

Evaluation of the Psychological Impact of Kidnapping on School Children in Nigeria.

Sadig Abubakar Adulsalami

Department of Political and International Studies, Al-Qalam University, Katsina.

ABSTRACT

Kidnapping has become a regular incidence such that it is no longer shocking to break news about kidnapping in the country. In Nigeria, kidnapping has been ongoing since the early 1990s. This takes place more in the moment of terrorism, insurgency and other forms of political violence. It has become more worrisome considering its trends and type of suspects being paraded as perpetrators of the crime. Involved teenagers kidnapers abducted, drugged and eventually killed are mostly primary school pupil in the metropolis. This, among other kidnapping incidents, speaks volume about the gruesome nature as well as the new dimensions of the phenomenon in Nigeria. This study, therefore examined the psychological impact of kidnapping on school children in Nigeria. To improve both security and Nigeria's damaged educational system, a fundamental need is accountability of governance.

Keywords: perpetrators, Nigeria, psychological and terrorism.

INTRODUCTION

Kidnapping has become a regular incidence such that it is no longer shocking to break news about kidnapping in the country [1]. The phenomenon of kidnapping currently in Nigeria has taken a fearful and threatening dimension going by what some released captives of the vicious kidnapers shared as their experiences in the dens of their kidnapers, which involves serious life threatening inhuman treatment like torturing, maiming, raping and even killing of innocent and defenseless victims in order to create fear in the mind of their victims and mount undue pressure on their relatives for quick and timely payment of ransom over their relations in captive [2].

In Nigeria, kidnapping has been ongoing since the early 1990s [3]; it is a national problem that has eaten so deep into the fabric of the country [4] but it takes place more in the moment of terrorism, insurgency and other forms of political violence. The kidnapping of 250 girls in a girls' secondary school in Chibok, Borno State in 2014 and many more by Boko Haram represent the growing incidence of the kidnapping in Nigeria. Recently, students have become cheap target of notorious kidnapers in Nigeria with its antecedent consequences on individuals,

schools, government and the society at large [5]. Although the security operatives claim to have recorded some successes in terms of arrests of some of the kingpin kidnapers across the country, the crime has continued to grow unabated. It has become more worrisome considering its trends and type of suspects being paraded as perpetrators of the crime. A case in point is the arrest of a gang of kidnapers made up of young teenagers, the oldest of whom was 19 years in Kano metropolis. These teenage kidnapers abducted, drugged and eventually killed a primary school pupil in the metropolis [6]. This, among other kidnapping incidents, speaks volume about the gruesome nature as well as the new dimensions of the phenomenon in Nigeria. This study, therefore examined the psychological impact of kidnapping on school children in Nigeria.

Kidnapping

According to [7], kidnapping is a forcible abduction or stealing away of a man, woman, or child from their own country, and sending them into another. It is an offence punishable at the common law by fine and imprisonment. In America law, this word is seldom, if at all, applied to the abduction of other persons than children, with the intention to send them

out of their country does not seem to constitute a necessary part of the offence. In another light, kidnapping according to [8] is a crime that constitutes an unlawful restraint of a person's liberty by force or show of force so as to send the victim into another country and under the modern law, this crime will usually be found where the victim is taken to another location or concealed. [9] maintained that in some jurisdiction, kidnapping accompanied by bodily injury, sexual assault, or a demand for ransom elevates the crime to first-degree or aggravated kidnapping act. The above source also stressed that although the two terms (that is; kidnapping and abduction) are used interchangeably by many authors, abduction in its scope is broader

Pervasiveness of Kidnapping Incidence in Nigerian Schools

According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), there are 10.5 million children between the ages of 5 and 14 who are out of school in Nigeria and according to the Minister for education, in 2021, the number had increased by more than three million. It is unclear how many children are directly impacted by kidnappings [12].

[13] reported that the first case of kidnapping for financial payment occurred between the year 1999 and 2000 when the Niger Delta criminal gangs abducted expatriate oil workers and made demands for payment of huge amount of money as ransom for their release. Since that time, the criminal business of kidnapping of people for ransom has now become a nationwide occurrence with more target on defenseless in-school adolescents. Meanwhile, the dastardly act of kidnapers in recent time spares nobody again as victims of this vicious criminal act now cut across the upper, middle and lower classes of people in Nigeria [14]. Since the infamous kidnapping of 276 girls from Chibok in 2014, school attacks and kidnapping have steadily increased, being that the same Boko Haram sects launched another attack on Government Girls' Science College, Dapchi, Taraba State, where they kidnapped another set of female students totaling about 105 in number.

than kidnapping, and is not generally accompanied by threat or use of force as it is applied to the later [10]. 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 is why [11] 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 Federal Republic of Nigeria, where every other law takes its cue from. In addition, kidnapping is usually motivated by financial gain or political demand.

[15] further reports that on December 11, 2020, armed men kidnapped 300 boys from Government Science Secondary School in Kankara, Katsina state. They spent six nights with their abductors before they were released. Barely a month later, on February 17, 2021, 27 students were taken from the Government Science Secondary School in Kagara, Niger state. They were released 10 days later. Less than a month after that, hundreds of schoolgirls were abducted from Government Girls Secondary School in Jangebe, Zamfara state, on February 27. 279 of the school girls were released after four days. Two different schools were attacked in Kaduna state in March, including the Federal College of Forestry Mechanization where 30 students were taken.

Presently, more than 600 schools have been closed in Nigeria over security concerns. More than 100 girls are still missing from the Chibok incident, seven years later, and at least 1,000 children have been kidnapped by armed men since December 2020 with nine killed and over 200 more missing. From 2011 to 2019, criminal gangs and armed groups (which the government collectively terms "bandits") have killed over 8,000 people in seven states in Northwest Nigeria forcing more than 260,000 people to flee their homes [16].

Causes of School Kidnappings in Nigeria

[4] observes that schools are generally referred to by experts as “soft targets” because they usually have few or no fences, weak security, and security guards tend to be few and poorly trained. Furthermore, mass abductions of school children attract a lot of attention as they usually generate more public outrage and “tend to attract more national and international attention. Hence, kidnapping hundreds of students rather than road travelers, guarantees publicity and government involvement in negotiations, which could mean millions of dollars in ransom payments. [8] points out that the media’s attention also guarantees government involvement in negotiations which could mean thousands of dollars in ransom payments. And experts say most of these mass kidnappings have been motivated by ransom money and other rewards often offered to “repentant” gang members by government officials. Security expert Kemi Okenyodo believes that this has made the abductions lucrative for criminal gangs. [6] adds that many believe that a weak security infrastructure and governors who have little control over security in their states, being that 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. Several instances abound; accordingly. Auwalu Daudawa, the mastermind of the abduction of more than 300 students in Katsina state in December was recently pardoned in nearby Zamfara state after he “repented” and handed over his weapons to the government Nduka (2021). Auwalu Daudawa and his gang were promised accommodation in the town by Governor Matawalle, along with assistance to improve their livelihoods. In July 2020, Mr. Matawalle also promised bandits two cows for every AK-47 gun they surrendered. There is every need therefore, for states and local governments to become proactive in improving security in schools as such policy of rewarding bandits with money

and vehicles has the potential to backfire with disastrous consequences [14]. Amnesty International reports that there have been sharp increases in child marriage and teenage pregnancies as the insecurity in Northern Nigeria disproportionately affect girls. Similarly, [2] reports that authorities in Kano and Yobe states ordered more than 20 schools to be shut because of the insecurity. Some schools were also recently closed in Zamfara and Niger states. In Borno, Yobe and Adamawa states, dozens of schools have been shut for years because of the Boko Haram insurgency [11]. For a region with a high rate of out-of-school children, this is a massive disruption to gains that have been recorded in recent years. According to UNICEF, there is a net attendance rate of just 53% in primary schools in northern Nigeria though education at that level is free and compulsory. The levels for girls are even lower because of socio-cultural norms and practices that discourage attendance in formal education. The mass kidnapping of Nigerian schoolchildren underscores that the crumbling of human security in Africa’s most populous nation is worsening a deeper impairment, hollowing out Nigeria’s education system to create a “lost generation” of youth across much of the country. Alarming, one in five of the world’s out-of-school children is Nigerian [8]. As Nigerian and international policymakers focus on the immediate crises — of kidnappings, they must urgently rescue and buttress the country’s damaged education system. Reducing violence and achieving development in Africa will depend on an effective strategy for doing so. Violence has suppressed school attendance and deepens a crisis for education in Nigeria. (Dolapo Falola/CC License 2.0). Nigeria’s breakdown in security is particularly attacking education, notably in the country’s north. The 12-year-old Boko Haram insurgency and the more recent rise in armed banditry have combined to displace more than 2 million people and forced the closures of several schools. Families also have withheld their children

from classes with the wave of kidnappings of students. In July, 2021, gunmen stormed the Bethel Baptist High School in Kaduna state and seized 140 students plus staff members [10]. The violence is only deepening a years-old educational crisis that has been worst for northern Nigerians — and for girls [9]. The northeastern state of Borno, at the epicenter of the Boko Haram insurgency, has had nearly 75 percent of its children out of school. The erosion of education for a generation of schoolchildren in the north will reduce their abilities to earn a living and bring skills to the reconstruction of their communities. It will increase their risk of being radicalized amid the region's conflicts. With education generally understood as “a leading determinant of economic growth” and “a key to escaping poverty,” the schools crisis adds what will be a long-lasting challenge to the economic development required to stabilize and rebuild a nation where 41 percent of people live in extreme poverty [15]. New research shows that Nigeria is among oil-exporting nations that will be highly vulnerable to declining oil revenues and consequent political destabilization as the world economy shifts from oil to renewable energy sources. Hence a review of education policy and security is necessary. Nigerian and international policymaking on Nigeria may need to acknowledge deeper and broader damage to the country from the 12-year-old Boko Haram insurgency [7]. Education is one of the domains where the conflict's damage has been severe — not least because secular education has been a primary Boko Haram target. This denial of schooling crimps the lives and

Psychological Impact of Kidnapping on School Children in Nigeria

The experience of kidnapping could be more devastating by its attendant emotional, cognitive, social and physical consequences for Nigerian students and adolescents. [1] observe that the psychological impact of being taken hostage is similar to that of being exposed to other trauma, including terrorist incidents and disasters for children. Thus, kidnapping can create

futures of all children, but especially girls. Global experience and research show that education is a powerful protector of girls, especially in poorer communities, against the hazards of child marriage, including abuse, injury or death from early childbirth, and impoverishment. UNICEF counted 22 million child brides in Nigeria in 2018, and women's rights workers in the north report that girls' exclusion from school has increased early marriages and pregnancies. Further, hundreds of kidnapped children who have been abused or raped by their abductors face acute trauma and stigma upon return. The violence also impedes the progress of Nigeria's most ambitious effort to protect children's rights — the Nigerian Child Rights Act, which still is not fully implemented 18 years after its passage. The recent years' rise in rural banditry — cattle theft, armed looting of villages and now mass kidnappings — in Nigeria's northwest and central states further overstretching Nigeria's military and police. Thus, with an effective vacuum of state authority in many rural areas, criminal gangs have made kidnappings a growth industry. A Lagos-based risk analysis company, SB Morgen, reported last year that Nigerians paid more than \$18 million in kidnapping ransoms from 2011 to 2020 — and nearly two-thirds of that amount in the last four years of the period — evidence of the surge in abductions. Unlike the past, when kidnap victims were mainly wealthy, criminals now target schoolchildren of any class, optimistic that political pressures will generate ransom payments by authorities [9].

different psychological problems in the life of students who fall victim of being kidnapped. [4] maintain that emotional effects such as shock, numbness, fear and anxiety (but panic is not common), helplessness, and hopelessness, dissociation (feeling numb and switched off emotionally), anger (at everybody), anhedonia (loss of pleasure in doing what was previously pleasurable) feeling of

depression (a reaction loss) feeling of guilt (for example, at having survived should other people that were involved died) and so on, are some of the psychological effects of being kidnapped. Similarly, kidnapped victims could suffer from impaired memory and concentration, confusion, and disorientation, instructive thoughts (flash backs) and memories, denial (that is, that the event has happened) hyper vigilance and hyper arousal (a state of feeling too aroused) with a profound fear of another incident of kidnapping [13].

Tackling School Kidnappings in Nigeria
Nigeria launched the “Safe Schools Initiative” during the administration of former president Goodluck Jonathan and immediately after Boko Haram kidnapped 276 school girls in Chibok in 2014 [7]. A \$20 million commitment was made by the

Nigerian government and its partners to improve security in schools in north-eastern Nigeria by building fences around them but the abduction of 110 schoolgirls from Dapchi in Yobe state in 2018 has called the effectiveness of the programme into question [16]. In the same vein, the Nigerian army has also built guard posts close to some schools but the number of schools across the country (and the ongoing fight with Boko Haram and similar groups) mean the army is stretched thin and several educational institutions are left unguarded. Other multilateral institutions such as UNICEF and World Economic Forum (WEF), and advocacy organisations like Amnesty International have also been contributing in various ways in the fight to put an end to these kidnappings [2].

CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATIONS

To improve both security and Nigeria’s damaged educational system, a fundamental need is accountability of governance. In 2014, the government joined an international, public-private effort, the Safe Schools Initiative, that aims to preserve the safety of education in countries facing violent conflict. With the continuation of abductions and attacks on unsecured schools seven years later, Nigerians have posed questions about how the millions of dollars allocated were spent. Also fundamental is investment — and the government’s latest budget moves in the wrong direction.

Nigeria needs to make a priority of overhauling its education system. The nation must rebuild and secure schools, improve teacher recruitment and training and reverse the declines in school attendance. Catch-up education must be available to those who have missed out. Innovative options like hybrid (on-site and off-site) schooling should be made available. Non-state schools must be subject to appropriate quality controls. Basic education must be complemented with targeted vocational training and entrepreneurship initiatives to help young people earn a living.

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