

**KIDNAPPING ECONOMY AND INCREASING INSECURITY:  
RETHINKING NIGERIA SECURITY EFFECTIVENESS**

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**ABSTRACT**

Kidnapping for monetary gain has become a lucrative business and to some extent, turn into a family business in which the father and son engage in the business of kidnapping for ransom. The act of the business knows no bound as the poor and rich have fallen victims in the hands of bandits and gunmen invading the high ways, villages, communities, schools, religious houses etc. kidnapping people in exchange for money. Friends and family members have paid a heavy ransom in millions of naira for their loved ones kidnapped. What is surprising is the rate at which people are being kidnapped without any arrest of the perpetrators by the law enforcement agents and the effrontery of kidnapers to continue with their heinous act in which some of them even boast that nobody can arrest them. It is apparent that they have sponsors and money to buy high calibre firearms for their operations. These criminals have been emboldened to attack military bases, State Governor's convoys, Traditional Rulers' houses, Politicians etc, and have killed several people in the process, thus causing insecurity in the country. Zamfara State Governor has cried out that over 30,000 bandits are operating in the state as bandits and kidnapers turned Sokoto/Gusau road to the highway of death; while Kaduna State is the 3rd most rated kidnap case in Nigeria with four schools attacked and students kidnapped within six months. The level of insecurity in the country makes Nigerians ask if there is any security apparatus that can stop the activities of the bandits and kidnapers in the country.

**Keywords:** Kidnapping Economy, Increasing insecurity, Rethinking, Effectiveness.

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

Peace and security are under serious threat in almost all the states in Nigeria, most especially, northern Nigeria. Boko Haram is terrorising Borno and Yobe states while Katsina, Zamfara, Niger, Sokoto, Kaduna states and part of the Federal Capital Territory, are under the siege of bandits and kidnapers. No one feels safe to travel by road along the major roads for the fear of being kidnapped while the farmers could no longer go to their farms as well as herders of livestock are in danger of their herds being rustled by the bandits. Criminal gangs have found kidnapping to be a lucrative business in which bandits and Fulani herders engaged. Kidnapping in Nigeria has become a multi-million-naira business especially to criminal Fulani herders who have received heavy ransom from families of kidnapped victims and would not want to quit the business. Quoting Governor El Rufai of Kaduna State-Nigeria, who does not support negotiating peace deals with bandits; "Anybody that thinks a Fulani

Herdsmen that ventured into kidnapping for ransom and he is earning millions of naira would go back to his former life of getting N100, 000 after selling a cow in a year must be deceiving himself" (www.dailytrust.com; 2021). The focus of this work, therefore, is to discuss cases of ransoms being paid to criminal gangs and how it escalates/elongate insecurity, reasons why students are being targeted by the kidnapers, kidnapping for economic survival, Federal Government capacity to tackle the menace, and, conclusion and recommendations.

## 2.0 CONCEPTUAL DEFINITION OF THE TERMS

Keywords are needed to be conceptualized for a better understanding of the concept used in this work

**Kidnapping Economy-** Kidnapping economy in the sense of this work is the economy growing through the barrel of guns in which kidnapers and bandits have unhindered access to guns, kidnap people at will and force them to pay a heavy ransom. Millions of Naira are demanded by the kidnapers for the release of victims and in most cases, monies are paid to the criminals. This has greatly encouraged more people to join the business of kidnapping in the country. Many people believe that a weak security infrastructure and state governors who have no or little control over the police and army in their states and are controlled by the federal government have resorted to paying ransoms; have made mass abductions a lucrative source of income. The monies collected as ransom are used to buy weapons by the criminal gangs and the cycle of violence and insecurity in the country continues.

**Increasing insecurity-** This is an increasing feeling of not being safe or protected in almost every part of the country where deaths are being recorded on a daily basis owing to banditry, kidnapping and attacks by killer Herdsmen. It is a situation in which citizens are not confident about their safety and preservation due to the perplexity of the security agents that are failing in their responsibilities. The fear of oneself and relations to be a victim of kidnapers and bandits is growing unabated. The safety of the citizens can no longer be guaranteed even as the law enforcement agents are also fallen victims to the deadly attacks of bandits and kidnapers. Insecurity pervades the northern region of the country in which out of the 19 states of the region, bandits are running riots and actively operating in 11 states. Security in Nigeria has deteriorated badly under President Buhari, with at least half a dozen reported mass abductions of students under his watch have been recorded.

**Rethinking-** We mean to reconsider or reassess the tactics and operations of the military in the fight against kidnappings, banditry and other criminalities for better performance. As the popular axiom says 'you cannot continue to do the same thing and get different results.' There must be new thinking to rejig, redesign and repositioning of the Nigerian military for effective performance.

**Effectiveness-** Effectiveness in this work is the ability of the Nigerian military to curtail or stop kidnappings and banditry in Nigeria. It is the desire of every Nigerian to see the end of kidnappings which can only be done by the military and when this is not achieved; the military is seen as ineffective by Nigerians and non-Nigerians alike. Nigerian Soldiers and Police have performed creditable well in international peacekeeping operations in the past. It is expected of them to stop or reduce kidnappings and other criminalities in the country.

Unfortunately, this has not happened in the country where bandits are busy sacking villages, gunmen killing at will and kidnappers holding people for ransom. A situation where the father of a bandit was arrested in Zamfara and the bandit in revenge, sacked about five villages and killed several people without being apprehended speaks to the ineffectiveness of the security in the country.

### **3.0 BRIEF BACKGROUND OF KIDNAPPING FOR RANSOM IN NIGERIA**

Prior to the 1990s, kidnapping for ransom was not a major issue in Nigeria (Okengwu; 2011). Kidnapping is not new or peculiar to Nigeria, as people had been kidnapped and sold into slavery during the 18th and 19th centuries (Ikime; 2006). Others were kidnapped from their homes as a result of quarrels over farmlands, child-napping was also not uncommon, as children were abducted and used for money-making rituals (Sanyaolu; 2009). Kidnapping for money gained momentum in Nigeria as militants started kidnapping people in the country's oil-rich Niger Delta region in the early 2000s, mainly targeted at the Expatriates working in oil companies. The militants usually demand a huge amount for ransom for the release of the kidnapped victims in which the oil companies normally pay. The business of kidnapping then spread across Nigeria, and now become a big security problem. Abductors have historically targeted the country's middle- and upper-class demanding ransoms between \$1, 000 and \$150,000, depending on their victim's net worth and capacity to pay according to the Police statements. In other cases, the sum is much bigger. The worrisome aspect of the current spate of kidnapping especially in the northern part of the country is that bandits do go to villages, towns, highways, house-to-house, schools etc. and kidnap people for ransom.

### **4.0 CASES OF KIDNAPPINGS IN NIGERIA**

There were cases of kidnapping in Nigeria before the current magnitudes especially in the Niger Delta Region as mentioned above. Cases of kidnapping were localised in the Delta then, but currently; kidnapping for ransom is done in almost every part of Nigeria. It is going up astronomically because many are paying ransom in millions to the kidnappers. Even though the Government has said no victim of kidnappers should pay any ransom, people are not heeding the advice because there are no measures put in place by the government to rescue or stop kidnapping activities in the country. Many family members of kidnapped victims have paid huge amounts of monies for the release of their loved ones from the captivity of the kidnappers. Some selected cases with figures of ransom paid are discussed below.

On Sunday 14 February 2021, nine members of suspected daredevil kidnappers stormed Sokoto village at around 8.05 pm local time, in Asa Local Government Area, Kwara State. During the attack, the wife of the village head, Malam Yinusa Ishola, and his brother, were kidnapped and taken to an unknown bush. According to the village head "They called me on the phone that I should bring 12 million nairas as a ransom to release my families and confirmed to them that all my property did not worth 1million talk less of 12 million nairas" (www.nigeriarealnews.com.ng; 2021). After two days of custody of his family members in the hands of the kidnappers, the kidnappers called him again and asked him to bring money nothing less than 2 million nairas if he wants his family alive. According to the village head, he said: "I pleaded with them to accept 1.4 million nairas but later, they agreed and then

began to cry out for people's help and I received the mercy of God through people's assistance" (www.nigeriarealnews.com.ng; 2021). He further explained that the kidnappers described the point along Ogbomosho road as where the ransom is to be taken to with sound warning that no Police or any security agencies should be informed. He said he quickly assigned one of his wife brothers to deliver the money to the designated point along Ogbomosho road and was delivered as directed by the kidnappers after which his family members were released. Other victims kidnapped during the invasion of the village were madam Iyabo Yinusa and Malam Babatunde Abdullahi, in which they were taken to the bush and fed with Gari with water. According to her account, she said: "we trekked in the bush for four days, we don't know the specific destination we are heading to, on many occasions, they beat us, they latter called my husband through one of the phones earlier seized from the residents" (www.nigeriarealnews.com.ng; 2021). She informed that they were immediately released after the payment of ransom which was not disclosed.

On 20 April 2021, twenty of Greenfield University and three staff of the school in Kaduna State were abducted after bandits broke into the University, killing a staff. Three days after, three of the students were found dead and five days after the abduction, another two were found dead in a village very close to the University while one of the students was earlier released after a ransom was paid for his release by his parents. The remaining fourteen (14) were in captivity until their release on 29 May 2021 after a huge amount of 180,000,000Naira (one hundred and eighty million nairas) was paid to secure their release. According to the statement of one of the parents who spoke to Television Continental News monitored in Abuja-Nigeria, said on the day of release of the abductors, 180million naira was paid by the parents of the students without the government given them any money and no single Police was deployed to go and search for the students (Television Continental News; 2021). This is a very lucrative business for criminals. Criminal gangs operating in different parts of Nigeria collect ransom as low as 1 million nairas. In an interactive conversation this author had with a victim family member; one Mr Anyichie, who was driving from Okigwe, Imo State to Abia State on Thursday 25 February 2021, around 4 pm, was kidnapped and later released Saturday morning after a ransom of 1million naira was paid. The wife of a colleague of mine was kidnapped along Abuja-Kaduna road in 2019, while she was returning to Abuja from Kaduna State. She was released after five days when a ransom of 5million naira was paid for her release by her husband, Bello Zalma.

After 28 days in captivity, seven abducted students of Nuhu Bamali Polytechnic, Zaria, Kaduna State, and two of their lecturers regained their freedom on 8 June 2021, after their relations paid a total sum of 10million naira. According to a source, "we paid 10million naira to get our people. The kidnappers asked for 10million on each of the victims initially. After a lot of pleas, they reduced it to 2.5million each (www.thenationonlineng.net). Gunmen had attacked the Institution on 10 June 2021 and took students and staff members of the school.

School children have become an easy target for ransom in the hands of terrorists and criminal gangs in the country. The most recent students' kidnapping was carried out by bandits in Niger state-Nigeria, on 17 February 2021, in which 42 people including students, teachers, staff and families of Government Science College, Kagara were kidnapped. The head of the bandit that abducted the students and families in the school, Dogo Gide, has said that the abducted people will be released as soon as the bandits' demands are met by the authority.

This infers that ransom has been paid in previous students' abduction, though; the government has denied paying any ransom. Previous students' abduction included the gun attack of Government Science Secondary School, Kankara, Katsina State, on 11 December 2020, where over 300 pupils were kidnapped. They were later released. It was strongly believed that ransom was paid before their release, but the authority denied it. On 19 February 2018, the Boko Haram Terrorist Group, kidnapped 110 schoolgirls from Government Girls Science and Technical College, Dapchi, Yobe State, North-East Nigeria. After much negotiation, the kidnappers released 104 school girls. As usual, the authority denied payment of any ransom. The first student kidnapping incident took place in Chibok on 14 April 2014, when Boko Haram Terrorist Group attacked Government Secondary School for Girls, Chibok, Borno State, North-East Nigeria, and kidnapped 276 girls. Of the 276 kidnapped, 103 girls, reportedly released in exchange for money and prisoners ([www.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com); 2021). From 2014 to 2021, four school students' kidnappings have been carried out in Nigeria. Three major abductions of students has been carried out within three (3) months. If ransoms are not being paid, criminal gangs will not be kidnapping students in their schools. According to African Independent Television (AIT), a local Television Station monitored on 27 February 2021; about 800 million nairas was said to have been paid for the release of Kankara abducted students (African Independent Television; 2021). Abductors of the 27 students and 15 workers of Government Science College, Niagara, Niger State-Nigeria, have threatened to starve them to death if the ransom they are demanding is not paid on time. One of the abductors stated this in an audio recording made available to one of the Punch newspapers (Local newspaper), correspondents via a prominent Islamic Cleric, Sheikh, Ahmed Gumi. According to the source, the abductor rejected 2.7 million nairas offered for the release of the 27 students abducted by the kidnappers. Each parent agreed to pay 100,000 nairas for each student which the kidnappers turned down. However, the Kankara students were released about a week after their abduction. Their release was made possible after negotiation was made with the bandits. As negotiation for the release of Kankara students was going on, another abduction took place at Government Girls Science Secondary School, Jangebe, Talata Mafara Local Government Area, Zamfara State, in which 317 students were abducted. The gunmen arrived at the school with pic-up vehicles and motorcycles around 01:am on Friday 26 February 2021, and carried the girls away, according to a teacher. It has now become turn-by-turn of armed gangs kidnapping school children for ransom. Going by the unconfirmed ransom paid on Kankara students by the government; the ransom on the Jangebe abductees may be higher than that of the Kankara students. This development is worrisome as different criminal gangs find it lucrative to kidnap the students for a bigger ransom. The irony of kidnapping is that the government was denying paying the ransom and would tell the general public that they are negotiating for the release of the students. What is the basis of negotiation if the government keep denying there was no payment of money for the release of the abductees? Are kidnappers kidnapping for fun if the ransom is not paid for the release of the abductees? Who pays for the logistics that the kidnappers used to carry the abducted students if kidnappers were not given ransom? In some instances, abductees come with vehicles and motorbikes. Who pays for the fuel? Possibly, some Drivers might be engaged to carry the abductees and would be paid.

The kidnappers' gang in which many of them cannot boast of 1000 naira a day has suddenly become rich through ransoms received from victims. Kidnapping has become the most lucrative business in the country with the connivance of some corrupt security personnel as

well as civilian collaborators. One wonders how millions of naira are collected by the kidnapers and still want to sleep in the bush with exposure to mosquitoes and snake bites, wild animals etc. This goes to say that there are accomplices within the civilian population shielding these criminals from being exposed. One can safely say that there are powerful networks between the kidnapers and the civilian allies in which heaps of naira are being kept in the bush and later converted to US dollars for easy carriage. By extension, the converted naira to dollars makes it easy to purchase arms and ammunition in black markets.

It is evident that there are some people sponsoring the kidnapers in the communities. In the audio recording according to the Punch newspaper, one of the abductors said "it is with the help of the city that intruders can overrun the city. Don't you know that? The person who gave us this business is there among you. He is there with you. Wherever you go, he is watching you" (The Punch; 2021). He stated further "Even if you put together the entire security forces of Nigeria in Niagara, I have eyes all over Niagara. Whichever step you take in Nigeria, I swear, I will Know" (The Punch; 2021). These revelations make security strategies to apprehend the kidnapers very difficult as their informants are living among the people within the communities where kidnapers operate. This also suggests that kidnapers are being aided by the locals. These criminals have been emboldened in the communities and thereby see the security agents as intruders in an attempt to rescue victims from their dens. The kidnapers are holding communities to ransom, kill, maim and burn the entire communities down. They dictate what happens in the communities and nobody dares to raise a finger against them due to the weakness of the security personnel saddled with the responsibility to protect the citizens. In the case of Niagara abduction, one of the abductors said "If I want Niagara to be in peace, it will be in peace. If it not going to be in peace, it will go in pieces from here until Ilorin" (The Punch; 2021). Ilorin is the state capital of Kwara State, the border state to Niger State where the abductors abducted the students in Niagara. This statement by the kidnapers suggests that they possess superior firepower compare with the Nigerian military. The kidnapers have unfiltered access to weapons of different calibres due to Nigerian porous borders. It has been said that the country has about 1,400 illegal entry points scattered all over the nation. In addition to this, the obnoxious policy of the current government of President Muhammadu Buhari, which issues visas at the point of entry, serves as a gateway for illegal aliens coming into Nigeria. This policy allows the Fulanis from other parts of West Africa and Jihadists from other countries to enter the country, thereby causing security problems. This may be unconnected to the infiltration of Fulani killers Herdsmen killing Nigerians in different parts of the country.

The increasing insecurity in the country calls for questioning the effectiveness of Nigeria security apparatus. The security situation has degenerated so badly that criminals are having free operations unchallenged by the security saddled with the protection of life and properties in the country. The Boko Haram Group are waxing stronger and are taking territory in the Borno State and Lake Chad region to the extent that they have appointed a Governor to be in charge of their newly carved out areas. It has also been reported that insurgent groups: Boko Haram, Islamic State in West Africa (ISWAP), and Jama'atu Ansarul, Muslimina fi Biladis Sudan, better known as Ansaru; are competing with one another in a mass membership drive among the ranks of bandits terrorising most of the north-west and part of north-central states of Nigeria. According to the Daily Trust local newspaper report, "the push is already yielding fruits for the insurgent groups with some prominent bandits declaring allegiance to the

terrorist groups or consenting to a close working relationship; sharing intelligence and logistics support among themselves”(www.dailytrust.com; 2021). On 11 July 2021, Emir of Kajuru, an 85-year old and second-class traditional ruler in Kaduna State, was kidnapped in his domain together with 13 members of his family and the kidnapers demanded 200million naira for their release. 24 hours later, the Emir was released but held back his family members and one is not sure whether a ransom was paid or not for the Emir’s release. If a traditional ruler is being kidnapped, it then suggests that a common man is no longer safe in the country. The point of concern, in this case, was that the Emir got information that kidnapers were planning to come and kidnap him. Based on the information, the Emir, according to a report, held a security meeting with the security personnel in his domain and informed them of the plan, but the security could not void the plan and the kidnapping took place. The worst hit by the intractable rural banditry states in northern Nigeria is Niger, Kaduna, Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto and Kebbi that share boundaries and are easily navigated through large swathes of unmanned forests. Kidnapping cases are increasing in the northern region and the security seems to be clueless on how to arrest the growing insecurity. According to the Television Continental program tagged ‘Journalist Hangout’ monitored on 11 July 2021, the level of insecurity in the country has ballooned in the region especially in kidnapping cases. The North West had 1405, North Central-942 and North East-210 cases of kidnapping, while the entire north recorded 2557 cases and 386 cases recorded in the southern part of the country (TVContinental; 2021). The primary responsibility of any government is to protect life and property of the citizens. The security personnel in Nigeria is found wanting to provide protection for the citizens and their properties.

## **Why Kidnapping of Students Are Rampant in Nigeria?**

The school kidnappings of students have persisted as the country continues to battle several security challenges, including but not limited to the insurgency in the north east, banditry in the North West, secessionist’s agitations in the south east, and Fulani-Herdsman versus Farmers crisis across the middle-belt and several states in the south west and south-south of the country. One would be wondering why the kidnapers go after school pupils that are not a party to the crisis that have engulfed the nation. Kidnapers go for school pupils/students for collective captivity in which kidnapers believe will fetch them big money compared to a single captive. Hundreds of millions of naira are usually demanded for the release of kidnapped students when it occurred. For example, kidnapers demanded 150 million nairas for the release of about 200 pupils of Islamiyya school, Niger State, that were kidnapped in late May 2021. The abductors usually demand a ransom before kidnapped students/pupils are released which involves serious negotiation in monetary terms. Although, the Federal Government of Nigeria has denied ever paying ransom to release kidnapped persons or students and has discouraged the idea of paying ransom. The National Assembly also sponsored a bill to prosecute anyone that paid ransom to kidnapers. Unfortunately, people are paying the ransom because the government has not been able to end the abduction of students across the country by kidnapers and terrorists. The parents of students abducted usually pay the ransom. For instance, some 14 students and staff of Greenfield University, Kaduna State, were said to be released in May 2021, after the parents reportedly paid 180million naira ransom and bought eight motorcycles for the bandits that kidnapped the students. Secondly, students are easy targets for the kidnapers because many of the schools are located on the outskirts of the towns and villages where kidnappings have taken place.

Many of the schools don't have a perimeter fence and, in most cases, no security personnel deployed to provide security amidst darkness due to lack of electricity in most schools. In some cases, kidnappers were reportedly spent hours in schools where they kidnapped students without any opposition or resistance against them. In some schools where they have security, kidnappers usually outnumbered the security personnel, kill them and carry student away. The abduction of 94 students at the Federal Government College, Birnin Yauri, Kebbi State, was a case in point in which intelligence was provided that kidnappers were planning to come to the school and kidnap the students. According to the Television chat with the Senator from the area, he said fifteen (15) Police men were deployed to beef up security in the school, but when the bandits came to abduct the students; they were numbered one hundred and fifty (150), and over powered the Police men deployed to provide security in the school (Channels Television, 2021). In the wave of kidnapping the student, gunmen kidnapped another 140 students from a boarding school in Kaduna, north-western Nigeria, on 5 July 2021. Since the start of the year 2021, heavily armed criminal gangs have increasingly targeted schools and colleges and abduct students for ransom in northwest and central Nigeria. Kaduna State is the worst hit in the gales of the kidnapping of students. In the last six months, 4 schools have been attacked in Kaduna alone and students adopted. The most recent kidnapping of students in the state took place in a small remote village in which gunmen scaled a fence of Bethel Baptist High School early hours of the day, taken away most of the 165 pupils boarding overnight. Emmanuel Paul, a teacher at the school told AFP "The kidnappers took away 140 students, only 25 students escaped. We still have no idea where the students were taken," ([www.guardian.ng](http://www.guardian.ng)). Bethel Baptist High School is a co-education college established by a Baptist church in 1991 at Maramara village in Chikun district outside the state capital, Kaduna. The location of most of the schools where kidnappings have taken place made them vulnerable to armed gang attacks. The Bethel Baptist School's attack was the fourth mass school kidnap in Kaduna state since December 2020. Around 1,000 students and pupils have been abducted in different Nigerian states since December 2020 ([www.guardian.ng](http://www.guardian.ng)). Some states in the north have closed down schools for fear of students being attacked and kidnapped.

The consequence of school attacks by the bandits is huge especially in the northern part of Nigeria. Authorities in Kano and Yobe states have ordered more than 20 schools shut down due to insecurity; some schools have been closed down 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. The spate of attacks on schools has implications in which parents or guardians get scared of allowing their wards to go to school in the region. The region has a high rate of out-of-school children. According to UNICEF, there is a net attendance rate of just 53% in primary schools in northern Nigeria through 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 ([www.bbc.com](http://www.bbc.com)). The former Nigerian military Head of State, General Abdulsalam Abubakar (Rtd), stated that insecurity in the north has set back the education of the region for 20 years. Prior to the current wave of kidnapping and banditry, the region was lagging behind in terms of students' enrolment in schools.

## 5.0 KIDNAPPING FOR ECONOMIC SURVIVAL



The cycle of kidnapping that is on the rise in Nigeria currently is more prevalent in the northern part of the country. The region has long been afflicted by violence in which criminal groups have taken over the region due to lack of effective policing and porous border that allows illegal immigrants to come into the country. The criminal gangs especially alien Pastoralists known and called Fulanis; collude with home nomads have turned the region to a region of mass abduction for financial gains. According to a report, at least \$18.34million, was paid to kidnapers as ransom-mostly by families and the government between June 2011 and March 2020 (www.aljazeera.com: 2021). Stressing the economic motivation of kidnapping, Ikemesit Effiong, head of research at S B Morgan, said "the motivation of these groups appears to be purely economic. They don't seem political. The high rate of poverty in this country has led many to resort to such criminal activities for economic survival" (www.aljazeera.com; 2021). Many reasons/factors have been given as probable causes of kidnapping in Nigeria. Two factors will be discussed here which are found responsible for people to engage in criminality for economic survival.

**Unemployment:** Iyang (2009), identifies unemployment as a reason why kidnapping in Nigeria is on the increase. He notes that there are unaccountable able-bodied men and women in Nigeria roaming the streets in search of non-existing jobs (Iyang; 2009). Out of frustration, many idle young persons have taken into criminal activities including kidnapping. Ugwuoke (2011), observes that many unemployed youths in Nigeria are poverty -stricken and usually find solace in criminal activities (Ugwuoke; 2011). Diara (2010) asserts that kidnapping in Nigeria is a kind of social revolution by the youths, especially the unemployed ones who are not satisfied with their socio-economic lots (Diara; 2010). Adibe & Iyang (2009), note that kidnapping is as a result of the rising incidence of unemployment in Nigeria. Thousands of Nigerian youths are roaming the streets in search of jobs. Some of these unemployed youths do engage in criminal acts, like kidnapping, as a means of livelihood (Adibe 2009; Iyang 2009). The newest idea to make money is by taking into kidnapping by the unemployed youths. Okoro (2010), states that the unemployment factor in Nigeria, with its alarming increasing rate, is among the country's top five headaches. This evil monster, 'unemployment,' has succeeded massively in pouring into the minds of its victims, bight but negative thoughts and ideas on how to make fast money, by ignoring all cautions (Okoro; 2010). Universities and other higher institutions are yearly producing graduates without any plan to absorb them. Those that could not go to school for learning are left to their fate. Increasing kidnapping in the country has made every Nigerian potential target including the military.

Greed and inordinate ambition to amass wealth: Nigerians place a high value on money and it is not uncommon to see citizens celebrating people that have wealth irrespective of how they made their wealth. Diara (2010), in his work, identified greed and inordinate ambition to amass wealth as one of the causes of kidnapping in Nigeria. Owing to the quest for materialism, people engage in criminal activities to amass more wealth. Money is held in higher esteem than virtues in Nigeria. People engage in kidnapping are in business to extort money and the money is paid under duress and in some instances, victims are killed even after a ransom is paid. Ugwulebo (2011), asserts that greed has caused many persons to take part in heinous criminal acts. It is greed that pushes the kidnapper to brutalize and torture a stranger and put his family through a cruel ordeal for weeks, months sometimes years so as to ensure that ransom is paid to them (Ugwulebo; 2011). In Nigeria, many youths are in a hurry

to get to the top of the economic ladder. Many youths want to 'harmer' millions of naira or want to be like so and so without asking the question how did he get his wealth. The get-rich-quick syndrome is catching up seriously with the Nigerian youths and this has led them into various social vices such as kidnapping.

## **6.0 GOVERNMENT'S CAPACITY TO DEAL WITH BANDITRY AND KIDNAPPING MENACE**

The government is perplexed, helpless and has no clue to get out of this horrendous situation. Imaging the Central Bank of Nigeria begging the bandits and kidnapers to come and take loans so that they quit their kidnapping and banditry businesses. There is no business that can yield high profit than taking a ransom from the people. The government has shown weakness to deal with the bandits and kidnapers in the country. The Minister of Defence, Major-General Bashir Magashi (Retired), and a serving State Governor, Matawalle, Zamfara State Governor, have all called on the general public to defend themselves against the bandits. By the law of the land, only Mr. President is allowed to grant a licence for any citizen to bear arms. The question then is how an ordinary citizen that does not bear arms can confront bandits/kidnapers that are well armed. Mr President' reactions to occurrences of kidnapping have not passed the rhetoric of 'the perpetrators will be apprehended and made to face the law,' 'we shall teach them in the language they understand' 'crush the bandits,' 'shoot at sight anybody carrying AK-47.' Unfortunately, no single kidnapper or bandit has been arrested, charged and jailed for their criminal engagement in the country. Another reaction of the government to address this menace is by forming special military operations to fight the bandits. Thousands of military operatives drawn from the army, navy and air force, have been deployed to more than 30 states in the country. The military is currently carrying out an operation against bandits in the northern region, communities have been sacked and most forest reserves in the region are under the control of criminals. Nigeria's military has built posts close to some schools, but many schools are still left unprotected. Some schools have employed local vigilantes armed with local weapons but this has often proved ineffective against the heavily armed bandits. Some Governors in the north have made 'peace initiatives in which they provided amnesty for repentant bandits in their states. Zamfara State Governor, Bello Matawalle, for instance, promised repentant bandits with houses, money and car. In July 2020, Governor Matawalle promised bandits two cows for every AK-47 gun they surrendered. All these measures have resulted in the formation of more armed groups carrying out mass abduction of students. President Muhammadu Buhari has insinuated that state governors were fuelling the crisis. He said "State governments must review their policy of rewarding bandits with money and vehicles. Such a policy has the potential to backfire with disastrous consequences," (www.bbc.com; 2021). Insufficient and ill-equipped manpower of the Nigerian Military and Police, incapacitate them to fight against the bandits. It has been widely reported that bandits are usually heavily armed while the Nigerian security personnel are found using outdated weapons to fight the bandits that are carrying AK-47, 49 and RPGs. The criminal gangs have also acquired Anti-Aircraft Weapons in their quest to fight the military. An Alpha Jet belonging to the Nigerian Airforce was reportedly shot down by the bandits on 19 July 2021, in a military operation against the bandits in which the Pilot, Abayomi Dairo, escaped. The attack on the Nigeria fighter plane happened on the border of the northern Zamfara and Kaduna States when the Pilot had finished a raid against kidnapers, according to the Nigerian Air Force (www.bbc.com, 2021). Many Soldiers have

lost their lives in the process of engaging the bandits due to superior fire powers of the criminal gangs. According to a report, no fewer than 183 personnel of the Nigerian Military have paid the supreme price within six months-January to June 2021, in the line of their duties (www.dailytrust.com; 2021). The Soldiers are being killed due to lack of physical protective equipment, as well as intelligence and tactical manoeuvres according to security and intelligence expert. Available information showed that they were killed in different parts of the country, but a large percentage of the cases were recorded in the northern part, with

North-East topping the chat. The security officers were killed by bandits, hoodlums, gunmen, terrorists, cultists, armed robbers etc. Low morale of the military has also contributed to the inability of the government to win the war against the bandits and kidnappers. The way and manner the family of the deceased officers are treated in which they are kicked out of the barracks three months after the demise of their husbands dampen their morale to fight and die for the country. The military is not well remunerated and lacks adequate training to match up with the current level of criminality in the country. Due to corruption and nepotism in the military, many Soldiers are unwilling to hazard their life in the fight against the bandits and kidnappers.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Kidnapping is becoming a fast-growing economy which does not require any capital or office space to start up before the criminals make their millions of Naira. The kidnapping figure in Nigeria is alarming. According to National Security Tracker 2021 report, an average of 13 persons were abducted daily within January-June 2021 across the 36 states of the federation and the Federal Capital Territory in which over 2, 371 persons have been abducted (www.punchng.com; 2021). Bandits are running amok on innocent citizens while gunmen have turned Nigeria into killing field. There must be concerted efforts to fight bandits and kidnapping in Nigeria. When the right measures are taken, the enemies of the state will be defeated and it is possible to defeat insecurity in Nigeria. The Nigerian law should be reviewed and recommend death penalty by hanging bandits, kidnappers and their informants. There must be political will to deal decisively with bandits, kidnappers and gunrunners irrespective of their tribe and religion. Special Unit should be set up in the banks to monitor and report lodgement of huge cash from any suspect especially customers that do not have history of any serious business or established source of income. The government should provide an incentive for citizens that are willing to give information to the military on criminals in their domains. The perpetrators of criminal acts should be arrested and be made to face the law. This will help to stop criminalities. The Nigerian borders should be properly monitored to prevent in-flow of illicit arms from coming into the country. Employment should be created to absorb the young population while conscious effort should be made by the government and religious bodies to start preaching good virtues in the society. This will redirect the minds of the youth from getting rich at all cost. Finally, the Nigerian military should be reorganized in such a way that they will be able to meet up the current security challenges in the country. The military must be well trained and equipped with the modern-day military technology that can over power the criminals running riot in the country. This will boost their morale.

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