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ARAŞTIRMA MAKALESİ

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Rise of Kidnappings in South Africa: Challenges for Law Enforcement

Güney Afrika'da Kaçırma Olaylarının Artışı: Kolluk Kuvvetlerinin Karşılaştığı Zorluklar

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the rise of kidnapping in South Africa. It aims to reflect on the challenges law enforcement faces in addressing what has quickly become a considerable societal problem. This paper employed secondary data as a data collection technique using narrative literature review. The rational choice theory was employed as a theoretical lens. Findings revealed that kidnapping in South Africa is driven by several issues, such as poverty, inequality, unemployment and the growth and consolidation of crime syndicates making millions in ransom fees. While South African law enforcement agencies claim to be making inroads in addressing kidnapping cases, they face considerable challenges, such as public mistrust, lack of support and the underreporting of kidnapping cases, making it hard to address the problem. South Africa is under pressure to ensure that legislation effectively addresses this issue. It is therefore recommended that the country establish and capacitate specialized kidnapping units that will work closely with community police forums, the community, and other relevant stakeholders to ensure seamless coordination in responding to the rise of kidnapping. Moreover, eradicating corruption within the police force will be an effective measure to help address the problem.

Keywords: Development, Police, Kidnapping, Corruption.

ÖZ

Bu makale Güney Afrika'da kaçırma olaylarının artışı incelemektedir. Amacı ise kolluk kuvvetlerinin hızla önemli bir toplumsal sorun haline gelen bu problemi ele alırken karşılaştıkları zorlukları yansıtmaktır. Bu makale, anlatsal literatür incelemesi kullanarak veri toplama tekniği olarak ikincil verileri kullanmıştır. Rasyonel seçim teorisi teorik bir mercekle kullanılmıştır. Bulgular göstermiştir ki Güney Afrika'daki kaçırma olaylarına yoksulluk, eşitsizlik, işsizlik ve fidye ücretlerinden milyonlarca dolar kazanan suç örgütlerinin büyümesi ve konsolidasyonu gibi çeşitli sorunlar yön vermektedir. Güney Afrika kolluk kuvvetleri, kaçırma vakalarını ele almada ilerleme kaydettiğini iddia etse de, halkın güvensizliği, destek eksikliği ve kaçırma vakalarının yeterince bildirilmemesi gibi önemli zorluklarla karşı karşıyalardır ki bu da sorunun ele alınmasını zorlaştırmaktadır. Güney Afrika, mevzuatın bu sorunu etkili bir şekilde ele almasını sağlamak için baskı altındadır. Bu nedenle ülkenin, artan kaçırma olaylarına yanıt vermede sorunsuz koordinasyonu sağlamak için toplum polisi forumları, toplum ve diğer ilgili paydaşlarla yakın bir şekilde çalışacak uzmanlaşmış kaçırma birimleri kurması ve bunları yetkilendirmesi önerilmektedir. Ayrıca, polis teşkilatı içindeki yolsuzlukların ortadan kaldırılması sorunun çözümünde etkili bir tedbir olacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kalkınma, Polis, Kaçırma, Yolsuzluk.

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INTRODUCTION

When South Africa emerged from apartheid and subsequently ushered in multi-party politics in 1994, there were feelings of hope and happiness across the country (Lundgren & Scheckle, 2019). It was hoped that during this period, those who were previously disadvantaged and discriminated against under the apartheid regime would now have opportunity to play a more meaningful and inclusive role towards the country's economic development (Mosala et al., 2017). South Africa's transition was also met with hope across the continent as South Africa's strong economic position was seen as crucial in terms of building an inclusive continent characterized by collective development. Nevertheless, after 1994, South Africa has struggled with many socio-economic issues, which have today given rise to widespread underdevelopment and a killedeconomy (Goodman, 2017). The hope of many black South Africans were upside down During 1994 reform process and ha been replaced by poverty, inequality and corruption, and a broken delivery framework (Alexander, 2010). Inequality has been the most challenging issue to address in the post-apartheid era, as argued by Bundy (2020); since 1994, inequality has increased. South Africa has become a more unequal society and not a more equal one. The increase in crime has also increased concern about the public safety. A report by the South African Police Service (SAPS) examined ten-year trends associated with various crimes. While 15 893 murders were recorded in 2010, that number soared to 21 325 in the 2019/2020 financial year (Daniel, 2022). The report also shows that, on average, 58 people are killed in South Africa daily, placing the country only second to El Salvador as the 'murder capital' of the world, according to a recent paper conducted by the United Nations (Daniel, 2022).

Recently, the increase in kidnappings in the country has taken law enforcement agencies by surprise, as there has been an increase in the consolidation of kidnapping syndicates targeting wealthy individuals, which has become a significant challenge for law enforcement (Writer, 2023a). The South African government admits that kidnapping has become a new problem for the country. This is mostly triggered by the rise in family breakup and divorce rates in South Africa (Etheridge, 2019). It is also triggered by the ease of international travel, which has led to an increase in parental kidnappings (Etheridge, 2019). For example, from the above triggers, one can see that relationship breakdowns and custodial disputes between parents are the major sources of kidnapping in South Africa. This is because, in broken relationships and divorce cases, numerous parents take matters into their own hands and kidnap their children as they fear that they will not be granted custody. They also fear that they will be prevented from taking care of or seeing their own children. They often take matters into their own hands and see taking their child as the only option (Etheridge, 2019). This act of seizing and detaining or carrying away a person through unlawful force and taking them away from their family forcefully without their consent constitute a crime and causes immense problem in society (Uzorma & Nwanegbo-Ben, 2014, p. 132).

While various factors point to poverty and inequality as the primary cause, police corruption has also given rise to crime syndicates who are exploiting these loopholes to make easy money through ransom kidnappings (Dlamini, 2023). Even though most kidnappings are an off shoot of car hijacking robberies, today, prime experts say an increasing number of victims are now being specifically targeted based on their wealth

and ability to pay a ransom that's contributing to easy money for kidnappers and crime syndicates mine that. This paper examines the rise of kidnappings in South Africa and the subsequent challenges for law enforcement. This paper employed a secondary data approach to collect the needed data, and a narrative literature approach was employed. The data search keywords included kidnapping, police corruption, syndicates, and ransom. Data sources included but were not limited to journal articles, credible online sources, unpublished dissertations, policy briefs and online newspaper sources that spoke to the research objectives of the paper. The data was analyzed in narrative form through reflections, arguments and different narratives that explain the emergence of kidnapping as a severe societal problem in South Africa and the challenges for law enforcement.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: RATIONAL CHOICE THEORY OF CRIME

The preceding discussion reflects significantly on the rising problem of kidnapping in South Africa and the urgent need for law enforcement to develop practical solutions to address a severe societal problem. To further shed light on the phenomenon, this paper employs the rational choice theory that explains how one commits a crime and the motivations of people committing that particular crime. For the rational choice theory, individuals decide to partake in criminal activity after a careful thought process that analyzes and weighs the cost and benefit of committing a crime (Akers, 1990). If the perceived benefits of the crime outweigh the costs, people are likely to commit that particular offence driven by the observation that they are likely to benefit (Perera, 2023). This paper argues that the rise in kidnappings in South Africa can be significantly explained but rational choice theory. Kidnappers are now selecting potential targets based on their wealth, knowing very well that they will financially benefit through ransom fees (AFP, 2022). With unemployment, poverty and rising inequality in the country, the need to survive means kidnapping has become an easy way for one to get rich quickly. Therefore, if the potential benefits of the crime (kidnapping) outweigh the potential cost (such as being arrested), there will likely be an increase in kidnappings in South Africa. Kidnapping syndicates do not fear of costs related to kidnapping. This challenges law enforcement to adopt new strategies to counter this growing problem. Kidnapping syndicates rake in billions of dollars annually. Thus the fear of arrests is superseded by financial gains, hence using the rational choice theory in this paper.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Types of Kidnaping

Even though there are many types of kidnapping, there has been increased confusion between kidnapping and abduction. Brooks and Baez (2021) note that kidnapping is a crime that is committed when a person or persons take someone else without their consent and hold them in a particular space. Often, a person who commits kidnapping does so to acquire financial gain through a ransom or extort. Abduction is committed when someone takes another person against their will and keeps them somewhere while restrained and possibly gagged (Brooks & Baez, 2021). However, unlike kidnapping, abduction involves no ransom for financial gain. The purpose of the crime is to prevent the victim from returning home. Within the context of kidnapping, many types, such as kidnap for ransom, tiger kidnapping/proxy bombings, express

kidnapping, political and ideological kidnapping and virtual have become common in globalized space (*Reducing the Risk*, 2023). No matter the difference in their operation and execution, nevertheless, kidnapping has become a threat to public safety and law enforcement.

Kidnapping as a Crime and Income Generator

Crime globally has become a threat to public safety. Crime has given rise to the need to implement a new approach based on community collaboration involving various stakeholders to ensure a unified approach. It is time to make communities safer by implementing innovative, evidence-based approaches to criminal justice that reduce crime, support law enforcement, address social injustice and hold individuals accountable for violating the law (*A Look Ahead*, 2023).

Even though governments remain key role players in crime prevention through law enforcement agencies, governments today must release that crime has become transnational and state sovereignty has been significantly challenged as criminal syndicates undermine the rule of law. Today, transnational organized crime is an inherent feature of economic globalization and represents more than just the dark side of that development path (Stiftung & Schöenberg, 2013). Transnational crime has conventionally been seen as a threat to the state, threatening its national and regional security and the rule of law, impeding its political and economic development, and limiting its society's social and cultural development (Wilson, 2020). Transnational criminals undermine the political and economic institutions of the state through the corruption and bribery of the police, immigration, customs officials, and the judiciary. From drug trafficking, human trafficking, smuggling of migrants, illicit trading in firearms, trafficking in natural resources, the illegal wildlife trade, and the sale of fraudulent medicines to cybercrime, transnational crime has become a threat to human security and the state's survival. Since the age of globalization and digitization, kidnapping has become a straightforward crime and has excellent financial rewards for kidnappers in a short space of time. Brockett et al. (2019), citing Bell (2019), noted that provides a higher estimate of 15,000–20,000 kidnappings per year, with fewer than 20% being reported to authorities. The financial cost of kidnapping is high—an estimated \$50 million in Mexico alone (the number one kidnapping country) and \$1.5 billion annually worldwide (Brockett et al., 2019). In Nigeria, for example, *Bad Cops* (2019) notes that between 2011 and 2020, Nigerians paid at least US\$18.34 million (₦7 billion) in ransoms to kidnappers. In the first half of 2021, 2 371 people were kidnapped, and about US\$23.84 million (N10 billion) was demanded in ransoms in Nigeria (Ukpe, 2021). This further consolidates the notion that kidnapping has become a significant source of income for kidnappers. The rise of kidnapping as a means of income generation cannot be eliminated from globalization. This paper argues that the rapid globalization of the world and the rise of the digital age has facilitated the rise of kidnapping through technology, making intelligence gathering of potential targets effortless. However, the perceived corruption within law enforcement has also impeded the need to address kidnapping. Singh (2022) laments the corruption within law enforcement and states that when police officers are not punished for corruption, corrupt activity increases and becomes embedded within a police force. *Bad Cops* (2019) communicates that police complicity in kidnapping and extortion activities permeates many societies and spans several continents. The practice

is more pervasive in those countries where entrenched flaws in institutional oversight and funding shortages either drive members of the security forces to crime or give them the confidence to believe they can act with impunity and such examples have been observed in Mexico, the Philippines and Nigeria (*Bad Cops*, 2019). In Mexico, law enforcement is vulnerable to either extorting bribes from members of the public or accepting pay-offs from criminal gangs (*Bad Cops*, 2019). In the Philippines, since the war on drug was declared by Rodrigo Duterte, there has been a significant increase in police-related kidnappings in the country. In a recent incident in March 2019, for example, Philippine authorities arrested seven police officers, all members of a drug enforcement unit, concerning a kidnapping case from November 2018 (*Bad Cops*, 2019). In Nigeria, Okoli (2019) worryingly admit that kidnapping has remained the most virulent form of banditry in Nigeria. It has become the most pervasive and intractable violent crime in the country, and the corruption in the police force has made it challenging to address kidnapping-related cases.

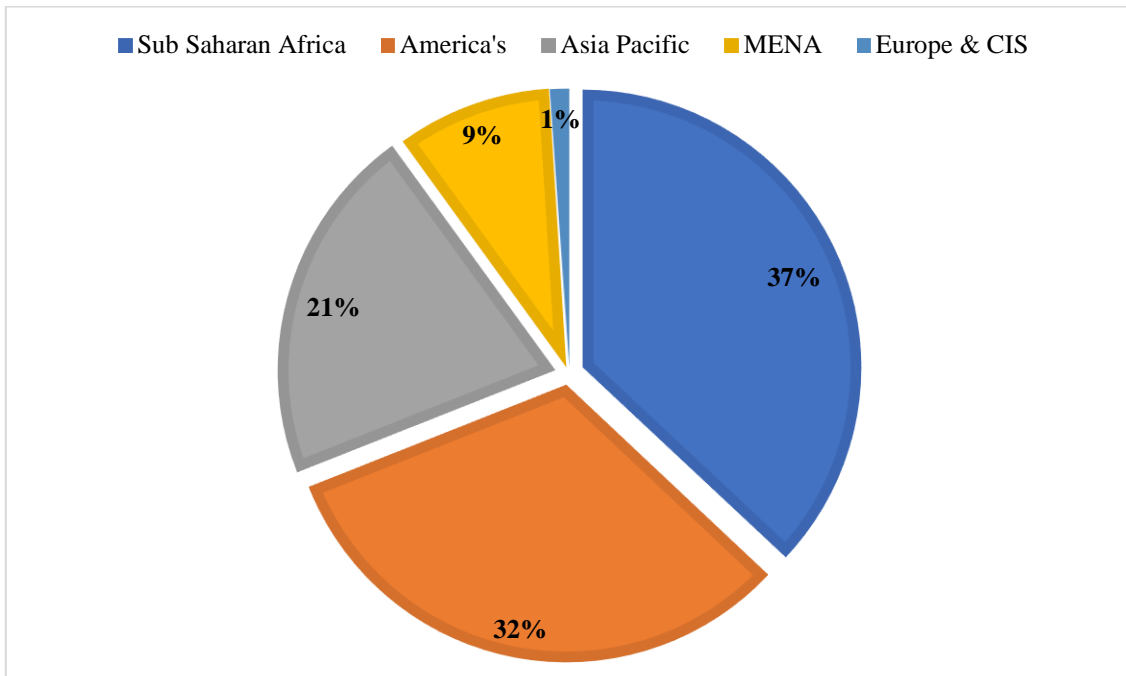


Figure 1. Kidnap for ransom in 2022. Source: *Kidnap for Ransom* (2022).

The above illustration reinforces that in Sub-Saharan Africa, kidnapping has become a pandemic that threatens public safety. While other regions have also become victims of kidnapping, Sub-Saharan has become a hotbed for kidnapping. For decades, chains of socio-economic problems, such as poverty, unemployment, inequalities, bad leadership and governance, and corruption, to mention a few, have mired Nigeria and the African continent (Bello, 2022). Kidnapping for ransom has become one of the most significant challenges facing Nigeria today, and the government is attempting to address this by punishing families who pay a ransom. Nevertheless, many believe this has little chance of tackling the problem. Poverty, unemployment, corruption, political violence, and religious intolerance have created fertile ground for insecurity and kidnapping in Nigeria (Onireti, 2022). The country's high rate of youth unemployment, currently around 30-35%, is believed to be a significant factor responsible for the growth of kidnap cases.

Causes and a Global Response to Kidnapping

From the above deliberation, one can deduce that kidnapping has threatened human security and the state's security architecture. Drivers kidnapping around the globe include unemployment, poverty, illiteracy, religion, greed, politics, and corruption. Kidnapping can have a destabilizing effect on the socio-economic, religious, economic and political environment. It can result in the erosion of social peace and economic sabotage (Ene, 2018). Kidnapping has been a widespread security issue for many decades. It is an ongoing global challenge that affects all levels of society, whether rich or poor, and Africa is no exception. Global kidnappings increased by 50% from 2020 to 2021. Many incidents are unreported, and the actual figures are likely higher still. Several factors have contributed towards the growth of kidnapping for business, including unequal distribution of wealth, rising political instability and declining state authority (Boreham, 2022). The African operating environment can be complex, with Sub-Saharan Africa alone accounting for 37% of global kidnappings, with a few locations contributing to its high rates, including Nigeria, South Africa, The Sahel, Mozambique and The Democratic Republic of the Congo (Boreham, 2022). Different governments take different approaches to hostage-taking. The United States, insiders say, tends to favor the military rescue option. European governments are more likely to pay up, although France increasingly takes a more aggressive approach, particularly with al Qaeda-linked abductions (*Feature-Kidnap and Ransom*, 2011).

In Nigeria, families and entire communities who pool their savings to pay ransoms are being destroyed, with many hostages afraid or ashamed of reporting their ordeals. Businesses, too, are affected, with many spending fortunes to protect their assets (*Kidnapping, the Industry*, 2022). The rise of terrorist organizations has also given rise to kidnapping. According to the United Nations (UN) Office on Crime and Drugs, terrorist groups have used kidnapping and ransom to help funding to their operations (Dean & Procelli, 2022). The UN found that between 2008 and 2014, al Qaeda and its direct affiliates made at least \$125 million in revenue from kidnappings. Methods of kidnapping have evolved beyond the traditional "snatch and demand" methodology, where kidnappers take custody of a victim and demand a ransom—typically from employers or family members—to release them to safety (Dean & Procelli, 2022). While those methods are still used, most kidnappings today are forms of express or virtual kidnapping. Express kidnappings involve a small and immediate demand for ransom from a victim, such as an ATM kidnapping. Criminals hold a victim hostage, transport that victim to an ATM, and force him or her to withdraw the maximum amount possible from his or her account before being set free (Dean & Procelli, 2022).

The global response to kidnapping has been unconvincing. In developing countries with a breakdown in the rule of law, governance and political instability, kidnapping tends to be rife as syndicates take advantage of lawlessness. In Nigeria, kidnapping for ransom has become one of the most significant challenges facing Nigeria today, and the government is attempting to address this by punishing families who pay a ransom through legislation. Onireti (2022) criticizes this and asserts that enforcing Nigeria's Terrorism (Prevention) Act 2013, where victims face up to 15 years imprisonment for paying to free loved ones, however, will not stop families from paying ransom fees as the reality on the ground is that most Nigerians lack trust and confidence in the police. In

most instances, the police and state security operatives fail to respond rapidly to kidnapping incidents (Onireti, 2022). Families of kidnapped victims pay ransoms out of desperation and helplessness, believing the security agencies will not come to their aid. In Mexico, the response to kidnapping has been hindered by law enforcement corruption and drug cartels' growth, influence and financial gain. Smith (2018) argues that the insatiable US drug demand largely fuels the kidnapping surge in Mexico. Mexican criminal organizations require extensive personnel and vast caches of assault rifles and other weapons — 70 percent of which come from the US — to defend their "plazas" (strategic points along the drug supply chain) from other gangs and the Mexican police and military. From a state's point of view, while there is a need for effective laws and regulations to deter kidnapers, several issues persist. Some countries cannot afford to spend as much on protecting their citizens as rich countries.

Moreover, crime disproportionately impacts vulnerable people and poor countries, less well-equipped to deal with shocks (*Crime and Development*, 2005). High crime levels' direct and indirect effects represent a significant challenge in themselves and how they undermine social and commercial activity. Niyitunga and Kimari (2020) argued that financial exclusion causes social crimes and pose threats to national security. Using the cases of attacks on migrants in South Africa, Niyitunga (2024) linked the occurrence of social crimes such as xenophobic attacks, kidnappings and social protests with social exclusion, corruption, inequality and lack of law enforcement. Therefore, addressing the rise in kidnapping needs a holistic approach with various stakeholder support to ensure possible success in addressing kidnappings.

The Problem of Kidnapping in South Africa

Kidnapping in South Africa has become a significant law enforcement concern. Koko (2022) communicates that South Africa's kidnapping syndicates stretch from Gauteng, Limpopo and Mpumalanga to Pakistan, Bangladesh and Mozambique. The targets are usually wealthy businesspeople and their families. Local or national syndicates often plan the kidnappings and extort money from the victim's family. The Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime (2022) reflects that Organized crime is an existential threat to South Africa's democratic institutions, economy and people. Kidnapping for ransom syndicates in South Africa have become well consolidated. Prior (2022) argues that kidnappings are increasing exponentially in South Africa – with syndicates earning over R1 billion in 2019. Addressing kidnapping In South Africa is also hindered by the lack of reporting. The families of victims never report the crimes as they are threatened not to do so, and, in most cases, families of victims simply choose to pay the ransom and never involve the police (Prior, 2022). In South Africa, between 2011 and March 2020, just before the lockdown, we saw a 133% increase in cases reported to the police. Not all are financially motivated, as reflected in the table below.

Table 1. Factors driving and increase in kidnapping in South Africa.

Casual factors	No	%
Robberies	832	27.5
Sexual offences	828	27.4
Hijacking	544	18.0
Domestic dispute	219	7.2
Mob Justice	170	5.6
Revenge	163	5.4
Ransom	77	2.5
Extortion	65	2.1
Children removed from guardian/parent	60	2.0
Human trafficking	16	0.5
Initiation related	12	0.4
Attempted murder	11	0.4
Intimidation	9	0.3
Gang-related	9	0.3
Labour-related	4	0.1
Taxi-related	2	0.1
Drug related	2	0.1
Multi-related	1	0.0
Total	3024	100%

The above table reinforces the notion that kidnapping is a multifaceted phenomenon driven by an array of factors in South Africa driven by an array of factors. About 4,028 kidnap cases were reported at police stations in South Africa in 2022, as against 2,000 cases in 2021 which has shown a threatening rate of crimes in the country (Busari, 2023). While the general assumption in society is that the kidnapping is mainly for ransom. Grant and Ritchie (2022) state that contrary to popular belief, most kidnappings are because of robberies and hijackings. For example, some victims are held for only a few hours so they can withdraw cash from an ATM to pay for their release. There is a need to debunk the notion that syndicates only target wealthy people. While this occurs, lower-level earners are easier targets and do not draw as much media attention or dedicated police response (Grant & Ritchie, 2022). With tough economic times in the country, criminals have now widened their net and kidnapping for a ransom no longer targets the rich and the famous. Kidnapping syndicates are often well organized and spend time papering and tracking their victims, knowing what their families can pay (Writer, 2023b). Police and law enforcement agencies are critical in addressing kidnapping cases. However, there have been increasing cases in South Africa where police officers have been accused of being part of kidnapping operations or working with syndicates. Numerous cases of police corruption have come to hinder the public's trust, and this mistrust of police has led families of kidnapped victims to approach private security companies for assistance. Corruption within the police force is one of the reasons why kidnapping continues to surge. Presence (2022) notes collusion, inefficiency and corruption within the criminal justice system. Shange (2021) reported that a total of 459 Gauteng police officers have pending criminal cases against them, ranging from murder, attempted murder, kidnapping, corruption and helping prisoners to escape. Other serious charges include rape and sexual assault, robbery, breaking into businesses, assault, animal

cruelty and domestic violence. The most common cases were reckless and negligent driving. Therefore, there have been questions as to how police can ensure an effective response to kidnapping cases while confronted with internal governance issues.

As of the 2022/2023 fiscal year, the total number of kidnappings in South Africa reached 15,343 cases. The leading province is Gauteng, which was found to have the most perturbingly high cases of kidnapping, with over 7,818 cases reported by the police (Cowling, 2023). The second leading province is KwaZulu-Natal, with 3,081 kidnapping cases (Cowling, 2023). Between April and December 2022, the South African Police Service (SAPS) recorded 11,702 kidnappings, which surpassed the annual figure of 10,826 from March 2021 to April 2022 (Lancaster, 2023). In the past 10 years, kidnappings rocketed by 183% from 3,832 in 2012/13 to 10,826 in 2021/22. This upsurge is related to the substantial growth of violent and organised crime. Some abductions are committed by sophisticated transnational groups specialising in high-value kidnappings. Local crime groups may carry out copycat attacks when they see the success of high-profile kidnappings. The SAPS Crime Registrar’s office routinely analyses the motives for kidnappings in each province across the country. Their analysis shows that most attacks are perpetrated during car or truck hijackings or armed robberies at businesses, homes or public spaces. The main motives for abducting victims during these robberies include stealing cash via mobile banking applications drawn from bank cards, overriding tracking devices, or delaying the victim from raising the alarm.

Causative factors	Eastern Cape	Free State	Gauteng	KwaZulu-Natal	Limpopo	Mpumalanga	North West	Northern Cape	Western Cape	Total SA
Robbery & hijacking related	41%	40%	75%	49%	34%	65%	47%	28%	51%	63%
- Hijacking	13%	19%	60%	26%	6%	43%	24%	3%	27%	45%
- Other robbery	28%	21%	15%	23%	28%	22%	23%	24%	24%	18%
Rape-related	9%	25%	5%	19%	21%	11%	20%	17%	10%	10%
Retaliation/vengeance	16%	12%	4%	9%	7%	10%	11%	28%	10%	7%
Taxi-related	4%	1%	7%	9%	1%	1%	0%	0%	5%	6%
Domestic-related	12%	4%	2%	6%	7%	4%	10%	10%	7%	4%
Ransom	4%	5%	2%	2%	5%	3%	2%	7%	3%	3%
Children taken without permission	3%	3%	1%	3%	13%	3%	3%	0%	6%	2%
Extortion	1%	2%	2%	1%	0%	1%	2%	0%	3%	1%
Intimidation	5%	2%	1%	2%	9%	1%	2%	0%	3%	2%
Human trafficking	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	7%	1%	1%
Mob justice	5%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	2%	3%	0%	0%
Sexual assault	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Total incidents sampled	246	201	3 615	1 122	151	389	250	29	354	6 357
Total no. kidnappings in 6 months	373	251	4 013	1 391	227	477	317	44	485	7 578

Figure 2. Causative factors for kidnapping in South Africa, by province, Apr-Sep 2022. Source: Lancaster (2023).

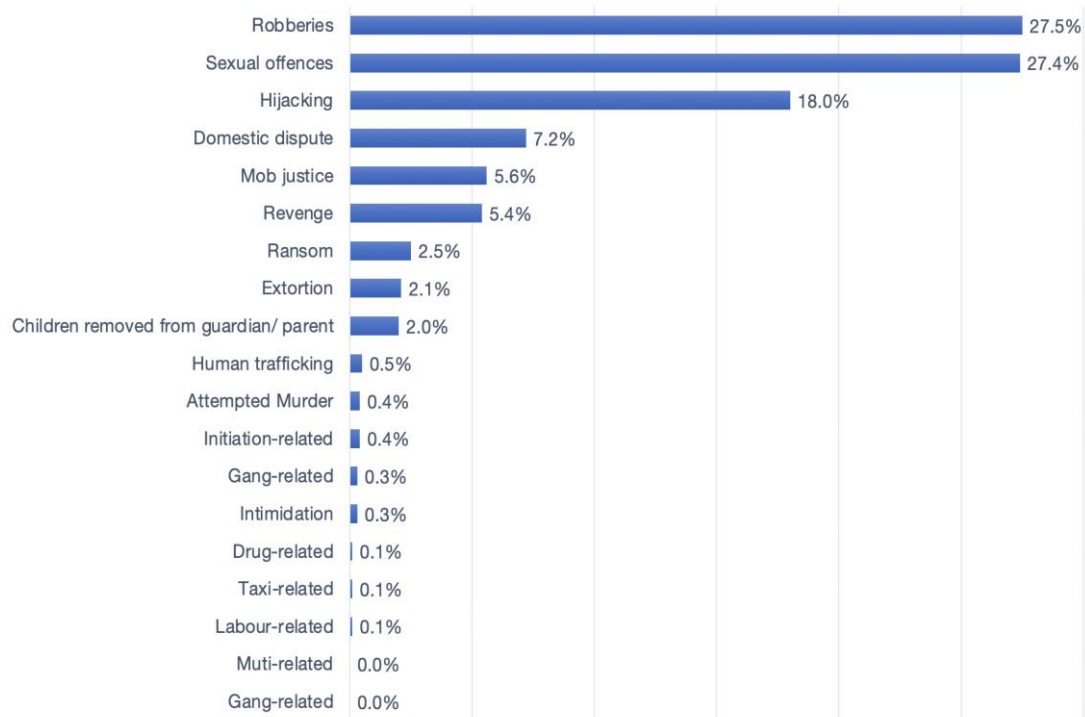


Figure 3. Causal factors of kidnapping. Source: SAPS.

From the above figure, kidnapping for ransom and extortion combined contributed less than 5% of the sample. More than a quarter (27%) involved kidnapping with the intention to commit a sexual offence. This is a large and worrying proportion (Lancaster, 2020). While the SAPS' data show that 45% of the total number of sexual offence complaints investigated are against children, there is no indication of the proportion that also involved kidnapping. The available data indicates that young children are most likely to be kidnapped by a legal guardian during custody disputes (Lancaster, 2020). Cases also occur when one guardian fails to ask permission to take a child from the other guardian.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The first finding of this paper is that there are numerous challenges for law enforcement in addressing kidnapping in South Africa. The law enforcement was found to be a significant issue as it delays justice for the victims. For example, in the cases of kidnappings caused by broken-up relationships or divorces, the time the courts took to deliver justice influences the act of kidnapping children. The need to address the rise in kidnappings in South Africa is driven by the observation that it affects human security and contributes to societal destabilization. Law enforcement has come under criticism in South Africa; police have been arrested for various crimes, including kidnapping, extortion and abduction. This has, therefore, raised considerable questions and debate as to whether law enforcement in South Africa can help address kidnapping.

The second finding of this paper is the public mistrust of police. For example, from the global system perspective Globally, the fight against any acts of kidnapping needs a strong police force characterized by stability and good governance. This requires successful law enforcement and the rule of individual member states. However, the paper presented that when police forces are seen as incapable of enforcing the law and/or

corrupt, there is a high level of mistrust between themselves and the ordinary citizens. The paper found that such a situation tends to open ripe avenues that give rise to public mistrust, and kidnapping, which can hinder the fight, and any other sorts of crimes. Niyitunga (2021) noted that corrupt arrangements affect the trust between the citizens and the people. Niyitunga (2023) further argued that service delivery protests result from the lack of trust between the people and municipal officials. The paper found that the lack of trust between law enforcement and the communities serves, therefore, as an open channel for kidnapping, and they serve as a significant driver of violence in society. Moreover, it was found that in many cases of police brutality, over-enforcement, and homicides have eroded trust, making residents less likely to place their trust in law enforcement, thus influencing kidnapping in the local community. In South Africa, for instance, only 26% of ordinary citizens trust the police forces, and this lack of trust has intensified kidnapping cases. The fact that has increased such mistrust between south African police forces and citizens was found to be rampant corruption and corrupt arrangements done by the police. This finding is supported by South Africa's Defense Minister Thandi Modise, who lamented the low level of public trust in law enforcement agencies in the country with its repercussions on crimes such as kidnapping. Roberts and Gordon (2022) supported this finding and highlighted key factors that influence the rise of police mistrust. These include experiences of crime that lower trust in the police and cases of police corruption that kill the trust the citizens have in the police forces. The paper also found that the delay by the police in reaching the scene on time to address crimes has also eroded trust between the police and the citizens. The above factors have dented the public's trust in the police. The paper found that the above factors that affect the public's confidence in democratic institutions, thus leading to the collapse of government, thus, promoting kidnapping and ant other crimes in society. This has affected confidence in the police's ability to address kidnap crimes as officers solicit bribes from suspects and victims of crimes alike. These demands for bribes allow alleged criminals. Generally, those kidnapping children or child traffickers escape justice and continue their crimes. Newham (2002) supported this finding by arguing that in South Africa, corruption within police forces is an unfortunate continuing challenge facing the police transformation process and has opened the terrible flow of crimes in society. Thamm (2021), on the other hand, argued that the SAPS leadership has failed the citizens because organized crime has infiltrated it. this infiltration has affected social security and order leading to the occurrences of kidnap crimes.

The third finding is that kidnap crime is influenced by the non-reporting culture in society. The non-reporting culture was found to be a significant problem in addressing kidnapping. This is because the underreporting of kidnap cases has been found to erode the trust citizens have in the police forces and other government institutions. It was found that when victims are kidnapped, their families or relatives are contacted by the kidnapers and are cautioned dare not to report to the police. This finding is supported by Pharoah (2005) who argued that kidnapers conditioned the families of the victims not to contact the police; otherwise, they would face death. Niyitunga (2022) supports this finding that unemployment in South Africa is the source of social crimes and insecurity. In this case one can see that social crimes include kidnapping. As a result, many relatives do not report cases to the police but rather do as they are told by the kidnapers, in most cases paying a ransom to guarantee their kidnapped relatives' freedom. Moreover, the

paper found that most law enforcement authorities are seen as corrupt and working with crime syndicates. Moreover, this finding is in agreement with *Bad Cops* (2019), which found that many families of the victims chose not to report the cases to the police forces and, hence, cooperate directly with kidnappers rather than risk the lives of their victims. This finding is also supported by Naido (2022), who noted that the actual number of high-profile kidnappings for ransom is severely underreported.

This finding showed that there is limited capacity of the South Africa Police Service to deter and effectively respond to kidnapping. This is because of the high levels of corruption within the police forces, which was found to be an indication that organized crime has infiltrated the police service. Earlier in 2021, the head of the SAPS kidnap unit was found to have extorted money from a kidnapping victim's family. Corruption in the police force hinders the need to address kidnapping globally. Kidnapping incidents are generally underreported in Nigeria. Many people do not trust the police or fear contacting security services as they think that this act would put their loved ones at greater risk.

The fourth finding is the failure of police support and lack of border security. The paper found that addressing the consolidation of kidnapping syndicates in society requires a holistic operational framework characterized by a wide range of multi-stakeholder collaboration. From law enforcement, private security companies, community police forums, and the general public, kidnapping needs a collective approach. Niyitunga (2021) argued that corruption within police forces and migration officers at the borders have opened venues for illegal migrants in the country thus causing insecurity and crimes. This means that corruption is a major issue as it affects law enforcement and as well as police forces effectiveness in curbing kidnapping cases in South Africa. Nevertheless, from global observations, it becomes highly observable that in many countries, law enforcement agencies are underfunded, lack capacity and do not have the much-needed support for personnel with the skills and knowledge needed to crack complex kidnapping cases. Mokgonyana (2022) supported this finding and presented that South Africa needs to tackle human trafficking urgently using a multi-institutional approach that employs various methods. The paper found that there is a severe shortage of capacity, as well as widespread corruption among the police force, that makes anti-trafficking efforts harder.

It is clear that South Africa struggles to address the increasing prevalence of kidnapping. The corruption within the police force further impedes their effectiveness in responding to cases of kidnapping in the country. Kidnapping syndicates are well-financed and sophisticated and were found to have infiltrated law enforcement. This infiltration has ensured a seamless operation in their illicit operations. This has made it difficult for South African law enforcement agencies to address kidnapping cases in the country effectively. However, the shortcomings of police in addressing kidnapping cases are not a phenomenon peculiar to South Africa alone. A paper by Alang et al. (2021) noted that in underdeveloped countries, there is a mistrust of police due to various reasons, such as police abuse, bribery and extortion, lack of professionalism, and the inability of the police to solve complex cases. This results in the public gradually losing confidence in the ability of the police to address their social issues, meaning the public tends to reduce cooperation (information sharing) out of fear that this cooperation will not yield any positive results. This was also revealed by Ibekwem and Alabi (2021), who stated that many cases are not reported to the police or by the media and security agencies,

such as the police and the Department of State Security (DSS) tasked with the primary responsibility of investigating and tackling kidnapping, also do not always record incidents of kidnapping. Hence, they instead involve other stakeholders such as private security, private investigators or private hostage negotiators to try and secure the release of their loved one, thus sidelining the police in crime fighting.

Nevertheless, one cannot blame relatives and family members for not reporting because reporting means putting one's loved one in harm's way. Instead, families cooperate with kidnapers. In most cases, a ransom is paid to avoid loss of life. There's also a lack of support for the police. Singh (2022) supports this and argues that police in underdeveloped countries lack crucial support to try and ensure they can effectively address kidnap cases. They lack skilled personnel who can crack complex kidnapping cases. This has meant that many cases go unresolved, and families never find closure. This what Nhamirre (2023) argued that South Africa's battle to address kidnapping has been linked to the lack of effective border control, making it difficult for the country to track who goes in and who goes out. this has thus intensified the kidnap crime cases in the country. Corruption within the border has eroded the public's trust and the ability of police to maintain integrity, transparency and accountability in the quest to address the rise of kidnapping in South Africa. With this, kidnappings will continue to be a threat unless corruption within the police is addressed, police regain the trust of the public and law enforcement is supported with adequate resources, personnel and finances to crack and infiltrate kidnapping syndicates to ensure a safe South Africa.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

While kidnapping is on the increase in South Africa, there is a need for the government to develop effective legislation to ensure police are capacitated to crack complex kidnapping cases and that the police can regain the trust of the public. Moreover, there is a need to ensure that the police can work with the public to solve these kidnapping cases. Without this, corruption will continue to see increased police officers being involved in various crimes, and such will continue to undermine the police sector and thus undermine the police as a body that is meant to ensure public safety and crime prevention. Therefore, the government must ensure the establishment of legislation that addresses these shortcomings. Moreover, borders need to be strengthened with South Africa's intelligence capabilities to ensure that police can help stop kidnapping cases even before they happen.

There is a need to establish a specialized TIP unit under the Hawks, South African Police Service (outside of the existing desk), South African National Defence Force, or an independent body that would tackle and address kidnap crime cases and reduce any related crimes such as human trafficking. There is a need for the country to strengthen border control. This means that the Department of Home Affairs needs to play an active role in strengthening border control systems. Strengthening basic border controls would make it more difficult for kidnapers to use conventional means of transport to enter the country or take away children kidnapped by South African territory.

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