

Kidnapping of School Girls: The Impact on Women's Education in Nigeria

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Abstract

The persistent cases of kidnapping for ransom or human shields by terrorists and bandits in Nigeria particularly targeted at school girls and women is quite alarming. Aside from the fact that it constitutes a major threat multiplier not just for the Nigerian educational system but specially for women and girl's empowerment as well as gender equality as a whole. Kidnapping is fast contributing to the destabilization and distortion of the school system as research has shown that it is a major factor for low school turn-out and enrolment for girls as they constitute the vast majority of the casualties. This has dampened their morale and self-efficacy as quite a sizeable number of girls particularly in the rural areas of Northern Nigeria which is the hub of such criminal activities do not have a choice but drop out of school for their personal safety and security of lives which is the most paramount. For the few girls who still remain determined in pursuing their educational pursuits, most of their parents and guardians have been too impoverished to meet the educational needs of their girl-children because of the huge losses of their personal resources incurred in the illegal settlement of huge ransom to help rescue the lives of other family members who happen to be victims of such criminal activities. Kidnapping in Nigerians remains a major threat to the realization of the broad goals and objectives of women and girl's education and continues to widen the gender gaps. This clearly indicates the drastic rolling back of the previous achievements of women and girls' education as well as the broad goals and objectives of gender equality. It is imperative for the government and all stake-holders to create the enabling environment for youth empowerment and job creation, embark on poverty

eradication strategies as well as integrate AI in intelligence gathering so as to effectively tackle this social anathema.

Keywords: Kidnapping, Women's Education

Introduction

kidnapping is one of the most critical global problems confronting many countries today which constitutes a threat to peace, security and development as it tends to deprive citizens of reaping the dividends of democracy especially in terms of their right to a violence free education. Over the years, the Nigerian educational sector has been bedeviled by a myriad of challenges due to inadequate funding, infrastructural definite and lack of well-qualified teachers and the most recent of which is kidnapping. Kidnapping of students and teachers for ransom is a new and emerging security threat where the victims are detained by terrorists and bandits until a ransom is paid by their families or government otherwise the culprits threaten to kill their victims. This is common particularly prevalent in northern Nigeria which is the main hub of terrorist activities. According to research, about 800 secondary school and university students have been kidnapped in coordinated attacks by terrorists and bandits in the last six months alone (Owonikoko:2021).

Most importantly, these kidnappings are often targeted at school girls and they continue to suffer severe consequences. For example, the 2014 kidnap case of 276 Chibok school girls in North Eastern Nigeria in 2014, (Owonikoko: 2021). This was followed by the kidnapped of the 2019 kidnap of Dapchi school girls and the 2021 kidnap case of 279 girls from Government Girls Science Secondary School Jangebe, Zamfara to mention but a few . Obviously, these serial cases of kidnapping seem to target mainly school girls and women which constitute a threat to the future of women's education in Nigeria. Consequently, the indefinite shut-down of schools by the government, poor enrolment of women and girls in school, rise in the number of out of school girls and women, withdrawal of girls from schools by their parents all in an attempt to save their girls from being kidnapped have done more harm than good. The logical consequences of this is that majority of girls are exposed to early marriage or even prostitution, and even denied of their right to complete their education in future. No doubt, this constitutes a threat to the rights of women to education, the SDGs as well as the realization of the broad goals and

objectives of gender equity and women's empowerment. According to Onyido (2019), kidnapping is a serious injustice to the human race as a result of its impact on the society. An education system that is characterized by chaos, constant terrorism, vandalism, cultism, students' unrest, willful destruction by hooligans, kidnapping and social vices can never be a fertile ground for productivity. (Obiechna & Nwogwu: 2018).

However, is against this background that this paper seeks to critically analyze the long-run impact of kidnapping on the future of women as well as the broad goals and the broad goals and objectives of gender equity in Nigeria? Thus, this research seeks to provide answers to such questions as: what factors are responsible for the rising level of kidnapping in Nigeria? What is its impact on the education of women? And how can the problem of kidnapping in Nigeria be tackled? This research is largely theoretical. It utilizes the feminist theory to establish the structural link between kidnapping and the future of women education. It also uses secondary data as well as qualitative methods of analysis.

Theoretical Framework: Feminism and Education

Feminist theory aims to understand the mechanisms and roots of gender inequality in education, as well as their societal repercussions. Like many other institutions of society, educational systems are characterized by unequal treatment and opportunity for women. When women face limited opportunities for education, their capacity to achieve equal rights, including financial independence, are limited. Feminist theory seeks to promote women's rights to equal education. Mary wollstonecshraft, Elizabeth Walker a key exponents of this theory.

Conceptual Clarification

Kidnapping is major social problem as well as an ambiguous concept which eludes any consensual definition. Nevertheless, the definition of this concept has evolved overtime. In earlier times kidnapping meant carrying or stealing or abducting a person (man woman or child) away to another country for involuntary servitude. It also referred to the practices of impressing males into military service (also known as crimping) by fraudulent inducement or force (Encyclopedia Britannica: 2021). It entails the unlawful taking and carrying away of a person by force or fraud or the unlawful seizure and detention of a person against his will.

According to Cornell Law School (1992), under modern law, this crime will usually be found where the victim is taken to another location or concealed. Diamond (1985) gave what he called a ‘modern definition’ of the concept kidnapping as a harmful crime measured by durations and conditions of the victim’s confinement. Although the terms kidnapping and abduction are, at times, used interchangeably, abduction is broader, generally not requiring the use of threat or use of force while kidnapping consists of an unlawful restraint of a person's liberty by force or show of force so as to send the victim into another country (Cornell Law School: 1992)

In some cases, kidnapping accompanied by such crimes as grievous bodily harm, domestic slavery, forced marriage, sexual assault, or a demand for ransom elevates the crime to first-degree or aggravated kidnapping which has been the case in Nigeria. The primary intentions for kidnapping are to subject the casualty to some form of involuntary enslavement, sex slavery, or to obtain ransom as a pre-condition for safe release which has been very typical of the kidnap cases in Nigeria. More recently, kidnapping for the purpose of extortion has become a strategy of bandits and terrorists for the purposes of enriching themselves as well as for political reasons. Kidnapping involves the use of coercion for the purpose of illegitimate confinement. Kidnapping for whatever reason no doubt is a grave offense as it is repugnant to natural justice, equity and good conscience. This crime is punishable by long prison sentence or death by a long prison term.

Women Education

According to Wikipedia (2021), Female education is a catch-all term of a complex set of issues and debates surrounding education (primary education, secondary education, tertiary education, and health education in particular) for girls and women. It is frequently called girls' education or women's education. It includes areas of gender equality and access to education. According to Hadiza (1990) Women’s education can be regarded as a kind of knowledge given to women for enhancing their self-respect and self-dignity. This knowledge can be in form of formal, non-formal and informal education, it can

also be in form of Adult Education, Community Development, Workshops, Seminars, Conferences and Training.

Education for women is a development priority because of the role women play in the society. According to Aja-Okorie (2013), Education helps men and women claim their rights and realize their potential in economic, political and social arenas. It is also the single most powerful way to lift people out of poverty. Yet, many people especially women are still excluded from education in Nigeria

Therefore, the main objectives for women's education are as follows; to increase women's productive ability, acquire modern skills, knowledge and technologies as well as to improve women's social and culture status. Considering the gender gaps, there are clear indications that there is some level of achievement as more girls today have better access to education even though there is still a lot to be done. Kidnapping has no doubt, contributed to the fast rolling back of these achievements. The high level of kidnapping has led to apathy towards attending school and this has further deepened inequality gaps in education. The education of women and girls is important because it is geared towards their empowerment. Inequalities in education for girls and women are complex: women and girls face explicit barriers to entry to school, for example, violence against women or prohibitions of girls from going to school, while other problems are more systematic and less explicit (Wikipedia:2021). In recent times, kidnapping is one of those numerous barriers in militating against the attainment of women education.

Insecurity and the Challenges Confronting the Nigerian Educational System

The understanding of insecurity was limited to the notion of only the loss of lives and properties. This explains the reason only minimal attention has been made by researchers to establish a structural link between education, kidnapping and insecurity, (Isaactamson: 2022). Today, security experts and researchers have come to the general understanding that the definition is quite complex and dynamic which includes kidnapping among other dimensions

Kidnapping is a security threat and has indeed eaten deep into the socio-economic fabric of Nigeria where it is fast crippling the entire system especially the educational sector where women seem to be most affected. Prior to the emergence of kidnapping the Nigerian educational sector has always been bedeviled by a myriad of challenges which has contributed to the drastic deterioration of its educational standards. These include:

1. Industrial strikes.
2. Inadequate teachers.
3. Inadequate Funding.
4. Infrastructural deficit.
5. Poverty.
6. Insecurity and violent conflicts

In recent times, kidnapping is a dimension of insecurity which seems to worsen the problem of education in Nigeria. Incessant conflicts, insecurity and kidnapping tend to interrupt the process of teaching and learning and the entire school calendar. The government at different times has always been compelled to shut down schools indefinitely so as to stem the tide while the number of school drop outs is on the increase. This has thus, done more harm than good to the educational system.

Possible Factors Responsible for Kidnapping in Nigeria

The rising wave of kidnapping in Nigeria has been attributed to so many factors some of which include the following:

1. Corruption.
2. High rate of unemployment.
3. Smuggling and circulation of small arms and light weapons.
4. Lack of proper security checks and porous geographical boundaries.
5. Culture of impunity.
6. Lack of an effective security capability.

Effects of Kidnapping on the Nigerian Educational system

1. Violent attacks and destruction of lives
2. Physical assault on both teachers and students
3. Physical attack on educational infrastructures such as buildings, library facilities, electricity and water supply systems, health facilities.
4. Impoverishing Nigerians through the payment of huge ransoms to kidnappers which makes it almost impossible for most parents to pay school fees.

Impact of Kidnapping on the Education of Women in Nigeria

Although these abductions did not begin recently, it has become frequent today than it was in 2014 when 276 girls were abducted from Government Girls' Secondary school, Chibok, Borno State.(Owonokoko:2021). The negative impact of kidnapping and insecurity on the Women education is indeed very colossal with severe collateral damage as the educational system is gradually being shut down in an attempt to save lives. According to Owonikoko (2021), one of the immediate responses of government to tackle this problem is the indefinite shut down of schools especially within the Northern region where the problem is worse. However, this measure taken by government is not without its consequences as it has increased the number of out of school children to the over 13.5 million especially school girls since they are the main target:

However, kidnapping has a negative effect on women education and consequently led to:

1. Increasing number of out of school girls
2. Shrinking number of girl-child enrollment and poor school attendance
3. Poor academic performance/ learning outcomes
4. Inability of governments to achieve the SDGs especially the fourth goal which emphasized equal access to education for all.
5. High level of illiteracy among women.
6. Early marriage, pregnancy and prostitution

7. Inability to achieve the broad goals and objectives of gender equality.
8. Increasing level of violence against women.
9. Increasing level of illiteracy among women.
10. Increasing Level of Violence Against Women.
11. Apathy Towards attending School

Suggestions

1. The Federal government of Nigeria should by law gazette capital punishment on kidnappers as a major step towards curbing the menace.
2. The Federal government of Nigeria must adequately fund and finance the security agencies as the major way to endure combat readiness.
3. The Federal government of Nigeria should allow each state or region to have control over its security agencies so as to ensure easy execution of its primary responsibility.
4. The Federal government of Nigeria should by law legislate to include equal opportunities for women and girls in employments, education of the girl-child, women in politics and peace building.
5. The Federal government of Nigeria and all stakeholders provide solution to the problems of poverty, unemployment, conflicts injustice, ethnicity, marginalization, corruption etc

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