

Security and Socioeconomic Factors on School Dropout in Northwest Nigeria: A Case Study of Katsina State

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Abstract

This study examines the impact of security and socioeconomic factors on secondary school dropout in Northwest Nigeria, using Katsina State as a case study. Education is a critical driver of human capital development, social transformation, and economic growth; however, persistent insecurity and socioeconomic deprivation continue to undermine school in the region. The researcher Employ a mixed-method descriptive cross-sectional research design, the study collected data from 100 respondents including students, parents, teachers, and education officials across schools in Katsina Zonal Education Quality Assurance. The instruments were structured questionnaires, school dropout records (2019–2025), and key informant interviews, with reliability established at Cronbach's alpha of 0.82. Analytical techniques involved frequency distributions, chi-square tests, and multiple logistic regression analyses. Findings reveals that significant upward trend in dropout rates, increasing from 6.38% in 2019 to 12.79% in 2025. Insecurity, characterized by banditry, kidnapping, attacks on schools, and forced displacement, significantly predicts dropout, while socioeconomic variables poverty, parental unemployment, and low parental education independently and significantly influence student discontinuation. Importantly, the combined effect of security instability and socioeconomic deprivation amplifies the risk of dropout, highlighting a multidimensional structural vulnerability. The study underscores the need for integrated policy interventions, including enhanced school security, economic empowerment programs, psychosocial support, and targeted educational initiatives, to improve and ensure educational continuity.

Keywords: *School dropout, Insecurity, Socioeconomic factors, Secondary education, Katsina State, Northwest Nigeria, Mixed-methods*

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Background to the Study

Education is universally recognized as a fundamental human right and a powerful driver of social transformation and economic development. Globally, it is central to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which seeks to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.” The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO, 2022) emphasizes that education enhances human capital development, increases productivity, reduces poverty, and strengthens democratic institutions. Similarly, the World Bank (2020) notes that each additional year of schooling significantly raises individual earnings and contributes to national economic growth. In developing countries, secondary education in particular plays a crucial role in equipping young people with employable skills, civic awareness, and resilience against socioeconomic shocks.

Despite these global commitments, many countries in Sub-Saharan Africa continue to experience serious challenges in ensuring school completion, especially at the secondary level. Nigeria, which has one of the largest youth populations in the world, faces persistent educational access and retention problems. Reports by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF, 2021) indicate that Nigeria accounts for one of the highest numbers of out-of-school children globally. While significant attention has focused on primary education, dropout rates at the junior and senior secondary levels remain alarming, particularly in the northern regions of the country. These patterns undermine national development objectives and widen regional inequalities.

Northwest Nigeria presents a particularly fragile educational landscape due to the intersection of poverty, demographic pressure, and escalating insecurity. Katsina State, located in this geopolitical zone, exemplifies these challenges. Although enrollment initiatives have increased access in some areas, school retention and completion remain deeply problematic. School dropout defined as the premature withdrawal of a student from formal schooling before completing a prescribed educational cycle represents not only an educational loss but also a social and economic setback. According to the World Bank (2018), high dropout rates reduce the returns on public investment in education and perpetuate cycles of poverty and social exclusion. In fragile states and conflict-affected areas, dropout is often symptomatic of deeper systemic vulnerabilities. In recent years, insecurity has emerged as a dominant factor disrupting educational continuity in Northwest Nigeria. The region has witnessed increasing incidents of armed banditry, kidnapping for ransom, cattle rustling, and attacks on schools. High-profile school abductions in Northern Nigeria have drawn international attention and intensified fear among parents and communities. The United Nations Children's Fund (2021) reports that attacks on schools and mass kidnappings have forced temporary or prolonged school closures across several northern states. In many rural communities, parents have withdrawn their children from school due to safety concerns, even in the absence of direct attacks.

The impact of insecurity on education operates at multiple levels. First, direct attacks on schools result in physical destruction of infrastructure, displacement of students and teachers,

and interruption of academic calendars. Second, insecurity reduces teacher availability, as educators may refuse postings to high-risk areas or relocate for safety reasons. Third, insecurity generates psychological trauma among students, affecting concentration, attendance, and academic performance. The Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack (2022) notes that exposure to violence in school environments significantly increases the likelihood of absenteeism and eventual dropout. Thus, insecurity contributes both directly and indirectly to educational discontinuity. Beyond security challenges, socioeconomic factors remain deeply entrenched drivers of school dropout in Katsina State. Poverty is one of the most persistent structural barriers to sustained educational participation. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2022), poverty rates in northern Nigeria are substantially higher than in many southern regions. In low-income households, limited financial resources constrain the ability to afford school-related expenses such as uniforms, transportation, learning materials, and examination fees. Even when tuition is subsidized, indirect costs of schooling can be prohibitive for economically vulnerable families.

Economic hardship often compels children to engage in income-generating activities to support household survival. Child labor in agriculture, petty trading, and domestic work remains prevalent in rural communities of Katsina State. The International Labour Organization (2021) highlights that children from poor households are significantly more likely to combine work with schooling or drop out entirely. When families face financial shocks such as loss of livestock due to banditry or displacement from farming activities education is frequently the first sacrifice. Parental education level further shapes children's educational trajectories. Research consistently demonstrates that parents with higher levels of formal education are more likely to value schooling, monitor academic progress, and invest in long-term educational attainment. Conversely, low parental literacy reduces awareness of the socioeconomic benefits of secondary education. In addition, socio-cultural practices such as early marriage disproportionately affect girls' educational continuity in Northwest Nigeria. Economic pressures and traditional norms often intersect, resulting in early withdrawal of girls from school to assume domestic or marital responsibilities. These patterns contribute to persistent gender disparities in secondary school completion.

Importantly, security and socioeconomic factors interact in mutually reinforcing ways. Insecurity disrupts local economies by limiting farming activities, reducing market access, and displacing households. Displacement often leads to loss of income, food insecurity, and unstable living conditions, all of which heighten dropout risks. At the same time, poverty increases vulnerability to insecurity, as marginalized communities may lack the resources to relocate to safer areas or access private schooling alternatives. The World Bank (2020) underscores that conflict-affected regions frequently experience compounded educational disadvantages due to this interaction between violence and poverty. The theoretical foundation of this study aligns with human capital theory, which posits that investment in education enhances individual productivity and economic returns. When students drop out prematurely, both individuals and society incur long-term economic losses. In conflict-affected contexts, interrupted schooling further diminishes opportunities for social mobility and increases susceptibility to unemployment, social unrest, and recruitment into criminal

activities. Therefore, school dropout in Katsina State should not be viewed solely as an educational issue but as a multidimensional development challenge requiring integrated policy responses.

Given the growing insecurity in Northwest Nigeria and the persistent socioeconomic vulnerabilities in Katsina State, there is a need for empirical investigation into how these factors jointly influence secondary school dropout. While prior studies have examined poverty or insecurity independently, limited research has quantitatively and qualitatively assessed their combined predictive effects within this specific regional context. By adopting a mixed-method approach, this study contributes to existing literature by providing context-specific evidence on the magnitude and interaction of security and socioeconomic determinants of dropout. Understanding these dynamics is essential for designing effective interventions. Addressing dropout in Katsina State requires not only strengthening school security measures but also implementing poverty alleviation programs, economic empowerment initiatives, and targeted support for vulnerable households. Integrated strategies that combine educational policy reform, community engagement, and socioeconomic development are critical to ensuring that children remain in school despite prevailing challenges.

Statement of the Problem

School dropout has become an increasingly critical educational and developmental concern in Northwest Nigeria, particularly in Katsina State. Despite national and international commitments to ensuring inclusive and equitable education, a substantial number of secondary school students in the region discontinue their education before completion. Reports from the United Nations Children's Fund indicate that Nigeria has one of the highest populations of out-of-school children globally, with northern states contributing disproportionately to this figure. This persistent trend undermines the objectives of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4), which emphasizes universal access to quality education.

In Katsina State, the problem appears to be intensifying. School records between 2019 and 2025 show a steady increase in dropout rates, rising from 6.38% to 12.79%, nearly doubling within six years. This upward trend coincides with escalating insecurity in the region, including banditry, kidnapping, armed attacks on schools, and forced displacement of communities. According to the World Bank (2018), conflict-affected areas often experience severe educational disruption, including prolonged school closures and declining attendance. In Katsina State, repeated security incidents have heightened parental fears, reduced student attendance, and disrupted academic calendars, thereby increasing the likelihood of permanent withdrawal from school.

At the same time, deep-rooted socioeconomic challenges further complicate the situation. High poverty rates, parental unemployment, low parental education, and child labor significantly limit families' ability to sustain children's schooling. Data from the National Bureau of Statistics reveal that poverty levels in northern Nigeria remain among the highest in

the country. For many households in Katsina State, economic survival takes precedence over educational investment, compelling children to engage in income-generating activities or domestic responsibilities. Furthermore, low parental literacy and socio-cultural practices such as early marriage, particularly among girls, exacerbate dropout rates. Although previous studies have examined the impact of insecurity or socioeconomic status independently, there is limited empirical evidence that systematically analyzes the combined predictive strength of these factors on school dropout within Katsina State. Most existing research provides generalized national data without offering context-specific, statistically grounded insights into how security instability and socioeconomic hardship interact to influence dropout patterns at the secondary school level.

The absence of comprehensive, localized data poses a significant challenge for policymakers and educational stakeholders seeking to design targeted interventions. Without clearly understanding the magnitude, trend, and interrelationship of security and socioeconomic determinants, policy responses may remain fragmented and ineffective. Therefore, the core problem addressed in this study is the rising rate of school dropout in Katsina State amid escalating insecurity and persistent socioeconomic vulnerability, and the lack of integrated empirical analysis to explain how these factors individually and jointly contribute to students' discontinuation of schooling. Addressing this gap is essential for developing evidence-based strategies capable of improving school retention and safeguarding the educational future of young people in the region.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study was to examine the impact of security and socioeconomic factors on school dropout in Katsina State.

The specific objectives were to:

1. Examine the trend and magnitude of school dropout in Katsina State from 2020 to 2025.
2. Determine the extent to which insecurity contributes to school dropout.
3. Assess the influence of socioeconomic factors on students' discontinuation of schooling.
4. Analyze the combined predictive strength of security and socioeconomic variables on dropout.

Research Questions

1. What is the trend of school dropout in Katsina State in recent years?
2. What is the significant relationship between insecurity and school dropout in Katsina State?
3. How do socioeconomic factors influence school dropout in Katsina State?
4. What is the combined effect of security and socioeconomic factors on dropout?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant difference in the magnitude of school dropout in Katsina State from 2020 to 2025.

- H₀₂:** There is no significant difference between insecurity and school dropout in Katsina State.
- H₀₃:** There is no significant difference on socioeconomic factors and students' discontinuation of schooling in Katsina State.
- H₀₄:** There is no significant difference on security and socioeconomic variables and school dropout in Katsina State.

Security Challenges and Educational Disruption in Katsina

Security challenges in Northwest Nigeria include armed banditry, kidnapping for ransom, communal conflicts, and displacement. According to the World Bank (2018), conflict-affected regions experience prolonged school closures and reduced attendance. In Katsina State, high-profile school abductions have heightened fear and anxiety among parents and students, discouraging consistent school attendance. Afolabi and Yusuf (2021) found that insecurity significantly reduces school participation in Northern Nigeria. Schools in high-risk areas report frequent closures, teacher absenteeism, and migration of families to safer urban centers. Psychological trauma experienced by students further undermines academic engagement.

Socioeconomic Factors and School Dropout in Katsina

Socioeconomic status remains a powerful predictor of educational persistence (Sirin, 2005). Poverty restricts access to learning materials, transportation, and nutrition. In Katsina State, many families depend on subsistence farming and informal trading, exposing children to labor demands (UNICEF, 2019). Parental education also influences dropout. Educated parents are more likely to value education and provide academic support (Baruwa & Adeyemo, 2017). Conversely, low parental literacy correlates with higher dropout rates.

Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design to examine the influence of security and socioeconomic factors on school dropout. The design is appropriate for collecting quantitative data from a large population and analyzing relationships among variables. The population comprised public secondary schools across Katsina State. A sample of 100 respondents was selected using stratified random sampling to ensure representation across the three senatorial zones: Katsina Central, Katsina North, and Katsina South. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire validated by experts in educational research. Reliability was established using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.82. Data were analyzed using frequency distribution, mean scores, chi-square tests, and multiple regression analysis.

Research Design

A mixed-method descriptive cross-sectional design was adopted.

Population and Sample

The population included senior secondary students, parents, teachers, and education officers in Katsina State. A total of 100 respondents were selected using stratified and purposive sampling across 12 schools in rural and urban zones.

Instruments

- i. Structured questionnaires (students and parents)
- ii. School dropout records (2019–2024)
- iii. Key Informant Interviews (education officials)

Reliability of questionnaire: Cronbach's Alpha = 0.82.

Data Analysis

This section presents a detailed interpretation of findings in direct alignment with the study objectives, research questions, and null hypotheses. All hypotheses were tested at the 0.05 level of significance.

Trend and Magnitude of School Dropout (H_{01})

Research Question 1: What is the trend of school dropout in Katsina State in recent years?

Hypothesis H_{01} : There is no significant difference in the magnitude of school dropout in Katsina State from 2020 to 2025.

Table 1: Trend Analysis (2019–2025)

Year	Enrollment	Dropouts	Dropout Rate (%)
2019	68,540	4,368	6.38
2020	70,215	5,002	7.12
2021	71,890	6,205	8.63
2022	73,345	7,419	10.12
2023	75,080	8,908	11.87
2024	77,215	9,876	12.79

The results show a persistent and progressive increase in dropout rates over the six-year period. The rate rose from 6.38% in 2019 to 12.79% in 2025, representing more than a 100% increase. Importantly, the rise is not irregular or fluctuating; rather, it follows a steady upward trajectory each year. This pattern suggests a structural and systemic problem rather than a temporary disruption.

The simultaneous increase in enrollment alongside rising dropout rates indicates that access to education may be improving, but retention mechanisms are failing. This reflects a critical weakness in educational sustainability. If the pattern continues, the long-term implication is a growing population of partially educated youth, which may increase unemployment, poverty cycles, and social instability.

Given this sustained increase, H_{01} is rejected. There is a significant and practically meaningful increase in the magnitude of school dropout over time.

Relationship Between Insecurity and School Dropout (H_{02})

Research Question 2: What is the significant relationship between insecurity and school dropout in Katsina State?

Hypothesis H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between insecurity and school dropout in Katsina State.

Table 2: Chi-Square Test Result

Variable	χ^2	df	p-value
Security vs Dropout	31.42	4	.000*

The chi-square result ($\chi^2 = 31.42$, $p < 0.05$) indicates a statistically significant association between insecurity and school dropout. The probability that this relationship occurred by chance is extremely low.

Substantively, this means students exposed to higher levels of insecurity are significantly more likely to discontinue schooling. Insecurity may manifest in multiple ways:

- i. Fear of kidnapping or attacks discourages attendance.
- ii. Parents may withdraw children from school for safety.
- iii. School closures disrupt academic progression.
- iv. Teacher relocation reduces instructional quality.
- v. Psychological trauma lowers engagement and performance.

This finding confirms that insecurity is not merely a background contextual issue; it is an active determinant of educational discontinuity. Therefore, H₀₂ is rejected. There is a significant relationship between insecurity and school dropout.

Influence of Socioeconomic Factors (H₀₃)

Research Question 3: How do socioeconomic factors influence school dropout in Katsina State?

Hypothesis H₀₃: Socioeconomic factors do not significantly influence students' discontinuation of schooling.

Table 3: Logistic Regression Results (Socioeconomic Variables)

Predictor	Exp(B)	p-value
Poverty (Low Income)	4.80	.000*
Parental Unemployment	2.75	.012*
Low Parental Education	2.10	.021*

The logistic regression analysis reveals that socioeconomic variables significantly increase the likelihood of dropout.

1. **Poverty (Exp(B) = 4.80):** Students from low-income households are nearly five times more likely to drop out compared to students from relatively stable households. This indicates that poverty is the strongest single predictor among the socioeconomic

variables. Economic survival pressures override educational priorities in financially distressed households.

2. **Parental Unemployment (Exp(B) = 2.75):** Students whose parents are unemployed are almost three times more likely to discontinue schooling. Unemployment reduces household income stability and increases dependence on children's labor.
3. **Low Parental Education (Exp(B) = 2.10):** Students whose parents have low levels of education are twice as likely to drop out. This suggests that educational value transmission within the household significantly influences persistence.

These findings demonstrate that dropout is strongly rooted in household-level structural disadvantages. Education discontinuation in this context is not solely a student decision but a function of family socioeconomic capacity.

Since all p-values are below 0.05, H_{03} is rejected. Socioeconomic factors significantly influence school dropout.

Combined Predictive Strength of Security and Socioeconomic Variables (H_{04})

Research Question 4: What is the combined effect of security and socioeconomic factors on dropout?

Hypothesis H_{04} : Security and socioeconomic variables do not have a significant combined effect on school dropout.

Table 4: Logistic Regression

Predictor	Exp(B)	p-value
High Insecurity Zone	3.60	.001*
Poverty (Low Income)	4.80	.000*
Parental Unemployment	2.75	.012*
Low Parental Education	2.10	.021*

When both security and socioeconomic variables are entered into the same regression model, all predictors remain statistically significant. This indicates that:

1. Each variable independently contributes to dropout.
2. The effect of one variable does not eliminate the effect of the others.
3. Dropout is the result of layered and interacting vulnerabilities.

Students living in high-insecurity zones are 3.6 times more likely to drop out, even after controlling for poverty and parental background. This suggests that insecurity has an independent structural effect beyond economic hardship.

The combined model confirms that poverty and insecurity reinforce each other. Insecurity disrupts livelihoods, which deepens poverty. Deepened poverty increases the likelihood of dropout. Thus, dropout emerges from a multidimensional vulnerability system rather than a single-factor cause.

Since the combined regression model is statistically significant, H_{04} is rejected. Security and socioeconomic variables jointly and significantly predict school dropout.

Discussion of the Findings

The results across all four hypotheses collectively demonstrate that school dropout in Katsina State is:

- i. Increasing over time,
- ii. Strongly associated with insecurity,
- iii. Deeply influenced by socioeconomic hardship,
- iv. And most powerfully explained when both structural conditions are considered together.

The data reveal that poverty is the strongest single predictor, but insecurity significantly amplifies vulnerability. Students who are both economically disadvantaged and exposed to insecurity face compounded risks.

The findings suggest that addressing dropout requires:

- i. Security stabilization,
- ii. Household economic empowerment,
- iii. Parental education interventions,
- iv. Social protection programs,
- v. And targeted retention policies.

Educational reforms alone will not sufficiently reduce dropout unless broader structural conditions are addressed.

Table 5: Summary of Hypothesis Decisions

Hypothesis	Decision	Interpretation
H_{01}	Rejected	Dropout significantly increased over time
H_{02}	Rejected	Insecurity significantly predicts dropout
H_{03}	Rejected	Socioeconomic factors significantly influence dropout
H_{04}	Rejected	Combined factors significantly predict dropout

The result confirms that school dropout in Katsina State is not incidental but structurally driven. It reflects the convergence of insecurity and entrenched socioeconomic deprivation. The statistical evidence strongly supports a multidimensional explanation of dropout patterns and underscores the urgent need for integrated, cross-sectoral intervention strategies.

Conclusion

School dropout in Katsina State is significantly influenced by security instability and socioeconomic hardship. The rising dropout trend threatens educational development and long-term economic prospects in the region. Addressing dropout requires holistic interventions beyond educational reforms alone.

Recommendations

1. Strengthen school security infrastructure and community vigilance systems.
2. Expand conditional cash transfer programs targeting vulnerable families.
3. Provide psychosocial support for conflict-affected students.
4. Implement school feeding and scholarship schemes.
5. Develop rapid response education continuity plans during crises.

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