Staging Crime: Women's human rights and gender-related concerns in situations of Armed Banditry and Kidnapping in Tosin Jobi-Tume's *Jungle of Many Shadows* -

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Abstract
This study investigates how kidnapping and armed banditry affects women human's rights, focusing on Tosin Jobi-Tume's *Jungle of Many Shadows.* Through a close analysis of the chosen text, this study analyzes the factors responsible for the high rate of kidnapping and its consequences on women's human rights and national security in Nigeria. It examines experiences of female characters who navigate the treacherous terrain of violence, exploitation, and loss in this hostile environment. Furthermore, this study interrogates the mechanisms through which patriarchal structures and cultural norms perpetuate gender-based violence and subjugation in the play. This study finds that Tosin Jobi-Tume in this play, *Jungle of Many Shadows*, tries to establish that the violation of women's human rights is often exacerbated by conflict and opens the door to powerlessness and oppression of women. This study is an addition to the existing body of scholarly work on gender, conflict and human rights. By examining the specific context, this study contributes to a broader understanding of how conflict exacerbates gender-based violence globally. It throws light on the mechanisms through which women's rights are violated in conflict zones, offering insights that can inform policy and advocacy efforts.
Keywords: Armed Banditry, Kidnapping, Crime, Subjugation and Violence

Introduction
In recent times, the high rate in cases of kidnapping and hostage-taking in Nigeria has garnered scholarly attention. According to Samuel Oyewole:

> The proportion of global kidnappings in Africa was 22% in 2013, and Nigeria accounts for 51% of all incidents on the continent. In 2011, as the location of nearly one quarter of all globally recorded cases, Nigeria was named the kidnap-for-ransom capital of the world. Hostage-taking is a significant threat to human security in Nigeria. The country recorded an average of 1000 incidents of kidnapping annually in the last decade. This criminal act is a profitable enterprise for bandits, ritualists, fraudsters (419 scams) and baby factories across the country. But this measure is also a tactic of conflict for the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), Boko Haram, Ansaru and other politically-motivated armed groups in the country. The threat of kidnapping in Nigeria has attracted international attention. Foreign nationals and foreign-owned businesses in Nigeria have been one of the major targets of kidnapping in recent times. Foreign nationals kidnapped in Nigeria rose to 27% of all kidnap incidents in the country in 2013. Moreover, foreign-armed groups such as al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) have developed significant transnational capabilities, which have been displayed in Nigeria through kidnapping. Many armed Nigerian groups have also recorded transnational kidnapping. The militant and pirate groups in the coastal regions of Nigeria have expanded their operations across the Gulf of Guinea. And the insurgent groups in the northern

region of Nigeria have   recorded a series of terrorist attacks and kidnappings across the Lake Chad. (Oyewole 193-194).

The plight of hostages, particularly those of women, in Nigeria's conflict areas is a major source of concern for both the rural and the international community. The predicament of hostages varies, with many experiencing violence, but there are also cases where hostages have endured and survived such brutality. According to Kums, Simon Nankap, and Kwede, Cornelius Ishaya:

Banditry, as it is practiced in Nigeria, has a negative impact on the country's security and generally makes the lives of victims, particularly women and girls, miserable...In recent years, rural Banditry has reached frightening heights in the northern states of Zamfara, Kaduna, and   Katsina. Women and girls face the brunt of Banditry in the region due to these attacks. Women are increasingly being raped, kidnapped, or commodified by families compelled to exchange their daughters for safety. ." (Kums, Nankap, and Kwede, 201).

Numerous women caught in the turmoil of armed banditry and kidnapping suffer enduring sexual abuse, leading to deep and enduring trauma. This inflicts severe and long-lasting harm on their well-being. Moreover, the intricacies of banditry also affect children, who are often forcefully separated from their families and, in some cases, compelled to join criminal factions. Such experiences not only traumatize the victims but also disrupt the stability of their parents, families, and the broader community. According to Freeman (2006), some left behind parents try "finding solace through religious faith. Others talked of their inability to settle while knowing that the child(ren) was somewhere else and of feeling constantly depressed and ill" (29).

One of the most distressing outcomes of abduction, often described by those affected, is the extended period of separation between parents and their children while they are missing. This occurs because the parents remaining behind are unaware of their children's whereabouts. Furthermore, Bello Ibrahim and Jamilu Ibrahim Mukhtar say that "Child Sexual abuse result of kidnapping also exposes child to the risk of contracting sexually transmitted diseases (Ibrahim and Mukhtar140)

Another form of sexual abuse these kidnapped children are exposed to, is the coerced marriage of underage victims to older spouses. Clark says that "the child brides are married to older, more sexually experienced men with whom it is difficult to negotiate safe sexual behaviours, especially when under pressure to bear children" (Clark 149).

The impact of banditry often varies based on gender disparities. Frequently, women become targets of indiscriminate terrorist attacks, and their access to education, healthcare, and participation in public life is unjustly hindered by these assaults. In many instances, women are disproportionately affected by internal displacement caused by violence perpetrated by bandit groups, particularly in Northern Nigeria. They constitute the majority of internally displaced persons resulting from terrorist attacks in the region. According to Maryam Hamza "According to IASC Gender Handbook in Humanitarian Action, approximately 80% of today's civilian casualties are women and 80% of all refugees and Internally Displaced People (IDP) worldwide are women and Children" (Hamza 493)

Furthermore, women may encounter obstacles in seeking justice for the violations and abuses of their human rights, often due to social inequality, segregation, or discrimination within the criminal justice system. Additionally, terrorist organizations deliberately target women, violating their human rights and hindering their progress by restricting their freedom of

movement and disrupting their access to education. Women are also specifically targeted for acts of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV), including rape, coerced marriages, and sexual slavery.

The impact of the Boko Haram crisis on women and girls has been extremely severe. They have borne the brunt of the displacement crisis and constitute the majority of the victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. Furthermore, they face stigma due to their association with different groups, exacerbating the challenges they already confront compared to men and boys. Although violence against women and girls stems from entrenched patriarchal and cultural beliefs, it becomes even more prevalent during conflict, with women and girls becoming targets of sexual abuses and harassment as instruments of war. Families and communities often contribute to this by denying or rejecting victims. Thousands of women and girls have been kidnapped, sexually assaulted, or compelled into marriage, while some are coerced into becoming suicide bombers either against their will or due to religious extremism and radicalization. While terrorist organizations are the primary perpetrators of gender-based violence, women and girls also experience abuses and harassment from security forces.
The significant impact of banditry on the rights of women and girls, particularly through the use of Sexual and Gender-Based Violence (SGBV) as a tactic of terrorism, highlights the necessity for a robust and gender-sensitive approach within the criminal justice system. Such an approach should consider the specific needs and concerns of women, facilitating their access to justice.

Women and children have borne the heaviest burden of the peace breakdown caused by the activities of insurgents and bandits. This has led to increased displacement and heightened poverty within communities. The actions of insurgents and bandits have resulted in a broader range of displacement and heightened poverty. It's evident that the breakdown of peace disproportionately affects women and children. Hence, this study aims to explore how kidnapping and banditry violate women's human rights and potential strategies to address this issue.

The Causes of Kidnapping and Armed Banditry in Nigeria
Various factors serve as the primary motivators behind banditry and kidnapping in Nigeria, and this ranges from economic to political reasons. Therefore, it is essential to identify factors responsible for this criminal activity for present and future security while suggesting the way forward. According to Ngwama "The first act of kidnapping in Nigeria started in 2006 when the militants of the Niger Delta took total hostage to protest the inequality in the region, According to the militants, Nigeria is built at the expense of the region which serves as the cash cow for the whole country" (Ngwama 134)
One prominent form of unconventional kidnapping in Nigeria is what is known as ritual kidnapping. The crime is being committed regularly, with countless casualties attributed to it over the years. According to Anselm Kole Jimoh:

> Particularly worrisome in recent years is the rising rate of ritual killings, which most times, are alleged to involve the use of human parts for money-making rituals. The prevalence of this unethical practice necessitates that we interrogate this phenomenon… Money rituals are spiritual and mystical practices aimed at generating wealth. While some people do not believe in its logic and efficacy, its prevalence in recent years suggests that there is a rising number of Nigerians who believe it is efficacious. The latter believe that through spiritual manipulations, we can employ spells, charms, and sacrifices, to generate wealth. In recent times, there have been several reports in our news and social

media about rituals involving the use of human parts. In 2017, the entire nation was gripped by the gruesome ritual killings of residents in the Ikorodu axis of Lagos by a group of cultists described as "Badoo Boys." Their criminal activities which involved some forms of ritual killing became so notorious as to attract global attention (Jimoh 299-300).

Ritual Kidnapping is closely associated with the high level of religiosity among its people. Many Nigerians adhere to belief in supernatural entities and pursue supernatural power for various purposes such as wealth, influence, and security. Consequently, there is a prevalent fear of being kidnapped for ritual purposes, as it is believed that victims of such rituals are cursed and can never resume a normal life. According to Gbinije (2014), "the ruthless apotheosization of money, wealth, success, fame, greatness and power etc has stimulated the passion for multidimensional strategies for achieving them. The deification of money and power has ascended the dangerous crescendo where human spare parts, diabolical rivalry, spiritual poisoning, family feud, voodooistic proclivities and cultic magic have become the major ritualistic paraphernalia and in their wake leaving many people mad, dead, poor and deformed" (3).

This implies that besides death, victims of ritual killings can also run mad, be poor, deformed or afflicted by ailments and diseases. In Africa, especially Nigeria, the use of human beings for ritual killings and other voodooistic purposes has been in existence since the pre-colonial period. In the words of La Fontaine, "human sacrifice is a blood sacrifice that involves the killing of a living creature as a ritual offering to a god or spirit, usually in expectation of a return in the form of good fortune, whether generalized or as the granting of a particular prayer" (La Fontaine 4). Persons such as dwarfs, slaves, hunchbacks, virgins, pregnant women and albinos are often seen as vulnerable individuals. The problem of ritual kidnapping is alarmingly on the increase at an alarming rate in contemporary Nigerian society. These criminal killings are being carried out by different classes of people (religious leaders, politicians, fraudsters) for so many purposes, some of which have been discussed in this study.

However, kidnapping for ritual purposes brings about a serious threat to the peace and security of the nation, and is yet to receive enough action from the government. Kidnapping for the purpose of human and organ trafficking is a serious criminal offence and can also be seen as modern-day slavery. According to Funmilayo Idowu Agbaje:

> Noteworthy is the fact that the medical field is fast becoming advanced with technology, and organ transplants are being carried out on patients more than ever before. This has resulted in increased requests for human body parts. Even though the quest for human body parts has increased, there is a meagre supply in the market. Consequently, it is a commonplace for desperate indisposed persons to seek alternatives from the black market. This trend has reinforced a dangerous and criminal act of forceful organ harvesting from kidnapped victims. In 2017, The National Agency for the Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons (NAPTIP) commenced an investigation into Nigeria's illegal human organ harvesting. The Agency further linked human organ trafficking with some of the country's supposedly kidnappings and ritual killings. The outcome of this investigation has not transformed into any policy implementation so far. There is a need to torchlight the numerous kidnappings in Nigeria to the possibilities of being done for human and body organs' trafficking purposes (Agbaje 159).

Most of the times, research studies on human and organ trafficking are carried out with the intention of looking at the economic and security implications of these dastardly acts. According to Albert Ofuoku

> The major cause of human trafficking in Nigeria is poverty. There is a strong desire to survive but poverty resulting from unemployment and lack of opportunity promotes human trafficking. UNIFEM Asia (2002) believes that women and girls are more vulnerable to being trafficked because of unequal access to education which limits their opportunities and the lack of legitimate and fulfilling employment opportunities, especially in rural areas (Ofuoku 5)

Also, there are many studies that address how victims of trafficking are being cajoled for financial reasons, while little or no attention is paid to how many of them are being kidnapped for slavery or organ harvesting. On the other hand, previous studies have identified women and children as victims of human trafficking for sexual and/ or labour exploitation. Therefore, it is important for raise awareness on the chances of kidnapped victims being trafficked in person or human organs.

Hostage-taking as a tactic used by terrorists has been widely debated in literature. Terrorism is characterized by violent acts conducted by a small group to instill fear and attract extensive media attention. As terrorists adapt their methods, the motives for kidnapping continue to evolve. Kidnapping by terrorist groups is increasingly deadly and widespread globally. Although not a new practice, kidnapping for terrorism typically occurs within domestic settings. For example, while terrorist groups in other regions often target expatriates and aid workers, the attacks in Nigeria are harder to categorize. However, there are frequent assaults on schools and local communities. In Nigeria, the Boko Haram terrorist group is known for abducting individuals to use them for various terrorist purposes, including as militants, intelligence operatives, suicide bombers, and for reproduction, among other reasons. According to Mia Bloom and Hilary Matfess:

> In June 2014, a middle aged woman riding a motorcycle approached the military barracks in the North Eastern Nigerian city of Gombe. While being searched at the military checkpoint, she detonated the explosives strapped to her body, ending her life and killing a soldier in the process. With this act, a new chapter in the destructive history of Boko Haram began. The group joins the ranks of terrorist groups around the world that have incorporated women into their organizational profiles. Since the first attack, women and girls (between the ages of 7 and 17 have been coerced into targeting civilians at markets, bus depots and mosques…The adoption of female suicide bombers is not especially surprising as an operational adaptation to increased state surveillance of the group activities, it has been a tactics adopted by secular and religious terrorist groups from Sri Lanka to Syria. However, Boko Haram depends on female operatives disproportionately relative to similar insurgencies, for example, The Tamil Tigers used 46 women over the course of 10 years, whereas Boko Haram has deployed more than 90 women in a little over a year and a half (Bloom and Matfess 105).

This does not mean these terrorists do not kidnap for financial gain; there are occasional instances of this as well. Kidnapping by terrorists in Nigeria is widespread, making it one of the country's organized crimes. It can occur anywhere and at any time, with people being abducted on highways, in churches, homes, schools, markets, and offices. Despite several measures taken by the Nigerian government to address kidnapping, these efforts have had little

to no success due to factors like high poverty rates, religious intolerance, sabotage, and significant socio-political issues. Another reason for the persistence of kidnapping is the government's willingness to negotiate with kidnappers and the lack of effective deterrent measures. This study, therefore, calls for urgent anti-kidnapping strategies and techniques by the Nigerian government to create a more effective system for combating this crime.

The combination of economic hardship and desperation has sowed the seeds of banditry, with kidnapping serving as a means of obtaining money in impoverished communities. This phenomenon has now extended to urban areas. Over time, it can evolve into a lifestyle choice, even when legal avenues for income generation become accessible. Kums and Kwede say that "The disparity between rich and poor is growing, and thanks to the internet and global media, everyone can see how the rich live (205).

There is no denying that a weak security system exacerbates the concerning prevalence of banditry in Nigeria. This weakness may stem from inadequate equipment for government security forces, both in terms of weaponry and training. Additionally, the attitudes and behavior of security personnel contribute to the problem. According to Caleb Danjuma Dami:

> The strength of police and other policing agencies in Nigeria to prevent the occurrence of crime before they are committed and detect or arrest crimes when committed have inhibited the control of crime and by extension encouraged criminal activities in the country. The popular perception of Nigerians is that, the policing agencies have failed the nation in protecting lives and property. Also lack of synergy among agencies of social control provision of security all over the world is a herculean task. It is costly, multifaceted and complicated. Yet, it is generally considered a necessity because, without it any other thing desired by man becomes secondary. Regrettably, this popular expectation has not been realized in Nigeria, as security operatives have at different times been involved in unhealthy operational rivalries. This explains the serious security challenges faced by the nation in recent times. It is argued in Nigeria for instance that: Such rivalry has been noticed between the Nigeria Police Force (NPF) and Nigeria Security and Civil Defense Corps (NSCDC) over security duties in several parts of the nation as well as between the Nigeria Police Force and Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) over the management of vehicle registration and licensing. The Nigeria Police and State Security Service (SSS) have had contentions over the management of criminal cases. It is still the problem of status and command or who is best to handle criminal cases. Failure to arrest and Punish Offenders One of the factors that have escalated crime cases in Nigeria today is the inability of government and governmental agencies saddled with the right and power to detect arrest and prosecute criminals to perform their duties. Because offenders and criminals are not speedily detected, tried and if found guilty punished accordingly, most of the citizens found it difficult to see reasons why they must not deviate from acceptable social norms (Dami 302).

Often, those assigned to handle security issues lack the necessary expertise and resources to effectively address and prevent such challenges. Even when resources are available, some security personnel may be swayed by ethnic, religious, or communal biases, prioritizing the interests of their own group over national concerns. Instead of acting as guardians of national security and upholders of national values, their actions may inadvertently support and

perpetuate insecurity. This can involve leaking vital security information or colluding with criminals to obtain weapons or evade justice.

Another significant catalyst for kidnapping and armed banditry in Africa worth noting is the issue of arms proliferation. Since the collapse of Gaddafi's regime in Libya, there has been a steady increase in the flow of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) into Nigeria from the Sahel region. These arms and weapons often find their way into the hands of non-state actors such as terrorists, militants, and bandits, who employ them to instill fear in individuals and communities. According to Abdulmalum Yakubu and Festus Aubyn:

> The proliferation of weapons has become one of the major security challenges facing the African continent. Since the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, many of formerly state-owned small arms and light weapons (SALW) spilt out on the global market, mostly into the hands of non-state actors. This further aggravated the destructive new conflict trends. The uncontrolled and widespread availability of weapons has contributed to the fueling of civil wars, crime and communal conflicts and forms of transnational threats which consequently have caused political instability as well as posing a threat to both national security and sustainable development in the continent. Weapons proliferation in Nigeria is ubiquitous because of porous borders, poor arms stockpile management by government, the contiguous nature of border communities, lack of transparency in global arms market, weak legislative and deterrent measures, bad governance, activities of local arms transfers and the residues of weapons from other countries that have been in conflicts (e.g. Libya, Mali). Hence, the proliferation of weapons in Africa has not only become a major source of concern for states, but it has also been established that a nexus exists between the spread and proliferation of weapons and the extreme case of criminality, which is terrorism (Abdulmalum and Aubyn 123).

Insecurity and fear are one major challenge Nigerians face due to the increase in kidnapping cases across the nation. An average Nigerian is now afraid of being kidnapped. The types of brutality reported by victims have caused excessive fear, significant distress and heightened anxiety in the minds of the citizens as they worry that the same plight might befall them. This fear is not limited to Nigerians living in the country alone but also, affects Nigerians in the diaspora and foreigners have been discouraged from visiting the country either for business or leisure.

Kidnapping has led to significant losses of lives, money, manpower, and investments in Nigeria. Agbaje says that:

> The actual estimated value of money lost to the kidnappers is yet unknown. However, there was evidence of ransoms paid in different parts of the country concurrently by government officials (though mostly denied), friends and families of kidnapped persons and religious sect members. Kidnapping in Nigeria and across the Sahel has been described as an extraordinarily lucrative enterprise by the insurgents and some unruly citizens who engage in the crime for financial gains. The consequence of this is the lack of trust by potential investors, loss of money by investors and outright loss of reputation and goodwill as a result of increased kidnapping in the country (Agbaje 160)

Deaths have also occurred during kidnaps, be it due to victims' resistance or health-related issues experienced in captivity.

Combating Crime and Gender based violence through Drama: A study of Tosin Jobi-Tume's *Jungle of Many Shadows*

Set in a fictional world teeming with insecurity, socio-economic inequality, social injustice and moral ambiguity, Tosin Jobi-Tume's play offers a vivid portrayal of the struggles faced by women amidst the challenges of kidnapping and armed banditry. As the play opens, the atmosphere crackles with tension as a group of three armed young men drag in Professor Lola Lawson from the crash door through the apron of the stage. She struggles to free herself, but she is gagged and blindfolded. Gunshots are fired sporadically by the kidnappers, probably to ensure their control over the situation and intimidate any potential resistance from their victim. Professor Lawson cries out:

> Prof: (Agitated.) What is the meaning of all this? Who are you?
> Where have you brought me?
> Stone: (Thunderously at Prof.) Keep quiet!
>> Prof: I refuse to be silenced! I know my rights, and so I demand to know who you are and why you have disrupted my journey…a very important research trip for that matter. You will answer me now: why am I here and what have I done wrong? (12).

Professor Lawson's confrontation with her abductors brings to the fore some pertinent issues relating to women and their status in society. Here, the playwright presents a female character, whose human rights are being violated as a result of a banditry attack. It is reported in the plat that Professor Lawson's journey to a very important research trip was disrupted by the kidnappers. Therefore, this results in a situation, whereby a socioeconomic progress is being impeded by limiting her freedom of movement and obstructing her activities in the public space.

These hoodlums even go to the extent of robbing her, collecting her jewelries and money. Being kidnapped by these group of unemployed youths, they made a demand of sixty million naira as a ransom, before she can be released from captivity. These hoodlums refuse to show any form of sympathy even when they learn that Professor Lawson is a widow and is diabetic at the same time. She makes it known to them that her meagre earnings often go into the running of her home leaving barely enough for her personal needs. Yet they refuse to listen to her. Blinded by the pursuit for quick wealth, Stone, a leader of the notorious and vicious gang collects her phone, demanding for the phone number of one of her family members, who will possibly facilitate the payment of the ransom. It turns out that Professor Lawson's son is in Germany for his studies. Temilade, her research assistant and a lady she has always taken care of, happens to be the only one, whom she trusts. However, Stone, the leader of the gang calls Temilade to inform her that the Professor has been taken into hostage by the notorious gang and she is expected to make a ransom payment of sixty million naira before she could be released. Further directives and threats are issued out at the same time, warning Temi not to involve the security agents if she still wants to see the professor alive.

The feeling of helplessness in the face of this calamity by Professor Lawson is not much different from the experiences faced by the African woman, especially widows in a developing country. According to Osita Ezenwanebe "The women as widows are products of cultural degradation" (268). Professor Lawson as a widow in the play under study has gone through much cultural degradation associated with the widowhood rites. Ezenwanebe says that:

> Some widows are required to sit in the ashes confined in the house for months like Ugboma in Sofola's *Wedlock of the Gods*, shave their hair, howl for three days, etc. to prove their innocence of their husband's death. For instance, Eaglewoman in Ezeigbo's novel, *Children of the Eagle* (2002) has to howl for three days to display public grief for the loss of her husband, Josiah. In the same novel, her daughters stage a protest against the patriarchal myths that inform widowhood rites (269).

Several playwrights have written on the plight of widows in Nigeria. Ahmed Yerima, in his play, *Aetu* treats the theme of sexual exploitation of widows. In this play, a young teenage girl, Aetu, is sexually exploited and is inherited as a wife by three brothers after each one's death. Elechi Amadi's novel, *The Concubine* revolves around a female lead character, Ihuoma, who remarries seven times and at each marriage her husband dies. The cultural perception is that she's a strange woman, a husband murderer, stirring up the superstitious belief that any man who marries her would die before she could bear children. In Ola Rotimi's *Our Husband Has Gone Mad Again*, the main character, Lejoka-Brown, inherits his late brother's wife, Mama Rashida. Ezenwanebe says that:

> Women as widows are recreated in the plays as an expendable commodity. If women as wives are twice oppressed, then women as widows are thrice oppressed because they are women, were wives and then widows. I therefore argue that wifehood is the greatest burden of womanhood in Nigeria and the most volatile gender space in dire need of social transformation. When women as wives lose their names and acquired names symbolizing their roles as wife and mother, they lose the right to self-definition (Ezenwanebe 21-22)

For many Nigerian women, being a wife, much like being a mother, is viewed as a responsibility worth shouldering for social well-being. Ezeigbo says that "A woman who goes through life without experiencing both wifehood and motherhood is regarded as unnatural or unfortunate" (Ezeigbo xv), and the situation has not changed much today. *Jungle of Many Shadows* raises vital gender issues, which Nigerian women needs to address. The widespread maltreatment of widows is a shared experience that women globally face, and it serves as a common bond that unites them irrespective of their cultural differences.

Another important gender issue treated in *Jungle of Many Shadows* is motherhood. Professor Lawson in the play under study is not just a career woman and a wife but also a mother. She has a child and is the bread winner as well. The need to take care of her son leaves her with little or nothing to depend on for survival. Ezenwanebe says that:

> For many Africans and Nigerians in particular, the family is sacred and one of the most important social units. The seed of human warmth, nurture and care sown in the family permeates every aspect of social relationships with personal touch unlike the laws and principles that are the basis of Western social relationships. Communal ties are cords of love and personal touch that bind people together. The cord is knotted at pregnancy between the mother and the fetus, and it is symbolized in the umbilical cord which though severed at birth, continues in parental nurture and care (Ezenwanebe 260).

The theme of intimidation and violence against women is opulently dramatized in *Jungle of Many Shadows*. Stone is portrayed as a vicious and violent criminal. He is insensitive to the Professor Lawson's plight and is determined not to release her from captivity until he receives the ransom, paid in full. In a commanding tone, he orders Professor Lawson to stop making noise. As an educated woman, who wants to assert her rights, Professor Lawson, ignores his

warning. The stage direction reads that "Prof doesn't get to finish the sentence because Stone rushes at her with the speed of lightning. He slaps her repeatedly, hits her with his gun and kicks her around. Prof yelps in pain" (13). Here, Stone is portrayed as the embodiment of male oppression. Nkiruka Akaenyi says that:

> The subjugation of women is pervasive across various communities and ethnic groups in Nigeria, where women are perceived as mere extensions of men, occupying a subservient status. Traditional institutions strongly reinforce gender differences, seeing women as inconsequential,   the "insignificant other." This stereotypical view of women, to a large extent, influences the mindset of women, who often internalize and accept this position. Any effort to challenge this norm is met with resistance, with such women being seen as competing with men or trying to disrupt the natural order of things. Consequently, they are frequently labeled as stubborn, out of control, or ill-mannered (Akaenyi 86)

The use of brutal force by Stone on Professor Lawson is a violent assault, which Hush considers a punishment for having "a loud speaker for mouth". Ifi Amadiume's view that "the sanctity of motherhood meant that women were treated with respect" has no place in his treatment of Professor Lawson in the play. Contemporary society has made away with most of the privileges that women once enjoyed in pre-colonial Africa, resulting in a crisis in modern gender relations. Stone knows nothing but brute force. His does not waste time in crushing any rebellion in his way, especially when it comes from a woman. He intimidates and subdues them into accepting and complying with his own terms. Professor Lawson's experiences highlights the existential plight of Nigerian women in armed violence within the patriarchal dynamics and structures of the society that supports male dominance. The existence of patriarchal power structures in African societies poses a serious challenge for gender equality. This highlights the systemic discrimination, oppression and inequality faced by women, as a result of the gendered power dynamics and societal norms.

Despite her elevated position as a Professor, she still finds it difficult to raise the sum of sixty million naira for her freedom. This highlights the strong barriers to women's economic, political and socio-cultural empowerment and emancipation and this automatically retard their contribution to national development.

In the play, Tosin Tume-Jobi makes it clear that banditry and all forms of criminality associated with it serve as a bane of sociopolitical development in Nigeria. Banditry causes numerous violations of the rights and dignity of women and girls. It also undermines the safety and humanity of women by reducing them to objects. Several times in the play, Stone charges at Professor Lawson like a wounded tiger. He resents the privileges that she enjoys. And even, he accuses her of using her connection to give her son, who is also his age mate a good life. He cries out "I have never really known what it feels like to have a mother…or a father. I grew up in an orphanage. They told me I was found on a refuse dump when I was three months old" (33)

The play vividly reveals the sorrowful plight of Nigerian unemployed youths, displaced and worn down by unemployment and societal neglect. The pent-up frustration within Stone finds an outlet when he says "Cut the theatrics, Prof. Deep down inside of you, you know that you only pretend to help the privileged. You make them think you are helping them, when in actual fact you only use them as your feel-good drug. (Despairingly.) The society has failed us. Your generation has failed my generation (35)

Violence in this play is therefore utilized for a criticism of the structurally violent, oppressive and corrupt society. It is obvious that the inhumanity and arbitrariness, which define everyday realities in the society, compel Stone, Butty and Hush to form a criminal alliance.

Against the backdrop of this fictional world, the playwright throws light on the ways in which the excessive desire to become rich overnight can drive young individuals towards illicit means of survival, including banditry and other forms of criminal activities.
In the play, members of the criminal gang have one need or the other to meet up with. Strong wants to travel abroad with his girlfriend. On the other hand, Butty needs the money because he wants to use it for his mother's cancer treatment, while Hush just wants to spend the money on drinks and pleasure.

The interplay between socio-economic factors and criminal behavior has been a subject of significant scholarly inquiry and public concern. Among the factors that promotes armed banditry and kidnapping in Nigeria, high unemployment rate stands out as a pressing issue with far-reaching implications for societal stability and public safety. According to Mustapha "The anxiety from Nigerian graduates that later turn to frustration and aggression on the Government has fuelled the emergence of most of these bandit attacks and security threats in the country (Mustapha, 20). In a similar vein, Kums Simon Nankap and Kwede Cornelius Ishaya say that:

> Nigeria has been blamed on the increasing level of unemployment. Thus, idle youths tend to engage in illegal activities to meet contemporary trends. Suffice to say that the youths easily get enticed to riches due to the prevailing "get rich quick syndrome" that pervades the country. Hence, they tend to do whatever it takes to get rich quick. Therefore, Nigeria's high rate of unemployment, especially the increasing rate of youth's unemployment, is what majorly prompts the jobless youths in the country to resort to violent crime like Banditry (Kums and Kwede 206)

In *Jungle of Many Shadows*, the writer treats the suffering and untold hardship of the unemployed youths, who feel cheated by the government after graduating from the higher institution. For instance, it is reported in the play that with the exception of Hush, who dropped out of the university, Stone graduated from the University with good grades. Also, Butty holds a first class degree in computer science. Stone cries out against the exploitative nature of the system and the social injustice meted out on the poor masses. In every sense, he resents the privileges that is being enjoyed by Professor Lawson's biological son, Teju, who through the help and connection of his mother is able to secure a job, immediately after he graduates from the University. The writer makes a statement that the widening gap between the rich and the poor in the society is responsible for the desperation that is pushing the youths to engage in criminal activities with the hope they can generate wealth through kidnapping and banditry, thereby bridging the gap.

Furthermore, the play presents a damning portrayal of security agents as complicit in the rising criminal cases of banditry and kidnapping. The leader of the criminal gang, known as Stone boldly assures Professor Lawson that he is well protected by the police, when she threatens to involve the police in securing her release. Stone says:

> Stone: Shut your mouth, woman! It may interest you to know that I have the police of this area inside my pocket. I have bought the highways and this forest area for the next 72 hours. So no security agent will come snooping around here for the next 72 hours. In fact, I

> will be notified if any overzealous police team from another area
> decides to come this way (19).

Here, the playwright presents an ironical situation of things. Even the security agents, whose responsibility and duty is to safeguard the lives and property of the masses are the ones responsible for the surge in criminal activities throughout the society. Some of these police officers in many cases, even make arms and weapons available to some of these bandits and terrorists, who end up using it to terrorize individuals and communities.

Eventually, Stone and Butty decide to go in search of Temi so as to get the ransom, while Professor Lawson is left in the custody of Hush, who attempts to strike a friendly alliance with Professor Lawson. Meanwhile, he finds the opportunity to tell her much about himself. Professor Lawson gets irritated listening to his tale, since all he can offer according to him is tied to his prowess in bed.

Things get complicated with Temi's arrival. She is beaten by Strong, until she becomes unconscious and passes out in Professor Lawson's arms. When Temi wakes up, she suggests to Professor Lawson on the need for them to flee the jungle. She unties the gun from Butty's waist and shoots Professor Lawson in the leg, as she tries to run away from the jungle. Temi's action leaves the professor wondering why Temi has suddenly switched allegiance to the terror group. At this point, Temi makes it known to her that Strong is her boyfriend and that they have planned travelling abroad with the ransom money. This complicates the predicament of Professor Lawson, who is now on the floor, bleeding.

Overall, the imagery of the jungle in the play is rich and multifaceted, encompassing a wide range of symbolic meanings and thematic associations. The playwright employs imagery to comment on the troubling rise of kidnappings in Nigeria and worldwide, which has left people in constant fear of becoming the next victim. Kidnappings and abductions have become a national epidemic, implicating everyone, including security agents. The reality is that those involved in kidnapping now encompass unexpected individuals such as family members, friends, neighbors, religious leaders, traditional rulers, and even security force members, all driven by the pursuit of quick wealth.

Even when the group realizes to their utter chagrin that Temi has brought the sum of thirteen million naira only, they agree to accept the money, because they do not have much time left. Stone insists that he will be having all the money to himself, contrary to their agreement that the money would be shared equally. Butty and Hush are not pleased with this development. Matters get worse when Butty is informed through a phone call that his sick mother in the hospital is dead. Angrily, he snatches the gun from Temi and challenges Strong and his girlfriend to a violent confrontation.

Nemesis, eventually catches up with them with the arrival of the security personnels. In *Jungle of Many Shadows,* the playwright exposes the underlying causes of kidnapping, armed banditry and other criminal activities, attributing them to unemployment, greed and financial irresponsibility. The playwright advocates strongly for the need to restrain such behavior. Moreover, the playwright highlights how impatience, lack of self- contentment, and greed among the youth have driven some of them to resort to criminal activities like drug trafficking, armed robbery, cybercrime, kidnapping, and ritualistic practices for money. Through the character of Strong, a young man arrested alongside other kidnappers, the playwright illustrates the consequences of such actions. Strong serves as a poignant example reinforcing the play's theme of retribution.

Conclusion

Through the lens of Tosin Jobi-Tume's *Jungle of Many Shadows*, this study examines the impact of banditry and kidnapping on women. The playwright masterfully sheds light on the complex intersection of women's human rights and gender-related concerns within the harrowing context of armed banditry and kidnapping in Nigeria. Through vivid portrayal and insightful narrative, the play underscores the detrimental impact of these criminal activities on the lives of women, their families, and the broader societal fabric. It illuminates how women often bear the brunt of violence, exploitation, and displacement, exacerbating gender disparities and impeding socio-political development.

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