



# The Effect of Kidnapping on Socio-economic Development: A Study of some selected wards in Jalingo Local Government Area

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## Abstract

Crime that involves the abduction of individuals against their will has raised concerns among residents and policymakers alike. This study examined the socioeconomic activities most affected by kidnapping and excavated the specific impact of kidnapping on the socioeconomic development in Jalingo LGA. The sample size of 394 was arrived at using Krejcie and Morgan Table. The study adopted Routine Activity Theory as the theoretical framework. Descriptive survey design enabled the description of the current state of kidnapping and data were generated from mixed-method approach which combines qualitative interviews and quantitative data generated from questionnaire. Quantitative responses obtained from the Questionnaire were analyzed by descriptive statistic while qualitative data obtained through interview were analyzed thematically. Presume hypotheses of significant differences was tested with Chi-Square. Findings from this research reveal that some of the socio-economic activities most affected include agriculture, transportation and financial strain which consequently affect the business activities and socio-economic development of Jalingo LGA. It distracts investors, result to loss of human lives and distrust among the community. Therefore, the study recommends government and policy makers to prioritize and push Proliferation of security personnel, aids/grants and severe punishment should be in the forefront in tackling the menace of kidnaping.

**Keywords:** Kidnaping, Socio-economic, Crime, Households, Jalingo

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## Introduction

Kidnapping, as a criminal activity, has become a widespread and alarming security threat in many parts of Nigeria, including the northeastern region where Jalingo Local Government Area (LGA) is located. The practice, which involves the illegal abduction of individuals for ransom, is not a new phenomenon in Nigeria, but its rapid rise in recent years has had devastating effects on both individuals and communities, disrupting social, economic, and political life. In these areas, the growing fear of abduction has reshaped the lives of residents, forcing them to alter their daily routines, social interactions, and economic activities (Onuoha, 2020).

has affected Nigeria, particularly in the northern and northeastern regions. This area has been plagued by various forms of violence, including insurgency, communal clashes, and banditry. The problem of kidnapping, however, has become especially prevalent in the last decade, exacerbated by the proliferation of small arms and light weapons, poverty, and weak governance structures. Criminal groups, motivated by financial gain, have targeted both wealthy and low-income individuals, demanding ransom payments that many cannot afford (Ibrahim & Dung-Gwon, 2020). As a result, kidnapping has significantly disrupted the economic productivity and social cohesion of the local population.

Jalingo, the capital of Taraba State, has not been spared from the general wave of insecurity that

The socioeconomic impact of kidnapping in Jalingo LGA is profound. Households in rural and



urban areas alike have had to confront this threat, with repercussions that extend into various aspects of life, such as agriculture, education, healthcare, and trade. For example, farmers in rural areas of Jalingo, who are a critical part of the local economy, have had to curtail their activities for fear of being abducted while working in their fields. This has led to decreased agricultural productivity and food insecurity, as residents are forced to abandon their farms or work shorter hours to reduce the risk of falling victim to kidnappers (Nwolise, 2020).

At the heart of these socioeconomic disruptions is the erosion of social trust and security. The persistent fear of kidnapping has led to the breakdown of traditional social networks, with residents becoming increasingly suspicious of outsiders and even their neighbors. This climate of fear and insecurity has weakened communal bonds, undermined social cohesion, and hindered collaborative economic efforts, such as cooperative farming or market associations (Omeje, 2018). Additionally, the government's failure to adequately address the kidnapping crisis has led to widespread disillusionment and a growing mistrust of public institutions, further compounding the problem. The study seeks to assess the prevalence of kidnapping incidents, to identify the socioeconomic activities most affected by kidnapping and to understand the specific impact of kidnapping on the socioeconomic activities of households in Jalingo LGA, filling a crucial gap in existing literature.

## **Literature Review**

### **Conceptual Explanations**

#### **The History and Evolution of Kidnapping in Nigeria**

The origins of kidnapping in Nigeria are complex, with roots that can be traced back to the pre-colonial and colonial eras. Historically, in the pre-colonial era, abduction was often linked to inter-tribal conflicts and slavery. It was a means of asserting dominance, acquiring labor, or exacting revenge, rather than a criminal activity driven by monetary gain (Ezeani, 2022).

During the colonial period, the nature of abductions began to shift. The imposition of colonial rule disrupted traditional power structures and created new forms of resistance. Local leaders, in some cases, resorted to abduction as a means of negotiating with or resisting colonial authorities. The transition from politically motivated abduction to criminal kidnapping began to take shape in the post-colonial period, particularly in the Niger Delta region, where economic grievances over oil exploitation and environmental degradation set the stage for a new form of resistance (Falola & Heaton, 2021).

#### **The Niger Delta Militancy: The Birth of Modern Kidnapping**

The discovery of oil in the 1950s transformed the Niger Delta into the economic heart of Nigeria, but the region's inhabitants saw little benefit from the oil wealth. Instead, they faced environmental degradation, poverty, and marginalization. These conditions fueled widespread discontent and gave rise to militant groups, such as the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), which began to use kidnapping as a political and economic tool (Watts, 2018). The militants demanded ransoms as a means of financing their operations and securing the release of imprisoned comrades. The success of these early kidnappings in achieving political and financial objectives set a precedent that would influence the spread of kidnapping across Nigeria (Courson, 2009).

By the early 2000s, kidnapping had evolved from a form of political resistance in the Niger Delta to a lucrative criminal enterprise. Criminal gangs, often operating with little or no political agenda, began to target wealthy Nigerians and their families, marking the beginning of the commercialization of kidnapping in Nigeria (Ikelegbe, 2018). The commercialization of kidnapping soon spread beyond the Niger Delta, taking root in the southeastern states. The reasons are high population density, economic disparities, and a history of marginalization in these areas (Onuoha, 2019).



### **The Boko Haram Insurgency and the Rise of Kidnapping in the North-East**

The emergence of the Boko Haram insurgency in the northeastern region of Nigeria in the late 2000s added a new and alarming dimension to the kidnapping crisis in the country. Boko Haram, initially focused on attacking government institutions and promoting its extremist ideology, soon turned to kidnapping as a means of financing its operations and terrorizing the population (Zenn, 2020).

Beyond Boko Haram, other criminal groups in northern Nigeria, often referred to as "bandits," have also adopted kidnapping as a primary mode of operation. These groups, operating in states like Zamfara, Katsina, and Kaduna, engage in mass abductions, targeting rural communities, travelers, and schoolchildren. The mass abductions carried out by these groups have become one of the most significant security challenges in northern Nigeria, contributing to widespread displacement and further destabilizing the region (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019).

### **Factors Contributing to the Proliferation of Kidnapping**

Several factors have contributed to the proliferation of kidnapping across Nigeria, transforming it into a widespread and persistent problem. These factors include socioeconomic conditions, weak governance, corruption, and the availability of small arms and light weapons.

*Socioeconomic Conditions:* Widespread poverty, unemployment, and economic inequality have created a fertile ground for the growth of kidnapping. Young people facing a lack of economic opportunities have turned to kidnapping as a means of survival. (Ibrahim & Dung-Gwom, 2020).

*Weak Governance and Corruption:* The failure of the Nigerian state to provide basic security and the pervasive corruption within law enforcement agencies often results in kidnappers going unpunished, further eroding public trust in the state's ability to protect its citizens (Agbiboa, 2019).

*The Proliferation of Small Arms and Light Weapons:* The influx of weapons, often from conflict zones in neighboring countries, has armed criminal gangs and insurgent groups, enabling them to engage in kidnapping with impunity (Nwolise, 2020).

*Cultural and Social Factors:* In some regions, where kidnapping has become widespread, there is a growing perception that it is an acceptable way to redistribute wealth in a context of economic inequality. The glamorization of criminality in popular culture, particularly through music and movies, has also contributed to the social acceptance of kidnapping as a means of achieving financial success (Omeje, 2018).

### **The Effect of Kidnapping on Socioeconomic Activities**

In recent years, the escalation of kidnapping incidents in various parts of Nigeria, has disrupted socioeconomic activities and eroded the sense of security among residents. Below is the impact of kidnapping on the socioeconomic activities of people.

*Economic Productivity and Livelihoods:* The threat of abduction forces businesses, entrepreneurs and traders in vulnerable rural areas, to scale down operations and are often unwilling to take the risk of traveling to markets or engaging in business activities that expose them to the danger of kidnapping (Eboh & Udo, 2020).

*Social Stability and Community Life:* Kidnapping instills fear and anxiety among residents, leading to a breakdown in trust and social cohesion. Families and communities that were once tightly knit are now fragmented, as individuals and families relocate to perceived safer areas leading to a decline in school attendance of their children (Abdu & Hassan, 2021). The financial burden of paying ransoms can push families into poverty, further exacerbating the socioeconomic challenges they face (Eze, 2022).

*Community Development and Investment:* Investors, both local and foreign, are reluctant to



commit resources to an area where security is precarious. This lack of investment hinders the growth of infrastructure, healthcare, education, and other critical sectors that are essential for development (Ali, 2020). These can affect job creation, distract tourism and promote vicious circle of poverty (Akinwale, 2020).

### **Theoretical Perspective:**

#### **Routine Activity Theory**

Routine Activity Theory (RAT), introduced by Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson in 1979, offers a valuable framework for understanding crime occurrences by focusing on the situational dynamics that enable criminal activities. RAT emphasizes the convergence of three critical elements: a motivated offender, a suitable target, and the absence of a capable guardian. When these elements converge in time and space, the likelihood of crime increases. This theoretical perspective is particularly relevant for examining the phenomenon of kidnapping in Jalingo Local Government Area (LGA), Taraba State, Nigeria, where kidnapping has become a significant threat to socioeconomic development.

#### **The Three Core Elements of Routine Activity Theory**

1. *Motivated Offender:* RAT begins with the assumption that motivated offenders exist in any given society. These are individuals who, due to various social, economic, or psychological factors, are predisposed to commit crimes. In the context of Jalingo LGA, several factors such as poverty, unemployment, and social disintegration can push individuals toward criminal activities like kidnapping as a means of survival or financial gain (Eze, 2022).
2. *Suitable Target:* The second element of RAT involves the identification of suitable targets that appears valuable, accessible, and vulnerable to the offender. In Jalingo LGA, for instance, farmers traveling to remote farmlands, traders transporting goods across rural markets, and students commuting to schools in isolated areas may all be perceived as suitable targets by kidnappers (Abdu & Hassan, 2021).

3. *Absence of a Capable Guardian:* The final element of RAT is the absence of a capable guardian or mechanism that can prevent a crime from occurring, such as law enforcement, community members, or even physical security measures and lack of community vigilance, leaving many communities vulnerable to kidnapping (Onuoha, 2019).

While RAT offers valuable insights on the occurrence of crime, it has also faced significant critiques. Cornish & Clarke (2018) criticized RAT for lack of focus on the psychological and motivational aspects of crime. The theory justifies crime prevention strategies that focus on reducing opportunities for crime, such as increasing surveillance, improving lighting, or enhancing security measures which may only address the symptoms of crime rather than its causes (Farrell & Tilley, 2021). Walklate, (2018) also argued that the theory emphasizes on situational rather than motivational factors.

#### **Methodology**

The study employed a descriptive survey design. The study area is Jalingo LGA, which is the capital of Taraba State. Five wards were purposively selected from the LGA. The target population of the selected wards comprises of 2059 households both victims of kidnapping and non-victims. The sample size of 394 households was determined using Krejcie and Morgan Table. As the study aims to understand the broader impact of kidnapping on socioeconomic development of the entire community, the study also considers the involvement of local leaders, law enforcement officials, and community members in the interview session of the research to gain a holistic view of the kidnapping phenomenon. Given the diverse population of Jalingo LGA, a multistage sampling technique was employed. This approach involves the following steps:

1. *Stage 1: Selection of Wards:* Out of the total number of wards in Jalingo LGA, a purposive sampling technique was used to





select five wards that have been significantly affected by kidnapping.

2. *Stage 2: Selection of Households:* Within the selected wards, systematic random sampling was used to select the households including the affected ones for participation in the study.
3. *Stage 3: Selection of Respondents:* Within each selected household, one respondent was chosen, preferably the head of the household or an adult member who is knowledgeable about the household's experiences with kidnapping and its socioeconomic impacts.

The data collected was analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative data retrieved from the questionnaire was analyzed using descriptive statistics (such as frequencies and percentages) to summarize the data, while inferential statistics (such as chi-square tests) was used to test hypotheses. The qualitative secondary data, and data obtained from interviews were analyzed thematically. This involves coding the data into themes and categories that reflect the key issues related to kidnapping and its effects on socioeconomic activities.

**Table 1: Population, sample and rate of return analyzed from the selected words in Jalingo LGA.**

| S/N | Name of Wards | Population | Drawn Sample | Retrieved Questionnaire | Copies Analyzed | Percentage Analyzed % |
|-----|---------------|------------|--------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| 1   | Barade        | 340        | 64           | 61                      | 61              | 95                    |
| 2   | KachallaSembe | 364        | 70           | 66                      | 66              | 94                    |
| 3   | Kona          | 859        | 168          | 161                     | 161             | 96                    |
| 4   | "             | 313        | 58           | 55                      | 55              | 95                    |
| 5   | Majidadi      | 183        | 34           | 31                      | 31              | 91                    |
|     | Total         | 2059       | 394          | 374                     | 374             | 95                    |

Source: Field Survey, 2023

Table 1 depicts the population, sample size and the rate of questionnaires administered and analyzed. The total number of useable questionnaires is 374 and the percentage is 95%.

## Results and Discussion of Findings

**Table 2: Socio-Economic Activities that are Mostly Affected as a Result of Kidnapping**

| Questions             | SD          | D           | NO          | A            | SA           | TOTAL         | REMARK |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|--------|
|                       | 5           | 4           | 3           | 2            | 1            |               |        |
| Transportation sector | 38<br>(10%) | 75<br>(20%) | 56<br>(15%) | 112<br>(30%) | 93<br>(25%)  | 374<br>(100%) | REJECT |
| Agriculture           | 19<br>(5%)  | 37<br>(10%) | 37<br>(10%) | 131<br>(35%) | 150<br>(40%) | 374<br>(100%) | ACCEPT |
| Financial Strains     | 19<br>(5%)  | 22<br>(6%)  | 56<br>(15%) | 131<br>(35%) | 146<br>(39%) | 374<br>(100%) | ACCEPT |

Source: Field Survey, 2023

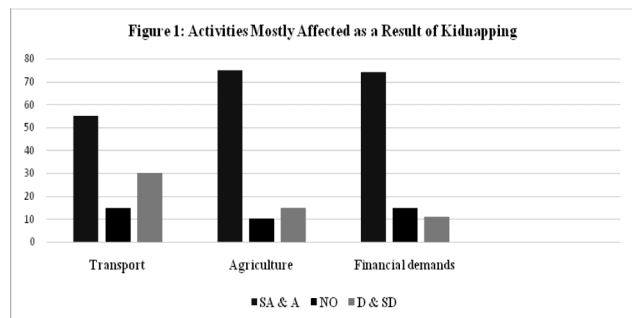


Table 2 and Figure 1, depicts the responds of households concerning the activities that are mostly affected as a result of kidnapping. 55% of the respondents have agreed and strongly agreed that Kidnapping has a negative effect on transport activities while 75% agreed that agricultural production has been demoralized and 74% of the respondents have unanimously agreed that kidnappers have succeeded in demanding and collecting ransoms from the affected people in Jalingo LGA.

The finding that Kidnapping has affect transport activities, agriculture and leads to financial liquidation is identical with the finding of Oluwatobi (2019) who assert that farmers, especially those working in isolated farmlands, are reluctant to cultivate their lands or tend to their crops due to the fear of abduction. Commercial drivers, particularly those operating along routes known for high kidnapping incidents, have either abandoned their routes or significantly increased fares to compensate for the risk, leading to



inflation and a higher cost of living for residents (Okoli & Ugwu, 2019). The corroborated finding of Eze (2022) reveals that families are forced to sell assets, deplete savings, or take on debt to secure the release of kidnapped loved ones. This financial strain can push families into poverty, further exacerbating the socioeconomic challenges they face.

This view is corroborated by the views of respondents from the interview session which stated that:

“Many families have suffered from financial challenges due to high demand of ransoms from the families of the affected victim which push some victims to poverty after returning from captivity”.

**Table 3: Effects of Kidnapping on Socio-**

| Questions                    | SD          | D            | NO         | A            | SA          | TOTAL         | REMARK |
|------------------------------|-------------|--------------|------------|--------------|-------------|---------------|--------|
|                              | 5           | 4            | 3          | 2            | 1           |               |        |
| Income reduction             | 56<br>(15%) | 30<br>(8%)   | 23<br>(6%) | 209<br>(56%) | 56<br>(15%) | 374<br>(100%) | ACCEPT |
| Investment and tourism       | 11<br>(3%)  | 79<br>(21%)  | 34<br>(9%) | 209<br>(56%) | 41<br>(11%) | 374<br>(100%) | ACCEPT |
| Lives and social interaction | 30<br>(8%)  | 120<br>(32%) | 22<br>(6%) | 112<br>(30%) | 90<br>(24%) | 374<br>(100%) | ACCEPT |

Source: Field Survey, 2023

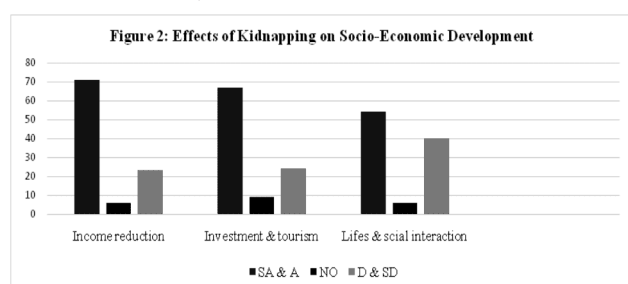


Table 3 and Figure 2, depicts the effects of kidnapping on socio-economic development in Jalingo LGA. 71% of the respondents have agreed and strongly agreed that Kidnapping has a negative impact on their income while 67% agreed that kidnapping distract investors and strangers. 54% of the respondents also agreed and strongly agreed that kidnapping affect people's lives and their social interaction.

The finding that socio-economic effect of Kidnaping affect people's income, distract investment and leads to demoralization of lives and social interaction is identical with the finding of Akinwale (2020) who purported that the persistent threat of kidnapping leads to decline in investment, limits the economic opportunities available to the local population and diminishes the potential for cultural exchange and community enrichment

This view is corroborated by the views of respondents from the interview session which stated that:

“The kidnappers abduct the wealthiest members of the community and demand exorbitant ransoms. Such kidnapers' activities can liquidate the economic activities of the community which consequently affect business and social interactions of the people”.

**Table 5: Chi-Square Test of the Relationship between Kidnapping and Socio-Economic Activities**

|                              | Value                | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|------------------------------|----------------------|----|-----------------------|
| Pearson Chi-Square           | 559.489 <sup>a</sup> | 45 | .000                  |
| Likelihood Ratio             | 458.256              | 45 | .000                  |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | .266                 | 1  | .606                  |
| N of Valid Cases             | 378                  |    |                       |

Source: Field Survey, 2023

**Decision:** The statistical test found that the value of Chi-Square ( $\chi^2$ ) calculated (559.489) is greater than the critical value, which means that the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternate was accepted indicating there is a significant relationship between Kidnaping and socio-economic development in Jalingo Local Government Area of Taraba State.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

From the findings, it is concluded that there is a prevailing incidence of Kidnapping in Jalingo LGA. Some of the socio-economic activities most affected include agriculture, transportation and financial strain which consequently affect the business activities and socio-economic development in Jalingo LGA. It distracts investors, result to loss of human lives and distrust



among the community members which demoralize the mode of social interaction in the community.

Therefore, based on the findings excavated from the objectives of this study, the following recommendations were suggested.

1. Proliferation of Security Personnels to Reduce Kidnapping Incidence: There was a need to display securities in the main roads that facilitate transportation, and security cameras that can reveal what is happening in the vulnerable areas for immediate action. This can prevent the spread of kidnapping in those areas.
2. Aids and Grants for Revitalizing the Affected Areas: Government should assist the affected individuals with financial assistant to revitalize the socioeconomic activities affected by kidnapping.
3. Strict Punishment: Strict adherence to the rule of law and severe punishment to the kidnappers caught during the act can strike fear to the kidnappers and reduce the high rate of the incidence in Jalingo LGA. Reducing the rate of kidnaping will enhance the socioeconomic development of the community.

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