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Middle East Geopolitical Shocks and the Stability of Secondary Education in Nigeria: A Review of Economic Transmission and Educational Outcomes

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Abstract: This study examines how geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, particularly those involving Iran, indirectly influence the stability of secondary education in Nigeria. Adopting a qualitative review approach, the paper synthesizes evidence from Nigerian media reports, policy documents, and educational commentaries to explore the economic transmission channels linking global oil market instability to educational outcomes. The findings reveal that Middle East crises contribute to rising fuel prices, inflation, and transportation costs in Nigeria, which in turn disrupt school attendance, increase household educational expenses, and weaken teaching-learning processes. The study further shows that fiscal pressures arising from energy price volatility reduce government investment in secondary education infrastructure, teacher development, and instructional resources. Additionally, the review highlights how these shocks exacerbate inequality in access to education, particularly among students from low-income households. The paper concludes that although Middle East crises do not directly target Nigeria's education system, their indirect economic effects significantly undermine the efficiency, equity, and quality of secondary education. It recommends the strengthening of economic resilience strategies and targeted educational protection policies to cushion the sector against external shocks.

Keywords: Education, Middle East Crisis, Secondary schools education.

1.0 Introduction

Secondary education in Nigeria is a critical stage in the national education system, serving as a bridge between basic education and tertiary learning. It is designed to equip learners with academic knowledge, vocational skills, and civic values necessary for higher education and societal participation. However, the performance and sustainability of this level of education are increasingly influenced by both domestic and global economic forces. In recent years, geopolitical tensions in the Middle East especially involving Iran have had significant ripple effects on global oil markets. As an oil-dependent economy, Nigeria is highly vulnerable to fluctuations in crude oil prices [1]. Nigerian media reports indicate that conflicts in the Middle East often lead to fuel price hikes, inflation, and broader economic instability, which directly affect household welfare and public service delivery [2].

These economic disruptions have serious implications for secondary education. Rising fuel costs increase transportation expenses for students and teachers, while inflation

reduces household capacity to fund education-related needs such as school fees, textbooks, and uniforms. Furthermore, government expenditure on education may be constrained due to competing fiscal pressures. Despite the importance of secondary education for national development, limited attention has been given to how external geopolitical shocks shape its stability in Nigeria. This study therefore reviews the economic transmission channels through which Middle East crises influence secondary education outcomes in Nigeria [3].

2.0 Conceptual Terms

2.1 Concept of Middle East Crisis

The Middle East crisis refers to recurring geopolitical tensions, conflicts, and political instability within the Middle East region, particularly among major oil-producing countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and their global allies. These crises often involve military confrontations, diplomatic disputes, sanctions, and energy supply disruptions that affect global oil markets [4].

Because the Middle East is a major hub of global petroleum production, any instability in the region tends to create volatility in crude oil prices worldwide [5]. For oil-dependent and import-reliant economies like Nigeria, such fluctuations translate into domestic fuel price increases, inflation, and broader economic instability. Nigerian media consistently report that geopolitical tensions in the Middle East often trigger immediate increases in fuel prices and transport costs within the country, demonstrating the interconnected nature of global energy and domestic socio-economic systems [6].

2.2 Conceptual Secondary School Education

Secondary school education in Nigeria is the stage of education that follows primary education and precedes tertiary education. It is typically designed as a six-year programme, divided into two phases: the Junior Secondary School (JSS 1–3) and Senior Secondary School (SSS 1–3). This level of education serves as a critical bridge in the Nigerian education system, helping learners transition from basic literacy and numeracy skills acquired at the primary level to more advanced academic, technical, and vocational knowledge. It is implemented under the national education policy framework and coordinated by federal, state, and private education authorities [7]. Secondary education in Nigeria plays a central role in human capital development and national transformation. It provides students with broader subject knowledge in areas such as sciences, arts, social sciences, technical education, and vocational studies. At the junior secondary level, students are exposed to a general curriculum that ensures foundational knowledge across disciplines. At the senior secondary level, learners specialize in chosen subject combinations that prepare them for higher education, entrepreneurship, or the labour market [8].

The objectives of secondary school education in Nigeria are clearly outlined in the National Policy on Education. First, it aims to prepare students for useful living within society by equipping them with relevant knowledge, skills, and values. Second, it prepares students for higher education by providing academic foundations required for admission into tertiary institutions. Third, it fosters national unity and social integration by promoting cultural understanding and civic responsibility among learners from diverse backgrounds. Secondary education is intended to develop critical thinking, innovation, and problem-solving skills in students. It also seeks to provide technical and vocational competencies that can support self-reliance and employment generation. Secondary schools aimed to instill moral and ethical values, discipline, and respect for societal norms, thereby contributing to the development of responsible citizens. Through these objectives, secondary school education serves as a vital instrument for national development, economic growth, and social stability in Nigeria [9].

3.0 Method

This study adopted a qualitative review method to examine the impact of Middle East geopolitical shocks on the stability of secondary education in Nigeria. The review approach was considered appropriate because the study relies on the synthesis of existing literature, policy documents, and media reports rather than primary data collection. It allows for an in-depth interpretation of how external economic shocks are transmitted into educational outcomes through indirect pathways.

The study is based on a narrative review design. This design enables the researcher to critically examine and integrate findings from diverse secondary sources to explain the relationship between geopolitical instability in the Middle East and secondary education outcomes in Nigeria. The focus is on identifying patterns, relationships, and recurring themes across existing studies and reports.

Data were obtained from multiple secondary sources, including: Nigerian newspapers and online media reports, Policy documents from educational and economic institutions, Reports from international development agencies and Academic journal articles on education, oil economics, and geopolitical risk. Particular attention was given to Nigerian media reports that document the relationship between global oil price fluctuations and domestic socio-economic conditions affecting education.

Relevant literature was identified through keyword searches such as Middle East crisis, Iran oil conflict, fuel price Nigeria, inflation and education, and secondary education challenges in Nigeria. Materials that provided evidence of economic transmission effects from geopolitical tensions to education outcomes were selected for analysis.

The study employed thematic content analysis. This involved categorizing information from the reviewed literature into major themes reflecting the pathways of impact. These themes included fuel price shocks, inflationary pressures, transportation disruptions, fiscal constraints, and policy instability. The analysis focused on explaining how these factors collectively influence secondary education access, quality, and sustainability in Nigeria.

To enhance credibility, the study triangulated information from multiple independent sources, including media reports, policy briefs, and academic literature. Only verifiable and relevant sources were included in the review.

4.0 Result and Discussion on Impact of Middle East Crisis on Secondary School Education in Nigeria

Rising Energy Costs and Disruption of Teaching–Learning Activities

The Middle East crisis, particularly tensions involving Iran, has significantly driven up global oil prices, with direct consequences for Nigeria's energy-dependent systems. Nigerian media reports indicate that the crisis has pushed crude oil prices higher, resulting in increased fuel costs across the country [10]. For secondary schools, this translates into higher operational expenses, especially in running generators due to persistent electricity challenges. Many public and private secondary schools rely on alternative power sources to support administrative work, laboratory activities, and digital learning tools. As fuel costs rise, school administrators are forced to scale down energy usage, which disrupts teaching schedules, limits practical lessons (especially in science subjects), and reduces the integration of ICT in instruction. This weakens the quality of teaching and learning outcomes at the secondary school level [11].

Inflation and Increased Financial Pressure on Students and Parents

Another major effect of the Middle East crisis is the rise in inflation across Nigeria. Reports show that the ongoing conflict has heightened inflation risks by increasing energy and commodity prices [12]. Additionally, economic analyses warn that the crisis is contributing to a broader rise in the cost of living. For secondary school education, this creates serious financial pressure on households [13]. Parents struggle to meet obligations such as school fees, textbooks, uniforms, and examination costs. As a result, many students

experience interrupted schooling, delayed fee payments, or forced transfers from private to public schools [14]. In extreme cases, students drop out entirely or engage in income-generating activities to support their families. This undermines enrolment stability, increases inequality, and affects overall participation in secondary education.

Transportation Challenges and Irregular School Attendance

Fuel price increases linked to the Middle East crisis have also led to higher transportation costs and logistical challenges. Media reports confirm that the crisis has caused fuel price hikes across African economies, including Nigeria, leading to increased transport fares [15]. For secondary school students many of whom travel longer distances than primary school pupils this poses a significant barrier to regular attendance. Students may arrive late, miss classes, or attend school inconsistently due to transport difficulties. Teachers are equally affected, especially those commuting from urban centers to suburban or rural schools [16]. The cumulative effect is reduced instructional time, incomplete syllabus coverage, and poor academic performance and disrupts the continuity and effectiveness of secondary education.

Government Fiscal Constraints and Decline in Educational Investment

The Middle East crisis has also strained Nigeria's fiscal capacity, with implications for public investment in education. Reports indicate that the crisis could weaken economic growth across Africa, including Nigeria, thereby affecting government revenue and expenditure priorities [17]. While rising oil prices may offer temporary revenue gains, the broader economic instability often leads to increased spending on economic stabilization measures rather than social services. Funding for secondary education may decline or become inconsistent. This affects infrastructure development, teacher recruitment, training programmes, and provision of learning materials. In many public secondary schools, the result is overcrowded classrooms, inadequate facilities, and declining teacher motivation. Such conditions weaken the overall effectiveness and sustainability of the secondary education system [18].

4.1 Findings

The study reveals that geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, particularly involving Iran, have significant indirect effects on secondary education in Nigeria through economic transmission channels. The rising global oil prices triggered by these crises lead to increased fuel costs in Nigeria, which disrupt school operations by raising energy expenses and limiting effective teaching and learning activities. Inflation resulting from these shocks reduces household income, making it difficult for parents to afford school fees, learning materials, and other education-related costs, thereby increasing dropout risks and inequality in access to education.

Transportation costs increase, leading to irregular school attendance among students and teachers, reduced instructional time, and weakened academic performance. Fourth, government funding for secondary education becomes constrained as economic pressures force a reallocation of national resources away from education toward stabilization measures. The instability created by these external shocks weakens long-term educational planning, resulting in inconsistent implementation of policies, delayed reforms, and reduced system efficiency. The findings show that although Middle East crises do not directly target Nigeria's education system, their ripple effects significantly undermine the stability, access, and quality of secondary education in the country.

4.2 Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, particularly those involving Iran, have significant indirect effects on secondary education in Nigeria. These effects are primarily transmitted through economic channels such as rising fuel prices, inflation, and fiscal constraints. As a result, students face increased transportation and educational costs, leading to irregular attendance and reduced academic performance.

Schools experience operational challenges due to higher energy costs and inadequate funding, which affects teaching quality and learning infrastructure. Government investment in secondary education is also weakened as economic priorities shift toward managing external shocks. Collectively, these factors undermine access, equity, and quality in secondary education. The study therefore establishes that secondary education in Nigeria is not insulated from global geopolitical developments. Instead, it is embedded within a broader economic system that makes it vulnerable to external shocks. Based on the study, the study recommend the following:

1. Government should establish a dedicated education stabilization fund to protect secondary education financing from global oil price shocks and economic volatility.
2. Secondary schools should be supported to adopt renewable energy solutions, particularly solar power, to reduce dependence on fuel and mitigate operational disruptions.
3. State governments should implement subsidized transport schemes or school bus systems to reduce the impact of rising fuel prices on school attendance and punctuality.
4. Expansion of conditional cash transfer schemes should be prioritized to assist low-income families in meeting education-related costs during periods of economic hardship.
5. Nigeria should accelerate efforts to reduce dependence on oil revenue to minimize vulnerability to external geopolitical shocks affecting education financing.
6. Educational planners should integrate risk assessment and emergency response strategies into policy frameworks to ensure continuity of learning during economic disruptions.

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