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Impact of Middle East Crisis on the Management and Sustainability of Private Schools in Nigeria: A Systematic Review

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Abstract: This study examined the impact of the Middle East crisis, with particular attention to Iran-related tensions, on the management and sustainability of private schools in Nigeria. The study adopted a systematic review model, drawing evidence from scholarly journal articles, policy documents, and credible media reports on global economic shocks and their implications for education systems. The review revealed that the crisis has indirectly affected private school management through rising inflation, increased operational costs, declining household income, and exchange rate instability. These factors have led to higher school fees, declining enrollment, staff salary pressures, and disruptions in strategic planning and infrastructure development. The findings further showed that private schools, being largely dependent on tuition fees, are highly vulnerable to external economic shocks. The study concludes that the Middle East crisis has intensified managerial challenges and threatens the sustainability of private schools in Nigeria. It recommends financial innovation, government support policies, diversification of income sources, and improved strategic planning frameworks to enhance resilience in the private education sector.

Keywords: Middle East crisis, private schools, educational management, Nigeria, sustainability, economic shocks

Introduction

Private schools have become a vital component of the Nigerian education system, providing educational services across pre-primary, primary, and secondary levels. These institutions are typically owned and managed by individuals, religious organizations, or corporate bodies and are funded primarily through tuition fees and private investment. Their emergence and rapid growth have been largely attributed to the inability of the government to adequately meet the increasing demand for quality education. As a result, private schools play a complementary role in expanding access, improving quality, and promoting innovation in teaching and learning. the management of private schools in Nigeria is highly sensitive to economic conditions due to their reliance on fee-based income and minimal government support. In recent years, global geopolitical tensions, particularly the Middle East crisis involving Iran, have created economic disruptions that have affected many developing countries, including Nigeria. These disruptions are mainly transmitted through fluctuations in global oil prices, inflationary pressures, and exchange rate volatility. Nigeria, being both an oil-dependent and import-reliant economy, is particularly vulnerable to such external shocks.

The implications of these economic disruptions for private schools are significant. Rising fuel prices increase the cost of running school operations such as transportation and electricity generation. Inflation reduces the purchasing power of parents, leading to declining enrollment and increased fee default rates. At the same time, teachers and other school staff demand higher salaries to cope with rising living costs, thereby increasing personnel expenses. Furthermore, the cost of educational materials, infrastructure development, and technological resources has risen sharply due to exchange rate instability and global supply chain disruptions.

Despite these challenges, limited empirical and review-based studies have systematically examined how the Middle East crisis affects the management of private schools in Nigeria. Most existing studies focus broadly on economic impacts without linking them directly to educational management practices. This study, therefore, seeks to fill this gap by reviewing existing literature to understand the nature, extent, and implications of the crisis on private school management. The study is significant as it provides insights for school proprietors, policymakers, and educational planners on how to develop strategies to mitigate the effects of global economic shocks on the education sector.

Conceptual Terms

Concept of Middle East Crisis

The Middle East crisis, with particular focus on Iran, represents one of the most significant contemporary geopolitical conflicts, rooted in long-standing political, ideological, and strategic tensions involving Iran, the United States, Israel, and their regional allies. The current phase of the crisis escalated dramatically in February 2026 when the United States and Israel launched coordinated military strikes against Iran, targeting its nuclear facilities, military infrastructure, and leadership after the breakdown of diplomatic negotiations over Iran's nuclear programme . These developments marked a turning point in decades of hostility, which had previously been characterized by sanctions, proxy conflicts, and intermittent confrontations rather than full-scale war. At the core of the crisis is Iran's nuclear ambition and its strategic influence across the Middle East. Iran has long been accused by Western powers of pursuing nuclear weapons capability, a claim it denies, asserting that its nuclear programme is for peaceful purposes. However, repeated failures to revive agreements such as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and growing concerns over Iran's ballistic missile programme and regional alliances particularly with groups like Hezbollah and Hamas have heightened tensions. These issues, combined with ideological rivalry between Iran and Israel and broader geopolitical competition with the United States, have made Iran a central actor in Middle Eastern instability (Ogunode, 2026).

The crisis escalated into open conflict when large-scale airstrikes were launched on Iran on February

28, 2026, resulting in significant destruction and the killing of key Iranian leaders. In response, Iran carried out retaliatory attacks targeting U.S. military bases, Israeli infrastructure, and allied interests across the Gulf region, including missile and drone strikes. This exchange of attacks has transformed the situation into a broader regional conflict, drawing in multiple actors and raising fears of a prolonged war. Another critical dimension of the crisis is its impact on global energy security. The Middle East, particularly the Persian Gulf, is a major hub for global oil and gas supply. Iran's strategic position along the Strait of Hormuz a key maritime route for oil transport has made the conflict especially consequential. Disruptions in this region have led to sharp increases in oil prices and volatility in global energy markets. Recent international reports indicate that the conflict has caused one of the largest disruptions to global oil supply in history, affecting a significant proportion of global energy flows and contributing to inflation and economic instability worldwide. This highlights the global reach of what might otherwise appear to be a regional conflict (Ogunode, 2026). This conflict in Nigeria have impacted every public and private institutions badly. It has affected health sector, the banking sector, sport, and education especially private schools in Nigeria.

Concept of Private schools

Private schools in Nigeria refer to educational institutions that are owned, funded, and managed by individuals, religious bodies, communities, or private organizations rather than the government. Unlike public schools, they rely primarily on tuition fees and private investment for their operations, although they are still regulated by state and federal education authorities. Scholars note that private participation in education in Nigeria is both an economic and social activity, where private individuals provide schooling services to complement government efforts. Similarly, private schools are often described as fee-paying institutions established to provide alternative or improved educational services due to the inability of the government alone to meet the growing demand for quality education. In Nigeria, these schools operate across all levelspre-primary, primary, and secondary and sometimes adopt both national and international curricula.

Private schools in Nigeria can be broadly categorized into different types based on ownership, structure, and orientation. One major category is faith-based or mission schools, which are established and managed by religious organizations such as churches or Islamic bodies and often combine formal education with moral or religious instruction. Another category is individual or proprietorship schools, owned by private individuals or families and run as business ventures. There are also corporate or international private schools, which offer foreign curricula such as British or American systems and are usually more expensive, catering to elite families. Additionally, private schools may be classified into low-cost private schools, which target low-income families, and high-fee private schools, which provide premium facilities and services. Some specialized private schools also exist, such as vocational schools and special needs institutions, designed to meet specific educational demands.

The contributions of private schools to the Nigerian education system are significant and multifaceted. Firstly, they bridge the gap in access to education created by insufficient public school capacity. The rapid growth of private schools in Nigeria has been largely driven by the government's inability to meet the educational needs of its population, making private institutions a necessary alternative. Secondly, private schools contribute to improving the quality of education by offering better infrastructure, smaller class sizes, and closer supervision of teachers, which enhances teaching and learning outcomes. Thirdly, they promote innovation and diversity in curriculum delivery, often introducing modern teaching methods, digital tools, and international curricula that broaden students' global exposure. Private schools contribute to employment generation by providing jobs for teachers, administrators, and support staff. They also encourage competition within the education sector, which can push both public and private institutions to improve standards and efficiency. In addition, private schools help in meeting specialized educational needs, such as vocational training and special education, thereby expanding opportunities for different categories of learners.

Methodology Result on

This study adopted a systematic review model to examine existing literature on the impact of the

Middle East crisis on the management of private schools in Nigeria. The review method is appropriate because it enables the researcher to synthesize findings from multiple sources and provide a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

The study relied on secondary data obtained from peer-reviewed journal articles, conference papers, government publications, policy documents, and credible media reports. Sources were selected based on relevance to key themes such as global economic shocks, oil price fluctuations, inflation, and educational management in Nigeria. Databases and platforms consulted included Google Scholar, ResearchGate, institutional repositories, and official government websites.

Inclusion criteria were:

(1) studies published between 2015 and 2026;

(2) studies focusing on economic crises, Middle East conflicts, or oil price shocks;

(3) literature linking economic conditions to education or organizational management; and

(4) reports relevant to the Nigerian context or comparable developing economies.

Exclusion criteria included unpublished opinions without empirical or analytical backing, and studies not related to education or economic impacts.

The collected materials were analyzed using thematic content analysis, where key themes such as operational cost, enrollment trends, staff management, and strategic planning were identified and synthesized. This approach allowed for a structured interpretation of how the Middle East crisis influences private school management practices in Nigeria.

4.0 Result on Impact of Middle East Crisis on Management of Private Schools in Nigeria

The Middle East crisis, particularly with tensions involving Iran, has indirectly but significantly affected the management of private schools in Nigeria through its impact on the national economy. One of the most evident consequences is the rise in operational costs. The crisis has contributed to increases in global oil prices, which in turn have driven up fuel prices in Nigeria. This has made it more expensive for private schools to run generators, power facilities, and transport students, thereby placing a heavy financial burden on school proprietors. Reports indicate that rising fuel prices and inflation linked to global geopolitical tensions have increased the cost of doing business across sectors in Nigeria (BusinessDay, 2026; Reuters, 2026). For private school managers, this results in budget distortions and difficult financial decisions, including whether to raise school fees or reduce operational quality.

Closely related to this is the issue of affordability and declining enrollment. As inflation rises, household purchasing power declines, making it harder for parents to afford private education. Consequently, many parents withdraw their children or delay fee payments, leading to unstable revenue for schools. Studies on Nigeria's current economic conditions show that the cost-of-living crisis has intensified due to global conflicts, thereby worsening financial pressure on households (Vanguard, 2026). This creates serious management challenges, as school administrators must now implement flexible payment systems and alternative revenue strategies to remain operational (Kasimu, Lawan,Pajo, & Okoh, 2026a).

The crisis has also intensified human resource challenges within private schools. With the rising cost of living, teachers and other staff demand higher salaries to cope with increased expenses such as transportation and food. However, many private schools are unable to meet these demands due to declining revenue, resulting in staff dissatisfaction, low morale, and increased turnover. According to The Nation (2026), inflationary pressures in Nigeria have significantly affected workers' welfare, which directly translates to workplace instability. For school managers, this complicates staff retention and performance management, ultimately affecting the quality of education delivered (Ogunode, Ukozor, Ayoko, & Devi, 2026; Suleiman, & Gladstone, 2026).

The instability caused by the Middle East crisis has disrupted strategic planning and long-term development in private schools. Economic uncertainty, exchange rate volatility, and fluctuating prices of goods and services make it difficult for school owners to plan effectively. Infrastructure projects are often delayed or abandoned due to the high cost of building materials and imported educational equipment. Research has shown that global crises contribute to economic instability in developing countries, limiting investment in sectors such as education (Unachukwu & Anukam, 2026). As a result, private schools struggle to expand, modernize, or maintain quality infrastructure.

The cost of educational inputs has increased significantly. Many private schools depend on imported teaching materials, ICT tools, and laboratory equipment, all of which have become more expensive due to supply chain disruptions and currency depreciation. This reduces the ability of schools to provide modern and effective learning resources (Dickson, 2026). Consequently, school managers are forced to either compromise on quality or pass additional costs onto parents, both of which have negative implications for educational outcomes.

Beyond financial and operational challenges, the crisis has also created psychological and administrative stress for school proprietors. Managing a private school in such an unpredictable economic environment requires constant adjustment, risk assessment, and crisis management. School owners must balance maintaining educational standards with financial survival while also meeting the expectations of parents and staff. This ongoing pressure as noted by Kasimu, Lawan, Pajo, and Okoh. (2026) affects decision-making and leadership effectiveness.

The Middle East crisis has weakened the sustainability of private schools in Nigeria. Since private education is largely dependent on tuition fees rather than government funding, the combined effects of rising costs, declining enrollment, and economic uncertainty threaten the survival of many schools. The situation according to Ogunode, Ayoko, Ukozor, & Devi (2026) underscores the need for adaptive management strategies, financial innovation, and supportive government policies to ensure that private schools continue to play their vital role in Nigeria's education system.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study concludes that the Middle East crisis, particularly involving Iran, has had far-reaching indirect effects on the management and sustainability of private schools in Nigeria. Through economic transmission mechanisms such as inflation, rising fuel prices, and exchange rate instability, the crisis has significantly increased operational costs, reduced parents' ability to pay school fees, and created financial instability within private educational institutions. The study further revealed that these challenges have led to declining enrollment, staff dissatisfaction, and disruptions in strategic planning and infrastructure development. Given that private schools rely heavily on tuition fees for survival, they are particularly vulnerable to such global economic shocks. The crisis has therefore intensified the complexity of managing private schools and has exposed the need for more resilient and adaptive management strategies.

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

1. Diversification of Revenue Sources: Private school owners should explore alternative income streams such as partnerships, grants, and auxiliary services to reduce overdependence on tuition fees.
2. Flexible Financial Policies: School management should introduce flexible fee payment systems, scholarships, and installment plans to accommodate parents facing economic hardship.
3. Government Support and Policy Intervention: The government should provide targeted financial support, tax relief, and policy incentives to private schools to enhance their sustainability during economic crises.
4. Strategic Financial Planning: School administrators should adopt proactive financial planning and risk management strategies to cope with economic uncertainties.
5. Investment in Cost-Effective Technologies: Private schools should leverage digital tools and energy-efficient technologies to reduce operational costs and improve efficiency.
6. Capacity Building for School Managers: Training programs should be organized for school proprietors and administrators on crisis management, financial planning, and institutional

resilience.

7. Strengthening Public-Private Partnerships: Collaboration between government and private school operators should be encouraged to ensure stability and continuity in the education sector.

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