

## KIDNAPPING PREDISPOSING FACTORS AMONG YOUTHS IN EASTERN NIGERIA

Chinaza Lucy Ugwu,  
Psychology Graduate Researcher.  
Phone: +2349027678833 ; +2347033907498  
Email: [ugwuchinaza1999@gmail.com](mailto:ugwuchinaza1999@gmail.com) ; [isabelclassics99@gmail.com](mailto:isabelclassics99@gmail.com)

**ABSTRACT:** *The study is on kidnapping predisposing factors among youths in Anambra State, Nigeria. A total 100 participants with mean age of 22.35 were sampled through cluster and incidental methods, comprising 25 males and 75 females. Data attained interval scale, and data analyses were done with SPSS Version 25. Design of the study was cross-sectional, statistics was multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA), and ethical measure was confidentiality and informed consent. Data were collected with Kidnapping Predisposing Factors Questionnaire by Nwankwo (2025) with overall content validity of 0.79, convergent validity of 0.92, split-half reliability of 0.78, Cronbach alpha of 0.79, and Strict Parallel reliability 0.81. A participant's response time could take between 20 to 30 minutes. Findings were: Gender consideration did not significantly influence Nigerian youths' perceived kidnapping predisposing factors. Education attainment consideration did not significantly influence Nigerian youths' perceived kidnapping predisposing factors. Education attainment consideration did significantly influence Nigerian youths' perception of "Religion" as a kidnapping predisposing factor. Interaction of gender and education attainment considerations did not significantly influence Nigerian youths' perceived kidnapping predisposing factors. Recommendations were made religious tolerance to reduce using kidnapping as an instrument jihadism. Good governance was also recommended, as kidnapping predisposing factors are attributes of bad governance.*

**KEYWORDS:** Kidnapping, Predisposing Factors, Youths, Anambra State, Nigeria

### INTRODUCTION

As Nigeria grapples with security challenges on several fronts, kidnapping has spiraled into a nationwide criminal industry. Kidnapping has become a favoured tactic of making money, bandit gangsterism and jihadism. A law was introduced that banned ransom payment handing money to kidnappers and officials deny paying ransoms to secure the release of victims. Many families say they have little faith in the authorities and feel they have no choice, often pooling their savings to meet kidnappers' demands. The authorities have used methods like registering mobile phone SIM cards to help track kidnappers. Yet, kidnapping is thriving in Nigeria.

Kidnapping experience carries with it a number of psychological issues. Hostage and kidnap survivors can experience stress reactions including denial, impaired memory, shock, numbness, anxiety, guilt, depression, anger, and a sense of helplessness. Freedom almost always brings a sense of elation and relief (APA, 2024). However, adjusting back to the real world after being held hostage can be just as difficult as abruptly leaving it. Upon release, many hostage survivors are faced with transitioning from

conditions of isolation and helplessness to sensory overload and freedom. This transition often results in significant adjustment difficulties (APA, 2024).

Police have deployed anti-kidnap units to counter kidnapping, but the forests where kidnappers hide are difficult to access and control. Authorities have tried to negotiate with bandits, strike amnesty deals and deploy vigilante groups as ways of controlling kidnapping in Nigeria. Still, kidnapping has been observed to have escalated beyond policing. Hence, it has become compelling to carry out this study on kidnapping and its perceived predisposing psychosocial factors among youths in Anambra State, Nigeria. This is with the view of contributing psychological paradigms to the fight against kidnapping.

Kidnapping is a serious crime and has potential for transforming into other felonious offenses, such as physical violence, financial victimization, and murder. Kidnapping has a lot of effects on national security. Kidnapping has been taking place in Nigeria due to the activities of insurgent groups in the North-western region, but it increased with the emergence of "Boko Haram" terrorism in the North-eastern Nigeria.

Corruption is not strongly related to kidnapping, but they have indirect connection whereby youth political thugs served corrupt political leaders and turned out to become kidnapers, sometimes for ransom from political opponents. Poverty is correlated with kidnapping in Nigeria. There are multiple consequences of kidnapping, such as financial victimization, rape and even death of the victims. For kidnapping to be eradicated in Nigeria, poverty and corruption must also be significantly reduced. Terrorism and insurgency should be fought as they involved abductions of innocent people, females and children in particular. For Nigeria to address the kidnapping phenomenon, strategic security action should be onslaught against terrorism and insurgency (Opene & Opene, 2023).

So many factors are perceived as contributing to kidnapping in Nigeria. However, there empirical examinations have not been carried out. The present study will therefore investigate those perceived contributing factors to kidnapping predisposition among Nigerian youths.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The criminal behaviour of kidnapping is uncontrollable in Nigeria, forcing many States to enact punitive laws to tackle it. In the Eastern Nigeria as a whole, news of kidnapping for ransom is now normative. Many individuals, their families, relations, friends and foreigners alike have experienced either primary, secondary, or vicarious victimization in the hands of kidnapers. The Economic and Social Council (ESC), an arm of the United Nations, and several other individuals, organizations and nations, have expressed their concerns on several areas which bother on kidnapping for ransom (Otu & Nnam, 2018).

Increasing cases of kidnappings in different parts of the country, the noxious effects of kidnapping on both the victims and their families, and the fact that there is a nexus between kidnapping and other various illegal activities are very worrisome. Impliedly, kidnapping occurs at multiple levels and dimensions.

From Awka to Nnewi, Aba, Enugu Umuahia, Abakaliki, Onitsha, Port Harcourt, Yenogoa, Calabar, Warri, Asaba in the Eastern Nigeria, to Benin, Lagos, Akure, Ogbomosho, Ile-Ife, Ibadan in the Western Nigeria, to Kano,

Kaduna, Jimeta Damatru, Abuja, Yola, Maiduguri, Jos in the Northern Nigeria, kidnapers are prowling on Nigerians and foreigners.

By 2013, Nigeria was ranked the 3<sup>rd</sup> most notorious kidnapping nation in the world, only trailing behind Mexico and India (Otu & Nnam, 2018). Nigeria also ranked 5<sup>th</sup> alongside with Syria and Afghanistan as the most dangerous countries in the world in terms of kidnapping and hostage taking (Otu & Nnam, 2018). Crisis Prevention and Response (CPR) in its 2016 Global Kidnapping Review observed that Nigeria belongs to a severe category of kidnapping countries in the whole world, ranking 10<sup>th</sup> among the list of 30 countries (Otu & Nnam, 2018).

Fear of kidnapping in Nigeria seems to be pathological. kidnapping has put everyone at fear. All whether the rich, poor, young, old, foreigners, non-foreigners, male or female is at a constant risk of either being a primary, secondary or vicarious victim of kidnapping. Basically, kidnapping in Nigeria has subjected many Nigerians to a palpable fear. Kidnapping in Nigeria takes place at any time and place. It occurs at homes, schools, streets, markets, business premises, places of worships, relaxation points, highways, morning, afternoon and nights. Going by confessional statements obtained by the police, it is also being engineered by friends, neighbours, colleagues, members of the family, maids, workers, private watchmen, personal drivers and aides (Otu & Nnam, 2018).

This study therefore considers it very imperative to delve into the empirical examination of the factors that predispose Nigerian youths in kidnapping. Actually, it could not be only the youths that get involved in kidnapping. However, the full of exuberance, easily influenced and highly pressured by the adversities in the country. Therefore, it is presumed that the youths are the most likely stage of the human development that will fall susceptible and vulnerable, and be used for kidnapping purposes, or embrace kidnapping as a way to make quick money.

### **Purpose of Study**

The purpose of the study included:

1. To examine whether Nigerian youths were significantly predisposed to kidnapping.

2. To find out the factors that were significant in predisposing Nigerian youths into kidnapping.
3. To find out whether gender impacted significantly in kidnapping predisposition among Nigerian youths.
4. Examine whether educational attainment impacted significantly in kidnapping predisposition among Nigerian youths.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions were sought to be answered.

1. What are the predispositions of Nigerian youths toward kidnapping?
2. What are the significant predisposing factors to kidnapping among Nigerian youths?
3. How does gender impact kidnapping predisposition among Nigerian youths?
4. In what ways would educational attainment impact kidnapping predisposition among Nigerian youths?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is relevant of the following points:

The study probes into the possible factors that predispose Nigerian youths to kidnapping criminality. Knowledge derived from the study is very important in restructuring the youths' perception of kidnapping as a mean of income.

### **Operational Definition of Variables**

**Kidnapping Predisposition Factors:** This is a participant's viewpoints on the possible factors influencing people to engage in kidnapping, examined under economic, security inefficiency, social, political, personality, value system, and religion, as measured with Kidnapping Predisposing Factors by Nwankwo (2025).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Routine Activities Theory by Cohen and Felson (1979):** Routine activities theory states that crime occurs when a motivated offender encounters a suitable target in the absence of a capable guardian (McLeod, 2024). Rather than focusing on criminality, it examines how changes in routine activities of potential victims and offenders affect crime rates based on availability, proximity, and exposure. Introduced by Lawrence Cohen and Marcus Felson, routine activities theory is an approach in criminology that relates crime closely to environment, studies

it as an event, and underscores its ecological process (Cohen & Felson, 1979).

Its primary focus on situations of crime, rather than on offenders, distinguishes it from many other criminological theories. Often studied in the context of rational choice theory and human ecology, routine activities theory has been utilized extensively to analyze cybercrimes, robberies, and residential burglary. Moreover, routine activities theory has been regarded as similar in many respects to lifestyle theory of criminology, and has been applied alongside social disorganization theory in multilevel frameworks in order to understand neighborhood crimes (Hindelang, Gottfredson & Garofalo, 1978).

The macro-level analytic focus of routine activities theory highlights the overarching shifts within the patterns of offender and victim behaviour (Cohen, Kluegel & Land, 1981). The theory notably assumes that anyone with the opportunity to commit a crime, can do so. Routine activities theory further holds that would-be-victims may choose whether to become victims or not via their choices. For example, they may avoid dangerous situations, and thereby, decrease their likelihood of becoming victims. For a crime to occur according to routine activities theory, there must be three elements: firstly, a motivated offender; secondly, a suitable target; and, thirdly, the absence of capable guardians. The combination of these three factors leads to crime.

### **Criticism of the Theory**

Routine activities theory is a macro theory that leaves out many components relevant to criminology (Nickerson, 2022). For example, the theory fails to consider criminal opportunity contexts, or those circumstances inducing the convergence of motivated offenders and their suitable targets (Wilcox, Land, and Hunt, 2003). Additionally, routine activities theory pays no heed to what might constitute an incentive for an offender (Clarke and Cornish, 1985). It bears noting that an offender might construe a certain target as either suitable or unsuitable based on a distinct and uncommon motivation.

### **Empirical Review**

In the early 2000s, kidnappers targeted oil workers in the Niger Delta, but the problem escalated following a 2009 jihadist insurgency in the Northeast. The kidnapping of 276 schoolgirls

from the town of Chibok on April 14, 2014 made headlines around the world. Almost 100 of the captives remain missing (Agence France-Presse, 2024a).

Data on kidnapping is unreliable because of under-reporting and daily abductions in Nigeria rarely gain global attention. SBM said it had recorded 4,777 people abducted since President Bola Ahmed Tinubu took office in May last year. More than 1,680 pupils were kidnapped in Nigerian schools from early 2014 to the end of 2022, according to the charity Save the Children (Agence France-Presse, 2024a).

The more than 250 school students seized by gunmen in a mass kidnapping in northwestern Nigeria earlier this month have been released, the local governor said on Sunday. The kidnapping in Kuriga, Kaduna state on March 7 was one of the biggest such attacks in years and prompted a national outcry over insecurity. "The abducted Kuriga school children are released unharmed," Kaduna state governor Uba Sani said in a statement that did not specify how they were freed. "This is indeed a day of joy," he said, thanking the army, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu, the national security adviser, and "all Nigerians who prayed fervently for the safe return of the school children" (Reuters, 2024a).

Terrorists politically termed as bandits have been blamed for the abductions. They routinely target communities, loot villages and carry out mass kidnappings for ransom in northwest and north-central Nigeria. Kidnap victims in Nigeria are often freed following negotiations with the authorities, though a 2022 law banned handing over money to kidnappers and officials deny ransom payments are made (Reuters, 2024a).

Gunmen have kidnapped more than 280 pupils during a raid on a school in northwest Nigeria, a teacher and a resident said, in one of the country's largest mass abductions (Agence France-Presse, 2024b). Local government officials in Kaduna State confirmed the kidnapping attack on Kuriga school on Thursday, but gave no numbers as they said they were still working out how many children had been abducted.

One of the teachers at the GSS Kuriga school in the Chikun district, said Thursday night that staff managed to escape with many students when the gunmen were firing in the air (Agence France-Presse, 2024b). "We then began working

to determine the actual figure of those kidnapped," he told local officials visiting the school. "In GSS Kuriga, 187 children are missing while in the primary school, 125 children were missing but 25 returned." (Abdullahi, 2024; Agence France-Presse, 2024b)

Local residents told AFP: "More than 280 have been kidnapped. We initially thought the number was 200, but after a careful count it was discovered that the children kidnapped are a little more than 280" (Adam, 2024). Local officials and police did not give any figures for the number of kidnapped. "Not even the government was able to know the number of children or students that have been kidnapped," (Sani, 2024)

Kidnapping gangs known locally as bandits have repeatedly raided schools mostly in rural areas in northwestern states of Nigeria. President Bola Ahmed Tinubu has made reducing insecurity one of his priorities, but Nigeria's armed forces are battling on several fronts, including a long-running jihadist insurgency in the northeast of the country. More than 100 people were missing after oppressive carried out a mass kidnapping last week targeting women and children in a camp for those displaced by the conflict in the northeast.

Even the university students are not left out in the kidnapping spree in Nigeria. In one of the kidnapping incidents, gunmen in Nigeria killed 8 people and kidnapped at least 60 others in two communities of northwest Zamfara state, residents and a local traditional leader said, 2 days after armed men kidnapped dozens from a university in the state. Elsewhere, in the northeast of the country suspected Islamist insurgents ambushed a convoy of vehicles under military escort, killing 2 soldiers and 4 civilians, said a police source and a motorist who witnessed the attack (Reuters, 2024b).

The attackers set fire to 5 vehicles and drove off with 1 truck, the witness said. Surprisingly, the Nigerian government is yet to spell out how it will tackle widespread insecurity. His economic reforms, including the removal of a costly fuel subsidy and freeing the naira currency, have increased the cost of leaving, angering citizens. Residents said gunmen early on Sunday tried to attack a forward army base in a rural Magami community of Zamfara, but were repelled. Zamfara is one of the States worst affected by kidnappings for

ransom by armed gangs known locally as bandits (Reuters, 2024b).

The gunmen in 3 groups attacked the army base and the communities of Magami and Kabasa, said a traditional leader who declined to be named for security reasons. It was observed that 60 people, mostly women and children, were kidnapped. "The bandits rode many motorcycles with guns and other weapons (and) were shooting sporadically," (Haruna, 2024; Reuters, 2024b).

Four (4) people were killed during the attack Haruna (2024), who attended their burial. Kabasa community, kidnapers killed 4 people and dozens of others kidnapped. Police and army did not respond to requests for comment (Mohd, 2024). Attacks in the northwest are part of widespread insecurity in Nigeria. Islamist fighters still carry out deadly attacks in the northeast, gangs and separatists attack security forces and government buildings in the southeast, and clashes involving farmers and herders continue to claim lives.

More than 30 people, including at least 24 female students, in a raid in and around a Federal University outside the state capital Gusau in northwest Nigeria's Zamfara state. The attack was the first mass kidnapping at a college since President Bola Ahmed Tinubu came to power, promising to tackle the country's security challenges. "The bandits rode into the village on motorcycles and broke into the hostels and gained access into rooms by bringing down the windows,"(Musa, 2024). "They took away at least 24 female students from the hostels along with two male neighbours, one of whom is a staff (member) of the university," (Musa, 2024).

The attackers went into the university and seized nine welders working on a new building while they were sleeping. One of the welders managed to escape and returned to the school (Hashimu, 2024). Troops deployed from Gusau, 20 kilometres away and engaged the attackers in a gunfight but a group of the kidnapers herded the hostages away while another group faced the soldiers, the two sources said."The attackers had a field day. They operated in the village from 3:00 am to 6:00 am unchallenged before troops arrived," (Hashimu, 2024).

Kidnapping and terrorists' gangs maintain camps in a huge forest straddling Zamfara, Katsina, Kaduna and Niger states.

Several States in northwestern and central Nigeria have been terrorized by bandits who raid villages, kill and kidnap residents as well and burn homes after looting them. The criminals have been notorious for mass kidnappings of students from schools in recent years (Agence France-Presse, 2024c).

In February 2021, bandits raided a girl's boarding school in the town of Jangebe in Zamfara state, kidnapping more than 300 students. The girls were freed days later following a ransom payment by the authorities. Nigeria is facing a myriad of security challenges, including a 14-year jihadist insurgency in the northeast that has killed at least 40,000 people and forced more than two million others to flee their homes (Agence France-Presse, 2024c).

Worshippers are not also spared by kidnapers, as gunmen kidnapped 19 Muslim worshippers after attacking a mosque in the restive northwest of Nigeria. The attackers stormed the mosque in Maigamji village, in Katsina state, during evening prayers Saturday and carried out the kidnappings after shooting and wounding the imam and another worshipper (Isah, 2024). Northwest and central Nigeria have been terrorized by criminal gangs locally known as bandits, who village raids steal cattle, kidnap for ransom and burn homes after looting supplies.

Hostages are usually released after a ransom is paid to the gangs, which take refuge in the vast Rugu Forest. It straddles four states in northwest Nigeria, including Katsina. Last month, 15 people were killed and several others wounded in a series of bandit attacks on villages in neighbouring Kaduna state, say the authorities. There is growing concern over an alliance in the northeast between the terrorists and jihadists waging a 12-year insurgency to establish a Caliphate (Agence France-Presse, 2024d).

Police in Nigeria discovered the severed head of a state legislator who went missing in the southeastern state of Anambra. Okechukwu Okoye, a legislator in the Anambra state assembly and his aide went missing on May 15, 2022. His head was found in a park in the Nnewi-South local government area, Anambra State The lawmaker was killed. His head was found along Nnobi road. (Ikenga, 2024). The Anambra state governor put up a 10-million-naira (\$24,000) reward for information on the kidnapers and killers.

Gunmen kidnapped 4 members of staff and their children from the University of Abuja. Such kidnapping in a large institution in the Nigerian capital is very surprising. Gangs of armed men, known locally as bandits launched a series of abductions from schools and attacks on villages, mostly in the northwest of the country, in return for ransom. There have been kidnappings of individuals on the outskirts of Abuja, but attacks on universities are rare. "Suspected bandits attacked the staff quarters of the university in the early hours of today. We have report that 4 of our staff and their children were, nevertheless, abducted,". Other sources at the university said 1 staff member was taken together with his son and daughter. Nigeria's security forces are stretched on several fronts, including growing lawlessness in the north and northwest and a 12-year Islamist insurgency in the northeast that has killed thousands (Reuters, 2024c).

Gunmen seized 136 children from an Islamic seminary in central Nigeria at the weekend, the state government said, the latest in a string of such incidents plaguing Africa's most populous nation. The Niger state government first reported the raid on the school in the town of Tgina, but did not indicate the number of children seized. Armed gangs are terrorizing inhabitants in northwest and central Nigeria by looting villages, stealing cattle, and taking people hostage (Agence France-Presse, 2024e).

More than 700 children and students have already been kidnapped by gunmen for ransom December 2020 and June 2021. "Niger State Government confirmed the number of students abducted by bandits at the Salihu Tanko Islamic School, Tgina... to be 136," (Agence France-Presse, 2024e). The State Deputy Governor Alh Ahmed Mohammed said that security agencies were "doing their best but don't have enough logistics," adding that more help was needed to equip them to confront the criminals (Ketso, 2024). The attackers did release 11 of the pupils who were "too small and could not walk" very far. The Niger State government said it did not pay ransoms, but trying to negotiate to see how it can bring them back safely," (Ketso, 2024).

Further on the kidnapped scores of children from an Islamic seminary in central Nigeria's Niger state, it was observed that some 200 children were at the school at the time of the

attack, and "an unconfirmed number" were taken. The abduction came a day after 14 students from a university in northwestern Nigeria were freed after 40 days in captivity. Abiodun (2024) the attackers arrived on motorbikes in Tgina town and started shooting indiscriminately, killing 1 resident and injuring another, before kidnapping the children from the Salihu Tanko Islamic school.

One of the school's officials, who asked not to be named, said the attackers initially took more than 100 children "but later sent back those they considered too small for them, those between four and 12 years old". The state government, in a series of tweets, said the attackers had released 11 of the pupils who were "too small and couldn't walk" very far. Armed gangs are terrorizing inhabitants in northwest and central Nigeria by looting villages, stealing cattle, and taking people hostage. Such seizures have become a frequent way for criminals to collect ransoms (Agence France-Presse, 2024f).

Since December 2020 to May 2021, 730 children and students have been kidnapped. On April 20, 2021, gunmen known locally as "bandits" stormed Greenfield University in northwestern Nigeria and kidnapped around 20 students, killing a member of the school's staff in the process. Five (5) students were executed a few days later to force families and the government to pay a ransom. Fourteen (14) of the students were released later released. Local press said that the families had paid a ransom totalling 180 million naira (\$440,000) for their release (Agence France-Presse, 2024f). Kidnappers have infiltrated by jihadists from the northeast waging a 12-year-old insurrection to establish an Islamic state (Agence France-Presse, 2024f).

Gunmen kidnapped 39 students from the Federal College of Forestry Mechanization in northwest Nigeria on March 11, 2021, and previously released 10 of them. The newly released students arrived at police headquarters in Kaduna city on looking weak, forlorn and wearing dirty, torn clothing. The kidnappers released the remaining 29 students they were holding captive, nearly 2 months after abducting them from a forestry college in Nigeria's Kaduna state.

One female student could not walk alone and was carried into the building, while another was rushed to the hospital. Police did not allow

journalists to speak to the students. More than 700 people have been abducted from schools in northwest Nigeria within 4 months of 2021 in a rash of kidnappings for ransom in the volatile region. Then Kaduna State Governor Nasir El-Rufai repeatedly said his state government would not negotiate with "bandits", as the criminal gangs are known, or pay ransoms.

According to Usman (2024), a ransom was paid for the students' release, but refused to say who had paid or how much. Two (2) of the kidnapped girls were 17 and 19 years old (2024). Then President Muhammadu Buhari released a statement that welcomed the release of 27 students. His office did not respond to questions regarding the discrepancy in the number (Reuters, 2024d).

Kaduna police spokesman Jalige (2024) said all remaining students had been released and would undergo medical examination. Aruwan (2024) the Kaduna state commissioner for internal security, said in a statement that the government rejoiced with the freed students, and called on them to "put the past behind and work hard towards a happier and successful future ahead." They however did not comment on whether a ransom was paid. All 279 Nigerian students kidnapped from their boarding school in the northern state of Zamfara have been released and are on government premises.

In another kidnapping incident, authorities initially said 317 girls were abducted in the raid by hundreds of gunmen on the Government Girls Secondary School in remote Jangebe village, Zamfara State, Nigeria. According to Matawalle (2024) the "total number of female students abducted" was 279. An AFP reporter saw hundreds of girls wearing hijabs, gathered at the government premises after purportedly been freed by the kidnappers. Heavily-armed criminal gangs in northwest and central Nigeria have stepped up attacks in recent years, kidnapping for ransom, raping and pillaging (Agence France-Presse, 2024g).

The Nigerian military deployed to the area in 2016 and a peace deal with bandits was signed in 2019 but attacks have continued. In December 2020, more than 300 boys were kidnapped from a school in Kankara, in President Muhammadu Buhari's home state of Katsina, while he was visiting the region. The boys were later released but the incident triggered outrage and memories of the kidnappings of 276

schoolgirls by jihadists in Chibok that shocked the world. Many of those girls are still missing. The gangs are largely driven by financial motives and have no known ideological leanings (Agence France-Presse, 2024g).

But there are concerns the security agencies, particularly the military and police, are being infiltrated by armed Islamists. The jihadists' decade-old conflict has killed more than 30,000 people and spread into neighbouring Niger, Chad and Cameroon. Authorities have denied paying any ransom to secure the recent releases, although analysts say this is unlikely and security experts fear that this will lead to an increase in kidnappings in these regions plagued by extreme poverty (Agence France-Presse, 2024g).

Kidnapping for ransom in Africa's most populous country is already a widespread national problem, with businessmen, officials and ordinary citizens snatched from the streets by criminals hunting for ransom money. At least \$11 million was paid to kidnappers between January 2016 and March 2020, according to SB Morgen, a Lagos-based geopolitical research consultancy (Agence France-Presse, 2024g).

Gunmen had abducted about 80 children as they returned to Mahuta village after having attended a religious ceremony. Local vigilantes rescued dozens of schoolchildren abducted by bandits in the northern Nigerian state of Katsina after a gun battle, police said Sunday. The incident came barely 48 hours after the release of 344 schoolboys kidnapped from a boarding school by bandits and held for six days. According to local people, the number of children rescued came to 113 (Agence France-Presse, 2024h).

When the news spread across Mahuta, residents and vigilantes mobilized and went after the kidnappers. They set off in pursuit of the gunmen, who had been identified as Fulani herders. "We laid siege on the area we knew they were holding the children and also took some Fulani settlements in the area hostage, warning that if anything happened to our children no Fulani would live in the area henceforth," (Sada, 2024).

"They released 60 children around 3:00 am and this morning they called and said they had released the remaining 53 who are now being ferried from the bush,". The children, from various Islamic seminaries in the town, had been

travelling in the company of their teachers when they were kidnapped, said one of the teachers who gave his first name Tijjani (Sada, 2024).

**HYPOTHESES**

1. Nigerian youths with gender considerations will not significantly differ in their perceptions of kidnapping predisposing factors in the country.
2. Nigerian youths with education attainment considerations will not significantly differ in their perceptions of kidnapping predisposing factors in the country.
3. Interaction of Nigerian youths’ gender and education attainment considerations will not significantly influence perceptions of kidnapping predisposing factors in the country.

**METHOD**

**Participants:** The participants’ distributions are as given in the table 1 below.

**Table 1: Sample Distribution**

Participant Cluster	Sample Distribution	N
GENDER	Male	25
	Female	75
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	PhD	2
	Masters	2
	BSc/HND	65
	OND	7
	SSC	24
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>
YEAR OF STUDY	Graduate	3
	Year 2	29
	Year 3	36
	Year 4	27
	Year 5	5
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>
DISCIPLINE	Social Sciences	83
	Education	2
	Law	12
	Arts	2
	Management Sciences	1
	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>
STATE OF ORIGIN	Anambra	67
	Rivers	1
	Ebonyi	2
	Abia	3
	Enugu	15
	Imo	11
	Edo	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>100</b>	

**SOURCE:** Questionnaire Primary Data; PhD= Doctor of Philosophy; Masters = Master Degree; BSc = Bachelor of Science; HND = Higher National Diploma; OND = Ordinary National Diploma; SSC = Secondary School Certificate.

A total of 100 participants were used in the study. The participants were of the following clusters: Gender (male = 25, female = 75); Educational Level (PhD = 2, Master = 2, BSc/HND = 65, OND = 7, SSC = 24); Year of Study (graduate = 3, year 2 = 29, year 3 = 36, year 4 = 27, year 5 = 5); Discipline (Social Sciences = 83, Education = 2, Law = 12, Arts = 2, Management Sciences = 1); and State of Origin (Anambra 67, Rivers = 1, Ebonyi = 2, Abia = 1, Enugu = 15, Imo = 11, and Edo = 1).

Again, the participants had the mean age of 22.35, and age SD of 3.02. Cluster and incidental sampling methods were employed. The cluster sampling was done based on the participants’ clusters and sampling distributions of table 1. The incidental sampling was based on the participants’ availability and willingness to participant in the study.

**Instrument:** The instrument for the study was “Kidnapping Predisposing Factors

Questionnaire” by Nwankwo (2025). The instrument was measured on 5-points rating format of “to a great extent = 5”, “to some extent = 4”, “occasionally = 3”, “not likely = 2”, and “not at all = 1”. The instrument had 7 sub-dimensions as economic (content validity = 0.70, Cronbach Alpha = 0.71), security inefficiency (content validity = 0.72, Cronbach Alpha = 0.71), social (content validity = 0.73, Cronbach Alpha = 0.70), political (content validity = 0.75, Cronbach Alpha = 0.73), personality (content validity = 0.70, Cronbach Alpha = 0.72), value system (content validity = 0.74, Cronbach Alpha = 0.72), and religion (content validity = 0.75, Cronbach Alpha = 0.74) factors.

The instrument had overall content validity of 0.79, convergent validity of 0.92 with Nigerian Social Challenges Scale by Nwankwo (2024), divergent validity of 0.79 with Ethical-Moral Self Scale, and discriminant validity of 0.88 with Self-Efficacy Scale. Similarly, the “Kidnapping Predisposing Factors Questionnaire” had split-half reliability of 0.78, Cronbach alpha of 0.79, and Strict Parallel reliability 0.81. The instrument has the overall norm as 169, showing the average benchmark to indicate above average kidnapping predisposition. The norms for the various dimensions are economic (32.47), security inefficiency (22.80), social (58.88), political (55.84), personality (41.24), value system

(31.03), and religion (16.37), showing the average benchmark to indicate above average kidnapping predisposition factor for each dimension.

**Procedure:** The study was carried out among educated youths in Anambra State. The essence of using educated youths was to reduce literacy bias. By this, the participants could read and understand the questionnaire with little or no interpretations. The administration of the instrument happened either in group process or separately. The response period was between 20 to 30 minutes. Informed consent was observed and the study was free from harm.

**Design/Statistics:** The design of the study was cross-sectional design. This was because the participants were sampled across various clusters of interest in their usual places of functional performance. The statistics was multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA). The statistics examines the role of multiple independent variable (gender and educational attainment) on multiple dependent variables (kidnapping predisposing factors).

## RESULT

The version 25 of the IBM SPSS was used for the data analyses. The data attained interval measurement.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Std. Error	Kurtosis	Std. Error
GENDER	100	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
AGE	100	18	31	22.35	3.02	.77	.24	-.26	.47
EDUCATIONAL LEVEL	100	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
YEAR OF STUDY	100	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
DISCIPLINE	100	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
STATE OF ORIGIN	100	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
RELIGION	100	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
CHRISTIAN DENOMINATION	100	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Economic	100	10	44	32.47	6.48	-.83	.24	1.14	.47
Security Inefficiency	100	8	42	22.80	5.16	.01	.24	2.08	.47
Social	100	8	82	58.88	12.77	-1.13	.24	2.00	.47
Political	100	26	83	55.84	10.71	-.89	.24	1.19	.47
Personality	100	12	60	41.24	8.38	-.74	.24	.88	.47
Value System	100	13	45	31.03	6.23	-.44	.24	.09	.47
Religion	100	5	28	16.37	5.97	-.28	.24	-.70	.47
KIDNAPPING PREDISPOSITION	100	138	338	258.09	41.97	-.96	.24	1.00	.47
Valid N (listwise)	100								

**SOURCE: Questionnaire Primary Data**

Table 2 showed the mean for “kidnapping predisposition” (258.09 of 338) was high,

indicating very high incidence of kidnapping in Nigeria. The SD (41.97) was high indicating

much variations among the participants in the perceived kidnapping predisposing factors. The skewness was negative (-0.96), indicating possible disdain against kidnapping. The kurtosis was also positive (1.00) below the kurtosis 3-point benchmark, indicating a common perception of kidnapping predisposition. All the

factors examined impacted on the kidnapping predisposition. However, “Economic” (32.47 of 44), “Value System” (31.03), and “Religion” (16.37 of 28) impacted highest, while “Security Inefficiency” (22.80 of 42) impacted the least as kidnapping predisposing factors.

**Table 3: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared	Noncent. Parameter	Observed Power
GENDER	KIDNAPPING PREDISPOSITION	88.34	1	88.345	.05	.821	.00	.05	.05
	Economic	21.09	1	21.09	.53	.468	.01	.53	.11
	Security Insufficiency	22.81	1	22.81	.92	.338	.01	.92	.15
	Social	337.52	1	337.52	2.09	.151	.02	2.09	.29
	Political	80.71	1	80.71	.73	.392	.01	.73	.13
	Personality	5.05	1	5.05	.06	.794	.00	.06	.05
	Value System	39.71	1	39.71	1.00	.318	.01	1.00	.16
	Religion	72.33	1	72.33	2.23	.138	.02	2.23	.31
	EDU. LEV.	KIDNAPPING PREDISPOSITION	7922.09	4	1980.52	1.15	.335	.04	4.62
Economic		121.09	4	30.27	.76	.552	.03	3.05	.23
Security Insufficiency		111.76	4	27.94	1.13	.344	.04	4.55	.34
Social		779.02	4	194.75	1.20	.313	.05	4.83	.36
Political		620.67	4	155.16	1.41	.234	.05	5.67	.42
Personality		110.55	4	27.64	.37	.827	.01	1.49	.13
Value System		224.60	4	56.15	1.42	.233	.05	5.69	.42
Religion		427.72	4	106.93	3.30	.014*	.12	13.20	.82
GENDER & EDU. LEV.		KIDNAPPING PREDISPOSITION	2624.96	3	874.98	.51	.676	.01	1.53
	Economic	103.68	3	34.56	.87	.459	.02	2.61	.23
	Security Insufficiency	46.45	3	15.48	.63	.597	.02	1.89	.17
	Social	591.60	3	197.20	1.22	.306	.03	3.66	.31
	Political	192.91	3	64.30	.58	.624	.01	1.76	.16
	Personality	34.24	3	11.41	.15	.927	.00	.46	.07
	Value System	35.51	3	11.83	.30	.825	.01	.90	.10
	Religion	130.19	3	43.39	1.34	.266	.04	4.02	.34
	Total	KIDNAPPING PREDISPOSITION	6835435.00	100					
Economic		109595.00	100						
Security Insufficiency		54630.00	100						
Social		362854.00	100						
Political		323182.00	100						
Personality		177026.00	100						
Value System		100139.00	100						
Religion		30333.00	100						

\*Computed using alpha = .05; EDU LEV = Educational Level; SOURCE: Questionnaire Primary Data

**Hypothesis One:** It states that “Nigerian youths with gender considerations will not significantly differ in their perceptions of kidnapping predisposing factors in the country.” Table 3 showed that gender consideration did not significantly influence Nigerian youths’ perceived kidnapping predisposing factors ( $P < 0.821 > 0.05$ ,  $F = 0.05$ ,  $N = 100$ ,  $df = 1; 100$ ). Gender had 0.0% ( $\eta^2 = 0.00$ ) impact on perceived kidnapping predisposing factors for Nigerian youths. The observed power of 0.05 showed low statistical strength of gender in

perceived kidnapping predisposing factors at  $P > 0.05$ . The non-centrality parameter ( $\delta = 0.05$ ) was negligibly above 0, and it is a measure of the degree to which a null hypothesis is false.

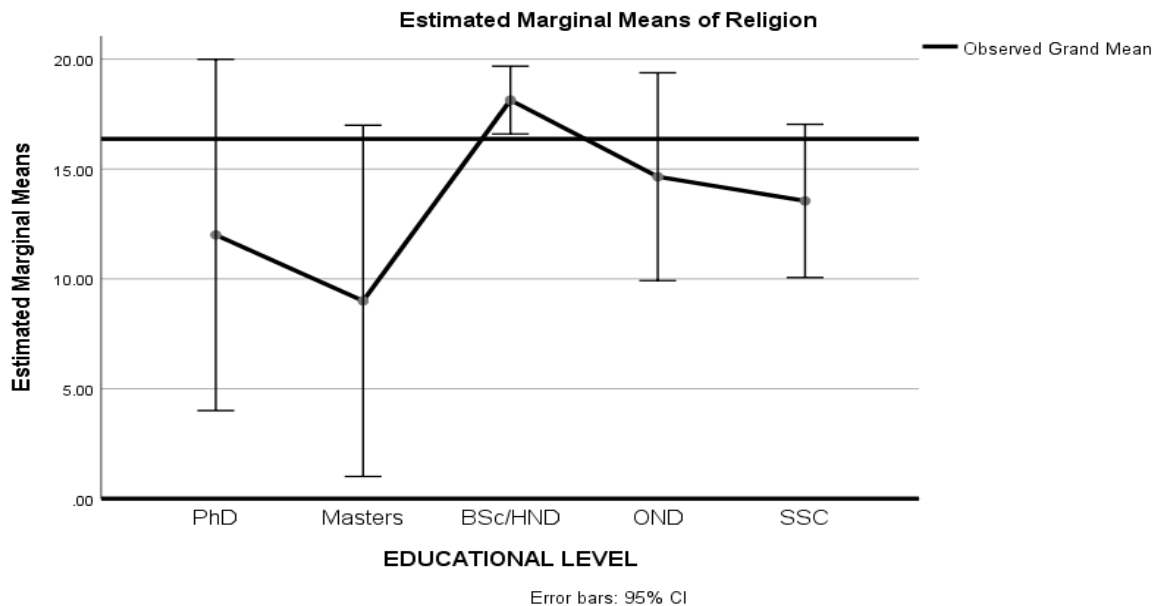
**Hypothesis Two:** It states that “Nigerian youths with education attainment considerations will not significantly differ in their perceptions of kidnapping predisposing factors in the country.” Table 3 showed the following findings: Education attainment consideration significantly influenced Nigerian youths’ perception of “Religion” as a kidnapping predisposing factor

( $P > 0.014 < 0.05$ ,  $F = 3.30$ ,  $N = 100$ ,  $df = 4;100$ ). Educational Attainment had 12% ( $\eta^2 = 0.12$ ) impact in influencing perception of “Religion” as kidnapping predisposing factor for Nigerian youths. The observed power of 0.82 (82%) showed high statistical strength of educational attainment in influencing perception of “Religion” as kidnapping predisposing factor at  $P < 0.05$ . The non-centrality parameter ( $\delta = 13.20$ ) was above 0, and it is a measure of the degree to which a null hypothesis is false.

**Hypothesis Three:** It states that “Interaction of Nigerian youths’ gender and education attainment considerations will not significantly influence perceptions of kidnapping predisposing

factors in the country.” Table 3 showed that interaction of gender and education attainment considerations did not significantly influence Nigerian youths’ perceived kidnapping predisposing factors ( $P < 0.676 > 0.05$ ,  $F = 0.51$ ,  $N = 100$ ,  $df = 3;100$ ). Interaction of gender and education attainment had 1% ( $\eta^2 = 0.01$ ) impact on perceived kidnapping predisposing factors for Nigerian youths. The observed power of 0.15 showed low statistical strength of educational attainment in perceived kidnapping predisposing factors at  $P > 0.05$ . The non-centrality parameter ( $\delta = 1.53$ ) was above 0, and it is a measure of the degree to which a null hypothesis is false.

**Figure 1: Educational Level on “Religion” as Kidnapping Predisposing Factor**



**SOURCE:** Questionnaire Primary Data. PhD= Doctor of Philosophy; Masters = Master Degree; BSc = Bachelor of Science; HND = Higher National Diploma; OND = Ordinary National Diploma; SSC = Secondary School Certificate.

From figure 1 above, Nigerian youths with PhD (12.00), Masters (9.00), OND/Diploma (14.50), and SSC (13.50) were well below average in perception of “Religion” as a kidnapping predisposing factor. However, Nigerian youths with BSc/HND (16.50) were well above average in perception of “Religion” as a kidnapping predisposing factor.

**Summary of Findings/Results**

**Tested Hypotheses (Inferential) Findings**

1. Gender consideration did not significantly influence Nigerian youths’ perceived kidnapping predisposing factors.

2. Education attainment consideration significantly influenced Nigerian youths’ perception of “Religion” as a kidnapping predisposing factor.
3. Interaction of gender and education attainment considerations did not significantly influence Nigerian youths’ perceived kidnapping predisposing factors.

**Descriptive findings**

4. Nigerian youths with PhD were well below average in perception of

“Religion” as a kidnapping predisposing factor.

5. Nigerian youths with Master Degree were below average in perception of “Religion” as a kidnapping predisposing factor.
6. Nigerian youths with OND/Diploma were below average in perception of “Religion” as a kidnapping predisposing factor.
7. Nigerian youths with SSC were below average in perception of “Religion” as a kidnapping predisposing factor.
8. Nigerian youths with BSc/HND were above average in perception of “Religion” as a kidnapping predisposing factor.

#### **Variables Comparisons Findings**

9. “Kidnapping predisposition” was high, indicating very high incidence of kidnapping in Nigeria.
10. All the factors examined influenced kidnapping predisposition.
11. “Economic”, “Value System”, and “Religion” influenced kidnapping predisposition highest in that order.
12. “Security Inefficiency” influenced kidnapping predisposing least.

#### **DISCUSSION**

The study examined kidnapping and its predisposing factors as perceived by Nigerian youths. The following findings were made: Gender consideration did not significantly influence Nigerian youths’ perceived kidnapping predisposing factors. Education attainment consideration did not significantly influence Nigerian youths’ perceived kidnapping predisposing factors. Education attainment consideration did significantly influence Nigerian youths’ perception of “Religion” as a kidnapping predisposing factor. Interaction of gender and education attainment considerations did not significantly influence Nigerian youths’ perceived kidnapping predisposing factors.

Further fallout findings showed that: Nigerian youths with PhD were well below average in perception of “Religion” as a kidnapping predisposing factor. Nigerian youths with Master Degree were below average in perception of “Religion” as a kidnapping

predisposing factor. Nigerian youths with OND/Diploma were below average in perception of “Religion” as a kidnapping predisposing factor. Nigerian youths with SSC were below average in perception of “Religion” as a kidnapping predisposing factor. Nigerian youths with BSc/HND were above average in perception of “Religion” as a kidnapping predisposing factor.

The findings of the study show that kidnapers are motivated offenders as observed by (Felson & Lawrence, 1980; Miro, 2014). They are not necessarily influenced by almost all the predisposing factors examined, except religion. Consequently, religion serves as a motivating factor for kidnapping. This could be the reason why Islamic adherents are perceived as kidnapers in the Eastern Nigeria.

Kidnapping usually occurs when kidnapers encounter a suitable target in the absence of a capable hindrance (McLeod, 2024) from security agents. There is no doubt that security in Nigeria is too poor. So, kidnapers prowl and abduct their victims very easily. There have been instances where the security operatives are accused of aiding and abetting kidnapers. This shows that without security lapses, kidnapping will not thrive as it is currently obtainable.

From the findings of the study, gender and educational attainment do not significantly predispose Nigerian youth to kidnapping. This shows that kidnapping crime is a result of inability to delay gratification. People with ostentatious living (Nickerson, 2022) and the poor have been kidnapped. In some cases, even after paying ransom the victims of a kidnap are still killed. This shows that there are more in kidnapping than economic, political, and religious factors.

Possibly, hatred and socio-cultural “scapegoatism” could be good explanations for the uncontrollable kidnapping crimes in Nigeria, which has become a national disaster. As national disaster, the security agencies are usually excused as not having enough logistics (Ketso, 2024). Even with adequate logistics, it is doubtful that security agencies would have done a good performance, since Nigeria and her security agencies have been polarized into ethnic and religion citizens. Compatriot security and love for others have dwindled drastically.

## Recommendations

The following recommendations are proffered.

1. There is need to enshrine religious tolerance among Nigerians. This will help reduce using kidnapping as an instrument jihadism.
2. Good governance must be dispensed in the communities. All the kidnapping predisposing factors are attributes of governance. Having good governance will inhibit perceiving kidnapping as an economic or wealth-making option.

## Limitations of the Study

The study used considerable number of university students (for instance more female) than other (for example males) sampled groups. The students were mainly those of Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State, Nigeria. It is the State-owned university. This could have impacted on the outcome of the study.

## Suggestion for Future Researches

1. Future researches should focus on behavioural paradigms, instead of gender and educational attainment as done in this study. This will help identify behavioural issues that Psychologists and other allied behaviour moulders should focus on in restructuring (shaping) behaviours that predispose youths to kidnapping tendencies.
2. Future study on kidnapping needs to be conducted in other socio-cultural environments in Nigeria. This will help a lot in comparative knowledge.

## Conclusion

The study focused on kidnapping and its predisposing factors as perceived by Nigerian youths. The study found the role of educational attainment on religion as the only significant kidnapping predisposing factor. Other factors were not significant. Recommendations were proffered for religious tolerance, and good governance to be pursued.

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**KIDNAPPING PREDISPOSING FACTORS QUESTIONNAIRE**

S/N	TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU BELIEVE <u>KIDNAPPING</u> IS BASED ON THE FOLLOWING?	To A Great Extent (5)	To Some Extent (4)	Occasionally (3)	Not Likely (2)	Not At All (1)
<b>ECONOMIC</b>						
1.	One of the quickest ways of making money.					
2	Easiest way of making money.					
3	Desperation to become rich by the perpetrators.					
4	The rich getting richer while the poor getting poorer.					
5	Kidnapping pays enough ransom.					
6	Underemployment.					
7	Unemployment.					
8	Desperation to accumulate more wealth.					
<b>SECURITY INSUFFICIENCY</b>						
9	Less likelihood of being detected.					
10	Involvement of security agencies.					
11	Escalating of activities of terrorists.					
12	Poor intelligence network.					
13	Proliferation of arms.					
14	Can not easily be apprehended.					
<b>SOCIAL</b>						
15	Enough money to bribe one's way out.					
16	For vendetta.					
17	Poor parenting.					
18	Used to intimidate the indigenous people.					
19	Ethnic action directed against perceived ethnic rivalry.					
20	Wide spread of social injustice.					
21	Inequality distribution of wealth among ethnic nationalities.					
22	Unfair distribution of resources.					
23	Corruption as a way of life.					
24	Ineffective educational system.					
25	Deprivation.					
26	Peer influence.					
27	Discontentment with the society.					
28	Socio-human exploitation.					
29	High prevalence of poverty in the country.					
30	It is caused by social seclusion.					
<b>POLITICAL</b>						
31	Settle political differences.					
32	Disenchantment with political situation.					
33	Reaction to insensitive government to the plight of the masses.					
34	Political alienation.					
35	Political instability in the country.					
36	Response to rights denial with impunity.					
37	Ploy of desperate politicians to cause political instability in the country.					
38	Little attention given to public interest by government.					
39	Political apathy to the basic needs of the poor.					
40	Using the youths during elections.					

41	Long years of neglect by governments to develop the country.					
42	Response to oppressive government.					
43	Aggressive response to suppressive government.					
44	Voicing out ideology.					
45	Response to poor governance.					
<b>PERSONALITY</b>						
46	Sheer greed.					
47	Because of its adventure.					
48	Idleness.					
49	Motivation for criminality.					
50	Perceived Hardship.					
51	Selfishness.					
52	Misplacement of priority.					
53	Frustration					
54	Perception of bleak future.					
55	Insatiable lust for materialism.					
56	Avarice.					
<b>VALUE SYSTEM</b>						
57	Debased value system.					
58	Kidnapping for rituals.					
59	Dependency of the victims.					
60	Kidnappers' intention to use people for slavery.					
61	Negligence on the part of the well-to-do in families on the offenders.					
62	Fragility of the children.					
63	Kidnapping for organ harvest.					
64	Kidnapping for human trafficking.					
<b>RELIGION</b>						
65	Religion.					
66	Kidnapping to release religious prisoners held.					
67	Kidnapping for religious conversion.					
68	Kidnapping for sex because religion requires it.					
69	Some people are likely to kidnap because of jihad.					

**SOURCE:** Nwankwo, O.D. (2025), Department of Psychology, Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State, Nigeria.