

Navigating Turbulence: The Impact of Socio-Political Conflicts, Safety, and Security on Educational Quality in North-Central Nigeria

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Abstract: *This study examines the interplay between socio-political conflicts, safety, and security, and their collective impact on the quality of secondary education in North-Central Nigeria. Employing a quantitative research design, data were collected from 1,176 teachers and 98 principals across selected public senior secondary schools in Benue, Kogi, and Kwara states. The findings revealed significant relationships between socio-political conflicts specifically communal and political conflicts and educational quality, while ethnic and religious conflicts showed negligible impacts. Notably, school safety and security emerged as critical factors significantly enhancing educational outcomes. The study highlights the urgent need for effective safety management and conflict resolution strategies to safeguard educational environments. Recommendations include fostering collaborative safety policies among stakeholders and ensuring continuous improvement in safety measures. Ultimately, this research underscores the necessity of addressing the socio-political landscape to promote educational quality in conflict-affected regions.*

Keywords: socio-political conflicts, school safety, educational quality, North-Central Nigeria, conflict resolution

Word Count: 138

INTRODUCTION

Globally, the interrelationship between socio-political conflicts and secondary education quality has drawn considerable attention due to the wide-reaching effects on societal development. Research has shown that regions affected by socio-political instability, such as the Middle East, Sub-Saharan Africa, and parts of South Asia, experience significant setbacks in educational quality. According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), conflict disrupts access to and the quality of education by creating unsafe environments that deter both teachers and students from participating fully in academic activities. Moreover, the continuous displacement of populations in conflict-affected areas further compounds the challenge of maintaining educational standards (UNESCO, 2021). Conflict zones also suffer from the destruction of educational infrastructure, which takes years to rebuild. The economic burden of reconstructing schools and retraining educators limits resources available for improving secondary education quality (Jenkins, Michalopoulos, and Vermeersch, 2022). Additionally, students exposed to conflict face psychological trauma, impeding learning and leading to high dropout rates.

In Africa, the situation is similarly complex. The continent has witnessed numerous socio-political upheavals, from civil wars to insurgencies, which have impaired the delivery of secondary education. Countries such as Ethiopia, South Sudan, and the Central African Republic have seen extensive damage to their educational systems due to prolonged periods of conflict. The African Union acknowledges that such disruptions lead to a lack of continuity in schooling, making it difficult to attain the educational targets set under frameworks like the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (African Union, 2023). The lack of access to quality secondary education exacerbates societal problems, such as unemployment and poverty, creating a vicious cycle of instability and underdevelopment. Educational interventions in conflict zones have often been insufficient in addressing these long-term effects, focusing more on immediate relief rather than sustainable reforms to improve education (Adejumo, Olabisi, and Adekola, 2021). Despite international aid and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working to stabilise educational systems, the impact remains limited in heavily conflict-affected areas.

In Nigeria, socio-political unrest and insurgency, particularly in the northern regions, have severely affected secondary education quality. The rise of Boko Haram and other insurgent groups has led to widespread school closures, mass abductions of students, and the destruction of school infrastructure. These challenges are most pronounced in Northern Nigeria, particularly in the North-East, where insurgent activities continue to disrupt education. However, the impact is also evident in other regions, including the North-Central region, where communal clashes, banditry, and political instability contribute to an unsafe learning environment. School enrolment and retention rates have drastically declined in conflict-affected areas, and the quality of education delivered has deteriorated, leading to a growing educational divide between Nigeria's regions (INEE, 2023). Empirical studies have revealed that the loss of teachers due to insecurity exacerbates the existing shortage of qualified educators, further diminishing secondary

education quality (Oyinloye, Mishra, and Adesina, 2023). These disparities in literacy rates and learning outcomes, particularly between the North and South, have become more evident.

When comparing other regions of Nigeria, such as the South-West and South-East, where political instability and conflict are less pronounced, educational outcomes are relatively higher. This discrepancy is largely due to contrasting socio-political environments. In the southern regions, educational institutions enjoy greater stability, better access to resources, and improved security, allowing for more consistent academic progress. On the other hand, Northern regions, including North-Central Nigeria, grapple with issues of poor school safety and the pervasive influence of socio-political conflicts, leading to substandard secondary education quality (Global Partnership for Education, 2024). Data from the National Bureau of Statistics (2022) highlight that literacy rates in the North-Central region lag behind those of the southern regions, with insecurity being a major contributing factor. Comparative analysis shows that while economic conditions also play a role, regions experiencing higher levels of violence suffer the greatest setbacks in secondary education quality.

North-Central Nigeria, the focus of this study, has been particularly affected by socio-political tensions and safety concerns within schools. Communal clashes, farmer-herder conflicts, and banditry have not only displaced communities but have also severely undermined the region's educational infrastructure. These conflicts pose a direct threat to students' safety, creating a climate of fear and hindering academic performance. While studies have examined the effects of conflicts on education in other parts of Nigeria, there is a notable gap in research concerning the specific challenges faced by North-Central Nigeria. This study, therefore, aims to bridge this gap by investigating the relationship between socio-political conflicts, school safety, and secondary education quality in the region, providing insights into the unique challenges affecting secondary education quality in North-Central Nigeria. Addressing these challenges is crucial for closing the education gap and promoting peace and development in the region (Adesina, Mkwanaenzi, Watts, Akogun, and Oyinloye, 2023).

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between socio-political conflicts, school safety, and secondary education quality in North-Central Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. Examine whether there is a significant relationship between socio-political conflicts and secondary education quality in North-Central Nigeria.
2. Assess whether school safety and security have a significant relationship with secondary education quality in the region.
3. Determine the joint contribution of socio-political conflicts, school safety, and security to the overall quality of secondary education.
4. Evaluate the relative contributions of socio-political conflicts, school safety, and security in explaining variations in secondary education quality in North-Central Nigeria.

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance

1. There is no significant relationship between socio-political conflicts and secondary education quality in North-Central Nigeria
2. There is no significant relationship between school safety and security on secondary education quality in North-Central, Nigeria
3. There is no significant joint contribution of socio-political conflicts, school safety and security to secondary education quality in North-Central Nigeria
4. There is no significant relative contribution of socio-political conflicts, school safety and security to secondary education quality in North-Central Nigeria

Significance of the Study

Understanding the lack of significant relationships between socio-political conflicts and educational quality can guide policymakers in reallocating resources to more impactful areas. They can focus on interventions that directly enhance educational quality, rather than merely addressing conflicts. Additionally, insights into school safety will inform policies that prioritise secure learning environments. This study provides evidence to develop targeted educational policies that align with the specific challenges faced in North-Central Nigeria.

Educators can benefit from this study by recognising that factors such as socio-political conflicts may not significantly hinder educational quality. This knowledge allows them to concentrate on pedagogical strategies and classroom management, rather than

external conflicts. Insights into safety and security can help educators advocate for necessary changes within their schools. Furthermore, understanding the dynamics of educational quality can empower educators to implement effective teaching methods.

Parents will gain reassurance from the findings that socio-political conflicts do not necessarily impede educational quality, enabling them to make informed decisions about their children's education. This study can encourage students to engage more actively in their learning, knowing that external conflicts may not define their educational outcomes. Additionally, understanding the importance of safety can empower parents to advocate for improved security measures in schools. Students will be motivated to pursue their studies without the overwhelming concern of socio-political disruptions.

Community leaders can leverage the findings to foster dialogue about the importance of educational quality independent of socio-political tensions. The study highlights the need for community involvement in enhancing school safety, which can lead to collaborative initiatives that benefit local schools. By understanding these dynamics, leaders can promote stability and support for educational institutions in their areas. Moreover, the findings can serve as a foundation for community programmes aimed at improving overall educational outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design, which is suitable for examining relationships between variables in a structured manner. The design allows for the collection of numerical data that can be statistically analysed, providing a clear understanding of the interplay between socio-political conflicts, school safety, and the quality of secondary education in North-Central Nigeria.

Population

The target population comprised all teachers and principals within public senior secondary schools located in the North-Central region of Nigeria. This population is vital as they are directly involved in the educational process and can provide insights into the conditions affecting educational quality in their respective contexts.

Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample for the study included 1,176 teachers and 98 principals from the selected states, providing a comprehensive representation of views and experiences related to the research focus.

Stage One: Purposive sampling was conducted to select three states Benue, Kogi, and Kwara from the seven states in the North-Central region. This method ensured that the chosen states were relevant to the study's objectives and represented diverse socio-political contexts.

Stage Two: A proportionate-to-size sampling technique was employed to select 9% of the public senior secondary schools in each of the chosen states. This approach ensured that the sample of schools reflected the distribution of schools across the states, providing a balanced perspective.

Stage Three: Within the selected schools, a simple random sampling technique was used to select 12 teachers per school. This resulted in a sample of 1,176 teachers, ensuring that each teacher had an equal chance of being included, thus minimising selection bias.

Stage Four: Total enumeration was utilised to include all 98 principals from the sampled schools. This ensured comprehensive input from school leadership, which is crucial for understanding the broader educational context.

Research Instruments

A. Socio-Political Conflicts, School Safety, and Security Questionnaire (SPCSSSQ)

This instrument was specifically designed for the study and administered to teachers. It comprises three sections:

Section A: Gathers demographic information such as school name, gender, marital status, age, teaching experience, and highest academic qualification. This section is essential for contextualising the data and understanding how these variables may influence perceptions of socio-political conflicts and school safety.

Section B: Focuses on the scales of socio-political conflicts, school safety, and security. The socio-political conflicts scale consists of 19 items rated on a four-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Never) to 4 (Very Frequently), allowing respondents to express the frequency of their experiences related to conflicts. The school safety and security scale, also containing 19 items, is rated similarly (1 = Not Available, 2 = Poor, 3 = Fair, 4 = Good), providing insight into the safety perceptions within

the schools. This instrument was refined with the help of the researcher's supervisor and educational management experts to ensure clarity and relevance.

B. Secondary Education Quality Questionnaire (SEQQ)

This instrument assesses the quality of secondary education, with a focus on teaching quality (process quality) and school infrastructure (input quality). It was administered to the principals of public secondary schools in the selected areas. The SEQQ comprises two sections:

Section A: Collects demographic data akin to that in the SPCSSSQ, ensuring that comparisons can be made across respondent groups.

Section B: Contains 20 items evaluating educational quality, rated on a four-point Likert scale (1 = Very Low, 2 = Low, 3 = High, 4 = Very High). This section assesses both subjective perceptions of teaching quality and objective measures of school facilities, offering a comprehensive view of educational quality.

Validity and Reliability of the Instruments

To ensure the validity of the instruments, a panel of experts in educational management reviewed the items for relevance and clarity. Reliability was assessed through pilot testing, yielding a Cronbach's alpha coefficient that indicated satisfactory internal consistency for both instruments. This rigorous process ensures that the instruments measure what they intend to and produce reliable data.

Administration of the Instruments

The researcher oversaw the administration of the instruments, supported by three trained research assistants to facilitate effective distribution and collection. Prior to data collection, the researcher obtained a letter of introduction from the Head of the Department of Educational Management at the University of Ibadan, which was presented to the sampled schools. This letter served to establish credibility and ensure cooperation from school authorities. Completed instruments were collected promptly to maximise response rates and completeness of data, with follow-ups conducted to encourage participation.

Method of Data Analysis

The collected data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics including frequency counts, percentages, means, and standard deviations were employed to summarise the demographic information and address research questions 1 through 3. To test hypotheses 1 through 3, Pearson Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) was utilised to determine the strength and direction of relationships between variables. For hypotheses 4 and 5, Multiple Regression Analysis was applied to assess the joint contributions of socio-political conflicts, school safety, and security to secondary education quality, with a significance level established at $p < 0.05$ to determine statistical significance. This comprehensive analysis approach provided a robust framework for interpreting the findings and drawing meaningful conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section presents the analysis and discussion of the major findings based on data collected from the field. The results are clearly presented and effectively discussed, commencing with the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Socio-Demographic Information of the Respondents

Table 1: Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Age

Age Range	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<25	88	7.3	7.3	7.3
26-30 years	265	21.9	21.9	29.2
31-35 years	288	23.8	23.8	53.0
36-40 years	248	20.5	20.5	73.5
>40 years	320	26.4	26.4	99.9
Not indicated	2	0.2	0.2	100.0
Total	1,211	100.0		

Table 1 illustrates the age distribution of the respondents. Among them, 88 (7.3%) are under 25 years, 265 (21.9%) are between 26-30 years, 288 (23.8%) are in the 31-35 age group, 248 (20.5%) fall within 36-40 years, and 320 (26.4%) are over 40 years. Additionally, 2 (0.2%) did not indicate their age. The data suggests that the majority of respondents are aged 40 and above.

Table 2: Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Status

Status	Frequency	Percent
Teacher	1,118	92.3
Principal	92	7.6
Unspecified	1	0.1
Total	1,211	100.0

Table 2 displays the working status of the respondents, with 1,118 (92.3%) identified as teachers, 92 (7.6%) as principals, and 1 (0.1%) remaining unspecified. This indicates a predominance of teacher respondents in the data collection process.

Table 3: Frequency Distribution of Respondents by Educational Qualification

Educational Qualification	Frequency	Percent
OND	30	2.5
HND	104	8.6
NCE	227	18.7
B.Sc./B.A.	387	32.0
B.Ed.	373	30.8
M.Ed.	83	6.9
PhD	7	0.6
Total	1,211	100.0

Table 3 highlights the educational qualifications of the respondents. A total of 30 (2.5%) hold an OND, 104 (8.6%) have an HND, 227 (18.7%) possess an NCE, 387 (32.0%) have a B.Sc./B.A., 373 (30.8%) hold a B.Ed., 83 (6.9%) have an M.Ed., and 7 (0.6%) possess a PhD. This data suggests that the majority of respondents hold a B.Sc./B.A. as their highest level of tertiary education.

Table 4: Frequency Distribution of Respondents by States and Local Government Areas (LGA)

State	LGA	Frequency	Percent
Benue	Otukpo	84	6.9
	Ohimini	20	1.7
	Makurdi	98	8.1
	Katsina Ala	98	8.1
Kwara	Ilorin West	169	14.0
	Ilorin South	92	7.6
	Moro	65	5.4
	Ilorin East	202	16.7
	Asa	52	4.3
Kogi	Dekina	108	8.9
	Lokoja	108	8.9
	Okene	115	9.5
	Total	1,211	100.0

Table 4 depicts the distribution of respondents by states and their respective local government areas. In Benue State, there were 84 (6.9%) respondents from Otukpo, 20 (1.7%) from Ohimini, 98 (8.1%) from Makurdi, and 98 (8.1%) from Katsina Ala. In Kwara State, 169 (14.0%) respondents were from Ilorin West, 92 (7.6%) from Ilorin South, 65 (5.4%) from Moro, 202 (16.7%) from Ilorin East, and 52 (4.3%) from Asa. In Kogi State, there were 108 (8.9%) from Dekina, 108 (8.9%) from Lokoja, and 115 (9.5%) from Okene. This data indicates that the largest number of respondents came from Ilorin East in Kwara State, reflecting the regional distribution of the sample.

Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis One: There is no Significant Relationships between Socio-Political Conflicts and Secondary Education Quality (School Facilities and Quality of Teaching) in North-Central Nigeria

Table 5: Relationships between Socio-Political Conflicts and Secondary Education Quality

Factors	Statistics	Teaching Quality	School Facilities Quality	Religious Conflict	Political Conflict	Communal Conflict	Ethnic Conflict
Teaching Quality	Pearson Correlation	1	.719**	-.259*	-.300**	-.255*	-.282**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.010	.003	.011	.005
	N	98	98	98	98	98	98
School Facilities Quality	Pearson Correlation	.719**	1	-.176	-.393**	-.126	-.216*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.084	.000	.218	.033
	N	98	98	98	98	98	98
Religious Conflict	Pearson Correlation	-.259*	-.176	1	.706**	.922**	.811**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	.084		.000	.000	.000
	N	98	98	98	98	98	98
Political Conflict	Pearson Correlation	-.300**	-.393**	.706**	1	.656**	.673**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.003	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	98	98	98	98	98	98
Communal Conflict	Pearson Correlation	-.255*	-.126	.922**	.656**	1	.821**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.011	.218	.000	.000		.000
	N	98	98	98	98	98	98
Ethnic Conflict	Pearson Correlation	-.282**	-.216*	.811**	.673**	.821**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.005	.033	.000	.000	.000	
	N	98	98	98	98	98	98

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5 presents the correlation matrix between the independent variable (socio-political conflicts) and the dependent variable (quality of secondary education regarding teaching quality and school facilities). The data indicate significant negative correlations: religious ($r = -0.259$), political ($r = -0.300$), communal ($r = -0.255$), and ethnic ($r = -0.282$) conflicts adversely affect teaching quality. Additionally, political ($r = -0.393$) and ethnic ($r = -0.216$) conflicts significantly impact the quality of school facilities, while relationships with religious and communal conflicts, although negative, are not statistically significant.

These findings echo the work of Shemyakina (2006), which demonstrated that conflict, particularly through physical destruction, negatively impacts girls' school enrolment. Families affected by conflict often deprioritise girls' education. This trend exacerbates existing gender disparities, as the combination of economic hardship and security concerns disproportionately affects female education. Moreover, the negative influence of socio-political conflicts on teaching quality aligns with Ichino and Winter-Ebner (2004), who found that educational disruptions during wartime can significantly reduce GDP. Their research indicates that the decline in educational quality due to conflict not only affects immediate learning outcomes but also limits future earning potential and overall productivity.

In conflict-affected regions, teaching quality suffers as educators may flee, schools may be destroyed, and resources may dwindle. This deterioration in teaching quality directly impacts student learning and the broader economic potential of the nation. The linkage between conflict and education underscores the urgent need for policies aimed at protecting educational systems during such crises. Furthermore, the detrimental effects of conflict on education extend to the social cohesion of communities. Weakening educational systems erode social ties, making communities more vulnerable to instability. Education is crucial for promoting understanding and integration, and when disrupted, it deepens social divisions.

This study reinforces the findings of Shemyakina (2006) and Ichino and Winter-Ebner (2004), highlighting the devastating effects of conflict on education, particularly in enrolment and teaching quality. Addressing these challenges requires focused efforts to safeguard educational systems, ensuring that vulnerable groups, especially girls, are not excluded from educational opportunities.

Hypotheses Two: There is no Significant Relationship among School Safety, Security and Secondary Education Quality (School Facilities and Quality of Teaching) in North-Central, Nigeria

Table 6: Relationship among School Safety, Security and Secondary Education Quality

		Teaching Quality	School Facilities Quality	School Safety	School Security
Teaching Quality	Pearson Correlation	1	.719**	.672**	.648**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	98	98	98	98
School Facilities Quality	Pearson Correlation	.719**	1	.809**	.870**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000	.000
	N	98	98	98	98
School Safety	Pearson Correlation	.672**	.809**	1	.915**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000		.000
	N	98	98	98	98
School Security	Pearson Correlation	.648**	.870**	.915**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000	
	N	98	98	98	98

Table 6 presents the correlation matrix between the independent variables (school safety and security) and the dependent variable (quality of secondary education regarding teaching quality and school facilities). The results indicate significant positive correlations: school safety with teaching quality ($r = 0.672$) and school facilities quality ($r = 0.809$). Similarly, school security correlates significantly with teaching quality ($r = 0.648$) and the quality of school facilities ($r = 0.870$).

These findings are consistent with the research of Omolo and Simatwa (2010), who explored safety policy implementation in public secondary schools in Kenya. Their study found that key educational stakeholders, including head teachers, teachers, and Quality Assurance Officers, expressed positive attitudes towards these safety policies, recognising safety as a vital aspect of the learning

environment. This positive outlook underscores the role of secure, well-maintained schools in fostering academic success and student welfare. Omolo and Simatwa (2010) also highlighted the proactive role of head teachers in enforcing safety regulations. Their commitment to safety reflects an understanding of its direct impact on students' academic performance and teachers' instructional effectiveness. When head teachers prioritise safety, they are more likely to allocate resources effectively and cultivate a culture of safety awareness within the school community.

Teachers, as primary educators, exhibited a positive attitude towards safety policies, crucial due to their daily interactions with students and roles as first responders to safety concerns. Their commitment helps create a secure learning environment and promotes safety education. Similarly, the positive stance of Quality Assurance Officers is important; they monitor compliance with national safety standards and provide feedback to identify gaps and recommend improvements. This reflects a broader recognition of safety's significance in education. Schools must ensure a secure environment for students and staff, with the collective commitment of leaders, teachers, and regulatory officers being vital for maintaining high safety standards. Moreover, effective safety policies are essential for managing emergencies and mitigating risks, enhancing the educational experience. A safe environment fosters trust among students, parents, and educators, which is crucial for student engagement and academic performance (Omolo and Simatwa, 2010).

This study's findings align with those of Omolo and Simatwa (2010), highlighting the importance of positive attitudes towards safety policy implementation in shaping the educational environment. When headteachers, teachers, and Quality Assurance Officers collectively prioritise safety, they create a conducive learning atmosphere that benefits both students and staff. Schools that emphasise safety are better positioned to manage risks and support student well-being, ultimately enhancing educational quality. The proactive stance of educational leaders in implementing safety policies is essential for ensuring that schools remain secure spaces for academic and personal growth.

Hypothesis Three: There is no Significant Joint Contribution of Socio-Political Conflict, Safety and Security to Secondary Education Quality in North-Central, Nigeria

Table 7: Joint Contribution of Socio-Political Conflict, Safety and Security to Secondary Education Quality

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Change Statistics				
				R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
.743	.552	.550	.40928	.552	247.746	6	1204	.000

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	248.995	6	41.499	247.746	.000
Residual	201.678	1204	.168		
Total	450.673	1210			

Dependent Variable: Education Quality

The findings in Table 7 indicate a significant joint contribution of socio-political conflict, safety, and security to the quality of secondary education ($R = 0.743$; $P < 0.05$). The adjusted R Square value of 0.550 reveals that 55% of the variation in education quality in North-Central Nigeria can be explained by these three independent variables. The linear combination of these predictors was found to have a significant joint impact on educational quality ($F(6, 1204) = 247.746$; $P < 0.05$). Consequently, the hypothesis was rejected at the 0.05 significance level, suggesting that socio-political conflict, safety, and security collectively affect education quality.

These findings underscore the substantial influence of socio-political conflict, safety, and security on educational quality in North-Central Nigeria, aligning with Asodike and Nwabueze (2017), who identified key safety management techniques for effective service delivery in secondary schools in Rivers State. Their study emphasised setting clear safety objectives, ensuring transparency in management, and securing senior management's commitment to enhancing school safety, all essential for fostering an environment conducive to educational quality. Asodike and Nwabueze also stressed the importance of accountability in safety management systems, which aligns with Osuji's (2011) findings that mismanagement and lack of accountability can lead to disputes affecting

education quality. A robust accountability framework encourages a more organised approach to safety management, minimising conflict and fostering a stable learning environment.

Furthermore, Asodike and Nwabueze highlighted the need for continuous improvement in safety procedures, supported by Wango (2010), who found that schools with defined safety strategies and regular drills were better prepared for emergencies, enhancing educational outcomes. Regular reviews of safety protocols build resilience and ensure student and staff security, essential for maintaining high educational standards. Active involvement from all school stakeholders in safety management is crucial for fostering collective responsibility, which can prevent socio-political conflicts from escalating. Continuous innovation in safety management is vital for sustaining educational quality, especially in unstable regions. This study's findings align with those of Asodike and Nwabueze (2017), Osuji (2011), and Wango (2010), highlighting the critical relationship between safety, security, and educational quality.

Hypothesis Four: There is no Significant Relative Contribution of Socio-Political Conflict, School Safety and Security to Secondary Education Quality

Table 8: Relative Contribution of Socio-Political Conflict, School Safety and Security to Secondary Education Quality

	Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	T	p	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta			
(Constant)	1.888	.055		34.283	.000	Sig.
Ethnic Conflict	-.034	.033	-.033	-1.040	.298	Not Sig.
Communal Conflict	-.087	.037	-.086	-2.346	.019	Sig.
Political Conflict	-.067	.021	-.081	3.162	.002	Sig.
Religious Conflict	-.050	.033	-.053	1.510	.131	Not Sig.
School Safety	.165	.021	.213	7.677	.000	Sig.
School Security	.467	.023	.565	19.861	.000	Sig.

Dependent Variable: Education Quality

Table 8 presents the results of hypothesis five, which aimed to assess the relative contributions of socio-political conflict, school safety, and security to the quality of secondary education in North-Central Nigeria. The findings reveal the beta weights for each factor: ethnic conflict ($\beta = 0.033$, $P > 0.05$), communal conflict ($\beta = 0.086$, $P < 0.05$), political conflict ($\beta = 0.081$, $P < 0.05$), religious conflict ($\beta = 0.053$, $P > 0.05$), school safety ($\beta = 0.213$, $P < 0.05$), and school security ($\beta = 0.565$, $P < 0.05$). Notably, communal and political conflicts, along with school safety and security, significantly contribute to education quality, while ethnic and religious conflicts do not.

These findings indicate that communal and political conflicts, as well as safety and security issues, significantly disrupt the learning environment and impact educational outcomes in the region. In contrast, ethnic and religious conflicts appear less influential, challenging common assumptions about their effects on education.

This aligns with research by Nastja *et al.* (2019), which found a relationship between teachers' personal beliefs and their professional roles, affecting the educational environment. Additionally, Raji and Akanbi (2019) highlighted the importance of effective risk management in enhancing the effectiveness of public secondary schools, indicating that proactive safety measures are crucial for educational quality. Overall, these findings illustrate the complex interplay between various conflicts and risk management strategies in shaping educational outcomes, suggesting the need for targeted interventions to address specific challenges in the educational system.

CONCLUSION

This study has explored the intricate interplay between socio-political conflicts, school safety, security, and the quality of secondary education in North-Central Nigeria. The findings demonstrate that socio-political conflicts, particularly communal and political tensions, significantly impact educational quality, alongside the critical roles of school safety and security. Notably, while ethnic

and religious conflicts were found to have minimal direct effects, the presence of safety and security measures emerged as crucial factors in fostering an effective learning environment. The significant contributions of school safety and security highlight the importance of creating secure educational spaces where students can thrive academically. The positive attitudes of teachers and educational stakeholders towards safety policies further reinforce the need for proactive measures to enhance the educational experience. Moreover, effective risk management strategies have proven vital in mitigating disruptions caused by socio-political tensions. The study underscores the necessity for targeted interventions that address the specific challenges posed by socio-political conflicts while simultaneously prioritising the establishment of safe learning environments. By focusing on these areas, policymakers and educational leaders can work towards improving the quality of education in North-Central Nigeria, ultimately fostering a more resilient and effective educational system.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study acknowledges several limitations that may impact the generalisability and applicability of its findings. Firstly, the research was confined to North-Central Nigeria, which limits the applicability of the results to other regions that may have different socio-political contexts. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data from respondents could introduce biases, as participants might provide socially desirable responses rather than objective assessments.

Moreover, while the study examined socio-political conflicts, safety, and security, it did not include other influencing factors, such as economic conditions and cultural influences, which may oversimplify the complexities surrounding educational quality. The sample size, although substantial, may not fully represent all stakeholders involved in education, particularly parents and community leaders, which further limits the diversity of perspectives captured.

Lastly, the cross-sectional design of the study restricts the ability to draw causal inferences about the relationships between the variables over time. Addressing these limitations in future research could enhance the understanding of the interplay between conflicts, safety, and educational quality.

RECOMMENDATION

In light of the limitations identified in this study, several recommendations are proposed to enhance future research and address the complexities surrounding educational quality in North-Central Nigeria.

1. **Broader Geographic Scope:** Future studies should consider including multiple regions to allow for comparisons and a more comprehensive understanding of how socio-political contexts influence educational quality across different areas. This would help to identify region-specific challenges and effective strategies.
2. **Diverse Data Collection Methods:** Employing a mixed-methods approach that includes qualitative interviews alongside quantitative surveys could enrich the data collected. Engaging parents, community leaders, and students in addition to teachers and school administrators would provide a more holistic view of the factors affecting education.
3. **Inclusion of Additional Variables:** Future research should explore other influencing factors such as economic conditions, cultural dynamics, and parental involvement in education. This would enable a more nuanced analysis of the factors impacting educational quality.
4. **Longitudinal Studies:** Conducting longitudinal studies would allow researchers to track changes over time and establish causal relationships between socio-political conflicts, safety, and educational outcomes. This could provide deeper insights into the long-term effects of these variables on education.
5. **Policy Implementation Studies:** Further research could focus on the effectiveness of specific safety and risk management policies in educational settings. Evaluating the impact of these policies on educational quality would help in formulating effective interventions.

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