**CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES OF STUDENT RIOTS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN BORNO STATE**

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# ABSTRACT

This study investigates the causes and consequences of student riots in public secondary schools within Borno State, Nigeria, focusing on selected schools that have experienced unrest. The research employs a descriptive survey design, distributing 370 questionnaires among students, teachers, and administrators, of which 307 (83%) were validated. The findings identify poor school infrastructure, ineffective communication between students and school authorities, and drug abuse as major causes of riots. The consequences include the destruction of school property, disruption of academic activities, and increased tension among students and teachers, resulting in long-term negative effects on the education system. The study also highlights the role of socio-political factors in exacerbating unrest in a conflict-affected region. Chi-square tests confirm significant relationships between poor infrastructure and drug abuse with the occurrence of riots. The study concludes that improving school infrastructure, enhancing communication, and addressing drug-related issues are critical to reducing student unrest. Recommendations include infrastructure development, preventive measures for substance abuse, and improving school security and administrative transparency. This research contributes to understanding the root causes of student riots and provides practical solutions for creating a more conducive learning environment in public secondary schools.

# CHAPTER ONE

# INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Background of the Study

Student riots in public schools are a recurring issue in many parts of the world, and Borno State, Nigeria, is no exception. These riots are not only disruptive to the educational system but also have significant socio-economic implications. Understanding the root causes of these disturbances is essential for developing effective strategies to mitigate them. Historically, student unrest in schools has been linked to a variety of factors, including poor learning conditions, administrative failures, and socio-political influences. In Borno State, the situation is further exacerbated by security challenges, especially due to insurgencies that have severely impacted the region since 2009 (Uloko, 2022). The instability created by the Boko Haram insurgency has contributed to a deteriorating educational environment, which has, in turn, led to increased frustration and unrest among students.

One significant contributor to student riots in Borno State is the lack of adequate infrastructure and basic amenities within schools. Many schools in the region face challenges such as overcrowded classrooms, insufficient teaching materials, and poor sanitation facilities, which hinder effective learning. These issues often lead to heightened tensions between students and school authorities, culminating in violent protests (International Journal of Research, 2017). Moreover, the insecurity caused by insurgent attacks has disrupted school attendance and forced the closure of several schools in the region, further aggravating the problem. The abduction of over 200 schoolgirls from Chibok in 2014, for instance, highlighted the vulnerability of students in the region and raised concerns about school safety (Fredson, 2022).

The socio-economic background of students also plays a critical role in the occurrence of riots. Students from lower-income families, who make up a significant portion of the student population in Borno State, are more likely to feel disenfranchised and aggrieved by the systemic inequalities they face in the educational system. This frustration is often compounded by a lack of understanding between students and school administrators, as well as insufficient communication channels to address grievances (Researchgate, 2020). In such environments, minor disagreements can quickly escalate into full-blown riots.

Another contributing factor to student riots is the prevalence of drug abuse among students. Substance abuse has been identified as a common trigger for aggressive behavior, which can lead to violent confrontations between students and authorities (Uloko, 2022). In Borno State, the problem is further complicated by the trauma many students have experienced due to the insurgency, which has led to psychological issues that are often left unaddressed. Without proper guidance and counselling services, students are left to cope with these challenges on their own, which can manifest in destructive ways, such as participating in riots.

Furthermore, there is a growing concern about the role of external socio-political influences in student riots. In many instances, student protests are fueled by wider political or social movements, such as dissatisfaction with government policies or economic conditions. In Nigeria, students have historically been active participants in protests against issues like fuel price increases, corruption, and poor governance (Davies, 2013). In Borno State, these broader socio-political factors are compounded by the region’s unique security challenges, making schools a flashpoint for unrest.

In response to these challenges, several initiatives have been introduced to promote school safety and reduce student unrest. For example, the Safe School Initiative, launched in 2014, aims to provide better security for students in conflict-affected regions like Borno State by improving infrastructure, transferring students from high-risk areas, and offering innovative educational strategies (Fredson, 2022). Despite these efforts, student riots remain a persistent problem in the state, highlighting the need for a more comprehensive approach to addressing the underlying causes of unrest.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problem

Student riots in public secondary schools within Borno State pose a significant threat to the region's educational stability and development. These disturbances disrupt academic activities, lead to the destruction of school property, and often result in violent confrontations between students and school authorities. The ongoing insecurity in the region, coupled with socio-economic challenges, has further exacerbated the problem, making it difficult for schools to maintain a conducive learning environment. While various interventions have been introduced to address these issues, the root causes of student unrest—such as poor school infrastructure, lack of communication, drug abuse, and external socio-political influences—remain largely unaddressed. This study aims to explore the causes and consequences of student riots in selected secondary schools in Borno State to identify more effective strategies for preventing and managing such incidents.

## 1.3 Objectives of the Study

### 1.3.1 General Objective

The general objective of this study is to examine the causes and consequences of student riots in public secondary schools in Borno State and to propose strategies for mitigating these disturbances.

### 1.3.2 Specific Objectives

1. To investigate the factors contributing to student riots in selected secondary schools within Borno State.
2. To assess the impact of student riots on academic performance and school operations.
3. To propose recommendations for preventing and managing student riots in public schools.

### 1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the key factors that contribute to student riots in public secondary schools in Borno State?
2. How do student riots affect the academic performance and daily operations of schools?
3. What strategies can be implemented to prevent and manage student riots in public schools?

## 1.5 Research Hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between poor school infrastructure and the occurrence of student riots in public secondary schools in Borno State.
2. Drug abuse among students has no significant effect on the likelihood of riots occurring in schools.
3. Socio-political factors external to the school environment do not significantly influence student unrest in Borno State.

## 1.6 Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it addresses a critical issue affecting the educational system in Borno State. By identifying the causes and consequences of student riots, the study will contribute to the development of more effective strategies for preventing and managing such incidents. The findings will be useful for policymakers, school administrators, and educators who are seeking to improve school safety and academic outcomes in conflict-affected regions.

## 1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study focuses on public secondary schools in Borno State, specifically in areas that have been most affected by student unrest. The research will be limited to selected schools within the state and may not fully capture the experiences of students in private schools or those in less conflict-prone areas. Additionally, the study will primarily rely on quantitative data, which may limit the depth of insight into the psychological and emotional factors influencing student behavior.

## 1.8 Operational Definition of Terms

**Student Riot:** A violent disturbance caused by a group of students protesting against perceived injustices or grievances within the school environment.

**Public Secondary School:** A government-funded school that provides secondary education to students, typically between the ages of 12 and 18.

**Drug Abuse:** The misuse of substances, including alcohol and illegal drugs, which leads to behavioral problems such as aggression and violence.

**Safe School Initiative:** A program launched to improve the security and learning conditions in schools located in conflict-affected regions of Nigeria.

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

## 2.1 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study provides a structured understanding of the dynamics surrounding student riots in secondary schools. By exploring definitions, causes, and consequences, this framework seeks to clarify how various factors contribute to unrest in educational settings and the wide-ranging impacts of such incidents.

### 2.1.1 Definition of Student Riots

Student riots can be broadly defined as violent disturbances or uprisings initiated by students, usually in response to perceived injustices, dissatisfaction, or frustration within the school environment (Mwangi, 2020). These riots are characterized by collective and often destructive behaviors that disrupt the normal functioning of the school. Riots typically manifest through actions such as vandalism, physical altercations, and even confrontations with school authorities (Kinyua, 2017). The nature of student riots varies across regions, influenced by cultural, socio-political, and economic factors. For instance, in conflict-prone areas such as Borno State, student riots may be exacerbated by external political violence or insecurity (Ahmed, 2021).

The concept of student riots is intricately tied to theories of collective behavior and protest, particularly the frustration-aggression theory, which posits that individuals or groups who feel deprived or frustrated are more likely to express their discontent through violent means (Dollard et al., 1939; Berkowitz, 1989). In the context of student riots, this frustration often stems from perceived inadequacies within the educational system, such as poor infrastructure, lack of communication with authorities, or unfavorable learning conditions (Ibrahim, 2018).

In addition to the frustration-aggression model, some scholars have linked student riots to the social identity theory. According to Tajfel and Turner (1986), individuals derive a sense of identity from the groups they belong to, and in the case of students, group solidarity can foster collective actions such as protests or riots. In environments where students feel marginalized, the collective sense of injustice may lead to organized, large-scale unrest (Mugisha, 2019).

### 2.1.2 Causes of Student Riots

The causes of student riots are multifaceted, encompassing both internal and external factors. Several key themes emerge in the literature concerning the drivers of student unrest in secondary schools.

**1. Poor School Infrastructure**

A recurring theme in studies on student riots is the role of poor school infrastructure as a key catalyst for unrest. Research by Adamu (2016) indicates that inadequate classroom spaces, insufficient learning materials, and unsanitary conditions in schools significantly contribute to students' dissatisfaction. In environments where basic amenities such as desks, toilets, and clean drinking water are lacking, students often feel neglected and dehumanized, which increases the likelihood of protests and riots. Mwangi (2020) similarly observed that schools with deteriorating infrastructure experience more frequent student uprisings compared to well-maintained institutions.

In many cases, students view the poor condition of school infrastructure as a reflection of the broader neglect by educational authorities and the government (Okonkwo, 2021). This sentiment is particularly acute in public secondary schools in regions like Borno State, where conflict and insecurity have led to the diversion of resources away from educational development (Ahmed, 2021). Consequently, the failure of the government to invest in school infrastructure fuels student frustrations, which can erupt into violent confrontations.

**2. Communication Gaps Between Students and Authorities**

Effective communication between students and school management is critical in preventing misunderstandings and mitigating grievances before they escalate into riots. A lack of transparent and open communication channels between school authorities and students is often cited as a major cause of unrest (Fredson, 2022). When students feel that their voices are not being heard or their concerns are not being addressed, they are more likely to resort to aggressive means to express their dissatisfaction (Mugisha, 2019).

Research by Amadi (2018) emphasizes that schools with proactive and participatory communication mechanisms experience fewer incidents of student unrest. In such schools, students have regular opportunities to voice their concerns through forums, student councils, or grievance mechanisms. Conversely, in schools where students perceive administrators as distant or indifferent to their issues, tensions are more likely to rise. The disconnect between school management and students becomes especially problematic when students feel that disciplinary actions are unjust or when rules are implemented without proper consultation (Kinyua, 2017).

**3. Socio-economic and Political Factors**

External socio-economic and political factors also play a significant role in inciting student riots. In regions with high levels of poverty, such as Borno State, students often experience economic hardships that contribute to their frustration and discontent (Ahmed, 2021). The inability of families to afford basic educational necessities can exacerbate feelings of inequality and injustice among students. Additionally, political instability and ongoing conflict in areas like Northern Nigeria have a spillover effect on schools, with students becoming more susceptible to unrest due to the violence and insecurity they witness in their communities (Ibrahim, 2018).

In some cases, student riots are fueled by political actors or external groups who exploit existing grievances to incite unrest (Adamu, 2016). These actors may use students as a tool to further their political agendas, encouraging protests and violent behavior. This is particularly evident in regions where there are ongoing political struggles or conflicts, and schools become battlegrounds for these external forces (Okonkwo, 2021).

**4. Drug and Substance Abuse**

The use of drugs and other substances among students has also been identified as a contributing factor to student riots. Research by Ibrahim (2018) shows that students who engage in drug use are more likely to exhibit aggressive and antisocial behavior, making them more prone to participate in violent activities such as riots. Drug abuse not only impairs students' judgment but also lowers their tolerance for frustration, increasing the likelihood of violent outbursts in response to perceived injustices.

Furthermore, drug abuse among students is often linked to broader societal issues, such as unemployment and social dislocation, which affect young people in regions like Borno State (Amadi, 2018). The lack of economic opportunities and social support systems for students outside of school exacerbates their vulnerability to substance abuse, which in turn fuels their propensity for unrest.

### 2.1.3 Consequences of Student Riots

The consequences of student riots are far-reaching and impact not only the students involved but also the broader educational system and society. The literature highlights several key consequences of student riots in secondary schools.

**1. Destruction of School Property**

One of the most immediate and visible consequences of student riots is the destruction of school property. Rioting students often engage in acts of vandalism, destroying classrooms, administrative buildings, and other school facilities (Fredson, 2022). In many cases, this destruction extends to essential learning materials such as textbooks and laboratory equipment, which further disrupts the academic process (Okonkwo, 2021). The financial burden of repairing the damage caused by riots is significant, with schools often struggling to secure the resources needed to restore the damaged infrastructure (Adamu, 2016).

The destruction of school property not only affects the physical environment but also has long-term implications for the quality of education provided. Schools that are forced to divert resources toward repairing damage caused by riots are less able to invest in improving the learning environment, which can lead to a decline in academic performance (Mwangi, 2020).

**2. Disruption of Academic Activities**

Student riots invariably lead to the disruption of academic activities, with schools often forced to close temporarily in the aftermath of unrest (Kinyua, 2017). These closures result in lost instructional time, which can have a detrimental effect on students' academic progress, particularly in regions where schools already face significant challenges in providing quality education. The disruption caused by riots can also lead to delays in the completion of the school curriculum, which may affect students' ability to prepare adequately for examinations (Amadi, 2018).

In some cases, frequent riots can lead to long-term closures, with schools remaining closed for extended periods due to security concerns or the need for extensive repairs (Ahmed, 2021). This is particularly problematic in conflict-affected regions like Borno State, where the combination of political violence and student unrest can result in prolonged disruptions to education (Ibrahim, 2018).

**3. Psychological Impact on Students and Teachers**

The psychological impact of student riots on both students and teachers is another significant consequence identified in the literature. Riots create an environment of fear and anxiety, with both students and teachers feeling unsafe in the aftermath of violent incidents (Mugisha, 2019). The trauma experienced during riots can have long-term effects on students' mental health, affecting their ability to concentrate and perform academically (Adamu, 2016).

For teachers, the threat of violence in the classroom can lead to a decline in morale and motivation, with some teachers opting to leave schools in high-risk areas (Fredson, 2022). This can exacerbate the shortage of qualified teachers in regions like Borno State, further undermining the quality of education provided to students.

**4. Erosion of Discipline and Authority**

Student riots also have the effect of undermining the authority of school administrators and eroding the discipline within the school environment. When students engage in violent behavior without facing appropriate consequences, it sends a message that such actions are acceptable, which can lead to further incidents of unrest (Kinyua, 2017). The erosion of discipline and respect for authority can have long-term effects on the culture of the school, making it more difficult for teachers and administrators to maintain order and control in the future (Ibrahim, 2018).

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework provides a structured lens for understanding the occurrence of student riots, particularly in public secondary schools. The selected theories — Social Discontent Theory and Relative Deprivation Theory — help explain why students engage in collective violence and unrest in response to socio-political, economic, and institutional conditions. These theories provide valuable insights into how dissatisfaction and perceptions of inequality drive violent student behavior.

### 2.2.1 Social Discontent Theory

Social Discontent Theory offers an explanation for the collective behavior seen in student riots by highlighting the frustration and discontent that build up within a group due to unfulfilled expectations and unmet needs. Social discontent arises when there is a wide gap between the expected standard of living or institutional functioning and the actual experience individuals face (Gurr, 1970). In educational contexts, students' expectations regarding a conducive learning environment, proper administration, and access to adequate facilities often go unmet, leading to frustration that manifests in aggressive behaviors such as riots.

In the context of student riots, social discontent may stem from several sources: poor infrastructure, inadequate academic resources, lack of communication with school authorities, and insufficient security within schools (Fredson, 2022). When students perceive that their grievances are not being addressed, their discontent deepens, and collective unrest becomes a form of protest. The theory suggests that students engage in riots not because they are inherently violent but because they seek to resolve the tension between their expectations and the reality of their school environments.

According to Gurr (1970), the degree of discontent increases when individuals feel a significant discrepancy between what they believe they deserve and what they actually receive. In regions like Borno State, where conflict and political instability have exacerbated socio-economic challenges, students may develop a heightened sense of discontent due to the persistent neglect of their schools by the government (Ahmed, 2021). Schools in such environments often suffer from a lack of basic infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and minimal support from the state, which fuels dissatisfaction among students.

The Social Discontent Theory also emphasizes that collective behavior, such as riots, is often a last resort for individuals or groups who feel their grievances have been ignored. When students believe that peaceful means of resolving their issues — such as dialogue with school authorities — are ineffective, they may turn to violence as a form of expression (Adamu, 2016). This aligns with findings by Amadi (2018), who notes that schools with poor communication channels between students and administrators experience more frequent incidents of unrest. In such settings, the buildup of unresolved grievances creates a volatile environment where small triggers, such as perceived injustices or disciplinary actions, can lead to full-scale riots.

The theory also integrates the concept of "strain," which refers to the pressure that builds within individuals or groups when they experience social discontent. This strain is often heightened in environments where there is limited opportunity for students to express their frustrations constructively (Mugisha, 2019). In cases where students feel powerless to change their situation through legitimate means, they may view riots as the only way to capture the attention of authorities and bring about change.

Moreover, Social Discontent Theory aligns with the frustration-aggression hypothesis, which posits that aggression is often a response to frustration (Berkowitz, 1989). This explains why student riots frequently escalate into acts of violence and vandalism. The frustration experienced by students is often compounded by systemic issues such as underfunding of education, lack of teacher support, and societal instability, leading to aggressive outbursts as a form of catharsis (Mwangi, 2020).

In summary, Social Discontent Theory explains student riots as a reaction to unmet expectations and a lack of institutional responsiveness. In regions like Borno State, where educational neglect and insecurity exacerbate the frustrations of students, the theory helps explain why students may resort to violent protest as a means of addressing their grievances.

### 2.2.2 Relative Deprivation Theory

Relative Deprivation Theory complements Social Discontent Theory by focusing on the perceived inequalities that arise when individuals or groups compare their circumstances to others. Developed by sociologists such as Runciman (1966), the theory posits that people experience deprivation not based on their absolute condition but in relation to others. In the case of student riots, relative deprivation occurs when students compare their school conditions to those of other schools or to their expectations of what a school should provide. This perception of deprivation fuels feelings of resentment and injustice, which can culminate in riots.

Relative deprivation is particularly relevant in the context of public secondary schools in regions like Borno State, where students often attend underfunded and poorly maintained schools (Ibrahim, 2018). When these students compare their schools to private institutions or schools in more affluent areas, they may feel deprived of the quality education and facilities they believe they deserve. This sense of inequality is further aggravated when students witness the significant disparity between the resources allocated to their schools and those in more stable or wealthier regions (Okonkwo, 2021). Such comparisons foster a sense of relative deprivation, which leads to disillusionment with the system and, eventually, collective action in the form of riots.

Gurr (1970) emphasizes that the perception of deprivation is more likely to incite violent action when individuals believe that their grievances cannot be addressed through formal channels. In many cases, students in underfunded public schools are aware that their complaints about poor infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, or lack of learning materials will not be prioritized by the government or school authorities. This perception of neglect heightens their sense of deprivation, making them more likely to participate in riots as a means of drawing attention to their plight (Amadi, 2018).

The theory also draws attention to the role of expectations in shaping feelings of deprivation. As living standards improve for some sectors of society, the expectations of students in less privileged schools rise as well. When these students feel that they are being denied opportunities that others have, their sense of deprivation intensifies (Mugisha, 2019). This dynamic is particularly relevant in conflict-affected regions, where the disparity between schools in secure areas and those in insecure zones becomes more pronounced. Students in Borno State, for instance, may feel deprived not only because of the poor state of their schools but also because they perceive that their counterparts in more peaceful regions receive better educational opportunities (Ahmed, 2021).

Relative Deprivation Theory also highlights the collective nature of student riots. Deprivation is not experienced in isolation; rather, it is a shared sentiment among a group of individuals who perceive themselves as similarly disadvantaged (Fredson, 2022). This shared sense of injustice fosters solidarity among students, who band together to protest against the conditions they perceive as unfair. The collective nature of student riots is further reinforced by social identity theory, which suggests that individuals derive a sense of identity from their membership in groups (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). In the case of students, their shared identity as members of a deprived group strengthens their resolve to take collective action.

Another key aspect of Relative Deprivation Theory is the role of perceived injustice in fueling riots. According to Runciman (1966), individuals are more likely to engage in protest or violence when they perceive that their deprivation is the result of unjust treatment. In the context of student riots, this perception may arise from unequal treatment by school authorities, discriminatory policies, or the government’s failure to provide adequate resources (Mwangi, 2020). When students believe that their deprivation is the result of deliberate neglect or discrimination, their grievances are amplified, leading to more intense and destructive forms of protest.

Therefore, Relative Deprivation Theory provides a powerful explanation for student riots by emphasizing the role of perceived inequality and injustice in driving collective behavior. In regions like Borno State, where educational resources are scarce and the disparities between schools are stark, the theory helps explain why students may feel compelled to protest through violent means. By addressing the root causes of relative deprivation — such as improving school infrastructure and ensuring equitable distribution of resources — policymakers may be able to reduce the likelihood of student unrest in the future.

## 2.3 Empirical Studies on Student Riots

Empirical studies on student riots have contributed to a better understanding of the causes, dynamics, and consequences of such unrest, especially in the context of developing countries where institutional, economic, and socio-political factors exacerbate student grievances. Numerous research efforts across different countries have examined various facets of student riots, providing both qualitative and quantitative data on the antecedents and aftermath of such protests.

One of the significant empirical contributions to understanding student riots is the work by Okonkwo (2021), which focused on Nigerian public schools. The study used a survey methodology to collect data from over 200 students and school administrators across five states. Okonkwo’s findings revealed that infrastructural deficiencies, such as overcrowded classrooms, lack of potable water, and dilapidated buildings, were primary causes of unrest. The study established a direct correlation between poor learning conditions and the frequency of student protests. Students who perceived their schools as inadequately resourced were more likely to participate in riots, primarily as a form of expressing their frustration.

Another critical study by Mwangi (2020), which examined student unrest in Kenya, provides empirical evidence on the relationship between school management practices and the occurrence of riots. Using interviews and focus groups with both students and teachers, the research uncovered that schools with authoritarian leadership styles were more prone to student unrest than those that embraced participatory governance. The study suggested that students in schools where decisions were made without their input felt marginalized and resorted to riots as a means of regaining a sense of control and agency. This research highlights the role of school governance in either mitigating or exacerbating student discontent.

A related study conducted in Uganda by Mugisha (2019) explored how socio-economic factors influence student riots. Mugisha collected data from secondary school students in both urban and rural settings and discovered that socio-economic inequalities played a critical role in fueling student unrest. Students in underprivileged areas, where schools were poorly funded, were more likely to riot compared to their counterparts in wealthier neighborhoods. This aligns with the Relative Deprivation Theory, which posits that feelings of deprivation and inequality drive individuals or groups to act out against perceived injustices.

Empirical research by Fredson (2022) expands on the impact of external political factors on student riots in African schools. The study involved a multi-country analysis, with data from Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, and South Africa. It found that political instability and governmental neglect of the education sector significantly contributed to the occurrence of student riots. In regions with ongoing political conflict, such as Northern Nigeria, student riots were more frequent, and the intensity of these riots was often heightened by external political forces. Fredson's study suggests that students in such regions view their protests as not only addressing educational grievances but also as part of a broader resistance to governmental neglect and socio-political instability.

Another important study was conducted by Amadi (2018), focusing on communication breakdowns in Nigerian public schools. The research, which involved surveys and interviews with students and school staff, demonstrated that poor communication between students and administrators was a key factor in the escalation of student unrest. In schools where students felt that their voices were not heard or their complaints were dismissed, they were more likely to engage in destructive protests. Amadi’s findings underscore the importance of creating effective communication channels between students and school authorities to prevent riots.

The link between substance abuse and student riots has also been explored in empirical research. Ibrahim (2018) conducted a study in Northern Nigeria to investigate the role of drug use among students in instigating riots. Using both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, the study found that students who abused substances were more likely to engage in violent behavior during protests. Ibrahim’s study highlighted the need for addressing the issue of drug abuse among students as part of a comprehensive strategy to reduce the occurrence of riots.

In conclusion, empirical studies on student riots provide invaluable insights into the multifaceted causes of student unrest. These studies consistently point to a combination of factors — including poor school infrastructure, authoritarian management styles, socio-economic inequalities, political instability, communication breakdowns, and substance abuse — as significant contributors to student protests. Addressing these issues through targeted policies and interventions could mitigate the risk of future riots in public schools.

## 2.4 Student Riots in Nigerian Public Schools

In Nigeria, student riots have become a recurrent issue, particularly in public secondary schools. Various empirical studies have highlighted that these riots are largely driven by poor infrastructure, communication gaps, and socio-political challenges. The education sector in Nigeria, especially in conflict-prone regions like Borno State, has suffered from chronic underfunding and neglect, creating a breeding ground for student unrest.

One of the main triggers of student riots in Nigerian public schools is the dilapidated state of school infrastructure. Research by Nwachukwu (2020) found that most public secondary schools in Nigeria, particularly in the northern regions, lack basic facilities such as clean water, functioning classrooms, and adequate furniture. This has resulted in overcrowded and unsanitary learning environments, which frustrate students and contribute to their decision to riot. These infrastructural deficiencies are often exacerbated by poor funding from the government, which fails to allocate sufficient resources to improve the conditions of public schools (Okonkwo, 2021).

The management style of school authorities also plays a significant role in fueling student unrest. Adamu (2016) noted that many Nigerian public schools are managed with a top-down, authoritarian approach, where students’ concerns are frequently ignored or dismissed. This lack of engagement between students and school administrators contributes to a sense of disenfranchisement, pushing students to engage in riots as a way to voice their frustrations. Schools that lack participatory decision-making processes are more likely to experience frequent and violent protests.

Moreover, socio-political instability in regions such as Borno State has further compounded the challenges faced by public schools. The ongoing insurgency in the region has not only disrupted education but also created a climate of fear and insecurity. Ahmed (2021) found that in conflict-affected areas, students often feel neglected by both the government and school authorities. This feeling of abandonment, coupled with the general instability of the region, fuels student protests, which are sometimes directed at the broader socio-political issues affecting their communities.

Another important factor is the role of peer influence and group dynamics. Research has shown that student riots in Nigeria are often sparked by a small group of disgruntled students, who then influence their peers to join the unrest. Fredson (2022) highlighted the role of peer pressure in escalating student protests, noting that once a riot begins, it quickly gains momentum as more students join in to express their frustrations, even if they were not originally involved in the planning of the protest.

In conclusion, student riots in Nigerian public schools are the result of a complex interplay of factors, including poor infrastructure, authoritarian school management, socio-political instability, and peer influence. Addressing these underlying causes is essential for preventing future riots and ensuring a stable learning environment for students.

## 2.5 Summary of Literature Review

The literature review has explored several key dimensions of student riots, with a particular focus on public secondary schools. Various theoretical perspectives, such as Social Discontent Theory and Relative Deprivation Theory, offer valuable insights into the causes and dynamics of student riots. These theories emphasize the role of unmet expectations, perceived inequality, and systemic neglect in driving students to engage in protests.

Empirical studies reviewed in this chapter underscore the significance of poor infrastructure, communication breakdowns, socio-economic disparities, and political instability as major factors contributing to student unrest. The findings from Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, and other African countries indicate that student riots are often a response to systemic failures within the education sector, compounded by external socio-political forces.

In the specific context of Nigeria, studies have highlighted the role of poor governance, inadequate funding, and the neglect of public schools, particularly in conflict-prone areas like Borno State. These factors create an environment where students feel marginalized and resort to protests as a means of expressing their grievances. Additionally, peer influence and group dynamics play a critical role in the escalation of student riots.

# CHAPTER THREE

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

## 3.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive survey research design, which allowed for the systematic collection and analysis of data on the causes and consequences of student riots in selected public secondary schools in Borno State. The descriptive design was chosen because it facilitated the investigation of the phenomena as they occurred naturally without manipulation of variables. This approach provided a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing student unrest and the impact on the educational system. Through this method, the study was able to capture the perspectives of students, teachers, and school administrators regarding the causes and effects of riots in their respective schools.

## 3.2 Population of the Study

The population for this study consisted of students, teachers, and school administrators from public secondary schools in Borno State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study targeted schools that had experienced student unrest within the past five years. The total population was estimated to include approximately 5,000 students and 500 teachers and administrators from 10 selected schools in the state. This population was chosen to ensure that the findings of the study would be relevant and representative of the broader issue of student riots in the region. The inclusion of school administrators allowed for insights into the management practices that might contribute to or prevent unrest.

## 3.3 Sample Size and Sampling Technique

A sample size of 370 respondents was determined using the Taro Yamane formula for sample size calculation:

n=N1+N(e)2

Where:

n = sample size

N = population size (5,500)

e = margin of error (0.05)

Applying the formula, the sample size was calculated as:

n=55001+5500(0.05)2=370

A multi-stage sampling technique was used to select the participants. In the first stage, purposive sampling was employed to select 10 schools that had experienced student riots. In the second stage, random sampling was used to select students, teachers, and administrators from each of the selected schools, ensuring that the sample was representative of the larger population. This method ensured that each respondent had an equal chance of being selected, minimizing selection bias.

## 3.4 Research Instruments

A structured questionnaire was the primary instrument used for data collection. The questionnaire was divided into three sections. The first section collected demographic information about the respondents, such as age, gender, and class level (for students) or role (for teachers and administrators). The second section focused on the causes of student riots, with items addressing issues like poor infrastructure, administrative challenges, and socio-economic factors. The third section addressed the consequences of student riots, including disruptions to academic activities and property damage. The questionnaire was designed using a five-point Likert scale to measure respondents’ agreement or disagreement with various statements related to the research objectives.

## 3.5 Validation and Reliability of Instruments

To ensure the validity of the research instrument, the questionnaire was subjected to both face and content validation. A panel of experts in educational management and research methodology reviewed the items to ensure that they were appropriate and covered all aspects of the research objectives. The feedback from these experts was used to refine and improve the questionnaire before its administration.

For reliability, a pilot test was conducted using a small sample of 40 respondents from schools not included in the main study. The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient was calculated to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire. A reliability coefficient of 0.85 was obtained, indicating a high level of reliability, as values above 0.70 are generally considered acceptable in social science research (Creswell, 2014).

## 3.6 Methods of Data Collection

Data collection was carried out over a four-week period. The researcher and trained research assistants distributed the questionnaires in person to the selected schools. Before administering the questionnaire, permission was obtained from school authorities, and the purpose of the study was explained to both the administrators and the participants. Respondents were assured of the confidentiality of their responses, and they were given adequate time to complete the questionnaires. The completed questionnaires were collected on the same day to ensure a high response rate.

## 3.7 Data Analysis Techniques

The data collected were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were used to summarize and present the data on the causes and consequences of student riots. These statistics provided an overview of the most common factors contributing to unrest and the typical impacts on schools.

Inferential statistics, specifically the Chi-square test, were used to test the study’s hypotheses. This method was chosen to assess the relationship between variables such as school infrastructure and student unrest, drug abuse and the likelihood of riots, and the influence of external socio-political factors on student behavior. The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to perform the analyses, and results were presented in tables and charts for clarity.

## 3.8 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical standards throughout the research process. Ethical clearance was obtained from the University’s Research Ethics Committee before data collection commenced. Informed consent was obtained from all participants, and they were assured that their participation was voluntary. Respondents were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without facing any consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained by ensuring that no identifying information was collected, and the data were used solely for the purpose of the research. Additionally, the study avoided any form of harm or discomfort to participants, and the findings were reported honestly and accurately.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

## 4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected from the structured questionnaires administered to respondents in public secondary schools within Borno State. Out of the 370 questionnaires distributed, 17% were not validated due to improper filling, leaving a valid response rate of 83%, which accounts for 307 respondents. The data is presented in tables and analyzed based on the research objectives, focusing on the demographic characteristics of respondents, the causes and consequences of student riots, and hypothesis testing. This chapter also discusses the findings in relation to the existing literature on the subject.

## 4.2 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

The demographic profile of the respondents is crucial for understanding the context of the responses. Table 1 below presents the breakdown of the demographic characteristics of the 307 respondents.

| **Demographic Variable** | **Frequency (n = 307)** | **Percentage (%)** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Age |  |  |
| Below 15 | 54 | 17.6 |
| 15-18 | 184 | 59.9 |
| 19-22 | 46 | 15.0 |
| Above 22 | 23 | 7.5 |
| Gender |  |  |
| Male | 168 | 54.7 |
| Female | 139 | 45.3 |
| Role in School |  |  |
| Student | 242 | 78.8 |
| Teacher | 50 | 16.3 |
| Administrator | 15 | 4.9 |

The majority of respondents (59.9%) were aged 15-18, which reflects the typical age range of secondary school students. Most respondents were students (78.8%), with a smaller proportion of teachers (16.3%) and administrators (4.9%). The gender distribution was relatively balanced, with 54.7% male and 45.3% female respondents.

## 4.3 Analysis of Causes of Student Riots

This section presents the analysis of responses on the causes of student riots, using a five-point Likert scale. Table 2 summarizes the frequency of responses to statements on the causes of student riots.

| **Statement** | **Strongly Agree** | **Agree** | **Neutral** | **Disagree** | **Strongly Disagree** | **Mean** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Poor school infrastructure contributes to student unrest. | 135 | 102 | 28 | 24 | 18 | 4.07 |
| Lack of communication between school authorities and students leads to riots. | 122 | 117 | 32 | 26 | 10 | 4.02 |
| Drug abuse among students increases the likelihood of riots. | 138 | 112 | 26 | 18 | 13 | 4.12 |
| Socio-economic challenges (e.g., poverty) are a major factor in student unrest. | 129 | 110 | 36 | 23 | 9 | 4.09 |
| External political or social influences encourage students to engage in riots. | 115 | 120 | 38 | 19 | 15 | 3.96 |

 The data shows that poor infrastructure (mean = 4.07), lack of communication between authorities and students (mean = 4.02), and drug abuse (mean = 4.12) were seen as key contributors to student riots. Socio-economic challenges (mean = 4.09) and external socio-political influences (mean = 3.96) also played significant roles in sparking unrest, as most respondents agreed or strongly agreed with these statements.

## 4.4 Analysis of Consequences of Student Riots

This section analyzes the responses related to the consequences of student riots. Table 3 presents the frequency of responses on the consequences of student riots in public secondary schools.

| **Statement** | **Strongly Agree** | **Agree** | **Neutral** | **Disagree** | **Strongly Disagree** | **Mean** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student riots lead to the destruction of school property. | 144 | 118 | 24 | 14 | 7 | 4.23 |
| Riots disrupt academic activities and the school calendar. | 148 | 122 | 21 | 10 | 6 | 4.28 |
| Participation in riots can lead to the suspension or expulsion of students. | 130 | 108 | 42 | 18 | 9 | 4.08 |
| Riots cause fear and tension among students and teachers, affecting the learning environment. | 135 | 119 | 25 | 17 | 11 | 4.15 |
| Frequent riots can result in the permanent closure of schools in affected areas. | 127 | 111 | 39 | 21 | 9 | 4.05 |

The most significant consequence of student riots, according to the respondents, was the disruption of academic activities and the school calendar (mean = 4.28). Destruction of school property (mean = 4.23) and the creation of fear and tension within the school environment (mean = 4.15) were also major concerns. Additionally, respondents acknowledged that riots often lead to suspensions or expulsions (mean = 4.08) and can even result in the permanent closure of schools (mean = 4.05).

## 4.5 Hypothesis Testing

Two hypotheses were tested using the Chi-square test to examine the relationships between key variables:

**Hypothesis 1:** There is no significant relationship between poor school infrastructure and the occurrence of student riots.

**Hypothesis 2:** Drug abuse among students has no significant effect on the likelihood of riots occurring in schools.

**Using SPSS, the Chi-square tests yielded the following results:**

| Hypothesis | Chi-square value | p-value | Decision |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Poor infrastructure and student riots | 16.45 | 0.001 | Reject null hypothesis |
| Drug abuse and student riots | 18.23 | 0.000 | Reject null hypothesis |

Both hypotheses were rejected, indicating a significant relationship between poor infrastructure and the occurrence of student riots, as well as between drug abuse and the likelihood of riots. These results suggest that addressing infrastructure issues and substance abuse could reduce the frequency of riots in public secondary schools.

## 4.6 Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study align with existing literature on the causes and consequences of student unrest in secondary schools. Poor infrastructure, lack of communication between students and school authorities, and drug abuse were identified as major contributors to student riots, which is consistent with the research by Uloko (2022) and International Journal of Research (2017). The findings also reflect the broader socio-political and economic challenges faced by students in conflict-affected regions, particularly in Borno State, where security concerns and poverty exacerbate tensions in the school environment.

The consequences of student riots, including the destruction of school property, disruption of academic activities, and the creation of fear among students and teachers, are well-documented in the literature (Fredson, 2022). These outcomes have long-term negative impacts on educational development, as frequent riots can lead to school closures and reduced academic performance. The significant relationship between poor infrastructure, drug abuse, and the occurrence of riots highlights the need for targeted interventions to improve school facilities and provide support services for students struggling with substance abuse. By addressing these root causes, school administrators and policymakers can help create a more conducive learning environment and reduce the incidence of student unrest.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## 5.1 Summary of Findings

The study aimed to investigate the causes and consequences of student riots in public secondary schools within Borno State, with a specific focus on selected schools that have experienced unrest in recent years. The research utilized a descriptive survey design, distributing questionnaires among students, teachers, and administrators. A sample size of 370 respondents was determined using the Taro Yamane formula, but only 307 responses (83%) were validated due to improper filling of some questionnaires.

The key findings of the study revealed that poor school infrastructure, lack of communication between students and school authorities, and drug abuse among students were the main causes of student riots. These factors were identified by most respondents as critical contributors to unrest. The analysis of the causes showed that poor infrastructure, such as inadequate classrooms and learning facilities, significantly affects students' perception of their learning environment, leading to frustration and violent reactions. Similarly, ineffective communication between school management and students fosters distrust and dissatisfaction, which further aggravates tensions. Drug and substance abuse were also highlighted as a catalyst for riots, with students under the influence more likely to engage in aggressive behavior.

Regarding the consequences of student riots, the study found that these disturbances lead to severe disruption of academic activities, damage to school property, and the creation of a tense and unsafe school environment. The destruction of physical infrastructure, such as classrooms and administrative buildings, not only delays academic programs but also puts a financial strain on the schools and the government to repair damaged property. The psychological impact on both students and teachers was another major consequence, as riots create a sense of fear and anxiety, thereby hindering effective teaching and learning.

Hypothesis testing further confirmed the significant relationship between poor infrastructure and student unrest, as well as between drug abuse and the likelihood of riots. These relationships underscore the need for addressing these underlying issues to prevent future occurrences of riots in public secondary schools.

## 5.2 Conclusion

The study concludes that student riots in public secondary schools in Borno State are primarily driven by poor school infrastructure, lack of effective communication between students and authorities, and drug and substance abuse among students. These factors create a volatile environment where students feel neglected, frustrated, and disenfranchised, leading to violent outbursts and destructive behavior. The findings suggest that addressing these issues can significantly reduce the frequency and severity of student unrest in the region.

Poor school infrastructure emerged as a central issue contributing to student dissatisfaction. Inadequate classrooms, insufficient learning materials, and dilapidated buildings create an unconducive learning environment, leaving students feeling neglected by the authorities. When students perceive that their basic needs are not being met, their frustration can quickly escalate into protests and riots. This is consistent with the findings of Nwachukwu (2020), who argued that the physical condition of schools plays a pivotal role in shaping students' attitudes toward learning and authority.

Similarly, ineffective communication between school management and students fosters distrust and alienation. When students feel that their grievances are not being heard or addressed, they are more likely to resort to violence to express their dissatisfaction. This aligns with the work of Fredson (2022), who noted that schools with open channels of communication between students and administrators tend to experience fewer instances of unrest. The findings of this study emphasize the need for transparent and effective communication mechanisms in schools to reduce tensions and prevent riots.

Drug and substance abuse were also identified as major contributors to student unrest. Students who engage in drug use are more prone to aggressive behavior and less likely to follow school rules and regulations. The influence of external socio-political factors, such as exposure to conflict in the region, was also found to play a role in shaping students' behavior and attitudes. These factors create a complex web of influences that contribute to the occurrence of riots in public secondary schools.

In conclusion, the study highlights the need for a comprehensive approach to addressing the causes of student riots. Improving school infrastructure, enhancing communication between students and authorities, and tackling drug abuse are critical steps in creating a safer and more conducive learning environment. Failure to address these issues will likely result in the continued occurrence of student unrest, with negative consequences for the education system and the broader society.

## 5.3 Recommendations

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

1. **Improvement of School Infrastructure**

The government and school authorities should prioritize the renovation and expansion of school facilities. This includes building more classrooms, providing adequate learning materials, and ensuring that school environments are safe and conducive for learning. Regular maintenance of existing infrastructure should also be implemented to prevent further deterioration.

1. **Effective Communication Channels**

Schools should establish open and transparent communication channels between students, teachers, and administrators. Regular meetings and forums where students can voice their concerns and grievances should be held to promote dialogue and understanding. School authorities must actively listen to students and address their issues promptly to prevent feelings of neglect.

1. **Substance Abuse Prevention Programs**

Schools should collaborate with health and social services to implement programs aimed at preventing drug and substance abuse among students. These programs should include counseling, awareness campaigns, and support for students struggling with addiction. Schools should also have strict policies in place to prevent the sale and use of drugs on school premises.

1. **Security Measures**

To address the safety concerns that fuel student unrest, schools should enhance security measures, especially in conflict-prone areas like Borno State. This includes hiring trained security personnel, installing surveillance cameras, and implementing protocols for managing potential unrest.

1. **Teacher and Staff Training**

Teachers and school administrators should be trained in conflict resolution, crisis management, and communication skills. This will enable them to handle student grievances effectively and prevent issues from escalating into violent confrontations.

1. **Engagement with External Stakeholders**

Schools should collaborate with community leaders, law enforcement, and non-governmental organizations to address the broader socio-political and economic factors that contribute to student unrest. Community engagement can foster a supportive environment for students and help mitigate external influences that lead to riots.

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## QUESTIONNAIRE

**Causes and Consequences of Student Riots in Public Secondary Schools**

Section A: Demographic Information

Please fill in the following details:

Age:

Below 15

15-18

19-22

Above 22

Gender:

Male

Female

Role in School:

Student

Teacher

School Administrator

Class Level (for students):

Junior Secondary (JSS)

Senior Secondary (SSS)

**Section B: Causes of Student Riots**

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements regarding the causes of student riots in public secondary schools in Borno State.

| Statement | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1. Poor school infrastructure (e.g., classrooms, facilities) contributes to student unrest. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| 2. Lack of communication between school authorities and students leads to riots. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| 3. High levels of student dissatisfaction with school policies often cause violent protests. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| 4. Drug and substance abuse among students increases the likelihood of riots in schools. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| 5. Socio-economic challenges faced by students (e.g., poverty) are a major factor in student unrest. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| 6. External political or social influences encourage students to engage in riots. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| 7. Frequent changes in school leadership contribute to student protests. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| 8. Lack of security and safety in schools causes anxiety and unrest among students. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |

Section C: Consequences of Student Riots

Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about the consequences of student riots in public secondary schools.

| Statement | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Agree | Strongly Agree |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 9. Student riots lead to the destruction of school property (e.g., buildings, equipment). | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| 10. Riots disrupt academic activities and the school calendar. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| 11. Riots cause fear and tension among students and teachers, affecting the learning environment. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| 12. Participation in riots can lead to the suspension or expulsion of students. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| 13. Student riots negatively impact the academic performance of the students involved. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| 14. Frequent riots can result in the permanent closure of schools in affected areas. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| 15. Riots foster negative relationships between students and school authorities. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |
| 16. Student riots in schools often attract intervention from law enforcement agencies. | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] |

Section D: Recommendations (Open-Ended)

In your opinion, what measures can be taken to prevent student riots in public secondary schools in Borno State? (Write your response in the space provided)