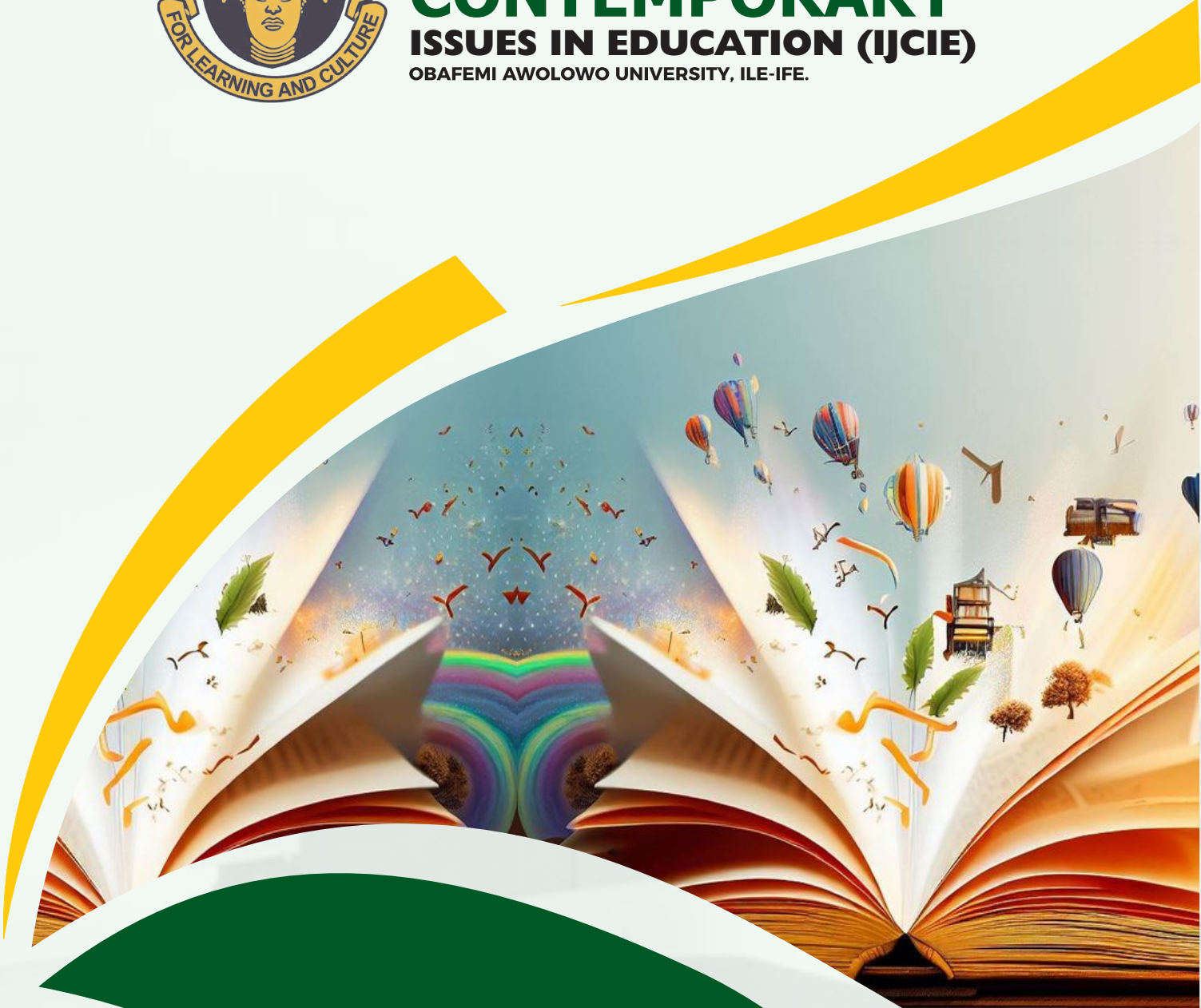




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OBAFEMI AWOLOWO UNIVERSITY, ILE-IFE.



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**INSECURITY AND POVERTY AS CONSTRAINTS TO
ECONOMICS EDUCATION IN NIGERIA: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY
OF THEIR IMPACT ON NATIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

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Abstract

Insecurity and poverty have emerged as significant challenges to educational development in Nigeria, particularly affecting the teaching and learning of Economics at various levels. In Nigeria, the pursuit of national economic development is intrinsically tied to the quality and reach of education, particularly Economics education, which plays a critical role in producing economically literate and productive citizens. However, persistent insecurity and widespread poverty pose significant barriers to the effective delivery of this subject. This study explored the extent to which insecurity and poverty constrain Economics education in Nigeria and the subsequent implications for national economic development. Using a mixed-method approach, the research surveyed secondary school students and teachers across regions heavily affected by insurgencies and economic deprivation. Results reveal that insecurity leads to school closures, psychological trauma, displacement, and a decline in teacher morale, while poverty restricts students' access to learning materials, causes absenteeism, and forces early school withdrawal. The findings underscore the need for integrated policy responses that enhance security, alleviate poverty, and strengthen Economics education as a pathway to sustainable economic development. The study found a statistically significant negative relationship between the levels of insecurity and poverty and students' performance

in Economics. It concluded that addressing these dual challenges is crucial to ensuring the transformative role of Economics education in national development. Strategic policy interventions, improved security architecture, poverty alleviation programs, and targeted educational support systems are recommended as imperative measures.

Keywords: Insecurity, Poverty, Economics Education, Human Capital, Educational Access, National Development, Nigeria

Introduction

Education plays a pivotal role in national development by equipping individuals with knowledge, skills, and critical thinking abilities. It remains a cornerstone of socioeconomic development globally. Economics education, in particular, fosters economic literacy, financial decision-making, and understanding of market systems necessary for active participation in a modern economy. In Nigeria, the relevance of Economics education is increasingly acknowledged for its potential to instill economic literacy, critical thinking, and entrepreneurship among young learners. Economics education provides individuals with an understanding of resource allocation, market behavior, fiscal responsibility, and decision-making processes that are essential for active participation in a developing economy. However, the Nigerian education sector is confronted by two interrelated

crises - rampant insecurity and endemic poverty - causing dual negative situations in the country. These pervasive challenges of insecurity and poverty have continued to undermine the delivery and outcomes of Economics education.

Insecurity in Nigeria manifests through terrorism, banditry, kidnappings, and ethno-religious conflicts, particularly in the North-East, North-West, and Middle Belt regions. These threats have disrupted academic calendars. Insecurity, characterized by insurgencies, banditry, and communal conflicts, leads to school closures, displacement of students and teachers, and destruction of educational infrastructure. Simultaneously, poverty deprives many households of the means to afford school fees, uniforms, books, transportation, and basic nutrition - essentials for sustained learning. It limits access to educational materials, inhibits consistent attendance, and reduces learning outcomes. These constraints pose serious threats to the realization of education's potential in driving economic growth.

Economics education, like other disciplines, is affected by these challenges. When schools are unsafe and students are hungry or burdened with economic responsibilities, their ability to engage with abstract concepts in Economics—such as supply and demand, inflation, and trade—diminishes. Thus, this study seeks to empirically analyze how insecurity and poverty constrain Economics education and, by extension, the human capital base necessary for economic transformation.

Insecurity: A condition marked by fear, violence, and disruption due to terrorism, armed conflict, or civil unrest. A state of danger or vulnerability resulting from violence, threats, or instability that affects schooling environments.

Poverty: A condition or state of lacking financial resources, where individuals or households cannot meet basic needs including food, shelter, healthcare, and education. The state of lacking financial resources to meet basic needs, including access to quality education.

The Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1964) states that, Education enhances productivity and earnings, and thus contributes to economic growth. However, if access to

education is obstructed by insecurity and poverty, human capital formation is weakened.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs: This theory posits that basic physiological and safety needs must be met before individuals can focus on learning. Students affected by hunger or fear are unlikely to learn effectively.

Studies indicate that educational achievement in conflict-affected and economically disadvantaged areas is substantially lower. Studies like:

Adegbite and Ojo (2019) observed that insecurity reduced school enrollment and learning outcomes in Borno and Yobe states, Ibrahim and Musa (2021) found that poverty forced students into labor, leading to absenteeism and poor academic performance and Adejumo and Salihu (2022) emphasized the significance of Economics education in shaping economic behavior and its vulnerability to educational disruptions.

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the extent to which insecurity affects the delivery of Economics education in Nigeria.
2. To assess how poverty impacts students' access to and performance in Economics education.
3. To analyze the broader implications of these challenges for national economic development.

Research Questions

1. How does insecurity affect the teaching and learning of Economics in Nigeria?
2. In what ways does poverty influence students' access to and performance in Economics education?
3. What are the long-term implications of these constraints for Nigeria's economic development?

Methodology

This study adopts a descriptive survey design, complemented and enriched with qualitative interviews. This combination allows for a comprehensive understanding of trends, experiences, and outcomes and to capture in-depth perspectives. The population includes

senior secondary school students and Economics teachers in three Nigerian states representing diverse insecurity and poverty profiles: Borno (North-East), Kaduna (North-West), and Oyo (South-West). A sample of 300 participants was selected, where 200 were students and 100 teachers, using a disproportionate stratified sampling technique. The primary instruments used are: Structured Questionnaires with sections on demographics, school conditions, learning challenges, and performance and semi structured Interview Guides for qualitative data from selected teachers and school administrators. The

questionnaires focused on exposure to insecurity, economic status, school attendance, and academic performance in Economics while the interview guide focus on situations or happening. Expert reviews were conducted to ensure face and content validity. Reliability testing using Cronbach's alpha yielded a coefficient of 0.83, indicating high consistency. Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS for frequencies, mean scores, standard deviation, and Pearson correlation. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic coding.

RESULTS

Table 1; Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency (n=300)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	160	53.3%
	Female	140	46.7%
Role	Student	200	66.7%
	Teacher	100	33.3%
State of Residence	Borno	100	33.3%
	Kaduna	100	33.3%
	Oyo	100	33.3%

Table 1 - presents the demographic distribution of the respondents, showing a balanced representation across gender, role, and state of

residence, with an overall total of 300 participants comprising 200 students and 100 teachers from Borno, Kaduna, and Oyo states.

Table 2; Students' Exposure to Insecurity and Its Effect on Attendance

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
I have missed school due to security concerns in my area	90 (45%)	70 (35%)	30 (15%)	10 (5%)	3.20
Armed conflict or violence has disrupted our Economics classes	100 (50%)	60 (30%)	25 (12.5%)	15 (7.5%)	3.23

The data in Table 2 indicate that a majority of students have experienced disruptions in their education due to insecurity, with over 80%

acknowledging school absences or interrupted Economics classes as a result of security concerns in their area.

Table 3: Students' Economic Background and Learning Challenges

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
I lack access to textbooks or internet due to financial constraints	120 (60%)	50 (25%)	20 (10%)	10 (5%)	3.40
I miss school to help my family with work or care for siblings	85 (42.5%)	75 (37.5%)	30 (15%)	10 (5%)	3.18

Table 3 reveals that financial hardship significantly affects students' learning, with a high percentage reporting limited access to

educational resources and frequent school absenteeism due to family responsibilities linked to poverty.

Table 4: Teachers' Perspectives on Insecurity and Poverty

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Mean
Insecurity makes it difficult to maintain a stable school calendar	65 (65%)	25 (25%)	8 (8%)	2 (2%)	3.53
Many students cannot afford essential learning materials	70 (70%)	20 (20%)	7 (7%)	3 (3%)	3.57
Students in conflict zones perform worse in Economics	55 (55%)	35 (35%)	7 (7%)	3 (3%)	3.42

Table 4 highlights teachers' strong agreement that insecurity and poverty severely disrupt academic stability, hinder students' access to learning

materials, and negatively impact Economics performance, particularly in conflict-affected regions.

Table 5: Pearson Correlation Between Insecurity, Poverty, and Student Academic Performance

Items	r	p-value	Significance
Variables Insecurity and Economics academic performance	-0.61	0.000	Significant ($p < 0.05$)
Poverty and Economics academic performance	-0.58	0.000	Significant ($p < 0.05$)

Table 5 shows a statistically significant negative correlation between both insecurity and poverty with students' academic performance in Economics, indicating that higher levels of insecurity and poverty are associated with lower academic outcomes.

Economics or anything else when you're worried about safety.” – *Student, Kaduna*

Qualitative Findings-Thematic Analysis

Theme 1: School Closures and Learning Disruption

“In Borno, our school has been shut multiple times due to attacks. It makes it hard to complete the syllabus.” – *Teacher, Borno*

Theme 2: Poverty-Induced Absenteeism

“Some students skip school to hawk or work with their parents; when they come back, they've missed lessons.” – *Teacher, Kaduna*

Theme 3: Emotional Impact of Insecurity on Learners

“Many students live in fear. You can't focus on

Theme 4: Unequal Resource Access Across States

“In Oyo, we have fewer security challenges, so we complete more lessons. But in Borno, we rarely finish the scheme of work.” – *Teacher, Oyo*

Discussion of Findings

The results highlight a strong negative relationship between insecurity, poverty, and students' academic performance in Economics, consistent with prior studies (e.g., Adebayo & Ogunyemi, 2021; UNESCO, 2022). Quantitative data revealed that insecurity disrupts schooling, with over 75% of students affirming that security threats affect their attendance and class continuity. Teachers corroborated this, noting that the school calendar is often disorganized in high-risk areas like Borno and Kaduna. Poverty-related barriers such as lack of educational materials, internet access, and the need for child labor were

also significant. Over 80% of students acknowledged financial constraints negatively impact their learning, while teachers observed similar challenges across conflict-affected and low-income areas. The Pearson correlation results confirm statistically significant inverse relationships between insecurity, poverty, and Economics performance. These findings support the theoretical assertion that economic and security stability is fundamental for educational delivery.

Qualitative data further enriched the analysis, revealing regional disparities in school functioning, emotional trauma among learners, and policy neglect. For instance, students and teachers from Borno shared experiences of fear and discontinuity, contrasting with more stable conditions in Oyo.

Conclusion

The analysis found that insecurity leads to school disruption and poor learning environments, while poverty reduces access to resources, attendance, and concentration. It found significant adverse effects on student attendance, performance, and teacher availability, ultimately threatening national economic development.

Insecurity and poverty have compounded effects on Economics education, hindering its capacity to contribute to national development. Economics education can be a tool for building financial resilience, entrepreneurship, and national productivity, but only if learners are supported in safe and resourceful environments. Economics education holds transformative potential, but its efficacy is undermined by persistent insecurity and poverty. A failure to address these issues risks widening the education gap and weakening the foundation for economic growth.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations of the study: Governments should deploy security

personnel, build perimeter fencing, and ensure safe transportation also ensuring protection of educational institutions, especially in conflict zones. Government should make available the provision of free learning materials, school feeding, and scholarship schemes for poor households, teachers should be offered incentives, hazard allowances, mental health support, and secure housing for teachers in crisis zones or high-risk areas. Government collaborations should align with education and security ministries in developing joint responses, mobilize local leadership to protect educational assets as well as strengthen school-community partnerships to enhance security and support for education and incorporate Economics education into national poverty alleviation and development strategies.

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