

Academic Impacts of Armed Conflict on Christians in Adamawa State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study examined “Armed Conflict and Its Impacts on Academic pursuit of Christians in Adamawa State, Nigeria”. The main objective of the study is to investigate Academic Impact of Armed Conflict on Christians in Adamawa State, Nigeria and the specific objectives is: to investigate armed conflict and its impacts on the academic pursuit of Christians in Adamawa State, Nigeria. A survey research design method was adopted for this study, with a population of 2,125,950 Christians in the state and a sample size of 1,337 Christians in the state. A structured questionnaire was used, with a descriptive data analysis using means and independent t-test. The major findings of the study are: The study reveals that, many schools were destroyed during armed conflict in Adamawa state. Students were displaced from places of learning as a result of armed conflict. School calendar is being distorted in the conflict areas and there was a decline in school enrolment. In spite of the negative impacts, Christian students learnt on the internet and many parents took their wards to conflict-free states. The following recommendation is made: Community leaders should interface with government so as to have a safe haven for those who want to pursuit their academic exercise in Adamawa State.

Keywords: Academic, Impact, Armed, Conflict, Christians

Introduction

The impact of armed conflicts on education is a global issue affecting millions of people worldwide. In Ukraine alone, the war has had a devastating impact on the lives and futures of 5.7 million school-age children. More than 3,000 educational institutions have been damaged, with 420 completely destroyed. Unfortunately, attacks on schools in armed conflicts have become a growing trend globally. In 2020 and 2021, over 5,000 attacks on education were reported, resulting in harm or death to at least 9,000 students and educators (Bonet, 2023). These attacks not only violate international humanitarian law but also deprive children of their right to education. Disrupting children's learning in war zones has long-lasting consequences, limiting their future opportunities and ability to contribute to society. Armed conflicts have a significant impact on

education and the people involved in it, such as students, teachers, and parents. These conflicts can have both short-term and long-term negative effects on education. One of the consequences is the refusal and impediments to a return to education, as conflicts disrupt the normal functioning of schools and make it difficult for students to continue their studies.

Additionally, the infrastructure of educational institutions is often damaged or destroyed, further hindering access to education. Cuts in or withdrawal of spending on education also occur during armed conflicts, limiting resources and support for schools. The loss of the educational and protective functions of the family is another consequence of armed conflicts. Families are often displaced or separated, making it challenging for children to receive necessary support and guidance for their education. The academic community is also affected, as conflicts lead to the displacement or loss of qualified teaching staff. This loss of skilled educators has a drastic impact on the quality of education provided to students. Moreover, armed conflicts can result in the abandonment of school due to population movements, destruction of networks, and a disrupted social environment. These factors contribute to behavioral problems among students, including trauma, difficulties in fulfilling pedagogical roles, and self-victimization. It is crucial to recognize the importance of education in conflict zones and prioritize its protection. Education serves as a lifeline for children, providing them with a safe space and protection from abuse, exploitation, and recruitment by armed forces. By safeguarding education, we can break the cycle of crisis and reduce the likelihood of future conflicts. The Safe Schools Declaration is a political commitment that aims to protect students, teachers, schools, and universities during armed conflicts. It encourages states to restore access to safe education and develop conflict-sensitive education systems that promote respect between different social or ethnic groups (Disrupted Educational Pathway, 2022).

Research Question

What are the academic impacts of armed conflict on Christians in Adamawa State, Nigeria?

Research Hypothesis

H0₁. There is no significant difference between the opinions of urban and rural Christians on armed conflict and its impacts on the academic pursuit of Christians in Adamawa State, Nigeria.

Armed Conflict and its Academic Impacts

Education is an instrument per excellence and is crucial to the development of the nation. Its continuous growth depends on a number of factors. Some of these factors are the provision of infrastructural facilities, quality of teachers, prompt payment of teachers' emoluments, provision and constant revision of the curriculum (Ogbonnaya, 2013). The factors mentioned above are germane and can bring the desired growth where they are pursued and provided. On the other hand, where there is any inhibition and they are not pursued, it stifles growth and slows down the education process. Apart from the factors mentioned above, there are some other factors that could stifle the process of growth in the education industry.

These factors are incidental factors identified by other scholars and they include natural disasters (flood, storm, and fire outbreak). Sequel to the above, it is important to note that the

armed conflicts assumed devastating dimension in state like Benue and other states of Nigeria. It has affected local government areas like Agatu, Guma, Logo, Gwer-West, Gwer-East, Ukum, Buruku, Katsina-Ala, Kwande and Makurdi all in Benue State. In the recent attack which occurred in Guma and Logo Local Governments, about seventy-three (73) people were killed and property worth millions of naira destroyed. In these local governments, the attackers usually invade the settlements, killed, sacked the people, and destroyed their property and farm lands. In some communities, they occupy the areas after chasing away the original dwellers. Aside killing and destruction of property, their activity affect the management of schools as they often settle in these schools and destroy the facilities. This renders classrooms and offices unusable as well as truncating academic activities. According to the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) (2018) about 80,450 children are currently trapped in eight Internally Displaced Peoples' (IDP) camps established by the Benue State Government to cater for victims of herdsmen incursions in the state. Out of these numbers, Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) Primary School.

Management of schools which requires proper planning, directing, monitoring and controlling of human, material, time and physical resources, finances, records and information flow has been affected drastically as most school facilities and documents have been destroyed thereby keeping students and teachers out of the school (Ahmed, 2018). The incessant destruction of lives and property have created management problems for school teachers and head-teachers in such areas. Ahmed further reveals that when there is armed conflict, infrastructural facilities in the schools such as classroom buildings, offices, books and other relevant documents are greatly destroyed or damaged. Most often, schools are burnt down to ashes in the rural areas. This makes it hard for learners to continue with their learning activities for a long time as they relocate to safer places with their families. The carnage also brings about decreased school enrolment in some parts of the state that are affected by the crises.

The emotional and psychological problems created in the people as a result of the fear further leads to decreased enrolment (Joseph, 2017). Joseph notes that even parents who have returned from the internally displaced people's camp, prefer to stay at home with their children, to sending them back to school to continue their education. In addition, the researchers observed that there has been a steady decline in school enrolment for over two decades in most rural areas across the state. This decline in school enrolment is further worsened by some of the incidental factors mentioned above. In Benue State of Nigeria, for over three years now, the researchers observed that there has been a steady decline in school enrolment which seems to be as a result of armed conflicts. Some of the towns and villages in the affected local government have been deserted by the occupants. This crisis has affected school enrolment, teaching/learning and educational quality improvement advocated for. The Federal Government of Nigeria and Benue State Governments have made concerted attempts to ensure that peace returns to the areas and that the internally displaced persons return from camp to their homes, but this seems not to have yielded meaningful results as most people are yet to return. Buttressing this point, Rick (2015) underscores that armed conflict often force parents to relocate with their families to places that are safe from the conflict area which influences their children's education as these new places may not have educational facilities.

Education in Nigeria is considered as a tool for national development. This is why the National Policy on Education (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 2014) informs that education is

designed to make Nigeria a free, just and egalitarian society, a land full of opportunities for all its citizens, able to generate a great and dynamic economy and growing into united, strong and self-reliant nation. This is the philosophy underlying Nigerian education which is geared towards, among other things, the social, cultural, economic, political, scientific and technological progress of the entire citizenry. Oyelere and Wharton (2015) corroborate this view by stating that education significantly improves an individual's chances to increase welfare and escape poverty and plays a critical role in human development.

Education thus, is a veritable tool for the development of individuals in the society. It is through education that knowledge is acquired by the individuals alongside skills, values and attitudes that are beneficial to the society. Okwori (2014) therefore, declares that each society desires that her citizens are knowledgeable, possess appropriate occupational skills and in addition develop acceptable attitudes that will make them useful to themselves and the society in which they live. Education therefore brings a positive change in the life of an individual that acquires it and this goes on to foster development in the society. Okwori and Tor-Anyiin (2014) describe education as an agent of social change which enables an individual to acquire more knowledge skills, ideas, as well as imbibe emotional intelligence and relevant experience which guides the individuals to manipulate their physical and social environments. From the foregoing, education becomes a valuable endeavour that every society tries to strengthen in order to bring about meaningful development and social change.

School enrolment may likely be affected by armed conflict especially in situations where terror is unleashed and there is massive displacement of people to safer places. In this kind of situation, there is either the likelihood of school children not being able to continue with their school programme or children of school age not being able to get enrolled in school. This is a development that may increase the number of out of school children. In a related vein, the schools' infrastructures may equally be affected by armed conflicts. As earlier stated, when these conflicts take violent dimensions, certain destructions of even lives and property may occur. In this regard, infrastructural facilities including classrooms, offices, staff quarters and a host of other facilities may be unfortunately destroyed. Such unfortunate incidents may in one way or the other truncate academic activities of schools during the conflicts and even afterwards. In fact, even when some school structures are spared by the violent conflicts, some of the schools may even be turned into camps for internally displaced persons thereby predisposing the facilities of such schools to overuse.

So many factors affect students' academic performance. For instance, Stevens (2019) holds that children exposed to traumatic events suffer from academic struggles and adjustment. Hotepo, Asokere, Abdul-Azeez and Ajemunigbphun (2014) declare that if armed conflict is not resolved, students are adversely affected in terms of poor performance and wastage of resources and productivity. Conflicts are likely to affect academic activities of secondary schools. Apart from the disruptive implications of armed conflict as noted by Nasongu and Muola (2011), it is worthy of note that if conflicts are not resolved, the affected students are adversely affected in terms of poor performance and wastage of resources and productivity (Hotepo, Asokere, Abudul-Azeez and Ajemunigbohun, 2014). It becomes obvious that in a place where conflict is prevalent, the smooth running of academic activities of secondary schools becomes impeded. For this reason of displacement of people during conflicts, Oyelere and Wharton (2015) indicate that the Internally-

Displaced Persons (IDPs) show much lower academic attainment. Bruck, Di. Maio and Miaari (2014) submit that the higher the intensity of armed conflicts in the locality of the school the lower the probability that the student passes the exam. According to Giancaman, Shannon, Saab, Atya and Boyce (2017) the experience of armed conflict-related violence is a strong predictor of expressive-like states which in turn may impact on academic performance. This suggests that a depressed person is not likely to produce a good academic performance.

According to McGaha-Garnet (2014) exposure to violent environments as well as injury due to violence contribute to both reduced academic progress and increased disruptive or unfocused classroom behavior for children, adolescents and teenagers Singha (2010) avers that frequent eruption of violence and conflict that arises from the different ethnic communities in search of and to assert their identities disturb educational environment. Close (2015) corroborates this position that children affected from armed conflicts suffer from lowered social and emotional competence, diminished academic performance and fear of abuse. Similarly, Aisenberg, Trickett, Mennen, Salzman and Zayas (2017) hold that with repeated exposure to traumatic events, a proportion of individuals may develop disorders characterized by post-traumatic stress and oppositional defiant. Miguel and Roland (2016) affirm that violent conflict may also affect severely the quality and functioning of institutions, the expansion of technology and social outcomes. In essence, when the quality and functioning of institutions are affected, performance equally drops. This is because, Justino (2015) declares that conflicts and associated physical destruction can interrupt the education of children through the damage of schools, absence of teachers, fears of insecurity and changes in family structures and household income. These stated impacts of the conflicts are not healthy for effective education to thrive owing to the fact that they are antithetical to smooth educational attainment.

Yecho (2016) laments the destruction of infrastructure occasioned by violent conflicts and states that this nasty situation rather lowers the pace of development in the society. According to Yecho, conflicts have implications which include: destruction of farmlands, markets, educational institutions and other institutions crucial to the smooth operation of the economy. Yecho (2016.124) further states:

This monumental loss of human and material resources usually retards the development efforts of governments at all levels. Funds and resources which would have been used in other areas of development are channeled towards rehabilitating displaced persons and rebuilding destroyed structures

What Yecho means is that after committing huge resources to the building of schools' infrastructure, conflicts come and get them destroyed thereby tasking the government to sue funds which would have been ordinarily used for other developmental projects to reconstruct the destroyed school structures. This is a great set back to the entire educational system particularly and the nation's development in general. Many scholarly views seem to converge on the fact that the structures and facilities of schools stand affected during conflicts. Education for All Global Monitoring Report (2015) reveals that, armed conflict often destroys and damage schools and educational infrastructure; adding that schools and places of learning are often explicit targets during periods of armed conflicts. This is sure to disrupt the teaching and learning activities of schools. While Oyelere and Wharton (2015) maintain that children living internally displaced

persons camp do perform low academically, the researcher observes that those who are fortunate to have been moved to metropolitan areas do perform excellently due to the fact that they are well tutored in good environment.

Methodology

A survey research design method was adopted for the study. Structured questionnaire was used by the researcher on the academic impacts of armed conflict on Christians in Adamawa state, Nigeria. The respondents comprises 1,337 urban and rural Christians in Adamawa state, Nigeria with a population of 2,125,950 Christians.

Results

Table 1: Opinions of the Respondents on Armed Conflict and its Impacts on the Academic pursuit of Christians in Adamawa State

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Std
1	Many school are destroyed during armed conflict during in Adamawa state	332	755	100	105	3.0	0.73
2	Students are displaced from places of learning as a result of armed conflict	388	741	96	67	3.1	0.81
3	Some Christian students are forced to learn on the internet due to armed conflict	667	358	141	126	3.2	0.75
4	School calendar is being distorted in the conflict areas	314	399	173	406	2.5	2.39
5	There is steady decline in school enrolment as a result of armed conflict	387	627	133	145	3.0	1.16
6	Many Christian parents have taken their wards from school and prefer to be with them at home than sending them to school	185	794	152	161	3.0	0.92
7	Many Christian children are taken to conflict free areas to continue their academic pursuit	373	276	152	491	2.4	0.84
Total						3.0	1.08

Item 1 on Table 1 shows that the respondents were generally of the view that, many schools were destroyed during the armed conflict. Three hundred and thirty-two (25.7%) and seven hundred and fifty-five (58.4%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed respectively that schools were destroyed. However, one hundred (7.7%) and one hundred and five (8.1%) of the

respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with the item 1 on the table. It has a mean score of 3.0.

Item 2 hinged on students being displaced from places of learning. The respondents three hundred and eighty-eight (30.0%) and seven hundred and forty-one (57.4%) strongly agree and agree on the item, but only ninety-six (7.4%) and sixty-seven (5.2%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with the item and a mean score of 3.1.

To further underscore this academic impact of armed conflict on Christians in Adamawa state, item 3 on the table hints on students being forced to study on the internet. Six hundred and sixty-seven (51.6%) and three hundred and fifty-eight (27.7%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that Christian students were forced to undertake studies on the internet. Only one hundred and forty-one (10.9%) and one hundred and twenty-six (9.8%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with the item, and a mean score of 3.2.

Item 4 dwelled on whether the school calendar is distorted. The respondents three hundred and fourteen (24.3%) and three hundred and ninety-nine (30.9%) strongly agreed and agreed that the school calendar is distorted. But only one hundred and seventy-three (13.4%) and four hundred and six (31.4%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with the item. With the mean score of 2.5, which implies that the academic calendar was affected.

Item 5 of the table addressed issue of steady decline in school enrolment due to armed conflict. Respondents of three hundred and eighty-seven (30.0%) and six hundred and twenty-seven (48.5%) strongly agreed and agreed that enrolment into school is plummeted. Only one hundred and thirty-three (10.3%) and one hundred and forty-five (11.2%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with the item, having a mean score of 3.0.

Item 6 examined whether armed conflict informs parents decision in taken their wards to other places of safety, one hundred and eighty-five (14.3%) and seven hundred and ninety-four (61.5%) of the respondents strongly agreed and agreed that many Christians have taken their wards to conflict free states . But one hundred and fifty-two (11.8%) and one hundred and sixty-one (12.5%) of the respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed. With mean score of 3.0, which is considered to be general opinion among the respondents.

Item 7 addressed how Christian children are taken to free conflict areas to continue their academic pursuit. The respondents three hundred and seventy-three (28.9%) and two hundred and seventy-six (21.4%) strongly agree and agree that many are being taken to areas of safety to continue with their studies. But only one hundred and fifty-two (11.8%) and four hundred and ninety-one (38.0%) of the respondents disagree and strongly disagree with the item. With a mean score of 2.4, which represents the opinions of the majority.

Having seen the opinions of the respondents on table 1 on the academic impacts of armed conflict on Christians in Adamawa state, Nigeria. the cumulative mean score of 3.0 is higher than the fixed mean score of 2.5 and a standard deviation of 1.08, this implies that the general opinions of the respondents on armed conflict impacting on their academic pursuit is both positive and negative. And it is the general opinion of the respondents.

Table 2: Two Sample t-test Procedure on the Impacts of Armed Conflict on the Academic Pursuit of Christians by Urban and Rural Respondents

Location	N	Mean	Std.Deviation	Std.error	t-value	DF	t-crit	P-value	Remark
Urban	676	107.48	10.815	0.416	0.41	1290	1.96	0.68	Not Sig
Rural	616	105.45	10.132	0.408					

The results on Table 15 reveal that the respondents do not differ on their opinions on the academic impact of armed conflict on Christians in the study area. The observed t-value (0.41) obtained at the 1,290 degree of freedom is lower than the critical value of 1.96 at the same degree of freedom. The observed level of significance (0.68) for the test is higher than 0.05 ($P > 0.05$). These observations provide enough evidence for the retaining of the null hypothesis. The null hypothesis that, there is no significant difference between the opinions of urban and rural Christians on armed conflict and its impacts on the academic pursuit of Christians in Adamawa State, Nigeria.

Discussion

The hypothesis revealed that urban and rural Christians do not differ in their views on armed conflict and its impact on Christians in Adamawa state. It is revealed that many schools were destroyed in the face of the armed conflict, some were forced to learn on the internet, and school calendar distorted. This is in line with the report of State Emergency Management (SEMA) (2018) aside killing and destruction of property, the conflict between host Christian communities and their neighbours affects the management of schools as they often settle in these schools and destroy the facilities. This renders classrooms and offices unusable as well as truncating academic activities, about 80,450 children are currently trapped in eight Internally Displaced Peoples' (IDP) camps. There is a decline in school enrolment by the children as is in agreement with Ahmed (2018) that records and information flow have been affected drastically as most school facilities and documents have been destroyed thereby keeping students and teachers out of the school. It is also in agreement with the report of Joseph (2017) the carnage also brings about decreased in school enrolment in some parts of the states that are affected by the crises. The emotional and psychological problems created in the people as a result of the fear further leads to decreased enrolment. Joseph further states that even parents who have returned from the internally displaced camps, prefer to stay at home with their children, than sending them back to school to continue their education.

Conclusion/ Recommendation

Armed conflict has the capacity to distort academic exercises, it is concluded that, many schools are destroyed during conflict due to armed conflict in Adamawa state. Students are displaced from places of learning as a result of armed conflict. Armed conflicts have a detrimental impact on education and the individuals involved in the educational process. The destruction of

infrastructure, cuts in funding, and loss of qualified teachers all contribute to the disruption of education. Protecting education in conflict zones is crucial for the well-being and future prospects of children. Community leaders should also interface with government so as to have a safe haven for those who want to pursue their academic exercise in Adamawa State.

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