THE IMPACT OF PROTEST-RELATED VIOLENCE ON EDUCATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examines the severe effects of violence associated to protests on Nigeria's educational system, with a particular emphasis on the harm done to physical infrastructure, the disruption of classes, and the psychological effects on faculty and students. Utilizing case studies including the Boko Haram insurgency, the EndSARS protests, and local disputes in the Niger Delta, the study emphasizes the short- and long-term effects of violence on the country's educational system. According to the analysis, demolishing schools and educational facilities not only makes education more difficult to obtain and reduces literacy rates, but it also makes it more difficult to achieve national development goals. The effects on society as a whole are studied critically, taking into account how low educational attainment can exacerbate social discontent and prolong violent cycles. Along with providing policy recommendations for protecting educational infrastructure during protests, the report also describes successful mitigation options, such as preventive actions involving the government, civil society, and communities. Sustainable reconstruction techniques and the significance of mental health care for impacted staff members and students are highlighted in the discussion of rebuilding and rehabilitation initiatives. This study highlights the vital role that education plays in promoting stability and development in Nigeria and emphasizes the necessity of extensive and coordinated measures to safeguard and rebuild educational infrastructure in the face of violence associated to protests. Stakeholders may build a more resilient and successful educational system and lessen the negative consequences of violence by putting the suggested methods into practice.

Keywords: Protest-Related Violence, Educational Infrastructure, Educational Development, Nigeria.

Introduction

Given its impact on a number of industries, including education, protest-related violence in Nigeria has grown to be a serious concern. Protests across the nation have been common over the years, with demands ranging from requests for social fairness to better administration.

Although nonviolent demonstrations are a defining feature of democratic expression, they frequently become violent and cause extensive damage. The majority of these acts of violence frequently target the physical infrastructure that supports education, which includes classrooms, libraries, labs, and other establishments. The country's educational advancement is affected in the long run by this interruption, which also interferes with the learning process in the short term (Yusuf & Ibrahim, 2022).

Infrastructure related to education is essential to every country's progress. It serves as the framework for the entire educational system, supplying the conditions required for efficient instruction and learning. A strong educational infrastructure helps students grow holistically by providing them with access to high-quality instruction, which in turn produces competent human capital. According to Okeke (2020), this human capital is crucial for promoting social cohesion, decreasing poverty, and accelerating economic progress. It is impossible to exaggerate the significance of educational infrastructure in Nigeria. The nation's ability to offer its citizens high-quality education is a major factor in its aspiration to become one of the developed world's economies. Thus, a vital component of the nation's educational infrastructure is its ability to support its development objectives. It not only speeds up the learning process but also represents the government's dedication to raising the bar for education and, consequently, the standard of living for its people (Abdu &Lawal, 2021).

Protest-related violence has a devastating impact on educational infrastructure in Nigeria. Schools and other educational facilities often become targets or collateral damage during violent protests. The destruction of these facilities results in immediate disruption of educational activities. For instance, during the EndSARS protests in 2020, several schools were damaged, leading to the closure of educational institutions and disruption of the academic calendar (Olusola, 2020).The impact goes beyond the physical destruction of infrastructure. The financial burden of rebuilding damaged facilities is significant, often leading to a diversion of funds that could have been used for further development of the education sector. Moreover, the psychological impact on students and staff who witness or are victims of such violence is profound. The trauma associated with such experiences can hinder academic performance and reduce overall morale, further affecting the quality of education (Yusuf & Ibrahim, 2022).In areas where protest-related violence is recurrent, there is a noticeable decline in school enrollment and attendance, as parents and guardians become increasingly concerned about the safety of their children. This situation contributes to the already alarming rate of out-of-school children in Nigeria, which stands as one of the highest in the world (UNESCO, 2021).

The position of this article is that protest-related violence has severe negative consequences on educational infrastructure in Nigeria, which in turn undermines the country's educational development and broader national development goals. The destruction of schools and other educational facilities not only disrupts the immediate learning process but also has long-lasting effects on the educational trajectory of the nation (Abdu &Lawal, 2021).The cyclical nature of violence and underdevelopment is evident in the Nigerian context. The destruction of educational infrastructure hampers the delivery of quality education, leading to a less educated population. This under-education perpetuates cycles of poverty, unemployment, and social unrest, which in turn fuel further protests and potential violence. Therefore, the negative consequences of protest-related violence on educational infrastructure are not just

immediate but have far-reaching implications for the nation's future (Yusuf & Ibrahim, 2022).It is imperative for the government, civil society, and other stakeholders to recognize the critical importance of protecting educational infrastructure. Proactive measures must be taken to ensure that protests, while a necessary part of democratic expression, do not devolve into violence that threatens the educational foundation of the nation (Okeke, 2020).

Protest-Related Violence and Major Protests in Nigeria and Their Triggers in Nigeria
Nigerians' increasing dissatisfaction with a range of socio-political and economic issues is reflected in the country's increasing problem of protest-related violence. In Nigeria, protests usually start off peacefully but can become violent very rapidly for a variety of reasons, including government persecution, ineffective crowd management, or the involvement of non-state groups. Since the violent effects of these protests frequently result in the damage of infrastructure and disruption of society activities, they have had profound ramifications for a number of sectors, most notably education. Protests have been common in Nigeria's past, with many turning violent. Prime examples are the 2020 "EndSARS" rallies, which called for the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS) to be abolished in response to claims of police abuse. Thousands of young Nigerians were mobilized by the demonstration, which soon attracted national and worldwide notice. But following altercations with security personnel, the nonviolent demonstrations turned violent, leading to the catastrophic Lekki Toll Gate event, in which demonstrators claimed to have been shot by the military (Olusola, 2020). The "Occupy Nigeria" movement in 2012 was another notable protest in response to the government's elimination of gasoline subsidies, which sharply increased petrol costs. Similar to the previous protest, it started off peacefully but turned violent when protesters confronted security personnel to voice their displeasure with government policies (Ibeanu, Orji, &Iwuamadi, 2016). Prolonged unrest has also been fueled by the Niger Delta protests, which are motivated by environmental degradation and economic marginalization in the oil-rich region. These demonstrations frequently feature militant. These demonstrations frequently feature militant activities that result in severe violence and devastation, especially when oil infrastructure is the objective (Agbonifo, 2017).

Evolution of Protest-Related Violence in Nigeria
Nigerian protest-related violence has evolved over time in reaction to changes in the political environment, economic conditions, and tactics employed by the populace to mobilize themselves. Under the military regimes of the 1980s and 1990s, protests were often greeted with strong repression, leading to extreme violence. After civilian rule was restored in 1999, protests were more frequent; yet, violence continued because of persistent socioeconomic inequities and the government's refusal to accede to demonstrators' demands (Adesoji, 2010). Over the past 20 years, there has been an increasing correlation between political manipulation, poverty, and youth unemployment with protest-related violence. The proliferation of small arms and the presence of non-state actors have also contributed to the increase in protest violence. Additionally, social media's introduction has altered how protests are organized and carried out; while it frequently speeds up mobilization, it can also contribute to the escalation of violence when misinformation spreads (Ibeanu, Orji, &Iwuamadi, 2016).

RevolutionNowMovement (2019): Another notable protest was the #RevolutionNow movement, which was organized by activists advocating for improved governance and the

eradication of corruption. The protests, which occurred primarily in Abuja and Lagos, faced severe repression from security forces. This resulted in arrests and violent confrontations, reflecting a broader trend of state responses to dissent and the increasing tension between the government and the populace (Amnesty International, 2019). EndSARS Movement (2020): The EndSARS protests emerged as a significant example of recent protest-related violence. Originally a social media campaign aimed at ending police brutality perpetrated by the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS), the movement quickly gained traction and led to widespread street demonstrations across major Nigerian cities. Initially peaceful, the protests eventually escalated into violence, marked by looting, property destruction, and violent clashes with security forces. The situation intensified following the deployment of military personnel, leading to reports of significant violence and casualties, particularly during the Lekki Toll Gate incident in Lagos (Yusuf & Ibrahim, 2022).End Bad Government Protests (2023): Most recently, the End Bad Government protests have emerged as a significant instance of protest-related violence. This movement has been driven by widespread dissatisfaction with the current administration's performance, including issues of corruption, poor governance, and economic mismanagement. The protests have spread across various states in Nigeria and have been marked by clashes with security forces, destruction of public property, and incidents of violence. The government's response to these protests has been characterized by heavy-handed measures, which have further exacerbated tensions and led to numerous casualties (Nwafor, 2024).Subsidy Removal Protests (August 2024): The most recent wave of protests emerged in response to President Bola Ahmed Tinubu's removal of fuel subsidies and the announcement of Seventy thousand naira (#70.000) minimum wage. Announced in early August 2024, the subsidy removal led to a sharp increase in fuel prices, which sparked widespread demonstrations across Nigeria. The protests, which initially began as peaceful expressions of public discontent, quickly escalated into violent clashes between protesters and security forces. Instances of property damage, looting, and confrontations with law enforcement have been reported, reflecting the deep-seated frustration and economic hardship faced by many Nigerians as a result of the policy change (Ogunleye, 2024).

The Role of Social Media in Mobilizing Protests
Social media has become a powerful tool in mobilizing protests in Nigeria. Platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp have provided protesters with the ability to organize quickly, disseminate information, and coordinate actions in real-time. The EndSARS protests are a prime example of how social media can galvanize widespread participation and international support. Hashtags like EndSARSand EndPoliceBrutality trended globally, drawing attention to the protesters' demands and pressuring the Nigerian government to respond (Oginni&Moitui, 2021).However, the role of social media is not without its drawbacks. The rapid spread of information can also lead to the dissemination of misinformation, which can inflame tensions and contribute to the escalation of violence. During the EndSARS protests, for instance, social media was used both to organize peaceful protests and to spread unverified claims, some of which contributed to the violence that ensued (Yusuf & Ibrahim, 2022).

Educational Infrastructure in Nigeria
Educational infrastructures are materials used directly or indirectly for the benefit of influencing teaching and learning in education (Busa, Shamsudeen&Nnamdi, 2024). Educational infrastructure refers to the physical facilities and resources necessary for effective

teaching and learning. Educational infrastructure refers to the physical facilities and resources required to support the educational process. This includes schools, classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and other facilities that contribute to the educational environment. UNESCO emphasizes the importance of maintaining and improving these infrastructures to ensure quality education (UNESCO, 2020).It includes various components such as school buildings, classrooms, libraries, laboratories, and other essential facilities that support the educational process. In Nigeria, educational infrastructure is a critical element in delivering quality education, contributing to student achievement, and fostering an environment conducive to learning. According to Busa, Shamsudeen and Nnamdi (2024) educational infrastructure is an integral component of the physical structure of schools, encompassing classrooms, libraries, laboratories, recreational areas, and other facilities that collectively contribute to the overall learning environment. Educational infrastructure includes the physical and organizational structures that support educational activities, such as school buildings, classrooms, libraries, and administrative facilities. This encompasses both the tangible aspects (e.g., facilities and equipment) and the organizational components (e.g., administrative offices) necessary for effective education delivery (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021)

According to World Bank (2021) educational infrastructure encompasses the facilities, equipment, and materials necessary for the provision of quality education. This includes both the physical assets like buildings and classrooms, as well as educational tools such as computers and laboratory equipment. The World Bank highlights the critical role of infrastructure in achieving educational outcomes and ensuring equitable access to education. However, the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP 2021) viewed Educational infrastructure as the set of physical and organizational structures required for the operation of educational institutions. This includes physical facilities (schools, classrooms, libraries), technical resources (laboratories, IT equipment), and administrative structures necessary to support effective teaching and learning.For   African Development Bank (AfDB, 2022)Educational infrastructure includes all the physical and logistical resources required to support the education sector. This encompasses educational buildings (schools, universities), classrooms, learning materials (books, computers), and other necessary facilities. The AfDB emphasizes that investing in educational infrastructure is vital for enhancing learning outcomes and achieving sustainable development goals. This means from the above definitions, educational infrastructure can be seen as those resources that are needed to aid the education institutions to attain the pinnacle or the desired goals.

What Constitutes Educational Infrastructure in Nigeria
Educational infrastructure encompasses a wide range of physical and organizational elements which include:
1. Schools: The primary physical entities where formal education takes place. Schools in Nigeria range from basic education institutions (primary and secondary schools) to tertiary institutions (universities, polytechnics, and colleges of education).
2. Classrooms: These are the core spaces within schools where teaching and learning occur. Adequate classrooms should be spacious, well-ventilated, and equipped with the necessary furniture and teaching aids to facilitate effective learning (Owolabi, 2021).
3. Libraries: Libraries are vital for providing students and teachers with access to books, academic journals, and other learning resources. A well-stocked and managed library

is crucial for promoting a reading culture and supporting research and academic excellence (Egunyomi, 2020).

4. Laboratories: Laboratories are essential for the practical application of scientific theories and principles. In Nigeria, laboratories in schools are often equipped for subjects like physics, chemistry, biology, and computer science, enabling students to engage in hands-on learning (Adegoke, 2019).

5. Administrative Offices: These spaces house the school's administrative activities, including the principal's office, staff rooms, and clerical offices. Efficient administration is crucial for the smooth operation of educational institutions (Olaniyan& Lucas, 2020).

6. Sports and Recreational Facilities: These include playgrounds, sports fields, and gymnasiums, which are necessary for physical education and the overall well-being of students. They play a significant role in the holistic development of students (Ishola, 2021).

7. These encompass the physical condition of classrooms, availability of libraries and laboratories, access to modern technology, and the overall safety and hygiene of the school environment (Busa, Shamsudeen&Pofung, 2024).

8. Utilities and Services: Essential services such as water supply, electricity, sanitation, and security are critical components of educational infrastructure, ensuring a safe and conducive learning environment.

9.

Current State of Educational Infrastructure and Before the Surge in Protests

The condition of Nigeria's educational infrastructure was already a source of worry before to the recent upsurge in demonstrations. Numerous government agencies made an attempt to upgrade facilities, but many schools nationwide still faced serious issues, such as outdated and insufficient infrastructure. The National Bureau of Statistics (2019) reports that inadequate learning resources, overcrowding in classrooms, and a lack of essential utilities like electricity and potable water were commonplace in many public schools, especially in rural areas. There were unique difficulties facing the tertiary education industry as well. For example, several universities were forced to operate with antiquated infrastructure that was unable to accommodate the increasing number of students enrolled. Students and professors alike frequently lamented the dilapidated condition of the labs, libraries, and lecture halls (Olaniyan& Lucas, 2020).

Existing Challenges Faced by Educational Infrastructure in Nigeria

Several challenges have long plagued educational infrastructure in Nigeria:

1. Inadequate Funding: Chronic underfunding of the education sector has led to the deterioration of existing infrastructure and hindered the development of new facilities. The budgetary allocation for education in Nigeria often falls below the recommended 26% of the national budget by UNESCO, making it difficult to maintain and improve infrastructure (Egunyomi, 2020).

2. Overcrowding: Many schools, especially in urban areas, are faced with the challenge of overcrowded classrooms due to the high demand for education.

3. Dilapidated Buildings: A significant number of school buildings across Nigeria are in a state of disrepair, posing safety risks to students and staff. The lack of maintenance and the use of substandard materials in construction have contributed to the deterioration of these facilities (Owolabi, 2021).

4. Lack of Basic Amenities: Many schools lack basic amenities such as clean water, electricity, and sanitation facilities, which are essential for creating a conducive learning environment. This issue is particularly prevalent in rural areas, where infrastructure development is often neglected (Ishola, 2021).

5. Inequitable Distribution of Resources: There is a significant disparity in the quality of educational infrastructure between urban and rural areas, as well as between private and public schools. Rural schools are often under-resourced and neglected, leading to poor educational outcomes for students in these areas (Olaniyan& Lucas, 2020).

6. Political Instability and Corruption: The mismanagement of funds and corruption within the educational sector has further exacerbated the challenges facing educational infrastructure.

7. Conversely, deficiencies in infrastructure may hinder the teaching-learning process, impeding students' ability to reach their full academics potentials (Busa, Shamsudeen&Pofung, 2024).

Impact of Protest-Related Violence on Educational Infrastructure

Protest-related violence has a significant and multifaceted impact on educational infrastructure, affecting physical facilities, educational activities, and the well-being of students, teachers, and the broader community. The following are theimpacts:

1. Destruction of Physical Facilities

Protest-related violence often results in the destruction of educational facilities, including schools, classrooms, libraries, and laboratories. This destruction not only damages the physical infrastructure but also disrupts the normal functioning of educational institutions. Repairing or rebuilding damaged facilities requires substantial financial resources and time, leading to long-term disruptions in educational services.

2. Disruption of Educational Activities

Violence during protests disrupts educational activities by forcing schools to close, postponing examinations, and interrupting the curriculum. Prolonged closures and interruptions affect students' learning continuity and academic progress, often leading to a backlog of educational content and decreased overall educational quality.

3. Impact on Students, Teachers, and the Broader Community

The impact of protest-related violence extends to students, teachers, and the broader community. Students face interruptions in their education, while teachers may experience job insecurity and stress due to the destruction and disruption of their workplaces. The broader community also suffers from the societal and economic ramifications of disrupted educational services.

4. Psychological Impact on Students and Staff

Exposure to violence during protests has a profound psychological impact on both students and staff. Trauma, fear, and anxiety are common responses, which can lead to long-term mental health issues. This psychological strain affects students' ability to concentrate and learn, as well as teachers' capacity to provide effective instruction.

5. Effects on Academic Performance and Staff Morale

The disruption caused by protest-related violence adversely affects academic performance and staff morale. Students may fall behind academically due to missed classes and disrupted learning environments. Additionally, teachers and staff experience decreased morale and motivation due to the challenges posed by violence and its aftermath.

Case Studies: Impact of Protests on Educational Infrastructure in Nigeria
1. EndSARS Protests (2020)
The EndSARS protests in October 2020 were aimed at ending police brutality in Nigeria, particularly targeting the Special Anti-Robbery Squad (SARS). The protests, which began peacefully, escalated into violent clashes and led to significant damage to public and private property, including educational facilities.

Impact on Educational Infrastructure:
Damage: Several schools in Lagos and other major cities experienced vandalism and arson. For example, the Lekki area in Lagos saw significant property destruction, including damage to local schools (Yusuf & Ibrahim, 2022).

Cost of Rebuilding: The cost of repairing and rebuilding affected educational facilities has been substantial. The Lagos State Government allocated funds for the reconstruction of damaged schools, though estimates for the total cost have varied (Olaniyan, 2021).

Government and Stakeholder Response: The Nigerian government, along with local NGOs and private organizations, initiated efforts to repair and rebuild damaged infrastructure. The Lagos State Government announced a plan for rehabilitating affected schools and supporting affected communities (Adewale&Ilesanmi, 2021).

2. Boko Haram Insurgency (Ongoing)
Case Study: The Boko Haram insurgency, which has affected northeastern Nigeria since 2009, has had a devastating impact on educational infrastructure. The insurgents targeted schools as symbols of Western education, leading to widespread destruction and closure of schools in affected regions.

Impact on Educational Infrastructure:
Damage: Numerous schools in Borno, Yobe, and Adamawa states have been destroyed or severely damaged. Reports indicate that hundreds of schools have been attacked, with some completely razed (UNICEF, 2022).

Cost of Rebuilding: The cost of rebuilding educational infrastructure in the affected regions is immense. International organizations, including the United Nations and various NGOs, have been involved in efforts to reconstruct schools and provide temporary learning spaces (Amnesty International, 2021).

Government and Stakeholder Response: The Nigerian government, with support from international donors and NGOs, has been working on rebuilding efforts and providing support for displaced students and teachers. Programs have been implemented to ensure continued education through makeshift schools and remote learning (World Bank, 2021).

3. Niger Delta Conflicts (Ongoing)

Case Study Overview: Conflicts in the Niger Delta region, driven by issues related to oil exploitation and environmental degradation, have led to disruptions and violence affecting educational facilities in the region.

Impact on Educational Infrastructure:
Damage: Educational facilities in the Niger Delta have suffered from vandalism and arson. Schools have been damaged or destroyed due to conflicts between militant groups and security forces (Egunyomi, 2023).

Cost of Rebuilding: The costs associated with repairing and rebuilding damaged schools are significant. Efforts have been made by both the government and various stakeholders to address these damages and restore educational services (Ilesanmi, 2023).
Government and Stakeholder Response: The Nigerian government, alongside international aid organizations and community groups, has been involved in rebuilding efforts and providing support to affected schools and students (Adewale&Ilesanmi, 2022).

Long-Term Consequences of Protest-Related Violence on Educational Development
Impact on Access to Education and Literacy Rates
EndSARS Protests (2020)The EndSARS protests led to significant disruptions in the educational sector, particularly in Lagos and other major cities. Schools were closed or damaged, impacting students' ability to continue their education.

Long-Term Effects: The disruptions contributed to a decline in access to education for many students. This has resulted in decreased literacy rates and educational attainment. Studies have shown that students affected by the protests faced delays in their academic progress and increased dropout rates.

Hindrance to Educational Goals and National Development
Boko Haram Insurgency: The Boko Haram insurgency has severely disrupted educational infrastructure in northeastern Nigeria, targeting schools and teachers as part of their broader campaign.

Long-Term Effects: The ongoing violence has hindered progress towards national educational goals, including universal primary education and literacy improvement. The destruction of schools and displacement of students and teachers have set back national development efforts, contributing to lower educational outcomes and slower economic development in affected regions.

Potential for a cycle of violence due to poor educational outcomes
Regional Conflicts and Educational Decline: In regions affected by persistent conflicts and violence, such as parts of northern Nigeria, poor educational outcomes contribute to a cycle of violence. Educational disruptions result in lower literacy rates and limited employment opportunities, which can perpetuate socio-economic grievances and fuel further violence.
Broader Societal Impact: Poor educational outcomes are linked to higher rates of social unrest and criminal activities. The cycle of violence is often sustained by the lack of educational opportunities, which exacerbates existing tensions and instability.

Connection between Educational Setbacks and Social Unrest

Niger Delta Conflicts: Ongoing conflicts in the Niger Delta, driven by grievances over oil exploitation and environmental issues, have led to frequent disruptions in education.

Broader Societal Impact: Educational setbacks in the region have contributed to social unrest. The lack of access to quality education perpetuates cycles of poverty and disenfranchisement, fueling ongoing conflicts and social instability. This connection illustrates how educational shortcomings can exacerbate broader societal issues.

Conclusion

The impact of protest-related violence on educational infrastructure in Nigeria has been severe, resulting in the destruction of physical facilities, disruption of educational activities, and significant psychological effects on students and staff. Case studies from the EndSARS protests, Boko Haram insurgency, and Niger Delta conflicts show that while the government and stakeholders have made efforts to address these issues, considerable challenges persist. The damage to educational facilities not only disrupts immediate access to education but also hinders long-term educational and national development, highlighting the need for comprehensive strategies to tackle these challenges.

Recommendations

1. Implement and enforce policies to safeguard educational facilities during protests. Establish rapid response teams and emergency preparedness plans specifically for educational institutions.
2. Strengthen the role of civil society organizations in promoting peaceful protest practices and mediating between protesters and authorities. Facilitate community-led initiatives to prevent escalation.
3. Develop and enforce legislation aimed at protecting educational infrastructure during periods of civil unrest. Include provisions for immediate repair and reconstruction in the aftermath of violence.
4. Encourage collaboration between government bodies, private sector stakeholders, and NGOs to enhance the resilience and recovery of educational facilities.
5. Employ sustainable and secure building practices for the reconstruction of damaged schools. Ensure that new facilities are equipped with security features to withstand future threats.
6. Incorporate mental health support into the educational system, providing counseling and trauma care for affected students and staff.
7. Conduct regular assessments of the damage caused by violence and the effectiveness of recovery efforts. Use these assessments to inform future strategies and policies.
8. Establish robust data collection mechanisms to track the impact of violence on educational outcomes and the effectiveness of mitigation measures.

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