

IMPACT OF VIOLENT CONFLICTS ON ADULT LEARNER AND ASSESSMENT.

BY

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Abstract

This paper x-rayed the incidences of violent conflict on education as a whole. It highlighted the impact on adult learner and assessment. The paper also discussed ways of promoting effective learning and assessment in era of violent conflict. It was recommended that government should strive for peace to reduce the incidence of violent conflict in our schools, help adult learners through scholarships, provision of learning materials as way of motivation among others. It was concluded that prompt intervention of government at all levels is required for achievement of proper learning and assessment in era of violent conflict.

Introduction

Teaching learning and assessment are supposed to take place in a serene environment due to the nature of task that is involved. The teacher is expected to have a conducive atmosphere to plan and execute his/her lessons. In the same way, the students need calm environment to study and explore what has been taught to them. Conducive environment is also necessary for proper students' assessment.

Violent conflict in schools has become a major source of disruption of the teaching, learning and assessment activities in Nigerian schools. Violent conflicts involve at least two parties using physical force to resolve competing claims or interest. There is no single, agreed upon definition of what constitute violent conflict. It refers to civil war, ethnic war, inter-state war at high and low intensities as well as violence that falls short of war such as militarized disputes, terrorism and riots or strikes (Szayna et al as cited in Avis, 2019). In 2021, there were 25 attacks on schools, 1440 children were abducted, and 16 children killed. Also no fewer than 618 schools were closed in six northern states (Sokoto, Zamfara, Kano, Kastina, Niger and Yobe) over fear of attack and abduction of pupil and members of staff.(UNICEF, 2021). Previous researches on the effect of violent conflict indicated negative impact on education as measured by outcomes. They include school environment, school attendance and school attainment (Buvinic in Bruck, Maio & Miaari, 2017). Such effects not only concern the adult learners but are also critical to their learning and assessment. This is because it will affect their attainment of such qualifications, what grades they attain and the consequent uses the acquired certificates can be put into or job it is used to obtain. Since the adult learners are large part of the population and human capacity of any economy, their academic challenges need to be taken seriously.

Furthermore, teaching, learning and assessment does not go in isolation, they complement the other. Effective teaching and learning is checked through proper assessment. Assessment in this context implies the entire medium like tests, assignment, project, class work,

examination etc used to check whether the desired learning activities/objectives are achieved. There is no doubt of the impact violent conflict will have on them.

There seems to be dearth of data in this area of study hence we have scarce empirical studies in this area. In developing countries like ours, primary data collection sometimes is difficult, let alone in the area of violent conflict. This paper therefore presents a discussion on the impact of violent conflict on adult learner and assessment under the following headings: The concept of violent conflicts, incidences of violent conflicts in Nigeria, overall impact of violent conflict on Education, impact of violent conflicts on adult learner, impact of violent conflicts on assessment, ways of promoting effective learning and assessment in era of violent conflicts. Recommendations were also made.

The Concept of Violent Conflicts

Violent conflict can be referred to as that which happens when at least two parties use physical force to resolve competing interests. There is no single agreed upon definition of what constitutes violent conflicts. It refers to civil war, ethnic war, inter-state war at high and low intensities as well as violence that falls short of war such as militarized disputes, terrorism and riots or strikes (Szayna et al as cited in Avis, 2019). Violent conflicts can vary in length, intensity and localization, so educational system is affected. Violent conflicts can be between students, between citizens, communities, the government and a rebel group among others. This conflict therefore may or may not emanate from the schools. Whichever way, the school system is affected by its outcome. The significance and magnitude of violent conflict will depend on the characteristics of the country, the conflict, age, gender, ability of the students and on the educational outcome considered (Akbulut-Yuksel, 2014).

Incidents of Violent Conflicts in Nigeria

Boko Haram in Nigeria is one of the deadliest extremist armed groups in the world. According to the global terrorist index 2015, as published by Institute of Economics and Peace (2015), the Boko Haram activities have led to the death of 6,644 people in Nigeria and Cameroon in 2014. Also, it is estimated that 10,000 of Nigerians have died since Boko Haram began in 2009. These deaths have affected various sectors the education sector inclusive. It has been reported that they have variously targeted, attacked and killed teachers, education workers and students in Nigeria. Also that not less than 611 teachers have been killed and 19,000 forced to flee from their locations since the start of insurgency in 2009 (News Release, 2016). The education system has thus been adversely affected through their bombing attacks leading to abduction, death and injuries of teachers and students. It was reported that between 2009 and 2015, that 910 schools have been destroyed and 1,500 forced to close down. Also, by early 2016 students fled the violent conflict areas hence having little or no access to education.

In the report by UNICEF (2021), it was stated that there have been 25 attacks on schools with 1,440 students abducted in Nigeria in 2021. They further stated that the past five years have had the highest numbers of grave violations against children in armed conflicts in West and Central African Region. These include killing and maiming of children, recruitment and use of children as terrorists, abduction of children, rape and other forms of sexual violence and finally attack on schools.

According to UNESCO (2010) “there have been thousands of reported cases of students, teachers, professors, academics and other members of the educational community being taken prisoner, held in captivity, beaten, tortured, burnt alive, shot by rebels, armies and repressive regimes; imprisoned or raped by armed groups or forces in school or on their way to school”.

Impact of Violent Conflicts on Education:

- 1) Violent conflicts negatively affect the quality of learning environment hence academic activities.
- 2) It leads to overcrowding in classrooms due to relocation of students from violence prone environment to other environment for academic activities, hence also affecting their learning.
- 3) Violent conflicts worsen psychological wellbeing of students exposed to violent conflicts either directly or indirectly.
- 4) Violent conflicts can affect students' homes, parents, and siblings hence affecting their composure and ability to study and perform well.
- 5) It affects both learning processes and students' performance in examinations.
- 6) It affects the number that graduates from school due to drop outs, deaths, injuries, death of parent/guardian.
- 7) School facilities are dilapidated among other social amenities. This may lead to stoppage of school activities.
- 8) Violent conflicts results to occupation of schools by the military hence impeding educational activities.
- 9) It reduces number of staff thereby leading to high staff to students' ratio.
- 10) It results in the use of non-qualified teaching staff due to death or withdrawal of qualified teachers on the basis of violent crises in schools.
- 11) Violent conflicts can lead to displacement of learners from schools, as well as their enrolment in new schools and new locations which creates adaption problems. Such learners need a certain time to be familiar to the new environment and pick up in their academic work.
- 12) Violent conflicts lead to cut or total withdrawal of spending on education due to concentration of expenditures on arms needed.
- 13) Countries' educational systems definitely suffer in the face of violent conflicts. It is obvious that the number of teachers and students that will be able to attend school will decrease.
- 14) It makes the quality of teacher training to become faulty and puts physical facilities in a mess.
- 15) With violent conflicts, displacement of staff and students is obvious. Jones and Naylor (2014) stated that violent conflict can make teachers to join armed forces, be killed, injured or choose to leave the teaching profession because schools are unsafe leading to diminished number of teachers.

Impact of Violent Conflicts on Adult Learner

- 1) Violent conflicts disrupt/interrupt the education of the adult learner. Consequently, some of them may feel too old or uninterested to go back to school.
- 2) Violent conflicts have led to loss of parents of adult learners, thereby hampering their further academic growth.
- 3) Violent conflicts alter the development of the adult learner's skill. According to Louisa and Antonio (2016), violent conflicts make some adult learners suffer from psychological and mental disorder, trauma, depression, nervousness, loss of ability to concentrate, passivity, sorrow and suicidal tendencies.
- 4) It leads to loss of interest in learning by the adult learner. The nature of unrest and insecurity as a result of the violent conflict makes the adult learner to focus his effort more on survival and safety.

- 5) It may lead the adult learner to drop out of school. The adult learner may opt out of school where it appears unsafe and risky to be in school especially where schools are target of violent conflict. (UNICEF, 2016)

Impact of Violent Conflicts on Assessment

Violent conflicts disrupt the entire teaching and learning activities in schools. Sometimes schools are closed down for safety of the students as well as that of the teachers. In such situation, school activities are intermittently disrupted like the Monday sit-at-home in the eastern part of Nigeria. The entire teaching and learning as well as assessment are affected in the following ways:

- 1) The scheme of work is not covered as required and as such the students do not learn all that is expected of them in a term.
- 2) The required assessment pattern may not be used in assessing the students especially where in-depth knowledge of the students is earlier expected. The teacher may end up assessing only low cognitive aspect of learning.
- 3) The students may not be assessed in a conducive environment as required to ensure that proper examination ethics are adhered to.
- 4) Even when assessment is done, the result from assessment does not show the true students' ability. The entire domain of learning may not be covered in assessment.
- 5) Students will not be well taught; hence their performance in examination will be affected.
- 6) All required assessments example, assignments, tests, projects may not be covered. This results in going back to one-shot assessment which has so many shortfalls.

Ways of Promoting Effective Learning and Assessment in Era of Violent Conflicts.

- 1) Students /adult learners should relocate to peaceful locations to continue their academic work.
- 2) The government should provide basic amenities as well as education support items to support and encourage learning.
- 3) Prompt make-shift classrooms should be provided by the government to accommodate students from violent conflict areas so as to avoid overcrowding.
- 4) Adhoc teachers should be engaged in environments closer to the violent zone where possibly the students will migrate to avoid outrageous teacher-students ratio.
- 5) Security personnel should be deployed to safeguard students, teachers and school properties in violent prone areas.
- 6) Prompt repair of damaged school facilities due to violent conflicts.
- 7) Re-orientation of the learners, especially adult learners to continue their education.
- 8) The government should provide incentive in the form of scholarships to children and adult learners who might have lost their parent due to violent conflict.
- 9) Online teaching as well as online assessment should be used.
- 10) Capacity development of existing teaching workforce in information and communication technology skills

Recommendations:

Following the huge impact of violent conflicts on entire education, adult learner and assessment, it was recommended that:

- 1) Government should strive for peaceful resolution of conflicts promptly to reduce the incidence of violent conflicts affecting our schools.
- 2) Prompt intervention of the government is required to re-in state schools affected by violent conflicts.

- 3) Government as well as philanthropists should help adult learners through scholarships and provision of learning materials as a way of motivation.
- 4) Government should help in provision of security through deployment of security personnel in schools to ensure safety of lives and school facilities.
- 5) Government should sponsor training of teachers in the use of online teaching and assessment facilities / mediums so as to enhance learning and effective assessment in periods of violent conflicts.
- 6) Government should promote e-learning and virtual schools so that learning and assessment of student can continue even in violent conflict.
- 7) Self-learning should be encouraged through designing, training and use of different online and offline learning and assessment programs and tools

Conclusion

Violent conflicts can be seen to have adverse effect on assessment, teaching, the adult learner as well as the entire teaching and learning. It is therefore imperative that the government should give urgent attention to violent conflicts where it occurs and render necessary help to cushion the impact. Peace and conflict resolution need to be encouraged so as to ensure uninterrupted learning process since violent conflict must not have a place in our society.

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