

# **IMPACT OF KIDNAPPING OF STUDENTS AND STAFF ON ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES IN NIGERIA'S INSTITUTIONS OF LEARNING**

**By**

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines the impact of kidnapping of students and staff on academic activities in Nigeria's institutions of learning. With the recent upsurge in the abduction of school students in the country such as Dapchi of Yobe State, Kankara of Katsina State, Mando of Kaduna state and host of many other places, it is glaring that the nation's educational system is under siege. This further underscores the security dilemma the country is exposed to. The importance of education to national socio-economic development and political stability in a democratic society is very critical. From the available data from secondary sources and observation of events in line with kidnapping of students in different parts of the country, it is clear that kidnapping is a great injustice to humanity and all institutions. The study discovered that institutions of learning in the country have been affected in areas such as unwarranted closure of schools, diversion of resources meant for educational development to promote security of lives and properties, distortion of academic activities, relocation of students and staff to other schools and states, withdrawal of students by their parents from public to private schools and the psychological trauma on students, staff, and their families. Based on the Anomie theory adopted for the study, dysfunctional economic and political systems are the major causes of kidnapping. To restore stability and public trust on the nation's institutions of learning, security of citizens must be taken with all sense of political will and tactical commitment. Penalty, government empowerment programmes aim at discouraging kidnapping and creation of special education marshal to be saddled with protection of all institutions of learning in the country were also recommended.

Keywords: Kidnapping, Institution of Learning, Academic Activities, Students and Staff

## **Introduction**

Kidnapping is adjudged to be unlawful detention of persons through the instrument of force, threat, fraud or enticement for different political and socio-economic reasons. It has become one of the major security threats to Nigeria as a sovereign entity. The Country has been home to different manifestation of security challenges such as insurgency, banditry, militancy, ethno-religion violent crises and politically motivated clashes. Since the episode of the civil war between 1967 and 1970, the corporate existence of the country has not been threatened as obtainable in this fourth republic dispensation.

While the country was still battling to curb with the menace of insurgency orchestrated by Boko Haram in the North and militancy in the south, a new trend of security challenge sprang up in the nature and formation of banditry and kidnapping. This metamorphosed from cattle rustling, kidnapping of farmers, business men for ransom to academic world where lecturers and students became soft target. Reports show that the Friday's kidnapping of nearly 300 students from the Government Girls Science Secondary School in Jangebe, Zamfara state,

which ended with their release, was the second mass kidnap from schools in less than 10 days. Twenty-seven boys and their teachers who were taken from a school in Kagara, Niger state on 17 February were released on Saturday. The authorities say recent attacks on schools in the north-west have been carried out by "bandits", a loose term for kidnappers, armed robbers, cattle rustlers and other armed militia operating in the regions who are largely motivated by money (Akinwotu, 2021). There is a general perception amongst citizens that a weak security infrastructure and governors who have little control over security in their states - the police and army are controlled by the federal government - and have resorted to paying ransoms, have made mass abductions a lucrative source of income.

Kidnapping became alarming in the Niger Delta region when militants in February, 2006, abducted some oil workers ostensibly to draw global attention to the deplorable situation in the oil-rich Niger Delta region of the country. Since then, kidnapping has spread to most parts of the country, especially the south-eastern and south-southern regions of Nigeria. The targets are no longer oil workers or foreigners alone; every Nigerian is now a target. In fact, the safety of persons in Nigeria and their property cannot be guaranteed owing to the near daily incidence of kidnapping.

In recent times, Nigerian scholars have concentrated on the social problem of kidnapping. Ilechukwu, Uchem and Asogwa, (2015), focused on reducing its occurrence using religious education; Oyewole (2016) examined the connectivity between rituals and kidnapping; Bello and Jamilu, (2017) investigated the consequences of kidnapping and its predisposing factors (terrorism, corruption and poverty); and Emanemua and Akinlosotu (2016), who illustrated how kidnapping has suddenly emerged as a variant profession for armed robbery in Nigeria with high level of proficiency in seizing persons for ransom (Chinemerem 2016). Once seen as a foreign problem, today the practice of kidnapping and ransom seeking has spread across the country affecting everyone irrespective of the societal class, threatening national peace and security of the country (Dodo, 2010; Ibrahim & Mukhtar, 2017). It is against the foregoing security dilemma caused by kidnapping in the country that this study examines how kidnapping of students and staff affected academic activities in Nigeria's institutions of learning.

### **Kidnapping Conceptualised**

Kidnapping has been defined by scholars to a varying degree. Ene, (2018), states that kidnapping is an act of capturing, taking away and keeping people in custody either through force or deceit. Secondly, Fage and Alabi (2017) assert that kidnapping is forceful or fraudulent abduction of individual(s) for reasons ranging from economic, political, and religious to struggle for self-determination". However, the authors later admitted that the forcefully or fraudulently abducted individuals are carried off as hostages for ransom purposes. This implies that while political and economic factors can instigate kidnapping, the economic reason is the most common predisposing factor of the phenomenon.

Uzorma and Nwanegbo-Ben (2014) defined kidnapping as the act of seizing and detaining or carrying away person(s) by unlawful force or by fraud, and often with a demand for ransom. It involves taking a person from their residence or location of interest forcefully without their consent with the motive of holding the person as a hostage and earning a profit from their families and places of official duties. From the foregoing, the definition of kidnapping has no one best way to describe it, but it is clear that for an act to be deemed kidnapping, it shall involve coercive movement of a victim from one place to another, detention or seizure of that person be it a child or an adult. That was why Inyang and Abraham (2013) added that it is legally regarded as a restriction of someone else's liberty which violates the provision of freedom of movement as enshrined in the constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, where every other law takes its cue from.

### **Theoretical Framework**

The paper uses Anomie theory. The theory originates from Greek word *anomia* which means the absence of law. In sociology, anomie is a societal condition defined by violating or breakdown of any societal moral values, standards or guidance generally provided for individuals to follow. Anomie may evolve from conflict of belief systems and causes breakdown of social bonds between individuals and the communities. Alienation in a person can progress into a dysfunctional inability to integrate within normative situations of their social world like to find a job, find success in relationships, etc (John, Macionis & Linda, 20210 and Long & Robertson, 2019). As posited by Orru (1987) Anomie means ruthlessness in Euripides, anarchy in Plato, sin, wickedness and, unrighteousness in religious palace, and a human condition of insatiability in Durkheim.

When applying the theory to explain the impact of kidnapping of Students and Staff on Academic Activities in Nigeria's Institutions of Learning, the anomie theory would clearly indict the economy for not functioning optimally as to produce the desired outcome. The theory also sees the incapacity of the economic system as secondary fallout of a primary malfunction that is associated with the failure of the political system to produce the requisite output necessary to enable the economy function properly. However, the end result of such dysfunctional situations is usually felt by the masses through widespread poverty, unemployment, starvation, low standard of living, illiteracy, deprivation as well as marginalization with attendant consequences of which kidnapping for ransom or economic gain is one.

In 1938, Robert K Merton linked *anomie* with *deviance*, arguing that the discontinuity between culture and structure have the dysfunctional consequence of resulting to deviance within society. He described different types of deviance in terms of the acceptance or rejection of social goals and the institutionalized means of achieving them.

To Merton (1954), anomie refers to 'a lack of consensus on norms judged to be legitimate'. He argues that anomy is a unique characteristic of an open democratic society. In a closed society anomie is more rampant, because people know their place in the stratification system. A social democratic political system is thus the precondition for the growth of anomie. He also states that in every society and societal system there are two essential elements: cultural goals and institutional norms which all create a platform where anomie becomes socially induced.

Latter research by Cao, Zhao, Ren, and Zhao (2010) demonstrated that people in societies with more social support should be less anomic because their fundamental needs are satisfied and they are not any under extreme pressure to achieve monetary success. Be that as it may, the theory of anomie is adopted for this research work, this is because, and most of the kidnapers are all in line with Merton's thought. For all the kidnapped students' from Kankara in Katsina to Niger, to Afakka in Kaduna and Greenfield University in Kaduna, ransoms' were demanded. And that is to show that the people involved are handicapped in socio-economic support and thereby resolved to kidnappings in order to measure up with the society.

### **Education**

The importance of education in societal development cannot be overemphasized. No country can meet its true potential if the educational sector is not developed. It is an essential tool in ensuring the acquisition of power, prestige, greatness as well as survival of the human race. It is the foundation for nation building (Oyitso & Olumukoro, 2012). Education can therefore be defined as the process of developing an individual's mental, social, emotional, spiritual and political intelligence through the provision of requisite information and circumstances that enables this (Kobani & Nkpolu, 2014). To Ocho and Nwangwu (2005) education is the procedure individuals undergo that makes them relevant to the society. Another school of

thought proposes that education is the process that sees an individual acquire relevant skills and competencies that enable them actualize their true potentials and reach self-actualization (Onyido & Osigwe, 2017). Bulut and Bars (2013), postulates that education aids in the preservation, transmission and enhancement of cultures across societies. It can therefore be seen that education is an essential aspect of human and capital development (Apple, 2011).

### **Academic Activities**

This has to do with any assigned work or project use to determine academic credit, including (but not limited to) teaching and learning, continuous assessment, examination, writing project, take home test, or other projects; or any competition, activity, or sponsored project sanctioned by any institution of learning in which the student participates for the purpose of gaining academic advantage. The academic activities in Nigerian institution of learning are deep into crises on multiple fronts, including in areas of access and quality of education. However, the recent spate of mass kidnappings of schoolchildren arguably represents the gravest existential threat and crisis to the education system. In less than three months between December 2020 and March 2021, more than 600 children have been kidnapped while in school, in three separate incidents (Adeniran & Castradori, 2021).

More worrisome is the fact that the heightened insecurity is predominant in northern Nigeria, which is already educationally disadvantaged. Of the estimated 10.5 million out-of-school children in the country, 69 percent come from the North, where children's active participation in schools are affected by cultural practices and economic deprivation. This mostly centered particularly on the female gender. The insurgence activities of Boko Haram with its debilitating effects on economic and education systems, is also heavily carried out in the region. The spate of recent school kidnappings have high propensity of diminishing community and parental trust in the education system. The level of literacy could shrink significantly, and the problem of access to quality and equitable education could become severely amplified. Furthermore, with the Nigerian education system still recovering from the devastating effects of the prolonged school closure from COVID-19, adding insecurity concerns to the basket of challenges could lead to its irrecoverable collapse (Adeniran & Castradori, 2021).

According to Sanni (2015) the north-east region has been greatly affected by suicide bombing, kidnapping and attacks by militant groups particularly the boko haram group and this is responsible for the north-east part of Nigeria recording the highest levels of girl-child illiteracy in the country. Murray-Bruce (2013) opines that the falling levels of education can be linked to the insecurity in the country. But to Buba (2015) the children who are kidnapped are subjected to emotional trauma such as rape, child marriage, slavery and torture. The children are also used as human shield and suicide bombers (Sanni, 2015).

It can therefore be deduced that the resultant effect of kidnapping, abduction, banditry and other related crimes on education of the students' include among other things low turn-out of students from institution of learning, teachers unwillingness to accept teaching jobs in villages they feel their lives will be jeopardised and parents unwillingness to send their wards to places of learning because of the fear of unknown.

### **Causes of Students' and Staff Kidnappings**

The upsurge of kidnappings in Nigeria of recent time may force schools that are privately owned to approach insurance companies and security agencies for protection of students and their teachers. It is on record that whenever the kidnappers kidnap or abduct either students' or teachers or both that measures are taken to rescue the victims. Similarly, the move by Security

agencies to ride the society of crime is on-going because, it is obvious that kidnap cases are rampant in institutions of learning and the target of the kidnappers is to collect ransom from the parents and government.

Inyang (2009) linked the problem of unemployment as one of such reasons why kidnapping in Nigeria is often associated with youth unemployment. He used the widely acknowledged adage, which says that “an idle mind is the devil’s workshop” to present the situation of unemployment in Nigeria. He noted that there are uncountable able-bodied men and women in Nigeria roaming the streets in search of non-existing jobs.

Obijiofor (2009) documented that when people analyse the causes of growing cases of kidnapping in Nigeria, “they point to factors such as greed, poverty, high level of unemployment, social injustice, political apathy, to the basic needs of the poor as well as failed economic policies.” It is noteworthy that kidnapping has grown from the Niger-Delta region to the South-Eastern part of the country, where it graduated into the most powerful criminal industry in the state. From the Eastern Nigeria, it spread its tentacle to the South-West, North Central and North East. Today, no region is free from the menace of kidnapping as everybody is directly or indirectly affected by the wave of the crime and its sundry effects.

Ikeje (2010) posit that kidnapping as a monster born and nurtured in Nigeria has so grown in stature and might that it is doubtful if it can be eliminated by any political and social approach. It has found a fertile ground to multiply, dominate and expand to different locations especially within the ungoverned spaces in the country. This is a national threat that we have wake up to live with. The impact of kidnapping in Nigeria has been felt in the economic, diplomatic, security, tourism, democratic, socio-cultural and worst still the national image of the country. Additionally, religious and other political extremists use kidnapping as political weapons and as a means of financing their activities (Catlin Group, 2012).

### **The Implication of Kidnapping on Institutions of Learning**

Since the beginnings of 2012, at least 70 teachers and over 100 students have been killed or wounded in northern Nigeria. Educational facilities have been burned, thousands of children forced out of schools and teachers made to flee for safety.

Nigerian government forces and pro-government militia have also used schools for military purposes. As of May 2017, a UN agency reported that Nigerian government forces were using 17 schools for military purposes. While the government stated that the presence of security forces near schools was for the protection of the schools and students, the presence of armed forces in or near a school can make it a target of retaliatory attacks, increasing the risks to children and teachers, as well as the likelihood that education will be disrupted. The presence of such forces also increases the risk of sexual violence against female students and teachers.

The attacks on schools often have adverse effects not only on students, educators, parents and educational institutions, but also on the government and the society at large. The attackers or abductors of school children often do so not only for the purpose of collecting ransom, but also to intimidate and deny young people the access to western education or civilization. School abductions are dangerous, condemnable and barbaric not only because it truncates student's right to education, but could also lead to untimely death of innocent school children who committed no sin other than just trying to be educated.

Soyombo, (2009) opined that, Lagos state alone spent three billion naira on security within two years. But the same state spent three billion on security apparatus in 2021 alone (Olabiyi, 2021). With this amount spent in a state, one could imagine the cumulative effect in all the states in the federation since the commencement of the menace of kidnapping in Nigeria. At individual level, a lot of money that would have been invested on profitable ventures has been diverted to ransom by the victims of kidnapping in order to regain their freedom. To Kyrian (2009), fifteen billion naira was paid to kidnappers as ransom between 2006 and 2009.

Kumolu, (2021) reported that there were over 720 kidnap cases across the Nigeria and about 10 billion Naira was paid as ransom. With high level of poverty prevailing in Nigeria, the money may not be available but because, the victims valued their freedom, the probability of them selling their valuables to raise ransom or borrow from different sources to set themselves free may not be ruled out. Previous studies have shown that enterprises are properly organised and managed by the private sector in a development oriented manner (Gberevbie, Ibitan, Abasilim & Excellence-Oluye, 2015), but that can only be achieved in a peaceful atmosphere. The followings are other implications of kidnapping on academic activities in Nigeria:

**Traumatic Situation of the Kidnapped victims:** in most cases, kidnapped victims are subjected to physical torture, sexual harassment, and hunger which usually result to emotional and psychological disorder. These if not given psychological and clinical attention may leads to post kidnap challenges such as isolation, mental stress, impaired memory, decrease concentration, been overcautious and aware, fear of possible occurrence, sense helplessness, depression and anger (American Psychological Association, 2013). Students under these social and psychological conditions can have difficulty in continuing with their studies and participate in social academic activities. This is why in most of the kidnapped cases, students are returned home for stabilization and possible post kidnapped trauma counseling.

**Incessant closure of schools:** As a result of insecurity and kidnapping, dozens of schools from Yobe, Kano, Kaduna, Zamfara, Katsina, and Niger States were reported to be closed down by government and school authorities. Obiezu (2021) reported 13 schools were closed by the Kaduna State government as a result the kidnapped of 140 students of Bethel Baptist High School. Following the abduction of many students in Kankara Local Government, the governor of Katsina State ordered the closure of all burden secondary schools in the state (Maishanu, 2020). No doubt the closure of schools became a reoccurring decimal in the country especially in the northern states of the country. This has greatly hampered academic activities in these places with consequential effects on the nation's education scale.

**Distortion of academic programmes and calendar:** with incessant closure of schools, academic programmes such as teaching, learning, examination, and extracurricular activities are grossly affected. This has consequently resulted to distortion of normal academic calendar. Presently, students are afraid to return to school, parents are uncertain if their children/wards would be safe in school. Teachers and school management are also longer concentrating fully on their duties particularly in schools that have experienced abduction of students and staff.

**Increase in out of school children:** It has been reported that with kidnapping and abduction of pupils and students in various schools, especially in some parts of northern Nigeria, cases such as gender discrimination, poverty, language barrier, child labour, forced marriage have become rampant. This has also increase the propensity of out of school children (Retrieved from [www.blueprint.ng](http://www.blueprint.ng)). The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has noted that the population of out of school children in Nigeria has risen from 10.5 million children to 13.2 million children. This scenario that has compounded the problem of education in the country is describes as the highest in the world.

**Social orientation and adaptation:** Students living their former schools and environment to safe places to further their studies are having the challenge of getting to learn of the new environment and the people. This includes the learning of their social way of life and academic culture. The process will by all means retard the progression of their learning.

**Relocation of academic staff:** security of lives and property is a major prerequisite for stability and development in every society. Once security is not guaranteed, movement and relocation of people toward places with better security becomes obvious. This situation results to starving the school of teachers and lecturers with mastery knowledge in their respective subject areas.

## Recommendations

The paper made the some recommendations in order to address the kidnapping and by implication to provide the opportunity for reducing kidnapping in Nigeria. The recommendations will task government, communities, families and the vulnerable groups in devising various measures toward fighting kidnapping.

1. A programme should be put in place to educate the ones that are caught in the act of kidnappings and are ready to leave the act. The situation where bandits, kidnappers claim to be repentant and government rush to settle them with finances and the next thing they do is to return back to business of kidnapping is not a welcome idea.
2. A re-orientation of the security apparatus to fit the situation on ground i.e a form of civil-security intelligence gathering should be put in place in order to identify the such kidnappers and be de-radicalized from the idea of kidnappings.
3. Communities should be caution against showing sympathy towards such people either the name of being their love ones, relatives or from their religious faith.
4. A security outfit should be put in place in institutions of learning and well trained for the difficult task of combating kidnappers and bandits should the incidence occur. And such security outfit in itself is an employment opportunity for a huge number of our unemployed youths.
5. The Nigerian Government should come up with poverty alleviation programmes and employment opportunities, targeting youths who are mostly involved in abductions and kidnappings out of economic frustration, such as unemployment. It is theoretical that a frustrated person is always angry and this anger leads to aggression, this to some extent is the situation the kidnappers and bandits find themselves in.
6. **Serious Punishments for Offenders:** Mild punishment does nothing to deter criminals. When the government treats kidnappers harshly, less abduction will occur.
7. **Job Creation:** Generating jobs for citizens, especially for the youth, can have a huge impact in the fight against crime. When people are gainfully employed, they do not need to commit crimes.

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