

# HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF INSECURITY AS BEDROCK TO ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL COLLAPSE: A CASE STUDY OF RAMPANT KIDNAPPING IN NORTHERN NIGERIA (2016-2021)

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**Abstract:** *Kidnapping is simply an abduction of an innocent person to achieve an anti-social purpose of diverse dimensions. There are several reasons for committing an act of kidnapping, including ritual, desire for power and money, and unemployment. This paper x-rayed the causes of kidnapping in Northern Nigeria within the North-West geo-political zone. The causes of this criminal act have been outlined with reasons attached to its spread. Furthermore, economics and education served as pivots for examining the roles of kidnapping for six to seven years. Finally, the study examined the socio-economic impact of kidnapping. At the same time, proffering manageable solutions, which included general improvement in security networks, synergy with the communities involved, border control and job creation for the teeming unemployed youth in the country, among others.*

**Keywords:** Kidnapping, Insecurity, Economy, Education, Development.

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## INTRODUCTION

Many experts believed the recent increase in kidnapping cases had become much more intense after 1990. Before this period, even the United Nations Survey on Crime Trends and Operation of the Criminal Justice System, a body researching such types of crime, did not mention the case of Nigeria before 1990. (Obarisiagbon & Aderinta, 2018). A survey on the kidnapping level in Northern Nigeria reached about 73.4%, showing that hardly a day would pass without a reported kidnapping case between 2019 and 2021. (Tahir, 2021). According to Crime Index Report (CIR) midyear, Nigeria was 3<sup>rd</sup> in Africa and the Top 14<sup>th</sup> in the world. (Knoema, 2019).

Kidnapping in Northern Nigeria was more or less an extension of activities in the southern part of the country, particularly the oil-rich riverine Niger Delta. So it was on Feb 12 2006, when some expatriate workers were abducted. Thus, kidnapping means abducting a person or group to collect ransom from their family, employers, organisation or Government. In other words, it is a forceful seizure, taking away, and unlawful detention

of a person against his/her will. (Issue, 2009). It is another easy way of robbing. In the southern part of the country, expatriates were the target because oil money could settle the ransom. Kidnapping has become a lucrative criminal activity in the region because the Federal Government primarily intervened for two reasons. After all, the presence of expatriates in the hands of the kidnapers could affect the bilateral agreement between their country and Nigeria.

Second, the Government must settle them with a large amount of money that an individual could hardly pay. These two reasons aptly described why militants resorted to kidnapping the area.

However, unlike in the south, northern Nigerian kidnapping cases are generally broader. Almost everybody is involved, and more precarious is that they usually abduct people in a group and sometimes the whole community or a large number of students in an institution. Thus, this paper examines how kidnapping affected northern Nigeria's socio-economic development, particularly education and commercial activities. Several schools

were shut down, markets were closed, and people's social life distracted, which virtually affected the general development of many communities, especially in the country's northeast and western geo-political zones. How could such menace be surmounted, which has become the order of the day? A few areas worthy of consideration have been pointed which may serve as a guide to the possible solution.

### **EMERGENCE OF KIDNAPPING IN NORTHERN NIGERIA AND IMPLICATION FOR NATIONAL SECURITY**

There are two types of kidnapping under the context of this research. The first is the criminal whose motive is to abduct a person or group of persons to collect ransom from the victim's relatives or any other concerned organisation. In comparison, the second is political kidnapping, usually carried out to achieve a political motive. In this case, the money was channelled towards funding political movements or settling power tussles.

However, several reasons were identified by this research paper as to why kidnapping emerged today as the leading criminal activity in Northern Nigeria. Particularly Northeast, Northwest and some part of North central. Among them include:

**Social inequality and injustice:** Most people engaged in this act wanted to achieve economic or social needs (Mahmoud, Ibrahim & Mustapha, 2019). In addition, since the emergence of the second republic, when the country returned to democratic rule under the presidential system, things became difficult for the commoner. The military era, which took over from the civilian, dragged the nation into a free market economy of capitalist oriented. Since then, as the currency continued devaluing, unemployment also continued to hit the labour market, which attracted different types of crimes. In addition, the emergence of religious fundamentalists like the recent Boko Haram militant group is believed to be a product of social inequality and the system's failure (Jafar, 2019).

**The escalation of dangerous weapons** is another factor that led to the emergence of kidnapping in Northern Nigeria. Before the emergence of rebel groups in some African countries, there were a few sophisticated weapons like AK -47 rifles in the hands of criminals. Nevertheless, the recent proliferation of weapons at the border of Niger republic, Chad and Cameroun have made the menace of kidnapping a typical criminal case in the Northern region. Today the number of dangerous and sophisticated weapons available in the hands of terrorists, militants, kidnappers and bandits has outnumbered the one in the hands of security personnel, if not in quantity, at least in quality. For instance, there are more than 30,000 Bandits with sophisticated weapons in Zamfara. (Nigerian Tribune, 2021)

**Poverty.** It is widely revealed showed by several studies findings that abject poverty is one of the fundamental causes of kidnapping in society. One of the easiest ways to relieve the menace of poverty is a quick-money syndrome, and kidnapping offered the best alternative to them. Despite numerous resources, northern Nigeria has the highest population in extreme poverty with violence and a high crime rate. (Jaiyeola, 2020)

**Corruption and Insecurity.** Corruption in Nigeria has been institutionalised since the era of the oil boom in the country. Simply, it is a deliberate violation, for gainful ends, of standards of conduct legally, professionally, or even ethically established in private and public affairs.

These gains may be in cash or kind, or even psychological or political. However, they are made from the violation of the integrity of an entity and involve the subversion of its quality and capacity. (Usman, 2003) Many attributed the causes of underdevelopment and increased social vices to social corruption, including cases of kidnapping.

In contrast, the general level of insecurity in the Northern region started to deteriorate in the early 80s when the political atmosphere between the National Party of Nigeria (NPN)

and other political parties, especially the leading opposition, the People's Redemption Party (PRP), went sour. This sour relationship between the two parties mentioned above could be traced to the involvement of youths acting as political tools for intimidation, kidnapping, assassination and destruction. However, the peak of corruption and insecurity escalated to the highest level with the emergence of the Islamic radical group Boko Haram in the North eastern state of Maiduguri. The wave of kidnapping in the land became a severe criminal activity when they started abducting people for ransom. This development later spread into other parts of the region as many criminal and disenfranchised ethnic groups continued to emerge.

**Unemployment.** Failure of the system in the land has created severe congestion in the labour market. Thousands of unemployed youth graduates roam about without job security. Millions of jobless youth, either school dropped out or unschooled in life, have been nursing serious life ambitions without a concrete plan for the future. It is pertinent to those youth that Government cannot afford carter, and thus the system has failed them.

From the above factors mentioned, this research finds out kidnapping has been a tool of circumstances due to negligence and artificial collapse of the system and highhandedness of the ruling class. The history of kidnapping in the country could be traced to pre-colonial times when people were kidnapped for burial purposes or a rapacious taste for power through rituals. Essentially, kidnapping could be presumed as a common phenomenon in the southern part of the country.

Nevertheless, the recent kidnap cases in the region have gone beyond burial or power. However, they are related to "**Natural Resources Nationalism.**," especially in the Niger Delta Militants and Lagos, where unemployment breeds criminals who are influenced by the addiction to drugs. However, in the North, which is the central plot of this research, the rampant cases of kidnappings have somersaulted due to "**Failure of the**

**System**", as elaborated above, to accommodate the basic needs of the multi-ethnic society. The crux of the matter is that the failure of the political class or ruling class to embrace their primary responsibility to their community was the aggravating factor. Instead, they engaged in endless accumulation of wealth by all means. This situation aggravated during the IBB regime's era and subsequently during the return of democracy in 1999. Nevertheless, despite all the above factors, a specific fundamental phenomenon continues to spearhead the kidnapping crisis in Northern Nigeria. This study discovered the following factors.

**A. Ethnic clashes and Fulani**

**Nationalism:** this refers to the push factor of Fulani herders by the natural movement of people and the rapid urbanisation in Northern Nigeria. According to Tailor (2017), most Fulani villages, popularly known as "Ruga", have been taken over by the rapid development of cities that chased the Fulani out without replacement. The ruga-phenomenon subsequently led to clashes with the farmers as they (Fulani) moved in search of greener pasture and convenience for their cattle grazing. The reaction by the farmers and other frustration led the Fulani to take arms which today has become a serious security challenge for the state and federal government.

**B. Religious Fundamentalism:**

The emergence of religious extremists in African countries connected to Al Qaeda (a Terrorist Islamic Organization led by Osama Bin Laden) has led to groups with similar doctrines and radical Islamic ideology. In northern Nigeria, it is generally believed that the emergence of the Boko Haram militant group in the northeast region was the beginning of the current insecurity, where they were abducted to collect ransom to buy arms. Kidnapping and other terrorist activities peaked at their maddest

moment with the group's series of attacks.

**C. Social inequalities and economic exploitation:** another issue related to the rapid growth of kidnapping cases in northern Nigeria is emblematic of social and economic inequality. The glaring exploitation of the "have not" propounded the cases of corruption, poverty and joblessness. On the contrary, according to (Umez, 2000), when the kidnapers secure the ransom, they suddenly turn rich compared to their former miserable poverty state, which means quick money syndrome.

**D. Political influence:** According to Umez (2000), the value system in a country is a leading factor that glorifies illegal and corrupt means as a way of accumulating sufficient means of survival. The situation has now turned the Nigerian moral training of our youths into a mere reflection of the dream society. Because basically, what was expected of the youth as leaders of tomorrow has become total darkness. Odey (2000) states that; "a society that is keen on condemning its youths for being dishonest and lazy, and for instituting a menace to the rest of the people such as kidnapping, armed robbery and materialism should equally be keen on providing better economic, social, and moral alternatives that will dissolve immoralities to be less attractive and thus drain their current drift to criminal life."

However, the above factors elaborated are some of the irritating issues that continue to aid and abet the menace of kidnapping in the Northern part of Nigeria. Others identified by this research include:

- Agitation to free one from constant oppression
- Rampant rituals for the desire to have money and political power
- Payment of Ransom easily by the family of the victims
- Poor parental upbringing

-failure of the social system like delay in the application of justice

-Illiteracy and lack of religious teaching teachings

The above are apparent manifestations of the pro-active kidnapping factor, which could have avoided the situation had they been appropriately handled. However, these have created artificial socio-economic problems in the region, which drastically relegated the background's commercial activities and equally negated the educational system to total stagnation.

### **KIDNAPPING AFFECTS ON NORTHERN NIGERIA'S SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL CONTEXTS.**

Recent data compiled by Violent Conflict Data Base (SPD) indicated that in 2021 along, Nigeria recorded twenty (20) different kidnapping cases resulting in two thousand, five hundred and forty-two victims (2,542). Equally, in another report, about five hundred and eighty (580) Nigerians were killed in just six months in the first half of 2021 and confirmed that about two thousand three hundred and seventy-one (2371) were abducted. (SMB intelligence, 2021)

What appeared to have severely affected the economy of the people and society, in general, was the enormous amount of money demanded by those kidnapers. Many victims' economic capacity has collapsed because of the large amount of ransom paid to save their relatives' lives. A study revealed that about 10 billion nairas, equivalent to 19.96million Dollars, were demanded. Even though what was paid out of this request was not stated in the research, a substantial amount was paid to enable them to release the victims on any occasion.

Further research categorically stated that Nigeria recorded the highest number of kidnappings in January, February and March of 2021. In January, the number reached twenty-one cases (21) and two hundred and eighty-four (284) victims. In February, the case reached about twenty-seven (27) with six

hundred and five (605) victims. However, in July, about twenty-three (23) cases were reported while more than three hundred and twenty-seven (327) people fell victim. (Punch newspaper: 2021)

The above few statistics show how the North has been raked by the activities of bandits and kidnappers, which virtually ravaged the entire socio-economic activities of the region.

Several other kidnapping cases which affected the smooth running of commercial and social activities include: Mar 18, 2021, kidnapping of 19 people in Kutunku village of state, three persons were also kidnapped in Rafi Local Government Area of Niger state on Feb 27 the same year. It was also reported that about fifty-three (53) passengers were abducted in the Riau Local Government Area of Niger State. Also, eight people were reported to have been kidnapped in Kutungu village of Wushishi Local Government Area of Niger State. These, among several other cases, have been reported in 2021, which has succeeded in disrupting the region's commercial activities by almost 47%. (A Garabu, 2020)

The above situation revealed to this research that about 20 markets were closed between Katsina and Zamfara in the North central Nigerian geo-political zone. (Shittu, 2021) many people have been subjected to a life of joblessness, and the poverty level has increased because of inactive commercialisation.

According to the World Bank Databank report 2021, northern Nigerian poverty, which mostly hammered rural dwellers, revealed that about 84.6% live below \$1.90. Moreover, about 76.3 out of this percentage are from North Central and North West, where kidnapping has reached an alarming rate. Recently the same data reported that Sokoto, one of the kidnap-affected North West states, ranks top on the list of states with the most glaring poverty crisis. About 87.3% are living below the poverty level as of 2019. Moreover, the subsequent years witnessed an increased rate of insecurity which aptly defined the situation will go above the previous percentage. According to analysis, severe insecurity has escalated which drives out the states' investors and prevents new ones from coming in. The overall effect has been the inability of the state to generate revenue internally for socio-economic development and social amenities for life.

However, education is the most affected social sector by the menace of kidnapping in the region. Several learning institutions were shut down, and the school calendar was abused because of constant cases of school kidnapping, particularly in the north-central geo-political zone of the country. The timeline below indicates a few cases of school kidnapping in the North since the advent of insecurity in the region.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Number of Victims</b>	<b>Name of School</b>
Apr 14, 2014.	Two hundred seventy-six students were kidnapped.	Government Girls Secondary School, Chibok, Borno State.
Feb 19, 2018.	One hundred ten school girls were kidnapped.	Government Girls Secondary and Technical College, Dapchi, Yobe state.
Dec 11, 2020.	Three hundred three boys were kidnapped.	Government Science Secondary School, Kankara, Katsina State.
Dec 20, 2020.	Eighty students were kidnapped.	Islamiyya School Mahuta town, Katsina state.

Feb 17, 2021.	Forty-one students were kidnapped.	Government Science College, Kagara, Niger State.
Feb 26, 2021.	Three hundred seventy-seven students were kidnapped.	Government Girls Secondary School, Jengebe, Zamfara State.
Mar 11, 2021.	Thirty-nine students were kidnapped.	Federal College of Forestry Mechanization, Afaka, Kaduna State.
Apr 20, 2021.	Twenty students were kidnapped.	Greenfield University, Kaduna State.
May 30, 2021.	One hundred sixty-nine pupils were kidnapped.	Tanko Islamic school, Regina, Niger state.
Jun 11, 2021.	Eight students were kidnapped.	Nuhu Bamali Polytechnic, Zaria, Kaduna state.
Jun 17, 2021.	80 students kidnapped	Federal Government College, Birnin Yauri, Kebbi state.
Dec 19 2020	80 students kidnapped	Dandume Islamic School

Source: Vanguard 18, June 2021 and fieldwork data collected.

### **IMPLICATIONS OF KIDNAPPING ACT TO THE ECONOMIC AND EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTHERN REGION**

There are many implications as far as this notorious act is concerned. Critical examination revealed that many school pupils had spent a long time at home because the school calendar was interrupted due to the general closure of learning institutions. For instance, Kaduna states have closed down schools for almost six months without any reason apart from insecurity caused by rampant kidnappings.

The situation has brought general uncertainty among local marketers as many merchants were kidnapped in day broad light while going to the market or after commercial activities. In Dankama town, there was a time when 20 merchants were abducted in a single day, and none of them paid less than 2m before their release. (Musa, 2020) the implication of this action underscored deficiencies in the villagers' supply of essential commodities to the urban areas. Also, the number of hours for

the market activities was reduced to nearly less than half of the regular time.

In addition, several primary commercial ways were avoided or suspended by the merchants. For instance, the Kaduna-Abuja highway, one of the most critical commercial thoroughfares leading to different vast northern markets, has become the scourge of kidnapping. The suppliers had to change their route to the commercial centres to avoid their kidnapers, which meant extra miles compared to the regular route. The implication is that transportation fare has increased, the hour and tediousness of the journey has increased, and that automatically means an increase in the prices of commodities the merchant brings—artificial inflation of the highest order by the scourge of insecurity.

However, despite all these economic implications, education suffered the most from these repercussions. About ten significant school kidnappings were recorded from 2020 to date, a major blow to the education sector. It was reported that over 700 students had been

kidnapped in Northern Nigeria since December 2020. (Aljazeera media: 2012)

For instance, the parents of Greenfield University were said to have paid the sum of 150 million naira as ransom to kidnappers when the Government showed an indifferent attitude towards the demand of the perpetrators. Consequently, government indifference, to a large extent, has created a culture of losing confidence in the security and Government by the parents and general public, where enrolment of students since then was said to have recorded low turnout. (G Ahmed:2020) ministry of education in one state revealed that the number of out-of-school children stood at 10.1 million, an increase of more than 3 million from 2020 and a total of 85% of Nigeria's population. All these are due to the general insecurity associated with our school operation. (Kaduna State ministry of education 2021 annual report).

Also, the United Nations Children's fund (UNICEF) has noted that the population of out-of-school children in Nigeria has risen from 10.5m to 13.2m, the highest in the world. Other implication includes how the situation added to the poverty statistic and terrible poor performance in the education sectors as both the study period and commitments by the supervisory body has been affected due to the level of insecurity.

### **MAJOR SOLUTION TO THE KIDNAPPING ISSUE IN NORTHERN NIGERIA**

Most of the solutions proper by scholars or researchers are virtually similar. Most of the literature related to this issue failed to realise that, even in the Northern part of this country, there are different societies and socio-economic and political sets up. Most of the communities affected by this problem have different orientations, cultures, languages and approaches to problems of such nature. Even their geography has differed in terms of location and environment. So application of uniform measures sometimes may not work correctly somewhere. There has to be a

security survey and study of the type of security measure that could be applied.

It is agreed that there is a need for absolute commitments and good gadgets, but most areas under this problem need deep expertise. Among the identified measure or solutions by this research work include:

- There should be an effective synergy between the security agencies and the community members. The unimpeded flow of information in an insecure situation is expected to assist security agencies in deciphering the actions of the kidnappers to ameliorate challenges.
- Generally, people must be vigilant in observing their environment. Anything suspicious should be questioned, and new movements are to be tackled. However, unfortunately, negligence sometimes is the mother of "had I known".
- Government must develop highly trained anti-kidnapping agents whose duty is just to be patrolling within and outside the community with sophisticated gadgets to track and identify the locations of the victims and the criminals. Without enough resources, the kidnappers cannot be tackled as they possess dangerous weapons which they buy with the ransom collected from the abductee.
- Community policing must be introduced at this critical moment. The case of the civilian Joint Task Force in Maiduguri during the Boko Haram crisis is a clear example of community policing performance in the wake of the internal insecurity crisis. Community policing is "an organisation-wide philosophy and management approach that promotes community, government and police partnership; proactive problem solving; and community engagement to address the cause of crime, fear of crime and other community issues." On the other hand, it is, in fact, a

mechanism of governance that can be authorised and provided by non-state groups as well as the state. (Yusuf 2014, p.13). Therefore, from the perspective of the current situation in the northern region, community policing will serve as a panacea to the nagging problem of kidnapping if adequately handled and implemented.

- It is observed that most perpetrators are not getting it more challenging when it comes to punishment. As most advanced countries apply, capital punishment has played a significant role in minimising the tempo of crimes. Thus there is a need for the country's law-making body to effect the capital punishment they passed into law for such type of crime which will serve as a profound lesson to the intended criminals in future. Section 365 of the Nigerian constitution, which condemns persons found guilty of kidnapping one another, liable to imprisonment for two years is not enough. Punishment like hanging, shooting (firing squad), beheading, public stoning, electrocution and lethal injection, among others, deserve such crimes nowadays. (Ofo:2010)
- Other solutions include job creation by both the three tiers of Government. Many studies generally reveal that unemployment is the backbone of any criminal activity in the country. Kidnapping has been coined as the easier way to make money today. Moreover, most youth engaged in notorious activities like Boko Haram, cattle rustling, kidnapping, and banditry are products of societal joblessness. The Government, in its effort, must accommodate the teeming unemployed youth, graduates and schools dropped out. The unemployment rate as of the fourth quarter of 2020 was about 33.30%. (Source: National Bureau of Statistics) By 2021, it has reached 35% (Agusto & co)
- Other measures include minimisation of corruption within the security agencies. It is a well-known fact that corruption is one of cancer that hinders development in the country. Unfortunately, several corruption cases have been brought forward, and little was done to curtail such baseless actions. Studies revealed that the trend of corruption is terrible day by day. Odekunle (2001) put it: corruption in Nigeria is characterised as endemic, and its consequences for the economy and society in all conceivable respects debilitating. Thus, corruption is so common in Nigeria that it is expected when ordinary businesses or citizens interact with government officials. Nevertheless, the most dangerous part is when corruption eats deeply into the security cycle, which has happened in Nigeria because the entire life of the citizens is being mortgaged by very few.
- There is a need for a proper and careful project for the National Identification and Registration exercise to enable the Government to monitor the movement of its citizens and expatriates from neighbouring countries. It has been discovered that more than 45% of the crime committed along the Nigerian border are the handwork of foreigners. Such measures shall reduce the tempo of the illegal influx of people and put people on watch where crime could be easily detected.
- Border Control/Patrol is also another issue of grave concern as far as security measures are concerned. It is said Nigerian border, which has been described as porous, has become a melting pot of all sorts of criminal activities such as Human trafficking, arm robbery, drug trafficking, money laundering and, recently, kidnappings (2021). The failure of the Nigerian Government to manage its border has led to an increase in different criminal acts. For example, most of the



kidnappers in the Northwest today are lingering along the Nigeria/Niger Border. Serious action on the side of the Government can lead to the control of such nefarious activities.

The above suggestion is the panacea to the kidnapping problem in northern Nigeria. Serious consideration of the above-outlined alternatives could bring sanity to the affected communities, where people can go back to life without fear. However, the equally absence of such action by the analysis of the security survey can entangle the region into further uncertainty as far as the current security imbroglio is concerned.

## CONCLUSION

Kidnapping has become a serious criminal activity in Nigeria. Historically it was a southern affair developed based on lust for power, money, rituals, and extravagant burial ceremonies. Hence, the extension of this criminal activity into the northern part of the country was attributed to the youth unemployment, poverty, oppression, exploitation and another repercussion of the system failure. This work has outlined the problems and solutions to the situation, such as improved security networks, the synergy between community and security agencies, modern security gadgets, border control and several others. Furthermore, the work has revealed the damages done to the Northern region in terms of both commercial activities and education. Furthermore, the damage done by the activities of kidnappers, especially in different institutions of learning, has been shown in tabular form. Finally, the paper shed light on the general failure of the political system in the country, which, if properly handled, could lead to sanity and arouse a new hope for the end of this menace and socio-economic development in the land.

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