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Impact of The Middle East Crisis on Education and Counselling in Nigeria: Economic, Social, and Institutional Perspectives

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Abstract: This study examines the impact of the Middle East crisis, particularly involving Iran, on Nigeria's education system and the practice of counselling. Geopolitical instability in the Middle East has disrupted global oil markets, leading to inflation, rising operational costs, and fiscal pressures in oil-dependent economies like Nigeria. These economic shocks have indirect but profound effects on educational access, quality, enrolment, and early childhood education, as well as on the mental health and socio-emotional well-being of students and families. Using a review of local and international media reports, scholarly articles, and policy analyses, the study highlights five key implications for counselling practice, including increased psychological distress, academic uncertainty, demand for trauma-informed support, resource limitations, and the need for economic literacy guidance. The paper concludes that addressing these challenges requires integrated strategies combining economic planning, educational funding, and strengthened counselling infrastructure. Recommendations include enhancing policy support, expanding counselling services, and integrating socio-economic resilience training into educational programs.

Keywords: Middle East crisis, Iran, Nigeria, education, early childhood education, counselling, economic impact

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1. Introduction

The Middle East has historically been a hub of geopolitical tension, with Iran playing a central role in recent crises. Military confrontations, sanctions, and proxy conflicts in the region have disrupted global oil supply and increased energy prices worldwide. For Nigeria, an oil-dependent economy, these external shocks translate into inflation, reduced household purchasing power, and constrained government revenue. Consequently, sectors that rely heavily on public funding and household contributions, such as education, are directly affected [1].

Education, particularly early childhood education, is sensitive to economic instability. Rising operational costs, reduced funding for schools, and increased household expenditure on basic necessities threaten enrolment, learning quality, and infrastructure development. Similarly, the counselling sector experiences increased pressure, as students and families face heightened psychological stress due to socio-economic uncertainties. Counsellors are challenged to provide support for trauma, career uncertainty, and coping with financial and social stressors. This paper explores how the Middle East crisis has affected education and counselling in Nigeria, focusing on five key areas: funding and operational costs of schools, enrolment, acquisition of learning resources, early childhood

education, and implications for counselling. The analysis draws on verified news reports, policy analyses, and scholarly studies to provide insights for education planners, policymakers, and counselling professionals seeking to build resilience against global economic shocks [2].

Literature Review

Review on Middle East crisis

The Middle East crisis, particularly involving Iran, has evolved from long-standing geopolitical tensions into a full-scale confrontation with global implications. The immediate trigger of the recent crisis can be traced to escalating hostilities between Iran, the United States, and Israel, including military strikes and counterattacks that disrupted stability in the region. These tensions are rooted in deeper issues such as nuclear development concerns, ideological rivalry, and regional power competition. Reports indicate that the conflict intensified following coordinated attacks on Iranian targets, leading to retaliatory actions and threats to critical oil transit routes like the Strait of Hormuz, a key global energy corridor. The escalation has transformed a historically indirect conflict into a direct geopolitical crisis with far-reaching consequences [3].

The global economic impact of the crisis has been significant, largely due to disruptions in energy supply. The Middle East accounts for a substantial share of global oil production, and instability in the region has pushed crude oil prices sharply upward. Recent international reports show that oil prices have risen above \$100 per barrel, triggering inflationary pressures across global markets and increasing the cost of transportation, manufacturing, and food production. The International Monetary Fund has also warned that the crisis will slow global economic growth while increasing inflation, particularly due to disruptions in energy and fertilizer supply chains. These developments have created uncertainty in financial markets and placed pressure on both developed and developing economies [4].

In developing countries such as Nigeria, Ogunode Ukozor, Ayoko, and Devi (2026) noted that the crisis has produced mixed but largely adverse economic outcomes. Although higher oil prices may temporarily boost government revenue, the benefits are often offset by rising inflation, increased fuel costs, and economic instability. Nigerian media reports indicate that fuel prices have surged significantly, leading to higher transportation costs and increased prices of goods and services. This has worsened the cost of living for citizens and reduced household purchasing power, even as government earnings from oil exports increase. Analysts further note that the broader impact of the crisis is transmitted through inflation, exchange rate pressure, and fiscal uncertainty, which collectively strain the Nigerian economy [5].

The education sector in Nigeria has not been immune to these economic pressures. As government expenditure becomes constrained by competing fiscal demands and macroeconomic instability, funding for education often suffers. Evidence shows that rising inflation and economic uncertainty limit the ability of governments to sustain or increase budgetary allocations to social sectors such as education [6]. Additionally, increased operational costs driven by higher fuel and energy prices affect the day-to-day running of schools, including transportation, electricity, and procurement of materials. These pressures are particularly severe in a system already characterized by funding gaps and infrastructural deficits. Consequently, the quality and accessibility of education are undermined during periods of economic stress linked to global crises [7].

Early childhood education (ECE), which depends heavily on private funding and household income, is especially vulnerable to the effects of the Middle East crisis. As the cost of living rises, many families are forced to prioritize basic needs such as food and shelter over early schooling, leading to declining enrolment in nursery and pre-primary institutions [8]. At the same time, school proprietors face increased costs of acquiring learning materials, many of which are imported and affected by exchange rate fluctuations. Infrastructure development for ECE centres is also slowed due to higher construction costs and limited capital investment. Reports highlight that the economic strain on Nigerian households continues to deepen, with rising costs across essential services reducing access to education and other social goods. Thus, the Middle East crisis

indirectly weakens the foundation of Nigeria's education system by affecting early childhood education, which is critical for long-term human capital development [9].

2. Materials and Method

The impact of the Middle East Crisis on Education and Counselling in Nigeria: Economic, Social, and Institutional Perspectives. This paper 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 impact of the Middle East Crisis on Education and Counselling in Nigeria: Economic, Social, and Institutional Perspectives. The previous findings are critically analyzed and presented in different themes as on the impact of the Middle East Crisis on Education and Counselling in Nigeria: Economic, Social, and Institutional Perspectives.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion

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

Exclusion

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

3. Result and Discussion

Results and Discussion on implications of the Middle East crisis (with focus on Iran) for counselling in Nigeria,

Increased Psychological Distress among Students and Families

Economic instability caused by Middle East crises often leads to higher inflation, unemployment, and increased cost of living in Nigeria [10]. For children, adolescents, and adults, these stressors manifest as anxiety, depression, and general psychological distress. In schools, counselling professionals face greater demand to provide emotional support to students who experience stress due to parental job loss, reduced household income, or fear about future opportunities. Counselors must therefore adapt their practice to address economic-induced mental health challenges, emphasizing coping mechanisms, resilience-building, and stress management [11].

Increased Cases of Academic and Career Uncertainty

Global crises that affect Nigeria's economy often disrupt educational plans and career pathways. Rising operational costs of schools, reduced funding for education, and declining household income can lead to students dropping out or reconsidering career choices. Counsellors are therefore increasingly required to provide career guidance and academic counseling to help students navigate uncertainties. This includes assisting them in exploring alternative educational pathways, vocational training, and skill development in response to shifting economic realities [12].

Demand for Crisis and Trauma Counselling

The socio-economic effects of the Middle East crisis, such as rising prices, poverty, and uncertainty, often lead to domestic stress, family conflicts, and social tensions. Counsellors in schools and communities may need to provide trauma-informed counselling to children who experience emotional neglect, domestic stress, or social insecurity. This involves equipping children and parents with coping strategies, fostering emotional regulation, and creating safe spaces for open communication [13].

Pressure on Counselling Resources and Accessibility

With more students and families affected by economic and social stressors, the demand for counselling services increases, often surpassing available resources. Nigeria's education system and community counseling frameworks already face challenges such as understaffed counseling units and inadequate facilities. The Middle East crisis exacerbates these shortages, highlighting the need for policy reforms to expand counselling services, train more professionals, and integrate counseling into primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions effectively [14].

Necessity for Economic and Social Skills Guidance

Economic shocks linked to global crises underline the importance of integrating financial literacy and social coping strategies into counselling programs. Students and families need guidance on budgeting, resource management, and resilience during periods of economic hardship. Counsellors therefore play a dual role: providing emotional support while equipping individuals with practical skills to navigate economic challenges, which can enhance their adaptability and long-term well-being [15].

4. Conclusion

The Middle East crisis, particularly the instability involving Iran, has demonstrated how global geopolitical events can indirectly disrupt education systems in developing countries like Nigeria. Economic shocks resulting from fluctuations in oil prices and inflation have increased operational costs for schools, limited government funding for education, and strained household incomes, thereby reducing access to early childhood and other levels of education. These pressures exacerbate challenges in counselling, as students and families experience heightened stress, academic uncertainty, and social tensions. Based on the findings, the study recommends the following:

1) **Increase Protected Funding for Education** – The Nigerian government should allocate ring-fenced funds for education, especially early childhood education, to ensure continuity during economic shocks.

2) **Strengthen Counselling Infrastructure** – Expand counselling services in schools, universities, and communities to address the rising psychological and social needs resulting from economic and geopolitical stressors.

3) **Integrate Economic Literacy and Resilience Training** – Counselling programs should include training on financial planning, coping mechanisms, and social resilience to equip students and families for external economic pressures.

4) **Support Private and Community-Based Schools** – Provide grants or subsidies to help private early childhood centres absorb rising operational costs and maintain quality education.

5) **Develop Policy Frameworks Linking Global Crises to National Planning** – Policymakers should incorporate risk assessments related to international geopolitical events into education and social services planning.

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