

## **From Reactive To Proactive: Enhancing The Nigeria Police Force'S Effectiveness In Fighting Kidnapping**

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### **Abstract:**

*Kidnapping has evolved into a dominant and sophisticated security challenge in Nigeria, transitioning from politically driven abductions to an organized, profit-driven enterprise. Despite its constitutional mandate, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) has largely adopted reactive tactics—characterized by delayed responses, ransom negotiations, and inadequate coordination. This paper argues for a strategic shift from reactive to proactive policing models. Drawing on extensive literature and empirical observations, the study identifies critical shortcomings of the NPF, including inadequate funding, weak intelligence networks, outdated equipment, corruption, poor community relations, and lack of inter-agency synergy. To address these issues, the study proposes six proactive pillars: intelligence-led policing, community engagement, technological integration, capacity building, inter-agency collaboration, and addressing root socioeconomic drivers of crime. Through these, a holistic and anticipatory approach is recommended to mitigate kidnapping and restore public confidence in the NPF as a credible law enforcement institution.*

**Key words:** Nigeria Police Force, Kidnapping, Proactive Policing, Intelligence-Led Policing, Community Policing, Law Enforcement Reform

### **1. Introduction**

Insecurity is a current challenge to most countries globally. It is a phenomenon that cuts across regions whether developed or developing countries. Most developing countries are introducing proactive means and strategies to curb the menace. This ranges from reformed police to technology. The international community through intergovernmental organisations have also made interventions on how states can go about taming the menace. Such group is the United Nations through its UNODC, International Police among other agencies. The developing countries have also imbibed these laws, programmes and policies by trying to implement same in their respective countries. Nevertheless, most developing countries still struggle to curb the menace.

Nigeria, a country with over 230million people is the most populous country in Africa and the largest black nation on the earth. Poverty religion and ethnicity have dominated Kidnapping in Nigeria has evolved from politically motivated abductions to a lucrative criminal enterprise targeting individuals across various socio-economic classes. There have been numerous crimes ravaging the country. This ranges from terrorism, ritual, banditry, to kidnapping. Kidnapping is a violent, terrible, sensational crime and poses national security challenge for the country. In curbing this crime, the Nigeria Police Force has been at the forefront.

The Nigeria Police Force (NPF), as the primary agency for internal security, has struggled to effectively prevent or reduce this crime. While responses have often been reactive, involving negotiations, ransom payments, or forceful rescues, these measures have not deterred the rising trend.

While a lot of studies have been done on insecurity (Thompson, Afolabi, Abdulkaki, 2019; Thompson, Adams, et al 2024), kidnapping and the Nigeria police force, (Osho, 2024; Osho 2025a; Osho, 2025b; Osho, 2025c), adequate attention has not been given to how the Police can effectively tackle the menace. In order words, most literature have given how the menace can be handled generally without making recourse to the Nigeria Police Force (Ngwama, 2020). This paper explores how the NPF can transition to a proactive model, identifying the structural and operational reforms required to prevent kidnapping before it occurs. The research question arising from this aim are: what is the nature of kidnapping in Nigeria? What are the proactive ways by which the Nigeria Police can tackle the menace? Answers to these questions will be of immense value to policy makers, strategists, and the security experts as well as the Nigeria police Force itself.

## **2. Literature review**

Numerous studies have examined kidnapping in Nigeria. Okonkwo (2020) in Baduku (2024) defines it as the unlawful detention of a person without consent, especially in ways that prevent them or others from locating or securing their release. Similarly, the Law Offices of Stimmel, Stimmel and Roeser (n.d.) define kidnapping as taking or confining someone against their will for illegal purposes such as ransom, committing a felony, or inflicting fear. Motivations can also include child custody disputes or acts of terror.

Dodo (2010) traces the rise of kidnapping in Nigeria to between 2005 and 2006, when Niger Delta militants began abducting expatriates to protest regional marginalization. Wajim (2020) supports this, noting that kidnapping evolved from rare incidents to a more organized crime during the militancy era initially political but later motivated by financial gain. Some scholars argue that kidnapping existed in pre-colonial Nigeria, though not in its current form. However, most agree that the surge in ransom-driven abductions began with the 2006 Niger Delta crisis. Overall, kidnapping has shifted from isolated cases to a widespread security and economic threat, with significant implications for governance, law enforcement, and national development. Its evolution reflects both structural weaknesses in Nigeria's security architecture and deep-rooted socio-economic challenges, especially in marginalized regions.

Dodo (2010) identifies several factors contributing to kidnapping in Nigeria, including political influence, poverty, terrorism, lack of strict punishment, family negligence, and the pervasive get-rich-quick mentality. He recommends a multifaceted approach to address the crisis: implementing stringent anti-kidnapping laws with severe penalties especially capital punishment for fatal cases; introducing targeted poverty alleviation programs for rural communities; establishing micro-industries to generate employment for youth; and launching nationwide public enlightenment campaigns to discourage kidnapping through legal, economic, and social interventions.

Ngwama (2014) observes that the surge in kidnapping has raised both domestic and international alarm, deterring foreign investment and worsening Nigeria's economic conditions. The resultant displacement of workers and economic uncertainty has further deepened unemployment. His study highlights the negative impact of kidnapping on the Nigerian labour market and proposes targeted interventions to expand employment opportunities, especially for disillusioned youth. Umego (2019) describes kidnapping as a major threat to Nigeria's national security and development. His doctrinal analysis of Nigerian legal and political frameworks emphasizes the persistent nature of the crime despite existing legislation. He advocates stricter penalties such as capital punishment in fatal cases—alongside equitable resource distribution and economic diversification to address the root causes and limit the crime's spread. Similarly, Baduku (2024) links kidnapping to poverty, unemployment, greed, and materialism. Using secondary data, he argues that these socio-economic challenges have fueled the crime's growth. He calls for collaborative efforts between government and the private sector to create youth employment and build a secure, stable business environment that discourages criminal activity.

Ashibi and Akintujoye (2024) note that kidnapping has morphed into a highly profitable enterprise, especially among unemployed youths motivated by greed and the desire for quick wealth. Initially used by Niger Delta militants to draw attention to regional neglect, kidnapping has since evolved into a form of armed robbery targeting individuals for ransom. This shift presents serious implications for national security, human rights, and socio-economic development. It has also undermined investor confidence and public safety. The authors stress that youth unemployment, weak governance, and societal glorification of wealth must be urgently tackled. They advocate effective governance and collective action from both the state and citizens. Other scholars (Ani and Nweke, 2014) emphasize the far-reaching socio-economic and political consequences of kidnapping, reinforcing the need for holistic, long-term responses that address both the symptoms and root causes of this troubling menace.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The paper adopts the routine activity theory (RAT) and the Problem-oriented policing (POP) theory. Routine Activity Theory, rooted in Criminology, explains crime as a product of everyday patterns of human interaction rather than merely individual criminal intent. It posits that crime occurs when three conditions converge in time and space: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian (Cohen, & Felson, 1979). In the context of kidnapping, this means that offenders are more likely to act when potential victims are accessible and when there is little or no effective security presence to deter or interrupt the act. Applied to the Nigerian context, the theory suggests that the persistence of kidnapping is closely linked to gaps

in surveillance, weak policing structures, and predictable routines that expose individuals to risk. Enhancing the effectiveness of the Nigeria Police Force therefore requires a shift toward proactive strategies that increase guardianship through visible patrols, intelligence gathering, and community-based security measures. By disrupting the convergence of these elements, proactive policing reduces the opportunities for kidnapping to occur.

Problem-oriented policing (POP) is a proactive strategy developed by Herman Goldstein in 1979 that shifts police focus from reactive incident response to identifying and analyzing underlying causes of recurring crime problems. It aims to develop tailored, long-term solutions, often using the SARA model (Scanning, Analysis, Response, and Assessment) to reduce crime, disorder, and fear. POP is an approach to develop targeted interventions, rather than an intervention itself. A POP approach can therefore be applied to any crime and disorder problem. It should not be viewed as an alternative to interventions in the crime reduction toolkit, but used in conjunction with them.

Routine Activity Theory explains that kidnapping occurs when offenders, targets, and weak guardianship converge, justifying proactive prevention. Problem-Oriented Policing provides a practical framework for identifying crime patterns and designing targeted interventions, enabling police to move from reactive responses to intelligence-driven, preventive strategies.

### **3. Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative, exploratory design based on secondary data from scholarly works, government reports, media sources, and policy documents on kidnapping and policing in Nigeria. Through interpretive analysis, it identifies key patterns and challenges confronting the Nigeria Police Force. The approach enables a contextual understanding of structural and operational gaps, offering insights into necessary reforms and the socio-political realities shaping anti-kidnapping efforts in Nigeria.

The study adopts a thematic analysis approach, whereby data from selected sources are systematically reviewed, coded, and organized into key themes such as digital policy frameworks, governance challenges, regulatory capacity, and socio-cultural implications of ICT. This allows for the identification of patterns, convergence, and gaps within existing literature.

However, the use of secondary data presents certain limitations. The study is constrained by the availability, scope, and quality of existing data, which may not fully capture recent developments or context-specific realities. There is also a risk of bias embedded in original sources, as well as limited control over data collection methods. Despite these limitations, careful source selection and critical analysis are employed to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings.

### **4. Understanding the Kidnapping Landscape in Nigeria**

Kidnapping has emerged as a critical national security issue in Nigeria, frequently used by different armed groups to achieve various objectives. While some factions employ it to recruit

members, others exploit it for financial gain by looting victims or demanding ransoms. Due to its high profitability, kidnapping is now seen as rivaling oil theft in terms of its threat to national security (Angalapu, 2024).

This surge is fueled by widespread poverty, weak policing structures, porous borders, and the growing presence of armed groups. Victims include a wide spectrum of society—from schoolchildren and religious leaders to foreign nationals and politicians. The crime now affects all six geopolitical zones, with regional variations in tactics and perpetrators. According to SB Morgen (2020), four of the ten Nigerian states with the highest rates of kidnapping are located in the South-South particularly Bayelsa, Delta, and Rivers states with a long history of militant activity. Kaduna ranks second, plagued by persistent violence along its corridor to Abuja. Although not among the top ten, Abuja is ranked 11th, with reports indicating that some kidnapers based in Kaduna have extended their operations to the capital. Between June 2011 and March 2020, at least \$18.34 million was paid in ransom, highlighting the scale and profitability of the crime.

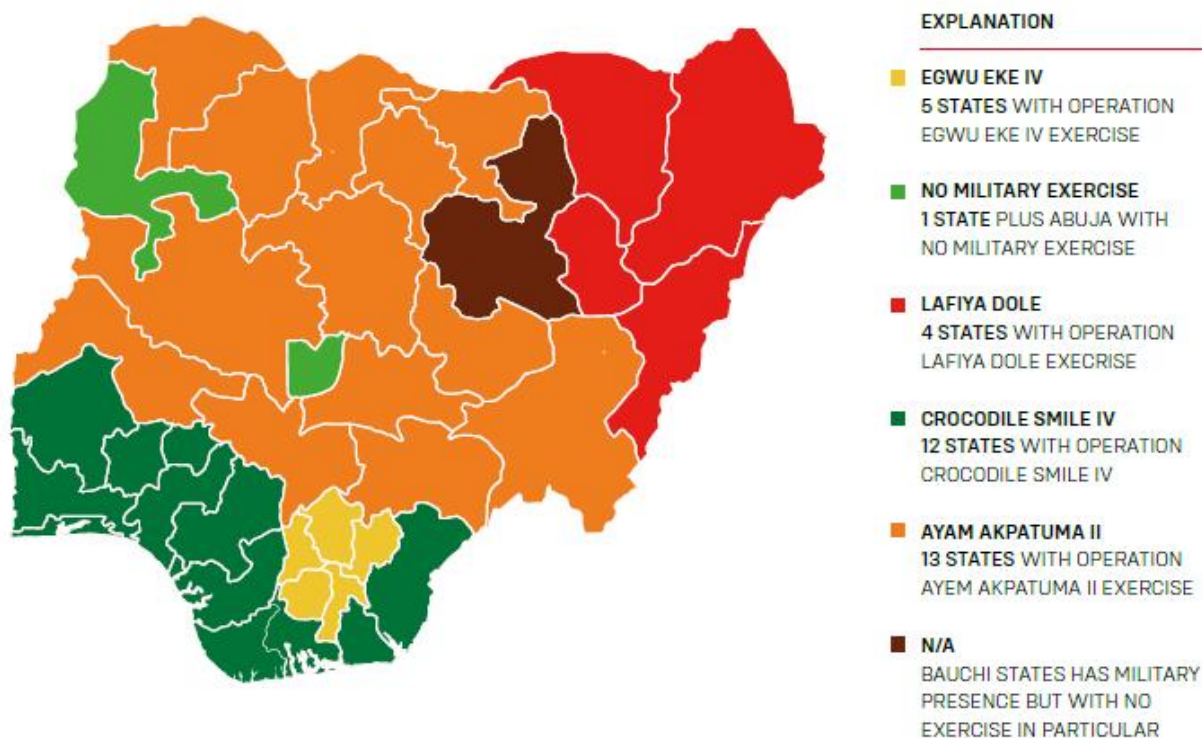
Further data from the Armed Conflict Location and Events Data Project (ACLED, 2024) shows that Nigerians paid billions of naira to secure the release of kidnapped individuals. From July 2022 to June 2023 alone, kidnappers demanded ransoms totaling around ₦5 billion (\$6.4 million), though only \$387,179 was paid, reflecting the impact of economic hardship and high unemployment. This was a significant drop from the \$1 million paid in the previous year.

The situation is further complicated by the involvement of ex-security personnel. Discharged or deserting military officers, some of whom were removed over questionable allegations like AWOL or failure to confront Boko Haram have reportedly joined kidnapping networks. Thompson (2021) warned that such individuals pose an elevated security risk due to their tactical training and insider knowledge. Victims often recount that kidnappers operate with military precision and sometimes wear military uniforms, suggesting that former or current security personnel may be involved (Aasike, 2025).

Some attacks occur near military checkpoints or barracks, further raising suspicion. High-profile cases like those of Mallam Wadume and Mr. Evans underscore that the crime is not confined to any single ethnic group or region but is instead a growing, organized enterprise that cuts across social and professional boundaries.

Figure 1: Nigeria Army Operations across Nigeria

|                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                      |                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <br><b>Airforce Operations</b><br>(Exercise & Region) | <b>Tsafan Daji</b><br>North West<br><br>Sokoto, Kaduna<br>Zamfara                                                                    | <b>Sharan Daji</b><br>North West<br><br>Sokoto, Kaduna<br>Zamfara                      | <b>Insecurity Categorisation</b><br>Banditry<br><br>Banditry, Banditry,<br>Banditry                                                                      |
|                                                                                                                                        | <b>AYEM AKPATUMA II</b><br>North Central and parts<br>of North Western states<br><br>Benue, Nasarawa, Kogi,<br>Taraba, Kaduna, Niger | <b>EGWU EKE IV</b><br>South Eastern States<br><br>Abia, Anambra,<br>Ebonyi, Enugu, Imo | <b>CROCODILE SMILE IV</b><br>South-south and parts<br>of South Western states<br><br>Akwa Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River,<br>Delta, Rivers, Edo, Lagos, Ogun |
| <br><b>Military Operations</b><br>(Exercise & Region) | <b>LAFIYA DOLE</b><br>North East<br><br>Adamawa, Borno,<br>Gombe, Yobe                                                               |                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                          |



Source: SB Morgen (2020:3)

Figure 1 shows some military operations against kidnapping and all forms of insecurity across Nigeria. The Nigerian State has deployed the Nigeria Armed Forces to almost everywhere across the country to stem the tide of rising kidnapping especially for ransom across the country. Yet, much has not been achieved.

This diverse and dynamic landscape requires the NPF to adopt adaptable and localized strategies. However, there are so many challenges confronting the NPF.

## 5. Current Challenges Facing the Nigeria Police Force

5.1. Inadequate Funding and Logistics Many police formations lack adequate patrol vehicles, communication devices, and operational funds, limiting timely intervention. Reforms aimed at improving the police force are often hampered by insufficient budgetary allocations. Critical areas such as officer training, welfare programs, infrastructure development, and procurement of modern equipment remain underfunded, leaving the police ill-prepared to meet contemporary security challenges. This financial shortfall not only weakens the implementation of reforms but also exacerbates morale issues among officers, leading to further resistance and inefficiency. To address this, governments must prioritize police funding as part of broader public safety initiatives, ensuring that resources are allocated effectively and transparently to drive meaningful change.

5.2 Inadequate training and poor firearms handling. During recruitment, the new recruits are usually housed in accommodations not conducive enough for their living. The feeding and overall welfare of the recruits are also very bad as well as the training for weapon handling. Ideally the recruits go through various phase of training from physical to psychological to firearm handling and management. However, due to the structural and logistical problems as well as corruption, the trainers would want to discharge the recruits into the society to save cost and make enough money for themselves thereby not giving them through training in weapon handling. Many police officers in Nigeria receive minimal firearms training, leading to improper handling and misuse of weapons.

5.3 Poor equipment and poor maintenance culture of firearms. The Nigeria Police Force still relies heavily on AK-47 rifles, even in situations where a more civil approach is required. This excessive weaponization—where all cadres of officers are armed rather than selectively—has contributed to public distrust, as many citizens are reluctant to interact with gun-carrying officers.

Compounding the issue is the poor maintenance of firearms. Many weapons in police custody are outdated, rusty, or in disrepair, due to years of neglect and insufficient servicing. Despite annual budget allocations for equipment maintenance, funds are often delayed, partially disbursed, or mismanaged, making it difficult to repair or replace faulty arms. Poorly maintained weapons are prone to malfunctions, including accidental discharges, posing risks to both officers and civilians.

Eke and Osaghae (2018) argue that the Nigeria Police is severely under-equipped, relying on obsolete firearms, while criminals increasingly use more advanced and lethal weapons. This widening equipment gap hinders effective policing, delays response to armed robberies, and compromises the ability of officers to engage with heavily armed criminals. As a result, the Force remains largely ineffective in preventing and

Figure 2: A modern police barrack built by a state governor



**Source: Okere (2016)**

5.4 Stress and psychological Challenge. Police officers in Nigeria face intense stress due to poor working conditions, low salaries, and frequent exposure to violence. These challenges often impair their judgment and performance, contributing to psychological strain and, in some cases, mental health issues. In a country plagued by widespread poverty and inadequate welfare systems, such stressors are heightened. According to the World Health Organization (2022), mental health is a state of well-being that enables individuals to cope with life's pressures, work productively, and contribute to their communities. However, those living in poverty or exposed to violence and inequality common conditions for Nigerian police officers are at greater risk of developing mental health problems. Although treatments are available and relatively affordable, underfunded healthcare systems in developing countries like Nigeria make access difficult and the quality of care often substandard.

Akpomuvie (2010) emphasizes that effective healthcare planning is essential for human capital development in Nigeria. Yet, mental health remains under-prioritized. Additionally, stigma and discrimination against those with mental health conditions further discourage treatment. In extreme cases, untreated mental illness among officers can lead to tragic outcomes, where those tasked with protecting the public may, intentionally or not, cause harm due to unaddressed psychological distress.

5.5 Poor Intelligence and Infrastructure: The Nigeria Police Force suffers from inadequate investment in intelligence gathering, surveillance, and data analytics. Crime mapping and profiling remain underdeveloped, with continued reliance on whistleblowers rather than modern

technology. In the 1970s and 1980s, informants were paid for intelligence, but today, despite technological advancements, funding constraints hinder the use of such tools.

Infrastructural decay further undermines police efficiency. From outdated data systems to dilapidated barracks and police stations, the lack of basic facilities reflects chronic underfunding. In a country of over 200 million people, the police remain overstretched and poorly equipped. The recent protests by retired officers over unpaid pensions (Odeniyi et al., 2025) highlight systemic neglect. These conditions demoralize both current personnel and potential recruits, ultimately weakening the force's ability to perform effectively in combating crimes such as kidnapping.

Figure 3: A dilapidated Police Barack in Nigeria



**Source: Adewale (2022)**

Figure 2 highlights the poor condition of police barracks in Nigeria. Even officer quarters, though slightly better in appearance, face issues of maintenance, delayed payments, and bureaucratic allocation. Akinwale (2022) notes that these conditions reflect the broader neglect within the Nigeria Police Force, negatively affecting officer welfare, morale, and overall operational effectiveness.

**5.6 Training and Personnel Shortages:** The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) remains understaffed, poorly trained in modern crime detection, and ill-equipped to tackle specialized crimes like kidnapping. There is a glaring absence of continuous training to update officers on evolving criminal trends. While some have accessed grants or bursaries for further education, many remain semi-literate, having joined the force through patronage, ethnicity, or religious favoritism. These unqualified officers often exploit their position for personal gain and are unfamiliar with

modern technology. Their lack of digital literacy leads to the harassment of innocent youths, whom they falsely accuse of cybercrime. This disconnect between the police and the tech-savvy youth population was a key trigger of the 2020 #EndSARS protests (Osho, 2025a). Despite promises of reform following the unrest, the outdated policing culture persists, highlighting the urgent need for systemic overhauls in recruitment, training, and digital competence within the NPF.

**5.7 Public Distrust and Poor Community Relations** A legacy of abuse, corruption, and inefficiency has eroded public trust, limiting community cooperation essential for early detection of criminal activities. Decades of police misconduct, including brutality, corruption, and impunity, have eroded public trust in law enforcement. Many citizens view the police as oppressors rather than protectors, resulting in reluctance to cooperate with law enforcement efforts. This mistrust creates a vicious cycle, where community disengagement further isolates the police, impeding effective crime prevention and response. Rebuilding trust requires a sustained commitment to transparency, accountability, and community engagement. Public relations campaigns, regular reporting on reform progress, and visible actions against misconduct can help restore confidence in the police force, but these efforts must be consistent and backed by tangible results. Akinwale (2022) notes that Nigeria police is rated low by the public—there is a lack of trust, confidence and respect for them—but the conditions of barracks where police and their families live across Nigeria is also a key factor why they are usually not seen as significant others.

**5.8. Corruption and Internal Complicity** Cases of police officers colluding with kidnappers or sabotaging investigations have undermined the Force's integrity. The corruption in the Nigeria Police is just a microcosm of the menace in the entire country. Corruption in Nigeria is high and civil and public servants have not done too well in that regard just like an average Nigerian. Any wonder the corruption index has not changed positively in the last few years. Though there have been years when it seemed fine, it has not been steady and the anti-corruption campaigns of leaders in the last two decades since we have transition to democracy has not improved or gained much either (Obasanjo, 2024). Thompson, Afolabi et al (2020) have asserted how the Nigerian state has even politicised the anti-corruption campaigns. Ranked 150 out of 180 countries in the Transparency International 2022 Corruption Perceptions Index and Nigeria's ranking places it in the bottom 20 per cent of the comity of Nations; and illustrates how systemic and embedded corruption is in the country. NBS/UNODC (2024) revealed that in 2024, Corruption continues to rank among the most important problems affecting Nigerians adding that more than ₦700 billion in cash bribes were paid by citizens to public officials in 2023. With Most bribes being paid in the street or in a public official's office.

Figure 4: A Police |Station in some rural communities in Nigeria



Source: Anokwuru (2019) and other platforms compiled by the author

The figure above shows the deplorable state of some police stations. Describing the state of one of the stations, an officer said

In fact, working here is more of a punishment. How can officers of the Nigerian Police Force be subjected to this working condition? To renovate this place would not cost much from the police budget. What if the building collapses when we have suspects detained in the cell? Those in authority should act fast because the calamity it would cause in future can be avoided now if urgent steps are taken. The quarters at the back is not spared either. There are dangers everywhere, both the presence of dangerous reptiles

As Akinwale (2022) posits,

The Nigeria Police live in squalor quarters for barracks across the country, and this has always been a source of concern corresponding to the well-being of the operatives, their families and indeed their work output. Large cracks on the walls, bat-infested houses, leaking roofs, broken and smelly soak-away channels as well as dilapidated structures dot the Mobile Police Barracks located in Adeke, along Naka/Ankpa Road in Makurdi, the Benue State capital, North-central Nigeria (Akinwale, 2022)

While some police stations are modern, many in rural areas remain underdeveloped, creating inefficiencies especially as kidnappings often occur in these ungoverned, poorly secured spaces.

Figure 5: A modern Police station donated by a community in Ogun State



Source: Hanafi (2020)

The figure above shows a modern police station built through community effort. However, while such infrastructure is important, the challenges facing the Nigeria Police Force go beyond buildings. Lasting solutions require investment in human development, systemic reform, and broader infrastructural support not just physical structures.

Figure 6: A Modern Police Station built by the NPF



**Source: Benson (2022)**

5.9 Compromised Judiciary: Over the years, Nigeria’s judiciary has increasingly been perceived as a tool of the wealthy and the ruling elite. Beyond state capture, some judicial officers exploit their positions for personal gain, accepting bribes to reduce sentences or acquit offenders entirely. This culture of corruption has eroded public confidence and fueled instances of mob justice, as citizens lose faith in formal legal processes. The judiciary is often seen as a marketplace where verdicts are “shopped” through backdoor deals, resulting in inconsistent and controversial judgments. A notable example is the disparity in sentencing between two convicted kidnappers: Hamisu Bala (Wadume) received only seven years from Justice Binta Nyako, while Chukwudumeme Onwuamadike (Evans) was sentenced to 21 years by Justice Oluwatoyin Taiwo. The Human Rights Writers Association of Nigeria (HURIWA) condemned this inconsistency, arguing that both men committed similar crimes and that justice must be applied equitably, regardless of influence or background (Nwachukwu, 2022).

5.10 The society: The dominant societal view of wealth and poverty in Nigeria urgently needs redefinition. Material success, often celebrated regardless of its source, has created a culture that sidelines hardworking individuals while glorifying those who gain wealth through illegitimate means. This distorted value system is reinforced by key institutions—families, religious bodies, schools, the media, and even government contributing to rising crime, particularly kidnapping.

Through either neglect or complicity, these institutions promote the dangerous idea that wealth equates to success, regardless of legality. As a result, the Nigeria Police Force often operates in isolation, facing resistance not just from criminals, but also from communities that shield offenders, especially when ethnic, religious, or social ties are involved. A striking case is Hamisu Bala (Wadume), a convicted kidnapper, who received a hero's welcome in his Taraba hometown. He was publicly celebrated, even defended by the traditional ruler who dismissed the charges as politically motivated (Opara, 2024). Such reactions reflect a societal acceptance of criminality and expose deep moral and cultural decay. As Ezinwa (2019) observes, the lack of strong moral upbringing and the obsession with quick wealth have driven many young people into kidnapping and hostage-taking as perceived paths to success.

These challenges hinder the NPF's effectiveness. As Ajayi (2014) notes, reactive policing, corruption, and poor intelligence limit impact. How can the Force become more proactive?

## **6. Towards a Proactive Policing Model**

6.1. Intelligence-Led Policing (ILP) To effectively address the growing threat of kidnapping in Nigeria, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) must institutionalize Intelligence-Led Policing (ILP) as a core operational and strategic framework. ILP emphasizes a proactive approach to crime control, driven by accurate, timely, and actionable intelligence. This model prioritizes the collection, analysis, and dissemination of information to guide decision-making, resource allocation, and operational deployment. The adoption of ILP requires significant investment in both human intelligence (HUMINT) and technological capabilities, such as surveillance systems, data analytics, cyber intelligence, and geospatial mapping.

Training officers in modern intelligence techniques and fostering inter-agency collaboration with bodies such as the Department of State Services (DSS), the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), and the National Identity Management Commission (NIMC) is crucial. Additionally, establishing a centralized intelligence fusion center within the NPF would enhance the coordination and analysis of kidnapping-related data across all states. By leveraging ILP, the NPF can move from reactive policing to a more targeted, preventive, and strategic model, capable of dismantling kidnapping networks, identifying hotspots, and disrupting criminal operations before they escalate. In turn, this will not only improve response times and investigative outcomes but also help restore public confidence in the capacity of the police to ensure security and justice.

6.2. Community Policing and Public Engagement by Strengthening Grassroots Security Networks

Effective crime prevention, especially against kidnapping, depends on strong community engagement. The Nigeria Police Force (NPF) must prioritize revitalizing community policing as a key part of its security strategy. This approach fosters trust, transparency, and cooperation between the police and the public, thereby improving intelligence flow and crime prevention. To succeed, the NPF should collaborate with traditional rulers, religious leaders, youth groups, vigilantes, and community development councils to build inclusive, trust-based partnerships.

Establishing Community Policing Committees (CPCs) at ward, local government, and state levels will ensure grassroots involvement and accountability. Embedding officers within communities through beat patrols and liaison roles will help humanize the force and improve responsiveness. Training in cultural sensitivity, conflict resolution, and communication is also essential to strengthen officer-community relations.

Public education campaigns should be used to encourage citizens to report suspicious activities and understand local security risks. By empowering people to take part in safeguarding their communities, the NPF can promote shared responsibility for safety and reduce crime. Ultimately, a well-executed community policing model will enhance early warning systems, strengthen intelligence gathering, and restore public confidence, contributing to a more secure and resilient society.

6.3. Technological integration: In response to increasingly sophisticated criminal networks, the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) must adopt advanced technology to enhance modern policing. Tools such as drones, Closed-Circuit Television CCTV, biometric systems, and centralized data platforms can significantly improve surveillance, evidence collection, and predictive policing. These systems allow real-time tracking of kidnapping trends, suspect movements, and high-risk areas. Adeniji and Emekayi (2022) also emphasize the need for tech-based crime fighting.

Technologies like license plate recognition, facial recognition, and geospatial crime mapping can aid in tracking suspects and securing public spaces. Investments in forensic labs, cybercrime units, and digital crime databases will boost investigative and prosecutorial efficiency. However, successful implementation demands inter-agency cooperation, continuous training, and strong legal safeguards to prevent misuse.

By integrating technology effectively, the NPF can shift from reactive to proactive policing, better equipped to counter the evolving tactics of kidnappers and restore public confidence in law enforcement.

#### 6.4. Training and Capacity Building: Equipping the Force for Specialized Anti-Kidnapping Operations

A key strategy for improving the Nigeria Police Force's (NPF) response to kidnapping is sustained training and capacity building. The NPF must develop specialized anti-kidnapping units trained in hostage negotiation, suspect tracking, and high-risk rescues, using both local insights and global best practices. Training should also cover hostage psychology, geolocation tracking, tactical navigation, covert surveillance, criminal profiling, forensic analysis, and digital evidence handling.

Equally important is embedding ethics and human rights education into the training curriculum to ensure accountability and professionalism. Regular workshops, simulations, and refresher courses should be institutionalized to promote continuous learning.

Collaborations with academic institutions, civil society, and international law enforcement can further expand training scope and expose officers to innovative security practices. By investing in professional development, the NPF can build a skilled, ethical, and responsive force capable of effectively preventing and combating kidnapping while earning public trust and legitimacy.

#### 6.5. Inter-Agency Collaboration: Institutionalizing Joint Security Efforts against Kidnapping

The persistent threat of kidnapping in Nigeria requires a coordinated, multi-agency response that goes beyond institutional silos. A formal task force involving the Nigeria Police Force (NPF), Department of State Services (DSS), Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), and carefully vetted local vigilante groups is essential. This task force must be well-funded, institutionalized, and integrated into the national security framework to ensure effective collaboration.

Each agency contributes unique strengths: DSS brings intelligence-gathering expertise, the police and NSCDC offer manpower, while vigilantes provide grassroots knowledge. Combined, these assets can enhance intelligence sharing, situational awareness, and joint operations tailored to local realities. To avoid duplication and conflict, roles should be clearly defined, with standard procedures, joint command structures, regular briefings, and shared communication systems.

The involvement of local vigilantes is especially valuable in remote areas, where their familiarity with the terrain improves tracking and early warning. However, this must be done through structured vetting and oversight to ensure professionalism and prevent misuse. Institutionalizing such collaboration will maximize Nigeria's security capabilities and demonstrate unified resolve in dismantling kidnapping networks across the country.

#### 6.6. Addressing Root Causes: Creating an Enabling Environment to Support Policing Efforts

While reforms within the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) are essential, lasting solutions to the kidnapping crisis must address the deeper structural causes of crime. By applying the POP theory, In the context of kidnapping in Nigeria, this means focusing on hotspots, understanding the operational patterns of kidnapping networks, and deploying tailored strategies such as intelligence gathering, community engagement, and situational crime prevention. It moves policing from a response-driven model to a solution-driven approach. The government must take primary responsibility for creating an enabling environment that reduces poverty, unemployment, and lack of infrastructure key drivers of insecurity. No police force can operate effectively without addressing the socio-political and economic conditions that foster criminal behavior.

Many youths, lacking access to jobs, education, or meaningful opportunities, become vulnerable to recruitment by criminal syndicates offering quick wealth or a sense of belonging. To support police efforts, the government must implement inclusive policies that uplift communities and reduce desperation. This includes creating jobs in rural and high-risk areas, promoting youth

entrepreneurship, expanding access to education and vocational training, and investing in essential infrastructure such as roads, electricity, healthcare, and water.

Additionally, transparent governance and equitable service delivery are crucial to rebuilding public trust. Although some youth empowerment programs exist, they are often politicized and ineffective. By tackling these root causes, the government can ease pressure on the police, reduce criminal recruitment, and foster long-term peace and development, affirming that true security depends on both effective policing and social justice.

## 7 Conclusion

The scourge of kidnapping in Nigeria presents a complex, multifaceted challenge that demands more than reactive policing. As this paper has shown, the current operational model of the Nigeria Police Force is hamstrung by poor funding, obsolete equipment, inadequate intelligence, public distrust, and corruption rendering it ineffective against the dynamic nature of organized kidnapping syndicates. To transform the NPF into an effective anti-kidnapping force, there must be a strategic reorientation anchored on intelligence-led and community-based policing, technological advancement, inter-agency collaboration, and sustainable training programs. However, these reforms will only thrive in a socio-economic environment where the root causes of crime, poverty, unemployment, and social inequality are addressed through inclusive governance and equitable development. Ultimately, Nigeria's ability to curb kidnapping hinges not only on police reform but also on building a secure, just, and participatory society.

The recommendations from the study are: Institutionalize Intelligence-Led Policing (ILP), Revitalize Community Policing Structures, Integrate Advanced Technology, Strengthen Training and Capacity Building, Institutionalize Inter-Agency Collaboration, Improve Police Welfare and Infrastructure, Address Socio-Economic Root Causes such as unemployment and poverty, Promote Judicial Integrity and Legal Reform, Implement Public Awareness Campaigns

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