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# **SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA**

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Peer Reviewed Book Chapter

# SUSTAINABLE EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

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# 12

## **MIDDLE EAST CRISIS AND WOMEN'S SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS IN NIGERIA**

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### **Abstract**

*The Middle East crisis, particularly the persistent tensions involving Iran, Israel, and allied global powers, has generated significant economic and social consequences across developing nations, including Nigeria. This paper examined the effects of the Middle East crisis on the socio-economic status of women in Nigeria. The chapter observed that the crisis has contributed to rising inflation, food insecurity, unemployment, transportation costs, and declining household welfare in Nigeria. Women, who constitute a substantial proportion of Nigeria's informal economic sector and household caregivers, have been disproportionately affected by these economic disruptions. The study further revealed that many Nigerian women now experience reduced purchasing power, increased unpaid domestic labour, declining business profitability, and worsening poverty conditions due to global oil market instability and economic uncertainty associated with the Middle East conflict. The paper concluded that although the conflict occurs outside Africa, its indirect consequences have deepened gender inequality and economic vulnerability among women in Nigeria. The study recommended stronger social protection policies, targeted economic empowerment programmes for women, agricultural support schemes, and improved economic diversification strategies to reduce the impact of external geopolitical crises on Nigerian women.*

**Keywords:** Middle East Crisis, Iran, Women, Socio-Economic Status, Nigeria Economy, Inflation, Gender Studies.

## 12.0. Introduction

The Middle East remains one of the most politically volatile regions in the world due to persistent conflicts, religious tensions, nuclear disputes, and geopolitical rivalries among regional and global powers. In recent years, the crisis involving Iran has attracted considerable international attention because of its implications for global oil supply, energy security, trade routes, and international diplomacy. Iran occupies a strategic position in global energy politics because it controls significant oil and gas reserves and influences maritime routes such as the Strait of Hormuz through which a substantial percentage of the world's oil passes. Consequently, any political tension, military confrontation, or economic sanction involving Iran often generates instability in the global economy. The ongoing Middle East crisis involving Iran, Israel, the United States, and other regional actors has contributed to fluctuations in global crude oil prices, disruptions in international trade, rising transportation costs, and inflationary pressures across many developing countries. Although Nigeria is geographically distant from the Middle East, the Nigerian economy is highly vulnerable to global economic shocks because of its dependence on crude oil revenues, imported goods, and fragile domestic production systems. Economic experts have argued that conflicts in the Middle East frequently influence Nigeria's exchange rate, fuel prices, inflation level, and overall macroeconomic stability.

Nigeria's economy has experienced significant pressure due to rising fuel prices, increasing transportation costs, food inflation, and weakening purchasing power linked to global geopolitical instability. The indirect consequences of the Middle East crisis have affected various sectors including transportation, agriculture, manufacturing, trade, and household welfare. In practical terms, the increase in fuel prices has raised the cost of moving goods and services across Nigerian cities and rural communities. Food items such as rice, cooking oil, tomatoes, onions, and grains have become more expensive partly because transportation and importation costs continue to rise. Small businesses and informal traders also struggle with unstable electricity supply and declining consumer demand. Among the various social groups affected by the economic crisis, women appear to bear a disproportionate burden because of their socio-economic roles within Nigerian society. Women constitute nearly half of Nigeria's population and play essential roles in agriculture, petty trading, family caregiving, informal labour, and household management.

According to demographic reports, women represent a substantial percentage of Nigeria's informal workforce where income is unstable and social protection is limited. Many Nigerian women engage in small-scale businesses such as market trading, tailoring, food vending, hairdressing, and agricultural processing. These occupations are highly sensitive to inflation, transportation costs, and declining household income. Women traditionally carry greater responsibility for household feeding, childcare, healthcare, and emotional support within families. During periods of economic instability, women often absorb financial shocks by reducing personal consumption, engaging in multiple informal jobs, or increasing unpaid domestic labour to sustain household survival. Consequently, global crises such as the Middle East conflict tend to deepen existing gender inequalities in developing countries like Nigeria.



The importance of this study lies in its attempt to connect international geopolitical conflicts with local gender realities in Nigeria. Many studies on the Middle East crisis focus mainly on international security, oil politics, terrorism, and diplomatic relations, while limited attention is given to the gendered consequences of such conflicts on African women. This study therefore contributes to gender studies, development studies, and international relations by examining how global political instability indirectly shapes the economic and social experiences of women in Nigeria. The study is also important because understanding the gender dimensions of economic crises can assist policymakers, researchers, and development agencies in designing inclusive economic interventions. When women experience economic hardship, the effects extend beyond individual suffering to household welfare, child nutrition, educational access, and community stability. Therefore, addressing the socio-economic challenges facing women during global economic disruptions is essential for sustainable national development.

### **12.1. Result and Discussion on impacts of the Iran-related Middle East crisis on Nigerian women**

The Middle East crisis, especially the prolonged tensions involving Iran, has produced serious global economic and social consequences that extend far beyond the region itself. Although Nigeria is geographically distant from the conflict zone, Nigerian women have experienced severe indirect effects because the Nigerian economy is deeply connected to global oil markets, food imports, transportation systems, and international trade networks. From a gender studies perspective, women are often the first social group to absorb economic shocks because they dominate informal trade, caregiving responsibilities, petty commerce, and household food management. The Iranian crisis therefore has gendered consequences that disproportionately affect women's social and economic wellbeing in Nigeria.

#### **i. Rising Cost of Living Has Increased Women's Economic Hardship**

One of the most visible impacts of the Iran-related Middle East crisis on Nigerian women is the sharp increase in the cost of living. Global tensions involving Iran disrupted oil supply expectations and increased international fuel prices. This triggered higher transportation costs, food inflation, and energy prices in Nigeria. The Nigerian Minister of Finance acknowledged that the US Israel Iran conflict contributed to rising fuel and food prices in Nigeria. Women in Nigeria are heavily represented in low-income occupations such as petty trading, street vending, food processing, hairdressing, tailoring, and market retailing. Many of these businesses depend on daily transport and electricity. As fuel prices rise, transport fares increase and small business profits shrink. Women traders in markets across Abuja, Lagos, Kano, and Port Harcourt now spend more money transporting goods from rural farms to urban markets. For example, a woman selling tomatoes in Abuja may previously have paid moderate transport costs to bring produce from Kaduna or Jos. Due to fuel increases linked to global oil instability, transportation expenses have doubled in some areas, forcing women either to raise prices or reduce their stock. The burden is heavier on widows, single mothers, and rural women who already struggle with poverty. In many Nigerian households, women are responsible for



feeding the family. Therefore, inflation directly increases emotional stress and financial pressure on women more than men because women manage household consumption and family survival. The IMF also noted that inflation in Nigeria rose sharply due mainly to food inflation and economic instability.

### **ii. Food Insecurity Has Worsened the Nutritional Condition of Women and Children**

The Middle East crisis involving Iran has disrupted global shipping routes and increased the cost of food imports and agricultural inputs. International organizations such as the World Bank warned that conflict in the Middle East could worsen food insecurity in Nigeria and other African countries. Women are central to household nutrition in Nigeria. They buy food, prepare meals, and ensure children are fed. When food prices rise dramatically, women often sacrifice their own nutrition so that children and husbands can eat first. This creates hidden hunger among women, especially pregnant and nursing mothers. In practical terms, many Nigerian women now reduce the quantity of protein in meals, skip meals entirely, or replace nutritious foods with cheaper alternatives. Women running small restaurants and food businesses are also affected because rising prices of rice, beans, vegetable oil, onions, and tomatoes reduce customer demand and profit margins. The BusinessDay report observed that transport and food prices in Abuja increased significantly as a result of Middle East tensions and oil market instability. In rural communities, women farmers face higher costs of fertilizers, irrigation, and farm transportation. Since women already have less access to agricultural loans and mechanized farming equipment, the additional economic shock deepens gender inequality in agriculture.

### **iii. Increased Poverty Has Expanded Women's Vulnerability and Informal Survival Strategies**

Another major effect of the Iran-related crisis is the worsening poverty situation in Nigeria. Economic shocks associated with global conflicts contribute to inflation, unemployment, and declining purchasing power. The World Bank and IMF have repeatedly warned about rising poverty and food insecurity in Nigeria due to global economic disruptions. Women are disproportionately affected because they constitute a large percentage of Nigeria's informal workforce. Unlike workers in formal sectors, many women lack pensions, savings, insurance, or stable salaries. When economic crises occur, they immediately lose income security. In practical terms, some women who previously managed small businesses now depend on borrowing money daily to survive. Others withdraw children from private schools because school fees can no longer be paid. Some rural women migrate to urban areas in search of survival opportunities, increasing urban poverty and overcrowding. Gender scholars explain that economic crises often widen the "feminization of poverty," meaning women become poorer faster than men during economic instability. A UNDP-related report also showed that women in developing countries suffer more severely during periods of rising debt, inflation, and reductions in social spending. This condition also increases women's exposure to



exploitation, domestic abuse, and economic dependency because financial hardship weakens women's bargaining power within households and society.

**iv. Women's Unpaid Domestic and Care Responsibilities Have Increased**

From a gender studies perspective, one of the least discussed effects of international conflict is the increase in unpaid care work performed by women. Economic crises caused by the Middle East conflict have reduced household purchasing power in Nigeria. Consequently, women now spend more time searching for affordable food, cooking with limited resources, caring for sick family members, and managing household stress. When transportation becomes expensive, women may trek longer distances to markets. When electricity costs rise, women spend more time using alternative cooking methods such as charcoal or firewood. When food becomes scarce, women engage in more labour-intensive survival strategies. The burden of unpaid care work in Nigeria traditionally falls on women due to patriarchal cultural structures. Therefore, crises linked to Iran and Middle East instability indirectly intensify gender inequality at the household level. Research on developing countries shows that women usually absorb economic shocks through unpaid labour rather than state welfare support. For example, during periods of inflation, many Nigerian mothers take on additional petty trading activities while still maintaining domestic responsibilities such as childcare, cooking, water collection, and elderly care. This creates physical exhaustion, emotional stress, and reduced opportunities for education or career advancement.

**v. Social Instability and Insecurity Have Increased Risks for Women**

The economic consequences of the Middle East crisis have also contributed to broader social instability in Nigeria. Rising fuel prices, unemployment, and inflation create frustration among citizens and may lead to protests, criminality, and social unrest. The African Development Bank warned that rising commodity and fuel prices linked to geopolitical tensions could increase social unrest in African countries including Nigeria. Women are usually the most vulnerable victims during periods of social instability. Economic desperation may expose women to gender-based violence, exploitation, harassment in public spaces, and unsafe working conditions. For instance, women who return late from markets due to transport difficulties may face security threats. Female students and young women searching for jobs may encounter exploitative labour conditions because employers take advantage of economic hardship. Insecurity in farming regions affects women traders and women farmers who depend on agricultural supply chains. As transportation becomes riskier and more expensive, women's economic activities decline further. From a sociological viewpoint, the crisis demonstrates how international conflicts produce local gendered consequences. Although the war may occur thousands of kilometres away, Nigerian women bear substantial social and economic costs because of structural inequality, poverty, and weak social protection systems.



## Conclusion and Recommendations

The chapter concluded that the Middle East crisis, particularly the tensions involving Iran, has produced significant indirect effects on the socio-economic status of women in Nigeria. Although the conflict occurs outside the African continent, its consequences have contributed to rising inflation, food insecurity, transportation costs, unemployment, and declining household welfare within Nigeria. Women have experienced greater vulnerability because of their concentration in informal economic activities and their traditional caregiving responsibilities within households. The study further established that the crisis has intensified poverty among women, reduced the profitability of women-owned businesses, increased unpaid domestic labour, and weakened household survival capacity. The findings demonstrate that international geopolitical conflicts can generate local gendered consequences in developing countries. Based on the findings, the study recommend the following;

1. The Nigerian government should establish targeted economic support programmes for women operating small and medium-scale businesses to cushion the effects of inflation and rising transportation costs.
2. Social protection programmes such as food subsidies, conditional cash transfers, and low-interest loans should be expanded to support vulnerable women, especially widows, rural women, and single mothers.
3. Government should strengthen agricultural support schemes for women farmers through the provision of fertilizers, improved seedlings, irrigation facilities, and market access opportunities.
4. Nigeria should intensify efforts toward economic diversification to reduce excessive dependence on global oil market fluctuations and external geopolitical crises.
5. Development agencies and non-governmental organizations should implement gender-responsive economic empowerment programmes aimed at improving women's financial resilience during periods of economic instability.
6. Researchers in gender studies and development studies should conduct further empirical investigations on the relationship between global conflicts and women's welfare in African societies.

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### Concluding Synthesis

This volume on *Sustainable Education in Nigeria* contributes significantly to contemporary discourse on educational transformation by examining the policies, practices, innovations, and challenges shaping the Nigerian educational landscape. The chapters collectively demonstrate that sustainable education extends beyond improving access to schooling; it encompasses the creation of resilient, inclusive, equitable, and future-oriented learning systems capable of responding effectively to socio-economic, technological, and environmental changes.

A synthesis of the contributions reveals that sustainable education in Nigeria requires a holistic approach that integrates governance reforms, technological advancement, infrastructure development, teacher capacity building, curriculum modernization, and stakeholder engagement. The studies presented in this volume underscore the importance of aligning educational policies with national development priorities while ensuring responsiveness to global educational trends and Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4).

The volume highlights the transformative potential of digital technologies in expanding educational opportunities, particularly in underserved and rural communities. Emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, learning management systems, educational data analytics, and digital content delivery platforms, present opportunities to improve teaching effectiveness, learner engagement, and administrative efficiency. However, their successful implementation depends on reliable infrastructure, adequate funding, digital literacy, and supportive policy frameworks.

The contributions further identify persistent challenges confronting the Nigerian education sector, including inadequate funding, infrastructure deficits, teacher shortages, policy discontinuity, regional disparities, insecurity, and socio-economic inequalities. These interconnected challenges continue to undermine educational quality and limit the realization of sustainable development objectives.

Importantly, the volume repositions education as a strategic instrument for national development, social mobility, economic competitiveness, innovation, and nation-building. Sustainable education is presented not merely as a sectoral concern but as a foundational pillar for achieving broader national aspirations, including poverty reduction, employment generation, social cohesion, and environmental sustainability.

Ultimately, this volume advances scholarly understanding and policy discussions by offering multidisciplinary perspectives and evidence-based insights into the future of education in Nigeria. It serves as a valuable resource for policymakers, researchers, educational leaders, development

practitioners, and other stakeholders committed to fostering educational systems that are resilient, inclusive, innovative, and sustainable.

### **Implications for Practice**

Drawing from the collective findings and recommendations presented throughout this volume, the following strategic implications are proposed for policymakers, educational administrators, practitioners, researchers, and development partners:

#### **Policy Reform and Strategic Governance**

Governments at federal, state, and local levels should strengthen educational governance through evidence-based policymaking, institutional accountability, policy continuity, and effective monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Sustainable educational development requires long-term planning that transcends political transitions and administrative changes.

#### **Digital Transformation and Technology Integration**

There is an urgent need to expand investments in educational technology infrastructure, internet connectivity, digital learning resources, and teacher digital competencies. Schools and higher education institutions should leverage emerging technologies to improve access, instructional quality, learner engagement, and administrative efficiency.

#### **Sustainable Education Financing**

Alternative and innovative funding mechanisms should complement public expenditure on education. Public-private partnerships, donor-supported initiatives, educational endowments, corporate social responsibility investments, and community participation can contribute to sustainable financing and improved educational outcomes.

#### **Teacher Development and Professional Capacity Building**

Continuous professional development should become an integral component of educational reform. Teachers must be equipped with contemporary pedagogical skills, technological competencies, research capabilities, and learner-centered instructional approaches necessary for twenty-first-century education.

#### **Equity, Inclusion, and Access**

Educational policies and interventions should prioritize disadvantaged populations, including learners in rural communities, girls, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, and

economically vulnerable groups. Sustainable education requires ensuring that no learner is excluded from quality educational opportunities.

### **Research, Innovation, and Data-Driven Decision Making**

Educational institutions should strengthen research culture and promote evidence-based decision-making. Reliable educational data systems are essential for planning, resource allocation, performance assessment, and policy evaluation.

### **Infrastructure Development and Learning Environment Improvement**

Governments and stakeholders should prioritize investments in school infrastructure, including classrooms, laboratories, libraries, digital facilities, sanitation systems, and renewable energy solutions. Safe and conducive learning environments are critical for educational sustainability.

### **Institutional Resilience and Crisis Preparedness**

Educational systems should develop adaptive capacities to withstand disruptions arising from pandemics, economic crises, natural disasters, and security challenges. Flexible learning models, blended education approaches, and emergency response frameworks should be integrated into educational planning.

### **Multi-Stakeholder Collaboration**

The sustainable transformation of education in Nigeria requires collaborative engagement among government agencies, educational institutions, private sector organizations, civil society groups, communities, and international development partners. Effective partnerships can mobilize resources, expertise, and innovation necessary for long-term educational advancement.

### Editors' Note

The editors are pleased to present this volume on *Sustainable Education in Nigeria*, a scholarly contribution designed to address critical issues shaping the future of education within the country.

We express our sincere gratitude to the contributing authors whose research and professional insights have enriched this publication. Their diverse perspectives provide valuable understanding of the opportunities, challenges, and emerging trends influencing educational development in Nigeria.

We also acknowledge the dedicated efforts of peer reviewers, editorial board members, and institutional partners whose commitment to academic excellence has enhanced the quality, credibility, and relevance of this volume. Their contributions have ensured that the publication meets the highest standards of scholarly rigor and professional integrity.

This volume is intended to serve not only as an academic resource but also as a practical guide for policymakers, educational leaders, practitioners, researchers, and development organizations seeking innovative solutions to contemporary educational challenges.

It is our hope that the ideas, findings, and recommendations presented herein will stimulate further research, inform policy formulation, encourage collaboration, and inspire transformative action toward building an educational system that is equitable, innovative, resilient, and sustainable.

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