Criminal Opportunity or Structural Failure? Examining the Causes and Socio-Economic Consequences of Kidnapping in Kaduna State, Northwestern Nigeria

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Abstract

Kidnapping has become one of the most endemic internal-security challenges in Nigeria with Kaduna State in the North-West being a major hub of kidnapping-related violence. The problem has been largely discussed in the security and criminological context, without considering its socio-economic impact at the community level as a development issue. This study explores the causes and socio-economic impact of kidnapping in Kaduna State and the depiction of the crime as a structural failure, criminal opportunity or both. It is based on structural strain theory and rational choice theory, and is a mixed-method design that includes a survey of 296 residents and ten key-informant interviews, which were analysed using SPSS and thematic content analysis. The results reveal that unemployment (23.3%), quick wealth (20.6%) and poverty (20.6%) are the main factors, while 81.8% of the respondents indicate that there is a significant socio-economic disruption, such as limited mobility, reduced agricultural production, contracting trade and community insecurity. The study concludes that kidnapping in Kaduna State is a symptom of underlying structural inequality, weak governance and youth marginalisation, and recommends for an integrated approach to addressing kidnapping, which involves security governance and targeted socio-economic intervention.

Keywords: Kidnapping, Socio-Economic Development, Security, Governance, Youth Unemployment.

Introduction

Kidnapping has been a constant problem in the internal security of developing countries in the last decade (Suleiman, 2022). The number of reported cases has increased significantly in Nigeria in the last decade, but the real incidence is unknown due to under-reporting. Nigeria is listed as one of the country's worst hit by terrorism-related violence in sub-Saharan Africa in the 2023 Global Terrorism Index (Kuchmenko, 2025). The crime has turned into a lucrative business that is intertwined with insurgency, armed banditry and socio-economic deprivation (Geldenhuys, 2023; Gilbert, 2025). Ransom is the most prevalent motive, but kidnapping also has political, ideological and communal motives and is now acknowledged as a threat to economic development in West Africa. However, its socio-economic impact on communities has been largely ignored, with overwhelmingly militarised responses.

Nigeria is at the heart of this issue, with an unprecedented increase in kidnappings in the last 20 years. Today, kidnapping has become a national phenomenon, transcending geopolitical, ethnic and religious boundaries, and was once limited to the oil-producing Niger Delta region (Okwuwada, 2023). The North-West region of Nigeria, and the North in general, has been one of the most affected regions, with high rates of chronic unemployment, poverty, weak governance and porous borders, which have facilitated the development of kidnapping networks (Raji, 2023). The crime has not been stopped by the military deployments, indicating that force alone is not enough and that the structural vulnerabilities that underlie the crime have not been examined.

Kaduna State has been one of the worst hit areas in the North-West with more than a thousand deaths,

hundreds of abductions and approximately 50,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the period 2019-2022 (Princewell, 2023). The Abuja-Kaduna highway, which is a strategic route, has been synonymous with insecurity, as armed groups have been known to intercept vehicles on the road for ransom (Obodo & Onota, 2025). Farmers have abandoned land, traders have closed shops, and schools have shut as communities live in fear of abduction (Ibrahim, 2025). These realities point beyond a law-enforcement problem to structural drivers, unemployment, poverty and institutional weakness, that both push people into kidnapping and make communities easy targets.

Against this background, this study investigates the causes and socio-economic consequences of kidnapping in Kaduna State, Northwestern Nigeria. Specifically, it pursues three objectives: (i) to examine the structural causes and drivers of kidnapping in the study area; (ii) to assess its socio-economic consequences for residents' livelihoods and community stability; and (iii) to identify the strategic measures adopted to curb it. In doing so, the study shifts the discussion of kidnapping from a policing concern to a development one and contributes to a growing but still limited evidence base.

Literature Review

Research Gap

Scholarship on kidnapping, in Nigeria and across the developing world, has centred heavily on security and criminological frameworks, attending to criminal-network structures, insurgent financing and state security responses (Adenuga, 2024). This focus has left a substantial gap: what kidnapping does to the socio-economic fabric of affected communities. Its effects on livelihoods, agricultural productivity, local trade, investment and community resilience, especially in high-incidence settings such as Kaduna State, remain under-explored. Without evidence on these community-level dimensions, policy continues to privilege security intelligence while neglecting the structural causes of the crisis. This study addresses that gap.

Kidnapping as a Phenomenon: Global and African Context

Kidnapping has evolved into a sophisticated criminal enterprise that intersects with organised crime, socio-economic instability and insurgency (Geldenhuys, 2023). Ransom abduction is now a lucrative source of illicit income for criminals around the world (Hansel & Silomon, 2024). It is a security threat and a manifestation of underlying developmental shortcomings, as it is found in sub-Saharan Africa where it is linked to structural poverty, poor governance and communal conflict (Gilbert, 2025). Abduction networks thrive and evolve in economically vulnerable and conflict-prone environments, and are resistant to security-focused interventions. Their profit motive is not only a reflection of the commercialisation of crime but also a lack of legitimate economic opportunity for young men in marginalised communities (Bello, 2022).

Drivers and Causes of Kidnapping in Nigeria and Kaduna State

The causes of kidnapping in Nigeria are mostly structural, stemming from socio-economic and environmental factors that facilitate the recruitment of criminals and organised violence. The lack of employment opportunities for young people and high poverty rates is always cited as the key structural facilitators of kidnapping networks (Karfe et al., 2022; Sarka & Magaji, 2025). These vulnerabilities are exacerbated in the North-West due to decades of neglect, low institutional capacity and access to education and economic opportunity. They are exacerbated by environmental pressures: farmer-pastoralist conflicts in rural Kaduna State have been exacerbated by land degradation, desertification and competition over natural resources (Ntumva, 2022). The involvement of organised groups allegedly linked to extremist groups like Boko Haram and Ansaru further complicates the picture, making the use of traditional security measures inadequate in combating a profit-driven crime (Okwuwada, 2023).

The Socio-Economic Impacts of kidnapping at the Community level.

The effects of kidnapping are most apparent at the

community level, but there is little literature available on this topic. Continued abductions cause fear and affect livelihoods in various sectors. It has had a particularly devastating impact on agriculture, particularly in agrarian areas like Kaduna State where farmers are scared of being abducted and thus are unable to farm, which has led to a decline in agricultural production, worsening food insecurity and the loss of rural livelihoods (Sani & Mohammed, 2025). This is consistent with broader evidence that insecurity has a direct negative impact on agricultural production and trade that rural economies rely on (Faruk & Abdullahi, 2022).

Kidnapping also has a negative impact on trade and the investment climate. The general sense of insecurity is a barrier to domestic and foreign investments, unemployment and discontent in already fragile communities (Anikwudike & Agabi, 2024). Traders leave the markets; transport becomes unfeasible and informal networks that support livelihoods gradually weaken. The education sector is not spared either, as the attacks result in the closure of schools, which have long-term implications for human capital (Sani & Mohammed, 2023). Combined, these shocks are an active force of underdevelopment that exacerbates the inequalities that gave rise to it.

In addition to income, kidnapping also undermines the social capital, cohesion and trust networks that support local economic life. When people are no longer able to go about their daily lives, attend services, or conduct business, their social life suffers (Berebon, 2025). This erosion of the social fabric of a community is one of the least studied impacts, and an important field where development research can make a contribution.

State responses and their limitations

The Nigerian state has not been passive. The security operations have been successful in some aspects of disrupting kidnapping networks and rescuing victims, including Operation Accord in the North-West, which aimed to dismantle kidnapping gangs and restore peace (Ohwo, 2025). However, their effectiveness has been constrained due to lack of adequate resources, poor intelligence coordination, institutional weakness and adaptability of criminal networks (Adenuga, 2024). Most of these interventions have focused on symptoms, not structural conditions, such as unemployment, poverty, inequality, and weak governance, which facilitate the crime, and networks have expanded into cattle rustling, arms trafficking and extortion (Ohwo, 2025). This pattern suggests that sustainable solutions need to go beyond security solutions to tackle root causes at the grassroots level (Demehin et al., 2024).

Theoretical Framework

The study uses an integrated framework of rational choice theory (Reyn, 2024) and Merton's (1938) strain theory to provide micro-, meso- and macro-level explanations of kidnapping. In this context, kidnapping is not a crime in isolation but a socio-economic process that is part of the broader governance and development failures (Bello, 2022). Rational choice theory assumes that offenders are rational and deliberate agents who consider the costs and benefits of crime, and will engage in criminal activity if they believe that the rewards outweigh the risks (Steele, 2023; Foreman-Peck & Zhou, 2025). In Kaduna State, kidnapping has become a business with kidnappers targeting travellers, farmers, traders and students, whose families or institutions can pay ransom. Poor policing, inadequate surveillance and delayed police reaction reinforces the rational calculation for participation.

Strain theory focuses on the structural forces that drive decisions, whereas rational choice theory focuses on individual decisions. According to the strain theory, crime can occur when the goals that are socially valued are not achieved through legitimate means (Meehan et al., 2024). This mismatch can lead to frustration and adaptive deviance in situations of entrenched poverty and low mobility. In many parts of Northwestern Nigeria, poverty, lack of access to quality education and high youth unemployment prevents people from moving up in the world, and kidnapping can be an alternative means of livelihood for those who have few other options

(Tukur & Aguiyi, 2022). Organised networks reduce the entry barriers by providing rewards, logistics and protection (Ogbueke & Usman, 2025). The crime is therefore maintained by deprivation and blocked opportunity, as explained by strain theory.

Both perspectives provide a comprehensive explanation: rational choice helps to understand the economic rationality and strategic choices of offenders, while strain theory helps to understand the socio-economic pressure and structural inequality that led to those choices (Isokon et al., 2025). Kidnapping then seems not to be a deviant act but a response of individual agency to economic incentives, opportunity structures and structural disadvantage. This synthesis puts the analysis of the causes of kidnapping, the socio-economic impacts and measures to prevent it, and the importance of multidimensional responses, in which enhanced security is coupled with poverty reduction, youth employment, and education and institutional reform.

Methodology

The study used a mixed-methods approach, which involved both quantitative survey data and qualitative interview data to explore the socio-economic impacts of kidnapping and its causes in Kaduna State. The descriptive approach facilitated a systematic description of kidnapping trends and their socio-economic impacts, and triangulation of the methods enhanced the contextual understanding and validity (Creswell & Plano 2023). The study was conducted in Kaduna Metropolis, mainly Kaduna North, Kaduna South, Chikun, Igabi and Kajuru local government areas of Kaduna metropolis which are highly significant in terms of administrative and economic activities and where kidnapping is common. The metropolis combines urban and peri-urban zones concentrating commercial and administrative activity. The study population comprised adults across occupational groups, farmers, traders, civil servants, artisans and community leaders, including direct victims of kidnapping, with sampling frames drawn from ward enumeration lists and local-government household registers.

For the quantitative survey, multistage sampling was used. From the local government areas that make up Kaduna Metropolis, the two with the highest reported abduction rates, Chikun and Igabi, were purposively selected as the primary sampling clusters; households within them were then systematically sampled, with a sub-sample of households reporting prior kidnapping experience. Of 300 questionnaires administered, 296 were valid (98.7%). The questionnaires were administered face-to-face by trained research assistants with on-the-spot completion and retrieval, which accounts for the high validity rate, and the sampling frames were drawn from the ward enumeration lists noted above. Because insecurity and displacement made a precise population denominator difficult to establish, the sample size was set pragmatically and is treated as adequate for the study's descriptive aims rather than as a basis for precise statistical inference. The qualitative component involved ten key informants, traditional authorities, security personnel, government officials and religious leaders who were purposively selected based on their first-hand experience of kidnapping in the metropolis, the number of which was determined by data saturation.

Structured questionnaires were used to collect the quantitative data which focused on the pattern, causes and socio-economic effects of kidnapping. Semi-structured interviews revealed qualitative data focusing on contextual knowledge and expert opinions about kidnapping. Secondary sources of data were scholarly literature, government's security reports and reputable mass media reports. All quantitative data were analysed using SPSS 25 and descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages and cross tabulations were used to summarise patterns and trends. The thematic content analysis of qualitative data was carried out, allowing two researchers to independently produce their own coding in order to ensure reliability. Themes were developed from the qualitative data and added to the quantitative data to provide a fuller picture. Triangulation of information from the various sources enhanced the reliability of the findings.

An informed consent process was obtained in line with guidelines for privacy, anonymity and withdrawal rights of participants who had already given their consent. These safeguards helped protect participants and also preserved research integrity (Alhabsi, 2024). Several limitations should be noted. The purposive focus on Kaduna Metropolis and on key informants limits the generalisability of the findings beyond the study area. The data are largely self-reported perceptions and are therefore subject to social-desirability and recall bias, especially on a sensitive and dangerous subject. The cross-sectional design captures associations at a single point in time and does not establish causation; the causal language used at points should be read as analytical interpretation rather than demonstrated cause and effect. Finally, insecurity and participant reluctance in some areas restricted access to certain affected populations.

Findings

Table 1: Socio-Demographic Profile of Respondents

Socio-demographic Characteristics	Frequency (N=296)	Percentage (100%)
Age		
21–30 years	95	32.1
31–40 years	68	23.0
41–50 years	73	24.6
51–60 years	60	20.3
Origin of Respondents		
Natives of Kaduna State	261	88.2
Visitors/Settlers	35	11.8
Years of Residence		
Less than 1 year	50	16.9
1–10 years	101	34.1
11–20 years	79	26.7
Above 21 years	66	22.3
Education		
No Formal Education	49	16.6
Primary School Certificate	54	18.2
Senior Secondary School Certificate	98	33.1
ND/NCE	55	18.6
B.Sc./B.A./B.Eng.	29	9.8
PGD/M.Sc./Ph.D.	11	3.7
Occupation		
Farmers	98	33.1
Students/Job Seekers	59	19.9
Civil/Public Servants	52	17.6
Traders/Business Owners	51	17.2
Others	36	12.2
Religion		
Christianity	123	41.6
Islam	104	35.1
Other Religions	69	23.3

Source: Field Survey (2026).

Table 1 analysis indicates that the ages of the respondents were between 10 and 60 years with the largest percentage (27.4%) of the respondents falling under the age group of 21-30 years. This was followed by 24.6% of the respondents in the 41-50-year bracket, 23.0% in the 31-40-year bracket and 20.3% in 51-60 bracket. The lowest percentage 4.7% was in the 10-20-year range. These figures show that the majority of the respondents were adults of mature age, and they could give informed views on matters that concerned kidnapping and its impacts on their society.

In terms of origin, (88.2%) of the respondents were natives of the state of study, Kaduna, and 11.8% were either visitors or settlers. As to years of residence, 34.1% lived in the area between 1 and 10 years, 26.7% between 11-20 years, and 22.3% above 21 years, with 16.9% residing in the area less than 1 year. This distribution indicates that the respondents were well conversant with the community dynamics and therefore were able to give credible information regarding the subject matter.

Regarding the level of education, most (33.1%) had the Senior Secondary School Certificate, 18.6% had ND/NCE and 18.2% had the primary school certificates. Approximately 16.6% had no formal qualification, 9.8% had tertiary education degrees (B.Sc., B.A., or B.Eng.), and only a small number of the respondents had postgraduate qualifications (PGD, M.Sc., or Ph.D.). This shows that there is a mixed background of education among the respondents as the area being studied has a varied social make-up. Occupationally, 33.1% of respondents were farmers, 19.9% were students or job seekers, 17.6% were civil/public servants, and 17.2% were traders or business owners, while a minority were engaged in other occupations. Concerning religion, 41.6% identified as Christians, 35.1% as Muslims, and 23.3% practiced other religions.

In a follow-up interview, a member of the community explained how horrible her experience with some of the hoodlums was. She said:

> *While still in the captivity of the kidnappers, they asked each of the eight of us our religion,*

we were later placed into different rooms based on the religion we claimed, and the payment of ransom was based on the same. This is why I think, in my own view, non-Muslim suffer most in the hands of the kidnappers, because most of the settlers are Christians, they constitute more than half of the people in this area, etc. (4:12:2025, Respondent K, Female, 29 years, Christian, BSc, Kaduna South).

Kaylor (2012) further discussed this. He stated that, irrespective of the type of kidnapping and the motive for its perpetration, the psychological and financial impact of the problem can be considerably damaging, both for the victims and their significant others. Victims of kidnapping differ in age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, level of education, and country of origin. Although anyone can become a victim of kidnapping, specific populations are especially vulnerable to this form of victimization (Kaylor, 2015). These responses show that the effect of kidnapping on economics and social development is overwhelming in the study area.

Table 2: Causes of Kidnapping in the Study Area

Causes of Kidnapping in the Study Area	Frequency (N=296)	Percentage (100%)
Unemployment and Youth Joblessness	69	23.3
Greed, Desire for Quick Wealth, and Materialistic Lifestyle	61	20.6
Poverty and Economic Hardship	61	20.6
Poor or Weak Government Policies	59	19.9
Inadequate Security Personnel and Weak Security System	41	13.9

Source: Field Survey (2026).

As shown in Table 2, respondents identified unemployment as the leading cause of kidnapping in the study area (23.3%), followed by greed and the desire for quick wealth (20.6%), poverty and economic hardship (20.6%), and weak government policy (19.9%); a minority (13.9%) cited insufficient security personnel. These responses point to unemployment and poverty as the dominant structural drivers.

An informant in an interview explained some of the factors that exacerbate kidnapping in the study area. He posited that:

Most of the youth involved in kidnapping are jobless, and the few who made it would not want to leave the obnoxious act because of greed and wanting to [live] a life of affluence
(6:12:2025, Respondent L, Male, 45 years, Muslim, BSc, Kaduna North).

Another informant said:

My interactions with the kidnappers arrested show that most of them are jobless, lazy youths who want to make it on all coasts.
(4:12:2025, Respondent M, Male, 52 years, Christian, SSCE, Kaduna South).

This is consistent with the wider literature, which treats security as the primary responsibility of the state (Lau, 2023; Bellamy, 2023) and frames Nigeria's deepening insecurity, killings, bombings and kidnappings, as a failure of that responsibility. The data confirm that unemployment and poverty are significant contributors to kidnapping in the study area.

Table 3: Socio-economic Consequences of Kidnapping in the Study Area

Socio-economic Consequences of Kidnapping in the Study Area	Frequency (N=296)	Percentage (100%)
Does kidnapping have socio-economic effects?		
Yes, kidnapping has socio-economic effects	242	81.8
No, kidnapping has no socio-economic effects	54	18.2
Socio-economic Effects of Kidnapping on Residents		
Restriction of Freedom of Movement and Social Activities	62	25.6
Decline in Business and Economic Activities	51	21.1
Disruption of Educational Activities and School Attendance	39	16.1
Psychological Trauma, Fear and Insecurity Among Residents	34	14.0
Reduction in Agricultural Production and Farmers' Livelihoods	29	12.0
Increased Poverty and Household Economic Hardship	17	7.0
Population Displacement and Migration from Affected Communities	10	4.1

Source: Field Survey (2026).

As Table 3 shows, 81.8% of respondents affirmed that kidnapping has socio-economic effects in the study area, against 18.2% who did not. Asked to specify these effects, respondents most often cited restriction of freedom of movement and social activities (25.6%), followed by a decline in

business and economic activities (21.1%), disruption of education and school attendance (16.1%), psychological trauma, fear and insecurity (14.0%), reduced agricultural production and farmers' livelihoods (12.0%), increased poverty and household hardship (7.0%), and population displacement (4.1%). Restricted movement and economic disruption thus emerge as the most pervasive consequences.

In an interview with some of the residents of Igabi, they explained their ordeal about the kidnapping saga as follows:

> *We can no longer move freely in our father's land, all my business is crumbled, and I can no longer buy more goods to stock in my shop. Most of my customers have deserted the town, and the few that remain cannot move freely like they have always done, all because of the fear of being kidnapped*
> *(28:11:2025, Respondent N, Male, 50 years, Christian, SSCE, Chikun).*

Another relative said:

> *I have been consistently confined with my siblings to my house and workplace. We can no longer go to church or social gatherings just for fear of being kidnapped. The small shop I manage at the outskirts of Igabi has become a no-go area for me. The shop has been locked for over three months*
> *(8:12:2025, Respondent O, Female, 39 years, Muslim, MSc, Igabi).*

The accounts reflect those of Carranza (2022) who reported that families of the abducted experienced high levels of psychological stress, such as depression, physical illness, and a general feeling of helplessness. They say that the lack of mobility is one of the most felt effects of the kidnapping wave, in addition to economic disruption.

The economic aspect was particularly prominent. As in the survey, a drop in business and economic activities (21.1%) and farm abandonment (12.0%) were mentioned as direct consequences of the fear of abduction, as informants reported.

In an interview with some of the residents of Kajuru, they explained their ordeal as follows:

> *I am a farmer in this area. I have a vast plot of land with different types of cash crops. About two years ago, I had only 10 million Naira, but now I can hardly get up to a million Naira. I am among the poorest farmers in the state for now.*
> *(9:12:2025, Respondent P, Male, 59 years, Christian, BSc, Kajuru).*

As mentioned by Yakasai et al. (2022), kidnapping has significant economic and financial costs as well as psychological costs. Hansel & Silomon (2024) estimate that ransom payments worldwide are up to US$500 million per year, but it is difficult to determine exact figures as it is believed that 70% of ransom cases go unreported due to fear of reprisal or distrust of the police.

Table 4: Strategic Measures for Curbing Kidnapping in the Study Area

Strategic Measures for Curbing Kidnapping	Frequency (N=296)	Percentage (100%)
Reporting suspicious activities to the police and security agencies	119	40.2
Sensitization and community awareness on kidnapping patterns	77	26.0
Personal vigilance and precautionary safety behaviours	58	19.6
Enhancement of neighbourhood surveillance (night watch/whistle systems)	15	5.1
Home and environmental security improvements (lighting, doors, clearing bushes)	12	4.1
Withholding personal information (travel plans, finances, social media activity)	8	2.7
Support for vigilante and local hunters' groups	7	2.4

Source: Field Survey (2026).

Table 4 outlines the measures that residents take to prevent abduction. The most common answer was reporting suspicious activity to the police and security agencies (40.2%), which suggests that many residents consider it to be their first line of defence and understand the importance of citizen intelligence in the early detection of crime. Community sensitisation on kidnapping patterns is second (26.0%), which indicates awareness raising activities in the community, such as community meetings, religious services and social media, as reported in the literature to be important in the prevention of violence.

Personal vigilance and precautionary behaviour (19.6%) is a high level of individual risk-awareness, for example, avoiding late travel, taking safer routes and staying alert. Other, less often mentioned, but useful practices are the improvement of neighbourhood surveillance by means of night-watch and whistle systems (5.1%), which are informal ways to complement formal policing.

Another 4.1% indicated that they had enhanced home and environmental security by installing stronger doors and perimeter lighting and clearing bushes that provide hiding places, consistent with Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED). A smaller proportion (2.7%) provide personal information on travel, finances and social-media activity to a smaller group of people, acknowledging that kidnappers use such information to track their targets, while 2.4% provide fuel, logistics and airtime to local vigilante and hunter groups, highlighting the ongoing importance of community-based security actors in areas where formal security provision is weak.

Overall, residents have a multi-layered approach, involving formal security cooperation, community surveillance, personal precaution and environmental security. The most commonly mentioned measures are the least organised and most individual, whereas the measures that are more resource-intensive and collective are the least mentioned, in line with evidence that accessibility, perceived effectiveness and local security norms influence protective behaviour in conflict prone environments.

Discussion of Findings

This study aimed to find out the causes and socio-economic impact of kidnapping in Kaduna State and the results put the crime firmly in the context of structural socio-economic deprivation and institutional weakness. That unemployment (23.3%), the desire for fast money (20.6%) and poverty (20.6%) are the top motivators is not just descriptive, it is a sign that kidnapping in the North-West is, to a large extent, an economic adaptation to denied opportunity. These drivers are exactly the disconnect between culturally accepted goals and acceptable means that compels people to seek out alternative means (Ifeanyichukwu et al., 2025; Ogbuke & Usman, 2025). The findings also show a rational-choice logic that is embedded within these structural constraints. The high returns of ransom and low likelihood of punishment seem to be the reason for the offenders' decision to commit the crime, as evidenced by the commercialisation of abduction as organised crime (Okwuwada, 2023) and weak enforcement. The two theories are thus complementary, not competing; strain provides the motivation, and the pool of willing recruits provides the means and targets of the motivation. The study's main analytical proposition is that kidnapping in Kaduna is not a purely structural phenomenon nor purely opportunistic, but a result of rational agents operating in a tense socio-economic context. A competing reading would focus on insurgency and its funding as the primary cause of the surge, but although organised and extremist actors are definitely involved (Okwuwada, 2023), the importance of unemployment, poverty and quick-wealth motives in the data indicates that economic pressure is the major factor in the study area, not ideology.

The socio-economic impacts show that kidnapping is not just a security issue, but a contributor to underdevelopment. The crime has a tangible impact on communities, with 81.8% of respondents saying it had a negative impact, most commonly in the form of limited mobility (25.6%) and loss of business and agriculture (20.0%). Evidence from other conflict-affected contexts suggests that farmers leave land and traders pull out of markets, reducing productivity and incomes, a cycle that is evident in this context (Faruk & Abdullahi, 2022). The study fills the gap noted above, which is the lack of attention in the literature to the socio-economic impact of kidnapping on affected communities. Networks can operate with relative impunity, particularly along rural corridors, due to institutional and environmental conditions, thin security presence, weak surveillance and limited enforcement capacity. On the other hand, residents have

responded to the situation at the community level, reporting on suspicious activity, sensitisation, personal vigilance and support for vigilante groups, but these efforts are limited by the lack of resources and coordination, and a lack of filling the protection gap by formal institutions. The results suggest that kidnapping in Kaduna State is a reflection of the overall socio-economic and governance problems. It is therefore necessary to take a comprehensive approach to addressing it, which includes a more robust security response, as well as targeted poverty alleviation, economic opportunity and institutional capacity-building initiatives, to help weaken the structural drivers of the crime.

Conclusion and Recommendations.

This study has revealed that kidnapping in Kaduna State is a multifaceted phenomenon of socio-economic deprivation, institutional vulnerability and individual motivation. Abduction is a survival strategy for some in the context of high unemployment, poverty, weak governance, corruption and inadequate security infrastructure. It not only causes direct victimisation but also has a wide range of socio-economic consequences, such as loss of mobility, school and trade disruption, and a general sense of insecurity that undermines social cohesion and trust in institutions. The results are consistent with the theoretical framework of the study. Structural strain theory explains socio-economic pressures and long-term deprivation that make kidnapping an attractive option, and rational choice theory explains the perceived economic benefits and low expected risk that make it an attractive option. They demonstrate that kidnapping in Kaduna is a multi-faceted issue that has structural and behavioural causes.

A coordinated response is needed to address the crisis, increasing security capacity and decreasing the socio-economic conditions that support criminal networks. Investment in modern infrastructure, intelligence systems and specialised training, as well as community-policing programmes that foster trust and facilitate information sharing, is crucial on the security side, while working with traditional rulers, religious leaders and community associations can enhance local surveillance and deter social tolerance of kidnapping. Targeted socio-economic interventions to address structural vulnerabilities that increase the risk of recruitment, vocational training, and entrepreneurship support and job creation to expand legitimate livelihoods are also important, as are continued investments in education in marginalised communities. Finally, a sustainable decrease in kidnapping requires a comprehensive strategy that includes better security governance and long-term socio-economic development, reducing the incentive for an opportunity to commit the crime.

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