

LIVED EXPERIENCES OF FAMILY NEGOTIATORS AND RANSOM CARRIERS IN KIDNAPPING INCIDENTS IN KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study explores lived experiences of family negotiators and ransom carriers in kidnapping incidents in Kaduna State, Nigeria. The study aimed at identify the profile of secondary victims in kidnapping incidents, multi-dimensional experiences of secondary victims and experiences of ransom carriers in Kaduna State. The study utilized family stress and coping theory. Using a qualitative research design, drawing from in-depth interview and Key Informant interview (KIIs). The study findings show that secondary victims experience severe psychological distress, economic strain, social dislocation, and prolonged uncertainty. The study also found that negotiators and ransom carriers endure intense fear, moral burden and social stigma. The findings further shows that victims rely largely on informal coping mechanism, including social networks, religious faith, and adaptive role reorganization, in the absence of institutional support. The study concludes that secondary victims suffer multiple layers of victimization as a result of their links with direct victims. The study recommends that there is need for multidisciplinary model for victim support to enable secondary victims navigate the burden of kidnapping and recover fully from incidences.

Keywords: Experiences, Families, Negotiators, Ransom, Kidnapping and Incidents

Introduction

Kidnapping for ransom has emerged as a pervasive and complex security challenge in Nigeria, evolving into a systemic risk that threatens national stability and public wellbeing. Driven by socioeconomic inequalities and weak institutional enforcement, this criminal enterprise has escalated notably in Kaduna State (Aleyomo & Olajubu, 2024). High-profile abductions, such as those at Greenfield University, the Abuja-Kaduna train, and Baptist High School, exemplify the harrowing scale of trauma where victims are often held for months during protracted negotiations (Mohammed & Malumfashi, 2025). While existing scholarship predominantly focuses on primary victimization the direct harm to the abductee there is an urgent need to examine the "trauma contagion" that radiates through the victim's social network. This study pivots to secondary victimization, defined as the re-traumatization and multidimensional harm endured by associated actors through systemic neglect, social stigma, and the agonizing process of the crisis itself (Egwuaba & Achebe, 2025).

In the landscape of Kaduna State, secondary victims are not a static group; they comprise a diverse profile of spouses, parents, and colleagues who become "emotional anchors" under extreme duress (Owolabi *et al.*, 2024). This circle of victimhood uniquely extends to

negotiators and ransom carriers intermediaries who operate in "ungoverned spaces" and endure intense fear, moral burdens, and physical risks to secure a loved one's release (Oludayo & Momodu, 2023). Despite their pivotal role in managing abandoned family responsibilities and raising funds, their lived experiences remain significantly under-researched. In the context of kidnapping for ransom in Kaduna State, secondary victimization extends beyond the abductee who are the primary victims to include negotiators-often family members, intermediaries, or community representatives tasked with engaging kidnappers and ransom carriers, individuals responsible for transporting financial and non-financial demands under conditions of extreme stress and risk (Mohammed & Malumfashi, 2025). These actors and other families' members like spouse, parents, sibling, peers, and colleague occupy crucial roles in aiding release, simultaneously embedded with the crisis and exposed to layered psychological, social, and institutional pressures. Yet, despite their crucial role that is catalysing resolution process, raising fund and handling abandoned roles by primary victims, their lived experiences remain under-researched in empirical scholarship. It is based on the foregoing that this paper examines lived experiences of family negotiators and ransom carriers in kidnapping incidents in Kaduna State, Nigeria. To the achieve the set goal the following objectives:

- i. To identify the profile of secondary victims in kidnapping incidents in Kaduna State
- ii. To ascertain the multi-dimensional experiences of secondary victims in Kaduna State
- iii. To determine the experiences of ransom carriers in Kaduna State

Literature Review

This section of the study focuses on the literature review

Profile of Secondary Victims in Kidnapping Incidents

The profile of secondary victims in Kaduna's kidnapping landscape constitutes a dynamic "trauma circle" where harm radiates out ward from the primary abductee. Far from being a uniform group, these victims are defined by their emotional proximity and the specific roles they are forced to assume during the crisis. Qualitative data suggests that this circle encompasses a wide array of social identities, ranging from immediate kin to professional colleagues and faith-based intermediaries (Mohammed & Malumfashi, 2025).

At the core are the immediate and kinship circles, where victimization is often gendered. Mothers and wives frequently become "emotional anchors," tasked with the heavy burden of ransom mobilization and family stability (Owolabi *et al.*, 2024). In contrast, male relatives' fathers, brothers, or uncles typically inhabit high-risk roles as negotiators or ransom carriers, exposing them to physical danger and legal scrutiny (Aleyomo & Olajubu, 2024). Children within these families represent a particularly fragile subset, often manifesting "trauma contagion" through academic decline, phobias, and attachment disorders (Matthias *et al.*, 2024). Beyond the home, the professional and institutional circles include colleagues and classmates whose functional routines are shattered by the abduction. In Kaduna's context of mass abductions, entire school communities and religious congregations become secondary victims, sharing in a collective state of mourning and fear (Aloku & Atafo, 2023). Finally, the macro circle identifies "national secondary victims" the general public and even security agents who experience a sense of pervasive insecurity and institutional failure (Yehene *et al.*, 2024). Thus, kidnapping in Kaduna is not merely a private tragedy but a collective social injury that destabilizes the entire communal fabric (Egwuaba & Achebe, 2025).

Multi-Dimensional Experiences of Secondary Victims

The victimization of secondary actors in kidnapping incidents is not a singular event but a complex, radiating crisis with consequences that span four critical dimensions: psychological, health, economic, and social. These effects are often interlocking, where the strain in one area such as economic ruin exacerbates the decline in psychological and physical health.

Psychological Experiences

The most immediate and pervasive consequence of kidnapping is the profound psychological distress experienced by secondary victims. This is often characterized by a state of "ambiguous loss," where the abductee is physically absent but psychologically present, leaving the family in a harrowing limbo (Yehene *et al.*, 2024). Relatives frequently endure a spectrum of trauma, including acute anxiety, hallucinations, and persistent nightmares. The suddenness of the crime can trigger a temporary loss of mental sanity, manifesting as irrational behavior, intense bitterness toward state institutions, or even suicidal ideation during the peak of negotiations (Aloku & Atafo, 2023). Long after the crisis concludes, these victims often grapple with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and permanent personality alterations, illustrating that the mental wounds of kidnapping often outlast the physical captivity (Owolabi *et al.*, 2024).

Health Experiences

The mental agony of kidnapping rapidly translates into tangible physical deterioration, as the human body reacts to the prolonged fight or flight state induced by the crisis. Secondary victims frequently report psychosomatic symptoms such as persistent body aches, chest pains, and chronic insomnia that often lack a clear clinical diagnosis but are deeply debilitating (Livne *et al.*, 2024). Furthermore, the sustained surge of stress hormones can trigger or exacerbate life-threatening conditions, most notably hypertension and stress-induced ulcers. This decline is often worsened by acute self-neglect; during the agonizing period of negotiation, many relatives experience severe dehydration and starvation, not due to lack of resources, but because the emotional burden renders the basic act of eating "meaningless" and repulsive (Levine & Saban, 2024).

Economic Experiences

Economically, kidnapping functions as a predatory mechanism that often leads to the total financial collapse of the family unit. When the primary victim is a breadwinner, the household loses its income precisely when it needs capital most (Usman & Mohammed, 2025). To meet urgent ransom deadlines, families are forced into distress sales of foundational assets such as houses, farmlands, livestock, and family inheritances at giveaway prices (Tsojon & Mohammed, 2023). These financial stocks are often compounded by the acquisition of high-interest loans from informal creditors, creating a "debt trap" that can take generations to escape. The resulting capital flight frequently leads to children being withdrawn from schools and the abandonment of family businesses, shifting the burden of the crime onto the economic future of the entire lineage (Matthias *et al.*, 2024).

Social Experiences

Socially, the impact of kidnapping produces a dual reality of enhanced communal bonding and deep relational fracturing. On one hand, the crisis often triggers a surge of "shared humanity," where religious organizations and neighbors provide vital spiritual and material support, acting as an informal safety net (Audu *et al.*, 2023). Conversely, the extreme pressure of negotiations frequently breeds intense mistrust and suspicion. Families may falsely accuse friends, neighbors, or even distant relatives of being "insiders" or informants, leading to the permanent souring of long-standing relationships (Egwuaba & Achebe, 2025). In many cases, secondary victims face social stigmatization or isolation, as the trauma of the event makes them "socially radioactive" to others who fear being associated with the tragedy or its ongoing risks.

Experiences of Negotiators and Ransom Carriers

The negotiator carries the weight of a life in their words. Their experience is defined by intense mental fatigue as they manage the volatile temperaments of abductors while simultaneously calming distraught family members. They endure verbal abuse and death threats from kidnappers, often feeling a profound "moral burden" if negotiations stall or if ransom demands increase. This role creates a unique form of secondary trauma, as they are the direct recipients

of the abductors' cruelty, forced to remain calm and tactical while their own safety and the victim's life hang in the balance. Negotiators and ransom carriers occupy a hidden but pivotal position in kidnapping landscapes. They typically act as intermediaries between abductors and victims' families. Negotiators are often relatives, community members, family friends, or designated mediators—are individuals chosen to communicate with kidnappers, facilitate discussions, and attempt to secure the victim's safe release. While ransom carriers are those entrusted with delivery money or valuables demanded by kidnappers. Scholars like Aleyomi and Olajubu (2024), Udechukwu and Ofoke (2024) noted that negotiators and ransom carriers suffered unpleasant experiences ranges psychological, emotional, moral conflict, physical risks, exposure to violence, stigmatization, and suspicion among other burdens their roles placed on their shoulders. Psychologically, negotiators experience intense psychological pressure sometimes from both kidnappers and victims' families, fear of negative outcomes and emotionally dysregulation (Udechukwu & Ofoke (2024). This made them to face acute anxiety because they bear responsibility for lives of loved ones they are standing for, they face imminent danger from kidnappers even after complying and they navigate family expectations, financial negotiations, and threats simultaneously

A common thread in the lived experiences of both roles is the subsequent social and legal isolation. Despite their heroic efforts to save a life, these actors often face intense suspicion from security agencies who may view them as accomplices or "middlemen" facilitating criminal gains (Aleyomo & Olajubu, 2024). This institutional mistrust is frequently compounded by community stigmatization, where neighbors and associates fear the intermediary's proximity to the criminal element (Egwuaba & Achebe, 2025). As documented by Oludayo and Momodu (2023), this creates a phenomenon of "double victimization." The individuals who risked the most to resolve the crisis—navigating ungoverned spaces and bearing immense moral weight are often left without institutional protection or social recognition. Instead of being hailed for their resilience, they carry the psychological and social scars of their journey into the heart of the crisis alone, frequently marginalized by the very systems and communities they sought to protect (United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime [UNODC], 2020).

Theoretical Framework

This study will be anchor on the Family Stress and Coping theory as theoretical framework.

Family Stress and Coping Theory

Family Stress and Coping Theory, specifically the ABC-X Model developed by Reuben Hill (1949). This framework is uniquely suited to explain how a sudden, high-intensity event like kidnapping transcends the primary victim to become a systemic crisis for the entire kinship and social network. The model posits that the crisis (**X**) is not merely the result of the kidnapping itself (**A**), but is produced by the interaction between the event, the family's available resources (**B**), and the family's subjective perception of the situation (**C**).

In the context of Kaduna State, "**A**" represents the stressor: the abduction, threats, and ransom demands. "**B**" refers to the family's crisis-meeting resources, including financial capital, spiritual resilience, and the "informal social safety nets" provided by the community "**C**" is the subjective meaning or "definition" the family attaches to the event; if the family perceives the abduction as an insurmountable catastrophe rather than a manageable challenge, the likelihood of a total system collapse (**X**) increases significantly. Insightfully, the model explains the variance in secondary victimization across households. As documented by Tsojon and Mohammed (2023), when resources (**B**) are depleted such as through the "distress sales" of ancestral lands the family experiences a "pile-up" of demands that exacerbates the crisis. By applying this framework, the research moves beyond descriptive trauma to analyze the structural and cognitive factors determining whether a family achieves resilience or suffers

permanent disintegration. This theory is critical need for external interventions to bolster family resources and reshape their coping trajectories.

Methodology

The methodology of this study employs a qualitative research design to capture the possess of lived experiences of secondary victims in Kaduna State. The study's geographical scope encompasses the three senatorial zones of Kaduna State North, Central, and South ensuring a representative cross-section of the region's diverse socio-cultural and security landscapes. Data was collected through In-Depth Interviews (IDIs) AND KIIs with a purposively selected sample of 39 respondents, including affected family members, negotiators, ransom carriers, police officials, medical experts, and community leaders. To ensure academic and ethical rigor, the study maintained strict protocols regarding informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality due to the high-risk nature of the subject. Data analysis followed a thematic approach, where narratives were transcribed and coded to identify recurring patterns regarding victim profiles, multidimensional impacts. and lived experiences This process was guided by the Family Stress and Coping Theory (ABC-X model), providing a robust framework to interpret how the stressor of kidnapping interacts with family resources and perceptions to produce specific crisis outcomes.

Data Presentation and Discussion of Findings

This section of the study presents and analyse the data collected from the field. The data presentation will cut across the profile of secondary victims, multi-dimensional experiences of secondary victims and experiences of negotiators and ransom carriers in Kaduna State.

Profile of Secondary Victims in Kaduna State

I, my kids, my in-laws and our entire relations from both far and near were all regarded a secondary victim when my husband was kidnapped. Because they are all worried and keep calling to find out about us and the news of my husband. In fact, when the kidnappers finally told us the amount for his ransom, his friends, associates and relations contributed far above what was demanded by those monsters (R, 1. A woman whose husband was kidnapped).

Another respondent added that

When my son and other students that were kidnapped on their way to Federal University Gusau, by kidnappers. I was a serious victim, as he was my only son. Almost all of us, that were their parents, we were contacted as secondary victims. All their siblings, friends, co-students, lecturers and the entire institution were equally secondary victim, as you could see them calling us, to share in our grief and assured us they are with us. This made us to be contacting them and give them feedback of our negotiations with the abductors. In fact, the university management sent delegations to visit and support in a manner they could (R. 4. A window whose son was kidnapped).

Another profile dimension of the secondary victims as submitted by another informant:

The secondary victims are diverse; I will not focus on everyday secondary victims but what we referred to as ignored or forgotten or unknown secondary victims. The profile of the person or persons kidnapped determines who should be their secondary victims. I will start with parents of victims of mass abduction in schools like the cases of Chibok girls in Borno State, Dapchi girls in Yobe State, Greenfield University students Kaduna, and Baptist students in Kaduna and other tragic instances. These episodes created numerous secondary victims at once. It comprises of not only their parents and siblings, but members of school community, the State and other people who have linked to the direct victims in different capacities or are just aware of the unfortunate incident from mass/social media and are worried by the sad events. Another type of secondary victims can be deduced from the tragic adoption of train passengers from Abuja to Kaduna. In this case we have national secondary victims; most Nigerians from every walk s of life

saw themselves as victims beyond the immediate families and relations of the direct victims, with even the government seeing themselves as victims by sharing in concerns of Nigerians that are pained by the incidence. More so, sometimes, when the abduction is brutal the security agents also see themselves as secondary victims, because of their inability to protect the victims. At other special cases, sometimes if we are mobilizing to raid kidnappers' hideouts, our families to see us as victims, once they hear any negative reports from our operations, they get panic and worried about our safety except they received first-hand information from us. Others are seminarians, foreigners, foreign embassies, the entire nation and by extension international communities like the case of Chibok, Dapchi kidnapping. Kaduna-Abuja train passengers and Humanitarian aids workers, made international communities to even show concerned and worries about these nefarious acts (R, 38, A Senior Police Officer, police Headquarters Kaduna).

The qualitative data revealed that kidnapping produces multilayer victimization, where harm radiates beyond the abducted individuals to affect parents, siblings, children, neighbours, colleagues, and even the entire nation and international communities. Parents and siblings frequently reported feeling of helplessness, guilt, and worry due to absence of others occasioned by kidnapping incidences. Overall, we can assert that kidnapping functions as a collective social injury, producing ripple effects by producing multiple victims with different social profiles that destabilize family structures, weaken community bonds, and undermine state legitimacy due to the large-scale number of both direct and indirect victims.

Multi-Dimensional Experiences of Secondary Victims in Kaduna State

The consequences of kidnaping on secondary victims have manifested in multi-dimensional levels, the study focuses on psychological, health, economically and social dimensions of the issues at hand. On Psychological effects, secondary victims are opened to multiple psychological effects as outcomes of their experiences due to the kidnapped of their love ones, colleagues and other social considerations attached to the victims. One of the responded reported that:

When my wife was kidnapped, I was terribly devastated; psychologically I was depressed, experiencing hallucination by communicating with my wife invisibly. I was engulfed with fears of them rapping or harming her. This has seriously weighed me down mentally. I was always bitter, moody, hating any Fulani persons around and angry with our Nigeria security architectures at all levels, as though they were responsible for my wife predicament. Thank God, since her safe released, we are getting back stronger; in fact, I just remember the evil thoughts of suicide that bedevilled me severally during her absence. On one occasion, I attempted going to search of my wife alone in any forest but all these irrational thoughts and behaviours are stories now. As if, we never passed through this horrific situation.

A medical expert added that:

We have seen numerous psychological cases that many secondary victims suffered due to the kidnapping of their love ones and others around them. Some have recovered within the shortest possible time while others have to undergone serious, psychiatric intervention before gaining full sanity while others personality is altered for life as a result of this victimization. Some of the secondary victims as you called them suffered serious psychological issues like anxiety, depression, PTSD, Phobia, nightmares, hallucinations, suspicious, prolong thinking, fears, sleepless night, dementia, absent mindedness and other severe psychological issues that has distorted their personality. This does not only affect their health but their normal functioning (R. 39, A Medical Expert from tertiary facility).

On the health dimension, secondary victims are vulnerable to different challenges that kidnapping their people generated for them. One of the secondary victims submitted that:

The news of kidnapping of my husband paralysed my health seriously. I suffered starvation, body pains, and persistent headache and it even resulted to issue of high blood pressure for me. The unpleasant stories I heard about kidnapped victims made me weep and depressed for days. I have lost appetite completely. This has landed me to hospital for admission. Though he has been released for over a year now and has fully reintegrated back to the society but me am just here with total discomfort with my health that couldn't come back to normal health even as I speak with (A mother of a released victim in Birni Gwari).

A medical expert handle

Secondary victims of kidnapping usually undergo serious health challenges; some recover very fast while others do not. I will highlight few of the health challenges they faced in an orderly manner. There is the one we called psychosomatic symptoms which made them to experience headaches, chest pain, or body aches with no clear underlining causes, which makes it difficult to handle. They also suffered Stress-Induced ulcers and gastrointestinal disorders which are not easily curable. It also prone them to hypertension (BP) and cardiovascular strain because persistent emotional distress elevates blood pressure and increases the risk of heart complications, particular among elderly relatives. Others are loss of appetite, malnutrition which at the long run weakens victims' immune system. Some victims' health is completely broken down; you see us carrying different tests for victims and the results come out negative but you see victims continuously deteriorating and displaying visible signs of illness (A medical doctor handling health cases of indirect victims).

On economic impact to victims, data reveal that:

As soon as our husband was kidnapped, we experienced a lot of hardships. We couldn't get feeding money for days as he is the breadwinner that gives us daily feeding money that automatically ceased before we stated getting help from families and friends to carter for ourselves. Also, at the cause of raising money for ransom we sold some of our properties and his properties at a giveaway prices, also we bordered some of our relations and his friends to assist us to complete the targeted amount, not minding their own financial challenges. In fact, payment of our children educational needs became a serious challenge for us for over a year before things started turning around for good, during the crisis period we shifted our economic burdens to others, which weighed some of them down even without them voicing out (R 32, A one the wives of a release victim in Kujama).

A police office added that

Truly we are aware of the economy damages that secondary victims suffered whenever their person is kidnapped. From family statements you hear them saying they are over stressed and stretched themselves to contribute millions of naira to pay for ransom of their person like they are trading commodity. Sometimes, apart from the ransom payments, they asked them to buy control drugs, which are usually bought through black markets at very expensive prices. Others, they will ask them to buy a particular brand of motorbike, power bank, drugs, herbicides chemical, certain food items to take to them in the bush, all these required monies to achieved. Another expense incurred is paying some local negotiators, those to take the money and the cost of transportation of taking the money to interior bushes. Once victim releases other form of expenses will follow. Some secondary victims seek for exorbitant loans to access which repayment is now becoming impossible, some destroys their life savings to support in the released of direct victims after which they became stranded, some will stop going to work to

earn their livelihood thereby becoming impoverish, especially those in the informal sector of the economy. During the period of naira redesigned, some have to be going to bush markets to be buying money at their local exchange rates to meet up the demands of bringing cash.

Additionally, we have some cases at hand now that are pathetic, first a man sold his house ₦8m and got assistance of #3m and gave the abductors for the release of his brother, for moths he is yet to see his brother. Him and his family are now homeless as he couldn't raise money to rent an apartment. The second case is that a man and his wife were kidnapped when the sad news got to his mom; she collapsed from there to coma. The man and his wife have gained freedom but the mom is still in coma. Families and friends have spent a lot on this but no sign of improvement but only daily spending's of huge amount of money. Thirdly, we have a case of one Alhaji that over 10 of his business partners brought complain about him for holding their business to ransoms with total debt of over ₦100M, the man was a victim of kidnapping, who claimed he spent almost ₦50M for ransom and his boys mismanaged the business in his absence but he promised to settle the debt bit by bit. Now his misfortune is crippling other people's businesses. Another type of economic challenge for secondary victims is change in family life style like selling of car, selling house, change of kids from big schools to small schools, finding it difficult to feed, becoming a dependent for others among other things. We have a lot to say, but just manage these ones I gave.

On social implications.

One of the respondents submitted that:

The social effect of kidnapping to me is both positive and negative. I will start with the positive ones, when my husband was kidnapped people truly and genuinely reached out to us, we saw love practically, we saw assistance and material support, financial, emotional, psychological and even spiritually supports, even till the point of his safe returned. Personally, as family our spiritual lives was boosted as we all increase our piety, fasting, prayers, alms given and faith in God, because the miracle we saw

On the negative side, it made us to be observant of those that didn't share in our grief as bad people, some of them we are not in talking terms with them as I speak. Some we felt they have not done enough and they notice feeling of resentment from us and have withdrawn their closeness to us. In fact, our hatred for some people became obvious when we were looking for who to take the ransom money and other items to the kidnappers, any one we approached turned us down but at last, one of them came and took the money for us but we now understands their fear of not going, as some persons that took ransoms were also kidnapped and their people cannot afford to raise the ransom they are demanding. This has created another problem between different families (A wife of a released victim).

Another victim equally told her experience,

It created different social effect for us. We noticed that people isolated themselves from us, we were mocked by others that it was our ostentatious life style that attracted kidnappers to the community. This forced us to relocate to new era, and start new social relationships with others in our new communities. Another problem that other victims like me suffered is the practice of renting alternative houses in safer environments, as we started living in double house, we stay our personal house once is 6pm we will go to the alternative house and sleep, in the morning we go back to our main house. We engaged in double spending; families' members suffered a lot of social breakdowns. Some even sold belongs they hitherto have comfort in, just survive. And the memories are creating regret and unhappiness for us. All these experiences I narrated to was the

fate of many victims like us in Maraban Rido (A young A woman who her husband was released).

The data reveals multidimensional effects on secondary victims. Psychological effects emerged as the most immediate and pervasive consequence. Victims described persistent fear, anxiety, and emotional instability arising from uncertainty about the safety of the abducted persons. Many respondents reported intrusive thoughts, recurring mental images of possible harm, sleep disturbances, and constant state of hyper-alertness. Also, in terms of health-related effects, respondents reported stress-induced physical symptoms such as headaches, hypertension, fatigue, and gastrointestinal problems. Others suffered physical injuries like stabbing, gunshot, fracture, dislocation and other internal health challenges occasioned by the episodes. More so, social effects constituted another critical dimension of impact. Respondents described negative effects like social withdrawal, abandonment, neglect by those they look up to while others described positive effects like financial assistance, moral support, spiritual support and increased bonding with family and friends from far and near. Lastly, economic effects on secondary victims. Families experienced severe financial strain as they mobilized resources to meet ransom demands, often selling assets, withdrawing savings, or incurring debts. Economic hardships persisted even after the victim's release, as households struggled to recover financially. For some respondents, their income generating activities was temporary halted. All these disruptions reduced household stability and deepened vulnerability, particular among low-income families and plunge them to poverty.

Experiences of Negotiators and Ransom Carriers in Kaduna State

Lived Experiences of Intermediaries (Negotiators and Ransom carriers)

My experience as negotiator and the person they demanded to bring Ransom to them was truly horrible and terrifying. To start with, they dictate the terms of the negotiations, they requested ₦30 million at first conversations with torchlights, drugs, blankets and a particular brand of power banks. Once I demanded reduction they will be telling me they know the victims worth before they charged that amount, and I will tell them is not achievable, they will witch off the phone for days. We settled at ₦3 million naira, with 10 biggest sizes of torchlights, some drugs and 10 blankets. They reschedule our days of meetings severally. The day I was to take the money they directed me to 5 different locations, before finally sends a bike man to carry me to specific locations and they determine the colour of cloth I must wear on that day. After the bike dropped me, I walked for almost five hours under their directives before they came and took the money and the items from me. They tied me under a tree all night long and was beaten by rain, and was left to cold, they couldn't offer me to food to eat all y stayed with. When they were to returned us, they took us with a bike and dropped us half, we could locate their description of the roads they asked us to follow, that was how we passed the night in another village, and the villagers help us to locate our way back home the next morning (A negotiator and ransom taker from Rigachukun, Kaduna).

Another negotiator added that:

Dealing with this people is scaring, is psychologically worrisome, as they will scatter your emotions. My experience with them from start to finish was very unpleasant. They always called at odd hours to scatter our sleep and instil fear in you. If they call you don't pick is a big its problem of its own. They will threaten you that you are trying outsmarting them; they will also come for you too. They gave me one week to tell the family to buy two bikes, bring two-million-naira cash which was very difficult for us to get during that cashless palaver; we spent almost ₦1m to raise cash of #2.5 million then. After the taking all these to them they refused releasing the victims, they asked us

to go and get some controlled drugs for them, which getting it was extremely difficult for us. We search in Kaduna, Kano and Zaria we couldn't get it, until one man promised get it from Abuja but we must sort him, they came to collect it at midnight without prior arrangement with us. So, dealing with them was hectic (A negotiator from Zaria)

A key Informant, a head of anti-kidnapping unit added to the narration by saying:

Though police cannot be involved in negotiations and ransom payments with kidnappers, but some family members usually come a report that they have secured the released of the victim's they came and reported earlier on in our units. Some persons report to us how they secure the release; we sometimes interview some to share their experiences as negotiators and those that taken the money to the kidnappers. Also, some arrested kidnappers gave us their statement, we further interrogate them. We have gotten a lot of information but let me give you few ones that I considered relevant to your question.

Negotiators and those that took money are considered sometimes accomplice to the crime, they are also accused of inflating the money or removing from the amount the family members gave them to take, we have some evidences were these allegations sometimes turned out to be truth. We see some negotiators/ money takers fight with the family members of the victims for not fulfilling part of the ends of their bargained, as they agreed; if one party fails, they come to us for settlements, you begging to hear dirty things. Also, we have cases were negotiators and those that took ransom money are also kidnapped, making the matter cumbersome, and no one is willing to negotiate or take money but the kidnappers have stopped kidnapping them because people were not longer to help in negotiating or bringing ransom money. There was a case I handled, where a man took money and was kidnapped and his family run to the family, he assisted to raise ransom for his release but the other party claimed they cannot assist, as that is our misfortune, but we also have them resolved it amicable.

Additionally, we saw cases were a person helped to take the risk of going to deliver ransom, after the kidnappers received the money, they killed the victims and either claimed that the negotiator brought the money late or he didn't bring any money at all. In this case another set of legal tussles starts among the family of the victims and ransom carrier, but by God grace and our experiences we always help them to resolved the matter. Another problem negotiators and ransom carriers suffered is vehemently denial by some kidnappers that they never contacted the negotiator's ransom carrier and accused those helping of just cheating the victim's family. All this create problem to those that wants to assist. On the other hand, some receive a handsome reward from the victims after release, as an appreciation of their role on enhancing quick released. I knew of a man whom paid millions to sponsor his ransom carrier to Mecca for Muslims annual pilgrimage as an appreciation, another received monetary gift, another receives the gift of car for also risking his life to visit this evil people.

The qualitative findings indicate that negotiators and ransom carriers experience persistent stress due to uncertainty and fear. Repeated phone calls at unusual hours, prolonged suspense, and frequent changes in meeting times and locations disrupt normal routines to create continuous sense of insecurity as control strategies. It breeds wide spread mistrust the roles of negotiators and ransom carriers. They are often accused of collusion with the kidnappers, inflating ransom amounts, or exploiting the situation for personal gain. Overall, the experiences of negotiators and ransom carriers demonstrate that the impact of kidnapping extends beyond primary victims.

Discussion of Findings

The findings show that secondary victims of kidnapping in Kaduna State, Nigeria include both immediate and non-immediate groups. Immediate victims comprise parents, spouses, siblings,

peers, neighbors, worshipping communities, colleagues and organization linked to the abducted person. These patterns align with Oludayo (2023); Livne *et al.*, (2024), who identify family members, colleagues, community leaders, and faith-based intermediaries as central to the trauma circle. The study further identifies non-immediate victims-such as embassies, the nation, and the international community-while highlighting that colleagues, students, and peers remain largely overlooked in discussions of findings of secondary victimization.

Secondary victims of kidnapping experience multiple negatives effects. Psychologically, they suffer depression, anxiety, fear, nightmares, hallucinations and emotional instability. This support findings of Owolabi *et al* (2024) noted that secondary victims suffered psychosocial and by extension psychological effects like their counterparts, the direct victims. The effect includes stress, anxiety, guilt, stigma, shame, phobia among others. Health impacts include pain, injuries, gunshot wounds, beaten and starvation. This is aligned with the findings of Livne (2024) who showed that secondary victims suffered numerous health challenges ranging from mental decline, sleep problems, reduced adherence to a healthy lifestyle and weight lost among other pronounced health challenges that weighed victims total functioning. Economically, victims faced financial loss through ransom payments, business disruption, asset sales and indebtedness. This complements the finding of Mohammed & Malumfashi (2025) who noted that victims suffered economic challenges like financial loss, closure of business, unplanned relocations, loss of material resources. All these generates economic hardships for victims; some eventually recover in the long run while others draft away to penury. Socially, they experience isolation, stigma, suspicion, neglect and decline bonding, who noted that victims suffered economic challenges like financial loss, closure of business, unplanned relocations, loss of material resources. All these generates economic hardships for victims; some eventually recover in the long run while others draft away to penury. This was supported by the findings of Udechukwu & Ofoke' (2024) showed that kidnapping reduce social bonding and prick family conflicts which result to diminishing family gatherings, religious activities and social interaction, thereby leading to increase social withdrawal among family. Positively, some victims gain strengthened social bonds, family cohesion, communal support, financial aid, and moral or spiritual assistance.

Negotiators and ransom carriers face intense psychological pressure, suspicion, and moral ambiguity. They endure call at odd hours, kept in suspense, shifting meeting times and location, and constant risk of harm or kidnapping. They also face false accusations of inflating ransom, dangerous collection locations, long treks, hunger and starvation. These findings align with Olajubu & Udechukwu, Ofoke (2024), who note intermediaries endure psychological, emotional, moral and physical challenges during kidnapping negotiations.

Conclusion

The study concludes that kidnapping in Kaduna State is a collective social injury that extends far beyond the duration of physical captivity. The trauma is multidimensional in nature as such it erodes mental and physical health, triggering generational poverty family through assets depletion, and fractures which are essential for social trust and community stability. Although, the safe release of victim does not terminate the crisis for secondary victims, but the psychological and economic scars create remain permanent in them. The combustion arising from it the trauma shared as its often endangered their lives throughout life time.

Recommendation

- i. Both Federal and Kaduna State Governments should provide secondary victims, negotiators, and ransom carriers with psychosocial support to address trauma and stress they faced in the course to free their love ones.
- ii. Both Federal and Kaduna State Governments should carryout health and safety measures negotiators and ramson carriers, including medical care protective protocols and economic relief programmes that will help in mitigating their financial losses and risks.

- iii. Both National Orientation Agency and Kaduna Ministry of Information and Culture should carry out awareness campaigns among peers and organizations on the dangers of negotiators and ransom carriers in kidnapping incidents.
- iv. Both Federal and Kaduna State Governments adequately train negotiators and ransom carriers so that can recognition, and legal protection to reduce psychological, moral, and physical risks.

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