



IMPLICATIONS OF THE MIDDLE EAST CRISIS ON TERTIARY EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT IN NIGERIA

By

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Abstract

This study examines the implications of the Middle East crisis on the development of tertiary education in Nigeria. In an increasingly interconnected global academic environment, conflicts in one region often produce far-reaching consequences for education systems in other parts of the world. The paper explores how instability in the Middle East affects Nigerian tertiary institutions through disruptions in international academic collaboration, reduced student mobility, economic fluctuations linked to global oil markets, and the psychological impact on students. Using a review-based approach, the study draws on evidence from international organizations, scholarly publications, and media reports to analyze these dynamics. The findings reveal that although



Nigeria is geographically distant from the conflict zone, its higher education system is indirectly influenced through global academic and economic linkages. The paper concludes that the Middle East crisis poses significant challenges to the growth and sustainability of tertiary education in Nigeria, thereby necessitating strategic responses from policymakers and educational stakeholders.

Keywords: Middle East crisis, Tertiary Education, Students mobility

1.0 Introduction

The Middle East crisis is rooted in a long history of geopolitical tension, territorial disputes, religious divisions, and struggles for economic and strategic dominance. Its modern phase is often traced to the aftermath of the Second World War and the creation of the State of Israel in 1948, which triggered prolonged conflicts between Arab states and Israel, as well as recurring wars, uprisings, and political instability across the region. Over time, the crisis has expanded beyond a single conflict into a complex web of interconnected tensions involving countries such as Israel, Palestine, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and others. These conflicts have been sustained by competing political interests, control of natural resources especially oil and external interventions by global powers. The crisis has intensified, particularly with the escalation of violence in Gaza and broader regional confrontations. The consequences have gone far beyond political instability, affecting critical sectors of human development and economic activity. One of the most severely impacted sectors is healthcare. Reports indicate that ongoing conflicts have led to the destruction of hospitals, shortage of medical supplies, and collapse of health systems in several parts of the region. In Gaza, for instance, repeated attacks on health facilities and fuel shortages have resulted in the shutdown of hospitals and the spread of disease, while millions of people face limited access to basic medical services.

The tourism sector, which constitutes an important source of revenue for many Middle Eastern countries, has also been negatively affected. The region hosts numerous historical, religious, and cultural heritage sites that attract global visitors. However, persistent insecurity and violence have discouraged international travel, damaged heritage sites, and reduced tourism flows. Evidence shows that several cultural landmarks and heritage locations across the region have been destroyed or placed at risk due to ongoing conflicts, thereby undermining tourism development and cultural exchange. The oil sector central to the global economy has experienced significant disruptions due to the crisis. The Middle East remains one of the world's largest producers and exporters of oil, and instability in the region often leads to fluctuations in global oil supply and prices. Historical and recent conflicts, including attacks on oil facilities and tensions around key maritime routes,



have demonstrated how crises in the region can trigger global economic shocks and disrupt international trade.

Beyond these sectors, the crisis has also affected education, particularly tertiary education. Universities, research centres, and academic institutions in the region have suffered destruction, displacement of scholars, and disruption of learning activities. Educational infrastructure has been damaged, and many students have been forced to abandon their studies due to insecurity. This has led to what international organizations describe as a growing “learning crisis,” characterized by loss of human capital, weakened research capacity, and reduced access to higher education.

While these effects are most visible within the Middle East, their implications extend globally due to the interconnected nature of modern systems. Countries such as Nigeria, which are linked to the region through economic, academic, and diplomatic ties, experience indirect consequences. Fluctuations in oil prices affect government revenue and education funding, while disruptions in global academic networks limit opportunities for collaboration, student mobility, and research development. Against this background, this paper examines how the Middle East crisis is affecting tertiary education in Nigeria. It seeks to analyze the indirect pathways through which geopolitical instability in the Middle East influences Nigeria’s higher education system, with particular attention to funding, academic collaboration, student opportunities, and institutional development. By doing so, the study contributes to a broader understanding of how global conflicts shape national education systems in an increasingly interconnected world.

2.0 Concept Terms

2.1 Concept of Middle East

The Middle East is a diverse region with a rich history and culture. It is home to a variety of countries, each with its own unique economy. Some of the most well-known countries in the Middle East include Saudi Arabia, Iran, Turkey, and Israel. The economy of the Middle East is heavily influenced by the oil industry, as many of the region's countries are major producers and exporters of oil. However, there are also significant sectors in agriculture, tourism, and manufacturing that contribute to the economy. In recent years, the Middle Eastern economy has faced challenges due to political instability, conflict, and fluctuations in global oil prices. However, many countries have also implemented economic reforms and investments to promote diversification and strengthen their economies. Overall, the economies of Middle Eastern countries continue to play a significant role in the global economy and are constantly evolving and adapting to new challenges. As the region continues to develop and grow, it will be essential to closely monitor and analyze the economy of each country to understand its unique strengths and opportunities.

2.2 Concept of Tertiary Education



Ogunode, Edinoh and Okolie (2023) defined tertiary education as a planned and organized educational system designed for the total development of man/woman and for the total transformation of the society through the utilization of teaching, research and provision of community service. Tertiary education can also be viewed as post basic and secondary school education that embraces advanced teaching, research and community service. National policy on Education (2013) of Nigeria defined tertiary education as the education given after Post Basic Education in institutions such as Universities and Inter-University Centres such as the Nigeria French Language Village, Nigeria Arabic Language Village, National Institute of Nigerian Languages, institutions such as Innovation Enterprise Institutions (IEIs), and Colleges of Education, Monotechnics, Polytechnics, and other specialized institutions such as Colleges of Agriculture, Schools of Health and Technology and the National Teachers' Institutes (NTI).

Ogunode and Odo (2023) acknowledged that tertiary education is the third tiers of education that is designed for the production of skilled and professionals for the socio-economic and technology advancement. Tertiary institutions are micro section of the larger society. Tertiary institutions is an organized fraction of the whole society curved out for teaching programme, research and provision of community service. Tertiary institution can also be seen as a subset of the general society that is made of collection of different people, different culture, different life style and different value. Tertiary education according to Ogunode, Iyabode, and Olatunde-Aiyedun, (2022) is an advanced educational system meant for human capital development through teaching, research and provision of community service.

3.0 Method

Implications of the Middle East crisis on the development of tertiary 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 researcher has visited different online sites to collect the previous literature and analyze the implications of the Middle East crisis on the development of tertiary education in Nigeria. The previous findings are critically analyzed and presented in different themes as on the implications of the Middle East crisis on the development of tertiary education in Nigeria (Adapted from Ogunode, 2025).

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion

This output of the literatures on the implications of the Middle East crisis on the development of tertiary 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 (Adapted from Ogunode, 2025v).

Exclusion

Also, the literature review excludes information from edited books, preprints, monographs, information below 2015 and book chapters (Adapted from Ogunode, 2025).

4.0 Result and Discussion on impact of Middle East Crisis Tertiary Education in Nigeria

Weakening of International Academic Collaboration and Research Linkages

One major effect of the Middle East crisis on tertiary education in Nigeria is the disruption of international academic collaboration. Nigerian universities often participate in global research networks that include institutions in the Middle East. However, the destruction of higher education infrastructure and instability in the region has reduced opportunities for joint research, conferences, and scholarly exchange. For instance, reports show that a significant proportion of universities in Gaza have been destroyed or rendered non-functional, limiting their ability to participate in global academic networks. This loss of institutional partners affects Nigerian universities that depend on international collaboration for research funding, knowledge exchange, and academic development. Over time, this weakens research output and global competitiveness of Nigerian tertiary institutions.

Reduction in Student Mobility and Scholarship Opportunities

The crisis has also affected Nigerian students who seek education opportunities in the Middle East, particularly in countries such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and others. Political instability and security concerns discourage academic travel and limit scholarship programmes. Globally, conflict situations have been shown to interrupt higher education participation, with tens of thousands of university students in affected regions forced to suspend their studies due to insecurity and institutional collapse. This situation reduces available academic spaces and partnerships that Nigerian students could benefit from, thereby narrowing access to international education and exposure.

Pressure on Nigerian Universities through Displacement and Global Academic Shifts

Conflicts in the Middle East have led to large-scale displacement of students and academics. While Nigeria is not a primary destination compared to Europe, global displacement patterns indirectly affect Nigerian universities through increased competition for limited international funding, scholarships, and academic placements. Evidence indicates that conflicts in the region have displaced large populations and disrupted entire education systems, leaving thousands of students without access to higher education. As global institutions redirect resources toward emergency



education interventions in conflict zones, Nigerian universities may experience reduced access to international grants and partnerships that would otherwise support local academic development.

Economic Consequences Affecting Education Funding in Nigeria

The Middle East plays a central role in global oil production, and crises in the region often lead to fluctuations in oil prices. Since Nigeria is heavily dependent on oil revenue, instability in the Middle East can indirectly affect government income and budgetary allocation to tertiary education. Although this connection is indirect, the broader consequences of conflict including economic uncertainty and global market instability—have been linked to reduced investment in education systems. When national revenues are strained, funding for universities, research, and infrastructure development in Nigeria may decline, thereby affecting the quality of tertiary education.

Psychological and Academic Impact on Nigerian Students

The Middle East crisis also affects Nigerian students psychologically, particularly those with religious, cultural, or familial ties to the region. Continuous media coverage of violence and humanitarian crises can lead to anxiety, reduced concentration, and emotional distress among students. Studies on conflict-affected education systems show that exposure to war-related disruptions affects not only those in conflict zones but also students globally through stress and uncertainty. In Nigerian universities, this may manifest in campus tensions, reduced academic engagement, and increased involvement in protests or debates related to the crisis.

4.1 Conclusion and Recommendations

The analysis demonstrates that the effects of the Middle East crisis extend beyond its immediate geographical boundaries and significantly influence tertiary education development in Nigeria. Disruptions in global academic networks have limited opportunities for collaboration and knowledge exchange, while reduced student mobility has constrained access to international education. Economic instability arising from fluctuations in global oil markets has also affected funding for higher education in Nigeria. Additionally, the psychological impact of the crisis on students contributes to a less stable academic environment. These findings underscore the interconnected nature of global tertiary education and highlight how external conflicts can shape national educational outcomes. Based on the finding, the study recommends the following:

1) Diversification of Academic Partnerships

Nigerian tertiary institutions should expand collaborations beyond conflict-prone regions by building partnerships with universities in stable regions such as Europe, Asia, and Africa to ensure continuity in research and academic exchange.



2) Strengthening Local Research Capacity

Government and institutional stakeholders should invest more in domestic research funding and infrastructure to reduce overdependence on international collaborations that may be disrupted by global crises.

3) Expansion of Digital and Blended Learning

Universities in Nigeria should adopt and strengthen digital learning platforms to maintain academic continuity and enhance access to global knowledge regardless of geopolitical disruptions.

4) Stabilization of Education Funding

The Nigerian government should develop sustainable funding strategies for tertiary education that are less vulnerable to fluctuations in oil revenue caused by international conflicts.

5) Provision of Student Support Services

Institutions should provide counseling and mental health support to help students cope with stress and anxiety associated with global crises, thereby improving their academic performance and well-being.

6) Policy Development for Crisis Response in Education

Educational policymakers should develop contingency frameworks that enable tertiary institutions to respond effectively to global disruptions affecting education systems.

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