

**THE PHENOMENON OF KIDNAPPING OF SCHOOL CHILDREN:
IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE
NORTH-EAST GEO-POLITICAL ZONE OF NIGERIA**

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In the last decade or more, the spate of Kidnapping of School children in Girls Secondary School Chibok, Borno State and Girls Technical College at Dapchi, Yobe state by criminal elements such as Boko Haram terrorists and Bandits in the North- East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria has become very alarming and embarrassing. The worrisome nature of this criminal act is exacerbated by the negative effects on the educational development in this zone. Unfortunately, the approach adopted by the stakeholders including the federal and state governments has been lethargic and therefore unsatisfactory. This study identified the causes of kidnapping in these schools, examined the implications for educational development and suggested measures needed to effectively combat the menace. The paper employed secondary qualitative materials as its source of data. We adopted content analysis to analyze data collected. Frustration-Aggression theory is the theoretical framework adopted for this study. The paper finds that kidnapping of school children has resulted in the closure of schools, palpable fear amongst school children as well as lack of intelligence gathering and sharing mechanism among the security agencies in the country. The study recommends effective intelligence gathering and sharing among the security agencies to forestall kidnapping. In addition, governments should take proactive measures to address the menace.

Key Words: Kidnapping, School Children, Educational Development, North-East Geo-Political Zone and Nigeria.**Introduction**

Kidnapping is a global phenomenon which its security challenges cuts across countries in the world. Besides, it is one of the forms of terrorism carried out by the both state and non-state actors. It

is no respecter of persons. Thus, it is the traumatic experience of the act by the victims that compels governments all over the world to take pro-active measures towards nipping the act in the bud.

In Nigeria, for example, kidnapping by Boko Haram terrorists and Bandits has become very alarming. The victims of the kidnappers cut across all strata of the society including Traditional Rulers, Politicians, Academics, Farmers, Doctors, Entrepreneurs, Pupils, Students, Youth Corpers, Public Figures and members of their Families, Security personnel, Foreigners, Expatriate, Religious Leaders, Judicial officers depending on the purpose or motive. Most kidnapping in Nigeria is for ransom and virtual purposes. Wright in his book, "Kidnap for ransom: Resolving the unthinkable", (2009), has it that the removal of the Hebrews from Babylon is one of the most well known examples of kidnapping of an entire race of people. Kidnapping for ransom was only practiced but was much more common than one might expect. In most cases the victims have been killed by their abductors. The traumatic experience of victims of kidnapping is not only unpalatable, thought provoking despite therapy but also the victims live with the effects of the trauma for the rest of their lives. Particularly and for our purpose, the kidnapping of school children (across the country) has generated reactions from both within and outside the country. Within the country, the federal government led by the former president, Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan expressed shock and embarrassment over the kidnap of 276 school girls from the government girls secondary school in Chibok on the 14th April, 2014. Dr. Jonathan stated "Wherever these girls are, we'll get them out. Similarly, Obasi (2014), observed that the recent crisis has been a very huge embarrassment for the government. The Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in Nigeria were also shocked over the kidnap of the Chibok school girls. The Bring Back Our Girls hashtags created and popularized by Dr. Oby Obikwesiri carried out demonstration and protests in Abuja which drew the attention of the international community. The Amnesty international and UNICEF backed the campaign, including some world leaders and celebrities such as Hilary Clinton, Malala Yousafzai and rappers Wyclef Jean and Chris Brown. It was later alleged that the Nigeria government ignored the intelligence report about the terrorist attack in the school. BBC News (2014), observed that Amnesty international condemned the Nigeria government whose military had four-hour advance warning of the imminent kidnapping, but failed to send reinforcement to protect the school.

Barely four years after the kidnap of Chibok school girls on February 19, 2018. Boko haram equally kidnapped 110 school girls from the Government Girls Science Technical College at Dapchi, Yobe State. In the buildup to the 2015 general elections, the kidnap of Chibok school girls was used by former president Mohammed Buhari, who eventually emerged after the elections as a campaign tool against the Jonathan government but the kidnapping of Dapchi school girls in Yobe State in 2018 was even more embarrassing to the Nigerian government whose tripod policy stood on providing adequate security, boosting the economy and fighting corruption. The Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED) in 2021, reported that Nigeria was miles ahead of Mexico and Columbia in Kidnapping for ransom (The Cable, 2022). In order to stem the wave of kidnapping in the country, the legislative houses at both the federal and state levels enacted laws including death penalty for convicted kidnappers.

Statement of the Problem

The increasing security challenges in Nigeria occasioned by the activities of terrorist elements such as Boko Haram group and other bandits have put the Nigerian government on its toes. Particularly, the kidnap of 276 Chibok school girls in Borno state and 110 school girls from the government girl's science technical college at Dapchi, Yobe State have cast doubt about the capacity of the Nigerian state led by successive regimes of former president Jonathan and Buhari to protect lives and property of the Nigerian citizens and other nationals living in the country.

However, it was alleged that five girls died, while on their way to the bush because of stampede in the vehicles (Khadiya, 2018). Unfortunately, two of the kidnapped girls were raped, half-dead and tied to a tree in Baale region of the north eastern Nigeria. It was also alleged that Boko Haram abandoned the girls, killed and buried four disobedient girls (Ijaseun, 2022). As at date 1st September, 2024, 88 abducted Chibok girls are still in captivity of the Boko Haram for 10 years, 4 months 20 days while Leah Sharibu of Dapchi school is still in captivity of Boko haram for 7 years 6 months and 14 days (AIITLIVE.com, 2024). Against this background, this study will investigate the kidnap of school children and its

implications for educational development in the North-East Geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Objective of the Study

The objective of the study is to:

1. Determine the major causes of school kids kidnapping in Nigeria.
2. Examine the implications of kidnapping of school children for Nigeria educational development.
3. Proffer adequate solution to the phenomenon of kidnapping in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

The Frustration-Aggression theory was proposed by Dollard, Miller, Drob, Mowrer, and Sears in 1939. It was further developed by Miller, Mowrer and Sear in 1941 and Berkowitz in 1969. According to this theory, aggression is the result of blocking or frustrating a person's efforts to attain a goal (Friedman and Schustack, 1999). The theory holds that frustration causes aggression but when the source of the frustration cannot be challenged, the aggression gets displaced onto an innocent target. Thus, several riots and revolutions, conflict and crises experienced in different parts of the world including Nigeria may be explained by this theory.

Violence is usually carried out by poorer and more deprived sections of the society who probably express their bottled up frustration and anger through violence. Taking a cue from proponents of this theory, the inability of the leadership at all levels in Nigeria to provide good governance has resulted in hoodlums and criminals leveraging on their failure by the government to engage in kidnapping of school children, killing innocent citizens, in addition to destruction of lives and property.

The choice of this theory provides the basis for the identification of political will that is not mustered by government officials and political actors to provide good governance which can fore criminality in form of kidnapping of school children and that extent undermining educational development in the North-East Geo- political zone of Nigeria.

Literature Review

Education

Oyitso and Olumukoro (2012), have observed that 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. Kobare and Nkpobe (2014), have stated that education is the process of developing an individual's mental, social, emotional, spiritual and political intelligence through the provision of requisite information and circumstances that enable it achieve its goal in life.

In their own analysis, Onyido and Osigwe (2007), posited 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. Education can be summed up as the totality of experiences to which a person is exposed or acquire formally or informally for the purpose of learning and character.

Kidnapping

Ngwama (2004), has opined that kidnapping is the process of abducting an individual or group of individuals with a view to achieving a desired objective. Fage and Alabi (2017), have stated that kidnapping involves the application of the force to take human being as hostages to achieve a particular aim. Kidnapping which is one of the forms of terrorism is synonymous or laced with ransom, rape, emotional trauma and even death. In view of the negativities associated with kidnapping, it calls for all and sundry to join forces to fight the menace.

Factors Responsible for Kidnapping of School Children in School

The kidnapping of school children in their schools can be attributed to the following factors:

Porous Borders

Nigeria borders with her neighbors are porous thus, making it possible for terrorists to infiltrate into the country without proper profiling and documentation. Some of these infiltrators may be involved in negative activities such as kidnapping either for organ harvesting or for monetary ransom. With these activities not

properly checked, they can target school children and by extension educational development, as Boko Haram kidnap of school children in Borno and Yobe states respectively lays credence to.

During Buhari presidency, the minister of interior, Rauf Aregbesola opines that many of Nigeria's border are artificial and thus difficult to manage. Aregbesola (2020), concludes: "let me be clear and remind us of the fact that our boundaries are artificial. I know of a particular village in Ogun where the boundary between Nigeria and Benin Republic cuts the palace of the traditional ruler of that town into two.

Poor Intelligence Mechanism

Intelligence is key in any attempt at foiling hoodlums and criminals at unleashing mayhem on their victims. Nte (2013), has observed that independent intelligence reports have shown a lack of cooperation between military intelligence authorities and the state security service on the one hand and between the intelligence agencies and law enforcement agencies on the other hand. This apparent anomaly is responsible for the massive intelligence failure in Nigeria and the triumph of domestic terrorist attacks by Boko Haram in the North East Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria.

Arms Proliferation

In recent years, Nigeria has faced serious security challenges such as insurgency, militancy, banditry, armed robbery, kidnapping, herders/farmers clash etc that undermine her national security. Regrettably, successive regimes have not been able to unravel the sponsors and the means through which the bandits have gotten access to the sophisticated arms and ammunition they use to carry out their activities.

In 2019, Former President Buhari ordered the closure of Nigeria's international borders to stem, among other things the wave of proliferation of small arms and light weapons. According to him, "we have closed our borders here for more than a year, but arms and ammunition continue to flow illegally. As far as Libya remains unstable, so will the problem remain" (Buhari, 2021).

Illegal Migration to Nigeria

Nigeria does not have accurate data on other nationals living in the country. This can be attributed to the fact that some of them do not

enter Nigeria through the right channels for proper profiling and documentation. However, because of the country's inability to keep accurate data about other nationals living here, it becomes difficult to track down some of them who may engage in criminal activities such as banditry, armed robbery, kidnapping, herder's/farmers clashes, insurgency etc. During the regime of Buhari, the minister of interior, Rauf Aregbesola (2020), emphasized on the fact that our boundaries are artificial. I know of a particular village in Ogun state where the boundary between Nigeria and Benin republic cuts the palace of the traditional ruler of the town into two Aregbesola (2020:1).

Lack of Political Will to Tackle Insecurity

The federal government has not been able to approach security challenges with the seriousness it deserves. To nip these challenges in the bud, political will is very important. The lethargic attitude of the federal government under the leadership of President Buhari has been criticized against the backdrop of the oath of office he took on assumption in 2015 which is to protect lives and property of Nigerian citizens. This failure by President Buhari tantamount to willfully neglecting to uphold the provisions of the chapter 2, section 14 (2b) of the Nigerian constitution, which state that the security and welfare of the people shall be the primary purpose of government. For example, the Federal government has not been able to rescue Leah Sharibu who has been under the captivity of Boko Haram sect for 7 years 5 month and 31 days (www.AITLIVE.com).

Failure of Intelligence

There is intelligence failure on the part the security organizations/groups/agencies in Nigeria to foil the attacks by the hoodlums. Some instances of intelligence failure include one prospective corp member from Akwa-Ibom State abducted in Zamfara state in August 2023 remain in Captivity for 1 year, 112 Gamboru Ngala IDPs in Borno state held by Boko Haram/ISWAP terrorist for 6 months and 5 days, 87 persons of Kajuru LGA in Kaduna state held by Boko Haram spent 5 months and 16 days, 88 Chibok girls abducted by Boko Haram terrorist held in captivity for 10 years, 4 months and 20 days, Leah Sharibu Held by Boko Haram spent 7

years and 6 months and 14 days, source:www.AITlive,2024. This lapse/gap has resulted in the kidnap of school Children/Students by the Boko Haram terrorists. This problem of lack of actionable intelligence has been acknowledged by the president and the leadership of various Security Agencies and the Military, (Avele, 2021).

The Implications of Kidnapping School Children on Educational Developments in the North-East Geopolitical Zone of Nigeria.

Abrupt Closure of Schools

Consequent upon the kidnap of the school children of Chibok and Dapchi at different period of time, schools were closed for a little over one year. For instance, in Borno state, schools have been closed for at least 2 years in 22 out of 27 Local Government Areas. Besides, more than 57% in Borno, the most devastated states are shutdown following the resumption of new academic year. (Chumba et al, 2013) in Sanchi, Alhassan, Ajibade and sabo, 2022).

Emotional Trauma

The school children who were kidnapped by Boko Haram and bandit have traumatic experience as a result of the ordeal they went through in the hands of these criminal elements. Some of the traumatic experience include torture, rape, slavery and child marriage (Buhari,2015). Similarly, Sanne,(2015), noted that the school children were used as human shield and suicide bombers.

Palpable Fear

The resultant effects of frequent kidnapping of school children is fear. Thus, the school children now live in fear perpetually (Olugbode,2015).

Efforts Made by the Nigerian Government

Federal government has made several efforts to address the security challenges in the schools in the North-East Geopolitical zone of Nigeria especially in Borno and Yobe states. For example, in 2014, after the kidnap of the Chibok school girls in Borno state, Former president Jonathan led administration declared a state of emergency in the North-East States of Borno, Yobe and Adamawa. Besides, government security agencies launched an onslaught/offensive against the Boko Haram militants by imposing a 24 hours curfew in the affected areas.

3333However, in spite of declaring a state of emergency, Abiodun (2016), observed that the Boko Haram sect continued to launch attack on some military installations and public institutions which have raised concerns and questions about the efficacy of the government's approach towards the insurgency in the country. In the same vein, following the kidnap of Dapchi school girls by the Boko Haram sect in 2018, Nigerian government took some steps by partnering with the international community including Nigeria's immediate neighbors and holding talks with the terrorists. Besides, Former president Buhari ordered the strengthening of a joint operational base involving relevant agencies and services to coordinate their activities.

Service commanders have not only established a unified command centre in Maiduguri, the military has also raised several rescue teams to comb the forest in the north east theatre of operation(Buhari,2018). Further, Buhari gave directives to the service chiefs and the inspector general of police(IGP) to take direct charge and brief him on a daily basis on the efforts of bring back the girls.

Summary

The kidnapping of school children in Chibok, Borno and Dapchi in Yobe States respectively has been attributed to failure of intelligence, porous borders, proliferation of small arms and light weapons etc. The resultant effects of the menace of kidnapping are closure of schools, traumatic experience of the kidnapped victims and palpable fear. The efforts made by the Nigerian state led by former president Jonathan and Buhari respectively have not yielded the desired result that can stem the tide of kidnapping of school Children in the North-East geopolitical zone of Nigeria.

Recommendations

Based on the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Efforts should be made to improve intelligence gathering, sharing and utilization by the security agencies in Nigeria to foil or even forestall attack on the school children by criminal elements.

2. Nigeria's borders are porous therefore government should mount surveillance by installing security devices, such as closed circuit television (CCTV) that can track down illegal migrants and criminal elements into the country.
3. There should be employment of drones to monitor the movement of criminal elements who pose serious threat to national security of the country.
4. Because of the centralized policing in Nigeria, there is a need for decentralized policing where state governments can set up their own state security outfits.

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