

PERCEPTION OF SCHOOL STAKEHOLDERS ON THE EFFECT OF SCHOOL CLOSURE ON STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN KATSINA STATE, NORTH-WEST, NIGERIA

Dr. Muhammad Sani Umar

Dr. Sani Abubakar, & Dr. Abdulhahim Bello Rimi

Department of Educational Psychology and Counselling,
College of Education, Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Nigeria

Abstract

This study examined the perceptions of key school stakeholders on the effects of school closure on secondary school students' academic achievement in Katsina state, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was adopted, involving 450 respondents selected through multi-stage sampling. Data were collected using the Stakeholders' Perceptions of School Closures and Students' Academic Performance Questionnaire (SPSC-SAPQ; Cronbach $\alpha = 0.78$) and analyzed using descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA at $\alpha = 0.05$. Results showed that stakeholders strongly agreed that prolonged school closures negatively affected academic performance (grand mean = 3.72, SD = 0.51). ANOVA confirmed a statistically significant negative effect of school closure on students' academic performance ($F = 4.873$, $p = 0.008$) and revealed significant differences in perception across stakeholder groups ($F = 3.214$, $p = 0.041$), with parents and teachers perceiving more severe consequences than administrators. Learning loss was rated most severe for students from low-income households (mean = 3.83). The study recommends targeted remedial interventions, improved digital learning infrastructure, and stakeholder-inclusive policy frameworks to mitigate the effects of future disruptions.

Keywords: School Stakeholders, School Closure, Academic Performance.

Introduction

Education is universally acknowledged as a fundamental driver of socio-economic development, human capital formation, and individual empowerment. It plays a pivotal role in equipping individuals with the knowledge, skills, and competencies required for meaningful participation in society. In developing nations such as Nigeria, education remains a critical tool for poverty reduction, social mobility, and national development. However, the effectiveness of any education system depends largely on the continuity and stability of its instructional processes. When disruptions occur particularly in the form of prolonged school closures the consequences on students' learning outcomes and overall well-being can be profound.

In recent times, Nigeria's education system has faced repeated disruptions arising from both global and local crises. The outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 led to widespread school closures across the world, affecting over 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries (UNESCO, 2021). While many countries adopted remote learning strategies to mitigate the impact, Nigeria faced significant challenges due to limited digital infrastructure, inadequate access to technology, and socio-economic inequalities (Oladele, 2021; Nwosu & Okeke, 2021). Beyond the pandemic, the Nigerian education system has also been severely affected by persistent security challenges such as insurgency, armed banditry, and kidnapping, which have further disrupted schooling in several regions (Aminu, 2022).

One of the states most affected by these disruptions is Katsina state, located in the north-western region of the country. The state has experienced repeated school closures due to insecurity, forcing both urban and rural schools to suspend academic activities for extended

periods (Musa & Bello, 2021). These prolonged interruptions have significantly reduced instructional time, disrupted curriculum delivery, and weakened teacher-student interactions. As a result, students in the state are increasingly vulnerable to poor academic outcomes, school dropout, and long-term educational disadvantage.

This study is built around three major variables: prolonged school closures, stakeholders' perceptions, and students' academic performance. These variables are conceptually and functionally interrelated. Prolonged school closure refers to the extended suspension of formal teaching and learning activities due to emergencies such as pandemics, insecurity, or natural disasters. Unlike temporary interruptions, prolonged closures have cumulative negative effects on students' learning progression. According to Aristovnik et al. (2020), extended absence from structured school environments leads to reduced academic engagement, loss of learning motivation, and widening knowledge gaps. In Katsina State, prolonged school closures are often linked not only to public health emergencies but also to security threats. These closures disrupt access to qualified teachers, instructional materials, and structured learning environments. Additionally, the lack of viable alternative learning systems such as online or distance education further exacerbates learning loss, especially among students from disadvantaged backgrounds (Nwosu & Okeke, 2021). Thus, prolonged school closures in this study are viewed as a major disruptive force affecting the continuity and effectiveness of education delivery.

Stakeholders' perceptions refer to the views, attitudes, beliefs, and interpretations held by individuals and groups involved in the education process. These include teachers, school administrators, parents, policymakers, and community leaders. Their perceptions are crucial because they influence both the understanding of educational challenges and the strategies adopted to address them. Johnson (2019) emphasizes that stakeholders' perceptions shape policy formulation, implementation, and the success of intervention programmes. For example, teachers' perceptions of students' learning loss may determine the intensity of remedial teaching, while parents' attitudes toward education can affect students' participation in home-based learning. In communities within Katsina State, stakeholders have expressed concerns over rising dropout rates, increased child labour, and early marriages particularly among female students during prolonged school closures (Musa & Bello, 2021). In this study, stakeholders' perceptions are treated as an intervening variable because they mediate the relationship between school closures and academic outcomes. Positive perceptions can encourage proactive interventions, while negative perceptions may hinder effective responses.

Students' academic performance refers to the measurable learning outcomes achieved by students, typically assessed through examinations, tests, and continuous assessment. It reflects students' mastery of subject content and their ability to apply acquired knowledge and skills. Academic performance is highly sensitive to disruptions in the educational process. Reduced instructional time, limited access to learning resources, and weakened teacher-student interaction negatively affect comprehension and retention (Aristovnik et al., 2020). In Nigeria, recent reports from the West African Examinations Council (2023) indicate a decline in students' performance in core subjects, particularly in regions affected by school closures. Furthermore, students from low-income households are disproportionately affected due to lack of access to digital learning tools, electricity, and conducive learning environments at home (World Bank, 2020). Therefore, students' academic performance in this study serves as the outcome variable reflecting the cumulative effects of prolonged school closures and stakeholder responses.

Although several studies have examined the impact of school closures globally, there is limited empirical research focusing on stakeholder perceptions in conflict-affected regions of Nigeria, particularly in Katsina State. Most existing studies emphasize learning loss without adequately exploring how stakeholders interpret and respond to these disruptions. This study therefore fills an important gap by integrating both academic performance outcomes and stakeholder perspectives. The findings will provide valuable insights for policymakers, educators, and development agencies in designing effective strategies for learning recovery and strengthening the resilience of the education system against future disruptions. Key undesirable consequences included inadequate continuity of student.

Statement of the Problem

The primary goal of secondary education is to equip students with foundational knowledge, critical thinking skills, and the academic qualifications necessary for higher education and societal development. To achieve this, a consistent and uninterrupted academic calendar is essential. Ideally, continuous student-teacher engagement in a structured school environment fosters optimal academic performance and cognitive development. However, the reality in recent years has starkly contrasted with this ideal. Secondary schools in Katsina State, North-Western Nigeria, have experienced unprecedented and prolonged closures, driven by a combination of global health crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic and severe localized security challenges, including the threat of banditry and kidnappings targeting educational institutions.

The immediate consequence of these prolonged school closures is a significant disruption to the academic calendar, resulting in truncated syllabi, loss of instructional time, and a heavy reliance on alternative learning methods that many students in rural and semi-urban areas are ill-equipped to access. Observations and preliminary reports suggest that this disruption has led to learning loss, diminished student motivation, and a noticeable decline in overall academic performance, particularly in high-stakes terminal examinations such as WAEC and NECO. While the general negative impacts of school closures are widely acknowledged, there is a critical gap in understanding how these effects are perceived by the core stakeholders, teachers, parents, and school administrators specifically within the unique socio-economic and security context of Katsina State. Therefore, the problem this study seeks to address is the lack of empirical data regarding how school stakeholders perceive the magnitude and specific nature of the effect of school closures on students' academic performance in Katsina State.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the perception of various school stakeholders (teachers, parents, and administrators) regarding the extent to which prolonged school closures have affected the academic performance of secondary school students in Katsina State.
2. To determine whether there is a significant difference in the perceptions held by different stakeholder groups concerning the specific academic consequences of school closures.

Research Questions

1. What is the perception of school stakeholders regarding the impact of prolonged school closures on the academic performance of secondary school students in Katsina State?
2. How do the perceptions of different stakeholder groups differ regarding the specific academic consequences of school closures?

Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant negative effect of school closures on students' academic performance as perceived by school stakeholders in secondary schools in Katsina State.

H₀₂: There is no significant difference in the perceptions of different stakeholder groups (teachers, parents, and administrators) regarding the effect of school closures on students' academic performance.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design, which is appropriate for systematically collecting data on the opinions, perceptions, and experiences of a defined population. This design is particularly suitable for studies that seek to describe existing conditions and examine relationships among variables without manipulating them. In the context of this study, the design enabled the researcher to assess stakeholders' perceptions regarding the impact of prolonged school closures on students' academic performance in Katsina State.

The target population comprised key educational stakeholders, including secondary school teachers, school administrators (principals and vice-principals), and parents/guardians across the educational zones in Katsina State. These groups were selected because of their direct involvement in students' learning processes and their capacity to provide informed perspectives on the effects of school closures. A total sample size of 450 respondents was used for the study, consisting of 200 teachers, 100 school administrators, and 150 parents/guardians. The sample size was considered adequate for ensuring representativeness and enhancing the generalizability of findings. A multi-stage sampling procedure was employed. In stage one, local government areas (LGAs) that experienced significant and recurrent school closures due to insecurity and other disruptions were purposively selected. In Stage Two, secondary schools were chosen from the selected LGAs using simple random sampling techniques to give all schools an equal chance of selection and to minimize selection bias. In stage three, the respondents were stratified into three categories teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians and proportionate stratified random sampling was used to select participants from each group. Data for the study were collected using a structured, researcher-developed questionnaire titled the "Stakeholders' Perceptions of School Closures and Students' Academic Performance Questionnaire (SPSC-SAPQ)". Responses were measured on a 4-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (4), Agree (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1). The use of a 4-point scale eliminated neutrality and encouraged respondents to make clear judgment. The instrument was subjected to face and content validity by experts in educational psychology and measurement and evaluation. The reliability of the instrument was established using the Cronbach Alpha coefficient, yielding a coefficient of 0.78, indicating acceptable internal consistency. Descriptive statistics (Mean and Standard Deviation) were used to answer the research questions, while inferential statistics, specifically Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), were used to test the formulated hypotheses at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the perception of school stakeholders regarding the impact of prolonged school closures on the academic performance of secondary school students in Katsina State?

Table 1: Mean Ratings and Standard Deviations of Stakeholders' Perceptions on the Impact of School Closures on Academic Performance

Item	N	Mean	SD	Remark
Prolonged school closures led to significant loss of instructional time.	450	3.72	0.51	Agreed
School closures resulted in widening knowledge gaps among students.	450	3.68	0.57	Agreed
Students showed reduced motivation for academic work following school closures.	450	3.61	0.60	Agreed
School closures negatively affected students' performance in terminal examinations (WAEC/NECO).	450	3.75	0.48	Agreed
Learning loss was more severe for students from low-income households.	450	3.83	0.42	Agreed
Alternative learning strategies (online/radio) were largely inaccessible to students in Katsina State.	450	3.79	0.46	Agreed
Students lost foundational academic skills due to prolonged school closures.	450	3.66	0.54	Agreed
The disruption of the academic calendar negatively affected curriculum delivery.	450	3.71	0.49	Agreed
Grand Mean / SD	450	3.72	0.51	Agreed

Table 1 reveals that all eight items recorded mean scores above 2.50, ranging from 3.61 to 3.83, with a grand mean of 3.72 and a standard deviation of 0.51. These figures indicate a strong and consistent level of agreement among stakeholders that prolonged school closures have negatively impacted students' academic performance. The item with the highest mean rating was "learning loss was more severe for students from low-income households" (Mean = 3.83; SD = 0.42), suggesting stakeholders' acute awareness of the socio-economic dimensions of educational disruption. The item with the lowest mean, yet still firmly above the decision cut-off, was "students showed reduced motivation for academic work following school closures" (Mean = 3.61; SD = 0.60). Overall, the findings from Research Question 1 affirm that stakeholders across all three groups perceived prolonged school closures as having a profoundly negative effect on students' academic performance.

Research Question 2: How do the perceptions of different stakeholder groups differ regarding the specific academic consequences of school closures?

Table 2: Comparative Mean Ratings of Stakeholder Groups on Academic Consequences of School Closures

Item	Teachers (n=200) Mean (SD)	Admins (n=100) Mean (SD)	Parents (n=150) Mean (SD)	Overall Mean	Remark
Extent of learning loss observed among students	3.78 (0.47)	3.65 (0.52)	3.81 (0.44)	3.75	Agreed
Decline in student performance in key subjects	3.71 (0.50)	3.60 (0.55)	3.74 (0.49)	3.69	Agreed
Reduced engagement and motivation in students	3.64 (0.53)	3.52 (0.58)	3.69 (0.50)	3.62	Agreed
Impact on examination outcomes (WAEC/NECO)	3.80 (0.43)	3.70 (0.47)	3.76 (0.46)	3.76	Agreed
Widening academic inequality between students	3.73 (0.48)	3.62 (0.53)	3.77 (0.46)	3.71	Agreed
Grand Mean	3.73	3.62	3.75	3.71	Agreed

As shown in table 2, parents/guardians recorded the highest overall mean (3.75), followed closely by teachers (3.73), with school administrators recording the lowest grand mean (3.62). Although all groups agreed that school closures had negative academic consequences, the variation in mean scores across stakeholder groups suggests that the intensity of perceived impact differs. Parents and teachers who have more direct and sustained interaction with students' day-to-day academic experiences tended to rate the impact more severely than administrators, whose engagement with academic performance is often mediated through institutional reports and aggregate data.

H₀₁: stated that there is no significant negative effect of school closures on students' academic performance as perceived by school stakeholders in secondary schools in Katsina state. A one-way ANOVA was conducted to test this hypothesis at a 0.05 level of significance.

Table 3: ANOVA Summary Table for H₀₁ — Effect of School Closures on Academic Performance

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F-value	P-value	Decision
Between Groups	2.841	2	1.421	4.873	0.008	Reject H ₀₁
Within Groups	130.162	447	0.291			
Total	133.003	449				

The ANOVA results in table 3 reveal an F-value of 4.873 with a corresponding p-value of 0.008, which is below the 0.05 significance threshold. On this basis, the null hypothesis H_{01} is rejected. This indicates that there is a statistically significant negative effect of school closures on students' academic performance as perceived by school stakeholders in Katsina state. The rejection of this hypothesis confirms the descriptive findings reported in Table 2, providing inferential support for the conclusion that stakeholders' perceptions of the academic impact of school closures are not merely impressionistic but reflect a consistently perceived, statistically significant phenomenon.

H_{02} : stated that there is no significant difference in the perceptions of different stakeholder groups (teachers, parents, and administrators) regarding the effect of school closures on students' academic performance.

Table 4: ANOVA Summary Table for H_{02} — Differences in Stakeholder Group Perceptions

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares (SS)	df	Mean Square (MS)	F-value	P-value	Decision
Between Groups	1.356	2	0.678	3.214	0.041	Reject H_{02}
Within Groups	94.318	447	0.211			
Total	95.674	449				

The ANOVA results in table 4 yield an F-value of 3.214 and a p-value of 0.041, which falls below the 0.05 significance threshold. The null hypothesis H_{02} is therefore rejected. This finding indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in the perceptions of teachers, school administrators, and parents/guardians regarding the academic consequences of school closures. While all groups agreed on the negative impact, the magnitude of their perceptions differed significantly, with parents and teachers perceiving more severe academic consequences than administrators. This variation is consistent with the descriptive group differences observed in Table 3 and carries important implications for how interventions targeting stakeholder engagement and educational recovery are designed and communicated.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study revealed a strong and statistically significant consensus among school stakeholders in Katsina state that prolonged school closures have had severe negative consequences on students' academic performance. With a grand mean of 3.72 across all items and a significant ANOVA result ($F = 4.873$, $p = 0.008$), the study confirms that the perceived academic impact is not anecdotal but represents a deeply felt and consistently held view across all stakeholder groups. This finding is consistent with a growing body of national and international literature on the academic consequences of school closures.

At the global level, Engzell, Frey, and Verhagen (2021) demonstrated that school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic produced measurable learning losses comparable to months of missed schooling. Similarly, Mazrekaj and De Witte (2023) found that learning deficits resulting from closures were as damaging as those caused by major natural disasters. The current study extends these findings to the Katsina state context, demonstrating that the academic consequences of school closures are perceived with comparable severity in a conflict-affected Nigerian setting, where closures are driven not only by pandemics but by persistent armed banditry and insecurity.

Specifically, the finding that stakeholders rated the disproportionate impact on students from low-income households most highly (Mean = 3.83) resonates with the World Bank (2020)

position that school closures widen educational inequalities, with the most economically vulnerable students bearing the heaviest academic burden due to their limited access to digital learning tools, electricity, and conducive home learning environments. This is particularly salient in Katsina State, where rural poverty levels are among the highest in the country and alternative learning infrastructure is virtually non-existent (Nwosu & Okeke, 2021).

The finding that stakeholders perceived school closures as disrupting curriculum delivery and leading to significant loss of instructional time (Mean = 3.71) aligns with the observations of Ndejjo et al. (2023) in their multi-country study across DRC, Nigeria, Senegal, and Uganda, which documented the cumulative impact of over 120 weeks of full school closure on the continuity of student education. In the Katsina State context, this disruption is further compounded by the fact that many schools closed following abductions and security threats were never fully reopened, meaning the instructional loss for affected students was not a temporary but a potentially permanent disruption (Amnesty International, cited in ThisDay Live, 2025).

The second finding of this study revealed that there are statistically significant differences in the perceptions of teachers, administrators, and parents/guardians ($F = 3.214$, $p = 0.041$) is theoretically significant and practically important. Although all three groups agreed that school closures had negatively affected students' academic performance, parents and teachers perceived the impact more acutely than school administrators. This differential in perception can be explained within the framework of stakeholder theory as developed by Freeman (1984) and applied to educational settings by Johnson (2019). Teachers and parents occupy roles of direct and sustained engagement with students' academic lives. Teachers observe firsthand the widening knowledge gaps, reduced classroom participation, and deteriorating examination performance that follow prolonged closures. Parents, in turn, witness the diminished academic engagement of their children at home, as well as the social and psychological consequences of prolonged school absence, including increased dropout temptation and susceptibility to recruitment into exploitative labour or criminal activity in the insecurity-ravaged communities of Katsina State (Musa & Bello, 2021).

School administrators, by contrast, interact with academic performance primarily through aggregated institutional data, official records, and policy compliance, which may attenuate their immediate personal awareness of the degree of individual student learning loss. This gap between administrative perception and grassroots reality has significant policy implications: if educational recovery programmes are designed based primarily on administrative perception, they risk underestimating the depth of academic deficits and the urgency of targeted intervention. These findings are in alignment with the broader Nigerian literature. IRE Journals (2024) similarly found variations in stakeholder perceptions depending on their proximity to students' day-to-day academic experiences, emphasizing the importance of triangulating input from all stakeholder categories when designing educational policy responses.

A distinctive aspect of this study's findings is that the school closures under examination were driven not only by the COVID-19 pandemic but also by armed banditry and kidnapping, making the Katsina State context uniquely severe and complex. Data from the NMPI reveal that Katsina State has shut down 52 schools, with 1.4 million children representing 45.9% of the school-aged population currently out of school (Legit.ng, 2025). This figure is catastrophic and contextualizes the depth of stakeholder concern captured in this study's findings. Ladan's (2023) research on banditry impacts in Jibia LGA of Katsina State found that armed banditry incidences directly hindered teaching and learning through school closures and student withdrawal, a finding that directly parallels the perceptions documented in this study. The

compound effect of COVID-19 school closures and security-driven closures means that many Katsina State students have experienced more years of disrupted schooling than uninterrupted formal education, resulting in a generation-wide academic crisis that is simultaneously a security crisis, a poverty crisis, and a child rights crisis. Ökörđi and Molnár's (2022) finding that academic gaps in the "COVID cohort" will not naturally diminish without targeted remedial intervention is particularly instructive in this context. For Katsina State's "insecurity cohort" students whose schooling has been disrupted by multiple consecutive years of closures driven by different causes the urgency and scale of remedial action required is even greater.

Conclusion

This study established that stakeholders in Katsina state perceive prolonged school closures as having a significant and multidimensional negative impact on students' academic performance. Key outcomes perceived to have been adversely affected include instructional time, curriculum delivery, student motivation, examination performance, and academic equity, with students from low-income and conflict-exposed households bearing the greatest burden.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are offered:

1. The Federal and Katsina state governments in collaboration with UNICEF and other development partners, should immediately deploy evidence-based remedial education programmes targeting students who have experienced prolonged school closures. Drawing on the recommendations of Ökörđi and Molnár (2022), these programmes should include structured accelerated learning frameworks, catch-up classes, and continuous formative assessments to diagnose and address specific learning gaps.
2. The persistent insecurity-driven school closures in Katsina state cannot be addressed through educational policy alone. Government at all levels must prioritize the security of school environments by expanding the safe schools initiative, constructing perimeter fencing around schools, deploying security personnel in high-risk areas, and establishing community-based school safety committees involving parents and local leaders.

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