



Psychology of Kidnapping

¹Charles O. Anazonwu, ²Onyemaechi Chinwe Ifeyinwa, & ³Igwilo Chukwuemeka

^{1,2}Department of Psychology, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka

³Department of Psychology, University College of Ibadan

Abstract

Huge resources through the government and private sectors have been allocated and re-allocated to the task of preventing kidnapping. These efforts, however, often lack a conceptual, let alone empirical based foundation for understanding kidnapers and their acts of violence. This paper seeks to analyze and synthesize what has been reported from theoretical and empirical literature about the psychology of kidnapping. Based on a review of existing literature, and in an efforts to better understand the causes, motivations, and determinants of kidnapper behavior, this study analyzes key themes and findings on the psychology of kidnapping: (1) No single psychological theory has gained ascendance as an explanatory model for kidnapper violence. (2) Kidnapper violence most often is deliberate (not impulsive), strategic, and instrumental. (3) Perceived injustice, need for identify and need for belongings are common motives among potential kidnapers. (4) Mental illness is not a critical factor in explaining kidnapper behavior. Also most kidnapers are not psychopaths. (5) There is no kidnapper personality nor is there any accurate profile of the kidnapper. (6) Kidnapper beliefs tend to provide a set of values that justify and mandate certain behaviors. Those beliefs are regarded as absolute, and the behaviors are seen as serving a meaningful cause. Research on the psychology of kidnapping is embryonic at best. More research is needed to develop an evidence-based knowledge concerning the psychology of kidnapers.

Introduction

Kidnapping is among the terrorizing crimes in Nigeria. The oil-rich Niger Delta region of Nigeria has seen an explosion in the number of foreigners kidnapped for financial or political gains. The government and the private sectors have continued to allocate huge resources to the task of preventing kidnapping. These efforts, however, often lack a conceptual, let alone empirical based foundation for understanding kidnapers and their acts of violence. This void creates a serious challenge at many levels, from policy-level decisions about how a state should respond to kidnapping, to individual level decisions about whether a given person of interest, who espouses extremist ideas, truly poses a serious threat.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze and synthesize what has been reported from theoretical and empirical literature about the “psychology of kidnapping”. This focus is not intended to suggest that the scientific discipline of psychology

provides the only analytic framework for understanding kidnapping. The focus is intended to identify, describe and evaluate what contribution, if any, psychological theory or research may have made to understanding kidnappers and kidnapping. The special focus on psychological dimensions de-emphasizes analysis of sociological based explanations or macro-level economic and political theories. Also, the focus on kidnapper's acts de-emphasizes analysis of the psychological effects, consequences or amelioration of kidnapping. Kidnapping as a human behavior changes over time and from country to country and so have the kidnappers, their motives, and the cause of kidnapping. There is a wide range of kidnapper groups, each of which has a different psychology, motivation and decision making structure. One should not speak of kidnapper psychology in the singular, but rather of kidnapper psychologies.

Conceptual Meaning of Kidnapping

Kidnapping is a special type of violence (TRADOC, 2008). Defining the concept precisely poses a number of problems. This is because of variations in a nation's jurisprudence and moral viewpoints as well as the availability of other variances such as hostage-taking and hijacking. Akpan (2010) attempted to differentiate between hostage-taking, hijacking and kidnapping. Practically, kidnapping involves abduction. It is considered to occur when a person is seized or detained or moved from one place to another against his or her will, or a situation in which a person is confined to a controlled space without the confinement being from a legal authority, with the intent to use the abduction in connection with some other evil or wicked objective (Protus, & John, 2014).

There are two common aspects to kidnapping. The first is that the movement or detention or seizure of a person must be unlawful (against the law of the land). Under various Nigerian federal and state laws, not all seizures, detention, and movements of people constitute kidnapping. For example, in the civilian sector, the police may arrest and detain a person they suspect of a crime. Parents are allowed to reasonably restrict and control the movement of their children. The second aspect to kidnapping is that some aggravating or provoking circumstances must accompany the seizure, restraint or movement. Example of aggravating circumstances include a demand for money, a demand for something of value, an attempt to affect a function of government, an attempt to inflict injury on the abducted person or persons, an attempt to commit a felony, or an attempt to terrorize a third party.

In US Federal kidnapping investigations, the categories of conduct that frame the crime of kidnapping are usually threefold: (1) limited duration kidnapping where the victim is released unharmed; (2) kidnapping that occurs as part of another



crime; and (3) kidnapping for the purpose of ransom or political concession (TRADOC, 2008). Other legal considerations used to describe the crime involve duration of kidnapping and if the victim was injured causing a permanent disability or life-threatening trauma, was sexually exploited, whether or not a dangerous weapon such as a firearm was used, or if the victim was murdered during the kidnapping (TRADOC, 2008).

While kidnapping seeks legitimacy as political action, kidnapping is criminal offense nearly under every national and international legal code (Ottuhand Aitufe, 2014). Section 364 of the Nigerian Criminal Code provides: "Any person who unlawfully imprisons any person, and takes him out of Nigeria, without his consent; or unlawfully imprisons any person within Nigeria in such a manner as to prevent him from applying to a court for his release or from discovering to any other person the place where he is imprisoned, or in such a manner as to prevent any person entitled to have access to him from discovering the place where he is imprisoned; is guilty of a felony, and is liable to imprisonment for ten years. The Penal Code also provides in section 271 thus: "Whoever takes or entices any person under fourteen years of age if a male or under sixteen years of age if a female, or any person of unsound mind out of the keeping of the lawful guardian of such person without the consent of such guardian or conveys any such person beyond the limits of Northern Nigeria without the consent of such removal, is said to kidnap such person. Section 273 further provides: "Whoever kidnaps or abducts any person shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which extend to ten years and shall also be liable to fine. While section 274 provides: Whoever kidnaps or abducts any person in order that such person may be killed or may be so disposed of as to be put in danger of being killed, or may be so disposed of as to be put in danger of being killed, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extent to fourteen years and shall also be liable to fine.

Kidnapping is an act of terrorism (TRADOC, 2008). Terrorism is described as an activity that (1) involves a violent act or an act dangerous to human life that is a violation of the criminal laws of any State, or that would be a criminal violation if committed within the jurisdiction of any State; and (2) appear to be intended to intimidate or coerce a civilian population; to influence the policy of a government by intimidation or coercion; or to affect the conduct of a government by assassination or kidnapping (TRADOC, 2008). Terrorism as a violent act is intrinsically tied to kidnapping. Both concepts entail the use force, mental or physical coercion, or means including false representations to achieve their objectives. Standard English dictionaries provide a similar description of kidnapping such as "to seize and hold or carry off (a person) against that person's will, by force or fraud, often for ransom" (Neufeldt, 1991).

The study of kidnapping can be mired in conflict over definitions and frames of reference. The understanding from the literature is that kidnapping is a criminal and violent behavior. It is a special type of violence, akin to Terrorism, Hostage-taking, and Hijacking. For the purposes of this analysis, the concern is with acts of violence intentionally perpetrated by the kidnappers on their victims with the goal of furthering some economic, ideological, religious or political objectives. This study uses Turner's (1998) broad working definition of kidnapping in which kidnapping applies to all situations where persons are forcibly seized and transported to a destination where they are held against their will in unlawful confinement. It also describes incidents when persons are lured away and then held illegally by force.

Psychological Approaches For Understanding Violent Behavior

Violence is caused by a complex interaction of biological, social/contextual, cognitive, and emotional factors that occur over time (Collins, 2009). Some causes will be more prominent than others for certain individuals and for certain types of violence. Another thing is that most violence especially kidnapper violence, can be viewed as intentional. It is chosen as a strategy of action. It is purposeful (goal-directed) and intended to achieve some valued outcome for the actor. It is not the product of innate, instinctual drives (Tedeschi & Felson, 1994), nor is it the inevitable consequences of predetermining psychological and social forces. Obviously, many factors influence that decision, but humans typically are not passive vessels for involuntary displays of behavior. There are, however, some exceptions. There are some circumstances where an individual might have some brain dysfunction that causes general emotional instability that may result in violence. This type of violence would be inconsistent with the kind of organization and planning necessary to carry out a kidnapper violence. Here are some of the main psychological theories that have been used or applied to understanding kidnapper violence.

PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY

The most widely recognized theory that addresses the roots of all forms of violence is the psychoanalytic model. Despite its influence on writers in the political science, sociology, history, and criminology literature, this model has weak logical, theoretical, and empirical foundations (Beck, 2002). Freud viewed aggression more generally as an innate and instinctual human trait, which most should outgrow in the normal course of human development. A later development in Freud's theory was that humans had the energy of life force (*eros*) and death force (*thanatos*) that sought internal balance. Violence was seen as the displacement of *thanatos* from self and onto others. A number of more narrow



violence-related theories have drawn on psychoanalytic concepts and ideas, but none are widely regarded as psychoanalytic theory of violence.

FRUSTRATION-AGGRESSION THEORY

The link between frustration (being prevented from attaining a goal or engaging in behavior) and aggression has been viewed as the master explanation for understanding the cause of human violence. The basic premise of the frustration-aggression (FA) hypothesis is twofold: (1) Aggression is always produced by frustration, and (2) Frustration does not inevitably lead to aggression. Sometimes, for example, it results in problem solving or dependent behaviors. And aggression is known to occur even in the absence of frustration. Thus it is not reasonable to view frustration alone as a necessary and sufficient causal factor. In an important formulation of FA hypothesis, Berkowitz (1989) posited that it was only “aversive” frustration that would lead to aggression. The newly proposed progression was that frustration would lead to anger, and that anger, in the presence of aggressive cues would lead to aggression. While research findings have been, at time, inconsistent, it is reasonable to conclude that aversive stimuli do facilitate, but probably not instigate aggressive behavior (Tedeschi & Felson, 1994).

SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

Fundamental learning theory suggests that behavioral patterns are acquired by links (contingencies) established between the behavior and its consequences. When behavior is followed by desired results (reward), that behavior is reinforced (made more likely). On the other hand, when behavior is followed by undesirable or aversive consequences, that behavior is punished (made less likely). Social learning theory is a simple extension of this basic idea, suggesting that behavior (e.g., aggression) is learned not only through one's direct experience, but also through observation of how such contingencies occur in one's environment. Some have referred to this as vicarious learning. In this model, aggression is viewed as learned behavior. Accordingly, it is argued that through observation people learn consequences for the behavior, how to do it, to whom it should be directed, what provocation justifies it, and when it is appropriate. If aggression is a learned behavior, then kidnapping, a specific type of aggression, can also be learned.

COGNITIVE THEORY

The core elements in a cognitive theory of aggression derives from an area of study called “social cognition”. The basic notion is that people interact with their environment based on how they perceive and interpret it. That is, people form an internal (cognitive) map of their external (social) environment, and these perceptions—rather than an objective external reality—determine their behavior. The experimental literature clearly suggests that perceptions of intent affect

aggression. Moreover, there are internal and external factors that can affect one's perceptions of provocation or intent. Two common cognitive/processing deficits found among people who are highly aggressive are: (1) an inability to generate non-aggressive solutions to conflicts (and lack of confidence in their ability to use them successfully) and (2) a perceptual hypersensitivity to hostile/aggressive cues in the environment, particularly interpersonal cues (Dodge & Schwartz, 1997). The principle of social cognition applies both to kidnapers and their groups. The actions of kidnapers are based on a subjective interpretation of the world rather than objective reality. Perceptions of the political and social environment are filtered through beliefs and attitudes that reflect experiences and memories (Crenshaw, 1988).

BIOLOGICAL APPROACHES

Biological factors affecting aggression are an important element in a comprehensive biopsychosocial understanding of behavior. Social scientists who seek to understand kidnapping should take account of the possibility that biological or physiological variables may play a role in bringing an individual to the point of performing an act of kidnapping. Here are the most basic, cursory review of current literature on biological factors influencing aggression.

Neurochemical Factors Serotonin (5-HT), of all neurotransmitters in the mammalian brain, has received the most research attention and has shown the most consistent association with aggressive behavior. Lower levels of serotonin have been linked to higher levels of aggression in normal, clinical, and offender samples. The association between 5-HT deficits and aggression seems to be specific to impulsive, rather than premeditated aggressive behavior, which also appears to be mediated by perceived threat or provocation. Low levels of 5-HT may heighten one's sensitivity or reactivity to cues of hostility or provocation. In the absence of provocative stimuli, decreased 5-HT functioning may have little effect on the level of aggressive behavior exhibited by humans (Raine, 1997). Because Serotonin is primarily an inhibitory neurotransmitter, it is possible that deficits in 5-HT reduce inhibition of aggressive ideas/impulses that would otherwise be suppressed. As neurotransmitters, Norepinephrine (NE) may affect arousal and environmental sensitivity and Dopamine (DA) may affect behavioral activation and goal-directed behavior. Compared to serotonin, the relationship between both Dopamine (DA) and Norepinephrine (NE) and human aggression is less clear (Berman, Kavoussi, & Coccaro, 1997). Although some studies have linked low levels of DA to increases in aggression, DA and 5-HT levels are correlated so it is particularly uncertain whether DA has any relationship to aggressive behavior independent of the effect of 5-HT.



Hormonal Factors. The effects of androgens/gonadotropic hormones on human behavior particularly aggressive behavior are weaker and more complex than one might expect. There is not good empirical evidence to support testosterone poisoning as a cause of disproportionate violence in males. Testosterone has at best a limited role. A meta-analysis of the relationship between testosterone and scores on the Buss-Durkee Hostility Inventory (Archer, 1991) showed a low but positive relationship between T levels and the overall inventory score of 230 males tested over five studies (Crenshaw, 2001).

Neuropsychological Factors: Cognitive abilities relating to self-awareness and self-control are referred to as “executive functions”. The frontal lobe of the brain, and the prefrontal cortex in particular, has been identified as the primary neuroanatomic site of these functions. Evidence of the relation between executive deficits and aggression has been found among incarcerated subjects in laboratory situations, and among nonselected populations. Effect sizes are small to moderate, but consistent and robust. Theoretical and empirical evidence suggest that dysfunction or impairment in the prefrontal cortex may be responsible for the psychophysiological deficits found in people who engage in antisocial and aggressive behavior (Raine, 1997). Specifically, brain imaging, neurological, and animal studies suggest that prefrontal dysfunction may account for low levels of arousal, low reactivity and fearlessness.

EMPIRICAL APPROACHES

In addition to the theoretically based approaches mentioned previously, psychological researchers also have attempted to apply statistical models to explain violence and to identify its predictors. This line of inquiry has yielded some positive findings on risk factors for violent behavior. The use of risk factors in the behavioral sciences is a concept borrowed from the field of Public Health, specifically the discipline of epidemiology (the study of cause and courses of diseases). Risk factor is defined as an aspect of personal behavior or lifestyle, an environmental exposure, or an inborn or inherited characteristic which on the basis of epidemiological evidence is known to be associated with health related conditions considered important to prevent (Last, 2001). Applied to this study, risk factor is any factor, that when present, makes violence more likely than when it is absent. Studies in psychology, sociology, criminology, and other behavioral sciences have yielded significant risk factors for violence. Risk factors have been classified as broadly falling into two categories: static and dynamic. Static risk factors are those that are historical (e.g., early one set of violence) or dispositional (e.g., gender) in nature and that are unlikely to change over time. Dynamic risk factors for violence are typically individual, social or situational factors that often do change (e.g., attitudes, associates, high levels of stress) and, therefore might be

more amenable to modification through intervention (Borum, Swartz & Swanson, 1996).

Risk Factors for General Violence are: juvenile delinquency, family problems, antisocial personality, hospital admissions, violent history, institutional adjustment, adult criminal history, unmarried (Crenshaw, 2001). While it may be tempting to apply these risk factors to determine risk for kidnapping, they are unlikely to be useful predictors. Although kidnapping is a type of violent behavior, risk factors tend to operate differently at different ages, in different groups, and for different specific types of violent behavior. For example, the factors that predict violent behavior in the urban gang member with a drug addiction often differ from those that predict violence among predatory child molesters or perpetrators of domestic violence. Most risk factor research in social sciences has focused on predicting "general violence risk". General violence risk represents the likelihood that an individual might engage in any aggressive act toward anyone over a specified period of time. That is not the question posed in kidnapper threat assessments. Most people who have a collection of general violence risk factors will never engage in kidnapping. On the other hand, many known violent groups, including some field leaders of the bombing of Abuja police headquarter on 16th June, 2011 did not have a large number of key general violence risk factors, although they were actively preparing to engage in the bombing of the police headquarters. That the correlates of general violence and kidnapping are different has at least two important implications: (1) it is likely that the causal mechanisms are also different; (2) one cannot reasonably use the risk factors from one to predict the other.

In conclusion, no single theory has gained ascendance as an explanatory model for all types of violence. Social learning and social cognitive approaches have received the most extensive attention and support among research, but not necessarily for kidnapping specifically. Kidnapper violence most often is deliberate (not impulsive), strategic, and instrumental. It is linked to and justified by ideological objectives and almost always involves a group or multiple actors/supporter.

MOTIVES AND KIDNAPPING

How and why do people enter kidnapper groups or organization? Motives are key psychological factors in understanding whether, how and which individuals in a given environment will enter the process of becoming a kidnapper. According to American Heritage Dictionary, motive is an emotion, desire, physiological need, or similar impulse that acts as an incitement to action. A person's motivation for engaging in kidnapping is often presumed to be the cause or ideology of the group. However, evidence suggests that motives to join a kidnapper group and to engage



in kidnapping vary considerably across different types of groups, and also within groups and they may change over time (Crenshaw, 2001). Based on the review of existing literature, three key motivational themes—perceived sense of injustice, search for identity, and need for belonging—appear to be prominent and consistent among kidnappers.

Perceived Sense of Injustice. Perceived injustice has long been recognized a central factor in understanding violence generally and kidnapping specifically. Hacker (1976) concluded that remediable injustice is the basic motivation for violent crime such as hijacking and terrorism. A desire for revenge or vengeance is a common response to redress a wrong of injustice inflicted on another. It is not difficult to imagine that one of the strongest motivations behind kidnapping is vengeance, particularly the desire to avenge not oneself but others. Vengeance can be specific or diffuse, but it is an obsessive drive that is a powerful motive for violence towards others, especially people thought to be responsible for injustice (Crenshaw, 2001). Perceptions of injustice may also be viewed as grievances, which Ross (1993) has posed as the most important precipitants cause of violent behavior such as kidnapping. He suggests such grievances may be economic, ethnic, racial, legal, political, religious, and social and that they may be targeted to individuals, groups, institutions or categories of people.

Early versions of kidnapping in Nigeria were believed to be part of a wider liberation call, a perceived sense of injustice, by the Movement for the Emancipation of Niger Delta (MEND) for the development of the State. It was then an activity with no monetary attachment as the key motivation factor. The key grievances oftentimes advanced by MEND for such confrontations involved three closely interrelated but analytically distinct issues namely: (1) that all laws relating to oil explorations and land ownership be abrogated to give the locals more empowerment to have control of their resources; (2) that the issue of natural resource control and self-determination be recognized and operationalized as cardinal principles for the protection of their minority status; (3) that appropriate institutional and financial arrangements be put in place for the development as well as addressing the numerous environmental problems associated with oil exploration in oil producing communities in Niger Delta. The refusal or inability of the Federal Government of Nigeria (FGN) to respond to these demands have been at the core of MEND's liberation struggle, resulting in incessant kidnap of oil workers in Niger Delta region.

Search for Ultimate Identity: A person's psychological identity is a developed, stable sense of self and resolved security in one's basic values, attitudes, and beliefs. Identity formation typically occurs in a crisis of adolescence or young

adulthood, and is tumultuous and emotionally challenging. However, the successful development of personal identity is essential to the integrity and continuity of the personality (Crenshaw, 1986). An individual's search for identity may draw him or her to radical groups in a varieties of ways. One may fall into what psychologist Jim Marcia calls "identity foreclosure" where a role and set of ideas and values are adopted without personal, critical examination. Another type of mechanism is one in which an individual defines his or her identity simply through group membership. Basically, one's personal identity is merged with a group identity, with no sense of individuality or uniqueness. As Johnson and Feldman (1992) suggest, "membership in a terrorist group (such as kidnapper) provides a sense of identity or belonging for those personalities whose underlying sense of identity is flawed". For these individuals, "belonging to the terrorist group becomes the most important component of their psychosocial identity" (Post, 1984). A similar mechanism is one in which a desperate quest for personal meaning pushes an individual to adopt a role to advance a cause, with little or no thoughtful analysis or consideration of its merit.

Need for Belonging: Luckabaugh *et al.* (1997) argue that among potential kidnapers the psychological motivation for joining is the great need for belonging. For these alienated individuals, joining a kidnapper group represented the first real sense of belonging after a lifetime of rejection, and the kidnapper group was to become the family they never had (Post, 1984). This strong sense of belonging has critical importance as a motivating factor for joining, a compelling reason for staying, and a forceful influence for acting. Borum, Fein, Vossekuil, & Berglund (1999) argued that kidnapper groups may provide a security of family by subjugating individuality to the group identity. A protective cocoon is created that offers shelter from a hostile world.

These three factors, perceived sense of injustice, search for identity, and need for belonging have been found often to co-occur in kidnapers and to strongly influence decisions to enter violent groups and to engage in kidnapper activity. Some analysts have suggested that the synergistic effect of these dynamics forms the real cause of kidnapping, regardless of ideology. Luckabaugh *et al.* (1997), for example, concluded the real cause or psychological motivation for joining is the great need to belong, the need to consolidate one's identity. There is no easy answer or single motivation to explain why people become kidnapers. There do appear to be some common perceptions among those who turn to kidnaping—perceived injustice, need for identity and need for belonging. However, there are certainly persons who share these perceptions who do not become kidnapers.



Psychopathology and Kidnapping

To what extent is psychopathology relevant for understanding kidnapping? A common stereotype is that someone who commits such abhorrent acts as kidnapping is abnormal. Psychology also has a long history of looking at deviant behaviors as a function of psychopathology (i.e., mental disease, disorder, or dysfunction) or maladjusted personality syndromes. Schmid (1988) noted that the chief assumption underlying many psychological theories is that the person that engages in violent criminal behaviors such as kidnapping is not normal and that the insights from psychology and psychiatry are adequate keys to understanding. Literature shows that psychopathology is at best only a modest risk factor for general violence, but not so much relevant in understanding kidnapper violence (Crenshaw, 2001). This study is not concerned with a lone kidnapper, who did not belong to any kidnapper group. An individual who is mentally ill cannot possibly fit into the kidnapper group. For an individual to choose to become a kidnapper, he or she would have to be motivated to do so. Having the proper motivation however, is still not enough. The would-be kidnapper would need to have the opportunity to join a kidnapper group. And like most job seekers, he or she would have to be acceptable to the kidnapper group, which is a highly exclusive group. Thus, the would-be kidnappers would not only need to have a personality that would allow them to fit into the group, but ideally a certain skill needed by the group, such as communication skill.

Post (1990) a leading advocate of the kidnapper or terrorist-as-mentally ill approach, has his own psychological hypotheses of terrorism. Although he does not disagree with the proposition that terrorists reason logically, he argues that terrorists' reasoning process is characterized by what he terms "terrorist psychology". In his analysis, terrorists do not willingly resort to violence behavior as an intentional choice. Rather, he argues that most terrorist are driven to commit acts of violence as a consequences of psychological forces, and that their special psycho-logic is constructed to rationalize acts they are psychologically compelled to commit. Post's (1990) hypothesis that terrorists are motivated by psychological forces is not convincing and seems to ignore the numerous factors that motivate terrorists, including their ideological convictions.

Results of studies on the prevalence of psychopathology and maladaptive personality traits in terrorist populations show that serious psychopathology or mental illnesses among terrorists are relatively rare, and certainly not a major factor in understanding or predicting terrorist behavior (McCauley, 2002; Sageman, 2004). Fried (1982) observed that even in the cases of the terrorist who is clearly psychopathic and delusional in his thinking, awareness of political realities can play a significant role in determining behavior. In addition, Friedland

(1992) noted that as for empirical support, there is no compelling evidence that terrorists are abnormal, insane, or match a unique personality type. Acknowledging that some studies have found psychopathological disorders among some terrorists, Silke (1998) summarized his review of the literature with the following conclusion: "Terrorist are not dysfunctional or psychopathological; rather, terrorism is basically another form of politically motivated violence that is perpetrated by rational, lucid people who have valid motives. The careful, detailed planning and well-timed execution that have characterized many kidnapper operations are hardly typical of mentally disturbed individuals.

Personality And Kidnapping

To what extent is individual personality relevant for understanding kidnapping? Personality traits consistently have failed to explain most types of human behaviors, including violent behaviors. They also have been shown repeatedly to contribute less to an explanation than situational and contextual factors. Crenshaw (2001), for example, has argued that shared ideological commitment and group solidarity are much more important determinants of violent behavior than individual characteristics. The most effective method for explaining behavior, however, is by combining personal and situational factors. Past analysis of acts of targeted violence reveal that the person-related factors are only one part of the equation, and often not the most critical. Risk for engaging in kidnapping is the product of factors related not only to the individual, but also to the situation, setting, and potential target (Borum, 2003). Taylor (1991) explored whether some systematic differences might be discerned between those who engage in kidnapping and those who do not. Their research led them to the conclusion that the active terrorist is not discernibly different in psychological terms from the non-terrorist. In psychological terms, there are no special qualities that characterize the kidnapper.

Horgan (2003) again examined the cumulative research evidence on the search for a terrorist personality, and concluded that "in the context of scientific study of behavior, such attempts to assert the presence of a terrorist personality, or profile are pitiful". This appears to be the conclusion of consensus among most researchers who study terrorist behavior. Most observers agree that although latent personality traits can certainly contribute to the decision to turn to violence, there is no single set of psychic attributes that can explain violent criminal behavior such as kidnapping (McCormick, 2003).

The Kidnapper Profile

The concept of "profiling" has come to have many different meanings. In the context of this study, the term "profiling" is not used to refer to the type of



criminal investigation analysis that seeks to examine physical and behavioral evidence of an offense after it has occurred and, based on that information, draw inferences about potential characteristics of the person who committed the crime. Counter-kidnapping intelligence, however, is primarily concerned with identification and interruption of kidnapper activity before an attack occurs. Some have assumed by examining characteristics of people who have committed kidnapper acts in the past, it should be possible to delineate a demographic/psychological composite of common traits that could be used to spot a kidnapper in the midst of law-abiding citizens. A number of social science researchers have attempted to develop such a composite.

Recently, Nnam (2014) carried out a research on “Kidnapping in the South Eastern States of Contemporary Nigeria: An empirical investigation into the social and demographic characteristics of offenders”. The study empirically investigated salient social and demographic characteristics as determinants of kidnapping in Abakaliki and Umuahia Prisons as a unit of analysis. The study adopted a cross-sectional research design. A specific non-probability sampling techniques known as the respondent-driven sampling was used in selecting a sample of 86 from a total population of 123 inmates in the two prisons. Data collected from in-depth oral interview were analyzed using thematic analysis. The study revealed that certain social and demographic characteristics such as age, occupation, gender, social backgrounds, marital status, and the like are responsible for kidnapping in Nigeria. The study concluded that kidnapping enterprise is dominated by men in their youthful age and men who are weak and/or lack strong religious attachment. A brief reflection on the study findings should reveal the problem that most individuals who fit that general description are not kidnappers and will never commit an act of kidnapper aggression. The problem of equally grave significance that could result from that profile is that there are and will be people who are planning and preparing to mount a kidnapper attack, who do not fit that profile. Concerning the problem of terrorism, Silke (1998) warns that the belief that profiling can provide an effective defense also seriously underestimates the intelligence of terrorist organizations. Indeed, sophisticated kidnapper groups, such as MEND in the Niger Delta or BOKO HARAN in the North East of Nigeria actively seek to know the type of person who will attract suspicion and then scout and use operators who defy that preconception.

In summary, there is no kidnapper personality, nor is there any accurate profile, psychological of the kidnapper. Also personality traits alone tend not to be very good predictors of behavior. The personalities of kidnappers may be as diverse as the personalities of people in any lawful profession. There do not appear to be any visible detectable personality traits that would allow authorities to identify a

kidnapper. And the quest to understand kidnapping by studying kidnapper personality traits is likely to be an unproductive area of investigation and enquiry.

Ideology And Kidnapping

What is the role of ideology or belief in kidnapper behaviors? Ideology is often defined as a common and broadly agreed upon set of rules to which an individual subscribe, which help to regulate and determine behavior (Taylor, 1991). These rules are also linked to one's beliefs, values, principles, and goal. The difference and relationship between an ideology and a worldview may depend on one's perspective. Both of them serve a similar function of acting not only to provide guidelines for behavior, but also as a lens through which people perceive and interpret information, cues, and events in the environment. Many religions such as Christianity and Moslem either embrace or sustain an ideology. The doctrines or core beliefs are certainly a central element of a religious system, but those beliefs generally are at least implicitly tied to a set of rules, which would comprise an ideology. There appear to be some commonalities in the processes or structures of kidnapper ideologies that may help inform an understanding of kidnapper behavior. Beck (2002) recently applied a cognitive model to terrorist ideologies and concluded that the thinking of the terrorist evidently shows the same kind of cognitive distortions observed in others who engage in violent acts, either solely as individuals or as members of a group. These include overgeneralization, that is, the supposed sins of the enemy may spread to encompass the entire population. Also, they show dichotomous thinking that a people are either totally good or totally bad. Finally they demonstrate tunnel vision once they are engaged in their holy mission (e.g. jihad), their thinking and actions focuses exclusively on the destruction of the target.

Beliefs that support violent criminal actions such as kidnapping appear to have three common structural characteristics: (1) they must provide a set of beliefs that guide and justify a series of behavioral mandates; (2) those beliefs must be inviolable and must be neither questionable nor questioned; and (3) the behaviors must be goal directed and seen as serving some cause or meaningful objective. Ideology guides and controls behavior perhaps by providing a set of behavioral contingencies that link immediate behavior and actions to positive outcomes and rewards down the road. Bandura (1990) argues that people do not ordinarily engage in reprehensible conduct until they have justified to themselves the morality of their actions. Kidnappers, like most others, seek to avoid internal conflict or dissonance by acting in ways that are consistent with their own beliefs and that allow them to see themselves as basically good. They most often seek to develop justifications for their kidnapper actions.



Conclusion

Our understanding of kidnapper psychology is embryonic at best. Nevertheless, behavioral scientists attempting to understand kidnapper psychology are making encouraging progress in developing an evidence-based knowledge base concerning the psychology of kidnappers.

REFERENCE

- Akpan, N. . (2010). Kidnapping in Nigeria's Niger Delta: An Explanatory Study. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 24(1).
- Bandura, A. (1990). Mechanisms of Moral Disengagement." Pages 161-91 in Walter Reich, ed., *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Beck, A. T. (2002). Prisoners of Hate. *Behavior Research and Therapy*, 40(3), 209–216.
- Berkowitz, L. (1989). The frustration-aggression hypothesis: An examination and reformulation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 106, 59–73.
- Berman, M, Kavoussi, R., & Coccaro, E. (1997). No Title. *Neurotransmitter Correlates of Human Aggression*. (pp305-313). In D. Stoff, J. Breiling, & J. Maser (Eds.) *Handbook of Antisocial Behavior*. New York: Wiley.
- Borum, R., Fein, R., Vossekuil, B., & Berglund, J. (1999). Threat assessment: Defining an approach for evaluating risk of targeted violence. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, 17(3), 323–337.
- Borum, R., Swartz, M., & Swanson, J. (1996). Assessing and managing violence risk in clinical practice. *Journal of Practical Psychiatry and Behavioral Health*, 2(4), 205–215.
- Borum, R. (2003). Understanding the terrorist mindset. *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin*, 72(7), 7–10.
- Collins, R. (2009). Micro and Macro Causes of Violence. *International Journal of Conflict and Violence*, 3(1), 9–21. Retrieved from www.ijcv.org/index.php/ijcv/article/viewFile/45/45
- Crenshaw, M. (1986). The psychology of political terrorism. In M.G. Hermann (Ed.). *Political Psychology: Contemporary Problems and Issues* (pp.379-413). London: Josey-Bass.
- Crenshaw, M. (1988). The subjective reality of the terrorist: Ideological and psychological factors in terrorism. In *Current Perspectives in international terrorism*, edited by R. O. Slater and M. Stohl. Basingstoke, Hampshire: Macmillan.
- Crenshaw, M. (2001). The psychology of terrorism: an agenda for the 21st century. *Political Psychology*, 21(2), 405–420.

- Dodge, K. & Schwartz, D. (1997). Social information processing mechanisms in aggressive behavior. *Handbook of Antisocial Behavior*. (Pp. 171-180). New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Fried, R. (1982). The Psychology of the Terrorist."Pages 119-24 in Brian M. Jenkins, ed., *Terrorism and Beyond: An International Conference on Terrorism and Low-Level Conflict*. Santa Monica, California: Rand.
- Friedland, N. (1992). Becoming a terrorist: Social, and individual antecedents. Howard, L, Ed. *Terrorism: roots, impacts, responses* (pp. 81-93). New York, NY: Praeger.
- Hacker, F. J. (1976). *Crusaders, criminals, crazies: terror and terrorism in our time*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Horgan, J. (2003). The search for the terrorist personality. Silke, A., Ed. *Terrorist, victims, and society: Psychological perspectives on terrorism and its consequence* (pp. 3-27). London: John Wiley.
- Johnson, P. W. and Feldman, T. B. (1992). Personality types and terrorism: Self-psychology perspectives. *Forensic Reports*, 5(4), 293–303.
- Last, J. M. (2001). *A dictionary of epidemiology. 4th Edition*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Luckabaugh, Robert, Edward Fuqua, J. C. and C. K. (1997). Terrorist behavior and US foreign policy: Who is the enemy? Some psychological and political perspectives. *Psychology*, 34(2), 1–15.
- McCauley, C. (2002). Psychological issues in understanding terrorism and the response to terrorism . Stout, C. E., Ed. *The psychology of terrorism: Theoretical Understandings and Perspectives* (pp. 3-29). Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers.
- McCormick, G. H. (2003). Terrorist Decision Making. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 6, 473–507.
- Neufeldt, V. (1991). Webster's New World Dictionary (3d ed.) New York: Simon & Schuster's, Inc., 742.
- Nnam, M. (2014). Kidnapping in the South eastern States of contemporary Nigeria: An empirical investigation into the social and demographic characteristics of offenders. *International Journal of Development and Management Review*, 9(1), 62–75. Retrieved from <http://www.ajol.info/index.php/ijdmr/article/view/104386>
- Ottuh, P. O. and Aitufe, V. O. (2014). KIDNAPPING AND MORAL SOCIETY: AN ETHICO-RELIGIOUS EVALUATION OF THE NIGERIAN EXPERIENCE. *European Scientific Journal*, 10(14).
- Post, J. (1990). Current Understanding of Terrorist Motivation and Psychology: Implications for a Differentiated Antiterrorist Policy. *Terrorism*, 13(1), 65–71.
- Post, J. M. (1984). Notes on a psychodynamic theory of terrorist behaviour. *Terrorism*, 7, 241–256.



- Protus, Nathan Uzoma & John, N.-B. (2014). Challenges of Hostage-Taking and Kidnapping in the South Eastern Nigeria. *IMPACT: International Journal of Research in Humanities, Arts and Literature*, 2(6), 131–142. Retrieved from www.impactjournals.us/download.php?...Challenges of Hostage-taking an...
- Raine, A. (1997). Antisocial behavior and psychophysiology: A biosocial perspective and a prefrontal dysfunction hypothesis. *Handbook of Antisocial Behavior*. New York: Wiley.
- Ross, J. (1993). Structural Causes of Oppositional Political Terrorism. *Journal of Peace Research*, 30, 317–29.
- Sageman, M. (2004). Understanding Terror Networks. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Schmid, Alex P., and A. J. J. (1988). Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, and Literature. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books.
- Silke, A. (1998). Cheshire-Cat logic: The recurring theme of terrorist abnormality in psychological research. *Psychology, Crime & Law*, 4(1), 51–69.
- Taylor, M. (1991). The fanatics: A behavioral approach to political violence. London: Brassey.
- Tedeschi, J. & Felson, R. (1994). Violence, Aggression, & Coercive Actions. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- TRADOC, G. (2008). Hostage-Taking and Kidnapper Terror. In *US Army TRADOC, TRADOC G2 Handbook No. 1.06*. Retrieved from https://www.google.com.ng/?gws_rd=ssl#q=Hostage-taking+and+Kidnapper+Terror+pdf
- Turner, M. (1998). Kidnapping and Politics. *International Journal of the Sociology of Law*, (145-160).

Biography

Dr. Charles O Anazonwu is a senior lecturer and a Social Psychologist at the Department of Psychology, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State Nigeria. His research interests include impact of governance on the citizens' psychological wellbeing, Peace and conflict resolution

Email: co.anazonwu@unizik.edu.ng

Onyemaechi Chinwe Ifeyinwa is an Academic Technologist attached to Psychological Services Center of the Department of Psychology, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Currently, she is a doctoral student of Clinical Psychology with Department of Psychology, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Her area of research interest includes clinical assessment, psychotherapy, family dynamics and many others. ifeachoc@gmail.com

Chukwuemeka Igwilo is an Industrial/organizational psychologist. He is an Emerging African Scholar, Department of Psychology, University College of Ibadan, Oyo State. His research interest is on Religion and peace keeping.