

SCHOOL ATTACKS, SCHOOL CLOSURES AND THEIR IMPACT ON EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

By

Edinoh Kingsley, PhD.

Social Studies / Civic Education Unit, Test Development Department,
National Examinations Council (NECO) Headquarters,
Minna, Niger State, Nigeria
edinohkings@gmail.com

Ruth Asemota, PhD.

Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education,
University of Abuja, Nigeria
ruthas97@gmail.com

Ifeobu-Emeanu Uchenna Victoria

Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education,
University of Abuja, Nigeria
emuvic2502@gmail.com

Abstract

The paper discussed School Attacks, School Closures and their impact on Education in Nigeria. Secondary data were used in the study. The data were collected from both print and online publications. Content analysis was used to analyze the selection of literature for the study. The paper concluded that School attacks and schools' closures in Nigeria as a result of banditry and insurgencies have led to disruption of learning, increased out-of-school rates, psychosocial trauma, and insecurity widening educational inequalities and long-term human-capital loss in the Nigerian educational system. Based on these findings, the study recommended that government must ensure that security measures are implemented to guarantee the safety of students and teachers. This includes providing adequate protection for schools and increasing patrols in vulnerable areas. Government should focus on rebuilding and reopening schools that have been attacked or closed. This will not only provide students with a safe learning environment but also send a message of resilience and hope. Government must increase efforts to address the root causes of school attacks and closures. This includes addressing issues of poverty, inequality, and religious extremism, which contribute to these problems. By tackling these underlying issues, there is a better chance of ensuring a safe and stable environment for education in Nigeria.

-Keyword: Education, School Attacks, School Closures

1.0 Introduction

A school is a social institution meant for the implementation of teaching and learning and other extra curriculum activities. The school is an organized social institution meant for the impartation of knowledge. The purpose or objective of the school is to provide a medium where instructors meet with learners to effect change of behaviors. The school provides avenue for conducive teaching and learning to take place between the teachers, staff and students. The schools are designed to have service providers (school administrators, teachers and non-teaching staff) and services receiver (learners), (Oguode, Edinoh & Olatunde-Aiyedun2023).

School attacks and recurrent school closures have become critical threats to the stability and progress of Nigeria's education sector. Over the years, violent incidents such as kidnapping of students and teachers, armed invasions of school premises, destruction of educational facilities, and community-targeted insurgencies have increased, particularly in Northern Nigeria. These attacks not only endanger the lives of learners and educators but also undermine the fundamental purpose of schooling as a safe environment for learning and personal development.

As a consequence of insecurity, many schools are forced to shut down temporarily or permanently, leading to widespread disruption of academic activities. School closures, whether caused by insecurity, communal conflicts, health emergencies, or socio-political crises, deprive millions of children of consistent access to education. In many affected communities, parents withdraw their children from school due to fear, teachers relocate to safer areas, and both government-owned schools and private schools struggle to maintain stable academic calendars.

The implications of school attacks and closures on education in Nigeria are far-reaching. They contribute to massive learning losses, increased dropout rates, poor academic performance, and psychological trauma among learners. The phenomena also widen existing educational inequalities, limit access to quality learning, and hinder progress toward national and global educational goals, including the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) on inclusive and equitable quality education. Moreover, the long-term impact on human capital development threatens national productivity, economic growth, and social cohesion.

Understanding the dynamics of school attacks, the factors leading to school closures, and their broader implications on the Nigerian educational system is therefore essential. Examining these issues provides insight into how insecurity and structural weaknesses affect learning outcomes, and highlights the urgent need for policies and interventions that ensure school safety, promote resilience, and safeguard the future of education in Nigeria.

2.0 Conceptual Terms

2.1 Concept of School Attacks

School attacks refers to an intentional act of violence or threat of violence directed at educational institutions, students, teachers, or school personnel, carried out for political, ideological, sectarian, religious, or criminal motives. These attacks include armed raids, kidnappings, bombings, shootings, or other violent acts that disrupt normal schooling, violate human rights, and undermine the safety of education systems. Such attacks are recognized internationally as violations of the right to education and are often documented in conflict and terrorism contexts, (Brookings Institution, 2025).

School attacks and forced closures compromise the right to education undermining efforts to achieve universal, inclusive, safe schooling. For millions of Nigerian children, education becomes uncertain or unsafe, threatening both individual futures and national development.

The phenomenon of attacks on schools in Nigeria, including abduction of students, armed raids, and violence against staff and pupils continues to pose a grave threat to education. According to UNICEF, since December 2020, more than 1,436 schoolchildren and 17 teachers have been abducted from schools, and at least 16 children killed as part of such attacks. Out of safety responses and security fears, many schools have been shut or suspended. UNICEF reports that 11,536 schools were closed in 2020/2021 because of abductions and security issues — impacting approximately 1.3 million children.

2.2 Concept of School closures

School closure due to terrorist attacks refers to the temporary or extended suspension of academic activities in schools following actual or credible threats, violence, or attacks by terrorist, insurgent, or armed groups. These closures occur when schools become unsafe for students and staff, leading governments or local authorities to halt operations to protect lives. In Nigeria, prolonged insecurity has forced the closure of thousands of schools, affecting access to education for millions of children, (UNICEF Nigeria, 2025).

There has been increase in violent attacks on schools across several regions of Nigeria since 2020. Attacks take different forms mass kidnappings, armed raids, targeted killings, and destruction of school property — and are carried out by a mix of actors: Boko Haram/ISWAP (primarily in the North-East), armed “bandit” gangs (North-West), and communal militias. Spatially, the North-East and North-West have been most affected, although incidents in central and other states have risen episodically. These trends are captured in recent country overviews and incident tallies compiled by education-protection researchers and agencies.

3.0 Method

School Attacks, School Closures and their impact on Education in Nigeria is a position paper that adopted a systematic literature review-based method. The method allows to collect and review the related previous literature from various online sources. With the aid of digital platform, the researcher collected secondary information to generate knowledge on this topic from 2015-2025. The position paper followed qualitative narrative design method. The researchers have visited different online sites to collect the previous literature and analyze the School Attacks, School Closures and their impact on Education in Nigeria. The previous findings are critically analyzed and presented in different themes such as the School Attacks, School Closures and their impact on Education in Nigeria (Adapted from Ogunode, 2025).

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion

This output of the literatures on the School Attacks, School Closures and their impact on Education in Nigeria presents an in-depth study and result that can infer conclusion on the topic. The study includes: online publication; conference paper, journals sorted from reputable international journals such as CEON, Elsevier, Hindawi, JSTOR, IEEE, Learn Techlib, SAGE, Nebraska and Springer.

Exclusion

Also, the literature review excludes information from edited books, preprints, monographs, information before 2015 and book chapters.

4.0 Result and Discussion on Implications of School Attacks & schools Closures

Disruption of Learning:

Closures force students out of school for extended periods; many children miss full academic sessions, hampering their acquisition of basic knowledge and skills. UNICEF Nigeria, (2024) disclosed that COVID -era lockdown and school closure shows that time out of school produces measurable learning loss; sector-wide analyses estimate substantial drops in learning outcomes correlated with closure length. In Nigeria, these losses are amplified by the pre-existing low learning levels and by limited access to effective remote learning in affected communities. The World Bank and related studies emphasized that prolonged disruption increases dropout risk, especially for girls (early marriage), and that lost cohorts undermine medium-term human-capital accumulation (World Bank, (2020). The disruption of learning caused by school attacks and closures in Nigeria have significant implications for the country's education system. These attacks and closures not only disrupt students' learning processes, but they also have long-term consequences on their academic performance and overall well-being. In addition, the lack of access to education due to these disruptions can lead to a widening education gap and exacerbate

existing socio-economic inequalities in the country (Peter, 2023). With schools being considered as safe havens for children, the disruption of learning due to attacks and closures also has a detrimental effect on their physical and mental health. Moreover, the loss of instructional time and disruption of school routines can hinder students' academic progress and success. These disruptions also have financial implications for families and communities, as they may have to bear the additional costs of enrolling their children in alternative schools or providing home-based education (World Bank, 2020).

Increased out-of-school rates

Fear of attack discourages parents from sending children to school; many children, especially in high-risk regions, drop out entirely. Increased out-of-school rates in Nigeria have long been a concern for policymakers and educators alike (Ogunode & Kolo, 2021). However, recent school attacks and closures have exacerbated this issue, leading to serious implications for the education system in the country. These attacks not only disrupt the learning process for students, but also instill fear and insecurity in teachers and parents, further contributing to high out-of-school rates. As a result, UNICEF Nigeria, (2024) submitted that the educational development and progress of children in Nigeria is hindered, ultimately leading to long-term consequences for the country's overall development. The alarming increase in out-of-school rates due to school attacks and closures highlights the urgent need for effective solutions to ensure the safety and accessibility of education in Nigeria. The increased out-of-school rates due to school attacks and closures in Nigeria have severe implications on the state of education in the country. As students are forced to drop out of school, the overall literacy rate decreases, hindering the country's progress and development (Protecting Education in Insecurity Contexts 2024). These attacks and closures disrupt the learning process and create a barrier to education, especially for marginalized communities. The lack of access to education can also lead to a rise in social issues such as poverty and unemployment. It is crucial to address and mitigate the impact of school attacks and closures in order to ensure a better future for the education system in Nigeria and its citizens (Ogunode, Ahaotu & Obi-E 2021).

Psychosocial trauma and insecurity

School attacks, particularly abductions inflict severe emotional harm on victims, erode trust in the safety of education, and undermine school as a safe space. The frequency of these attacks has resulted in significant disruptions to the education system, leading to decreased enrollment and attendance rates, hindering academic progress and hindering the overall development of students (James, 2024). The resulting psychological distress and trauma have also been found to impact students' mental health and well-being, potentially leading to long-term negative effects. Additionally, the lack of education and missed opportunities can have severe economic consequences for individuals and the country as a whole. As such, Ogunode, Umeora, & Olatunde-Aiyedun, (2022) observed that it is crucial to address and mitigate the effects of psychosocial trauma and insecurity on the education system in Nigeria to ensure the future success

and well-being of students. The psychosocial trauma and insecurity caused by school attacks and closures have severe implications for the education system in Nigeria. The disruption of education due to these attacks and closures can lead to academic setbacks, as students are unable to attend classes and complete their studies (Obilo, Oparah, & Ajeka, 2022). The instability and fear caused by these events can have a negative impact on the mental health and well-being of students, teachers, and staff. This can result in decreased academic performance and attendance, as well as long-term effects on their overall development and future prospects. The closure of schools can also lead to a decline in the quality of education as students are unable to access proper learning resources and materials. This problem is compounded by the fact that many schools in Nigeria are already facing challenges such as overcrowding and limited resources (Mohammed & Ogunode, 2022).

Widening educational inequalities:

Vulnerable communities, especially in conflict-affected zones, suffer disproportionately; girls are often more affected, jeopardizing gender equality in education. Eduok, Bassey & Danson, (2023) shows that insecurity-related school closures have been frequent and, in some areas, prolonged. UNICEF and education cluster data indicate that dozens to hundreds of schools in the worst-affected states were temporarily or permanently closed between 2020–2024, contributing to a surge in out-of-school children and interrupted schooling cycles. Closures result not only from direct attacks but also from caregiver fear, teacher flight, and government decisions to suspend in-person classes in insecure localities (Iyere, Muhammad, Ledawo, & Abubakar, 2018). Widening educational inequalities have been a major concern in the education system of Nigeria. One of the key factors contributing to this issue is the increasing number of school attacks and closures across the country. These attacks and closures have had significant implications on the education system of Nigeria, particularly on the educational opportunities for students from marginalized communities. Ogunode, and Ukozor (2022) opined that without access to safe and secure schools, students from these communities are at a disadvantage, as their education is constantly disrupted. This leads to a significant gap in academic achievement between students from different socio-economic backgrounds. The closure of schools according to The cable (2023) also results in a lack of access to quality education for these students, leading to a further widening of educational inequalities. Moreover, the implications of school attacks and closures go far beyond just academic achievement. Students who are forced to leave their schools due to attacks or closures also suffer from psychological trauma, which can have long-term effects on their overall well-being and educational success (Ogunode, & Chijindu, 2022), in (Tribune 2021). In light of these implications, it is crucial to address the issue of school attacks and closures in Nigeria in order to tackle the widening educational inequalities in the country (Financialinnigeria.com 2020). This can be done by implementing stronger security measures to protect schools, providing support and resources to schools in marginalized communities, and promoting inclusive education policies to ensure that every child has equal access to education regardless of their background (Nejo, 2021).

Long-term human-capital loss

Large-scale disruptions translate into lost opportunities for skill development, increasing risks of poverty, reduced lifetime earnings, and wider social consequences. Long-term human capital loss is a pressing issue that has been exacerbated by school attacks and closures in Nigeria. This has significant implications for the education system in the country and must be addressed promptly. Schools are not only places of learning, but they also serve as crucial social and emotional support systems for students (Abubakar, Otakey, Umar, Fulani, & Isah, 2023). The disruption of school activities due to attacks and closures not only leads to a loss of learning opportunities but also negatively affects the overall well-being of students. The long-term impact of this according to Abdullahi, (2022) in terms of loss of human capital is immense. It not only hinders the personal growth and development of affected individuals but also has detrimental effects on the economy and society as a whole. Without proper education and skills, Adedigba, (2018) noted that individuals may struggle to find employment or contribute to the growth of their communities. School attacks and closures also have far-reaching implications for the education system in Nigeria. It disrupts the continuity of learning and may result in a significant number of students dropping out of school. This has a domino effect on the quality of education and the ability of schools to provide a conducive learning environment (International centre for investigative reporting 2024). It also strains the already limited resources of the education system, making it challenging to provide quality education to all students (Bamidele, 2015; Ogunode, Attah, & Ebute, 2023). The issue of long-term human capital loss due to school attacks and closures in Nigeria is a complex and multifaceted problem that requires immediate attention (Achumba & Akpor-Robaro 2013). The government must take swift and decisive action to address these issues and ensure the protection and continuation of education for all students. Failure to do so will have long-lasting consequences for the individuals and the Nigeria education system.

4.1 Findings

School Attacks & schools Closures in Nigeria as a result of banditry and insurgencies have led to the disruption of learning, increased out-of-school rates, psychosocial trauma and insecurity thereby widening educational inequalities and long-term human-capital loss in the Nigerian educational system.

4.2 Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper discussed School Attacks, School Closures and their impact on Education in Nigeria. School Attacks & schools Closures in Nigeria as a result of banditry and insurgencies have led disruption of learning, increased out-of-school rates, psychosocial trauma and insecurity widening educational inequalities and long-term human-capital loss in the Nigerian educational system.

The effect of school attacks and closures is the disruption of the learning process. When schools are attacked, students are unable to attend classes, and teachers are unable to teach. This interruption can have a detrimental impact on students, especially in crucial years of their

education. It can lead to a significant loss of instructional time, which can hinder academic progress and achievement.

School attacks and closures can also result in psychological trauma for students. They may experience fear, anxiety, and stress, which can affect their overall well-being and their ability to learn. This trauma can be exacerbated in cases where students have witnessed or experienced violence themselves. As a result, the quality of education suffers, and students may struggle to keep up with their peers.

School attacks and closures also have a profound effect on teachers. They may fear for their safety and the safety of their students, making it challenging to focus on teaching. Teachers may also feel demotivated and demoralized, leading to a decline in the quality of instruction. This can further impact students' academic performance and create a ripple effect on the education system in Nigeria.

School attacks and closures also have a significant socio-economic impact on Nigeria. Education is a vital tool for economic and social development, and the disruption caused by these issues hinders progress in these areas. Students who are unable to attend school may be more likely to drop out, leading to a generation of individuals with limited education and employment opportunities. This cycle of poverty can have long-lasting effects on the country's development.

Steps to Mitigate the Effects:

To mitigate the effects of school attacks and closures on education in Nigeria, there need to be concerted efforts from all stakeholders. Governments must ensure security measures must be implemented to ensure the safety of students and teachers. This includes providing adequate protection for schools and increasing patrols in vulnerable areas.

Government should focus on rebuilding and reopening schools that have been attacked or closed. This will not only provide students with a safe learning environment but also send a message of resilience and hope.

Government must increase efforts to address the root causes of school attacks and closures. This includes addressing issues of poverty, inequality, and religious extremism, which contribute to these problems. By tackling these underlying issues, there is a better chance of ensuring a safe and stable environment for education in Nigeria.

References

Abubakar, F. L., Otakey, H. A., Umar, S. A., Fulani, S. M., & Isah, A. (2023). The impact of insecurity on secondary schools in northern Nigeria. *Arts and Social Science Research*, 12(2), 19. Retrieved from <https://fassjassr.com.ng/index.php/assr/article/view/74>

- Abdullahi, M (2022). UNICEF: Insecurity has caused closure of 11,536 schools in Nigeria since Dec 2020. <https://www.thecable.ng/unicef-insecurity-has-caused-closure-of-11-536-schools-in-nigeria-since-dec-2020/>
- Adedigba, A. (2018) Nigeria: Boko Haram Kills 2,295 Teachers in North-East – Minister.<https://protectingeducation.org/news/nigeria-boko-haram-kills-2295-teachers-in-north-east-minister/>
- Aljazeera.com (2021). Northeast Nigeria conflict killed more than 300,000 children: UN. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2021/6/24/northeast-nigeria-conflict-killed-more-than-300000-children-un>.
- Achumba I & Akpor-Robaro (2013). ‘*Security Challenges in Nigeria and the Implications for Business Activities and Sustainable Development*’, Journal of Economics and Sustainable Development, ISSN 2222-1700 (Paper) ISSN 2222-2855 (Online)..4, No.2, 2013 79.
- Bamidele,. O. (2015). Beyond the Shadows of Terrorism: Boko Haram Crisis in North-Eastern Nigeria. Conflict Studies Quarterly Special Issue, 2015, pp. 41-57.
- Brookings Institution. (2025). The need to end the Nigeria abductions and all attacks on schools globally. <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-need-to-end-the-nigeria-abductions-and-all-attacks-on-schools-globally/>
- Eduok, J., D, Bassey, S., O & Danson, A, U (2023). Insecurity as an impediment to curriculum delivery in basic education. *The Intuition*, 10(1),1-13
- Financialinnigeria.com (2020). Ten economic consequences of growing insecurity in Nigeria <https://www.financialnigeria.com/ten-economic-consequences-of-growing-insecurity-in-nigeria-blog-512.html>
- Ibrahim W. (2021) Banditry: Kaduna orders 13 schools to close <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2021/07/banditry-kaduna-orders-13-schools-to-close/>
- Iyere, M. J., Muhammad, A. T., Ledawo, S., & Abubakar, F. U. (2018). The problem of insecurity in achieving universal basic education in north- eastern nigeria . *Zaria Journal of Educational Studies (ZAJES)*, 19(1), 99-113. Retrieved from <https://zarjes.com/ZAJES/article/view/322>
- International centre for investigative reporting (2024) Despite increasing budgets on security, Nigeria’s insecurity lingers. <https://www.icirnigeria.org/despite-increasing-budgets-on-security-nigerias-insecurity-lingers/>

- James, I. (2024). Nigeria's Rising Insecurity: Implications for the Nigerian Economy. <https://budgit.org/nigerias-rising-insecurity-implications-for-the-nigerian-economy/>
- Mohammed, H., & Ogunode, N. J. (2022). Impact of insecurity on secondary School Administration in North-West-Geo-Political Zone, Nigeria. *International Journal on Integrated Education*, 5(3), 9-17
- Nejo, A (2021). Insecurity, assaults on teachers threat to education -ASUSS <https://punchng.com/insecurity-assaults-on-teachers-threat-to-education-asuss/>
- Obilo, I. P., Oparah, Z. C., & Ajeka, P. I. (2022). Curriculum delivery and security challenges in tertiary education: Counselling perspectives. *International of Management, Social Sciences, Peace and Conflict Studies(IJMSSPCS)*, 5(1), 59-68.
- Oguode, N. J., Edinoh, K. & Olatunde-Aiyedun, T. G (2023). Staff Training in Schools *Journal of Innovation in Educational and Social Research. Volume: 1 (3) 192-207*
- Ogunode, N. J., Attah, G. E. & Ebute, J. (2023) Investment in Education in Nigeria: Barriers and Way Forward. *European Journal of Higher Education and Academic Advancement* 1 (2), 61-71
- Ogunode, N. J, Umeora, M & Olatunde-Aiyedun, T. G (2022) Impact of Insecurity on Administration of Post-Basic Education and Career Development (PBECD) in South-East Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. *Spanish Journal of innovation and integrity*, (8), 56-62
- Ogunode, N. J. & Chijindu, O. E (2022) Implication of Sit At Home Order (Insecurity) on Basic Education in South-East Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria. *Central Asian Journal of Social Sciences and History*, 03 (07), 21-29
- Ogunode, N. J & Ukozor C. U (2022) Implication of Insecurity on Higher Education in South-East Geo-Political Zone of Nigeria and Way Forward. *International Journal on Integrated Education*, 5(7), 77-85
- Ogunode, N. J. Ahaotu G. N. & Obi-E., U. (2021) Effects of Insecurity on School Administration in Nigeria. *Middle European Scientific Bulletin*, (13), 94-102
- Ogunode N. J. & Kolo, F (2021) Effects of Insecurity on Basic education in Northern Nigeria. *International Journal of Discoveries and Innovations in Applied science*, 1(7), 1-8.
- Patrinos, H. A., (2023). Learning loss and school closures: cross-country evidence (World Bank working paper.

Protecting Education in Insecurity Contexts (2024) — Nigeria country brief (EUA/Protecting Education, 2024).

Peter, Y. (2023). Research on banditry and community impacts (banditry violence studies, 2023–2025 regional analyses). Save the Children / Education under attack (country analyses and field reports).

Tribune (2021) Education In Disarray •More Than 10,000 Schools In The North Closed, 400,000 Students Affected .<https://tribuneonline.ng/education-in-disarray-more-than-10000-schools-in-the-north-closed-400000-students-affected/>

Thecable (2023). Nigeria losing foreign investment to rising insecurity. <https://www.thecable.ng/nigeria-losing-foreign-investments-to-rising-insecurity-says-envoy/>

UNICEF Nigeria. (2025). UNICEF calls for stronger protection of children following tragic school attack in Kebbi, Northwest Nigeria. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-calls-stronger-protection-children-following-tragic-school-attack-kebbi>

UNICEF Nigeria, (2024). “Immediate action needed to protect Nigeria’s children and schools” (press release / situation analysis, Sept 9, 2024).

World Bank, (2020). The effect of the Boko Haram conflict on education in North-East Nigeria (technical paper).