

## KIDNAPPING: A THREAT TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN NIGERIA

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### ABSTRACT

*Kidnapping is a national threat and capable of disintegrating the country if not properly checked. Kidnapping simply means to seize and detain unlawfully, by force or fraud and to remove persons to an undisclosed location against their will and usually for use as a hostage or to extract ransom. It is sad that this unwholesome act has made many entrepreneurs to relocate their businesses to other parts of the country where kidnapping is less vulnerable while others have relocated to neighbouring countries where their return on investment will be highly secured. In order to salvage the situation for a better Nigeria some recommendations were made which include: the government should enact laws making kidnapping a capital offence punishable by life jail in their respective states. This is against the federal law that prescribes 10- year jail term, among others.*

### INTRODUCTION

The spate of kidnapping in Nigeria has reached an alarming proportion that there is an urgent call for something drastic to be done to address this trend. However kidnapping is rampant in many parts of the world and in many countries it is a thriving business. Supporting this claim Jamiu (2009) stated that the phenomenon of kidnapping has taken an alarming dimension in Nigeria, such that it has become a big business. He added that kidnapping hitherto known only in the Niger Delta is now a daily occurrence in Lagos, Ondo, Ekiti, Oyo and many other states in the country. Folasade-Koyi, Nwankwo and Ajakaye (2009) maintain that Abia state has the highest incidents of kidnapping in Nigeria with 110 reported cases. Eso (2009) reported that between 1991 and 2000, Nigeria ranked ninth behind nations like Columbia, Mexico, Russia Federation, Philippines and Venezuela in the number of annual kidnappings. Nigeria had 34 reported cases, compared to Columbia's 5,181 and was a notched ahead of 10<sup>th</sup> ranked South Africa. He continued, "as 2009 begins, this seems to be old news, as kidnappings in Nigeria have grown exponentially, and is now widespread and beyond the confines of the violence prone Niger Delta region". He concluded that since 2006, some 300 foreigners have been kidnapped, and Nigerians kidnapped during the same period would soon over take that shocking number. Eso (2009) remarked that kidnapping simply means to seize and detain unlawfully, by force or fraud and to remove a person to an undisclosed location against his will and usually for use as a hostage or to extract ransom.

Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (2010) reiterated that kidnapping for ransom is a common occurrence in various parts of the world today, and certain cities and countries are often described as the kidnapping capital of the world. As at 2007, that title belonged to Baghdad. In 2004, it was Mexico, and in 2001 it was Columbia. It describes kidnapping as a common means used to obtain slaves and money through ransom. It has been identified as one source by which terrorists organizations have been known to obtain funding. In the same vein Folasade-Koyi, et al (2009) stated that kidnapping is repugnant to natural justice, equity, good conscience and is against public policy and the principle of fraternal co-existence. It is not our custom to embark on kidnapping, unprovoked, and unbridled attack, on innocent lives and property. Nwojo (2009) stated that kidnapping which was first unleashed in Nigeria in Port-Harcourt on

February 18, 2006 by militants to press home their demands has now assumed a frightening proportion in various parts of the country. It has now become a veritable tool in the hands of hoodlums for making money.

Adibe (2010) stressed that there is no doubt that Nigeria is today one of the major kidnapping capitals of the world. This has obvious implications for investments, the country's development trajectory and even the quality of governance. Supporting this claim Eso (2009) stated that kidnappings will inevitably chase investors away and scare the Nigerian in Diaspora from returning home to invest or re-settle.

### CONCEPT OF KIDNAPPING

A recent surge in kidnapping in Nigeria has seen prominent members of the society becoming victims of abductors. Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (2010) opined that the law of kidnapping is difficult to define with precision because it varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Most state and federal kidnapping statutes state that kidnapping occurs when a person, without lawful authority, physically asports (i.e. moves) another person without that other person's consent, with the intent to use the abduction in connection with some other nefarious objective. It adds that it is a crime of unlawfully seizing and carrying away a person by force or fraud, or seizing and detaining a person against his or her will with an intent to carry that person away at a later time. Kidnapping laws in the United States as cited by Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (2010) defines kidnapping as the unlawful and non-consensual transportation of a person from one country to another. Bouvier (1856) cited by Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (2010) defined kidnapping as the forcible and unlawful abduction and conveying away of a man, woman, or child, from his or her home, without his or her will or consent, and sending such person away, with an intent to deprive him or her of some rights.

Eso (2009) affirmed that kidnapping simply means to seize and detain unlawfully, by force or fraud and to remove a person to an undisclosed location against his will and usually for use as a hostage or to extract ransom. In a similar vein Adibe (2010) saw it as the taking away of a person against the person's will, usually for ransom or in furtherance of another crime. This is becoming everyone's nightmare in our dear country.

Trends and the Operations of Criminal Justice Systems (2002) reported by Eight United Nations Survey on Crime reports the latest available data country by country on the spate of kidnapping:

Table 1: National survey on crime report.

Rank	Countries	Number of kidnappings
1	United States of America	3261
2	South Africa	3071
3	Canada	2933
4	Belgium	994
5.	Tunisha	555
6	Peru	491
7	Portugal	432
8	Romania	383
9	Kuwait	281
10	New Zealand	257
11	Japan	205
12	Switzerland	203
13	Italy	124
14	Poland	118
15	Saudi Arabia	107
16	Germany	88
17	Croatia	80
18	Chile	74
19	Bolivia	46
20	Czech Republic	28
21	Lithuania	26
22	Luxembourg	23

23	Azerbaijan	20
24	El Salvador	19
25	Latvia	16
25	Denmark	16
25	Costa Rica	16
28	Albania	15
28	Hungary	15
30	Belarus	14
31	Cyprus	12
32	Slovakia	10
33	Austria	9
34	Slovenia	8
34	Uruguay	8
36	Morocco	6
37	Oman	5
38	Finland	2
38	Iceland	2

Source: National Survey on Crime (2002)

From the foregoing kidnapping is a global phenomenon and not particular to any country. However, Eso (2009) reported that kidnapping in Nigeria have grown exponentially, and is now widespread and beyond the confines of the violence prone Niger delta region and it would soon over take the number recorded against United States of America of 3261. AMIP News (2010) reported that since January 2009 over 129 foreign nationals have been kidnapped in Nigeria. Emelogu (2010) reported that Aba with a population of 900,000 people is ground zero for the epidemic of kidnapping that is sweeping across most southern states, turning entire communities into ghost towns at night, destroying local businesses, forcing families to relocate elsewhere, and leaving residents cowering behind locked doors, distrustful even of Police.

### **CONCEPTS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ENTREPRENEURS**

Nwafor (2007) defined entrepreneurship as the willingness and ability of an individual to seek out investment opportunities in an environment, and be able to establish and run an enterprise successfully based on the identified opportunities. Nwafor (2007) citing Stallworth (1989) stated that entrepreneurship is the creation of a new economic entity centred on a novel product or service or, at the very least, one which differs significantly from products or services offered elsewhere in the market. Ugiagbe (2007) in the same vein opined that entrepreneurship is the process of bringing together creative and innovative ideas and coping with management and organizational skills in order to combine people, money and resources to meet an identified need, thereby creating wealth. The definition that readily comes into focus is by European Commission Enterprise and Industry Directorate-General (2008) cited by Owenvbiugie (2009); it stated that entrepreneurship refers to individual's ability to turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation and risk taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. Okpara (2000) viewed entrepreneur as a human bulldozer, who can convert a stumbling block into a stepping stone. To an entrepreneur he continues, there is no mountain that is unmovable. He is, therefore, a creative and aggressive innovator. Hence an entrepreneur is the man who promotes the necessary relationships required for the business to come into existence. He is the man who consolidates a new venture. He is the man who manages and operates the enterprise once established. He is the man who risks his capital in new ventures. Usioboh (2008) citing Oborah (2003) believed that an entrepreneur is an individual who perceives needs, conceiving goods and services to satisfy the needs of others, organizes the factors of production, and creates and markets the products. Usiofoh (2008) quoted World Bank as defining entrepreneurs are people who perceive profitable opportunities, are willing to take risks in pursuing them and have the ability to recognize the business. He further stated that entrepreneurship is being vigorously advocated because of its potential to:

- (a) Create jobs through the formation of new enterprises, especially small medium scale enterprises.
- (b) Raise productivity through various forms of innovation.

- (c) Facilitate transfer of technology or the adaptation of existing one.
- (d) Harness resources that might otherwise remain idle and put them into productive use.
- (e) Stimulate growth in those sectors, which supply it with inputs.
- (f) Reinvigorate large-scale enterprises and also public enterprises.
- (g) Encourage and sustain economic dynamism that enables an economy to adjust independence and status for themselves in society.

Oborah (2003) citing Ojuku (1999), Akintola (2001), and Aina (2001) said that entrepreneurship is a veritable employment alternative to wage employment and panacea to graduate unemployment. Nwaokolo (1997) defined entrepreneurship as a venture that involves taking up business enterprises quite distinct from obtaining a paid job. Paul (2005) stated that an entrepreneur could be said to be a person that is determined to operate alone in business; to be self-employed instead of being in paid job; to combine other factors of production; to take the risks of loosing or succeeding in business; to believe in himself and prefers to finance his business alone; to be creative and innovative; and to identify new business opportunities.

Entrepreneurship has been identified across the globe as a tool for generating a suitable economy. Supporting this claim Isike (2008) stated that entrepreneurship has been identified globally and nationally as a tool for generating a suitable economy, which is the core value of NEEDS (National Economic Empowerment Development Strategies). He further stated that no country can move forward technologically, industrially and economically without first develop its private sector by creating wealth, poverty reduction and employment generation.

Uche (2008) maintains that successful entrepreneurs globally possess the following characteristics: they are trail blazers, creative, starving to save, investment consciousness, turning disability into possibility, converting obstacles to stepping stones, patient and persevering, enterprising, propelled by will and positive thinking, dynamism, determined and resolute to set task and objectives. Entrepreneurship is attractive and rewarding due to the freedom and independence associated with it. This is why Isike and Ovekaemo (2008) stated that the rewards of entrepreneurship include the following:

1. They serve as suppliers to bigger enterprises.
2. There is less pressure on the limited foreign exchange earnings.
3. It is less dependent to imported inputs to their capital investment.
4. It nurtures indigenous raw materials and processing industries to support large enterprises. It helps in resources utilization.
5. It reduces rural to urban migration by engaging a large fraction of the rural population as employees.
6. It gives an opportunity to utilize one's potential.
7. It brings self-fulfillment.
8. It brings economic power.
9. It ensures rapid growth and development.
10. It eradicates poverty alleviation.
11. It leads to empowerment creation.
12. It leads to technological advancement.

### **BENEFITS OF ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

U.S Department of State/Bureau of International Information programmes (2009) observed that sometimes a person is frustrated with his or her current job and doesn't see any better career prospects any more. Sometimes a person realizes that his or her job is in jeopardy. A firm may be contemplating cutbacks that could end a job or limit career or salary prospects. Perhaps a person already has been passed over for promotion. Perhaps a person sees no opportunities in existing businesses for someone with his or her interests and skills. Some people are actually repulsed by the idea of working for someone else. They object to a system where reward is often based on seniority rather than accomplishment, or where they have to conform to a corporate culture. Other people may decide to become entrepreneurs because they are disillusioned by the bureaucracy or politics involved in getting ahead in an established business or profession. Some may be tired of trying to promote a product, service, or way of doing business that is

outside the mainstream operations of a large company. However, some people are attracted to entrepreneurship because of its importance.

Entrepreneurs are their own bosses. They make the decisions. They choose whom to do business with and what work they will do. They decide what hours to work, as well as what to pay and whether to take vacations. They offer a greater possibility of achieving significant financial rewards than working for someone else. It provides the ability to be involved in the total operation of the business, from concept to design and creation, from sales to business operations and customer response. It offers the prestige of being the person in charge. It gives an individual the opportunity to build equity, which can be kept, sold, or passed on to the next generation.

### **KIDNAPPING: A THREAT TO ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN NIGERIA**

If the spate of kidnapping remains unabated in Nigeria it has the tendency of scaring away investors (entrepreneurs) from far and near. Supporting this claim Eso (2009) maintains that the threat of kidnapping will inevitably chase investors away and scare the Nigerians in Diaspora from returning home to invest or re-settle. He continues, the growth of the kidnapping industry in Nigeria is a national security and rudimentary problems. Ajao (2010) citing Gwandu lamented that kidnappings have become serious threat to lives and businesses in Nigeria over the last one year, especially in the South-East and South-South zones of the country. Okpul-Umuobo (2010) opined that since kidnapping started in Abia people are selling off their businesses and moving to Abuja. He continued, "people have all deserted Aba, no body is developing again. People now prefer to take their families to other towns". Awa (2010) maintained that the harsh business climate propelled by high level of insecurity has led to the closure of companies such as Lever Brothers, Nigerian Breweries, Aba Textile Mills and most recently Dana Motors which ordinary would have absorbed some of the large number of unemployed youth. In the same vein Nkoye (2010) regreted that most of their customers who buy in bulk that come from Lagos and other parts of the country are afraid to come to Aba as a result of kidnapping.

Adibe (2010) maintained that there is no doubt that Nigeria is today one of the major kidnapping capitals of the world. This has obvious implications for investments, the country's development trajectory and even the quality of governance. AMIP news (2010) reported that many foreign oil companies operating in the Niger Delta states of Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Delta, Rivers, Edo, Abia, Imo as well as Jos have implemented essential travel ban for their personnel to these areas. This policy has adverse effect on investors. In a similar vein Suswam (2010) raised alarm over the threat to his live and his wife by kidnappers and states that the trend is scaring away potential investors.

### **CONCLUSION**

A recent surge in kidnapping in Nigeria has seen prominent members of the society becoming victims of abductions. Kidnapping is a threat to national security and development. If the spate is not checked it is capable of scaring away entrepreneurs. Kidnapping is threatening the corporate existence of Nigeria to the extent that many small, medium and large businesses are relocating to neighbouring countries where their return on investment is assured without threat to lives and property. It is believed that if all hands are on deck, kidnapping would soon be a thing of the past in Nigeria.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are made:

- The National Assembly should strengthen the existing laws on terrorism in the country in order to save the country from terrorist activities.
- The government should enact laws making kidnapping a capital offence punishable by life jail in their respective states. This is against the federal law that prescribes 10- year jail term.
- The various tiers of government should provide jobs for its citizens as many of the kidnappers are mostly jobless youths, including graduates. If these groups of people are gainfully employed they would probably stay off kidnapping business.
- Our security agents should be more vigilant by observing the faces of the occupants of vehicles especially when there is alert of a kidnap.

- The Nigerian Communications Commission should mandate telecommunications operators to install equipment on every mast and tower capable of tracking and identifying the locations of handsets being used to solicit for ransom. This technology has helped many advanced countries like Japan to track down kidnappers.
- The time is now that we need proactive preventive Police and not reactive investigative Police.
- The federal government should aid the security agents for the deployment of technology-based infrastructure that will help unmask kidnappers and their sponsors.
- The federal government should place ex-militants on 24-hour surveillance through the various law enforcement agencies.
- The current training of ex-militants should be encouraged and sustained. This will go a long way to help them to turn new lease of lives.
- A new technology known as krak kidnap recovery tracker for easy traceability of kidnap victims, easy identification of kidnap scene, and easy identification of hostage location developed by Soltans Security Business should be encouraged by the federal, state, local governments as well as well – to-do individuals in the society

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