

**Effects of Kidnapping and Insecurity on Christians in Zamfara State, Nigeria**

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**Abstract**

Kidnapping and other insecurity vices have been a menace in human history. The acts of kidnapping and banditry as observed in history are not new crimes, as most nations of the world have been hit by this criminality in recent years. Nigeria is experiencing its expanded toll in almost all the states of the nation and the Christian church as a human organization has been greatly and negatively impacted. This paper examined the effects of kidnapping and insecurity on Christians in Zamfara State, Nigeria. Guided by the conflict theory of Karl Marx, it employed a mixed-methods research design using quantitative and qualitative techniques of analysis to examine the possible causes and effects of kidnapping on Christians. Findings revealed that unemployment, failed leadership, and corruption, were the major factors responsible for the rising incidences of kidnapping in the state, leading to socio-religious and economic effects on the people. It was further discovered that the government's response to kidnapping through amnesty programme and dialogues among others have not sufficiently curtailed its occurrence in the state. The paper recommends that kidnappers and their sponsors should be identified and made to face the full wrath of the law. In addition, Church leaders should collaborate with government agencies to implement job creation and poverty alleviation programmes to reduce vulnerability and enhance the economic status of the citizens.

**Keywords:** Kidnapping, Insecurity, Christians, Zamfara State, Nigeria

**Introduction**

The effects of kidnapping and insecurity on Christians in Zamfara State, Nigeria, is a pressing concern that warrants attention. Zamfara State has experienced a surge in insecurity, including banditry, kidnapping, and terrorism, which has significantly affected the lives of residents, particularly Christians. Adebayo (2020) opined that Christian communities in Zamfara State in recent times have faced numerous challenges, including attacks on churches, kidnapping of church members, and disruption of church activities. This has

led to a breakdown in trust between the government and the citizenry, with many Christians feeling vulnerable and neglected (Akinola, 2020). The situation has raised questions about the effectiveness of security agencies in protecting lives and property. Furthermore, the effects of kidnapping and insecurity on Christians in Zamfara State can be understood within the context of Nigeria's complex socio-political landscape. The country's diverse ethnic and religious groups, coupled with economic and political

instability, have created an environment conducive to insecurity (Onuoha, 2018).

Inyang & Ubong (2013) aver that over the last few years, the wealthy and the income earners have been picked up by kidnappers, who only free their victims after payments of ransom. Kidnapping exerts enormous and far reaching economic and social costs. It induces and creates a palpable ambience of fear and despair for all citizens and stultifies economic growth and sustainable development. It is one major development challenge bedeviling Nigeria today.

Okorie-Ajah, Nwokeoma & Okpan, (2018) affirm that the discovery and exploration of gold in Zamfara has made many young herdsmen turn to kidnapping and banditry to make ends meet, having realized that it is lucrative. They make millions in ransom collection and in rural areas of Zamfara and Katsina states, villagers are compelled to pay monthly insurance premiums for protection on their land and people. Those who default on paying this monthly imposition due to one reason or another are severely dealt with by the summary execution of the family members to compel obedience. This is the unfolding situation in the rustic areas of the north-west, where sheep and cattle roam freely (Okorie-Ajah, Nwokeoma & Okpan, 2018).

The main thrust of this work is to examine the effects and the experiences of Christians in Zamfara State in the spate of kidnapping and violent attacks, emotionally, economically and spiritually; and how these menaces could be mitigated.

To do this end, the following research questions were developed to guide the paper:

(i) What are the prevalent causes of kidnapping and insecurity among Christians in Zamfara State?

(ii) How does kidnapping and insecurity affect church attendance and participation in Christian activities in the state?

(iii) How does the government respond to the menace of kidnapping in the state?

### **The Concept and History of Kidnapping**

The Chambers (1996) defines kidnapping as the illegal seizing and holding of someone as a prisoner and then demanding for a ransom for his/her release. Dode (2007) emphasized that kidnapping is a process of forcefully abducting a person or group of persons because of an injustice done. This corresponds with the views of Nwaorah (2009), who opined that kidnapping is often carried out by an angry fellow or group with the hope of taking hostage a person or people of significance and worth in the society. Uzorma & Nwanegbo-Ben (2014), conceived it as the act of seizing and detaining or carrying away a person by unlawful force or by fraud, and often with a demand for ransom. It involves taking a person from their family forcefully without their consent with the motive of holding the person as a hostage and earning a profit from their family.

It is a restriction of someone else's liberty which violates the provision of freedom of movement as enshrined in the constitution of Federal Republic of Nigeria, where every other law takes its cue from (Inyang & Abraham, 2013). It is the taking away of individuals against their will with the aim at robbing and exploiting them (Thomas & Nta, 2009; Okoli, 2013).

From the foregoing, the definition of kidnapping has no one best way to describe it, but it is clear that for an act to be deemed kidnapping, it shall involve coercive movement of a victim from one place to

another, detention or seizure of that person be it a child or an adult and payment of ransom.

The history of kidnapping and banditry is not peculiar to Nigeria, as these crimes are perpetrated across the world, such as Mexico, and United States of America among other nations. These barbaric and heinous crimes were also recorded in the Bible, (Exodus 21:16, Deut. 24:7, Gen. 40:15, Judges 21:20-23, 9:25). Kidnapping and banditry had been linked to the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Century slave trade, during which millions of Africans were forcibly confined and sold to New World (Ekechukwu & Osaat, 2021).

Kidnapping is a global phenomenon and every part of the world has its share of the menace. Turner (1998) has attempted a documentation of how kidnapping originated. According to him, the term 'kidnapping' originated in 17<sup>th</sup> century in England where children were 'kidnapped' and often sold as slaves or agricultural workers to colonial farmers.

Prior to the 1990s, kidnapping was a rare occurrence in Nigeria, and it was not mentioned in the 2002 UN Office of Drugs and Crime's Eighth Survey on Crime Trends and Criminal Justice System Operation (Obarisiagbon & Aderinto, 2018). The abduction of expatriates working for oil corporations in the Niger Delta area began the current wave of kidnappings in Nigeria on February 25, 2006. Kidnapping was used to send a message to the world about the area's long history of injustice, marginalization, alienation, and underdevelopment (Akpan, 2010). Since then, the threat has been aggressively monetized in many sections of the country. Kidnapping no longer affects only foreigners in Nigeria; it also affects natives as well, including adult women and men, the rich and the poor, the elderly, and children.

Chingunta and Mkanawire, 2002), attributed the reasons for the rising incidence of kidnapping and insecurity in Nigeria to the alarming cases of unemployment. While Eche and Wobodo (2021) asserted that the rate of armed robbery, oil bunkering, kidnapping, cultism, among other crimes is a direct consequence of a failed leadership in Nigeria. In the same vein, Njoku (2017) attributed the factor to corruption. The Nigerian nation is at the verge of collapse because of corruption manifested in form of militancy, kidnapping, murder, robbery, nepotism, tribalism, embezzlement, bribery, power tussle, and political violence, electoral fraud and religion violence (Njoku, 2017). On the other hand, Simwa (2022) observed that the poor criminal and justice system in the country counts among the many reasons why kidnapping and insecurity thrive in Nigeria. To address the challenge, the judicial system in the country should be changed, and there may be only one answer to that- transparency (Simwa, 2022).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The conflict theory by Karl Marx is used in this work. The theory emerged from his works in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, particularly in "Das Kaspital" (1867) and "The Communist Manifesto" (1848). Conflict theory of Karl Marx, argues that scarcity is the root cause of perpetual conflict in society, because of competition for limited sources. The theory holds that social order is maintained by domination and power, rather than by consensus and conformity. The conflict theory revealed that those with wealth and power try to hold on to it by any means possible, chiefly by suppressing the poor and powerless. The conflict theory is relevant, as it explains why kidnapping and banditry has persisted in Nigeria. For instance, the Herders and farmers conflict has been linked to competition and

grabs for land space, and the environmental degradation and economic space in Niger Delta, this have also been linked to the kidnapping of oil company workers by militants. In the same vein, the contention for religious and ethnic space has resulted in the current kidnapping and banditry in Zamfara State and other northern Nigeria. The alleged kidnapping of wealthy Nigerians (by criminal gangs) had been linked to competition and grab for limited sources (wealth and power). Thus the relevance of this theory to the research.

### **Methodology**

In order to determine the effects of kidnapping and insecurity on Christians in Zamfara State, Nigeria, the study employs a mixed-methods research design with a quantitative and qualitative techniques of analysis. In respect of the high occurrence of kidnapping in the area, the following most affected Local Government Areas were considered – Zurmi, Talata Marfara, Anka, Birnin-Magji, Tsafe, Maru, Shikafi, Bakura and Maradun.

The fact that the entire population cannot be investigated, the work adopted Taro Yamane (1967) statistical formula for calculating sample size from a finite population, as described by Okwandu (2004), to arrive at a sample size of 400 correspondents. Multi-stage sampling procedure was used to draw the sample for the study. The first stage involves using purposive sampling technique to select 3 out of the 9 most affected LGAs by the activities of kidnappers in the state. The LGAs include: Zurmi, Anka and Talata Marfara. The second stage involves administering Structured Questionnaire (SQ) to target respondents using convenience or accidental sampling technique. Descriptive statistics was used to analyze data collected via SQ while non-parametric statistics (chi-

square) was used to test the research hypotheses at 5% (0.05) level of significance.

The respondents were asked to express their opinions based on the statements given in the SQ as tabulated below using 5-point Likert Scale of SA (5), A (4), U (3), D (2), SD (1). The Relative Importance Index (RII) of the respondents is computed thus:  $5+4+3+2+1=15/5=3.0$

**Decision Rule:** If the RII is less than 3.0, the respondents disagreed; if the RII is equal to 3.0, the respondents are undecided; if the RII is greater than 3.0, the respondents agreed and as such the statement is taken as important.

### **Analysis and Discussion of Findings**

The analysis utilized a sample size of 400 respondents across the most affected areas in Zamfara State as shown in Table 1 below. Results were presented in tabular format in response to the research questions posed for the study.

**Table 1: Sampled LGAs and their Respective Respondents**

| LGAs           | Population (2016) | Number of Respondents                |
|----------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Zurmi          | 523,000           | $523,000/1,161,900 \times 400 = 180$ |
| Anka           | 255,500           | $255,500/1,161,900 \times 400 = 88$  |
| Talata Marfara | 383,400           | $383,400/1,161,900 \times 400 = 132$ |
| Total          | 1,161,900         | 400                                  |

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

**Table 2: Relative Importance Index of the causes of kidnapping and insecurity among Christians in the State**

| CAUSES                   | 5       | 4       | 3      | 2      | 1      | TW<br>V   | RI<br>I  | RA<br>NK        |
|--------------------------|---------|---------|--------|--------|--------|-----------|----------|-----------------|
| Unemployment             | 17<br>7 | 17<br>3 | 1<br>2 | 2<br>1 | 1<br>7 | 1,6<br>72 | 4.<br>18 | 1 <sup>st</sup> |
| Failed Leadership        | 17<br>5 | 17<br>2 | 1<br>7 | 1<br>8 | 1<br>8 | 1,6<br>68 | 4.<br>17 | 2 <sup>nd</sup> |
| Corruption               | 17<br>3 | 16<br>3 | 1<br>7 | 2<br>0 | 2<br>7 | 1,6<br>35 | 4.<br>09 | 3 <sup>rd</sup> |
| Get rich quick mentality | 16<br>7 | 16<br>1 | 2<br>0 | 3<br>0 | 2<br>2 | 1,6<br>21 | 4.<br>05 | 4 <sup>th</sup> |
| Weak Judicial System     | 16<br>6 | 16<br>0 | 1<br>9 | 2<br>7 | 2<br>8 | 1,6<br>09 | 4.<br>02 | 5 <sup>th</sup> |

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

The analysis of the data in Table 2 shows that the most important factor responsible for the increasing incidences of kidnapping in Zamfara State is unemployment with RII (4.18) ranked 1st. This finding is consistent with the findings of similar studies carried out by Chingunta and Mkanawire (2002). They affirmed that alarming rate of unemployment among Nigeria's youth vis-a-vis citizens has contributed to the increased rate of kidnapping and banditry in Nigeria (Chingunta and Mkanawire, 2002).

Failed Leadership which has RII (4.17) is the second most important cause of the rising cases of kidnapping in the state. This finding is in tandem with

the findings of similar study carried out by Eche and Wobodo (2021) who asserted that the rate of armed robbery, oil bunkering, kidnapping, cultism, among other crimes is a direct consequence of a failed leadership in the State.

Corruption is the third reason for kidnapping in the State with RII (4.09). This is also in line with the work of (Njoku, 2017) as he observed, "Nigeria nation is at the verge of collapse because of corruption manifested in form of militancy, kidnapping, murder, robbery, nepotism, tribalism, embezzlement, bribery, power tussle, thuggery, and political violence, electoral fraud and religion violence."

It was also found that kidnapping in the state is caused by get rich quick mentality with RII (4.05) ranked 4th. The negligence of the Nigerian government to address the root causes of kidnapping such as quick-money mentality and hard drugs among others were seen as being responsible for the rising spate of the phenomenon.

Another factor considered as an important cause of kidnapping is weak judicial system with RII (4.02) ranked 5th. This finding agrees with the work of Simwa, (2022) who found that Nigerian judicial system is corrupt thereby allow people feel insecure when criminals and terrorists go free after they commit crimes that should be penalized.

**Table 3: Relative Importance Index of the Effects of kidnapping and insecurity on Christians in the State**

| EFFECTS                             | 5   | 4   | 3  | 2  | 1  | TWV   | RII  | RANK            |
|-------------------------------------|-----|-----|----|----|----|-------|------|-----------------|
| Fatalities and Humanitarian effects | 190 | 187 | 12 | 8  | 3  | 1,753 | 4.38 | 1 <sup>st</sup> |
| Forceful Closure of Church          | 188 | 175 | 12 | 15 | 10 | 1,716 | 4.29 | 2 <sup>nd</sup> |
| Economics effects                   | 179 | 177 | 26 | 13 | 5  | 1,716 | 4.29 | 2 <sup>nd</sup> |
| Gendered - differential effects     | 168 | 164 | 25 | 28 | 15 | 1,642 | 4.10 | 4 <sup>th</sup> |
| Educational effects                 | 165 | 162 | 27 | 24 | 22 | 1,624 | 4.06 | 5 <sup>th</sup> |

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

The analysis of data in Table 3 reveals that the effects of kidnapping with the highest RII (4.38) is fatalities and loss of the lives of many victims ranked 1st. Findings also reveal that forceful closure of Church and its activities with RII (4.29) is another significant effect of kidnapping in the State ranked 2nd. This finding is in consonance with the findings of research conducted by Ibrahim et al, (2020), who found that several Christians in Nigeria had been abducted,

raped, kidnapped, killed, and some Christian dominated villages razed down, among other horrible experiences of the church and its leaders.

Also ranked 2nd as a significant effects of kidnapping in the State is economic effects with RII (4.29). Another significant effect of kidnapping on Christians in Zamfara State is Gendered-differential effects which has RII (4.10) ranked 4th. The last on the table is the educational which leads to forceful closure of schools with RII (4.06) ranked 5<sup>th</sup>.

**Table 4: Government's Response to the Menace of Kidnapping in the State**

| GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE      | Effective    | Not Effective | Not Sure  | Total |
|----------------------------|--------------|---------------|-----------|-------|
| Military Operation         | 388 (97%)    | 11 (2.75%)    | 1 (0.25%) | 400   |
| Legislative actions        | 362 (90.5%)  | 36 (9%)       | 2 (0.5%)  | 400   |
| Community-based initiative | 393 (98.25%) | 4 (1%)        | 3 (0.75%) | 400   |
| Amnesty Programme          | 19 (4.75%)   | 378 (94.5%)   | 3 (0.75%) | 400   |
| The Use of Dialogue        | 28 (7%)      | 356 (89%)     | 16 (4%)   | 400   |

Source: Researcher's Field Survey, 2025

The analysis of data in Table 4 shows that 378 respondents representing 94.5% are of the opinion

that government's response to kidnapping through amnesty programme was not effective in addressing the menace. 19 respondents representing 4.75% are of the opinion that the amnesty programme was effective in addressing the danger of kidnapping. 3 respondents representing 0.75% are not sure whether the amnesty programme was effective or not. These findings indicate that the Nigeria government's response to kidnapping through amnesty programme was not effective in addressing the menace of kidnapping.

Also, analysis of data in Table 4 reveals that 356 respondents representing 89% of the respondents are of the opinion that the use of dialogue to address the danger of kidnapping was not effective in addressing the scourge. 28 respondents representing 7% are of the opinion that the use of dialogue by the government was effective in addressing the danger of kidnapping while 16 respondents representing 4% are not sure whether the use of dialogue was effective or not. These findings therefore suggest that the use of dialogue by the government was not effective in addressing the menace of kidnapping in the state. In fact it was discovered that, rather than peace initiative abating kidnapping and insecurity in Zamfara state, the situation has worsened in recent times.

Furthermore, analysis of data in Table 4 shows that 388 respondents representing 97% are of the opinion that government's response to the menace of kidnapping through the deployment of Military operation was effective while 11 respondents representing 2.75% felt it was not effective. 1 respondent representing 0.25% was not sure whether the use of force was effective or not. This finding suggests that the deployment military agents by the government to tackle the menace of kidnapping in the state remains the most effective strategy for curtailing

the rising incidences of security challenges, especially kidnapping for ransom in the state.

Analysis of data in Table 4 also reveals that 393 respondents representing 98.25% agreed that the use of Community-based initiative (community policing) by the government to manage the menace of kidnapping was effective while 4 respondents representing 1% felt it was not effective. However, three respondents representing 0.75% were not sure whether the use of Community-based initiative (community policing) was effective or not. From the analysis of data in Table 4 above; 362 respondents representing 90.5% agreed that Legislative actions by the judiciary arm of the government was an effective response to the menace of kidnapping in the state while 36 respondents representing 9% felt it was not effective. However, two respondents representing 0.5% were not sure whether legislative action was effective or not.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of this research, the following recommendations are proposed to address the effects of kidnapping and insecurity on Christians in Zamfara State, Nigeria. The Federal Government should provide security agencies with necessary resources, training, and equipment to effectively respond to kidnapping and insecurity in Zamfara. There is need for church leaders should collaborate with governments to implement job creation programmes in order to reduce poverty and vulnerability among the youth. There should be an ethno-religious dialogue, aimed at promoting religious tolerance/understanding in the affected areas. It is recommended that church leaders and relevant agencies initiate advocacy and awareness campaigns

to raise awareness about the effects of kidnapping and insecurity on Christians in Zamfara State and promote ways to arrest the menace.

## **Conclusion**

The effects of kidnapping and insecurity on Christians in Zamfara State, Nigeria, is a complex and multifaceted issue that requires a comprehensive attention to address. The findings of this paper has proved that the consequences of kidnapping and insecurity are far-reaching, affecting not only the individuals directly involved but also the broader community and society as a whole. The effects on Christians in Zamfara State is particularly significant, with many facing persecution, displacement, and economic hardship.

The suggestions provided above as solutions to the challenges of kidnapping in the north-west require committed efforts toward improving human welfare, with emphasis on poverty alleviation and reducing inequalities, as well as access to justice with human development and security. Such an approach will mitigate the motivations that are driving criminal violence and resistance that characterized the security landscape of the region and the rest of Nigeria.

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