



A Warning Trend: Kidnapping and Abduction and Its Implications on Food Security and The 2023 Democratic Election In Nigeria

Author:

Ogunkanmi, Zaccheaus O.

Affiliation:

Centre for Gender, Humanitarian and Development Studies (CGHDS), Redeemer's University, Osun State, Nigeria.



Abstract

Kidnapping and abduction are some of the major forms of organised crimes and global phenomena threatening peaceful co-existence and human dignity in modern society. This explorative research work focuses on the incidence of kidnapping across the six geo-political zones of Nigeria. Secondary data utilized for the study were culled from; audio-visual reports (newspapers and televised news) spanning seven months (from March to October 2022). The study identified the vulnerable groups and kidnapping hot spots across the nation. It also highlighted the pull and push factors of kidnapping in Nigeria. The study further explored the effects of kidnapping on the 2023 democratic election and food security across the nation. It concluded that, if not handled proactively, kidnapping would add to worsen the insecurity situation in the nation which is already being affected by flooding, Herdsmen attacks, and an extreme climate that confronted farmers and the food chain. The paper calls for security beef-up at the local, state, and national levels.

Keywords: Kidnapping, Abduction, Ransom, Early-warning, Election



Introduction

Kidnapping or man stealing is an illegal practice of forcefully picking and abducting human beings and keeping them in an unknown destination, probably in the jungle, hidden houses in a remote place. Britannica defines kidnapping as a criminal offence consisting of the unlawful taking and carrying away of a person by force or fraud or the illegal seizure and detention of a person against his will. The principal motives for kidnapping include; subjecting the victim to some form of involuntary servitude for ritual or economic purposes.

There is no globally accepted definition for kidnapping, however, Fage and Alabi (2017, p. 289) define kidnapping as the "forceful or fraudulent abduction of an individual or a group of individuals for reasons ranging from economic, political, and religious to [struggle for] self-determination". The common propelling factor from the above definitions is the economic factor, even though other factors like political and religious factors exist. Hazen and Horner (2007) posit that hostages taken are for two primary reasons: political bargaining and economic gain.

Currently, kidnapping is considered a lucrative business in Nigeria and the shortest means to wealth by those involved in the crime. The current wave of abductions across the country makes every person a potential target regardless of social class or economic status.

Rationale for the Study

The Reason for this study is to understand better the trend and effects of kidnapping in the political and economic situation of the Nigerian society and provide warning to the stakeholders to ensure the menace of kidnapping is totally eradicated in the Nigerian Society. The study seeks to provide recommendations that would help in ensuring peaceful democratic transitions and provide peaceful environment for farmers to work without fear of kidnapping and brutal killings.

Methodological Approach

The exploratory work was conducted using secondary data (audio-visual) online daily news and reports of incidence of kidnapping across the country during the period of seven months. The data was collected randomly from various online Newspapers, radio stations and Televisions.



Findings

Early History of Kidnapping and the Current Uprising

Kidnapping or man stealing is not new to human society as a penalty for the abduction was recorded in the Bible in Exodus 21:16 (KJV) "And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he is found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death". However, kidnapping exists, and it is an uprising in human society and is not limited to a country; it is a global phenomenon, though more pronounced and typical in countries with poor economic means. One of the populous kidnappings happened On March 1, 1932, with Charles Augustus Lindbergh Jr. (born June 22, 1930). The 20-month-old son of aviators Charles Lindbergh and Anne Morrow Lindbergh was abducted from his crib on the upper floor of the Lindberghs' home, Highfields, in East Amwell, New Jersey, United States. On May 12, a truck driver saw the child's corpse on a nearby road.

In September 1934, Bruno Richard Hauptmann, a German immigrant carpenter, was arrested for the crime. After a trial from January 2 to February 13, 1935, he was found guilty of first-degree murder and sentenced to death. Despite his conviction, he continued to profess his innocence, but all appeals failed, and he was executed in the electric chair at the New Jersey State Prison on April 3, 1936. Newspaper writer H. L. Mencken called the kidnapping and trial "the biggest story since the Resurrection". Legal scholars have referred to the trial as one of the "trials of the century". The crime spurred Congress to pass the Federal Kidnapping Act, commonly called the "Little Lindbergh Law", which made transporting a kidnapping victim across state lines a federal crime.

Before the current surge of kidnapping in Nigeria, children were victims of abduction, especially in the South West. They call the kidnappers "Gbomogbomo" meaning "children stealer" One can argue that most of the victims abducted then are for slavery or ritual purpose. The current wave of kidnapping in Nigeria started on February 25 2006, with the abduction of expatriates working for the oil company in the Niger Delta (Nseabasi S. Akpan2010)

However, the current uprising of kidnapping as a menace and one of the security challenges for the entire citizen started with the Boko-Haram abduction of Chibok girls and subsequent kidnapping of school children, especially in the North East and North Central. The motive for kidnapping the Chibok girls, as explained then, was to stand against Western education. Boko-Haram's original intention was to discourage Western education by all means. They considered western education as "Book forbidden". The Chibok girls' case drew



the attention of the International Community, which led to the "Bring Back our Girls" campaign.

One thing led to another: the Government's action to negotiate and rescue the girls led to the Boko-Haram demand for ransom, and kidnapping became a massive business from then. Corruption and the country's economic condition can be seen as excellent motivations for the current surge in kidnappings. Onireti (2022) noted that the situation in Nigeria, as it relates to poverty, unemployment, corruption, political violence, and religious intolerance, has created a fertile ground for insecurity and kidnapping for ransom in the country.

Early Warning Signals

Nigeria is going through various challenges ranging from terrorism, banditry, violence, the farmers-headers crisis, and unemployment, strike actions in the educational sector, kidnapping and all sorts of conflicts.

Haider (2014) posits that conflict prevention requires careful monitoring of rising tensions and taking measures to ease them. He stressed further that early warning consists of data collection, risk analysis and providing information with recommendations to targeted stakeholders (Haider, 2014, p. 49). Considering the multifaceted pressure in Nigeria and the scheduled election in 2023, all stakeholders require proactive action for a peaceful democratic election.

Mancini (2013) noted that mobile phones, social media, crowd sourcing, crisis mapping, blogging and extensive data analysis are used in early warning and response. We gathered the data through social media and digital virtual reports and news. All hands must be on deck to prevent violence and crisis in the forthcoming democratic election. Nderitu (2013 P.9) observed that after the 2008 election violence in Kenya, extensive efforts were made to prevent another outbreak of violence during subsequent elections Nderitu (2013 P. 9). He noted further that as a result of the mechanism put in place, i.e. a peace-building platform bringing together national cohesion and integration commission, the United Nations Development Programme, the National Steering Committee on conflict management, the Police and PEACENET, a civil society network of more than 500 NGOs created an early warning and early response mechanism Nderitu, (2013)



Food Security and Kidnapping

Food security has a link with peace. In a nation where conflicts and violence are standard, there could be no food security. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO, 2006) noted that food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meet their dietary needs and food preference for an active and healthy life which include the following dimension: availability ; access, utilisation and stability.

Some possible reasons for the Uprising of Kidnapping

The proliferation of arms in the country: Daily trust newspaper of February 26, 2021, observed that "The worsening insecurity in Nigeria, manifested in terrorist attacks, banditry, kidnapping, communal clashes, violent crimes, cult wars, ethnic and regional militias, and the like, provide enough evidence that small and illicit arms are in circulation in abundance. Daily Trust (2021), part of the reasons for the proliferation was a result of porous borders in the country. Okeke and Oji (2014) noted, "Nigeria is rated high in the regional debate for controlling small arms and light weapons and illegal trade. For more than a decade, diplomatic activity to contain arms and ammunition transfers has been animated by a concern with instability and crises generated in the continent many years back. Leading think tanks, research groups, and advocacy organisations have repeatedly drawn attention to how the burden of armed violence in Northern Nigeria is a product of high porous borders and low-tech assault by the Nigerian Government."

High Unemployment: It has been observed that the tertiary education sectors turn out graduates year-in-year-out, but there is no labour market where they can secure jobs. At present, Nigeria imports, most of the gross domestic products. The labour market is dehydrated because enabling environment is not available. Electricity supply degenerates daily; hence industrialists and idle youth engaged in criminal activities in the country.

Rising Organised armed violence by none—state actors, the Islamic State of West Africa Countries, Boko-Haram and the herders from neighbouring countries are flooding into the country to perpetuate all sorts of evil. In addition, the growing trends of ritual criminality, Economic motivation attached to ransom, Inability of the security forces to bring several criminals to book, high level of poverty and lack of western education, ideological beliefs and philosophy, especially

Islamic fundamentalist group, politics and corruption are parts of what accounts for the uprising of kidnapping in Nigeria.

Vulnerable Group at Risk

All citizens are at risk of kidnapping. However, the following categories of people are more vulnerable to the current trends of kidnapping in Nigeria:

Students/School Children: Since the abduction of Chibok girls and the action of the Government in negotiating and paying the ransom, more students/School Children has been one of the most targeted groups. According to Burrai J. et.al.(2022) International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC) categorized missing children to include but not limited to: endangered runaway, family abduction, non family abduction (forcible and unauthorized taking of a child who has disappeared under circumstances that are unknown and difficult to determined; those separated by emergency, those in a refugee situation and those who have been abandoned or otherwise left without care). Non-family abduction is the category that is peculiar to Nigeria in the period under study.

Random Data of students kidnapped in the recent time

Figure 1. Random Data of students kidnapped in the recent time

S / N	Date	No. of students	Location	Comment
1	14/4/2014	276	Chibok, Borno State	All girls aged 16-18 kidnapped by Boko-Haram terrorist
2	19/02/2018	110	Dapachi, Yobe State	All girls kidnapped by Boko-Haram Government Girls' Science and Technical College (GGSTC)
3	11/10/2022	303	Kankara, Katsina State	Boys were kidnapped
4	17/2/2021	42	Kagara, Niger State	Boys and girls were kidnapped

5	26/2/2021	317	Jangebe, Zamfara State	All girls were kidnapped by bandits
6	11/03/2021	39	Afaka, Kaduna State	23 female and 16 male Students of Federal College of Forestry Mechanized kidnapped by Gun men
7	20/04/2021	16	Kasarami, Kaduna State	13 students and 3 staff of Greenfield University kidnapped by suspected armed bandit
8	30/05/2021	200	Tegina, Niger State	students of Islamiyya School at Tegina few of the kidnapped students that were considered very feeble were released immediately

Source: Author

In the Vanguard Newspaper of October 5 2022, the Academic Staff Union of Secondary Schools (ASUSS), Kaduna State chapter, has alleged that bandits have killed over ten teachers and kidnapped more than 50 others across the 23 local government areas of the state since January 2022.

The recent Headline on This Day Newspaper came with the caption UNICEF: In 15 Months, 1,436 School Children Abducted in Nigeria. UNICEF Representative in Nigeria, Peter Hawkins, revealed these figures in a statement, calling governments across the federation to make schools safer and more secure. According to him, "Attacks on learning institutions render the learning environment insecure and discourage parents and caregivers from sending their wards to schools, while the learners themselves become fearful of the legitimate pursuit of learning," he noted further that the invisible harm school attacks "inflict on the victims" mental health is incalculable and irredeemable. (Source, This Day Newspaper)

Looking at the above data, the kidnapping of school children and students is always in group. While children can generally be regarded

as vulnerable, the girl child is more vulnerable and at risk of kidnapping following the above reports. Not all the students kidnapped were released. Some suffer to die at the hands of their abductors, and those eventually released suffered traumatic experiences. It is not likely that all of the students kidnapped at one time or the other would return to school. Most parents in the affected areas may entertain fears and, as a result, discourage the children from furthering their education.

Commuters and Travellers

Commuters and travellers across the country also form parts of the vulnerable group for kidnapers. The Contributing factors for this include bad roads full of potholes and a lack of security network and architecture to combat crime. Daily Post of August 25, 2022, published the news captioned Bandits kidnapped Commuters in Katsina. The Newspaper reported that Bandits, on Wednesday, abducted a yet-to-be-specified number of commuters along the Katsina-Jibia road. (Source Daily Post, August 25, 2022) It was reported that the kidnapers were not more than 20, but they came with motorcycles. Premium Times reported with a caption, "Train Attack: Deprived of safer alternatives, commuters forced to ply dangerous Abuja-Kaduna highway". In March, 2021, Blueprints News posted that Police rescued kidnapped commuters in Osun. Osun state Commissioner of Police, CP Olawale Olokode, disclosed that seven commuters kidnapped at Ajobamidele village, Obokun local government area of the state had been rescued.

On May 18 2022, Chanel online had the caption Bandits Attack Commuters Along Abuja-Kaduna Road, Abduct Several Travelers. Several reports across the six geo-political zones and with dominance in North East and North Central have revealed how kidnapping affects commuters and travelers who were most vulnerable because of their profession. The above have significant effects on business transactions across the country.

Expatriates/Workers in High-Rated Organizations

Since the new surge of kidnapping in Nigeria, Expatriates and workers in the high-rated organisation and conglomerates has also been victims and are highly vulnerable to kidnapping. The kidnapping of the expatriates on February 25, 2006, in the oil company in the Niger Delta, marked the beginning of the current surge of kidnapping in Nigeria. Since that time, several expatriates have been abducted. A. I. Badiora (2015) observed that kidnapping in Nigeria is triggered by resource control disputes directed both at oil expatriate workers and

at prominent citizens, politicians and members of their families. According to This Day Newspaper of July 15, 2022, the Rivers State Police Command confirmed the kidnapping of two foreigners in Port Harcourt by suspected gunmen.

Farmers

Since the rising of kidnapping, several farmers have been kidnapped across the country while some have been killed. Shabu T. (2022) noted that kidnapping has significantly impacted social economic activities, its responsible for shutting down small business and social gathering and causes decrease in marketing/trading in Katsina-Ala local Government Area of Benue state, Nigeria. A flashback to years back, Chief Olu Falae was kidnapped from his farm in Aledo, along Igbatoro road, in Akure, the capital city of Ondo State, on September 21, 2015. On June, 24th 2022 All Farmers Association of Nigeria warned the Government after the Kidnap of farmers in Abuja:

In June 2022, 22 farmers were kidnapped in Abuja, also on Saturday, August 27, 13 Farmers were kidnapped, and 2 people were killed at Rafin-Daji and kutara in Abuja (Daily Trust, September 5 2022) In June 2022, 4 farmers abducted in Ondo demanded 16M and on July 18, 2022,15 Farmers were kidnapped in Mgbuji Eha-Amafu LGA, Enugu State. In August, ISWAP kidnapped six farmers in Mafa LGC of Borno (The Guardian) to list but few.

Attacks on farmers are attacks on the nation's food basket, and it has a lot of implications on Food Security. Dennis E.K etal (2022) argued that banditry has hampered sustainable agricultural production in the North West region and impacted the realization of food security in Nigeria. He stressed further that killing and kidnapping of farmers have affected the production of food.

Kidnapping and Ransom

In Nigeria, kidnapping for ransom has recently become a multibillion Naira business. Furthermore, it is spreading across the entire nation. Before the new upsurge in kidnapping, most kidnappings in Nigeria were associated with ritual killing. This example was noted in some states in the South West like Oyo and Ogun. In the recent past, the abduction of expatriates and the Chibok girls were the first to attract ransom payment. When the Government intervened through the payment of ransom, multiple kidnappings followed. Kidnapping and payment of ransom created severe physical, economic and psychological harm not only to victims and their families but also to private and the public. Families of kidnappers always fear the

abductors killing their family members held hostage and would probably look for money by all means to avoid the loss of lives of their loved ones. According to the leader of Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, "Kidnapping hostages is an easy spoil, which I may describe as a profitable trade and a precious treasure" (Callimachi Reference Callimachi, 2014). A report released by SB Morgen (SBM) estimated that \$18.34 million (N7 billion) had been paid for ransom in Nigeria between 2021 and 2022. As a result of ransom, several families became bankrupt amid the poor economic situation. It is no doubt that many families would have entered into debt as a result of ravaging kidnapping.

The Federal/State Government Response to Kidnapping

Since the uprising of kidnapping in Nigeria, the Federal Government has applied different methods and strategies to nail the menace in the bud. However, the strategies yielded no significant and positive results. Some of the major strategies employed include the followings: In the 2016 Dialogue, the Federal Government initiated a settlement and peace mission, Negotiation and settlement, especially in Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto and Kaduna. The amnesty programme hinges on renouncing the banditry set. These steps taken by the Government enjoy criticism from citizens. Air bombardment and seizing Telecommunication services. Moreover, in 2018 Government efforts were directed towards air bombardment of bandits' stronghold. But because of the vast geographical space and forest, the bandits started shifting locations and spreading to other parts to continue their operations.

Deployment of Women Soldiers in Kaduna State. About 300 women soldiers from the Nigeria army Corps were deployed on A2/Abuja – Kaduna expressway, but the bandits moved their operations again. Ending ransom payment: State Government decided not to negotiate with bandits again in 2020 and discouraged family members from negotiating and ransom payment. The terrorism prevention (Amendment) Bill was considered to criminalise ransom payment as a felony –punishable by 15 years in prison. This strategy has not also worked as kidnappers are always ready to kill people on hostage. Helpless family members raise money and pay quietly and secretly to ransom their loved ones.

Kidnapping and Early Warning

If Dramatic and urgent actions are not considered, kidnapping in Nigeria will bring about the following:

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- i. Democratic Governmental control would be hijacked, and the Sovereignty of the Nigeria Nation would be under serious threat.
- ii. Loss of more lives and properties to Bandits and Kidnappers
- iii. Loss of more human power and brain drain in the country
- iv. The 2023 Election will be severely threatened if the proactive measure is not considered.
- v. Food insecurity may loom as farmers would be sent out of the farm ultimately and the nation food basket would be empty
- vi. The current state of inflation may double up.
- vii. State of anarchy may prevail.

Recommendations

1. Prevailing poverty, hunger and unemployment needed to be addressed by the national and state government.
2. Western education Encouraged in the Northern State of Nigeria
3. Security forces should ensure the withdrawal of unlicensed sophisticated weapons and armour from the unauthorized civilian
4. Issues of herd men and farmers needed to be resolved
5. The flush of non-nationality from the neighbouring countries should be put under control
6. State Security should be encouraged and should be empowered with a comparable and even better weapon than that of the bandits
7. Government should stand up for their primary responsibility of the security of lives and property
8. Local and Community security needed to be consolidated

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