

Kidnapping of School Children in North Western Nigeria: Interrogating the Social Implications.

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the ugly phenomenon of kidnapping of school children in Nigeria against the backdrop of its rising incidence over the recent years. This paper discovered that the rate of kidnapping of school children in northwestern Nigeria was geometrically increased such that more than 1000 innocent Kankara, Kagara, Jangebe, Kaduna and Birnin Gwari school children have been kidnapped between 2018 and 2021. While some of these school children were rescued after paying huge amount of money as ransom by their parents and government, some of them were able to escape after being tortured and dehumanized, others were incarcerated to die of mysterious hunger while some were outright sold or married off by their captors. With the aid of secondary qualitative data, aided by Routine Activity Theory (RAT), the study found out that kidnapping has been an old ugly phenomenon in Nigeria due to the activities of ritualists, militants groups in Niger-Delta region, Boko Haram terrorists in the north-eastern Nigeria, but it increased with forceful abduction of school children with the emergence of “Bandit” groups in the north-western Nigeria.

The paper found out that as a result of poverty, lack of job opportunities, poor effective policing and activities of Banditry, kidnapping of school children has now become the most lucrative business and a serious security threat in Nigeria. The paper therefore suggested that for kidnapping of school children to be eradicated in north western Nigeria, poverty must be significantly reduced. Also, terrorism, insurgency and banditry should be fought aggressively as they involved abductions of innocent school children. The major objective of this study is to analyze the social implications of kidnapping of school children in north western Nigeria.

Keywords: Kidnapping; Kidnapping in Nigeria; Ransom; School Children; Social Implications.

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is no doubt, a country under security distress. The country's woes are most obvious in the torrential spate of armed violence and criminality in various parts of the country (Al Chukwuma and Anthony, 2019). Nothing explains this unfortunate situation than the precarious volatile insecurity raveling the entire country. The north eastern Nigeria is still battling the Boko Haram scourge, despite the precarious counter-insurgency efforts of the federal government (Okoli 2017a: Zenn 2018). The north-central has witnessed ferocity in clashes of farmers and herdsmen militancy which has created a dire humanitarian crisis (Okoli and Ogayi, 2018). The south-western areas have continued to battle with upsurge of clashes between various cults leading to loss of lives and properties. The north western region has recently been enmeshed in the rapid unprecedented kidnapping of innocent school children for ransom by Bandit groups.

Kidnapping is not a new phenomenon. According to Bello & Jamilu (2017) religious parables found in the two books i.e.-Bible and Quran about the abduction of Prophet Joseph by his brothers are indications that kidnapping is as old as human history. Tzanelli (2006) as cited in Bello & Jamilu (2017) posited that modern usage of the term “kidnapping” dates back to 17th – century Britain where infants ('kid') of rich families have been 'napped' (caught in the sleep) for ransom.

According to Hazan & Horner (2007) kidnapping has been ongoing in Nigeria since the early 1990s. The Niger Delta militants have used the instrumentality of kidnapping of expatriate oil workers to raise international attention to the environmental degradation in the Niger Delta region, plights of those living in the region and demand for more local ownership of the extraction of natural resources (Hazan & Horner, 2007). Kidnapping took on a whole new economic attraction in the south-east of Nigeria after the 2007 general elections, as youths that were used as political thugs by politicians diverted their guns, skills and energy into the ugly trade as a new means of economic survival (Onifade, Imhonopia & Urim, 2013). The ugly phenomenon thrived in the south-east zone, especially in Abia and Imo states, where prominent indigenes and residents of the states were easy targets. At the height of kidnapping activities in Abia state, especially in Aba metropolis, an attempt was made to kidnap the Abia State Governor, Chief Theodore Orji, in 2008 (Nwogu, 2008). The menace of kidnapping has now become a generic word both in public and private discuss going by its prevalence in Nigeria (AbdulKabir, 2017). It is now a natural problem that has eaten so deep

into the fabric of the country (Dodo, 2010) but it has taken place more in the movement of terrorism, insurgency and banditry.

Kidnapping is fast becoming a lucrative alternative to armed robbery offence in Nigeria (AbdulKabir, 2017). The kidnapping of over 250 girls in a girls' secondary school in Chibok, a sleepy community in Borno state, north eastern Nigeria by Boko Haram insurgents introduced another dimension to kidnapping in Nigeria. Before the kidnapping of these girls, kidnapping for ransom was mainly targeted at government officers, politicians, influential people, lecturers, Royal families, kismen and even some kings were recorded to have been kidnapped from their palace (AbdulKabir, 2017).

When nearly 300 Chibok secondary school girls were kidnapped from their boarding school by the Boko Haram insurgents in 2014, the world exploded in outrage. Hundreds marched in Abuja, the federal capital of Nigeria, the hash tag #Bring Back Our Girls was launched which was actively supported by celebrities, influential people, foreign government officials and former Head of states all over the world. The hash tag was picked up by then first lady of United States of America, Michelle Obama and the federal government of Nigeria scrambled to respond to the mass abduction in the village of Chibok (Ruth, 2021). It seemed an aberration that over 250 girls can be kidnapped and while the Federal Government of Nigeria was still grasping with the abduction and struggling to locate the whereabouts of the remaining Chibok girls after paying huge amount of money to secure the release of some of the girls, the insurgents struck again by invading another girls secondary school in Dapchi, Yobe state, another north eastern state where another set of school children were kidnapped.

The prevalent of kidnapping of school children by Boko Haram insurgency in the north eastern states of Borno and Yobe, has systematically shifted to the north western areas of Nigeria where kidnapping of school children has assumed the scale of a complex emergency and a worrisome dimension. The kidnap for ransom business is booming across northwestern Nigeria and school children are its hottest commodity

This study is an attempt to explain the phenomenon of kidnapping of school children in the north western Nigeria against the backdrop of the rapid upsurge of the incidence over the recent years. The north western Nigeria comprises of Seven States namely; Kaduna, Kano, Kastina, Kebbi, Jigawa, Sokoto and Zamfara. Three of these which are Kaduna, Kastina and Zamfara have been the most critical hotspot. Suffice it to note that the incidence of kidnapping of school children is not only limited to the north western Nigeria as a case was reported in Niger state, a north-central state in Nigeria.

In this paper, an attempt is made to interrogate the social implications of kidnapping of school children in north western, Nigeria. Among, other things, the paper intends to stimulate intellectual discourse on social implications of subjecting innocent school children to psychological and traumatic experience of kidnapping.

CONCEPTUALISING KIDNAPPING

Kidnapping has been defined by various scholars with varying degree of successes. Firstly, Uzorma and Nwanegbo-Ben (2014, P.132) defined kidnapping as the “act of seizing and detaining or carrying away a person by unlawful force or by fraud, and often with a demand for ransom. It involves the act of forcefully taken a person from their family without such person consent with the motive of holding him/her as a hostage and getting a profit (ransom) from their family. In the view of criminal law as cited in Abdulkabir (2017), kidnapping refers to the transportation of a person against his or her will, usually to confine the person in false imprisonment without legal authority. This act may be perpetrated principally to extract ransom or in connection with child custody as a fall out of marital dispute (Okoye, Joe-Akunne and Chire, 2016). According to Fage and Alabi (2017, P. 289) cited in Bello and Jamilu (2017) “kidnapping is forceful or fraudulent abduction of an individual or a group of individuals for reason ranging from economic, political, and religious to (struggle for) self-determination”. The authors later explained that while that of forcefully or fraudulently abducted individuals are carried off as hostage for ransom purposes, political factors can also instigate kidnapping. However, economic is the most common motivating factor for kidnapping. Another definition is offered in Inyang and Abraham (2013) who conceived kidnapping as legally regarded as a restriction of someone else’s liberty which violates the provision of freedom of movement as enshrined in the constitution of federal Republic of Nigeria, where every other law takes its example from.

Furthermore, kidnapping is usually motivated by economic gain or for political reason. Hence, criminal as well as political/freedom fighters can resort to kidnapping in order to illegally obtain financial gain or draw attention to their demands. Kidnapping, whether it originate in social science or business background, the focus is on criminal motivation. Abdulkabir (2017) posited that kidnapping, as abduction or holding people hostage either to take ransom from the victim’s family or as a sacrifice for ritual money or as an extenuative appeasement to win political freedom or appointment. Two claims are important here: (a) that in every kidnapping a form of financial is involved, and (b) that it involves the payment of ransom.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: ROUTINE ACTIVITY THEORY (RAT)

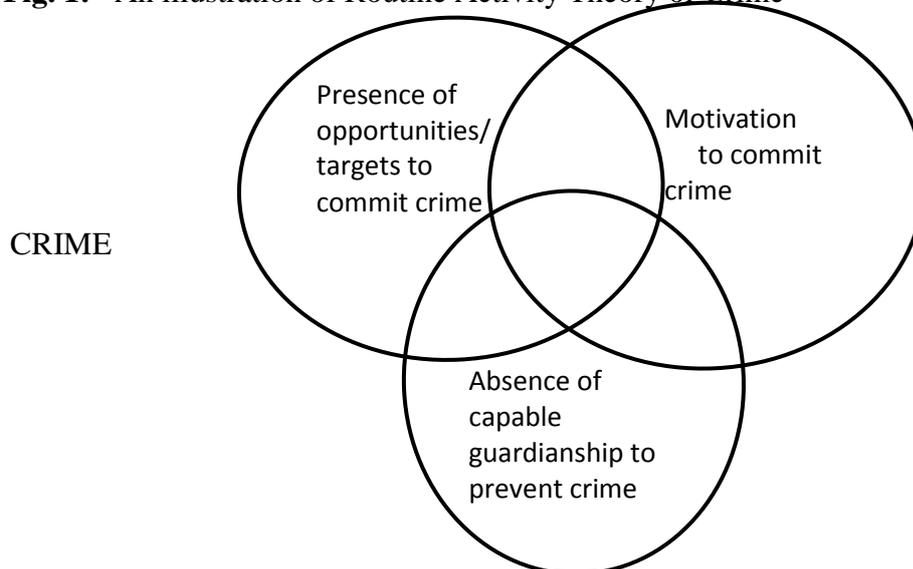
The Routine Activities Theory (RAT) was propounded by Cohen & Felson (1979) in an attempt “to understand the patterns and upward trends of predatory criminal events in the historical context of changing economy” (Hsieh & Wang 2018, 335). The theory posits that crime is likely to occur when there is a convergence of three essential elements of crime; a motivated offender; an attractive target; and the absence of capable guardianship.

According to the theory, motivated offenders are individuals who are capable and willing to commit a crime while suitable targets can be a person or object that are considered by offenders as vulnerable or attractive. On the other hand, guardianship can be a person or an object that can effectively deter offence/crime to occur. Mere physical presence of guardianship in space and time can defer crime committal (Al Chukwuma and Anthony-Chinedu, 2019).

The Routine Activity Theory is based on some basic major assumptions (Cohen & Felson 1979; Felson and Cohen 1980).

- Crime is likely to occur where there is a convergence of three essential elements of crime; a motivated offender; an attractive target and absence of capable guardianship;
- The factors that render a particular target attractive are situated and crime-specific;
- Crime can be perpetrated by anyone who has the opportunity in terms of capacity and availability of vulnerable target; Victims have choices on whether to be victims mainly by possibly avoiding situations where a crime can be committed against them.

Fig. 1: An illustration of Routine Activity Theory of Crime



Source: Adapted from Samonas (2013) used in Al Chukwuma and Anthony-Chinedu (2019): Note: the three interrelated variables shown in Fig. 1 need physical convergence in space and time.

Applied to the purpose of the study, it is to be observed that kidnapping of school children is a crime that has been sparked off and sustained by the prevailing socio-existential environment in the north western characterized by a high propensity to criminal indulgence. In the case of the study area, north western Nigeria, the presence and prevalence of under-policed, unregulated hinterland and activities of banditry have provided a huge opportunity for criminality and kidnapping. Also, the presence of viable but vulnerable location of most schools in an isolated place and without being fenced equally provides an opportunity for school children to be kidnapped and made them a suitable target. The virtual absence of governmental security apparatus in most rural communities and the over-stretch of military personnel as a result of the military operation against Boko Haram insurgents in north western Nigeria give incentive for criminal opportunism as well as impunity. In all, the aforementioned ecology of crime brings about, not only motivation but also temptation, for criminal indulgence (Al Chukwuma and Anthony-Chinedu, 2019). Under this situation, deterrence takes flight all types of predatory crime prevail. This is situation in north western Nigeria, where kidnapping of school children is having a sustained field day in a criminal adventure that is threatening to disrupt academic activities in the region and create socio-economic problems.

KIDNAPPING IN NIGERIA

Kidnapping, an illicit incident through which human-being is forcefully abducted to an unknown area against his/her will by another person because of the reason best known to them (AbdulKabir, 2017) is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria. Nigeria has recorded more than 1,000 cases of kidnapping incidents a year, and there are undoubtedly many cases of kidnapping that are unreported (Catlin Group, 2012). As a result of this, Nigeria was ranked as one of the worst place to live because of frequent kidnapping incident in the global index. Contrary to the Opinion of Mohammed (2008) who claimed that the concept of kidnapping originated around 1682, Turner (1998) however argues that the menace of kidnapping actually originated in England in the 17th century where children were kidnapped and sold as slaves or as an agricultural workers to colonial farmers. The current wave and incidences of kidnapping began with the abduction of expatriate oil workers by a militant group in the

Niger Delta region of Nigeria called “The Movement For The Emancipation of the Niger-Delta (MEND)” in late 2005 as a means of alerting the entire world of the many environmental degradation caused by the Anglo-Dutch multinational oil company Shell, exploitation, marginalization and underdevelopment of the region by successive administrations.

Nwagboso (2012) observed, that the inability of failure of the government particularly during the military era, to address the root causes of the agitation (environmental problems, poverty, unemployment, lack of basic amenities, etc) in the Niger-Delta, resulted in the spawning of ethnic militias of Niger-Delta origin leading to the militarization of nearly the entire region. Thus, the foundation was therefore laid for the wave of insecurity that beleaguered the entire region and spread throughout the country (Onifade, Imhonopia and Urim, 2013).

The kidnapping of expatriate oil workers in the Niger-delta region by militants spread to the south-east region after the 2007 general election South-East youths used as political thugs by Politicians during the 2007 general election diverted their guns, skills and energy into the ugly trend as a new means of economic survival after the election (Onifade et. al 2013). Abia and Imo states were turned into hotspot for kidnapping for ransom where prominent indigenes and residents of the states were targeted. At the height of the kidnapping spree in south-east, the Abia state Governor, Chief Theodore Orji, narrowly escaped being kidnapped in 2008 (Nwogu, 2008).

In January 2012, a US citizen was abducted from his vehicle while his security guard was killed in Delta state. Also, in April 2012, criminals kidnapped a US citizen in Imo state and Spanish in Enugu state in a separate incident (Bello and Jamilu, 2017). Kidnapped struck again in may 2012, when an Italian citizen was kidnapped in Kwara state. On the 7th May, a Lebanese was kidnapped in Kaduna and his Lebanese colleague was killed during the abduction. It was reported in March 2012 that two engineers – one British and another Italian were killed by their abductors when Nigerian security forces, with support from Britain, attempted to rescue them. According to Catlin Group (2012) the Britain and Italian were been held by element of the dreaded Boko Haram group for ten months.

Kidnapping of foreign nationals as well as prominent citizens in Nigeria have been attributed to the Boko Haram insurgents in recent times with another spliter group led by Khalid al-Barnawi, a member of Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb and trained in Algeria (Bello and Jamilu, 2017). The group is called Ansaru. The group kidnapped seven-member

French family, which a ransom of USD 3 million was believed to have been paid and a French Priest, Georges Vandebeusch (Barna, 2014). The massacre of 29 sleeping school boys in their dormitories and attacked on the University of Maiduguri in February, 2014 was attributed to the Boko Haram militants (Barna, 2014).

On the 14th April, 2014, the Boko Haram militants invaded a Government Girl's Secondary school Chibok a sleepy town in Borno state where over 250 female students were kidnapped (Shuaibu, Salleh & Shehu, 2015). The kidnapping of these innocent girls by Boko Haram drew public outrage and global condemnation. The world attention was drawn to the prevalence of kidnapping in Nigeria. Another 110 school girls aged 11-19 years old were kidnapped by the Boko Haram terrorist group from the Government Girls' Science and Technical College in Dapchi located in Bulabulin, Yunisari Local Government Area of Yobe State on February 19, 2018. Ansaru militant group has also targeted western nationals (kidnapping) including Christians. Reverend Andimi of the church of the Brethren in Nigeria (EYN) was kidnapped and later executed in January 21, 2020. Also Pastor Bulus Yakura was kidnapped on Christmas Eve of December 24, 2020 at Pemi Village in Chibok Local government and was finally released in March, 2021 after payment of ransom.

Another terrorist group called Islamic State in West African (ISWA) another splinter from the Boko Haram group known for kidnapping its victim for ransom, kidnapped and executed five aid workers in the north eastern Nigeria state of Borno on July 30, 2020. According to Catlin Group's (2012) report, military-led rescue attempts of kidnapped victims can end in the death of the hostages.

CAUSES OF KIDNAPPING IN NORTHWESTERN NIGERIA

In existence are copious literature material elaborating causes of kidnapping in Nigeria from different informed prisms (See Bello and Jamilu, 2017; Abdukabir, 2017; Onifade et al, 2013; Nwagbodo, 2012). This study will not duplicate such efforts but will point out selected causes of kidnapping in Nigeria. Some of these causes have been briefly listed as follows:

Poverty

Poverty has been identified as one of the causative spectrum that influenced many people to turn out to be a notorious criminal in Nigeria. In Northwestern Nigeria, economic deprivation and poverty have planted the seeds of kidnapping as a way of getting money in poor communities. The near absence of government in most poor communities in the northwestern Nigeria and total absence of manufacturing companies have twisted many

youths to have become notorious kidnapper. Nigeria is currently facing serious job challenge and widespread decent work deficits, a development that is capable of increasing the spread of poverty (Adesina, 2013).

Lack of Job Opportunities

In Northwestern Nigeria and many geo-political regions in Nigeria lack, of legal/available employment opportunity among the Youths are also playing important role in the increase in rate of kidnapping. In northwestern Nigeria due to its population and large number of adolescents out of job, this has been attributed to economic factors and expose to all forms of risks.

Poor Effective Policing

Discourse on the causes of kidnapping in Northwestern Nigeria will not be completed without mentioning the symptomatic and poor effective policing in the region. There is a series of ungoverned, under governed and ungovernable spheres within the region have encouraged kidnapping and other criminal activities. The northwestern hinterlands and schools are marked by extremely dispersed rural settlements, separated by range lands and farmlands that are susceptible to violent contestations (cf. Gaye, 2018a). The landscape of northwestern Nigeria apart from being separated from each other, they are equally far separated from the centers of governance at the local and state levels and this has made effective policing a huge problem in the region. The region is grossly under-policed to the point that makes it conducive to all forms of jungle criminality, most especially kidnapping.

Rural Banditry

The cases of banditry in northwestern Nigeria has not only sedentary but also territorial. The various bandit groups operating in the region has founded underworld fiefdoms in the jungles where criminal impurity prevails amidst the ruthless authority of the kingpin-bandit (Al Chukuma & Anthony –Chenedu, 2019). Bandit group kingpin such as Buharin Daji has reported to involve in many mass abduction of innocent Nigerians. This has been incessant in states like Kaduna, Kastina and Zamfara. Rural Banditry as contributed to kidnapping for ransom in northwestern Nigeria and between December, 2018, and March 2019, Zamfara state alone has recorded many incidents of kidnapping involving 227 victims (Gusua, 2019).

KIDNAPPING OF SCHOOL CHILDREN IN NORTH WESTERN NIGERIA

When nearly 300 school girls from the Government secondary school Chibok, Borno State were kidnapped from their boarding school by the Boko Haram militants on April,

2014, the world exploded in outrage. The condemnation birthed hash tag #BringBackOurGirls campaign which was picked up by the then American first Lady Michelle Obama. It seemed like an aberration that such large numbers of school children can be kidnapped by the insurgents. But since then, mass kidnapping of school children both boys and girls at boarding schools in North West Nigeria have been happening more and more frequently.

The menace of kidnapping of school children has been incessant in state like Kaduna, Kastina and Zamfara. In December 11, 2020 Bandit group loyal to a notorious kidnapper called Buharin Daji abducted 344 school boys from the town of Kankara in northwestern Kastina state. The school children were free after six days. In another reported case of mass abduction of school children, bandit group stormed and abducted 317 school girls from Jangebe Government Girls Secondary School, Jangebe, Zamfara state. The incidence of kidnapping of school children for ransom in north western Nigeria has been disturbing. Kidnapping of school children for ransom is fast becoming lucrative for criminals and for officials involved in the rescue process as well (Ruth, 2021). Another 39 students of the Federal College of Forestry Mechanization, Kaduna State were abducted from their dormitories while the bandit group demanding ₦500 million as ransom. On March 15, 2021 unspecified numbers of primary school pupils and their teachers were abducted by armed bandit group in Birnin Gwari LGA, Kaduna State.

According to Emmanuel (2021) the rise in attacks is fuelled in part by sizeable governments pay offs on exchange for school children. The pay off by government to this group of bandits has made kidnapping for ransom targeting schools become endemic, heightening fear for the welfare of students, making already low levels of school enrolment in the region to suffer further.

Table 2: Incidences of kidnapping of school children in North Western Nigeria

S/N	Incident	Date of occurrence
1.	Armed Bandits invaded a Government Secondary School and abducted 344 school boys from the town of Kankara in Northwest Kastina State.	December 11, 2020
2.	279 School girls abducted from Jangebe Government Girls Secondary School, Jangele, Talata – Mafara LGA, Zamfara State.	February 26, 2021
3.	Gunmen barged into the Federal College of Forestry Mechanisation, Afaka, Igabi LGA, Kaduna State and seized 29 students	March 12, 2021

	from their dormitories	
4.	Unspecific numbers of primary school pupils and their teachers abducted by Bandits in Birnin Gwari, Kaduna State.	March 15, 2021
5	Gunmen abducted 80 school children at the Federal Government College in Birnin Yauri in Kebbi state according to Police Spokeman Nafiu Abubakar	June 17, 2021
6	Bandits abducted 121 boarding students of Bethel Baptist High school in Damishi, Chikun LGA, Kaduna state.	July 5, 2021
7	9 Students kidnapped by bandits in Sakkai , Faskari LGA ,Kastina State.	August 18, 2021
8	Gunmen suspected to be bandits abducted, over 73 students of Kaya Junior secondary school, Maradun LGA, Zamfara State.	September 1, 2021

Source: Author’s compilation

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF KIDNAPPING OF SCHOOL CHILDREN IN NORTH WESTERN NIGERIA

Regardless of the type and motive for its perpetration, kidnapping has serious social implications on victims, especially when such victims are school children. The psychological effect on the school children is quite devastating as they are traumatized and feeling constantly depressed owing to the ugly ordeal they experience in the hand of their abductors. According to Buba (2015) the children who are kidnapped are subjected to emotional trauma such as rape, child marriage, slavery and torture. In such instance, these school children may become dependent on drug and alcohol, feeling suicidal and being unable to function properly.

Another social implication of kidnapping of school children in Northwestern Nigeria is the increase in members of children dropping out of schools. Okobiah (2002) cited in Onyido (2019) posited that education in the North part of Nigeria which has been historically lower than the Southern part of Nigeria Owing to reasons such as religion, cultural practices and the perception that western influenced education is contrary to the Islamic belief has been worsened by increasing causes of kidnapping. For some school children, the educational prospect in the region where one-third of primary-age children already do not go to school is at stake (Ruth, 2021).

The spate of attacks on schools signals a double assault on education in the region because no parent would want to endanger his or her child’s life simply because of education

on the face of constant attacks on schools and kidnapping of school children. These frequent kidnapping of school children has seen the attendance in school drop as a result of fear of such event (Ovuorie, 2015)

Disruption of academic activities and prolonged calendar has social implications in the region. According to Nduka (2021) authorities in Kano and Yobe states ordered more than 20 schools shut because of insecurity while some schools were recently closed in Zamfara state. For region with a high-rate of out of school children, the massive gain that has been recorded in recent years from the school feeding programme of the Federal Government of Nigeria to lure school children in Northwestern Nigeria back to school is being seriously threatening by constant disruption in school calendar and activities as a result of incessant kidnapping of school children. The attacks on school can discourage attendance in formal education and help increasing the scourge of Almajiri syndrome which the Northern, Nigeria has been battling with over decades.

Apart from the psychological trauma on the victim and the disruption of academic activities in the region, kidnapping of school children is also accompanied with huge financial implications in form of ransom paid for the release of the victims. The huge amount allegedly paid as ransom by Government both State and Federal could have been used in provision of social amenities for poor communities in Northwestern region. The Katsina state government paid #30 million (about \$76,000) to recover the school boys kidnapped from Government secondary school Kankara, by Bandit Group in 2021 (Campbell, 2021). According to a report by SB Morgen (SBM) intelligence, a Lagos-based political risk analyst firm, at least \$18.34million was paid to kidnapers as ransom-mostly by families and the government between June 2011 and March 2020. Such huge amount of money could have provided social amenities such as hospitals, pipe-borne water, road and construction of schools in poor rural communities in Northwestern Nigeria and help provide succor for rural people who had been facing serious social problems occasioned by poor governmental policies, lack of job opportunities and insecurity. Acaps (2020) reported that more than 309,000 people have been displaced by kidnapping crisis in north-west as of 30 June, 2020. Rapid displacement of people by kidnapping crisis in the region also disrupts peoples' livelihood activities. The incessant kidnapping of school children has forced parents to leave their place of abode to another location thereby disrupting their economic activities. This may force displaced people to resort to any means to survive increasing social problems associated with displacement.

MITIGATING THE SCOURGE OF KIDNAPPING OF SCHOOL CHILDREN IN NORTHWESTERN NIGERIA.

The menace of kidnapping of school children in north western Nigeria is phenomenal threat that has affected the education sector of the region and eroded the recent gains made by the government-both federal and state in addressing the educational needs and challenges of the region. Poverty has been identified as one of the critical drivers of kidnapping and abduction in Northwestern, Nigeria. Economic frustration occasioned by lack of job opportunities and incentives for youth in the region has led many of them to join organized criminals such as bandits and insurgents and carry out nefarious activities. Hence, Nigerian government as a matter of urgency must come up with proactive poverty alleviation programmes and employment opportunities, targeting youths who are mostly involved in abductions and kidnapping out of economic frustration

A conscientious effort be made by law enforcement agents at policing and intensifies surveillance of forested landscapes of the northwestern region, regulation of trans-border activities, controlling of the spate of small arms proliferation and special training for security agents in hostage rescue operation. With better surveillance, the incessant kidnapping of school children in the northwestern region will be seriously minimized, if not eradicated

While it is advisable for government to enforce Anti-terrorism and Anti-kidnapping laws in the country, the most imperative for the government in the northwestern region is to ensure that schools in the region are well-fenced, adequately secured and security agents are detailed for day and night patrol of isolated schools.

Government should also intensify the military campaign against bandits, terrorists and insurgents in the region. There should be coordinated efforts among the armed force to aggressively fight bandits in the region because the various bandits and insurgents groups in the northwestern Nigeria are all resorting to kidnapping of innocent school children to raise ransom for their nefarious operations.

CONCLUSION

The spate of kidnapping is on the increase in Nigeria and it is prevalent across all the geopolitical regions. In the Niger Delta region or the South-east, militants and political thugs are using kidnapping as an insurgent tactic to abduct expatriate workers and politicians to draw global attention to their cause and for ransom in order to finance their nefarious activities. Just like Boko Haram insurgents, who kidnapped innocent school children in Chibok and Dapchi respectively, armed bandit groups have resorted to kidnapping of school

children in northwestern Nigeria. The consequence has been disruption of school activities increase drop-out of children due to fear and psychological trauma for victims of abduction.

The study sought to explain the social implications of kidnapping of school children in northwestern Nigeria against the rising incidence of the menace in recent years. The study observed that kidnapping of school children in the northwestern Nigeria has festered under the socio-existential condition occasioned by poverty, terrorism and banditry.

The existence of many isolated and unfenced schools and inefficiency policing, has created an enabling atmosphere for criminal opportunism in the region. Consequently, there has been high incidence of kidnapping of innocent school children in the northwestern Nigeria with attendant social implications. The spate of kidnapping of school children can be mitigated in the region by aggressively tackling the scourge of poverty, proper surveillance, adequate security protection of schools and fighting banditry to a standstill in the region.

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