



## Article

# Iran–Middle East Geopolitics and the Sustainability of Basic Education in Nigeria: A Review of Economic and Social Transmission Channels

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**Citation:** WAHAB S. K., IBRAHIM S., MUSA M. Iran–Middle East Geopolitics and the Sustainability of Basic Education in Nigeria: A Review of Economic and Social Transmission Channels. American Journal of Social and Humanitarian Research 2026, 7(5), 7-13.

Received: 05<sup>th</sup> Feb 2026

Revised: 10<sup>th</sup> Mar 2026

Accepted: 15<sup>th</sup> Apr 2026

Published: 01<sup>st</sup> May 2026



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**Abstract:** This study examines how geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, with particular reference to Iran, indirectly shape the sustainability of basic education in Nigeria. Adopting a qualitative review approach, the paper draws on evidence from Nigerian media reports and policy commentaries to analyse the economic and social transmission channels through which these external shocks affect school systems. Findings indicate that fluctuations in global oil prices linked to Iran-related conflicts have intensified fuel price instability in Nigeria, thereby raising transportation costs and reducing school attendance. The study further reveals that inflationary pressures triggered by these global disruptions weaken household capacity to finance children’s education, contributing to dropout and irregular participation. In addition, government fiscal responses to oil market volatility tend to constrain funding for basic education, affecting infrastructure, instructional materials, and teacher welfare. The review also highlights how transport disruptions and policy instability undermine effective educational planning and delivery. The paper argues that while the Middle East crisis does not directly target Nigeria’s education sector, its ripple effects significantly shape access, equity, and quality in basic education. The study concludes that strengthening economic resilience and insulating the education sector from global shocks are critical for sustaining progress toward universal basic education in Nigeria.

**Keywords:** Basic Education, Middle East Crisis, Inflation.

## 1. Introduction

Globalisation has increasingly interconnected national economies, making domestic sectors vulnerable to external geopolitical developments. One such development is the recurring tension in the Middle East, particularly involving Iran, which plays a strategic role in global oil supply. For an oil-dependent economy like Nigeria, fluctuations in global oil prices often translate into domestic economic instability. While much attention has been given to the macroeconomic implications of such crises, less emphasis has been placed on their social consequences, especially in the education sector [1].

Basic education in Nigeria represents the foundation of human capital development and is central to national growth. However, its sustainability is closely tied to economic stability, household welfare, and effective government funding. Reports from Nigerian media sources have shown that crises involving Iran often trigger spikes in fuel prices, leading to increased transportation costs and general inflation. These developments place

significant strain on households and educational institutions alike. Parents face difficulties in meeting school-related expenses, while schools struggle with rising operational costs [2].

Nigeria's reliance on imported refined petroleum products complicates the potential benefits of high crude oil prices. Instead of increased fiscal space, the country often experiences economic pressure that affects public spending priorities, including education. This creates a situation where external geopolitical shocks indirectly disrupt school attendance, reduce funding, and weaken policy implementation. Given these dynamics, it is important to critically examine how Middle East geopolitics particularly Iran-related tensions affect the basic education system in Nigeria. This paper adopts a review-based approach, drawing on local media evidence to explore the pathways through which these impacts occur and their implications for educational development [3].

### **Concept of Middle East (with Iran in Focus)**

The Middle East is a strategically important region linking Asia, Africa, and Europe, and it plays a central role in global energy supply due to its vast oil reserves. Within this region, Iran stands out as a major political and economic actor, particularly because of its influence on global oil markets and its involvement in recurring geopolitical tensions. Recent conflicts involving Iran and other global powers have shown that events in the Middle East often have far-reaching consequences beyond the region. For countries like Nigeria, which depend heavily on oil revenues and imported petroleum products, instability involving Iran can trigger fluctuations in fuel prices, inflation, and economic uncertainty [4]. Reports in Nigerian media emphasize that when tensions escalate in the Middle East, the effects are quickly transmitted to Nigeria through rising fuel costs, inflation, and economic pressure.

Noted that a country like Nigeria that is heavily dependent on oil exports and whose economy is sensitive to global energy price movements, the Middle East crisis has generated both risks and burdensome costs. Rising crude oil prices initially promise higher export revenue, but sustained market instability leads to **inflationary pressures** domestically, particularly in fuel, transportation, and food prices, which erode household purchasing power. Local Nigerian reporting noted that anxiety grew among citizens as global oil approached \$100 per barrel due to the conflict, straining already fragile economic conditions. The disruption in energy markets also creates uncertainty around foreign exchange flows, complicating Nigeria's balance of payments and undermining efforts to stabilise the naira. Additional effects include potential volatility in investor sentiment toward emerging markets like Nigeria, where economic growth is tied to global commodity trends, and the risk that prolonged upward pressure on global commodity prices exacerbates inflation and cost-of-living challenges for ordinary Nigerians [5].

### **Concept of Basic Education in Nigeria**

Basic education in Nigeria refers to the first nine years of formal schooling, comprising six years of primary education and three years of junior secondary education. It is designed to provide foundational literacy, numeracy, and life skills necessary for personal and national development. The system is implemented under the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme, which aims to ensure free and compulsory education for all children. Despite this policy framework, Nigeria continues to face major challenges in the sector, including inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and a high number of out-of-school children [6]. Statistics indicate that millions of Nigerian children of school age are not enrolled in school, reflecting persistent barriers such as poverty, inequality, and weak implementation of educational policies .

Geographically distant, developments in the Middle East especially involving Iran affect basic education in Nigeria through economic channels. Rising oil prices and inflation linked to regional conflicts increase the cost of living, making it difficult for

families to afford schooling. Schools also face higher operational costs due to fuel price increases, which affect transportation, power supply, and instructional delivery. These pressures contribute to reduced school attendance, poor learning conditions, and weakened educational planning [7]. Therefore, the stability of basic education in Nigeria is not only dependent on internal policies but also influenced by global geopolitical dynamics, particularly those involving major oil-producing regions like Iran.

## 2. Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative review design to examine the relationship between Middle East geopolitical tensions particularly those involving Iran and the sustainability of basic education in Nigeria. The review model was considered appropriate because the subject under investigation involves synthesizing existing knowledge, drawing connections across sectors (economy and education), and interpreting evidence from diverse secondary sources rather than generating primary data.

### Research Design

The study employed a narrative review approach, which allows for the integration and interpretation of evidence from multiple sources to explain complex social phenomena. This approach was suitable for identifying and analysing the economic and social transmission channels through which Middle East crises influence basic education outcomes in Nigeria. The design enabled the researcher to contextualize findings within Nigeria's socio-economic realities and educational framework.

### Sources of Data

Data for the study were obtained exclusively from secondary sources. These included:

Nigerian newspapers and online media reports (e.g., national dailies and policy commentary platforms), Publications from international development organizations, Government reports and policy briefs on education and the economy, Existing academic literature related to basic education, oil economics, and global geopolitics. Particular emphasis was placed on Nigerian media sources because they provide real-time and context-specific accounts of how global events—such as tensions involving Iran—affect the Nigerian economy and, by extension, the education sector.

### Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To ensure relevance and credibility, the study applied the following criteria:

**Inclusion criteria:** Sources published within recent years, reports directly linking Middle East tensions to economic outcomes in Nigeria, and materials addressing implications for education or social welfare.

**Exclusion criteria:** Sources lacking clear relevance to Nigeria, outdated reports without current significance, and publications without verifiable authorship or institutional backing.

### Data Collection Procedure

Relevant materials were identified through systematic searches using key terms such as Middle East crisis, Iran oil conflict, fuel price increase in Nigeria, inflation and education, and basic education challenges in Nigeria. The researcher reviewed and selected sources that explicitly or implicitly addressed the connection between global oil market disruptions and educational outcomes [8].

### Method of Data Analysis

The study utilized thematic content analysis to interpret the collected data. Information from selected sources was carefully read, coded, and grouped into recurring themes. These themes were then organized into major categories representing the key transmission channels of impact, including: rising fuel prices and school operational costs,

Inflation and household educational expenditure, transportation challenges and school attendance, Government funding constraints and Policy instability and educational planning. The analysis focused on identifying patterns, drawing relationships, and explaining how economic shocks originating from Middle East tensions translate into educational consequences in Nigeria [9].

#### **Validity and Reliability**

To enhance validity, the study triangulated information from multiple sources, particularly cross-checking media reports with policy documents and institutional publications. Reliability was ensured by using consistent criteria for source selection and by focusing on widely reported and corroborated developments [10].

### **3. Results and Discussion on the Impact of the Middle East Crisis on Basic Education in Nigeria**

The influence of Middle East tensions, especially involving Iran, on Nigeria extends beyond macroeconomics into the education sector. At the basic education level, these effects are indirect but deeply felt through economic, social, and infrastructural disruptions. The discussion below presents five major ways this impact occurs, supported with evidence from Nigerian media reports [11].

#### **Rising Fuel Prices and Increased Cost of School Operations**

The Middle East tensions affect basic education in Nigeria in the area of fuel price escalation. As a major oil-producing region, instability in the Middle East often leads to disruptions in global supply, which in turn drives up domestic fuel prices in Nigeria. Despite being an oil-producing country, Nigeria's dependence on imported refined petroleum products means that it is highly vulnerable to such external shocks. The increase in petrol prices has direct implications for school operations. Basic schools, particularly in urban and semi-urban areas, rely heavily on fuel-powered generators due to irregular electricity supply. With rising fuel costs, the financial burden on school administrators increases significantly [12]. Funds that would ordinarily be allocated to teaching aids, classroom maintenance, and co-curricular activities are diverted to energy costs. Moreover, transportation costs for both pupils and teachers rise sharply. Many pupils, especially those attending public schools located far from their homes, depend on commercial transport. When transport fares increase, attendance becomes irregular. Teachers also face similar constraints, which can result in lateness, absenteeism, and reduced instructional time. Over time, these disruptions weaken the effectiveness of classroom teaching and learning processes, thereby undermining the goals of the Universal Basic Education programme.

#### **Inflation and Reduced Household Ability to Fund Basic Education**

Another critical dimension of the Middle East crisis is its contribution to inflationary pressures within the Nigerian economy. It is opined that the rising oil prices triggered by tensions involving Iran often lead to increases in the cost of goods and services, including food, transportation, and housing. This broader economic strain significantly affects households' ability to support children's education. In Nigeria, it is observed that where a large proportion of families operate within limited income margins, inflation reduces disposable income and forces households to re-prioritize expenditures. Education, particularly at the basic level where it is assumed to be "free," still involves indirect costs such as uniforms, books, levies, and transportation. When economic conditions worsen, parents may delay or default on these expenses. This situation has far-reaching consequences for enrolment and retention. Some children are withdrawn from private basic schools and transferred to overcrowded public schools, while others drop out entirely [13]. In more severe cases, children are compelled to engage in street trading or other forms of child labour to supplement family income. These outcomes not only disrupt

individual educational trajectories but also exacerbate inequality within the education system, as children from poorer households are disproportionately affected [14].

### **Disruptions in School Attendance**

Transportation challenges represent a direct and immediate effect of fuel price increases associated with Middle East instability. Scarcity of petroleum products, long queues at filling stations, and fluctuating transport fares create uncertainty in daily mobility. For pupils in basic education, especially those in rural and peri-urban communities, access to school is heavily dependent on affordable and reliable transportation. When transport systems become unstable, school attendance patterns are disrupted [15]. Pupils may arrive late, miss classes entirely, or attend school irregularly. Teachers, particularly those commuting from distant locations, are similarly affected. This results in inconsistent lesson delivery, reduced syllabus coverage, and poor preparation of learners for continuous assessment and examinations. The cumulative effect is a decline in learning outcomes. Basic education, which requires consistent teacher–pupil interaction and structured learning progression, is particularly sensitive to such disruptions. Irregular attendance weakens foundational literacy and numeracy acquisition, thereby affecting long-term educational development.

### **Decline in Government Funding for Basic Education**

While rising oil prices might suggest increased national revenue, the Nigerian context presents a more complex reality. The country's reliance on imported refined petroleum products means that higher global oil prices often translate into increased subsidy burdens or higher domestic fuel costs. Consequently, government resources are stretched, and fiscal priorities shift toward economic stabilization measures [16]. In such circumstances, funding for social sectors like education may be constrained. Allocations to basic education particularly for infrastructure development, teacher training, and instructional materials may be reduced or delayed. This has direct implications for the quality of education delivered in public schools. Inadequate funding manifests in overcrowded classrooms, dilapidated school buildings, insufficient teaching materials, and limited professional development opportunities for teachers. These challenges weaken the capacity of the basic education system to deliver equitable and quality education [17]. Furthermore, disparities between urban and rural schools become more pronounced, as resource constraints disproportionately affect already disadvantaged areas.

### **Weakening of Educational Planning and Policy Stability**

The impact relates to policy instability and weakened educational planning. Frequent economic shocks arising from Middle East tensions expose structural weaknesses in Nigeria's policy response mechanisms. The unpredictability of oil prices and revenue flows makes it difficult for policymakers to engage in long-term planning for the education sector. Basic education programmes, including those implemented under the Universal Basic Education framework, require sustained funding, consistent policy direction, and long-term commitment. Submitted that when economic conditions fluctuate, government priorities often shift, leading to policy discontinuities and implementation gaps [18]. Teacher recruitment and retention plans may be disrupted, curriculum reforms delayed, and infrastructure projects abandoned or slowed down. In addition, uncertainty discourages private sector investment and community participation in education. The overall effect is a fragile education system that struggles to achieve stability and long-term progress [19].

### **Findings**

The findings indicate that the Middle East crisis, particularly involving Iran, affects basic education in Nigeria through interconnected economic and social pathways. These include rising operational costs, reduced household capacity, disrupted attendance,

constrained government funding, and weakened policy frameworks. The cumulative impact is a decline in both access to and quality of basic education. This underscores the need to view educational challenges within a broader global context. Basic education in Nigeria is not insulated from international developments; rather, it is deeply embedded in global economic systems. Strengthening resilience within the education sector therefore requires not only domestic reforms but also strategic responses to external shocks [20].

#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study demonstrates that geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, especially those involving Iran, have far-reaching implications for basic education in Nigeria. Although the relationship is indirect, the effects are profound and multifaceted. Rising fuel prices, inflation, transportation challenges, and constrained government spending collectively undermine access to and quality of education. Pupils face increased barriers to school attendance, while schools operate under strained financial conditions. At the policy level, frequent economic disruptions weaken long-term planning and the effective implementation of educational programmes.

The findings underscore the vulnerability of Nigeria's basic education system to external economic shocks. They also highlight the need to move beyond viewing education challenges as purely domestic issues, recognising the role of global dynamics in shaping local outcomes. Based on the findings, the paper recommends the following:

1. The government should establish dedicated education stabilization funds to protect basic education financing from global economic shocks, particularly fluctuations in oil prices.
2. Schools should be supported to adopt renewable energy sources such as solar power to reduce dependence on fuel and mitigate the impact of rising energy costs.
3. State and local governments should introduce subsidized transport schemes or school bus systems to cushion the effects of fuel price increases on school attendance.
4. Policies such as conditional cash transfers and educational subsidies should be expanded to support low-income families in keeping children in school during periods of economic hardship.
5. Reducing overdependence on oil will help shield the country from external shocks linked to Middle East conflicts and ensure more stable funding for education.
6. Education planners should integrate risk assessment and crisis-response strategies into policy frameworks to ensure continuity of learning during economic disruptions.

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