

Armed conflicts and educational behaviours of teachers and students in Sankera Area, Benue State, Nigeria

Terfa Jato* and Emmanuel Iornumbe

Department of Educational Foundations and Management, College of Education, Katsina-Ala, Benue State, Nigeria.

*Corresponding author. Email: son_of_man@yahoo.com; Tel: +2348054071100.

Copyright © 2025 Jato and Iornumbe. This article remains permanently open access under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0](#), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Received 27th February 2025; Accepted 29th March 2025

ABSTRACT: The decade-long armed activities by anarchic and horrendous outlaws operating in the Sankera Area of Benue State, Nigeria, have infernally impacted various sectors of society in the region, notably including education. This study investigated the impact of armed conflicts on the educational behaviours of teachers and students in the region – an area comprised of three Local Government areas of Benue State: Katsina-Ala, Ukum and Logo. Using a survey design combining descriptive and benchmark comparison approaches, the research sampled 365 teachers from a total population of 7,250 in 136 schools across three Local Government areas. Data collection employed the Armed Conflicts and Educational Behaviours Questionnaire (AC&EBQ), with analysis utilising means and one-sample t-tests against a 2.5 benchmark. Results revealed the significant prevalence of armed conflicts, manifesting through displacement, property destruction and economic disruption. Teachers exhibited negative behavioural changes including decreased motivation, frequent lateness and difficulty covering curricula. Students showed increased absenteeism, declined academic performance, and reduced engagement. Statistical analysis confirmed significant impacts of armed conflicts on both teachers' ($t=17.654$, $p<0.000$) and students' ($t=26.108$, $p<0.000$) educational behaviours. The study recommended strengthening security measures, implementing psychosocial support programmes, providing conflict-sensitive teacher training, maintaining educational continuity through alternative schooling options, increasing funding for conflict-zone education and creating flexible learning pathways.

Keywords: Armed conflicts, educational behaviours, students, teachers.

INTRODUCTION

For more than a decade now, Benue State of Nigeria has been convulsed by a raging conflagration arising from the fiery breath of a vicious dragon which has manifested – and continues to manifest – itself in sanguinary clashes and skirmishes. The Sankera area of the state appears to be at the centre of events, facing existential threats from this blood-howling monster. This region of the state, geographically defined as the Katsina-Ala/Ukum/Logo federal constituency, is seldom out of local and national news due to gruesome killings of innocent people in their homes and on their farms, kidnapping for ransom and attacks on property. For example, July of 2024, quite like other months preceding it, was awash in news coverage regarding the occurrences of lethal crises in the area. Aar (2024) documented the raging spree by youths in Ukum

Local Government area, who razed several key buildings – including the police divisional headquarters, a public and a private school, the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) office, the Local Government Secretariat and the High Court of Justice building – all in Zaki-Biam, the headquarters, following a deadly attack by local militia on the Ayati-Borikyo community, which claimed eleven lives in July of the year. Charles (2024) in July penned a deepening insecurity in Benue State, resulting in shattered hopes and homes. Duru (2024) reported the gruesome killing of at least 18 persons by suspected armed bandits in the Mbache community of Katsina-Ala Local Government Area, also in July. Earlier in March, Hir (2024) recorded instances of suspected herdsmen militia, kidnappers and bandits on a terror

spree, with existential impacts inflicted on residents across several Local Government areas of Benue State that notably included all three Local Government Areas in the Sankera area, resulting in thousands of people displaced and many villages deserted. On their part, Umoru *et al.* (2024) reported on the slaughter of no fewer than 50 persons, including a family of seven, on March 7, 2024, in the Ukum Local Government area in Sankera by suspected armed herdsmen militia, supported by local Tiv bandits, also in March of 2024.

The instances of insecurity highlighted above paint a vivid picture of a region reckoning with levels of armed conflicts soaring to stratospheric heights, and these conflicts have defined the sociological reality of the people in the Sankera area since time immemorial. Significant impediments to educational development are well-recognised, prevalent realities in regions grappling with recurring acts of violence and instability, especially those arising from armed conflicts, like the unfortunate situation with the Sankera area of Benue State. The impact of such conflicts on educational behaviours is multi-faceted. For example, teachers in conflict zones may live in trepidation, driven by a sense of doom and gloom from anticipated vicious attacks. They may be forced to flee the geographical areas of their workplaces, leading to a shortage of qualified educators. Teachers who do not flee may experience elevated levels of stress, trauma and fear, which can render them emasculated in their responsibilities as effective instructors. As the stress and trauma experienced by teachers compromise effective teaching practices, the impact of armed conflicts on the educational behaviours of teachers becomes a significant source of impact on the educational behaviours of their students. Students in conflict-affected areas may also be forced to drop out of school due to the insecurity and lack of access to educational facilities. In the Sankera region, these conflicts are observed to have displaced populations, damaged educational infrastructure and instilled fear and anxiety among students and teachers.

The impact of armed conflicts on educational behaviours, in the general consensus, is multi-faceted and far-reaching. Prolonged exposure to violence and insecurity can profoundly influence the attitudes, aspirations and decision-making processes of students, parents and educators alike (Omoeva *et al.*, 2018). The fear and trauma associated with armed conflicts can create a sense of hopelessness, adversely affecting motivation and engagement with educational pursuits (Assefa *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, armed conflicts often lead to the destruction of educational infrastructure, the displacement of teachers, and the disruption of academic calendars, exacerbating existing challenges in accessing quality education (Jones and Naylor, 2022; Devkota, 2016). Families may prioritise immediate survival needs over educational investments, further contributing to low enrolment and high dropout rates.

Therefore, it is crucial to examine the specific ways in

which armed conflicts have influenced educational behaviours in the Sankera area in order to provide valuable insights for policymakers and humanitarian organisations who might be interested in investing efforts in the mitigation of the adverse effects of these conflicts.

Statement of the problem

Despite the recognition of education as a fundamental human right and a key driver of socio-economic development, the prolonged armed conflicts in the Sankera area of Benue State appear to have disrupted the educational trajectories of countless children and youth in the region. Furthermore, existing literature and studies have primarily focused on broader national or global trends, failing to capture the lived reality within the socio-ecological context of the region. Consequently, there is a pressing need for in-depth, contextualised understanding and empirical evidence of how armed conflicts have shaped, and continue to shape, the educational behaviours of teachers and students in the Sankera area. The study is, therefore, justified by the urgent need to address the educational challenges faced by conflict-laden communities in the Sankera area in order to support the attainment of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations, 2015).

Objectives of the study

1. To highlight the prevalent realities of armed conflicts in the Sankera area of Benue State, Nigeria.
2. To ascertain the educational behaviours common among teachers within the prevailing context of armed conflicts in the Sankera area of Benue State, Nigeria.
3. To explore the educational behaviours typical among students within the prevailing context of armed conflicts in the Sankera area of Benue State, Nigeria.
4. To analyse the statistical significance in teachers' mean ratings regarding the impact of armed conflicts on their educational behaviours, when quantified in relation to the value of a pre-set benchmark, in the Sankera area of Benue State, State, Nigeria.
5. To assess the statistical significance in teachers' mean ratings regarding the impact of armed conflicts on the educational behaviours of their students, when quantified in relation to the value of a pre-set benchmark, in the Sankera area of Benue State, State, Nigeria.

Research questions

The following questions guided the study:

1. What are the prevalent realities of armed conflicts in the Sankera area of Benue State, Nigeria?
2. What are the educational behaviours common among teachers within the prevailing context of armed conflicts in the Sankera area of Benue State, Nigeria?
3. What are the educational behaviours typical among students within the prevailing context of armed conflicts in the Sankera area of Benue State, Nigeria?
4. What is the statistical significance in teachers' mean ratings regarding the impact of armed conflicts on their educational behaviours, when quantified in relation to the value of a pre-set benchmark, in the Sankera area of Benue State, State, Nigeria?
5. What is the statistical significance in teachers' mean ratings regarding the impact of armed conflicts on the educational behaviours of their students, when quantified in relation to the value of a pre-set benchmark, in the Sankera area of Benue State, State, Nigeria?

Research hypotheses

Research Questions 4 and 5 were converted to hypotheses, thus:

H₀₁: There is no statistical significance in teachers' mean ratings regarding the impact of armed conflicts on their educational behaviours, when quantified in relation to the value of a pre-set benchmark, in the Sankera area of Benue State, State, Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no statistical significance in teachers' mean ratings regarding the impact of armed conflicts on the educational behaviours of their students, when quantified in relation to the value of a pre-set benchmark, in the Sankera area of Benue State, State, Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical review

Social-ecological theory and the human security framework provide a structured lens for understanding how armed conflicts in the Sankera area of Benue State disrupt educational behaviours among teachers and students. By applying these frameworks, the study contextualises the multi-level effects of conflict on education, ranging from personal experiences to broader societal dynamics.

Social-ecological theory

The social-ecological model, developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), posits that human development is influenced by relations within multiple levels of environmental systems: the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem and the macrosystem. At the microsystem level, the theory provides

a lens for the comprehension of potential behavioural changes in teachers and students. This includes examining how teachers may struggle with curriculum delivery, experience decreased motivation, arrive late, or develop negative attitudes toward teaching amid conflict. For students, the theory provides a lens in comprehending the patterns of absenteeism, academic performance changes, focus difficulties and participation levels as potential individual-level impacts. The mesosystem lens sheds light on how the displacement of families could create circumstances prejudicial to positive and quality interactions between the home and school environments. When families experience displacement, the home-school relations may become severely compromised, potentially generating stressful challenges to educational behaviours among both teachers and students.

Coming to the dynamics in the exosystem, the theoretical lens directs insights into how community-level factors such as loss of life, property destruction, economic decline, and widespread fear might indirectly affect educational behaviours. Teachers may struggle to adjust teaching approaches for students who miss school, representing an exosystem challenge where community disruptions create classroom complications. Finally, the macrosystem analysis provides context for exploring how the constant threat of conflict might create a pervasive cultural context of insecurity that could fundamentally alter educational priorities and behaviours across the Sankera region.

Human security framework

The human security framework, introduced by the United Nations Development Programme in its Human Development Report of 1994, provides a context useful for analysing how adverse security circumstances arising from armed conflicts impact education in the Sankera region. Personal security is compromised when violence leads to displacement and loss of life, forcing students to abandon schools and teachers to operate under constant threat. Economic security is eviscerated as a child of declining community economic activities that reduce resources for education, leaving teachers underpaid and schools underfunded. Community security deteriorates as students withdraw from extracurricular activities and social trust declines. Political security is undermined when the state fails to protect schools, leaving curricula incomplete and learning environments unstable.

Contextual review

Armed conflicts

The concept of "armed conflicts" can be succinctly defined as the utilisation of weaponry in confrontations or hostilities between organised entities (Wallenstein, 2002). The

Uppsala Conflict Data Programme (UCDP), a preeminent authority in conflict research, elaborates on this definition by stipulating that an armed conflict entails "a contested incompatibility concerning government and/or territory, wherein the deployment of armed force between two parties, with at least one being a state government, culminates in a minimum of 25 battle-related fatalities within a calendar year" (Pettersson and Öberg, 2020, p. 578). This definition underscores two pivotal elements: the participation of a state actor and a minimum threshold of battle-related deaths. However, armed conflicts can manifest in diverse forms and intensities, encompassing a spectrum of violence that ranges from low-intensity conflicts to full-scale wars (Justino, 2016).

To further elucidate the complexities of armed conflicts, the UCDP categorises them into three primary types: interstate armed conflicts, involving two or more states; internal armed conflicts, occurring within the boundaries of a single state; and internationalized internal armed conflicts, where external states intervene in an internal conflict (Pettersson and Öberg, 2020). This categorisation acknowledges the multifaceted nature of armed conflicts and the potential involvement of multiple actors, both domestic and international.

The consequences of armed conflicts are profound and far-reaching. They include loss of lives, displacement of populations, destruction of infrastructure, disruption of essential services and long-term psychological and emotional trauma (Betancourt *et al.*, 2013). Furthermore, Kadir *et al.* (2018) expand on the definition of armed conflict to encompass any organised dispute involving weaponry, violence, or force, whether within national borders or beyond and involving state actors or non-governmental entities. Examples of armed conflicts include international wars, civil wars, ethnic conflicts, and violence associated with narcotics trafficking and gang violence.

Educational behaviours

Educational behaviours constitute a wide spectrum of behaviours that directly influence the learning process from actions and reactions to interactions exhibited by individuals involved in the educational process (NeuroLaunch Editorial Team, 2024). For example, teacher behaviours play a critical role in shaping the learning environment and influencing student behaviours. The way teachers present information and guide learning activities significantly impacts student engagement and understanding (Marzano, 2017). Effective teachers utilise a variety of methods to cater for diverse learning styles and promote critical thinking skills. Effective classroom management techniques create a safe and orderly environment where students feel comfortable participating (Wong and Wong, 2009). Teachers who motivate their students and provide positive reinforcement for desired

behaviours create a positive learning atmosphere that fosters engagement and academic success (Brophy, 2004). A teacher's dedication to student learning and professional development sets the tone for the classroom and influences student attitudes towards learning (Boyd *et al.*, 2011). Further, teachers who model the behaviours they expect from their students can have a significant impact on student behaviours. For students, educational behaviours encompass how they approach learning. Regular attendance is crucial for accessing learning opportunities and maintaining progress (School Dekho, 2023). Active participation in discussions, group work, and presentations demonstrates engagement and facilitates deeper understanding of the material (Astin, 1993). The ability to focus on the task at hand and minimise distractions is essential for successful learning (Pashler *et al.*, 2001). Completing homework assignments, projects, and in-class exercises allows students to practice skills, reinforce learning, and demonstrate their understanding (Guskey, 2010).

Gaps in the literature review

Despite the fact that the studies highlighted above provide empirical evidence regarding the impact of conflicts on education in various global contexts, including Nigeria, they do not fully capture the dynamics in the unique socio-cultural and political realities of the Sankera area of Benue State, Nigeria. Furthermore, the cited studies centrally focus on broad impacts of conflict, such as school closures and displacement. While these are critical issues, they do not specifically address the nuanced dynamics regarding the educational behaviours of teachers and students, which are the focus of this study.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a survey design combining descriptive and benchmark comparison approaches to address the research questions. The descriptive aspect provided insights into the educational behaviours of teachers and students amidst armed conflicts in the Sankera area of Benue State, Nigeria, while the benchmark comparison examined the impact of these conflicts by comparing the calculated means of teachers' ratings to the value of a pre-set benchmark. Due to literacy constraints, students were excluded from the study population, as many, particularly primary school pupils, lacked the literacy skills required to accurately complete the questionnaire. Teachers, who interact with students daily, acted as proxies, providing insightful and comprehensive responses regarding the educational behaviours of their students. The study population consisted of 7,250 teachers across 1,360 schools in the Sankera area, which includes the Katsina-Ala, Ukum and Logo Local Government areas of Benue

State. A 10% sampling technique was applied to select 136 schools, aligning with Ary *et al.* (2018), who recommend a 5 – 10% sample for large populations to ensure generalisability when rigorous methods are used, making it both practical and statistically sound. A proportionate random sampling method was then used to select a sample of 365 teachers, further strengthening representativeness by adhering to Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size guidelines for reliable inferences in educational research. Data was collected using the Armed Conflicts and Educational Behaviours Questionnaire (AC&EBQ), a 4-point Likert scale questionnaire divided into three sections: *Prevalent Realities of Armed Conflicts*; *Educational Behaviours of Teachers*; and *Educational Behaviours of Students*, with each section comprising five items. The reliability of the instrument was assessed for internal consistency of items in each of the three sections through a pilot test using Cronbach's alpha, yielding coefficients of 0.79, 0.77 and 0.75 for the first, second and third sections, respectively. Data collection was conducted by the researchers together with two trained research assistants, who assisted in the administration of the questionnaires.

The prevalent realities of armed conflicts and the educational behaviours common among teachers and students were assessed using mean comparisons against a predetermined threshold value of 2.5. This benchmark was derived from the midpoint of the four-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 4 = Strongly Agree) by calculating the average of the two middle response categories (Disagree = 2 and Agree = 3), following established methodological conventions for forced-choice scales (Norman, 2010). Mathematically, this was formalised as:

$$\mu = \frac{(V2 + V3)}{n}$$

Where μ represented the theoretical mean, $V2$ and $V3$ denoted the ordinal values corresponding to the second and third response categories, respectively, and n represented the count of the two middle response categories ($n = 2$). This approach aligns with recommendations by Sullivan and Artino (2013), who advocate using calculated midpoints when true neutral options are absent in Likert scales. Calculated means exceeding or equalling 2.5 were interpreted as indicating significant prevalence and significant commonality of educational behaviours. Conversely, a value below 2.5 suggested non-significance, reflecting a lack of prevalence or commonality.

For hypothesis testing, a one-sample t-test compared teachers' ratings against the same benchmark of 2.5, computed as:

$$\text{Benchmark} = \frac{2 + 3}{2} = 2.5$$

At the 0.05 level of significance, if the calculated mean

exceeded 2.5, the null hypotheses were rejected, indicating a statistically significant impact of armed conflicts on teachers' educational behaviours and on students' educational behaviours. Conversely, if the calculated mean was below 2.5, the null hypothesis would not have been rejected, suggesting no statistically significant impact.

The benchmark selection and analytical approach were thus grounded in established statistical conventions for Likert scale analysis, following Boone and Boone (2012) guidelines for rigorous interpretation of ordinal scale data in educational research.

RESULTS

This section presents results arising from data analysis, addressing the research questions and testing the hypotheses.

Research Question 1: What are the prevalent realities of armed conflicts in the Sankera area of Benue State, Nigeria?

The findings presented in Table 1 reveal that armed conflicts are a harsh reality in the Sankera area of Benue State, with all indicators scoring significantly higher than the benchmark score of 2.5.

Research Question 2: What are the educational behaviours common among teachers within the prevailing context of armed conflicts in the Sankera area of Benue State, Nigeria?

The findings in Table 2 indicate that common educational behaviours among teachers in the Sankera area of Benue State, Nigeria, include difficulty in covering the curriculum, feeling unmotivated, frequent lateness, developing negative attitudes towards teaching and inconsistent adjustment of teaching pace to accommodate students affected by conflicts, with all mean scores exceeding the benchmark score of 2.5.

Research Question 3: What are the educational behaviours typical among students within the prevailing context of armed conflicts in the Sankera area of Benue State, Nigeria?

The findings in Table 3 indicate that typical educational behaviours among students in the Sankera area of Benue State, Nigeria, include increased absenteeism, declined academic performance, lack of focus on studies, decreased participation in class and extracurricular activities, and general disengagement from curricular and extracurricular activities arising from the impacts of armed conflicts on their teachers, with all mean scores exceeding the benchmark score of 2.5.

Table 1. Descriptive analysis of the prevalent realities of armed conflicts in the Sankera area of Benue State, Nigeria (No of Participants = 365; Benchmark Score = 2.5).

Item	Prevalent realities of armed conflicts	Mean	Significant
1	Armed conflicts occur in increasing frequency in Sankera, resulting displacement of families from their homes	3.544	Yes
2	Armed conflicts have resulted in massive loss of life and destruction of property in Sankera	3.690	Yes
3	Armed conflicts have led to a decrease in the community's economic activities	3.599	Yes
4	Armed conflicts have caused widespread fear and anxiety among residents	3.343	Yes
5	The threat of armed conflict is a constant concern for the community	3.143	Yes

Source: Data from the authors' fieldwork (analysed using SPSS Version 22, 2024).

Table 2. Descriptive analysis of the educational behaviours common among teachers within the prevailing context of armed conflicts in the Sankera area of Benue State, Nigeria (No of Participants = 365; Benchmark Score = 2.5).

Item	Teacher educational behaviour	Mean	Significant
1	Teachers find it difficult to cover the curriculum when disruptions are caused by conflict	3.456	Yes
2	Teachers often feel unmotivated to inspire their students in difficult circumstances	3.079	Yes
3	Teachers frequently arrive late to school due to the challenges posed by the conflict	3.690	Yes
4	Teachers develop a negative attitude towards teaching in the face of armed conflicts	3.927	Yes
5	Teachers do not always adjust their teaching pace to accommodate students who may have missed school due to conflict	3.000	Yes

Source: Data from the authors' fieldwork (analysed using SPSS Version 22, 2024).

Table 3. Descriptive analysis of the educational behaviours typical among students within the prevailing context of armed conflicts in the Sankera area of Benue State, Nigeria (No of Participants = 365; Benchmark Score = 2.5).

Item	Student educational behaviour	Mean	Significant
1	Students show increased absenteeism due to the impact of armed conflicts	3.453	Yes
2	Students' academic performance has declined because of disruptions caused by armed conflicts.	3.362	Yes
3	Students display a lack of focus on their studies because of the stress associated with the conflict	3.198	Yes
4	Students' participation in class and extracurricular activities has decreased because of their experiences with the conflict	3.271	Yes
5	Generally, students "curricularly" and extracurricular from the adverse impacts of armed conflicts on their teachers' educational behaviours	3.088	Yes

Source: Data from the Authors' fieldwork (analysed using SPSS Version 22, 2024).

Testing of Hypothesis 1: What is the statistical significance in teachers' mean ratings regarding the impact of armed conflicts on their educational behaviours, when quantified in relation to the value of a pre-set benchmark, in the Sankera area of Benue State, State, Nigeria?

The one-sample t-test results for the test of Hypothesis 1

presented in Table 4 reveal that the t-value is 17.654 with 328 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.000, which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The mean difference is 0.5255, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.467 to 0.584, indicating that the teachers' ratings regarding the impact of armed conflicts on their educational behaviours are significantly higher than the pre-set benchmark of 2.5. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is

Table 4. One-sample test of teachers' ratings regarding the impact of armed conflicts on their educational behaviours in the Sankera area of Benue State, Nigeria (Test Value = 2.5).

Parameter	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Impact of armed conflicts on the educational behaviours of teachers	17.654	328	0.000	0.5255	0.467	0.584

Source: Data from the Authors' fieldwork (analysed using SPSS Version 22, 2024).

Table 5. One-sample test of teachers' ratings regarding the impact of armed conflicts on the educational behaviours of their students in the Sankera area of Benue State, Nigeria (Test Value = 2.5).

Parameter	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Impact of armed conflicts on the educational behaviours of students	26.108	328	0.000	0.7839	0.725	0.843

Source: Data from the authors' fieldwork (analysed using SPSS Version 22, 2024).

rejected, and it can be concluded that armed conflicts have a substantial and significant impact on teachers' educational behaviours in the Sankera area of Benue State, Nigeria.

Testing of Hypothesis 2: What is the statistical significance in teachers' mean ratings regarding the impact of armed conflicts on the educational behaviours of their students, when quantified in relation to the value of a pre-set benchmark, in the Sankera area of Benue State, State, Nigeria?

The one-sample t-test results for the test of Hypothesis 2 reveal that the t-value is 26.108 with 328 degrees of freedom and a p-value of 0.000, which is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The mean difference is 0.7839, with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.725 to 0.843, indicating that teachers' ratings regarding the impact of armed conflicts on the educational behaviours of their students are significantly higher than the pre-set benchmark of 2.5. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 is rejected, and it can be concluded that armed conflicts have a substantial impact on the educational behaviours of students in the Sankera area of Benue State, Nigeria.

DISCUSSION

The descriptive analysis of the realities of armed conflicts in the Sankera area of Benue State enriches the general understanding of the prevalence and severity of these conflicts, with a significant impact on the sociological and educational terrain of the study location. With means consistently exceeding the 2.5 benchmark, the empirical

data reveals profound disruptions across multiple dimensions of community life, aligning with existing literature and news reports and presenting a grim picture of a region destabilised by pervasive violence and insecurity. The displacement of families, scoring a significant mean of 3.544, manifests in stark reality through documented cases of thousands fleeing their homes, leaving entire villages deserted as reported by Hir (2024). The destabilisation arising from these displacements disrupts community cohesion and severely impacts access to educational services, as displaced families often struggle to enrol their children in stable schools. Most striking is the overwhelming evidence of loss of life and destruction to property, registering the highest mean of 3.690. This finding gains particular poignancy when considered in relation to specific incidents, such as the slaughter of fifty individuals, including an entire family of seven, as documented by Umoru *et al.* (2024), and the systematic destruction of vital institutional buildings in Zaki-Biam as reported by Aar (2024). The dramatic decline in economic activities, indicated by a mean of 3.599, suggests deeper structural damage to community sustainability. The economic downturn is likely to result in reduced funding for education and an increase with a likely consequence of children being forced out of school. The picture of doom and gloom from psychological impacts emerges clearly through the data, with widespread fear and anxiety scoring a mean of 3.343. This finding particularly draws attention to the challenges facing the educational sector, where teachers operate under persistent threat, potentially compromising their effectiveness as educators. The constant concern about conflict (mean 3.143), while slightly lower but still significant, indicates how deeply security considerations have become embedded in daily life.

The finding on the educational behaviours of teachers in the Sankera area of Benue State, within the context of armed conflicts, yields a striking revelation that emerges in teachers' development of negative attitudes towards teaching, registering the highest mean score of 3.927. This finding diametrically stands in variance with Boyd *et al.* (2011) vision of teacher dedication as a fulcrum for setting positive classroom tones. The severe disruption to professional commitment suggests a fundamental challenge to the educational foundation in the conflict-affected Sankera. The high prevalence of late arrival to school among teachers (mean 3.690) represents a significant variation from Wong and Wong (2009) principles of effective classroom management and creation of orderly learning environments. The mean score of 3.456 for the difficulty in covering the curriculum highlights a critical issue for teachers operating in conflict zones. Frequent disruptions caused by armed conflicts make it challenging to maintain continuity in teaching, leaving gaps in curriculum coverage. This finding constitutes a substantial variation in Marzano (2017) vision of effective information presentation from the practical realities facing Sankera's educators, potentially compromising student understanding and achievement. A mean score of 3.079 indicates that many teachers do not feel sufficiently motivated to inspire their students in such difficult circumstances. This lack of motivation can be attributed to the psychological toll of teaching in a conflict-affected area, where fear and instability prevail. This finding particularly contradicts Brophy (2004) emphasis on teacher motivation as crucial for fostering student engagement and academic success. The data suggest that conflict-related stressors significantly impair teachers' capacity to create the positive learning atmosphere necessary for effective education. Perhaps most concerning is teachers' reduced capacity to accommodate conflict-affected students (mean 3.000). This finding challenges Walugembe *et al.* (2022) conception of educational behaviours as adaptive responses that enhance learning processes. It suggests a concerning rigidity in teaching approaches precisely when flexibility is most needed.

The findings on the educational behaviours of students in the Sankera area of Benue State, Nigeria, reveal how armed conflicts block students in primary and secondary schools in their efforts at effective engagement with the learning process. The most pronounced finding is the elevated rates of student absenteeism due to armed conflicts, which register a mean score of 3.453. This finding significantly contradicts School Dekho's (2023) emphasis on regular attendance as fundamental to accessing learning opportunities and maintaining academic progress. Academic performance decline, indicated by a mean score of 3.362, represents a troubling outcome of conflict-related disruptions. This finding points to a breakdown in what Guskey (2010) identifies as essential learning demonstrations through assignments,

projects and exercises. The data suggests that conflict-related disruptions are substantially compromising the dynamics required for students to practice skills and reinforce learning effectively. The decrease in class participation and extracurricular engagement (mean 3.271) operates at variance with Astin (1993) recognition of active participation as crucial for deeper understanding. The absence of participation not only affects individual students but also adulterates the vibrancy of the learning environment, further reducing collective engagement and morale. Students' decreased levels of focus on studies (mean 3.198) present another significant challenge, contradicting Pashler *et al.* (2001) emphasis on concentrated attention as essential for successful learning. The data also suggests that conflict-related stress is severely compromising students' ability to maintain the mental focus necessary for effective learning. The general disengagement from both curricular and extracurricular activities (mean score 3.088), influenced by teachers' compromised educational behaviours, indicates a concerning cascading effect through the educational system. This finding suggests that the impact of armed conflicts creates a cyclical pattern of educational degeneration, where teacher distress contributes to student disengagement, potentially amplifying academic challenges. In essence, when teachers are not sufficiently motivated or able to perform their roles effectively, this becomes a phenomenon of adverse impacts on students, creating a cycle of disengagement that perpetuates the negative effects of conflict on education.

The one-sample t-test analysis of the impact of armed conflicts on the educational behaviours of teachers in the Sankera area of Benue State, Nigeria yields robust results ($t=17.654$, $df=328$, $p<0.000$), demonstrating significant evidence of armed conflicts' impact on teacher behaviours in the region. The mean difference of 0.5255, bounded by a 95% confidence interval (0.467-0.584), provides strong statistical validation that these impacts substantially exceed the benchmark threshold, firmly establishing the relationship between armed conflicts and educational disruption. The results demonstrate correspondence with Jones and Naylor (2022) comprehensive documentation of conflict impacts on Nigerian education for the Education Above All Foundation. Their identification of 10 primary ways through which conflicts affect education – from school closures to fear-induced attendance issues and declining educational delivery capacity – provides a broader contextual framework that validates the current statistical findings. The findings also draw notable parallels with Assefa *et al.* (2022) research in Ethiopia's Tigray region, whose convergent mixed-method study similarly revealed decreased teacher effectiveness, among other negative educational behaviours.

The one-sample t-test analysis of the impact of armed conflicts on the educational behaviours of students in the Sankera area of Benue State, Nigeria, offers robust statistical validation of armed conflicts' severe impact on

student education in the region: $t=26.108$, $df=328$ and $p<0.000$. The substantial mean difference of 0.7839, with a 95% confidence interval (0.725-0.843), provides compelling evidence that these impacts significantly extend beyond the benchmark threshold, demonstrating an incontrovertible relationship between armed conflicts and educational disruptions for learners in the region. These findings align notably with Bertoni *et al.* (2019) quantitative analysis of Boko Haram's impact on north-eastern Nigeria's education system. Their panel fixed-effects regressions similarly revealed significant reductions in school enrolment. The findings also demonstrate correspondence with Jones and Naylor (2022) comprehensive documentation of conflict impacts on education in Nigeria. Their identification of multiple impact pathways, including school closures and security-related attendance issues, provides a contextual framework validating the current statistical findings. Finally, the findings parallel the results of a research effort by Assefa *et al.* (2022) in Ethiopia's Tigray region, where their convergent mixed-method research revealed reduced student enrolment, increased dropout rates and an unwished-for phenomenon linked to the higher incidence of out-of-school students.

Conclusion

Armed conflicts in the Sankera area of Benue State, Nigeria, have registered pervasive impacts across multiple dimensions of educational life, from physical security to psychological wellbeing, which have significantly compromised the educational behaviours of teachers and students. Teachers in the conflict-affected area exhibit significant behavioural changes that compromise educational quality. The constant threat of violence, disruption of daily routines and the displacement arising from the conflicts contribute to a significant decrease in their teaching effectiveness. Teachers find it increasingly difficult to centralise time and efforts on their professional responsibilities when faced with the challenges of maintaining personal safety and stability. This lack of focus and increased anxiety leads to a decline in the quality of teaching, reducing students' engagement and their ability to learn effectively. The educational behaviours of students in the region reflect signs of educational degeneration under conflict conditions. Increased absenteeism, a decline in academic performance and a lack of focus on studies are evident indicators of the educational disruption caused by the conflict. Students affected by the trauma of violence and displacement often struggle to concentrate on their lessons, leading to lower participation in both academic and extracurricular activities. These behaviours reflect not only an academic struggle but also a deep psychological impact that corrodes their ability to fully engage in the dynamics of learning.

Recommendations

1. Government and security agencies should centralise efforts on addressing the root causes of armed conflicts by implementing peacebuilding initiatives, promoting dialogue between conflicting groups and ensuring the effective enforcement of laws to reduce violence and insecurity.
2. Government and NGOs should implement psychosocial support programs for teachers and students, offering counselling and stress management resources to address the emotional impact of armed conflicts.
3. Educational institutions and teacher training programmes should train teachers on conflict-sensitive teaching and resilience-building strategies to manage teaching in conflict environments better.
4. Community leaders, local authorities, NGOs, and educational institutions must collaborate to ensure education continuity for displaced students by providing alternative schooling options, such as mobile schools, temporary learning spaces, online learning and non-formal education.
5. Government and educational policymakers should allocate more funding for education in conflict zones, focusing on learning materials, infrastructure repairs and resources to ensure continued learning.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

REFERENCES

- Aar, A. (2024, July 4). *Protesters burn Ukum LG Secretariat, INEC office as bandits kill over 11 residents*. National Record. Retrieved from <https://www.nationalrecord.com.ng/protesters-burn-ukum-lg-secretariat-inec-office-as-bandits-kill-over-11-residents/>
- Assefa, Y., Tilwani, S. A., & Moges, B. T. (2023). The impact of armed violence on educational institutions, students' educational attainment and the role of actors in governance of the education process. *Cogent Education*, 10(1), 2189503.
- Assefa, Y., Tilwani, S. A., Moges, B. T. & Shah, M. A. (2022). The impact of armed violence on students' educational attainment and the role of parents in resilience schooling and the education process. *Heliyon*, 8(12), e12192.
- Astin, A. W. (1993). *What matters in college? Four critical years revisited*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Bertoni, E., Di Maio, M., Molini, V. & Nisticò, R. (2019). Education is forbidden: The effect of the Boko Haram conflict on education in North-East Nigeria. *Journal of Development Economics*, 141, 102249.
- Betancourt, T. S., Brennan, R. T., Rubin-Smith, J., Fitzmaurice, G. M. & Gilman, S. E. (2013). Sierra Leone's former child soldiers: A longitudinal study of risk, protective factors, and mental health. *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 49(6), 606-615.

- Boone, H. N., & Boone, D. A. (2012). Analyzing Likert Data. *Journal of Extension*, 50(2), 1-5.
- Boyd, D., Grossman, J., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wykoff, J. (2011). Who leaves? Teacher retention and student achievement. *Educational Researcher*, 40(8), 426-441.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.
- Brophy, J. (2004). *Motivating students to learn*. Routledge.
- Charles, J. (2024, July 19). *Shadow of death: Benue's deepening insecurity leaves trail of shattered hopes, homes*. Punch. Retrieved from <https://punchng.com/shadow-of-death-benues-deepening-insecurity-leaves-trail-of-shattered-hopes-homes/>
- Devkota, S. P. (2016, September 5). Impact of armed conflict on education. TRANSCEND Media Service. Retrieved from <https://www.transcend.org/tms/2016/09/impact-of-armed-conflict-on-education/>
- Duru, P. (2024, July 20). *18 killed, others injured by armed bandits in Benue community*. Vanguard. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2024/07/18-killed-others-injured-by-armed-bandits-in-benue-community/>
- Guskey, T. R. (2010). *Formative assessment*. Corwin.
- Hir, S. (2024, April 6). *Benue: Herdsmen, bandits unleash endless terror on residents*. The Sun. Retrieved from <https://thesun.ng/benue-herdsmen-bandits-unleash-endless-terror-on-residents/>
- Jones, A., & Naylor, R. (2022). *The quantitative impact of armed conflict on education in the Nigeria: Counting the human and financial costs*. Education Development Trust. Retrieved from <https://www.edt.org/research-and-insights/the-quantitative-impact-of-armed-conflict-on-education-in-the-nigeria-counting-the-human-and-financial-costs/>
- Justino, P. (2016). Supply and demand restrictions to education in conflict-affected countries: New research and future agendas. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 47, 76-85.
- Kadir, A., Shenoda, S., Goldhagen, J., Pitterman, S., Suchdev, P. S., Chan, K. J., Howard, C. R., McGann, P., St Clair, N. E., Yun, K., & Arnold, L. D. (2018). The effects of armed conflict on children. *Pediatrics*, 142(6), e20182586.
- Krejcie, R. V., & Morgan, D. W. (1970). Determining sample size for research activities. *Educational and psychological measurement*, 30(3), 607-610.
- Marzano, R. J. (2017). *The new art and science of teaching* (p. 110). Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press.
- Norman, G. (2010). Likert scales, levels of measurement and the "laws" of statistics. *Advances in health sciences education*, 15, 625-632.
- NeuroLaunch Editorial Team (2024, September 22). Behavior and education: Shaping learning outcomes in the classroom. NeuroLaunch.com. Retrieved from <https://neurolaunch.com/behavior-and-education/>
- Omoeva, C., Hatch, R., & Moussa, W. (2018). The effects of armed conflict on educational attainment and inequality. *Connecticut Education Policy and Data Centre, Connecticut, Washington, DC*. Retrieved from [https://www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/Omoeva%20Moussa%20Hatch%20\(2018\)%20-%20Impacts%20of%20conflict%20on%20education.pdf](https://www.epdc.org/sites/default/files/documents/Omoeva%20Moussa%20Hatch%20(2018)%20-%20Impacts%20of%20conflict%20on%20education.pdf)
- Pashler, H., Johnston, J. C., & Ruthruff, E. (2001). Attention and performance. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52(1), 629-651.
- Pettersson, T., & Öberg, M. (2020). Organized violence, 1989–2019. *Journal of Peace Research*, 57(4), 597-613.
- School Dekho (2023). How poor teaching can affect a student's academic performance? Retrieved from <https://www.schooldekho.org/school/blog/details/How-Poor-Teaching-Can-Affect-a-Student%27s-Academic-Performance--162>
- Sullivan, G. M., & Artino Jr, A. R. (2013). Analyzing and interpreting data from Likert-type scales. *Journal of Graduate Medical Education*, 5(4), 541-542.
- Umoru, H., Duru, D., & Chapi-Odekina, G. (2024, March 7). *Bloodbath in Benue: 50 killed as militia gangs go to war*. Vanguard. Retrieved from <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2024/03/bloodbath-in-benue-50-killed-as-militia-gangs-go-to-war/>
- United Nations (2015). *Transforming our world: The 2030 agenda for sustainable development*. Retrieved from <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>
- Wallensteen, P. (2002). *Understanding conflict resolution: War, peace and the global system*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Walugembe, A., Ntayi, J., Olupot, C., & Elasu, J. (2022). Adaptive behaviors in education institutions before and after COVID-19: A systematic literature review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 1017321.
- Wong, H. K., & Wong, R. T. (2009). *The first days of school: How to be an effective teacher*. Mountain View, CA: Harry K. Wong Publications.