

Kidnapping for Terrorism Financing: The Case of Boko Haram Group in Northern Nigeria

Dr Monsurat Isiaka and Dr Usman A. Ojedokun

Research Article

ABSTRACT

Even though the mass media, anecdotal accounts, and popular opinion have consistently alluded to a connection between terrorism financing and kidnapping in northern Nigeria, empirical research focusing on this subject is rare. Therefore, this research investigated the involvement of members of the Boko Haram terrorist group in kidnapping to help finance terrorism. Using in-depth and key-informant interviews, data were elicited from 27 Boko Haram suspects apprehended in Gonan-Magajin-Gari village. The findings revealed that the involvement of Boko Haram in kidnapping was necessitated by the need to devise an alternative source of funding owing to dwindling financial support from the group's sponsors. Furthermore, group members systematically sourced recruits among individuals perceived to have criminal tendencies.

Keywords: *Boko Haram, Kidnapping, Terrorism financing, Terrorists, Local vigilantes, Northern Nigeria*

INTRODUCTION

Kidnapping is among the most potent contributors to the pervasive problem of insecurity in Nigeria (Ene, 2018; Otu & Adedeji, 2022; Tade et al., 2020). Although the occurrence of this form of crime in the country is not a recent phenomenon, the involvement of members of terrorist groups in kidnapping to help finance terrorism is certainly a more recent development. Although the mass media, anecdotal accounts, and popular opinion have consistently alluded to a connection between terrorism financing and kidnapping in northern Nigeria, empirical research focusing on the subject is rare. This study attempts to bridge this gap by investigating the involvement of the Boko Haram terrorist group in kidnapping to help finance terrorism.

Boko Haram, a terrorist group with a very strong local support base in northeastern Nigeria, has been involved in a series of violent attacks against the Federal Republic of Nigeria since 2009 (Iyekekpolo, 2016; Thurston 2016). The group gained global prominence in April 2014 when its members kidnapped 276 girls from the Government Girls Secondary School in Chibok, Borno State. The same year, it was named the world's deadliest terrorist organisation (Rock, 2016). The terrorist group subsequently pledged allegiance to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in March 2015. It has been widely recognised as being responsible for killing over 100,000 people in Nigeria and the neighbouring countries of Cameroon, Chad Republic, and Niger Republic (Amao, 2020; Lenshie et al., 2022; Maza et al., 2020).

The Federal Government of Nigeria's development of some strategic counter-terrorism measures, such as the formulation of the Terrorism (Prevention) Act, 2011, which criminalised the provision of funds for terrorist groups, introducing a Bank Verification Number policy, and implementing the recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) on money laundering and terrorism, aimed at blocking local and international illicit financial flows to support terrorism, greatly impacted the finances of Boko Haram and other terrorist groups operating in Nigeria (Adisa, 2021; Attah, 2019; Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit, 2013). Consequently, kidnapping is increasingly becoming a major operational support strategy being used by the Boko Haram Group and other terrorist organisations to finance their criminal activities. For instance, in March 2022, 67 train passengers were kidnapped by terrorists along the Abuja-Kaduna route after the train conveying them was bombed with explosives (Odita & Akhaine, 2022). In the same month, a group of terrorists operating in Kaduna State released 32 kidnap victims after they had been paid a ransom totalling ₦16 million (US\$38,000) (Isenyo, 2022).

The adoption of kidnapping for terrorism financing amounts to a dual challenge for the Nigerian state as both are criminal activities clearly socio-economically harmful to the wellbeing of society and pose a serious threat to human safety and national security. More so, the fact that funding is critical for the successful facilitation of the terror operations of the Boko Haram Group makes it imperative to design far-reaching, results-oriented frameworks for tracing, identifying, and blocking their illicit sources of finance. Therefore, there is a need to explore the nature of the involvement of members of the Boko Haram terrorist group in the crime of kidnapping, their strategies for recruiting members for their kidnapping operations, and their methods of operation as kidnapers to generate vital and timely information to assist the Nigerian government, law enforcement agencies, and other relevant stakeholders in combating the terrorist group and blocking the illicit financial flows that it is relying on to sustain its criminal activities. Against this background, this study was guided by the following research questions: (i) What is the nature of Boko Haram's involvement in kidnapping for terrorism financing? (ii) What are the strategies being used by the Boko Haram Group to recruit members to engage in kidnapping for terrorism financing? (iii) What is the mode of operation of Boko Haram members involved in kidnapping for terrorism financing?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the early 1990s, terrorism-related kidnapping has become a global security concern. Countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, Russia, Colombia, India, the Philippines, Nepal, and Nigeria are among the worst affected (Freeman, 2011; Freeman & Ruehsen, 2013; Keatinge & Danner, 2021; Koseli et al., 2021; Maza et al., 2020; Rafay, 2021; Yun, 2007). According to Keatinge and Danner (2021), kidnapping has become a major fundraising tool. Many terrorist groups are relying on it to meet their funding needs and are adopting it to boost their terror activities. The Abu Sayyaf Group in the Philippines, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA), the Haqqani Network in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, and the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) are notable examples of terrorist groups that have engaged in kidnapping to finance their activities (O'Brien, 2012).

Attah (2019) notes that the survival of terrorist organisations largely depends on their capacity to attract and generate funding because terrorism is typically a capital-intensive endeavour. Similarly, Keatinge and Danner (2021) state that crime plays an important role in the funding of almost all terrorist groups, from those highly organised to those with loose structures. Koseli et al. (2021) assert that kidnapping remains a popular method for terrorism financing among terrorist groups because it has a lower level of risk and higher monetary benefit. Furthermore, Forest (2012) says the decisions of terrorist groups to engage in kidnapping are usually informed by an array of reasons, ranging from political advantage to financial gains, vengeance, the protection of secrets, and the creation of a pervasive climate of fear, among others. Similarly, Yun (2007) identifies several reasons for the frequent occurrence of kidnapping by terrorist groups, including the loosening of national borders occasioned by the end of the Cold War, the simultaneous rise of globalisation, the global saturation of media coverage of terrorism incidents, and the development of a series of countermeasures in the fight against terrorism worldwide.

Forest (2012) states that most of the religiously oriented terrorist groups in North Africa, the Middle East, and Southeast Asia have become increasingly active in profit-motivated kidnappings in recent times. Moreover, the 2011 report of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) indicates that terrorist groups affiliated with Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) earned as much as US\$15 million annually from kidnapping. Also, Maza et al. (2020) claim that the Boko Haram Group maintains diverse sources of funding both nationally and internationally. Adisa (2021) points out that the Nigerian government finds it very difficult to defeat Boko Haram because members of the group essentially rely on informal financial networks and criminal means to raise funds needed for their terror activities. Furthermore, Labayle and Long (2009) argue that terrorist organisations constantly need financial resources to fund different projects that are central to their activities, such as the recruitment of members, training recruits, meeting logistical requirements, the procurement of weapons and other equipment that are essential for conducting acts of violence, and supporting the family members of 'martyrs'.

Comolli (2015) says Boko Haram Group terrorist attacks have consistently constituted a serious threat to national security and public safety in Nigeria since 2009. Markovic (2021) reports that members of the Boko Haram Group frequently rely on a variety of means and

methods, ranging from extortion to kidnapping, armed robbery, looting, and taxation and soliciting donations to generate their operational funds and equipment. Furthermore, Boko Haram has generated millions of dollars over the years through the involvement of members of the group in kidnapping (Zenn, 2014). According to Rock (2016), although the Boko Haram Group has kidnapped many foreigners over the years, most of their kidnapping victims are Nigerians. Maza et al. (2020) say the ransom that the Boko Haram Group usually demands depends on the personality of their victims and usually ranges from \$10,000 to \$1,000,000. Moreover, Kingsley et al. (2015) report that the Boko Haram Group has a specialised kidnapping squad that is primarily set up to kidnap wealthy people, politicians, business tycoons, traditional rulers, and civil servants, among others. However, according to Okolie-Osemene and Okolie-Osemene (2019), although most Boko Haram kidnappings are financially-driven, some are carried out to meet the sexual and marital needs of members of the group.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The major propositions of rational choice theory developed by Derek Cornish and Ronald Clarke offered the theoretical guidance for this research. By focusing on the situational dynamics involved in the decision-making process about whether to commit a crime, rational choice theory conceives criminal behaviour as a process in which an individual subjectively defines a given situation while perceiving the possible benefits to be derived from it (Linden, 2007; Perry & Hasisi, 2014). The theory views crime as a byproduct of deliberate choices made by offenders based on their calculation of its associated risks and rewards (Cornish & Clarke, 2017). Thus, it sees crime as a purposive behaviour designed to meet an offender's commonplace needs for things such as money, status, sex, and excitement (Cornish & Clarke, 2003). Generally, rational choice theory assumes that an individual's decision to commit a criminal act is usually determined by the opportunities, risks, and benefits associated with certain types of crime, which together constitute the situation (Schmalleger & Volk, 2018). Therefore, the situation forms the context in which an individual engages in rational calculations when deciding whether to commit a specific criminal act (Murray & Topalli, 2014). The term "rational" in rational choice theory centres on the notion of strategic thinking and assumes a process whereby information is analysed, situations are defined (from a subjective perspective), and opportunities and alternatives are evaluated (Perry and Hasisi 2017), while the concept of "choice" in the theory reinforces the position criminals consider when making decisions (Perry & Hasisi 2017). In essence, rational choice theory assumes that crime is not a random phenomenon occurring evenly across time and place because it is a product of the interaction between the offender and their situational environment (Guerette et al., 2005). In this instance, Boko Haram members' adoption of kidnapping to fund their terror activities is more likely to have been informed by their purposive analysis and deliberate calculations of the associated risks, opportunities, and benefits compared with the perpetration of alternative forms of crime.

METHODOLOGY

An exploratory-cross-sectional design was adopted for this research. Gonan-Magajin-Gari, a village situated along the Zaria-Kaduna expressway in Kaduna State, was the study location. The choice of the village was informed by the fact that it has a functional local vigilante group that had at various times apprehended members of the Boko Haram Group involved in kidnapping. The study population constituted Boko Haram suspects who were apprehended by the community's local vigilante group. All the arrestees were male.

Qualitative methodology involving the triangulation of in-depth interview and key informant interview methods was principally deployed for data elicitation from 27 members of Boko Haram who were allegedly involved in kidnapping. Specifically, data were elicited from 21 members of the group through in-depth interviews, while key informant interviews were also conducted with six leaders of the group. The combination of these two methods was imperative for a holistic understanding of the subject of the research. The specific objectives of this research were: (i) to investigate the involvement of the Boko Haram Group in kidnapping for terrorism financing; (ii) to examine the strategies employed by the Boko Haram Group to recruit members engaging in kidnapping for terrorism financing; and (iii) to investigate the mode of operation of Boko Haram members involved in kidnapping for terrorism financing.

Before data could be elicited from the apprehended Boko Haram members, permission was sought and obtained from the commandant of the local vigilante group that arrested them through the assistance of a gatekeeper who was also a member of the Gonan-Magajin-Gari community. The process of data elicitation, which essentially involved using voice recorders and fieldnotes, lasted for three days, with each interview session spanning 35–50 minutes. The model that was adopted yielded first-hand information on the reasons informing the decision of the Boko Haram terrorist group to adopt the crime of kidnapping, the recruitment strategies of the group, the categories of individuals being targeted for recruitment as kidnappers, and the group's mode of operation as kidnappers, among others. All the interviews were conducted with the apprehended kidnappers before they were officially transferred to the Kaduna State Police Headquarters for onward investigation and prosecution. All the sessions were conducted in the Hausa language, the predominant language of Boko Haram members, to ensure smooth interactions and in-depth discussions between the researchers and respondents.

Finally, the data elicited through the in-depth and key informant interviews were subjected to content analysis. The recorded interviews were first transcribed and subsequently translated from Hausa to English. Thereafter, the emerging patterns from the data and the submissions of respondents that aligned with the research objectives were captured and categorised into themes and sub-themes. The themes were carefully explored and the data were interpreted to answer each research objective.

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Due to the sensitive nature of this research, ethical approval for its conduct was sought and obtained from the Ethical Review Committee of the principal investigator's university. The research procedures conformed with the international ethical standards guiding social research by upholding the principles of informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, and non-maleficence as a way of not only protecting the rights of the respondents who were already arrested by non-state actors but also to ensure they were not subjected to any form of victimisation during data elicitation. Caution was taken throughout the data collection process to uphold the rights and integrity of the respondents, while also ensuring they suffered no form of harm from participating in the research. Interview sessions were conducted privately with all the respondents through one-on-one informal chats devoid of the intimidating presence of the community's local vigilante officials. Also, none of the respondents was forced to participate in the research, nor were they coerced to respond to the questions the researchers asked.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section thematically presents and discusses the findings from this study. The main themes covered include: the adoption of kidnapping for terrorism financing by members of the Boko Haram Group, the strategies employed by members of the group to recruit members for kidnapping operations, and the mode of operation of Boko Haram members involved in the criminal act of kidnapping.

Boko Haram's Adoption of Kidnapping for Terrorism Financing

To gain insights into the connection between Boko Haram's terrorism financing and kidnapping in northern Nigeria, the respondents were asked about their involvement in kidnapping activities. Their responses shed light on the phenomenon. In one of the interviews, a leader of the kidnapping gang said:

I and other members of my group are kidnappers. The ransoms generated from our kidnapping operations are usually taken to our central administrators (leaders) through the Ameer (commandant) of my zone. These funds are mostly used to finance the operations and logistics of Boko Haram Group such as for the launching of attacks, the sustenance of group members in the Sambisa Forest, and for the recruitment of new members into the group. However, some of our gang members actually do not know that they are raising funds for the purpose of supporting the Boko Haram Group. (KII, Boko Haram member, Gonan-Magajin-Gari, Zaria)

Another member of the group said:

Kidnapping is one of the major means that we normally used to generate funds. We also do rob people along the major highways. My own group is the group that mostly rob and kidnap people along the Zaria-Kaduna–Abuja express way. Though there are some other gangs of robbers operating along that highway because there was a time that we had a clash with another gang during a particular robbery operation. In fact, our operation was very bloody on that particular day. (IDI, Boko Haram member, Gonan-Magajin-Gari, Zaria)

In the words of one of the other leaders of the group:

I and some of other loyalists (Boko Haram members) left the forest (Sambisa Forest) to raise money for our activities because we have not been getting sponsors like we used to before. The Joint Military Task Force (JMTF) stationed at various border posts in the northeast is also another factor that is affecting our movement of cash and weapons. Although the presence of JMTF and the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) in the region cannot prevent our operations, their presence is a barrier to the intensity of our operations and recruitments. So, the need for fund to strengthen our operations informed our adoption of kidnapping for ransom and armed robbery. (KII, Boko Haram member, Gonan-Magajin-Gari, Zaria)

Another key-informant stated:

For any of our kidnapping operations, it is only one member (usually one of our gang leaders) that must be communicating with the family members of a kidnapped victim(s) during the process of ransom negotiation. It is this same person who would collect the money if family members of the victim(s) decide to pay. The person would then declare whatever sum of money he likes, and this would then be shared amongst members. In a particular deal that I handled, I only declared 50% of the ransom, and that was shared amongst my group members. The remaining 50% was then sent to our commandants. (KII, Boko Haram member, Gonan-Magajin-Gari, Zaria)

It can be seen from the above extracts that members of the Boko Haram Group were not only involved in the crime of kidnapping, but they were also engaging in armed robberies. The involvement of members of the group in some instrumental crimes (kidnapping and armed robbery) was essentially necessitated by the need to devise an alternative source of funding because of dwindling financial support from their sponsors. Moreover, the fact that they were

having trouble moving large sums of cash and ammunition from one place to another owing to the law enforcement and policing efforts of the JMTF and CJTF also influenced their decision to explore other criminal means of support. Keatinge and Danner (2021) and Rafay (2021) have also reported that resorting to criminal activities usually becomes essential for terrorists' financial survival whenever their monetary donations and external support decline. Another major analytical finding which emanated from the interviews is that some members of the criminal gangs being used to carry out kidnapping and armed robberies were unaware they were working to support the terrorist activities of Boko Haram. This demonstrates the ingenuity of the group at widening its social capital and its stringent clandestine organisational structure that was designed to buffer and mitigate possible threats that could be targeted at its commandants and central leadership. Some other related studies have also established that the secretive nature of the organisational structure of the Boko Haram Group is central to its resilience as a terrorist organisation (Attah, 2019; Curiel et al., 2020; Rock, 2016; Thurston, 2016). Furthermore, this result is also in line with a key proposition of the rational choice theory which posits that crime is a purposive behaviour that is designed to meet an offender's commonplace needs for things such as money, status, sex, and excitement (Cornish & Clarke, 2017). In this context, the members of Boko Haram involved in kidnapping did not see the crime as an end in itself. Rather, they considered it as a means for generating finances that they could use to further prosecute their terror activities. Moreover, the fact that only leaders of the apprehended Boko Haram kidnapping gang were aware of the true intention behind their kidnapping activities demonstrated the rational approach that was being used by the group to achieve its terror objective while also guarding against the leakage of sensitive information that could compromise the group's criminal operations. But what does it say about those who were unaware, and what are the implications of this for rational choice theory?

Boko Haram Strategies for Recruiting Members for Kidnapping Operations

Information was also sought from the respondents on their recruitment strategies as a way of understanding the techniques they were adopting to recruit members to carry out their kidnapping operations. All the key informants expressed similar opinions. One of them described the group's recruitment strategy this way:

...The process of recruiting new members is not that difficult, and this is why you hear of recurring kidnapping incidents in the north ... I was selling herbal mixtures before I was recruited into the Boko Haram Group in 2011. I left Sambisa Forest about five years ago to recruit youths that will be engaging in robbery and kidnapping operations... (KII, Boko Haram member, Gonan-Magajin-Gari, Zaria)

Another leader of the Boko Haram kidnapping gang said:

Whenever we get to a new community, we usually hide our identities while also systematically identifying hoodlums in the areas after settling down. We usually established strong ties with hoodlums, unemployed youths, thugs, touts, drug addicts, and ex-convicts with high profile crimes in our communities of destination. (KII, Gonan-Magajin-Gari, Zaria, 2019)

In the words of another:

Abubakar Sheka'u (the now-deceased Chief Commandant of the group) is usually surrounded by four Ameer (commandants) whose absolute loyalty is not in doubt. Each of these four commandants has two Ameers/commandants directly working under them. These two sub-commandants together with their fighters were assigned to different geographical zones based on the zonal divisions that were created by the group (Boko Haram) leaders. It is these two sub-commandants that usually allocate their subordinates to their preferred locations within their zones. By the time our members get to their assigned states, they would then locate and settle down in Muslim-dominated areas where they would pretend to be 'labourers' and thereafter systematically lure more youths into the group. (KII, Boko Haram member, Gonan-Magajin-Gari, Zaria)

A member of the group also stated:

Initially, they (the recruiters) got close to us by enticing us with cash and gradually they started to show us how to make money by introducing us to armed robbery operations in the first instance. Thereafter, we were then introduced into the act of kidnapping for ransom. (IDI, Boko Haram member, Gonan-Magajin-Gari, Zaria, 2019)

These responses clearly indicate that Boko Haram is a well-organised terrorist group whose activities are systematically structured and well-coordinated. Equally, the fact that members of the group were specifically targeting Muslim-dominated areas to clandestinely source recruits among unemployed youths, thugs, touts, hoodlums, drug addicts, and ex-convicts further demonstrates the strategic intent behind the Boko Haram Group's operation. A major implication of this finding is that without any strategic intervention specifically targeted at significantly ameliorating the rate of poverty and unemployment, it may be very difficult to stop the recruitment processes of the terrorist group because the recruiters are targeting people with poor financial status and those who have criminal tendencies or are already engaged in other forms of crimes. This aligns with the findings of Onuoha (2014) and Ozeren et al. (2014) that terrorist groups' methods of recruiting new members are usually in consonance with their ideologies, aims, and areas of activity, as well as their policies and target groups. Furthermore,

the results also support the assumption of rational choice theory which states that crime is not a random phenomenon occurring evenly across time and place because it is a product of the interaction between the offender and their situational environment (Guerette et al., 2005). Thus, Boko Haram as a group is intentional and highly pragmatic in its adopted approach for recruiting members into its kidnapping squads by strategically targeting locations (Muslim-dominated environment) where they can easily blend in and by also strategically recruiting from among individuals who have criminal tendencies. This is a rational approach to the running of a criminal enterprise as settling in locations where they are less conspicuous reduces the risk of their detection and apprehension and while recruiting from the vulnerable and individuals who have criminal propensity within their adopted localities means they could easily gain access to credible intelligence and useful information that would be beneficial to the facilitation of their criminal objectives.

Mode of Operation of Boko Haram Members Involved in Kidnapping

Respondents were also asked about the methods their group usually adopted for executing their kidnapping operations. One of the apprehended members of the group described their methods this way:

Most times, it is the thugs living within a targeted community that usually give us information about the identities of those we should kidnap. For instance, a Mallam that we kidnapped some time ago, we heard about him from his neighbour who told us that he recently bought a Toyota Corolla car (2010 model) and that he was among the wealthy persons in the community. After kidnapping him, we demanded for a sum of ₦40 million (US\$96,327) because we were informed that he had big men around him that could easily pay the ransom. He started negotiating with us to pay ₦5 million (US\$12,040.94). He was calling his people in Abuja, Lagos and Ilorin to assist him to raise the money with which to pay for the ransom. We eventually collected the sum of ₦3 million (US\$7,224.56) from his family members. (IDI, Boko Haram Member, Gonan-Magajin-Gari/Zaria, 2019)

Another member of the group said:

In one of the kidnapping operations that we carried out, we targeted a man whose son-in-law is very rich. The son-in-law decided to sponsor the holy pilgrimage of one of his wives to Mecca in 2019. The man's other wife was not happy, and subsequently discussed the matter with his son who is one of the thugs in the community. It was him (the son) who invited us to kidnap his stepmother without informing his own mum. When we got to their residence, the man's first wife (the thug's mother) was

shocked, slumped and died instantly. We also shot a young man that we met in the house. Thereafter, we went away with their father. We eventually killed the man because his family members instead of giving the ransom that we demanded decided to involve the police in the matter. (IDI, Boko Haram member, Gonan-Magajin-Gari, Zaria)

A respondent also provided insight into the mode of operation of the group:

Our two leaders usually supplied us arms and ammunitions through a source that we do not know. At times, when it is not convenient for us to move around with our own weapons, we usually sourced for arms within the immediate community in which we want to operate. We usually rented weapons through our recruited indigenes; and that is why we mostly look for hoodlums and ex-convicts with high profile crimes to work with. (IDI, Boko Haram member, Gonan-Magajin-Gari, Zaria)

Another member of the gang said:

There was a respected Mallam that we also kidnapped in Zaria town sometimes ago. Before we went out for that particular operation, we sought spiritual guidance on how to successfully overcome him. Our spiritual guardian told us to look for human faeces which to carry along with us for that particular operation; and that once we get inside his (Mallam) compound, we should step on it and abduct the man. We did just that, and we were able to effectively neutralise his power spiritually. Thereafter, we were able to successfully kidnap him. (IDI, Boko Haram member, Gonan-Magajin-Gari, Zaria)

It can be established from these findings that Boko Haram members involved in kidnapping usually relied on sensitive information obtained from their informants who were, typically, individuals sharing some form of interpersonal relationship (family members, friends or neighbours) with their potential victims to successfully carry out their criminal operations within their targeted communities. This result aligns with the findings of Otu et al. (2021), who established that informants play a pivotal role in the operations of kidnappers in south-eastern Nigeria. Also, the fact that members of the Boko Haram Group who were involved in kidnapping were engaging in spiritual consultation before carrying out their criminal operations indicates that they were combining their physical strength and munitions with the use of spiritual power. This finding corresponds with the outcome of Zenn's (2014) study, which established that some members of Boko Haram were relying on the use of traditional charms to avoid being detected and arrested by security forces and members of the civilian Joint Task Force (JTF). Furthermore, Ojedokun and Dinne (2022) and Isiaka (2020) also established that it is common for criminals operating in Nigeria to use spiritual powers for crime perpetration. This finding also supports the

position of rational choice theory which states that criminal acts are the outcome of the interaction between motivation and opportunity (the opportunity for financial reward, knowledge of the necessary skills and techniques needed to commit the crime and understanding the risks and methods of avoiding detection) (Murray & Topalli, 2014). The result shows that Boko Haram members involved in kidnapping are rational actors who realised the costs and risks associated with their criminality and consequently were using a wide range of situational and contextual approaches to actualise their criminal intention, which is mainly to perpetrate kidnapping without running the risk of being detected or apprehended by law enforcement officials.

CONCLUSION

The main thrust of this research was to investigate the involvement of members of Boko Haram terrorist group in kidnapping to help fund terrorism. The results showed that the involvement of Boko Haram members in kidnapping was necessitated by the need to devise alternative sources of funding because of dwindling financial support the group was receiving from its sponsors. Some members of the criminal gangs who were recruited to engage in kidnapping were unaware they were working to support the terrorist activities of Boko Haram. The old members of the group were systematically recruiting members among unemployed youths, thugs, touts, hoodlums, drug addicts, and ex-convicts with high-profile crimes. Furthermore, local informants were pivotal to the success of the kidnapping operations of Boko Haram members in their targeted communities.

The criminal acts of terrorism and kidnapping by members of the Boko Haram Group are not only socio-economically harmful but also constitute a potent threat to human security and Nigeria's stability. Therefore, the following recommendations are considered relevant for combatting their criminal activities. First, community heads and religious leaders should be more strategically engaged by the Nigerian government in its fight against the Boko Haram Group. Given their key positions in society, community and religious leaders are usually very close to the people and well-informed about the happenings within their communities. Hence, they can potentially play a pivotal role in assisting and supporting governments at both the central and state levels in their efforts to discourage youths from being recruited into the Boko Haram Group.

Second, the Nigerian government in collaboration with state governors in the north should strategically partner to design practicable multi-layered frameworks tailored towards the alleviation of poverty, the provision of job opportunities for unemployed youths, as well as the counselling and systematic rehabilitation of youths involved in deviant acts. This step can contribute to drastically reducing the number of individuals who can be easily enticed to join the terrorist group because Boko Haram members usually target unemployed youths, thugs, touts, hoodlums, drug addicts, ex-convicts and individuals with poor financial status.

Third, there is the need for security operatives to consciously collaborate with local vigilantes to combat the criminal activities of Boko Haram members who are kidnapping people in communities and along major highways in northern Nigeria. Typically, local vigilantes combine their hunting skills with the use of spiritual charms in dealing with crimes and security-

threatening situations. Therefore, their systematic engagement by law enforcement officials can prove highly beneficial in dealing with Boko Haram members who are relying on spiritual assistance for perpetrating crimes.

Finally, it is important for the Nigerian government and other relevant stakeholders to make concerted efforts to ensure that the cashless policy that was introduced by the Central Bank of Nigeria to reduce cash usage in the economy is successfully implemented and widely embraced by the Nigerian populace. If this step is achieved, it can go a long way to discouraging the criminal propensity of individuals and terrorist organisations motivated by the largely cash-based system of the Nigerian economy to take to the crime of kidnapping. Indeed, the successful digitalisation of the Nigerian economy has the potential to combat illicit financial flows and crimes that are largely driven by the availability of large volumes of cash in circulation.

About the authors:

Dr Monsurat Isiaka is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Criminology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria. Her email address is: isiaka.m@unilorin.edu.ng

Dr Usman A. Ojedokun is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Sociology, Faculty of the Social Sciences, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. His main research areas of specialisation include: Crime Prevention and Law Enforcement, Policing and Police Studies, Violence, Gender and Cultural Studies. His email address is: uaojedokun@gmail.com

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