjecting them to involuntary servitude in an attempt to demand a ransom or in furtherance of another crime (John, 2020). Therefore, it is an act of snatching and seizing a person in order to collect a ransom in return or settle some scores of disagreements among people. According to Thomas and Nta (2009), kidnapping is termed as robbery of the highest rank. In their view, it is an organised and systematic robbery which is not as deadly as armed robbery but more profitable than the former. The profitability has encouraged those who indulge in it to carry on with the act, although there is a law prohibiting it. Nwaorah (2009) defined kidnapping as an act of an angry man who wants to take any person of value hostage, and who could be rescued by loved ones. In most cases, victims are often released after payment of ransom. In criminal law, kidnapping is defined as taking away of a person by force, threat or deceit with intent to cause him/her to be detained against his or her will (Asuquo, 2009). Other forms of kidnapping are: Ransom Kidnapping, High Net-worth Kidnapping, Tiger kidnapping (also proxy bombings), and Express kidnapping.

### **Causes of Kidnapping**

In Nigeria today, anybody can be kidnapped. Kidnapping has no regard for gender, age, religion, economic status, colour or nationality. Politicians, civil servants, lecturers, royal fathers, clergymen, traders, peasants, schoolchildren, etc. can be kidnapped at any time. Kidnapping has continued to thrive in Nigeria because of poor security arrangements and a poor democratic process. There are many causes of kidnapping in Nigeria today, and some of the causes will be discussed. Nigeria has the label of having one of the world's highest levels of corruption. A society where corruption is on the high side is likely to experience a high level of kidnapping. For instance, if a government is corrupt or not satisfying members of a region, the government official or family members can be kidnapped in order to make their grievances known to the government.

**Poverty:** In addition, poverty is another cause of kidnapping in Nigeria. According to the United Nations on poverty, poverty is a denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity. It means a lack of basic capacity to participate effectively in society. Anyone who lives below US\$1.90 a day is living below the poverty line. An average Nigerian is living below the United Nations poverty line (as of today, the Nigerian minimum wage is N18,500 monthly, that is, ₦18500 divided by 30 ₦616 per day, whereas US\$1.90 in

Nigerian currency is ₦684.95). The main intention of kidnappers is to obtain ransom (money). Many Nigerians who venture into crime do it in order to cater for their family and also to feed, clothe and provide shelter for themselves. Extreme poverty in the country as a result of job loss has made some parents relinquish some of their duties as breadwinners of the house. Hence, poverty has turned many young adults into breadwinners in their different families. In order to have their needs and that of their family members met, some girls engage in premarital sex while boys engage in other heinous crimes such as kidnapping, drug peddling, arm robbery and ritual killings to get money; even when parents become aware of the source, their sense of judgment is beclouded by the shame of their inability to play their primary role in providing for their homes. They simply rationalise that, after all, the needs are met. The popular slogan among young adults today is ‘use what you have to get what you want’ (Olulowo, 2017).

**Unemployment:** Unemployment is another cause of kidnapping in Nigeria. The proverb, “an idle hand is the devil’s workshop,” comes quite handy. A person who does not have a job tends to resort to crime. Kidnapping is either for financial or political benefit. Prior to this time, victims of kidnap were always oil expatriates or government officials, but in recent times, locals who are financially incapable of fending for their families are kidnapped and turn to begging in order to pay the ransom required. People like this can also resort to kidnapping to save themselves in the kidnappers’ den. In addition, kidnapping has become quite a lucrative and many youths see it as a business model. A cash-strapped unemployed person may believe that when he kidnaps someone who is rich, he may be able to become rich himself.

**Greed:** Greed is another cause of kidnapping in Nigeria. My friend is riding a 2019 Toyota Highlander car, and I want to ride the same model that has led many youths to involve themselves in criminal activities. However, stories abound that indicate that relatives kidnap themselves. Or how does anyone explain why a mother would kidnap her daughter? Why would a father kidnap or participate in the kidnapping of his wife? The love of money seems to be the root of all evil, including kidnapping, which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. If not for greed, why would a pastor kidnap himself and demand ransom from members of his church? Adewuyi Adegoke, a Pastor at Methodist Church, Ado-Ekiti, Ekiti State, has been arrested for organizing hi own kidnapping.

**Illiteracy:** Illiteracy is another cause of kidnapping in our country, Nigeria. According to the Cambridge dictionary, illiteracy is a lack of the ability to read and write. It is also a lack

of knowledge about a particular subject. Illiteracy limits the ability of an individual to have knowledge of the facts about things happening around. Illiteracy largely limits the reasoning ability of illiterates. Although many illiterates have native intelligence, research suggests that some illiterates are not enlightened and, as such, are unable to realise many of the consequences of their actions and inactions. For instance, Boko Haram uses people who are poorly educated as suicide bombers. They can be abducted from their houses and trained to be suicide bombers. This set of people is allegedly manipulated by their abductors and influenced by money. They are made to understand that killing according to their religion is the right thing to do. Thus, since they can neither read nor write, they believe everything completely.

#### **Inadequate equipment of Law enforcement agencies**

Thon-Otuya (2010) posits that most of the kidnaps carried out by the militants are always ferried to the creek for custody. She further alleges that the Nigerian Navy do not have enough functional equipment to monitor and secure the porous waterways. The Navy, according to her, has only about ten (10) combat ships with about twelve (12) defender boats; none of these ships is below thirty years old. She is inadequately equipped to police her sea lanes, and this makes her less equipped to monitor sea pirates and kidnapping activities. The police and the customs are also ill-equipped to match the sophisticated weapons being used by these hoodlums. Apart from inadequate equipment, the law enforcement agents are corrupt and lack the will/power to fight the criminals to a conclusive end.

Conclusively, kidnappings can be motivated by politics or religion. People in politics can use the tactics of kidnapping to silence their opponents and put them in disarray to drop their political ambition in order to save their children or spouse. In this case, ransom can be demanded from the family of a kidnapped victim so as to raise funds for their political activities. It is also conducted to obtain political concessions from security forces or governments, rival political parties and the kidnappers' own political party. Kidnapping can be religious in nature because of the group's fundamentalist Islamic beliefs. Their purpose is to institute Sharia, or Islamic law, in Nigeria. The meaning of their name, boko haram, is "Western education is forbidden". This explains why they continually target schoolchildren. For instance, the kidnapping of 276 children from Chibok in Borno State in 2014 and 110 children from Government Girls Science and Technical College, Dapchi in Yobe State in 2018.

### **Effects of Kidnapping**

Kidnapping human beings at random produces significant psychological, sociological and financial impacts on the lives of the victims, the victims' relatives, and the nation at large (Onyishi, 2011). Kidnapping has led to quite a high level of mistrust among people, as well as a general feeling of fear. The traditional African hospitality to strangers is no longer observed and extended. Most people do not accept or return salutations from strangers nor attend to strangers asking for directions. Also, the majority of people are reluctant to give help to people in distress because of the fear of being kidnapped. Few people would venture to stop to assist people calling for help on the expressway. Increasingly, many people nowadays barricade themselves in their homes (Soyombo, 2009). Most devastatingly, it has been noted that it is the fear of kidnapping that has contributed to the current high demand for police escort by diverse public officials in the country, thereby further depleting the inadequate police personnel that could have been deployed to street crime control (Soyombo, 2009). These factors include economic, political and moral.

### **Economic effect of Kidnapping**

Inyang and Ubong (2013) and Ilechukwu (2015) averred that the economic effects of kidnapping include direct and indirect costs. Direct Cost of Kidnapping involves the economic value that individuals and the government may lose to kidnappers; much money has been paid as ransom. Former Inspector of Police, Sir Mike Okiro, reported that N15 billion has been paid as ransom to the kidnappers between 2006 and 2009 (Kyrian, 2009). Inyang and Ubong (2013) posited that in many cases, it is often the breadwinners of families who are usually targeted; the implication is always felt particularly within the family, whereby members of such families will have to feed themselves and adjust to their normal daily activities until they secure the release of the victim. If the victim is a businessman or woman, the business will suffer; if he is a civil servant or artisan, the workplace will be adversely affected. The Indirect cost of kidnapping includes expenditure on preventive measures, such as the employment of private security personnel. At the government level, the economic effects include the expenditure on security and security agencies (Inyang and Ubong, 2013).

### **Political effects of Kidnapping**

Kidnapping can create political effects like Elective and Political Violence. There can be an increase in the use of political thugs by strong politicians to threaten their political opponents, thereby derailing the democratic process (Thom-Otuya, 2010). According to Thom-Otuya (201), the alarming rate of kidnapping activities in the country could overturn democracy and pave the way for military invasion into politics and send the politicians

packing. If political gladiators will use kidnapping, as established crime in Nigeria, to intimidate their opponent, then they will be prompting military storming into Nigerian politics to remedy the insecurity of lives, properties and business with military dispatch. According to Otuya (2010), this will lead to the utmost backwardness of Nigerian society. Kidnapping activities have shot up the abundance of arms. The business requires good firearms to kidnap the targeted victims, to scare people out of sight and to resist the law enforcement agents. Politicians equip the thugs with arms to use in threatening their opponents, and the inability of the security agencies to stop kidnapping occurrences in the country exposes the weakness of the security agencies.

### **Moral Effects of Kidnapping**

Some victims of the kidnappers could be sexually abused in the process of their captors waiting for the demanded payment (Ilechuckwu et al. 2015). Some victims of the kidnappers have lost their lives in the hands of their abductors. For instance, Dr. Gabriel Olowoyo, the Attah of Aiyede Orisagbeni, died in a motor accident when he was being transported by the kidnappers; Henrian Omovegie was kidnapped and killed in Delta state; Mrs. Owoidighe Ekpoattai and two policemen died at the hands of their abductors, among many others. Life is sacred, but kidnappers have made human life lose its value. Their immoral acts have reduced man to a semblance of an animal. They have caused humanity to lose its freedom and dignity (Ilechuckwu et al. 2015).

### **The Research Objectives are to:**

1. Investigate the prevalence of kidnapping in Nigeria.
2. Ascertain if financial gain will be a motivation for kidnapping in Nigeria
3. Find out if there are adequate preventive strategies against kidnapping in Nigeria

### **Research Hypotheses**

1. There is no significant high prevalence of kidnapping in Nigeria
2. Financial gain has a significant motivation for kidnapping in Nigeria
3. There is no significant adequate preventive strategies against kidnapping in Nigeria

## **METHOD**

The design of this study is a descriptive survey. The population consists of all the Nigerian Customs attending the Regimental Training Course 2024. A sample of one hundred and fifty Officers of the Nigerian Customs attending the Regimental Training Course 2024 was

selected. The participants were randomly selected from the 385 participants in the training programme. A self-developed questionnaire was used for data collection. In analysing the data, descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages were used to analyse the demographic data, while inferential statistics (Chi-square) were used to test the hypotheses at a 0.05 alpha level.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Table 1:** Chi-Square Analysis showing prevalence of kidnapping in Nigeria

Variable	N	Df	Mean	SD	X <sup>2</sup> -calc	Sig.
Prevalence of kidnapping	137	3	3.18	0.73	77.978	0.000

**P < 0.05;** X<sup>2</sup>-critical = 7.815

Table 1 showed a significant prevalence of kidnapping in Nigeria, because the calculated value (77.978) is greater than the critical value (7.815) given 3 degrees of freedom at a 0.05 level of significance. Hence, there is a significantly high prevalence of kidnapping in Nigeria, because the null hypothesis was rejected.

**Table 2:** Chi-Square Analysis showing financial gain as motivation for kidnapping in Nigeria

Variable	N	Df	Mean	SD	X <sup>2</sup> -calc	Sig.
Financial gain	137	3	3.14	0.850	77.511	0.000

**P < 0.05;** X<sup>2</sup>-critical = 7.815

Table 2 showed that financial gain as motivation for kidnapping in Nigeria is significant, because the calculated value (77.511) is greater than the critical value (7.815) given 3 degrees of freedom at a 0.05 level of significance. Hence, financial gain was a significant motivation for kidnapping in Nigeria, because the null hypothesis was rejected.

**Table 3:** Chi-Square Analysis showing adequacy of preventive strategies against kidnapping in Nigeria

Variable	N	Df	Mean	SD	X <sup>2</sup> -calc	Sig.
Adequacy of preventive strategies	141	3	3.01	0.978	29.978	0.000

**P < 0.05;** X<sup>2</sup>-critical = 7.81529.978

Table 3 showed a significant adequacy of preventive strategies against kidnapping, because the calculated value (29.978) is greater than the critical value (7.815) given 3 degree of freedom at 0.05 level of significance. Hence, there is a significant adequacy of preventive strategies against kidnapping in Nigeria, because null hypothesis was rejected.

With respect to hypothesis one, using Chi-Square analysis with a level of significance set at 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected. This implies that there is a significantly high prevalence of kidnapping in Nigeria. Ashibi and Akintujoye (2022), citing Punch (2024), asserted that as of January 2024, no fewer than 176 residents of the Federal Capital Territory were kidnapped since the assumption of office of President Bola Tinubu on May 29, 2023. Also, according to Data obtained by The ICIR from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), over 380 persons were kidnapped between December 1, 2023, and January 3, 2024, across Nigeria under President Bola Tinubu. Beyond Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), which has recorded several cases of kidnapping recently, there is heightened fear in no fewer than 19 states of the federation following a spike in the activities of kidnappers and their kingpins. (Vanguard, 2024). Abdulkabir (2017) corroborated this assertion by stating that “the rate of kidnapping in Nigeria was geometrically increasing such that more than 2000 innocent people, including Chibok girls, politicians, and government officials, influential people and kings, were reportedly kidnapped between 2014 and 2017. As a result of this, Nigeria was ranked in the global index as one of the worst places to dwell in because of frequent kidnapping incidents”.

The significant C-value obtained at a 0.05 confidence level while testing hypothesis two established the basis for its rejection. This shows that financial gain was a significant motivation for kidnapping in Nigeria. Kyrian (2009) reported that the former Inspector General of Police in Nigeria had noted that kidnappers and hostage takers got about USD100 million between 2006 and 2009. Olulowo et al (2021) pointed out that the prevalence of kidnapping is not unconnected with the recent cashless economy that has reduced the possibility of pilfering huge amounts of cash. Olulowo et al posited that poverty is directly related to crime. He contends that if people do not have enough to eat, they steal to survive. When people become desperate for food and other necessities, they will steal and even kill to get what they need. The 2004 Human Development Indicators put Nigeria at number 151 out of 177 countries. Poverty in Nigeria is generally believed to be the prime cause of kidnapping in the country.

While testing hypothesis three, a significant C-value was obtained at a 0.05 confidence level, hence the rejection of the hypothesis. It was discovered that there is a significant adequacy of preventive strategies against kidnapping in Nigeria. Indeed, efforts are in place to stop kidnapping, but the problem still persists, even escalating. According to

Uzorma and Nwanegbo-Ben (2014), in Ashibi and Akintujoye (2022), the most obvious challenges that the Police and other law enforcement agencies in the country face in kidnapping include:

1. Insufficient intelligence within the Nigerian police force. The Nigeria Police Force faces a significant challenge in identifying, infiltrating, recruiting, and gathering actionable intelligence, which is crucial for an accurate onslaught against abductors in Nigeria, particularly in the south-east. Intelligence work is strategic and requires long-term investment, including keeping sleeper agents in place. It is physically, emotionally, and intellectually demanding, requiring self-service, discipline, and dedication from operational commanders and agent handlers. Solomon Arase, a police expert in crime onslaught strategy, argues that modern policing is intellectually driven due to factors like globalisation, technological advancement, and increasing crime dynamics, necessitating the emergence of novel policing concepts.
2. Lack of sophisticated equipment in the Nigerian Police Force hinders effective tracking of kidnapping incidents, thereby hindering the speed and accuracy of investigations.
3. The incapacitation of network providers in giving data about their network users who utilise their phone lines in each criminal and kidnapping activity to execute the business that starts and ensures the payment of the ransom requested for the release of their captive.
4. Porous border surveillance and control, which brings about the transportation and proliferation of modern arms and ammunition in the nation that outpowers those utilised by the security experts to battle the crime.
5. Insider or collaborator's variable of a few trustworthy agents in the Nigeria Police Force and other security institutions, global organisations, banks and bureaus of finance, which makes data effectively open for the criminals and furthermore makes crime inquiry and tracking difficult.

## **CONCLUSION**

Kidnapping has been a persistent problem in Nigeria for decades. All efforts to nip it in the bud have not been successful. It is sufficient to get the perspectives of security personnel who are major stakeholders in understanding and addressing the issue. In line with the findings of this study, it is informative to state that there is a significantly high prevalence of kidnapping in Nigeria, motivated by financial gains, but the government at all levels has a significant inadequacy of preventive strategies against kidnapping in Nigeria.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Intelligence gathering should undergo a paradigm shift to be effective. Security personnel should form better synergy with stakeholders and see the solution as a win-win approach.
2. The government should prioritise the acquisition of modern technology to enhance its surveillance capabilities, especially tracing the financial flows that motivate kidnapping.
3. All segments of society should be enlightened about their roles in safety and security matters and to assist security operatives.

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