

# Assessment of Prevailing Kidnapping Risk Factors and Its Reduction Initiatives in Port Harcourt Metropolis

AJETUNMOBI B<sup>1</sup>, ELUDOYIN O.S.<sup>2</sup>, MBEE D. M.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1, 2, 3</sup> Centre for Disaster Risk and Development Studies, University of Port Harcourt, Port Harcourt  
Nigeria

**Abstract-** *The study assessed the prevailing kidnapping risk factors and its reduction initiative in Port Harcourt Metropolis, Rivers State, Nigeria. Four hundred copies of questionnaire were administered to the professionals to elicit information about the risk factors of kidnapping and ways to reduce the frequency of occurrence. Descriptive and inferential statistics were applied in the study. Findings revealed that more than 70% of respondents attested that kidnapping in Port Harcourt Metropolis has its determining factor in situating businesses; negatively affects tax revenue; negatively affects development; and restricts commuting freely. Significant variation in the risk factors of kidnapping from 2010 to 2020 ( $F=2.2771$ ;  $p<0.05$ ). Findings also revealed that more than 80% agreed that government special task force on kidnapping risk reduction will catalyse preventive efforts; adopting risk reducing policing will reduce kidnapping risk; equipping the security architecture with risk reduction technology will facilitate kidnapping risk reduction; and setting up a risk communication protocol, legislation to enforce risk reduction protocols; setting up a special kidnapping judicial process; adopting governmental systems that enforces responsibility in leadership; and strategic governmental efforts to rapidly reduce unemployment will facilitate kidnapping risk reduction in Port Harcourt. The study can be concluded kidnapping is a major crime which has many major risk factors and initiative to reduce the frequency among others included response approach to kidnapping is reactive; security response to kidnapping can be proactive security patrols and road blocks; security architecture has adequate technical requirements and community policing with preventive policing. The study thus recommended that the response approach to kidnapping that is reactive should be more encouraged; and the security response to kidnapping should be more proactive.*

**Indexed Terms-** *Prevailing; Kidnapping; Professionals; Proactive; Reactive*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Every person traversing the Nigerian soil as a citizen or visitor, is to a very high probability, vulnerable to being kidnapped, not just when commuting between states but even within the metropolis of the thirty-six (36) states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). Kidnapping can really not be micro-zoned to specific areas of cities in Nigeria, but have in recent time, been executed in places many could easily classify as safe zones. Historical, records show that individual kidnappers fall into the following categories of being religious zealots and political extremists, where the drive of an ideology is the purpose; autocrats and anarchists to fulfil political goals; sadists and psychopaths, under unbalanced mental conditions; slaves and abolitionists; gangsters and those who prey on racketeers; parents, children and those who crave children, outlaw pursuing profits; and policemen acting under order of the state Newton, (2002). This over a decade long crime, in Nigeria, has compounded from being a tool for negotiating for justice, equity and restitution in the Niger Delta, to a means of economic sustenance and ideological demands by criminal elements and terrorist alike. Inyang & Abraham, (2013) defined kidnapping as the use of force to capture, take away and detain a person unlawfully against their will. The birth of kidnapping in Nigeria stems from the response to perceived and actual grievances associated with, especially the discovery of crude oil in commercial quantity in the oil rich region of Nigeria, the Niger Delta, and the resultant environmental degradation, destruction of the people's means of livelihood, which was agriculture (farming and fishing) to also denying them a worthy reward of being the goose that lays the golden egg the nation Nigeria feeds on, majorly, amounting to 90% of export

income and 85% government revenue Ngwama, (2014). This led to the rise of agitators, freedom fighters, militants etc. under different groups in the Niger Delta, protesting the degradation, injustice, and inequality in received dividends of hosting the resources that contributes majorly to the Nation's economy. Beyond the use of media, subversion, threatened and actual sabotage, these groups and their leaders used kidnapping as a tool to get the attention of the Federal government of Nigeria and the International oil companies operating in the Niger Delta, doing business without responsible consideration to the welfare and wellbeing of the people. The first case of kidnapping for financial payment occurred between the year 1999 and 2000 Research Clue, (2020), while the first case attracting national attention occurred on 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2006, when some foreign expatriate oil workers were abducted by restive Niger Delta youths to entrench their demands for restitution and increased infrastructural development Ugwuoke, (2011). The victims at the time were expatriates of International Oil Companies (IOC's) and their release was secured by the payment of huge financial ransom. Currently, kidnapping in Port Harcourt metropolis and its links to the historical grievances raises questions why the crime still persists, why the kidnapers are the average youth with a promising future, and why the victims of prevailing trends are the average Nigerians going about their normal lives and business activities. In Port Harcourt metropolis, this is done majorly for pecuniary extortion from their victims, their relatives and/or their employer. With the lucrative returns received, kidnapping became a criminal mainstay in Nigeria with citizens being victims at random. Despite right turns by the federal government through key actions to reduce grievances, such as the amnesty program, and the thirteen percent (13%) derivation fund, amongst other benefits to be utilized for visible development purposes, this has become a subject of controversy between the oil-producing communities and their various state government, with the former demanding the money be paid directly to the communities and not into the state coffers Eboh, (2017). The prevailing situation in Nigeria as regards kidnapping is that no one is safe, no matter the class: everyone is vulnerable and a potential victim, as the poor are most likely kidnapped for ritual or trafficking purposes, while the middle class and the rich are

kidnapped for extortion through the payment of ransom running from thousands to billions of naira, depending on the victim status Ogbuehi, (2018). The existential rate of kidnapping in Nigeria questions the fulfilment of the primary role of government: the protection of lives and properties, because the average Nigerian neighbourhood is filled with homes secured with high walls, but this human induced disaster has defied this protocol as it occurs beyond the built fence of personal homes, in the open spaces where and when people are going about their daily businesses Ngwama, (2014). There are thoughts that posit that the political consequences of kidnapping results from the spill over influence of social failure of providing employment and creating the enabling environment for businesses to provide gainful employment for the growing youth population who settle for kidnapping as the viable substitute or complement to armed robbery and pick pocketing Akpan, (2010). These set of vulnerable actor's target not only the elite and well to do persons but also the ordinary citizen with little or no valuable means of survival. Ekechukwu & Osaat, (2021) in their research noted that results have shown that the participation of the ordinary citizen in the criminal act of kidnapping is to ensure resources are available for their economic sustenance as individuals, making them a ready tool deployed by the rich and affluent to execute dirty jobs from political thuggery to attacking business opponents at their request. Also, results show that some leaders within the community and religious institutions are involved in these businesses through divulging information relevant to fostering this disaster, with the aim of getting valuable share of the loot. The security framework in the study area and the nation at large is not left out of the whole cycle, most especially as regards the effective management of kidnapping, as the prevailing situation tells a whole lot about how much progress has been made in terms of proffering solutions to this disaster, with the compounding frequency of occurrence. The situation is a case of individual deployment of security, most especially the men of the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) to individuals who can afford them, causing shortage of manpower to tackle the daily criminal activities. The transition of deploying a terror tool for the expression of grievance and injustice to its growing use by the common criminal as a more lucrative option that is ravaging the nation to the point of being a major threat on the list of every travel

advisory for their clients visiting Nigeria, most especially the study area is the depth of concern for this study, with calculated steps to provide useful solutions, accordingly.

The vulnerability of the population to kidnapping and its risks has stunted the opportunities for development in the state, making it a second option to other states that experience relative peace, playing host to organizations corporate headquarters and other viable businesses. Kidnapping has also put the study area on the top list of travel advisory as a high-risk zone, with warning to citizens of western nations to either avoid visiting or adopt stringent security protocols to ensure their safety. This human induced disaster has also left the study area with a shortfall in revenue, relative peace, and developmental benefits. With the general perception of how kidnapping is here to stay because of its ease of execution, compared to other criminal activities, and the economics surrounding it, there is a need, beyond the history and transformation to an everyday criminal activity, to also check the modus operandi of kidnap managers in the study area to analyse the existing approach and its vulnerabilities that sets the disaster on a compounding path, that exceeds their management capacity, most especially as regards ensuring the prevention of this dastardly act. Many studies have been done on various crimes in the Niger Delta but they never considered the risk factors of kidnapping especially in Port Harcourt Metropolis. This study assessed kidnapping risk factors and its reduction initiatives in Port Harcourt metropolis, Rivers State, Nigeria.

## II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was carried out in Port Harcourt LGA, Rivers State, Nigeria. It is located on latitude  $04^{\circ} 48'$  and  $05^{\circ} 00'N$  of the Equator and longitude  $06^{\circ} 55'$  and  $07^{\circ} 10'E$  of the Greenwich Meridian (Figure 1). Port Harcourt Metropolis covers an area of 387.261000 (sq.km). Port Harcourt is the Capital City of Rivers State of Nigeria. The study area has a tropical monsoon climate with mean annual temperature of  $28^{\circ}C$  and annual rainfall over 2500mm. The relative humidity is very high with an annual mean of 85%. The relief is generally lowland which has an average of elevation between 20m and 30m above sea level and the geology of the area comprises basically of alluvial

sedimentary basin and basement complex. The vegetation found in this area includes raffia palms, thick mangrove forest and light rain forest. The soil is usually sandy or sandy loam underlain by a layer of impervious pan and is always leached due to the heavy rainfall. The study area is well drained with both fresh and salt water. The salt water is caused by the intrusion of sea water inland, thereby making the water slightly salty. All relevant data collected will be obtained through interview with twenty-one (21) government security kidnap investigators, comprising of ten (10) from the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and eleven (11) from the Department of State Services (DSS). Fifteen (15) post incident testimonials will be made available for exploitation from the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) records. The population of the study was three million, three hundred and twenty-five thousand 3,325,000 indigenes and residents in Port Harcourt Metropolis. A sample size of four hundred (400) was drawn using the Taro Yamane formula. The simple random sampling technique was used and the collection instrument while tables and simple percentages were used in analysing the collected data.

## III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

- Prevailing kidnapping risk factors in Port Harcourt metropolis

The prevailing risk factors are displayed in Table 1 whereby it is shown that 88.86% of respondents agreed that kidnapping is a form of criminal activity in Port Harcourt Metropolis, 66.08% agreed that kidnapping is a major risk factor in Port Harcourt Metropolis; 85.31% agreed that indigenes and residents are exposed to the risk of kidnapping in Port Harcourt Metropolis while 78.48% of total respondents agreed that kidnapping threatens the growth potentials of businesses in Port Harcourt Metropolis. Furthermore, it is disclosed in the analysis that 93.67% agreed that kidnapping in Port Harcourt Metropolis has polarised residential settlement; 97.21% attested that kidnapping in Port Harcourt Metropolis has its determining factor in situating businesses; 72.91% of respondents agreed that the prevailing kidnapping situation in Port Harcourt Metropolis negatively affects tax revenue; 96.71% agreed that kidnapping in Port Harcourt Metropolis negatively affects development; 80.26% agreed that kidnapping in Port Harcourt Metropolis restricts

commuting freely and 78.99% agreed that kidnapping risk in Port Harcourt Metropolis is a priority consideration for visitors.

from 2010 to 2020 ( $F=2.2771$ ;  $p=0.008$ ). This shows that the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is retained.

The analysis of variance in Table 2 revealed a significant variation in the risk factors of kidnapping

Table 1: Kidnapping Risk Factors in Port Harcourt Metropolis

SN	Nature of Kidnapping in Port Harcourt	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
1	Kidnapping is a form of criminal activity in Port Harcourt Metropolis	206	145	23	21	395
	Percentage (%)	52.15	36.71	5.82	5.32	100.00
2	Kidnapping is a major risk factor in Port Harcourt Metropolis	151	110	77	57	395
	Percentage (%)	38.23	27.85	19.49	14.43	100.00
3	Indigenes and residents are exposed to the risk of kidnapping in Port Harcourt Metropolis	219	118	30	28	395
	Percentage (%)	55.44	29.87	7.59	7.09	100.00
4	Kidnapping threatens the growth potentials of businesses in Port Harcourt Metropolis	214	96	48	37	395
	Percentage (%)	54.18	24.30	12.15	9.37	100.00
5	Kidnapping in Port Harcourt Metropolis has polarised residential settlement	161	209	14	11	395
	Percentage (%)	40.76	52.91	3.54	2.78	100.00
6	Kidnapping in Port Harcourt Metropolis has its determining factor in situating businesses	215	169	8	3	395
	Percentage (%)	54.43	42.78	2.03	0.76	100.00
7	The prevailing Kidnapping situation in Port Harcourt Metropolis negatively affects tax revenue	203	85	56	51	395
	Percentage (%)	51.39	21.52	14.18	12.91	100.00
8	Kidnapping in Port Harcourt Metropolis negatively affects development	209	173	12	1	395
	Percentage (%)	52.91	43.80	3.04	0.25	100.00
9	Kidnapping in Port Harcourt Metropolis restricts commuting freely	198	119	20	58	395
	Percentage (%)	50.13	30.13	5.06	14.68	100.00
10	Kidnapping risk in Port Harcourt Metropolis is a priority consideration for visitors	201	111	42	41	395
	Percentage (%)	50.89	28.10	10.63	10.38	100.00

Table 2: Analysis of Variance in the risk factors from 2010 to 2020

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	74.258	17	4.368118	2.277057	0.008
Within Groups	725.124	378	1.918317		
Total	799.382	395			

- Risk factors that can be reduced by entrenched safety and development in the study area

The risk reduction strategies of kidnapping are provided in Table 3 whereby it is discovered that 87.09% of respondents agreed on community policing in Port Harcourt Metropolis will catalyse kidnapping risk reduction; 88.1% agreed that government special task force on kidnapping risk reduction will catalyse preventive efforts; 88.86% agreed that adopting risk reducing policing in Port Harcourt Metropolis will reduce kidnapping risk; 87.34% attested that equipping the security architecture with risk reduction technology will facilitate kidnapping risk reduction; and 97.21% of respondents agreed that setting up a risk communication protocol in Port Harcourt Metropolis will facilitate kidnapping risk reduction. However, 97.31% agreed that legislation to enforce risk reduction protocols will entrench kidnapping risk reduction efforts; 93.67% agreed that setting up a

special kidnapping judicial process will entrench kidnapping risk reduction; 97.24% agreed that adopting governmental systems that enforces responsibility in leadership will play a key role in reducing kidnapping risk; 87.09% attested that strategic governmental efforts to rapidly reduce unemployment will facilitate kidnapping risk reduction while 93.67% agreed that a clamp down on political thuggery will curtail the entrenchment of kidnapping risk and 95.7% agreed that dedicated efforts to entrench moral values will reduce kidnapping risks. Results of analysis also discovered that 88.6% agreed that dedicated efforts to entrench quality education to employability will reduce kidnapping risks while 97.21% of total respondents agreed that refining the transportation system in Port Harcourt Metropolis in alignment with preventive policing will reduce kidnapping risks.

Table 3: Kidnapping Risk Reduction Strategies

SN	Risk Reduction	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
1	Community policing in Port Harcourt Metropolis will catalyse kidnapping risk reduction	209	135	24	27	395
	Percentage (%)	52.91	34.18	6.08	6.84	100.00
2	Government special task force on kidnapping risk reduction will catalyse preventive efforts	200	148	15	32	395
	Percentage (%)	50.63	37.47	3.80	8.10	100.00
3	Adopting risk reducing policing in Port Harcourt Metropolis will reduce kidnapping risk	211	140	18	26	395
	Percentage (%)	53.42	35.44	4.56	6.58	100.00
4	Equipping the security architecture with risk	210	135	20	30	395

	reduction technology will facilitate kidnapping risk reduction					
	Percentage (%)	53.16	34.18	5.06	7.59	100.00
5	Setting up a risk communication protocol in Port Harcourt Metropolis will facilitate kidnapping risk reduction	215	169	8	3	395
	Percentage (%)	54.43	42.78	2.03	0.76	100.00
6	Legislation to enforce risk reduction protocols will entrench kidnapping risk reduction efforts	209	173	12	1	395
	Percentage (%)	52.91	43.80	3.04	0.25	100.00
7	Setting up a special kidnapping judicial process will entrench kidnapping risk reduction	160	210	15	10	395
	Percentage (%)	40.51	53.16	3.80	2.53	100.00
8	Adopting governmental systems that enforces responsibility in leadership will play a key role in reducing kidnapping risk	210	175	7	3	395
	Percentage (%)	53.16	44.30	1.77	0.76	100.00
9	Strategic governmental efforts to rapidly reduce unemployment will facilitate kidnapping risk reduction	143	201	26	25	395
	Percentage (%)	36.20	50.89	6.58	6.33	100.00
10	A clamp down on political thuggery will curtail the entrenchment of kidnapping risk	161	209	14	11	395
	Percentage (%)	40.76	52.91	3.54	2.78	100.00
11	Dedicated efforts to entrench moral values will reduce kidnapping risks	212	166	10	7	395
	Percentage (%)	53.67	42.03	2.53	1.77	100.00
12	Dedicated efforts to entrench quality education to employability will reduce kidnapping risks	213	137	19	26	395
	Percentage (%)	53.92	34.68	4.81	6.58	100.00
13	Refining the transportation system in Port Harcourt	219	165	8	3	395

Metropolis in alignment with preventive policing will reduce kidnapping risks						
Percentage (%)	55.44	41.77	2.03	0.76	100.00	

- Initiatives that can be implemented to reduce kidnapping risk factors

The initiatives that can be deployed or implemented in order to reduce kidnapping risk factors are expressed in Table 4 whereby it is observed that 89.62% agreed that kidnapping is the dominant crime in Port Harcourt Metropolis; but 87.85% of respondents disagreed that kidnapping risk can be completely eliminated unless the factors that led to kidnapping are being attended to keenly by the government. Furthermore, 89.62% of respondents agreed that kidnapping risk can be reduced to as low as reasonably possible; 97.22% agreed that the response approach to kidnapping is reactive; 87.85% agreed that the security response to

kidnapping can be proactive, 83.54% agreed that kidnapping response through post incidence arrest is more than rescue events while 87.6% of respondents agreed that security patrols and road blocks have prevented kidnapping incidents. In addition, the analysis revealed that 86.58% of respondents agreed that the security architecture has adequate technical requirements to curtail kidnapping risks; 87.60% agreed that community policing with preventive policing will reduce kidnapping risk; while 92.66% disagreed that government makes all resources available to combat kidnapping risk.

Table 4: Initiatives to be deployed to reduce kidnapping risk factors

SN	Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
1	Kidnapping is the dominant crime in Port Harcourt Metropolis	209	145	17	24	395
	Percentage (%)	52.91	36.71	4.30	6.08	100.00
2	Kidnapping risk can be completely eliminated	9	39	208	139	395
	Percentage (%)	2.28	9.87	52.66	35.19	100.00
3	Kidnapping risk can be reduced to as low as reasonably possible	254	100	15	26	395
	Percentage (%)	64.30	25.32	3.80	6.58	100.00
4	The response approach to kidnapping is reactive	189	195	10	1	395
	Percentage (%)	47.85	49.37	2.53	0.25	100.00
5	The security response to kidnapping can be proactive	245	102	17	31	395
	Percentage (%)	62.03	25.82	4.30	7.85	100.00
6	Kidnapping response through post incidence arrest is more than rescue events	225	105	39	26	395
	Percentage (%)	56.96	26.58	9.87	6.58	100.00
7	Security patrols and road blocks have prevented kidnapping incidents	218	128	20	29	395

	Percentage (%)	55.19	32.41	5.06	7.34	100.00
8	The security architecture has adequate technical requirements to curtail kidnapping risks	227	115	18	35	395
	Percentage (%)	57.47	29.11	4.56	8.86	100.00
9	Community policing with preventive policing will reduce kidnapping risk	201	145	26	23	395
	Percentage (%)	50.89	36.71	6.58	5.82	100.00
10	Government makes all resources available to combat kidnapping risk	14	15	228	138	395
	Percentage (%)	3.54	3.80	57.72	34.94	100.00

IV. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings showed that more than 90% of respondents agreed that kidnapping in Port Harcourt Metropolis has polarised residential settlement and that kidnapping in Port Harcourt Metropolis has its determining factor in situating businesses. This is corroborated in Plass et al., (1997) and The Conversation (2022) in which explains that Nigeria’s banditry crisis is a complicated situation with a number of interests, motives and actors. Some criminals are opportunistic, others organised. Militants, terrorists and insurgents use banditry to raise funds for their operations and as a bargaining strategy. Kidnapping for ransom thrives in Nigeria because the material incentive and opportunity are there, and victims find it expedient to pay ransom. In my view, the solutions lie in removing incentives, creating stricter deterrents, more effective policing and greater vigilance. Findings revealed that more than 90% agreed that the response approach to kidnapping is reactive; while more than 80% agreed that the security response to kidnapping can be proactive, kidnapping response through post incidence arrest is more than rescue events and security patrols and road blocks have prevented kidnapping incidents.

CONCLUSION AND RESULTS

The study can be concluded kidnapping is a major crime which has many major risk factors including threatening of the growth of potentials of businesses, polarising the residential settlement; negatively affecting nthe tax revenue, distorting the development

and restricting free movement of individuals. The initiative included response approach to kidnapping is reactive; security response to kidnapping can be proactive security patrols and road blocks; security architecture has adequate technical requirements and community policing with preventive policing. The study thus recommended among others that the response approach to kidnapping that is reactive should be more encouraged; the security response to kidnapping should be more proactive; security patrols and road blocks which have prevented kidnapping incidents should be more encouraged to destroy the plans of kidnappers; community policing with preventive policing should be more established and encouraged; government should try to make all resources available to combat kidnapping risk; there should be provision for peace education should be embraced to instil a culture of peace in the people living in Port Harcourt while there should be a call for right democratisation and societal transformations that will would lead to an effective check on kidnapping in Port Harcourt.

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