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KIDNAPPING AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN ZARIA (2018-2023)

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ABSTRACT
This study investigated the impact of kidnapping on economic activities in Zaria Metropolis between 2018 and 2023. This study employed a descriptive survey method targeting household members in bandit-affected communities across the thirteen wards of Zaria Metropolis. A hybrid data collection technique was utilized, incorporating both quantitative (questionnaire) and qualitative (in-depth interviews) methods. A total of 204 questionnaires were distributed with 193 retrieved. Interviews were conducted with 12 respondents including community leaders and security personnel. Following the analysis of the data using frequency and percentage tables and thematic method, the study revealed a consensus among respondents that kidnapping incidents in Zaria Metropolis have increased significantly from 2018 to 2023. Economically, kidnappings have caused business closures, decreased local investment, and increased security costs, with notable impacts on agricultural productivity and food security. The study also revealed that personal livelihoods have been severely affected, with changes in daily routines, income, and quality of life, resulting in increased relocations from the area. The study recommends that the government and security agencies develop a collaborative security strategy involving all stakeholders, with a focus on community engagement and trust-building

Keywords: Economy, Economic activities, Kidnapping, Security agencies

INTRODUCTION
Kidnapping is a major security challenge, having changed from isolated incidents into organized crime and highly lucrative business that impact several parts of the world. It comes in various forms, from economic one such as ransom demands to becoming a tool of strategy during wars.

In Africa, between 2019 and 2023, there were more than 400 recorded kidnappings annually precisely in Mali and Burkina Faso alone (Berger, 2023). This testifies to the rising part that abductions play in regional conflicts. Militants hold people kidnapped as means of intimidation, recruitment, extortion or increasing their power, and they mostly target locals rather than foreigners. The change in tactics, from financial to expansionist and ideological motives, worsens regional instability by displacing populations and sowing widespread fear.

In Nigeria, the phenomenon has grown in scale and sophistication, and it has been linked to a range of criminal activities, including terrorism, armed robbery, and human trafficking. Kidnapping is a multifaceted phenomenon with significant economic, social, and political implications. It not only affects the victims and their families but also has a ripple effect on the wider society, particularly on economic activities. The increasing incidence of kidnapping in Nigeria and other parts of the world has raised concerns about its impact on economic development and stability (Okoli and Osuagwu, 2019).

Specifically, kidnapping has been found to have a significant negative impact on economic activities in affected areas in the country. It creates fear and uncertainty, which can lead to a

decline in economic activities such as tourism, investment, and trade. According to a report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), kidnapping has been found to have a significant impact on the economy of affected communities (UNODC, 2019).

Zaria metropolis, located in Kaduna state, Nigeria, has experienced a significant increase in kidnapping incidents in recent years. According to a report by Vanguard newspaper, Zaria recorded 79 kidnapping incidents between January and October 2019. This represents a significant increase from the previous year when only 26 cases were reported in the same period. The impact of kidnapping on economic activities in Zaria metropolis is likely to be significant, particularly given the city's status as a major commercial center. Zaria is home to a number of businesses, including banks, manufacturing companies, and educational institutions. The city is also a major transportation hub, with a railway station and a major highway connecting it to other parts of the country.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Kidnapping

Kidnapping is one of the most severe and traumatic crimes that involves the taking of a person against their will and confining them in an undisclosed location. It is considered a serious violation of a person's fundamental human rights, and it is punishable by law in most countries worldwide. According to Chesterman (2019), kidnapping is also defined as the unlawful taking, carrying away, or confinement of a person against their will, through the use of force, coercion, or deception, with the intent to commit a felony, ransom, or other unlawful purpose. It is the act of seizing, holding, or detaining a person or group of persons by unlawful means, including by force or threat of force, for the purpose of extortion, exploitation, or other illicit purposes (UNODC, 2016).

The United Nations defines kidnapping as "the abduction or unlawful detention of a person, including by the use of force, coercion, deception, or fraud, or by the exercise of authority, in order to compel that person to act or refrain from acting in a particular way" (United Nations, 2002, p.2). This definition emphasizes that kidnapping involves both the act of taking a person away and the intent to use that person for some purpose.

Economy

Economy is a term that refers to the system of production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services in a country or region. It is influenced by various factors, such as supply and demand, trade, technology, government policies, and natural resources.

According to James (2015), economy is a social domain that emphasizes the practices, discourses, and material expressions associated with the production, use, and management of scarce resources. From a business perspective, it is the system of making money and producing and distributing goods and services within a country or region. The economy is measured by indicators such as gross domestic product (GDP), inflation, unemployment, trade balance, and consumer confidence (Cambridge Dictionary, 2021). Economies can be measured and evaluated by various indicators that reflect their performance and health. Some of the most common indicators are gross domestic product (GDP), inflation rate, unemployment rate, consumer price index (CPI), balance of trade, and exchange rate. (Investopedia, 2023).

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

This study adopts the Rational Choice Theory

Rational Choice Theory

Rational Choice Theory (RCT) originated from the classical economic theories of the 18th century, with Adam Smith being one of the earliest proponents of the idea that individuals act based on self-interest, which in turn leads to market efficiency. This concept has evolved to form the basis of RCT, which posits that individuals make decisions that maximize their personal advantage (Paternotte, 2020). (Herfeld, 2020).

According to Nickerson (2023), RCT is based on the premise that individuals are rational actors who make decisions that maximize their utility. The theory assumes that people weigh the potential costs and benefits of their actions to make choices that will provide them with the greatest benefit. This utility maximization is not limited to financial gains but can also encompass other forms of rewards (Paternotte, 2020). Furthermore, RCT suggests that individuals have preferences and beliefs that they use to evaluate their options and make choices. These choices are made with the intention of optimizing personal outcomes, whether they be material, social, or psychological (Paternotte, 2020).

Rational Choice Theory is relevant to the study because it explains the motivations behind the act itself. Kidnappers often weigh the potential rewards, such as ransom payments, against the risks of capture or punishment, and may proceed if the perceived benefits outweigh the costs. This makes kidnapping an economically motivated crime, where targets are deliberately chosen based on their ability to yield higher returns, such as wealthy individuals, expatriates, or business owners. From the perspective of victims, businesses, and governments, RCT also explains the behavioral and economic adjustments made in response to the threat of kidnapping. Individuals may avoid certain areas, reduce travel, or invest heavily in security; businesses may relocate, scale down operations, or redirect resources to protective measures; and governments must weigh the costs of increased security against the risks of economic decline. These rational responses reduce investment, productivity, and overall economic activity, showing how kidnapping disrupts normal economic functions.

Despite its broad application, RCT has faced criticism for its assumption that all human behavior is driven by rational self-interest. Critics argue that the theory does not adequately account for altruistic or impulsive behaviors that do not align with the rational actor model (Carson, Dugan, & Yang, 2020). In addition, RCT has been critiqued for its failure to consider nonrational influences on behavior, such as emotions and social norms. These critiques suggest that the theory's focus on rationality is too narrow and does not capture the full complexity of human decision-making (Crossman, 2019).

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

A total of 204 questionnaires were distributed, out of which 193 were retrieved, resulting in a response rate of approximately 94.6%. This high response rate indicates the relevance and urgency of the topic, as well as the respondents' willingness to share their experiences and perspectives.

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

As presented by the data, majority of the respondents are male (82.90%), while females constituted 17.10%. This distribution reflects the demographic composition of the study area and indicates a higher level of male participation in the survey.

The age distribution shows that a significant portion of the respondents (75.26%) were 31 years and above. The age group 26-30 years accounted for 17.37%, followed by 21-25 years (4.21%) and 16-20 years (3.16%). This suggests that the majority of respondents were mature

adults, potentially reflecting their greater awareness and concern about the issue of kidnapping.

Finally, the educational background of respondents reveals that the majority held undergraduate degrees (65.26%), followed by postgraduate (33.68%), and a small fraction with diploma or certificate qualifications (1.05%). This high level of education among respondents could influence their understanding of the economic impacts of kidnapping.

Impact of Kidnapping on Economic Activities in Zaria Metropolis

The data reveals a significant consensus among respondents regarding the trend of kidnapping incidents in Zaria Metropolis from 2018 to 2023. Specifically, 113 respondents, representing 58.95%, strongly agree that kidnapping incidents have increased each year since 2018, while 44 respondents, or 22.96%, agree. On the other hand, 31 respondents, or 16.15%, disagree, and a mere 2 respondents, or 1.04%, strongly disagree with this statement.

Regarding awareness of kidnapping incidents, 111 respondents, equating to 57.68%, strongly agree that they are more aware now than in 2018, and 52 respondents, or 27.08%, agree. Meanwhile, 16 respondents, or 8.33%, disagree, and 14 respondents, or 7.29%, strongly disagree. When it comes to media coverage of kidnapping in Zaria, 31 respondents, representing 16.15%, strongly agree that it has become more frequent, and 83 respondents, or 43.23%, agree. However, 56 respondents, or 29.17%, disagree, and 23 respondents, or 11.98%, strongly disagree.

In terms of personal concern, 114 respondents, or 59.38%, strongly agree that people they know are more concerned about kidnapping now than in the past, while 41 respondents, or 21.35%, agree, 24 respondents, or 12.50%, disagree, and 11 respondents, or 5.73%, strongly disagree.

Finally, regarding the fear of kidnapping in their community, 116 respondents, representing 60.42%, strongly agree that this fear has grown over the last five years, and 59 respondents, or 30.73%, agree. Conversely, 12 respondents, or 6.25%, disagree, and 6 respondents, or 3.13%, strongly disagree. This analysis indicates an increase in kidnapping incidents, heightened awareness, increased media coverage, growing concern among acquaintances, and escalating fear within the community, that require the urgent need for effective measures to combat this security challenge. These findings align with the views expressed by the traditional ruler, who highlighted a marked increase in indiscriminate kidnappings, attributing this trend to economic downturns and inflation in the country.

Economic Impact on Businesses

The analysis of the data collected reveals that the majority of respondents strongly agree that businesses have closed due to the threat of kidnapping, with 120 respondents, or 62.50%, indicating this view, while 45 respondents, or 23.44%, agree. On the contrary, 20 respondents, or 10.42%, disagree, and 7 respondents, or 3.65%, strongly disagree. In terms of local investment, 118 respondents, or 61.46%, strongly agree that kidnapping has led to a decrease in local investment, and 40 respondents, or 20.83%, agree. Meanwhile, 25 respondents, or 13.02%, disagree, and 9 respondents, or 4.69%, strongly disagree.

Regarding the cost of security, 110 respondents, or 57.29%, strongly agree that it has increased for businesses, with 55 respondents, or 28.65%, agreeing. On the contrary, 20 respondents, or 10.42%, disagree, and 7 respondents, or 3.65%, strongly disagree. When it comes to job loss due to kidnapping-related business impacts, 105 respondents, or 54.69%, strongly agree, and 60 respondents, or 31.25%, agree. However, 20 respondents, or 10.42%, disagree, and 7 respondents, or 3.65%, strongly disagree.

Finally, regarding the overall economic growth of Zaria Metropolis, 125 respondents, or 65.10%, strongly agree that kidnapping has affected economic growth, with 45 respondents, or 23.44%, agreeing. Conversely, 15 respondents, or 7.81%, disagree, and 7 respondents, or 3.65%, strongly disagree. This comprehensive analysis indicates that kidnapping significantly impacts business closures, local investment, security costs, job loss, and overall economic growth in Zaria Metropolis.

Interviewed respondents also expressed that kidnapping significantly impacts business closures, local investment, security costs, job loss, and the general economic growth in Zaria Metropolis. These impacts go in line with the observations from the leader of the crops farmers association, who emphasized the transformation of kidnapping incidents from sporadic to pervasive, which had been affecting agricultural productivity and food security.

Effect on Livelihoods

The analysis of Table indicates that the personal income of respondents has been significantly affected by kidnapping, with 38 respondents, or 20.32%, strongly agreeing, and 44 respondents, or 23.53%, agreeing. Contrarily, 67 respondents, or 35.83%, disagree, and 38 respondents, or 20.32%, strongly disagree. Regarding changes in daily routines due to the threat of kidnapping, 52 respondents, or 26.94%, strongly agree, and 77 respondents, or 39.90%, agree. On the other hand, 55 respondents, or 28.50%, disagree, and 9 respondents, or 4.66%, strongly disagree.

The impact of kidnapping on acquaintances' jobs is also notable, with 101 respondents, or 53.16%, strongly agreeing, and 69 respondents, or 36.32%, agreeing. Conversely, 14 respondents, or 7.37%, disagree, and 6 respondents, or 3.16%, strongly disagree. The threat of kidnapping has impacted the quality of life of respondents' families, with 63 respondents, or 32.64%, strongly agreeing, and 57 respondents, or 29.53%, agreeing. On the other hand, 67 respondents, or 34.72%, disagree, and 6 respondents, or 3.11%, strongly disagree. There has also been an increase in relocation from Zaria due to kidnapping, with 35 respondents, or 18.13%, strongly agreeing, and 57 respondents, or 29.53%, agreeing. Meanwhile, 63 respondents, or 32.64%, disagree, and 38 respondents, or 19.69%, strongly disagree.

In addition to the above, kidnapping extends beyond economic indicators to personal livelihoods, as indicated by significant shifts in daily routines, income stability, and quality of life within affected communities. This is the view of the traditional ruler in the study area who explained the escalation of kidnapping incidents, impacting livelihoods across demographic lines. In places such as Wuccri, Dambo and Dunten Abba, farmers have been retrained from farming full scale like they used to before. None of these places have not witnessed kidnapping. In fact, some of them had experienced the killing of the kidnapped victims.

Government and Security Agencies' Strategies

The analysis of Table 5.6 reveals varied findings of the strategies to combat kidnapping. Specifically, 22 respondents, or 11.40%, strongly agree that these strategies have reduced the number of incidents, and 83 respondents, or 43.01%, agree. Conversely, 75 respondents, or 38.86%, disagree, and 13 respondents, or 6.74%, strongly disagree. Regarding communication from the government about anti-kidnapping efforts, 31 respondents, or 16.06%, strongly agree that there is clear communication, and 56 respondents, or 29.02%, agree. Conversely, 84 respondents, or 43.52%, disagree, and 22 respondents, or 11.40%, strongly disagree.

The adequacy of support provided to victims of kidnapping by the government is questioned, with 8 respondents, or 4.21%, strongly agreeing, and 23 respondents, or 12.11%, agreeing. Meanwhile, 83 respondents, or 43.68%, disagree, and 76 respondents, or 40.00%, strongly disagree. The equipment and preparedness of security agencies to deal with kidnapping are also in doubt, with 21 respondents, or 11.05%, strongly agreeing, and 17 respondents, or 8.95%, agreeing. However, 78 respondents, or 41.05%, disagree, and 74 respondents, or 38.95%, strongly disagree. Finally, regarding the effectiveness of collaboration between the community and security agencies, 38 respondents, or 19.69%, strongly agree that there is effective collaboration, and 56 respondents, or 29.02%, agree. On the other hand, 68 respondents, or 35.23%, disagree, and 31 respondents, or 16.06%, strongly disagree.

In addition to the above, one of the interviewed respondents expressed that the government and security agencies have implemented various strategies to address kidnapping, but these measures have had limited success due to corruption, lack of resources, and poor coordination. Challenges include inadequate funding, insufficient training, and the influence of criminal networks. To improve these strategies, the participants suggest enhancing the training and welfare of security personnel, increasing funding, and fostering better cooperation between the community and law enforcement. They also posit that community has played a role by providing intelligence and supporting local security efforts, but there needs to be a more structured and collaborative approach to ensure effectiveness.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings from this study give a significant consensus among respondents regarding the increasing trend of kidnapping incidents in Zaria Metropolis from 2018 to 2023. The majority of respondents strongly agreed that kidnapping incidents have escalated each year, with heightened awareness and media coverage of these events. The perspectives of the traditional ruler corroborate these findings, highlighting the economic downturns and the emergence of organized criminal groups as contributing factors to the rise in kidnapping incidents. This increase in kidnappings has amplified fear and concern within the community, and this indicate an urgent need for effective countermeasures.

The economic impact of kidnapping on businesses in Zaria Metropolis is profound. A substantial portion of respondents reported that businesses have closed, local investment has decreased, and security costs have surged due to the threat of kidnapping. The leader of the crops farmers association's observations about the pervasive nature of kidnappings impacting agricultural productivity and food security further support these findings. The economic repercussions extend beyond business closures to include job losses and hindered economic growth, underscoring the extensive reach of this security challenge.

Kidnapping has also significantly affected personal livelihoods, with respondents reporting changes in daily routines, personal income, and overall quality of life. The youth leader's comments about the widespread impact of kidnappings on businesses and livelihoods across different demographic groups align with the survey results. Many respondents indicated that they know individuals whose jobs have been affected by kidnapping, and there has been an observable increase in relocations from Zaria due to security concerns. These disruptions in daily life and economic stability illustrate the pervasive and personal toll of kidnapping on the community.

Finally, the study reveals varied perceptions of the government's and security agencies' strategies to combat kidnapping. While some respondents acknowledge the efforts to reduce kidnapping incidents, others question the adequacy of support provided to victims and the

effetiveness of security measures. Emphasis of the traditional ruler on community-driven security measures and transparent governance aligns with the need for enhanced collaboration, resource allocation, and public communication strategies. These findings suggest that for security strategies to be effective, there must be a concerted effort to involve the community and ensure clear, consistent communication from the government.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study underscore a troubling increase in kidnapping incidents in Zaria Metropolis, markedly affecting the economic and social fabric of the community. The overwhelming consensus among respondents that kidnapping incidents have increased each year since 2018, coupled with the rising fear and awareness, points to an escalating security crisis. Economic activities have been severely disrupted, with businesses closing, local investments dwindling, and security costs soaring. These economic disruptions have led to significant job losses and stunted economic growth, highlighting the broader implications of kidnapping on regional development. In addition, the impact on personal livelihoods has been profound, with many respondents altering their daily routines and experiencing declines in personal income and quality of life.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the findings of this study, the following recommendations are suggested:

i. Families should play a foundational role in preventing kidnapping by instilling strong moral values and educating children about personal security. Parents and guardians should work closely with local community leaders and security agencies to report suspicious activities.

ii. The government, in collaboration with local business associations and NGOs should introduce financial aid programs, investment incentives, and security grants to assist businesses affected by kidnapping. This will help revitalize economic activities and mitigate the financial impact of kidnapping on businesses and individuals.

iii. To tackle the root causes of kidnapping, the government, in partnership with international organizations and NGOs, should implement interventions that address poverty, and unemployment. These should include skill acquisition programs to provide alternatives to criminal activities and reduce the appeal of kidnapping as a source of income.

iv. Continuous training and improved working conditions for security personnel are essential to strengthening the fight against kidnapping. The government should ensure that security agencies receive adequate resources to enhance their effectiveness in fighting kidnapping.

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