



## Kidnapping: A Variant of Nigerian Advance Fee Fraudsters (419) Diversified Portfolio

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### Abstract

*A trend has emerged over the past few years concerning the universal awareness of the Nigerian advance fee fraud (419) that suggests that a diversification process is taking place. This paper investigates why 419 syndicates have added kidnapping for ransom to their criminal portfolio that already include armed robbery, extortion, and other related crimes. The paper argues that since advance fee fraud (419) is no longer as lucrative as it used to be, and hence, kidnapping in Nigeria which was a regional and oil sector problem confined to the Niger Delta region, is now a national nightmare. Furthermore, the study reveals that although kidnapping for ransom is very lucrative, fraudsters are also very much interested in politically motivated kidnapping if and when the price is right. In the final analysis, kidnappings in Nigeria are unintended consequences of decades of wealthy people preying on the powerless and doing everything in their considerable power to keep from losing power; which generates a class-based resentment fueling kidnapping.*

Keywords: Diversification, Armed Robbery, Advance Fee Fraud, Kidnapping.

### Introduction

Nigeria is a country in West Africa with a population of about 167 million people, (NPC, 2013). It achieved independence from British on October 1, 1960. According to history, Nigeria began a millennium ago. In the past decades, the activities of Nigerian criminal syndicates have caused increasing concern all over the world. Transparency International ranked Nigeria as one of the most corrupt nations in the world, (Ajayi, 2012, p.1). The advance fee fraud, also known as the Nigerian money transfer fraud or 419 scam, named after the Nigerian criminal code that it violates, is scams that make victims believe they will get rich overnight. Victims are requested to pay an advance fee before their immense fortune is released. This scam is usually carried out in other African countries and European cities, but it is associated with Nigerians because, it originated in Nigeria in the 1970s (Coalition Web Site, 2010).

Most commonly, the "innocent" (even fellow Nigerians) individual is contacted by e-mail with an offer that a very rich person needs to discreetly move millions of dollars abroad, and they are promised a high percentage of the money if their bank account can be used for the transaction. The e-mail addresses of targets are often collected from cyber cafes using e-mail harvesters. The "business" idea is always presented as a "clean" money

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laundering proposal to discourage the individual from contacting law enforcement authorities. If both parties agree to the "fake" transaction then the scammers will start by sending documents bearing official-looking government seals and stamps. At this point, some delays will be introduced into the deal, and to speed things up the scammer will request some money to bribe bank officials. They may request a loan from their victim.

Chances are the victim could be invited to visit the country, such as Nigeria, Togo, or Benin, to meet with the perpetrators personally (Megan 2006). In some instances, after arriving in the country, a victim may be held hostage for ransom, and/or robbed and murdered (Morrison, 2001; Genis, 2001). In other instances, victims may be illegally transported into the country and threatened with severe penalties for illegally entering the country. The final chapter is that the money transfer never existed in the first place and that all the deals were a sham. It is important to note that there are other forms of scams, including fake banks, fraudulent credit cards, fake export and import experts, fake lottery-winning scams, fake charity/church organizations, inheritance scams, counterfeit check scams, anti-fraud investigators, and numerous others (Megan, 2006).

The fact is that advance fee fraud (419) is less complex and could be operated by a single individual. 419 is also more highly publicized than other scams, and its publicity has resulted in fewer victims and a need for diversification. It is very difficult to investigate, prosecute, and get conviction on 419ers because the crime may originate in Nigeria, but it may involve other countries and different financial institutions. There is little or no recourse for victims of advance fee fraud. Most recently, the advance fee fraud (419) scammers have exhibited substantial flexibility and diversity in their operations. They have diversified to include kidnapping for ransom and expanded their territory to cover the entire Nigerian nation, and one of the reasons for concern is the violent nature of their operations. One impact the kidnapping for ransom has on the general population is fear, which creates insecurity and results in immeasurable anxieties that directly affect human physiological and psychological growth. No community in Nigeria is immune from this growing phenomenon. Kidnapping can occur anytime, day or night, and anywhere—even in a church or mosque.

The high rate of kidnapping in Nigeria is the byproduct of world publicity of advance fee fraud (419). For the last two decades, 419 was very lucrative and there was no need for kidnapping for ransom. The crime of kidnapping was localized in the southern states, particularly the Niger Delta States. Responding to the publicity of 419 and the dwindling number of victims, and in addition, since 25% of the total Federal Government overhead goes to National Assembly alone (Akogun, 2010; Punch, 2010), kidnapping is serving as a substitute or supplement of 419 for the poor and criminal.

According to Eso (2009a, p. 2) kidnapping in Nigeria started as a political tool, used by Niger Delta militants to force the federal government into meeting their political demands. The unintended consequences of the federal government allowing foreign oil companies to pay ransoms has turned kidnapping into a lucrative business. "Someone should tell the eminent members of Nigeria's elite Governors' Forum, that they are all accessories to this growing crime of Kidnapping" (Eso, 2009a, p. 1)

It is important to note that there may be many other factors that have caused or influenced kidnapping in Nigeria, including but not limited to interminability of slavery, colonialism, poverty, tribalism, religious polarization, corruption, etc. To fully understand the idea of interminability, we have to look at slavery, colonialism, poverty etc. as the original debt and kidnapping may be the pay back or redemption of the debt. There is a

need for studying this phenomena and this present study will therefore highlight the diversification progress and growth as well as the prevention and control strategies of Nigerian criminals from armed robbery to advance fee fraud, and recently to kidnapping for ransom. This study only aims at bringing to light the diversification process that encourage and facilitate kidnapping in Nigeria.

### Review of Literature

Studies on the topics of advance fee fraud and kidnapping in Nigeria are mostly descriptive and narrative, lacking a compelling theoretical perspective that would allow a fuller explanation of the origin, growth, and diversification of criminal portfolios of Nigerian criminal organizations. Most of these descriptive studies and suggestions may be sub-divided into multiple sub-groups that are interrelated. The categories include general kidnapping, threat prediction, study of causes/reasons for kidnapping, suggesting prevention and control strategy, (Asobie 2010; Anosike 2009; Clkpatton 2010; Megan 2006; Eso 2009a).

Most advance fee fraud studies deal with the origin and history of the crime, (Eso 2009b; Dion, 2010; Holt & Graves, 2007; King & Thomas, 2009; Uduak-Abasi, 2009; Rotimi, 1984). This type of work does not deal with the specific reasons why advance fee fraud (419) necessitates diversification to include kidnapping for ransom. These studies of 419 only show an overview of the crime in an attempt to suggest its control. The Megan (2006) study presents a general description, history, operations' estimated losses, and possible consequences of 419, but it fails to address the progress and the decline in number of victims of 419, and the inclusion of kidnapping in the portfolio of criminals. Nigeria kidnapping studies only provide directions to understanding the problem and possible causes and control. The directions and instructions only provide what the government should do and not do, to control the crime (Eso 2009b).

Fabiyi (2010, p 3) explained the effect of kidnapping on the Nigerian economy, from the insecurity situation to the loss of a chance to host the commonwealth games, etc. Also, Asobie (2010) wrote about kidnapping as a national problem and how prejudice has clouded many kidnapping investigations. He pointed out that kidnapping in Nigeria is an organized crime linking the top-ranking police officers with the local citizens. This type of writing aims at bringing the problem to light, but not at finding a solution to factors that may influence kidnapping. Odum (2010) sought to bridge the gap/differences between the current governor of Akwa Ibom State, Chief Godswill Akpabio, and his predecessor Obong Victor Attah. Although it is a one-sided narrative, it made no recommendation for solving the country's major problem—kidnapping. This study went on to point out the fact that some political opposition candidates tend to get involved in kidnapping, but it failed to investigate and point out the excellent running of the Akwa Ibom State government by Governor Akpabio, who has implemented many programs, including free and compulsory education for youths and the death penalty for kidnapers, which are important steps towards preventing and deterring kidnapping.

Also, Clkpatton (2010) suggests that kidnapping in the southeastern states of Nigeria may have been established as the stereotypical vocation replacing auto spare parts trading. This type of writing tends to suggest the replacement of a legitimate, legal occupation by an illegal occupation, and it fails to explain that advance fee fraud stars are still doing armed robbery, but on part-time basis. There are other writings that do not fall directly into categories of work explaining kidnapping in Nigeria as an extension of advance fee

fraud (419). For example, Fabiyi (2010) wrote about kidnapping, only explaining it as the president of Nigeria sees kidnapping as worrisome and a national embarrassment. The kidnapping of four journalists near Aba in Abia State, and those of fifteen elementary school children in the same State, not to mention that of Madam Afuenya Abaja a senior citizens is enough to understand that if nothing is done to tear down criminals and their portfolio, the worst is yet to come (Agborh, 2010; Alli, Anofi, & Eke, 2010)

### **Methodology**

The main aim of this study, as indicated above, is to draw attention to the diversification of criminal portfolios by Nigerian criminals. Knowing that this is a complex issue, many qualitative research methods were used to obtain data for this study, including indirect observation, one-on-one interviews, and group interviews with concerned individuals. The researcher spent a total of five years in Nigeria gathering data for this study. The author also gathered part of this research information from hundreds of newspaper reports, journal and magazine articles, and internet sources.

It is understood that the results of this study are qualitative and rely considerably on documentary evidence and oral interviews, but a serious effort was made to distinguish meaningful facts from fictitious or emotional ideas expressed by the participants. This method is consistent with the purpose of this study, which is to show how Nigerian criminals have progressed from armed robbery to advance fee fraud and to kidnapping for ransom.

### **The Problem Definition**

Nigeria has been called every bad name in the “book”: failed state, a state descending into the dark, and a country beset with insecurity across the land (Anosike, 2009, p. i). The Failed State Index of 2009, as well as The Fund for Peace, ranked Nigeria among the 15 most vulnerable nations on the globe, and the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in 2001 predicted that Nigeria would cease to exist in its present form within 15 years (Anosike, 2009). Among other global uncertainties and various levels of national and international problems are armed robbery, advance fee fraud, and, more recently, kidnapping, among others. Corruption is what indirectly supports and controls the economy of Nigeria and promotes the accumulation of wealth by a few individuals at the expense of the many. The wealthy have considerable power by virtue of their monetary resources. In an effort or struggle by the poor to become better off, the poor reverse the course of doing business in a capitalistic fake democracy. Instead of doing what the wealthy usually do, which is to prey on the weaker people, they (the poor who turn to kidnapping) are preying on the wealthy, with the losers being members of the working class, the non-working class, and some Nigerians in the Diaspora, all of whom are lost in the confusion. The resulting effect is that the powerless majority are mocking the system.

### ***Diversification:***

Diversification is the process of entering a new business or establishing other businesses that are directly related to the organization’s market. It is risk management investment strategy in which a wide variety of “investments” are mixed within a portfolio; the rationale is that a portfolio of different investments will, on average, yield higher returns and pose a lower risk than any individual investment within the portfolio. Diversification strives to smooth out unsystematic risk in a portfolio so that the positive performance of

some investments will neutralize the negative performance of others. Therefore, the benefits of diversification will hold only if the securities in the portfolio are not correlated, (Guinam, 2009).

Diversification in Nigeria criminal groups is the extension of their capabilities and skills into other areas of criminal activity. Generally, there are two major diversification strategies: related or concentric diversification, where organizations produce products or services similar to their current products or services that target new or similar groups. The second type of diversification is the unrelated, conglomerate, or horizontal, where the organization produces products or services that are totally unrelated to their current products or services. In the case of Nigerian criminals, concentric diversification is at work—Armed Robbery—Advance fee fraud—Kidnapping.

### **Armed Robbery**

After the Nigerian civil war in the 1970s, armed robbery became a common activity in the entire country. Armed robbery is the unlawful, willful, and violent taking of another person's moveable properties (Loewy, 1981). Also, Beirne and Messerschmidt (2000) define armed robbery as the unlawful taking or attempt to take property of value from another person by violent force or threat of force. According to Nigerian law, Uniform Crime Report (UCR) and National Crime Survey (NCS), armed robbery is the taking of property from another by force or threat of force (Brown, Esbensen, & Geis, 1991).

Armed robbery during the 1970s, and 1980s was the leading crime of violence for Nigerian criminals, as echoed in many other research studies (Ekpeyong, 1989; Olurode, 1990; Otu 2003; Moreni, 1987; Rotimi, 1984). The overwhelming agreement by researchers that armed robbery in Nigeria was at its height in the 1970s through the early 1980s is expressed by Iwarimie-Jaja (1999) when he states:

...of all crimes committed in Nigeria, none is as horrifying to the Nigerian people as armed robbery.... Indeed, the enormity of armed robbery and the violence associated with it has become major source of concern not only for the Nigerians.... People are scared to go to the streets, dark alleys, and buildings without security; hence they pay more for security measures.... Armed robbery has remained a chronic crime, which is systematically and flagrantly committed with unabated violence (p. 156–158).

It is important to acknowledge that there were outstandingly notorious armed robbers during this period—for example, Dr Oyenusi and his gang, Machine and the gang, Mighty Joe and gang, Ojologba and gang, Anini and gang, Oyazino and gang, Clement Ozorobodo AKA Skwensu, and many others (Otu, 2003). Armed robbery from the positive school perspective is the result of social and economic problems. Although not all those suffering from economic problems commit armed robbery, the economic problem is a major factor. Nigeria has gone through colonization, civil war, and an oil boom, which provided a fertile ground for inequality and a surplus of sophisticated weaponry. The combination of economic inequality and the availability of weapons produced armed robbery as a consequence of a class society that produces the extremely rich and the very poor. This idea had been agreed upon by other important writers, including Karl Marx, Henry George, Richard Quinney, Anthony Platt, and others, who explain armed robbery

as a class struggle that requires individuals to compete against each other in the pursuit of material wealth in society (Bohm & Haley, 2002)

### **Armed Robbery to Advance Fee Fraud**

A concentric diversification strategy was implemented when Nigerian armed robbers diversified into advance fee fraud. Once again, in the 1990s, with the introduction of Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) and credit cards in Nigeria, armed robbery was not very profitable. Due to the decline in financial gains from armed robbery, it has been observed that:

...the Nigerian armed robbers are never quite content to leave things as they found them. They invent, they innovate, and these characteristics—innovativeness, inventiveness, and the perfection—are born out of necessity. Need enters into the inventive process especially in terms of crisis when men are made aware of the impending danger that some new approaches to situations must be found (Landis 1958, p. 59; see also Otu 2003, p. 530).

According to Otu (2003) armed robbers generally are both external thinkers and tinkers. In other words, armed robbers gain the benefit of other people's self-restraint without reciprocal restraint on their part. Studies show that there is a positive relationship between the sources of learning this crime and the motive, which is predicated on material gain and anger towards the government (Otu, 2003; Chijioke, 2007). Many who are involved in armed robbery do so for economic reasons, the need to secure the means of survival. Studies show that many people become armed robbers because of unemployment and the need to secure money to assist relatives (Otu 2003; Chijioke 2007). Another cause is the class struggle, which is the tension or antagonism which exists in society due to competing socioeconomic interest and desire between people of different class. Simply, the practice of taking advantage of other people.

Although little is written about Nigerian armed robbers' involvement in other nonviolent crimes, there is strong evidence that certain robbers did diversify into advance fee fraud. Nigerian armed robbers diversify by expansion. During the latter part of 1990s, the introduction of ATMs and credit cards made it unnecessary to carry large amounts of cash in Nigeria, and hence armed robbery was not as financially lucrative as in the past. Just as with any other business, armed robbery involves too much labor with "uncertain profit." There is also a potential risk of getting hurt or killed in armed robbery. The news media and public opinion show that armed robbers experiencing low returns had to consider diversification, and advance fee fraud was the choice. Nigerian armed robbers show their understanding of the necessity to diversify their criminal activities by engaging in the advance fee fraud (419).

### **Advance Fee Fraud (419)**

The number 419 is used in Nigeria's Criminal Code to describe the crime and explains the penalty for it. The origin of advance fee fraud is complex and debatable. Depending on which version you agree with, one camp believes that the scam was first introduced to Nigeria by the oil companies and criminal gangs in the 1970s or 1980s (Megan 2006). Another group believes that the scam was a combination of different frauds in the Igboland some hundred years ago. The truth is that until about the 1990s, the scammers were only found in Nigerian cities like Lagos, Aba, Owerri, and Port Harcourt. In the

2000s, the scammers expanded their bases to other countries like Togo, Cote Divoire, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and Canada (Megan, 2006). The operation of 419 is not very complex; the scammer chooses a target and sends an unsolicited e-mail, or letter concerning some type of money laundering or other illegal business proposal. The most common type of scam is an “over-invoiced” or double-invoiced crude oil supply service contract in which the scammer wants to get the overage out of Nigeria, a technique that is referred to as “classic 419.” Another form is the goods and services 419. This type of scam involves the selling of crude oil and other commodities. The third type is the will scam 419—a person has left you money in a will, and you need to pay some taxes in order to claim millions of dollars (Coalition Website, 2010).

### **Advance Fee Fraud to Kidnapping**

Advance fee fraud was Nigeria’s most notorious scam. Dubious requests by people pretending to be the son of rich African countries’ presidents were sent out to various potential victims targeted at random using e-mails, and other electronic means. The fraud relied on Diaspora connections for their effectiveness (Perouse de Montclos, 2005). The fictitious mail senders asked for help in transferring African funds to a bank account abroad, offering to reward any person prepared to assist with a sizeable percentage as a commission.

It was during the mid-1990s that advance fee fraud (419) was beginning to be known worldwide. The success of getting as many victims and as much money as in the past started dropping, and hence scammers started introducing kidnapping into the game. For example, Mr. Josef Raca of England, the owner of a Northampton-based import company and a former mayor of Northampton, was lured into flying to South Africa to hand over his bank details to a notorious Nigerian crime syndicate (Morrison 2001). Mr. Raca’s experience began when he replied to a letter inviting him to get involved in a “business transaction” of transferring large sums of money between countries using his bank account. When he flew to Johannesburg to meet the potential business partner, he was kidnapped and ordered to pay twenty thousand pounds ransom. When his wife was telephoned with the ransom demand, she contacted the Northampton shire police, who in turn contacted the South African police, and on July 11, 2001, Mr. Raca was freed (Morrison 2001). Sometimes the scam operates from a non-African state like the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Spain, or Canada (Megan, 2006). The latest scams are the fake charity, fake church, and fake “fraud recovery experts.” Within the past fifteen years, the advance fee fraud has become the most prevalent and popular form of fraud in the world. There are very few people in the modern world who have not received an e-mail informing them that they have won an international lottery and/or that a large amount of escrow capital is waiting for them to claim. With the popularity of the 419 scam comes the reduced number of victims. The more the public is aware of the scam, the less success the scammers have.

The Nigerian oil boom, which resulted in the mass embezzlement of public funds, led to the reduction in armed robbery, because money was in many hands. The economic crisis of the mid-1980s was a major blow to the economy of the country, which led to the expansion of the Nigerian Diaspora (Perouse de Monteclos, 2005). All of the above facts led to the diversification of the criminal portfolio to include and facilitate advance fee fraud. The popularity (notoriety) of this scam worldwide ultimately led to a decrease in

the number of victims, which in turn resulted in fewer funds and promoted the diversification of criminals' portfolios to include kidnapping.

### **Kidnapping**

The word kidnap means to seize and detain a person unlawfully and usually for the payment of ransom. Generally, kidnapping is the taking of a person against his or her will (or from the control of a parent or guardian) from one place to another under circumstances in which the person so taken does not have freedom of movement, will, or decision because of violence, force, threat, or intimidation (Hill & Hill, 2005).

Kidnapping in Nigeria was centered in the south and the Niger Delta region in the early 2000s. In the years 1991 through 2000, Nigeria was in the ninth position in the ranking of kidnapping countries, behind Columbia, Mexico, the Russian Federation, the Philippines, and Venezuela, among others (Eso, 2009b). Starting from the latter part of 2000, when the advance fee fraud (419) market declined dramatically, the kidnapping business picked up speed. Records show that from January 2008 to June 2009 Nigeria had a total of 512 kidnappings, with the deaths of 30 victims (Anosike, 2009). According to state-by-state police reports released in July 2009, the scores are as follows: (1) Abia State with a total of 110 kidnap incidents, 353 court cases, and three deaths; (2) Imo State recorded 58 kidnaps, 109 arrests, 41 prosecutions, and 1 death; (3) Delta State had 44 kidnappings, 43 released, 27 arrests, 31 prosecutions, and 1 death; (4) Akwa Ibom State recorded 40 kidnappings, 40 released, 18 arrests, and 11 prosecutions; and the list continues (Anosike 2009). During the latter part of 2005–2006, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) resorted to kidnapping of foreign oil workers to make political statements (Eso 2009a). Today kidnapping seem more lucrative than advance fee fraud:

In August 2012, a statement by the civil society group Campaign for Democracy (CD) claimed that some 938 people in the South East of the country have been kidnapped between January 2008 and August 2012 with a total estimated ransom of NGN 1.2bn (USD \$7,585,335). Police authorities have however disputed these figures. The high incident areas included Anambra State (273 kidnap victims), Imo State (265) and Abia (215) with ransoms ranging from NGN 5m (USD \$31,605) to NGN 30m (USD \$189,633) (Collard, 2012 p 2).

It is clear why Nigeria is today considered a “kidnapping country” by many Nigerians and other countries. The progression and diversification from armed robbery to advance free fraud and to kidnapping seems to suggest that none of these crimes will be eradicated soon in Nigeria, Instead, the diversification process will continue, but it is the responsibility of the government to prevent and control it as much as possible. Kidnapping, which started as a political tool for the Niger Delta militants to force the federal government to meet their political demands, has now been included in the criminal portfolio of organized crime gangs in Nigeria.

This study revealed that the causes of armed robbery, advance fee fraud, and kidnapping in Nigeria are numerous and complex, including but not limited to the following: endemic corruption at the local, state and national law-enforcement levels, which facilitates all other criminal activities. The proliferation of firearms; the availability of firearms in an armless society promoted armed robbery. High unemployment,



lawlessness, and a disorganized environment have been the products of decades of corrupt leaders, which facilitated most of the crimes in Nigeria.

The failing market of advance fee fraud and the successful use of kidnapping as a political tool and money making machine in the Delta State encourage and allow kidnapping to flourish. According to Uduak-Abasi (2009), the kidnapping of Madam Grace James Akpan Udoedehe, Chief David Ekannem, and Pa Kelvin Edet and many others in Akwa Ibom State, and other states in the nation were all politically motivated. In one instance, the kidnapers rejected one billion Naira ransom to confirm that their aim was political and not financial. In the aforementioned cases, the resignations of political figures were the demands for the release of their hostages. Finally, the kidnapping of Professor Kamene Konjo and Actress Nkiru Sylvester are the 2012 end of year final act. Besides, in Ekiti State, when the leader (Ovie Ojo) of a kidnapping group was arrested, he made a useful statement to the police implicating some politician in the state.

Kidnapping is encouraged by the action of the government, or at least it could be considered as an unintended consequence of the goodwill of the state and federal governments by paying ransom to gain the release of government officials and oil company expatriates. The government of Nigeria allowing foreign oil companies to pay (foreign exchange or hard cash) several million dollars to kidnapers as ransom for the safe return of foreign oil company workers confirms the idea that kidnapping pays, and it obviously yields more money with minimal risk than armed robbery (Eso 2009b). If 80% of the population earns three dollars a day and the Nigerian legislators are the highest paid in the world, it is logical to conclude that there is a class-based resentment by the poor against the rich, which help to nurture kidnapping in Nigeria.

It is important to note that Nigeria will never progress economically or socially if concerted effort is not made by all stakeholders to ameliorate the problem of kidnapping. Kidnapping hinders investment by foreign and local investors, which in turn increases the unemployment rate, which results in a high rate of kidnapping—and the cycle continues. According to Maxim and Whitehead (1998, p. 187), “Reduce unemployment and you will reduce crime.”

## Discussion

Armed robbery, advance fee fraud, and kidnapping are willful criminal acts planned and executed by guilty-minded individuals. Hence, effective deterrent measures have to be in place to prevent and control people’s behavior, especially when law enforcement officials are corrupt or ineffective, and citizens should be allowed to carry weapons to defend themselves. Also, the fear of a severe punishment for committing armed robbery, advance fee fraud and/or kidnapping would deter potential kidnapers from their nefarious and illicit activities. Several important themes in Nigerian history are necessary for the understanding of the culture and the appreciation of the appropriate punishment for offenders. Beginning with the spread of Islam, the holy war, the Trans-Atlantic trade, the spread of Christianity, the European slave trade, colonial Nigeria, independence, and the Nigerian civil war, this is to name but a few. Numerous dominant events have determined the culture of the approximately 102 ethnic groups that make up an estimated population of 167 million Nigerians (Ogundowole, 2012).

The recommendations provided in this study will be helpful in deterring and controlling armed robbery, advance fee fraud, and kidnapping in Nigeria. This study believes that the Nigerian government should not apply cruel and unusual punishment on

any offender, nor should it violate individuals' human rights, but the principle of equivalency should prevail; the punishment and/or rehabilitative treatment should correspond to the crime (within the culture) and should be limited to the one involved in the offense.

### **Recommendations to deter and control armed robbery**

It is the belief of the researcher that if this recommendation is considered and implemented by well-meaning Nigerians from an impartial standpoint, armed robbery and other crimes will dramatically decline. This recommendation applies also to advance fee fraud and kidnapping.

1. All qualified citizens (of age and no criminal record) of Nigeria should be allowed to bear arms. It is common knowledge that if every qualified citizen is allowed to bear arms, rarely would armed robbery and home invasion occur. For example, very rarely, if ever, have armed robberies occurred in any Nigerian army barracks. Also, very rarely does armed robbery occur in homes in the United States, because many homes have weapons. The benefits outweigh the potential abuse of firearms. According to Haag "Nobody fears prison as much as death" stated flatly, "If I know I will be punished so severely (death), I will not commit the crime" (Andersen, Phillips, Griggs, & Simpson 1983, p. 18).
2. Employment opportunities should be created for young school leavers. Most young people leave school without being employed for years (Chijike, 2007).
3. There is strong evidence that unemployment is related to high property crime rate. If young people are employed then armed robbery will be reduced in Nigeria.
4. The government at the local, state, and federal levels must play a strong role in combating armed robbery by providing funds for law enforcement agencies equipment and reasonable pay scales for police officers. Enacting serious penalties for armed robbery and crimes against law-enforcement officers should also be considered. As stated by Adepegba (2010), "Nigeria police personnel may begin to earn increased wages from October 2010," and the increase should come with accountability. However, as Chijike (2007) puts it, the police are not yet well equipped to tackle the menace. It's about time Nigeria establish a "Balanced Policing Model" which is a proactive philosophy utilizing collaborative strategies to address community problems at the source (Otu, 2012 p. 13).
5. The government should instill professionalism and integrity in the criminal justice system. Police and judiciary leaders should be held accountable for their behavior and that of their subordinates. It is common knowledge that the Nigerian criminal justice system is so corrupt that a guilty person (kidnapper, murderer, etc.) can bribe his or her way out of the system (Otu, 2012). Also, corruption is so endemic, that one has to bribe criminal justice personnel in order to get anything done in the system, from the police to the courts. Criminal justice officials should not be involved in partisan politics. Beccaria believed that if the people who dispense justice are themselves corrupt, people lose respect for the justice system and become more likely to commit crimes (Bohm & Haley, 2002, p. 74). Accordingly, "bad eggs" that are already in the police force should be detected and flushed out (Chijike, 2007).
6. Education for the masses is very important for the development of any nation. Nigeria, being a developing country with a very high illiteracy rate, must have free

and compulsory education as the number one priority in nation building. Beccaria stated that the more educated people are, the less likely they are to commit crimes (Bohm & Haley, 2002, p. 74). Also, the Alliance for Excellent Education (2002) states that lower educational attainment levels increase the likelihood that individuals, particularly males, will be arrested and incarcerated. These recommendations have been in practice by the Akwa Ibom State Governor Godswill Akpabio, who established free and compulsory education in his state. It is a good first step and will succeed if other measures are implemented at the same time with free education.

### **Recommendations to deter advance fee fraud (419)**

Advance fee fraud and other scams come in many forms, from diamond deals to billion-dollar inheritances—the list goes on, but they all have the same aim of scamming greedy individuals out of their money. In addition to some or all of the recommended solutions for armed robbery, the following recommendations are provided to reduce or eliminate 419.

- If a business deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is. There is a proverb, “You cannot cheat an honest man.” It is true that most victims of 419 must have had some larceny in their hearts or were blinded by greed. It is hard to believe that anyone would honestly dream of getting millions of dollars for doing nothing. “There is a sucker born every minute” (Barnum in Genis 2001, p. 7). This study and common sense show conclusively that if people did not respond to 419 e-mails, then there would not be online victims of 419 scams.
- The individual who receives a scam letter should report it to the appropriate law enforcement authority and delete such mail. It is the belief of this researcher that 419 fraud is the third to fifth largest industry in Nigeria (Genis, 2001), and the solution is very simple—do not respond to scam letters and double check your supposed business partner, and the business (419) will close down.

### **Recommendations to deter kidnapping**

Kidnapping in Nigeria is the most recent nightmare that the country is experiencing beside Boko Haram terrorist activities, which is a rallying cry for the implementation of sharia law across Nigeria. In addition to solutions recommended for armed robbery and advance fee fraud, the following recommendations will reduce and/or eliminate kidnapping.

- The Nigerian government and foreign oil firms should stop paying ransom to kidnapers. State governors, lawmakers, and rich Nigerians should understand that the paying of ransom is equally as bad as taking hostages. The underlining point is to make it clear that kidnapping would not pay (Eso, 2009).
- The government should rank kidnapping at the same level as treason. In other words, kidnapping should be considered an act of war against a nation, and appropriate response should be meted out to convicted kidnapers. The Governors of the Delta and Abia States are moving in the right direction, by setting up a combined military task force to rid their respective states of kidnapers and directing the military to comb the nooks and crannies of their states for known kidnapers (Ogoigbe, 2010). The problem with using a single approach to tackle

- the problem of kidnapping is that it fails to deal with the antecedent condition that produced and nurtures kidnapping, which includes taking advantage of other people.
- The official Nigerian government policy is to not pay ransom to kidnappers, yet governments (federal, state and local), oil companies, and rich Nigerians are paying ransoms without government sanctions. The government should mete out punishment to those who pay ransoms because they are encouraging the crime to continue. In many cases, paying of ransom does not even guarantee the survival of the victims.
  - All telephone companies should develop a system/ability of tracking calls and pin-pointing call locations effectively and efficiently, and give full cooperation to law enforcement officials when needed.
  - The financial institutions should be required to report suspicious banking activities to the appropriate authorities. Money Laundering Act of 2011 should be fully and effectively enforced.
  - It is important that the Nigerian government listen to and negotiate with the Oil Producing Communities and/or their legitimate representatives. According to all the literature, it is very clear that kidnapping in Nigeria was started in the Niger Delta State by militants to pressure the government into meeting their political demands (Eso, 2009a). The federal government of Nigeria should deal with the problem from its roots.

## **Conclusion**

The primary purpose of this paper was to analytically uncover diversification strategies used by Nigerian criminal organizations, to produce recommendations for prevention and control of armed robbery, advance fee fraud, and kidnapping, and finally to show that diversification of the criminal portfolio did occur in Nigerian crime organizations. Using the available data and literature derived from this and previous studies and the consensus from known offenders, the findings on the diversification of the criminal portfolio were, as expected, consistent with the diversification heuristic. This evidence shows that criminals use (spread) their skills across criminal activities of a particular mix with the baseline aim of making more money. This study reveals that a behavior is always altered when the anticipated consequences outweigh the benefit. Kidnapping is the most recent and most serious problem facing Nigeria at this time; although terrorism is also a major problem, but BOKO HARAM terrorist group only calls for the implementation of sharia law across Nigeria and not out to make personal financial gains.

Kidnapping in Nigeria is a culmination of many of the factors addressed in this paper and that combating it depends on the application of this paper's recommendations in groups at the same time. This will reduce the practice of taking advantage of other people and lessen the intense class struggle, which should in turn reduce the forces producing armed robbery, advance fee fraud and kidnapping in Nigeria. It is the belief of this researcher that if the recommendations of this paper are implemented in a multiple manner at the same time, there is no doubt it will do what it is supposed to do, which is prevent and control armed robbery, advance fee fraud and kidnapping in Nigeria.

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