UNDERSTANDING THE DYNAMICS OF KIDNAPPING IN BIRNIN-GWARI LGA OF KADUNA STATE, NIGERIA: A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE UNDERLYING CAUSES

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Abstract

This research investigates a critical analysis of drivers of kidnapping in Birnin –Gwari Local Government Area of Kaduna State. Kidnapping has assumed a more dangerous dynamic dimension in Birnin-Gwari Local Government Area of Kaduna State. with kidnappers and bandits running a parallel government alongside with Kaduna State Government as reported by the immediate past Kaduna State Governor, Mallam Nasiru El-Rufai in 2021. The local government has been invaded by ISWAP, Boko-Haram and Fulani Militia group terrorizing community members, farmers, traders, passengers and motorists and educational institutions. This research paper seeks to explore the driving forces contributing to kidnapping incidents in Birnin-Gwari Local Government Area of Kaduna State. The study adopted the survey method using structured closed-ended questionnaire to collect data from the victims of kidnapping from 6 political wards. The sample size was made up of 395 victims who were purposively selected using Taro-Yamane's formula. It was revealed that majority (85%) of the victims affirmed unemployment, 75.6% affirmed political activities, and 79.7% affirmed religious extremism all contribute to kidnapping incidents in Birnin-Gwari Local Government Area of Kaduna State. The study concluded that incidents of kidnapping in Birnin-Gwari Local Government Area of Kaduna State can be attributed to unemployment, political activities and religious extremism. The study also recommended that Government should promote inter-ethnic and religious harmony and conflict resolution initiatives among the conflicting communities and Government should implement inclusive political policies and promote political participation and among others.

Keywords*:* Kidnapping, Kidnappers, Bandits, Ransom, Victims, and Activities

1. Introduction

Kidnapping is a ubiquitous and complicated global phenomenon that bedevils individuals, communities, and nations worldwide. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC, 2020), kidnapping is a serious violation of human rights and a significant risk to global security.

Within the African level, kidnapping is a growing concern, particularly in countries with lingering regional crises, weak governance, corruption, and insecurity (African Union, 2019). The African Union's Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa emphasizes the need for member states to address the root causes of kidnapping and provide protection to victims (African Union, 2019).

In Nigeria, kidnapping has become a major security issue, with significant human, economic, and social implications (Nwakpu, 2020). The country has witnessed an increase in kidnapping incidents, particularly in the northern region, such as the North-East, North-West including Kaduna State (SBM Intelligence, 2020). According to the Nigeria Police Force, kidnapping is one of the most prevalent crimes in the country, with over 1,000 reported cases in 2020 alone (Nigeria Police Force, 2020).

Birnin-Gwari has been bedevilled by kidnapping, particularly in Randagi, Kuyelo, Dogon Dawa,Kakangi,Gayam and Tabanni. The Kaduna State Government reports that 5042 kidnapping cases were recorded in 2020, and 774 victims abducted within the first three months of 2021 resulting in significant economic losses and 250 deaths of victims (Kaduna State Government, 2020). Kidnapping has caused severe economic hardship on the victims and their families resulting to the displacement of victims from their ancestral communities. Sixty (60%) of kidnapping victims experience economic hardship (Olaniyi et al., 2020).

This study aims to investigate the factors contributing to kidnapping incidents in Birnin-Gwari Local Government Area, Kaduna State, Nigeria, with a view to providing insights for policymakers and stakeholders to develop effective strategies to prevent and respond to kidnapping incidents in the state.

Kidnapping has become a widespread and recalcitrant problem in Nigeria, with stern consequences for individuals, families, and communities (Nwakpu, 2020; Ogundiya, 2019). The country has witnessed a significant increase in kidnapping incidents, particularly in the northern regions, including Kaduna State (SBM Intelligence, 2020). Birnin-Gwari and Chikun Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Kaduna State have been identified as major hotspots for kidnapping activities in the North-Central geo-political zone (Human Rights Watch, 2022).

The National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) (2024) disclosed in its report titled `The Crime Experienced and Security Perception Survey (CESPS) 2024', and based on the surveys conducted between May 2023 and April 2024, no fewer than 614, 937 Nigerians were killed and 2,235,954 others kidnapped across the country. In addition, according to NBS, Nigerians paid an astronomical amount of N2.670trn ransom to kidnappers within one year. This sum was paid by households affected by kidnapping incidents, highlighting the growing risk posed by criminal activities in the country.

Recent empirical reviews have highlighted the complex and multi-dynamic nature of kidnapping in Nigeria. A study conducted in Birnin-Gwari LGA of Kaduna State found that poverty, unemployment, and lack of education were significant factors attributing to kidnapping (Abubakar, 2020). Another study in Chikun LGA identified corruption, insecurity, and poor governance as major contributing factors to kidnapping (Ezugwu, 2022).

Despite these findings, there is a significant research gap in understanding the specific socio-economic and environmental factors that contribute to kidnapping in Kaduna State, particularly in Birnin-Gwari and Chikun LGAs. A comprehensive examination of these factors is essential to inform evidence-based policies and interventions aimed at preventing and addressing kidnapping in the region. To fill the gap in this research, there is a need for a comprehensive study that examines the interplay between socio-economic, environmental, and governance factors contributing to kidnapping in Birnin-Gwari and Chikun LGAs of Kaduna State.

2. Literature Review

Various researchers have conducted enormous studies to investigate the causes and the immediate remedies of kidnapping incidents in Nigeria. For instance, in a study conducted by Adebayo (2021) titled: Socio-economic Drivers of Kidnapping in Kaduna State made attempt to investigate the socioeconomic factors contributing to the rise of kidnapping in Kaduna State. The study reveals that high unemployment rates and poverty levels significantly contribute to the prevalence of kidnapping. The study also concludes that addressing socioeconomic disparities among the people can mitigate the incidence of kidnapping in Kaduna State. The study recommends that there should be Implementation

of comprehensive poverty alleviation programs and job creation initiatives by government and non-governmental organizations.

Similarly, Danjuma (2019) conducted a study titled: Economic Inequality and Kidnapping in Kaduna State to analyze the relationship between economic inequality and kidnapping. The study reveals that Regions with high economic disparities witness more kidnapping incidents. The study concludes that reducing economic inequality can lower kidnapping rates in Kaduna State. It was recommended that government should implement policies aimed at reducing economic inequality and promoting equitable growth.

Fadeyi (2022) in a study titled: Unemployment and Kidnapping in Kaduna State to examine the impact of unemployment on the incidence of kidnapping. The finding reveals that high unemployment rates contribute to the increase in kidnapping activities in Kaduna State. The study concludes that Job creation is vital for reducing kidnapping and recommends that government should develop comprehensive employment programs targeting youth and vulnerable populations.

Ifeanyi (2020) conducted a study titled: Economic Hardship and Kidnapping in Kaduna State. The study aimed to examine the relationship between economic hardship and kidnapping. The Methodology adopted was the mixed-method approach with quantitative surveys (500 participants) and qualitative interviews (30 community leaders). Statistical and thematic analyses used. Finding shows that economic hardship is a significant driver of kidnapping in Kaduna State. The study also concludes that alleviating economic hardship can help reduce kidnapping. It was recommended that government should implement social welfare and economic support programs for all victims of kidnapping in Kaduna State.

In similar study conducted by Khalid (2019) titled: Rural-Urban Migration and Kidnapping in Kaduna State, the study aimed to explore the impact of rural-urban migration on kidnapping rates using quantitative surveys with 500 rural-urban migrants. Data analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. The study reveals that rural-urban migration influences the incidence of kidnapping in Kaduna State. The study concludes that managing rural-urban migration can help

reduce kidnapping in Kaduna State. The study recommends that government should implement policies to support balanced regional development and manage migration.

In a study conducted by Lawan (2022) tiled: Family Income Levels and Kidnapping in Kaduna State to investigate the relationship between family income levels and kidnapping using quantitative surveys with 600 families. Data were analyzed using regression analysis. The finding shows that Lower family income levels are associated with higher kidnapping rates. It was concluded that improving family income levels can help mitigate kidnapping and recommends that government should develop and implement economic empowerment programs for low-income families.

On the contrary another factor responsible for kidnapping incidences in Nigeria is people's religious extremism. Nigerians are highly religious people. Statistics shows that Nigeria ranked second most religious country in the world, and based on a religion survey, 93 percent of her population tended to be religious (Otuh and Aituf 2014). Religion plays a fundamental role in the evolution of a people. This can be observed in the way and manner in which individuals commit their selves to religious norms and values. Recently, Boko-haram and Islamic States are arguably some of religious sects speculated to pursue religious ideologies via its list of criminal acts. Some people are fanatically religious (Ottuh and Aituf, 2014).

Musa (2021) in a study titled: Political Marginalization and Kidnapping in Kaduna State to assess the impact of political marginalization on kidnapping incidents using qualitative case study approach with 30 focus group discussions and 50 individual interviews. Thematic analysis used. Finding shows that Political marginalization significantly contributes to the rise in kidnapping. The study concludes that addressing political marginalization can help reduce kidnapping in Kaduna State and also recommends that government should implement inclusive political policies and promote political participation.

Yusuf (2022) also conducted a study titled: Poverty and Kidnapping in Kaduna State to assess the impact of poverty on the prevalence of kidnapping using quantitative surveys with 700 participants. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. From the finding, it was gathered

that poverty significantly drives kidnapping activities. In essence, incidence of kidnapping in Kaduna State is poverty induced and the study concludes that mitigating poverty can help decrease kidnapping rates in Kaduna State. The study recommends that government and non-governmental organizations should implement comprehensive poverty alleviation programs for all victims and among other members of the communities.

Sani (2020) also conducted a study titled: The Influence of Cultural Beliefs on Kidnapping in Kaduna State to explore how cultural beliefs and practices influence kidnapping in Kaduna State adopting Ethnographic study and interviews with community members. It was observed that cultural practices sometimes justify or mitigate the impact of kidnapping in Kaduna State. The study concludes that cultural beliefs play a role in the perception and response to kidnapping in Kaduna State and therefore, recommends cultural education and engagement in anti-kidnapping initiatives for all victims.

3. Methodology

Research Design and Methodology

The study locations were in 6 political wards in Birnin-Gwari Local Government Area of Kaduna State. These locations were well known as most flashpoints or hotspots for kidnapping and banditry activities in the local government. These wards include Randagi, Kuyelo, Dogon Dawa,Kakangi,Gayam and Tabanni. Primary data were collected through the use of structured questionnaire instrument. The sample size was made up of 395 victims obtained from Taro Yamane's formula. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the locations of the study and the victims of kidnapping in each political ward through the help of village heads or community leaders. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics with the help Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.

4. Results and Discussions

The data for this research are analyzed and presented in tables as follows: Table 1 shows ways unemployment contributes to kidnapping incidents in Birnin- Gwari Local Government Area of Kaduna State. It was gathered that majority (97%) of the respondents agreed that poverty and economic depression could largely contribute to kidnapping incidents in Birnin-Gwari Local Government Area. On the other hand, few (3%) of the respondents disagreed. Based on this finding, it can be deduced that majority (97%) of the respondents agreed that poverty and economic depression could largely contribute kidnapping incidents in Birnin-Gwari Local Government Area.

Table 1: How Unemployment Contributes to Kidnapping Incidents

Variables	Agree		Disagree	
	Freq	%	Freq	%
Poverty and Economic Depression	385	97	10	3
Idleness and Restlessness	340	86	55	14
Social and Economic Frustration	365	92	30	8
Lack of Equal opportunities and Resources	370	94	25	6
Increased Vulnerability	378	96	17	4
Break down and Social Cohesion	230	58	165	42
Corruption and Injustice	38	93	27	7
Total Frequency & percentage per row:395				

Source: Field Work 2024

Table 2 shows how political activities contribute to kidnapping incidents in Birnin-Gwari Local Government Area. Majority (97%) of the victims agreed that lack of effective or weak governance can contribute to kidnapping while on the other hand, few (3%) victims disagreed. Based on this finding, it can be deduced that majority (97%) of victims agreed lack of effective or weak governance contributes to kidnapping. The implication of this finding shows that ineffective or governance

contributes to lack of accountability, which can pave way to kidnapping syndicates to operate with relative impunity.

This finding corresponds with the study of Musa (2021) titled: Political Marginalization and Kidnapping in Kaduna State to assess the impact of political marginalization on kidnapping incidents using qualitative case study approach with 30 focus group discussions and 50 individual interviews. Thematic analysis used. Finding shows that Political marginalization significantly contributes to the rise in kidnapping. The study concludes that addressing political marginalization can help reduce kidnapping in Kaduna State and also recommends that government should implement inclusive political policies and promote political participation.

Table 2: How Political Activities can contribute to Kidnapping

Variables	Agree		Disagree	
	Freq	%	Freq	%
Politically motivated kidnapping	230	58	165	42
Corruption and complicity	265	67	130	33
Insecurity and power vacuum	257	65	138	35
Elections related violence	270	68	125	32
Lack of effective Governance	385	97	10	3
Security agency complicity	368	93	27	7
Patronage and reward	237	60	158	40
Total Frequency & percentage per row:395/100				

Source: Field Work 2024

Table 3 shows how religious activities contribute to kidnapping in Birnin-Gwari Local Government Area. It was revealed that majority (97%) of the victims agreed religious extremist's ideologies contribute to kidnapping while few (3%) of the victims disagreed. Based on these findings, it implies that majority (97%) of victims agreed that religious

activities contribute to kidnapping in Birnin-Gwari Local Government Area. This finding also coincides with Otuh and Aituf (2014) who opined that religious extremism could drive a lot of people into kidnapping incidents in Nigeria.

Statistics shows that Nigeria ranked second most religious country in the world, and based on a religion survey, 93 percent of her population tended to be religious Religion plays a fundamental role in the evolution of a people. This can be observed in the way and manner in which individuals commit their selves to religious norms and values. Recently, Boko-haram and Islamic States are arguably some of religious sects speculated to pursue religious ideologies via its list of criminal acts. Some people are fanatically religious (Ottuh and Aituf, 2014).

Table 3: How Religious Activities Can Influence Kidnapping

Variables	Agree		Disagree	
	Freq	%	Freq	%
Extremists Ideologies	385	97	10	3
Religious conflicts	240	61	155	39
Ransom and Financing	365	92	30	8
Recruitment and radicalization	330	84	65	16
Divine Retribution	368	93	27	7
Influence of religious beliefs and practices	370	94	25	6
Lack of interfaith dialogue	337	85	58	15
Total Frequency & percentage per row:395/100				

Source: Field Work 2024

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

Kidnapping in Birnin-Gwari Local Government Area of Kaduna State is a complex issue driven by several factors. Economic drivers play a significant role, as the area's rural communities struggle with poverty and unemployment, making them vulnerable to criminal activities. Environmental factors also contribute to the prevalence of kidnapping in the region. The area's forests and rural landscapes provide a conducive environment for kidnappers to operate, making it challenging for security agencies to track and apprehend them. Furthermore, political marginalization and religious extremism have been identified as significant drivers of kidnapping in Birnin-Gwari. The lack of effective security measures, corruption, and inadequate governance structures have created an enabling environment for kidnappers to thrive. In conclusion, addressing kidnapping in Birnin-Gwari Local Government Area of Kaduna State requires a multifaceted approach that tackles the economic, environmental, and governance drivers of this complex issue.

5.2 Recommendations

i. Government and non-governmental organizations should implement comprehensive poverty alleviation programs for all victims and among other members of the communities.

ii. Government should promote inter-ethnic and religious harmony and conflict resolution initiatives among the conflicting communities.

iii. Government should implement inclusive political policies and promote political participation

iv. There should be implementation of comprehensive poverty alleviation programs and job creation initiatives by government and non-governmental organizations.

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