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THE SOCIOECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS OF KIDNAPPING ON FOOD SECURITY IN NIGERIA: A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Kidnapping is currently a worldwide problem. It is a violent crime known to have not just profound effects on individuals but also a multifaceted implication on the society. Nigeria is currently bedevilled by this social menace, and this is to the extent that it has escalated and is threatening not just the very fabrics of economic development but also the aspect of food which is crucial for human existence in the society. In fact, this ugly situation is devastatingly growing geometrically despite yearly increased budgetary allocation to the security sector by the Nigerian government. Worried by this perplexing situation, this study examines the socioeconomic implications of kidnapping in Nigeria with focus on its on agricultural production, food availability, accessibility and affordability. The study adopts a qualitative approach based on a review of relevant literature and secondary data while analysis was the done using to qualitative content analysis. Failed State theory provides a theoretical thrust for examining this phenomenon. The review highlights how kidnapping can discourage farmers from accessing farmlands, disrupt agricultural activities, increase production and transportation cost and weaken the economic security of rural households. The study recommends among others the need for improved governance at all levels so as to rarely ensure the security of lives and properties of people, the study further advocated the need to introduce economic incentives for farmers in high-risk zones in order to address the losses suffered and subsequently ensure a food secured society.

Keywords: Kidnapping for Ransom, Agricultural Disruption, Food Security and Rural Vulnerability

1. Introduction

Nigeria today is undoubtedly flooded with different security challenges which is further compounded by the prevailing issues of kidnapping. Alemika (2013) explained this when he noted that Nigeria is currently plagued by numerous criminal behaviours, amongst which kidnapping traverses its territorial bounds. Although, this phenomenon is said to be witnessed in the urban areas but it's weightier in rural areas driven largely by weak governance, poverty, unemployment and get-rich-quick syndrome mostly seen among youths. Hence, kidnapping is becoming more alarming to the extent that

it has unavoidably continue to sustain a growing climate of fear and insecurity in the country that is disturbing to locals as well as foreigners. This therefore implies that the booming business of kidnapping activities spells dooms for both local businesses, foreign direct investment (FDI) and the entire society. In fact, kidnapping in Nigeria has become a strong threat to peace and security (Johnmary & Ndubuisi, 2014). A security expert, Prof. Oyesoji Aremu has said that Nigeria is grappling with alarming levels of insecurity with about 2.2 million kidnapping incidents recorded in a single year in addition to ransom payments estimated at N2.2 trillion (The Guardian, 2026). This is possible

because of the mass abduction of victims across the country recorded in schools, religious places, markets etc. This therefore denotes that kidnapping which apparently reflect the emergence of an organised system to generate quick-money through ransom payment is tremendously making waves across the country and assuming dangerous dimensions which is threatening to the corporate existence of the country as one geographical entity as what was in time past adopted as a tool of ideological struggle has since become a major source of livelihood in Nigeria (Abati, 2009). Hence, the growing contentious concern on not just the citizens and foreigners but also among scholars who sees it as a prevailing social problem that requires scholarly attention especially as this trendy felonious acts affects various facets of national life among which are leaving agricultural investments in Nigeria on life support, making multinational company to fold up and many farmers vacating their farms if not the country in their numbers which widely considered as “japa” syndrome.

Similarly, statistics has undoubtedly shown increase in food insecurity in Nigeria. National Bureau of statistics (NBS) reports that food insecurity in Nigeria has risen significantly, with 62.4% of households facing challenges in accessing nutritious or preferred foods. The Food and Agricultural Organization and partners in 2025 projected that 30.6 million people in 26 states and the FCT are projected to face acute food and nutrition insecurity while the World Bank reported that by 2024, about 129 million Nigerians (which is over 50% of Nigerians) were trapped in poverty thereby constraining them from being able to afford food. Hence, kidnapping activities will further worsen this already bad situation and should therefore be a source of concern to the people and the government at various levels. For instance, Ibrahim & Ahmad (2022) revealed that between 2019 and 2021, these organized criminals have received over \$100 million (about 15 billion). This is in addition to the fact that the kidnappers have desperately become more daring and ruthless (Okaba, Nte & Okiro, 2009). They have over the years intentionally develop their criminal network that seems to have defy all possible solutions and making a show of shame of the intelligence of Nigerians as well as the Nigeria security operatives. It is

against this backdrop that this paper explores kidnapping activities and its implication on food security in Nigeria.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Conceptual Issues

Kidnapping

Kidnapping is complex and transitional due to its state-to-state scenario as well as jurisdictional criteria (Asuquo, 2009). The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) describe kidnapping as the unlawful detention of a person or persons against their will, using force, threat, fraud or enticement for the purpose of demanding for their liberation an illicit gain or any other economic gain or other material benefit or make them do or not do something. Fage and Alabi (2017) conceived kidnapping as “forceful or fraudulent abduction of an individual or a group of individuals to an unknown destination, for reasons ranging from economic, political, and religious to struggle for self-determination (p. 289). Thomas and Nta (2009) asserted that it is an organized and systematic robbery which is not as deadly as the armed robbery, but more profitable than the former. This explains while many have thrown caution at the wind and indulge in it recklessly. Walsh and Poole, (2019) has described the phenomenon as ‘abducting or capturing away of a person intentionally to deprive them of personal freedom. More so, Nwaorah (2009) viewed it as an act of an angry man who wants to take any person of value hostage and who could be rescued by loved ones. Generally, kidnapping comprises capturing and detaining an individual against his or her will, usually in an extension of other criminal intentions. Abraham, (2010) has further illustrated that kidnapping is of two kinds: simple and aggravated. The latter is rampant in Nigeria and is more unsafe because it contains both physical and psychological suffering and deprivations, it really might be difficult for most Nigerians to utter which of aggravated kidnapping and armed robbery is the most dreaded and feared crime in the country. In this paper, kidnapping is conceptualized as a deliberate act done to imprison individual(s) contrary to their will to extort certain benefits.

Food Security

Food and agricultural Organization sees food security as the availability, access, and utilization of sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO, 2020). Based on the 1996 World Food summit, food security is defined when all people always have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preference for an active and healthy life. They went further to identify four main dimensions of food which are physical availability of food (food supply), economic and physical access to food (that is food being adequately supply is not enough but also being affordable and sufficiently accessible), food utilization to ensure nutritional status of people and then stability (consistently) which has to do with food availability at all times not just periodically. According to Liddo (2021) food security refers to access to basic nutrition and food supply. It is often seen as being closely related to economic security. Therefore, if situation other than this is obtainable it is perceived as food insecurity which can either be chronic (persistent poverty) or transitory (due to shocks, such as conflict) (NBS, 2017). Additionally, Ike et al (2015) in an attempt to x-ray the definition reveals the multi-dimensional nature of food security concept pinpointing that food sufficiency focuses on the availability and adequate quantities of food of appropriate quality, physical and economic access focuses on individuals' access to sufficient food, the security aspect relates to food utilization by the body, food safety, risks involved among other factors while food safety relates to time-bound aspect of food availability, access and utilization.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this paper is Failed State theory which is also known as State Fragility theory. It is widely used to explain conditions in countries where the government is unable to perform core functions, leading to instability and insecurity hence has overtime become an important tool in explaining kidnapping and other violent crimes by different scholars in the field (Igiebor, 2025). This theory was popularised by Torres and Anderson (2004) who attempted to describe the

character of a collapsed (failed) state. The theory assumes that a state is considered "failed" when it can no longer provide basic services such as security, law enforcement and economic stability. In that case non-actors, including criminal groups like kidnappers exploit the power vacuum, leading to increased violence and lawlessness and consequently dramatic and devastating experiences on the victims and the society. Scholars have attempted to put forward several plausible generalizations. For instance, Morcos (2005) conceived fragile states as countries that exhibit less capacity to evolve and execute public development-oriented policies and less capacity for political development. Similarly, Rotberg (2004) expounded on the state that have failed or are failing. According to the Crisis States Research Centre (2009), the term "failing state" typified a country whose government has performed poorly in providing for the public good and economic and people-oriented development (cited in Igiebor, 2025). Moreover, proponents of this theory are of the opinion that fragility fuels criminality such as kidnapping which in turn increasingly weakens governance and unleashes havoc on the various sectors of the state and devastating impacts on its citizens. This also implies that it is a catalyst that further worsen state fragility in Nigeria thereby leaving its citizens vulnerable to all sorts of dysfunctional happenings.

To further, going by the above description, it is easier to fit Nigeria into a fragile state due to not to the incessant activities of the kidnappers with little or no interference as well as their devastating effects on the economic, food, health, personal and community security of the Nigeria state thereby further exposing the weak security structure and competence to actually tackle the phenomenon bedevilling the country recklessly. The proponents of this theory also argued that victims of kidnapping do not deserve what they went through but that the system has failed. In fact, some areas have been lost to the criminally minded people and are seen as danger zones or lions' den and the thought of this not to talk of the experience of such has made many people mentally fragile as well as worsen the fragility of the state. Moreover, the Nigerian state is struggling to recover and exercise the needed control some parts of its

territory overwhelmed by the activities of kidnappers or abductors who often are compelled to redeem themselves with a ransom after they have been price tagged or where either exchange for their fellow criminals in prison by government in some instances and this depicts a picture of a failed state with weak institution that is supposed to provide basic security, protection of property and rule of law in the society. More so, farmers are displaced, agricultural activities are disrupted and the socio-economic pillar is unstable significantly evident in the reduction of economic growth as well as in food production. Hence, the danger here is not just the activities of the kidnappers but also the actions and inactions of those at the corridors of power that seems to be additionally exploited by the kidnappers thereby perpetuating the cycle of insecurity in the state. Consequently, this implies that more crime will boom where crime thrives. The Nigerian state is confronted with the challenge of providing effective security for its citizens mostly in the Northern parts where bandits have seriously undermined the military capacity of the security apparatus of the state despite the military efforts (Olorok, 2014; Okoli, 2019a). Therefore, this theory provides an analytical perspective for understanding how weaknesses in the state institutions, inadequate security provision, and the inability of government to effectively perform its fundamental responsibilities can create conditions that allow criminal activities to flourish. These conditions may undermine citizens' livelihoods, agricultural production, food distribution, and access to food. The theory further explain why the socioeconomic implications of kidnapping may extend beyond the immediate victims of abduction to farmers, agricultural traders, rural households, and consumers.

Hence, the need for government to be proactive and strengthen it weak governance, repudiate corruption and established an effective institutional control that will ensure a formidable security and criminals unleashing such havoc are held accountable even to the furthest extent of the law

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative documentary research design to examine the socioeconomic implications of kidnapping on food security in Nigeria. The design was considered appropriate because the study relied on existing literature and other sources to investigate the relationship between kidnapping and agricultural production, and food security. It enables the researcher to examine previous work and develop an understanding of the socioeconomic implications of kidnapping on food security

3.2 Sources of Data

The study relied exclusively on secondary data obtained from published journal articles, academic books, newspaper reports, government publications, and reports from relevant national and international organisations. The materials were selected based on their relevance to kidnapping, insecurity agricultural production and food security in Nigeria Particular attention was given to publications addressing the effects of kidnapping and related security challenges on farming activities, food supply, market access, and household economic well-being.

3.3 Data Collection Procedure

Relevant materials were identified and reviewed through academic publications, online journal and newspapers reports. The selections were guided by their relevance to the study objectives, credibility, and contribution to understanding the relationship between kidnapping and food security. Information relating to agricultural production, food availability, food accessibility, food affordability as well as rural livelihoods was extracted from the selected materials and organised according to major issues addressed in the study

3.4 Method of Data Analysis

The study employed qualitative content analysis to examine the secondary data. The materials were read carefully, and relevant information was classified into themes corresponding to the objectives of the study. These categories included the disruption of agricultural production, displacement of farmers, disruption of food

supply chains, transportation costs, and threats to rural livelihoods. The information was compared across sources to identify recurring findings and relationships between kidnapping and food security. The study was subsequently interpreted in relation to the study objectives and the Failed State Theory.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Effects of Kidnapping on Food Security

Food is a necessity for all living creatures including humans. It is one of the basic needs of man that provides one with energy as well as sustains the health to undertake daily tasks. Nigeria is blessed with natural resources including vast fertile land that favours the massive production of crops and livestock that can sustain people in the country and become not just giant of the Africa but also food basket of the continent. Over the years, many scholars have attempted to define the concept food security.” Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) sees food security as the availability, access, and utilization of sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life (FAO, 2020). According to Liddo (2021) food security refers to access to basic nutrition and food supply. It is often seen as being closely related to economy security Food security continues to be a critical issue in Nigeria (Umar, 2025). In Nigeria, rural areas are known for most of the agricultural activities and subsequently food production. However, kidnapping has become one of the major drivers of rural insecurity thereby affecting the pillars of food security. Below are some of the ways the phenomenon result in food insecurity in Nigeria:

a. Agricultural Activities Disorder: Agriculture, no doubt, is the pillar of Nigeria’s economy. However, in recent years, agricultural activities are greatly disrupted not because of natural factor such as weather condition or natural disaster but by a social disaster known as kidnapping. Kidnapping is a social cankerworm which has a dramatic effect on not just social fabric but also the means of livelihood of members of the society. This idea was expounded by Bello and Abdullahi (2021) who asserted that the threat to Nigeria’s food security has increased due to bandits and herders targeted attacks on

farmers and farming. This view was corroborated by NBS 2017 report which revealed that currently, there have been a decrease in agricultural production thereby indicating a disorder in agricultural activities. This further implies kidnapping has a broad range of consequences some of which are less tangible (not easily identified) but of grave effect. For instance, kidnapping has instilled a climate of fear and anxiety which have further disrupted agricultural activities. Food insecurity is indeed associated with insurgency/banditry as farmers are deprived of cultivating vast hectares of farmland thereby leading to decrease in production (Beetseh, Abubakar & Nongo, 2021). Hassan and Tanko (2023) also supported this view when they stated that the incidence of kidnapping has destabilised agricultural and socio-economic activities of the nation. More so, Beetseh, et al., (2021) agreed with this when he noted that due to the heinous acts of Boko Haram insurgents/bandits many farmers have been forced not just out of their farmlands but also out of the ancestral homes to internally displaced persons (IDP) camp. This implies that many farmers are living as refugees in their own country. In fact, it is also revealed that when some farmers who unfortunately were kidnapped had to sell their ancestral homes or farmland to generate money in order to pay as ransom before they were freed from the kidnappers’ den which hence the accumulation of all these have further worsen agricultural activities in Nigeria.

b. Decreases Food Availability: Kidnapping incidents have led to most farmers being displaced while many more who would not throw caution to the wind have deliberately refuse to go to their farmland so as not to be kidnap. Shettima (2016) revealed that bulk of farmers in Nigeria are rural dwellers and rural areas happened to be the hardest hit area in the kidnapping. Furthermore, Ajodo-Adebanjoko (2020) expounded on this when he stated that the level of rural kidnapping escalated between 2014 and 2021 attracting a lot of attention. Beetseh et al., (2021) argued that the negative effects of activities on farmers in cultivation is a serious setback for progress in food production. Additionally, it is even argued that in some communities, farmers are forced to pay huge money as tax to kidnappers to enjoy uninterrupted and unlimited farming activities. It means that those who couldn’t meet up with this deal find it difficult to tend to their crops or livestock. This

invariably affects the number of farmers turning out for agricultural activities which is already being constrained by the effect of large rural-urban migration. Consequently, agricultural produce is said to have decrease drastically thereby limiting the availability of food.

c. Inadequate Access to Farm Produce: The ravaging incidence of kidnapping has grave effects on the accessibility of food. According to Garba et al., (2023) many rural areas in the epicentre of the kidnapping have been rendered unsafe for human habitation pushing hundreds of thousands of farmers out of their lands. Madu (2019) in his opinion stressed that kidnapping had significantly affected the agricultural production as well as the welfare of people living around the affected area. Many farmers cannot access agricultural produce either because transporters of these produces are constrained by the activities of kidnappers or their routes are being hijack by the kidnappers who operate there with little or no interference. It is also imperative to add here that this has force some farmers to stockpile their farm produce consequently resulting in avoidable waste. This implies that some zones are seen as danger zones or entirely out of bounds to farmers, hence, produce that should be accessed and moved to areas they are needed for consumption or to market are abandon due to this menace. This view can be deduced from the idea of Garba et al (2023) who pinpointed that market linkages between towns and cities thereby crippling the income generations of the rural farmers. Additionally, the proliferation of kidnapping activities is such that many individuals of different socio-economic status are vulnerable. They indiscriminately use different sophisticated weapons to have unhindered widespread coverage thereby further instilling fears in their victims as well as those who hear of their happenings. Consequently, this has greatly hampered not just the production of food but also the distribution and subsequently accessibility of food. Moreover, it further increases the problem of rural–urban migration. This implies that people who are displace from their means of livelihood are more likely to be displace from their place of living

d. Discourages Agricultural Investment: Kidnapping is no doubt said to be accounting for decrease investment in agriculture thereby shrinking sources of income for

many households that depend on agriculture. Business Day newspaper (2022) reported that agricultural sector will continue to attract less investment if problems of insecurity are not address. This is already visible in contemporary Nigeria society, investment in agriculture is said not to be a viable business now because of the disturbing incidents of kidnapping ongoing in some parts of Nigeria. Some agricultural investors prefer to invest in other profitable and secure business and this further affects food security and consequently the development of rural areas.

e. Decreases Affordability of Food: According to current reports from National Bureau of Statistics, 62.4% of Nigerian households are food insecure, experiencing reduced consumption due to either financial constrain or rising cost of foodstuff. It is important to note here that the widespread activities of kidnappers have grave consequence on the price of food. Carson (2020) added that historically, efforts to ameliorate it have focused on expanding food availability by citing new retailers in underserved communities or making food more affordable by subsidizing purchases for low-income earners. In fact, the United Nations have adopted ending hunger, achieving food security, improving nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015. Nigeria is one of the developing countries grappling to ensure that she is food secure. However, the country is seriously battling sky-rocking prices of foodstuff and livestock on almost a daily basis hence, those individuals and households who could barely eat three square meals are struggling to survive as they find it hard to boast of two meals a day because they could barely afford the everyday price increase syndrome on foodstuff which is gravely affected by the uprising in kidnapping incidence hence cases of many skipping meals, going for less nutritious foods (malnutrition) . For instance, transporters now avoid certain routes, raising transport fares which consequently affect its availability in market and result in higher food prices. This invariably means that there is little or no food security due to the overwhelming increase of kidnapping incidences at different part of the country. To further, Umar et al (2024) in their work on the effect of insecurity on food security status of farmers in Niger state, Nigeria in their findings revealed that 52.44% of respondents were food insecure as a result of wide range of insecurity

activities such as killings, blocking of local routes and kidnapping among others. This implies that more than half of the respondents were food insecure. The study therefore recommended that communities should form viable and active vigilante groups for surveillance to complement government effort in tackling insecurity.

Overall, the effect of kidnapping on food security cannot be relegated to the background as it has both direct and indirect impact on the availability, affordability and accessibility of food. Therefore, it is healthy to state that a food secure nation is a safer nation.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

This study has explored the menace of kidnapping and its increasing threats to food security which is one of the elements of human security in Nigeria. It revealed that this prevailing problem (kidnapping) has in fact emerged as a multifaceted phenomenon having serious implications on food security which undoubtedly is basic in any given society. This review has identified their effects as disruption of agricultural production, reduction of availability, accessibility and affordability of food as well as heightened vulnerability of local farmers and the entire households in Nigeria. This explains why failed state theory contends that a state that cannot provide basic services such a security should be considered a

failed state. Hence, it can be argued that if the prevailing problem of kidnapping is not curtailed and its consequences address, Nigeria can be easily nose-dived into a failed state. The study therefore recommends the followings:

- i. There is serious need for state and local government to strengthen community policing in Nigeria to effectively curb the prevailing problem of kidnapping in all nooks and crannies of the country.
- ii. There is also need for government at all levels to introduce economic incentives in high risk zones in order to assist business owners as well as farmers such as giving them financial support in addressing the losses suffered as a result of years of this persistent menace so as to discontinue the sequence of fragility.
- iii. Also, government needs to invest in rural infrastructure such as building good roads, electricity, standard healthcare facilities and others to further encourage rural investors and local farmers thereby strengthening pathways for resilience.
- iv. Finally, there is urgent need for government to effectively implement laws to the later to deter potential and daring kidnappers from such crime as prevention is better than cure.

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