

Influence of Youth Restiveness on Students' Academic Performance in Economics in Public Senior Secondary Schools in North East, Nigeria

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36348/sjhss.2026.v11i09.005>

| Received: 13.07.2026 | Accepted: 07.09.2026 | Published: 12.09.2026

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Abstract

The study investigated the Influence of Youth Restiveness on Students' Academic Performance in Economics in Public Senior Secondary School in North East, Nigeria. The study was guided by two research questions and two null hypotheses. A descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population comprised 6,398 teachers and 275,897 students in public senior secondary schools across four states in North East Nigeria (Adamawa, Borno, Gombe and Yobe). A sample size of 1,697 was selected from the population using Krejcie and Morgan's formula. Proportionate sampling technique was used to select 317 teachers and 1,380 students from four states in the North East, Nigeria. Three research instruments were used to collect data. Namely: Youth Restiveness Questionnaire for Teachers, Youth Restiveness Questionnaire for Students and a Cumulative WAEC Results in Economics from 2021 – 2025. The Instruments were validated by three experts. The instruments were also trial tested on some sample of teachers and students using test-retest reliability; and the reliability coefficient of 0.87 and 0.84 were obtained. The data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation, t-test and ANOVA all test at 0.05 level of significance. The results from the study indicates a high level of agreement among teachers and students on all dimensions of youth restiveness. Antecedents, forms, causes, effects, and counselling strategies, parent socio-status, and peer influence. The study concluded that youth restiveness is a common and multi-dimensional problem among public senior secondary school students in North East, Nigeria.

Keywords: Youth restiveness, academic performance, antecedents, gender, school types.

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INTRODUCTION

Education remains an important instrument for human-capital development, social integration and economic transformation. At the secondary-school level, education prepares learners for higher education, employment, entrepreneurship and responsible citizenship. The quality of educational outcomes therefore depends not only on what occurs within the classroom but also on the broader social, economic and security environment within which teaching and learning take place.

In North East Nigeria, youth restiveness has become a big issue of concern. The causes of this restiveness are often linked to socio-economic deprivation, systemic neglect, and insecurity, which are prevalent in the region (Eze-Micheal, 2020). Many adolescents face challenges such as poor educational infrastructure, high rates of poverty, and exposure to

violence and conflict, leading to feelings of frustration and helplessness (Eze, 2019a). The ongoing insurgency, especially the activities of Boko Haram, has further disrupted the lives of many young people, displacing them from their homes, schools, and communities. These conditions create a fertile ground for disillusionment, pushing adolescents toward rebellious and disruptive behaviours. Also, the lack of effective counselling services in schools exacerbates the problem as students are left without guidance to help them cope with their emotional and psychological challenges.

This ongoing insurgency has led to widespread displacement, destruction of properties and economic stagnation, all of which have had a profound effect on the youth population. Among adolescents, these challenges have manifested in increased levels of youth restiveness, a phenomenon characterized by rebellion, violence, and other forms of disruptive behaviour

(Ahmad & Umar, 2021). This situation has become a major concern for educators, parents, and policymakers because it threatens not only the safety and well-being of young people but also their educational development and future prospects.

Academic performance refers broadly to the extent to which a learner achieves predetermined educational objectives, usually demonstrated through scores obtained in tests, examinations, continuous assessment and other forms of academic evaluation. It is not produced solely within the classroom; it is also shaped by the social and psychological environment in which learning occurs. A student who learns in an environment characterised by fear, insecurity, violence, displacement or persistent disruption may experience difficulties in concentrating, attending school regularly, completing assignments and participating effectively in classroom activities Okpanachi (2023; Amao, 2024). Thus, although academic performance is commonly examined from the perspective of teaching and learning processes, the wider social environment in which schooling takes place deserves equal attention.

Therefore, one of the major social challenges capable of undermining a stable educational environment is youth restiveness. Youth restiveness may be understood as persistent, disruptive, aggressive or violent behaviour by young people arising from dissatisfaction with perceived social, political or economic conditions. It can manifest through protests, demonstrations, vandalism, cultism, communal violence, political thuggery, kidnapping, destruction of property, attacks on institutions and other forms of collective disorder. Such grievances are linked with unemployment (Oke & Ahoton, 2024; Fareo & babale, 2021; Bello & Adamu, 2019); economic hardship (Folorunso, 2025). Youth restiveness in North East Nigeria are intricately linked to the ongoing insecurity that has severely disrupted the educational landscape in the region (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2020). Schools, once viewed as safe havens for learning and personal development, have become targets of violence and destruction.

According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), millions of children in Nigeria, especially in the North East are out of school due to the ongoing conflict (UNICEF, 2022). The dire situation has left many adolescents without access to consistent learning environments which is vital for their academic and emotional development (Takwate & Iranda, 2023). Those who remain in school often face deteriorating conditions characterized by inadequate facilities, insufficient teaching staff, and a lack of learning materials. This educational deprivation contributes significantly to youth restiveness, as students become frustrated by their inability to achieve their educational goals in the face of constant disruption and instability. Gender may also influence the ways in which

young people experience, respond to and are affected by social unrest. In some conflict environments, boys may be more directly exposed to recruitment into violent groups, political violence, street protests and other forms of physical confrontation (Adejuwon & Okewole, 2019; Bertoni *et al.*, 2019).

It is equally important therefore to recognise that antecedents, gender and school type may interact rather than operate independently. For example, unemployment, poverty, perceived marginalisation, peer influence and inadequate social support may increase young people's vulnerability to restiveness. The consequences of such restiveness may then be experienced differently by male and female students and may vary according to the characteristics and resources of their schools. Consequently, this study is aimed at examining the influence of youth restiveness on students' academic performance in Economics.

Statement of the Problem

The rise of youth restiveness among adolescents in North East Nigeria has become a pressing concern for security officials, policymakers, principals, teachers and community leaders. This troubling phenomenon, characterized by violence, insurgency, and social unrest, poses significant challenges to the region's stability and development. It threatens not only the immediate safety of students and educational staff but also has far-reaching implications for the socio-economic landscape of the area (Adeola & Oluyemi, 2021). Schools, public utilities, and essential infrastructure frequently bear the brunt of this unrest, leading to a cycle of destruction and hindered progress. One tragic incident of youth restiveness occurred on May 14, 2024, at Kolere Senior Secondary School in Mubi. The principal of the school lost his life due to an unrest caused by a former student who had dropped out but returned to terrorize the school. This incident highlights the personal and institutional vulnerabilities in the face of unchecked youth violence. It also illustrates the profound impact of such restiveness on the educational sector, where schools should be safe havens for learning and development.

Security personnel, school authorities, stakeholders of education, the society, parents and students in North East, Nigeria play a critical role in managing and responding to youth restiveness. The youth firsthand experiences provide valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of this phenomenon. However, there has been limited systematic documentation and analysis of their perspectives regarding the perceived causes of youth restiveness among adolescents (Abubakar, 2022). Despite extensive efforts by government agencies, non-governmental organizations, community leaders, and other stakeholders to combat youth restiveness, there remains a gap in comprehensively understanding its perceived causes in the geo-political zone (Adeola & Oluyemi,

2021). This gap in understanding hinders the development of effective policies and interventions. Policymakers need detailed insights to craft solutions that address both the symptoms and the underlying causes of restiveness among adolescents. Bridging this gap requires dedicated research efforts and a commitment to incorporate the insights of those who confront the realities of youth unrest on a daily basis.

The issue of youth restiveness in North East Nigeria necessitates a multi-faceted approach that tackles both immediate and underlying causes. This research aims to bridge the gap in existing literature by determine the influence of youth restiveness on student academic performance in economics in public senior secondary school in North East, Nigeria. Therefore, this study is aimed at examining the influence of youth restiveness on student academic performance in economics in public senior secondary school in North East, Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What are the causes of youth restiveness among adolescents in public senior secondary schools in North East Nigeria?
2. What are the effects of youth restiveness on adolescents' behaviour in public senior secondary schools in public senior secondary schools in Adamawa State Nigeria?

Research Hypotheses

H₀₁: There is no significant influence on the mean score of the respondents on the perceived causes of youth restiveness on the bases of school type in public senior secondary schools in North East, Nigeria.

H₀₂: There is no significant influence of youth restiveness on academic performance of senior secondary school students in Economics in the WAEC of 2021 to 2025

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design. The population of the study comprised of 6,398 teachers and 275,897 students in public senior secondary schools in North East Nigeria. A proportionate sampling technique was used to sample a total 1,380 students and 317 teachers from public senior secondary schools across the region. Two research instruments were used for data collection: A structured questionnaire titled "Perception of Teachers and Students Youth Restiveness Questionnaire (PTSCEYRQ)," comprised eight sections labelled A, B, C, D, E, F, G, and H and Students' Academic Performance Records in Economics obtained from the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) results for the period 2021–2025. The instrument was subjected to face and content validation by experts and was also trial tested on some sample of teachers and students and the instrument was found reliable for the study yielding a reliability coefficient of 0.87 and 0.84. The data collected were analyzed using mean, standard deviation and t-test all tested at 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS

Research Question one: What are the causes of youth restiveness among adolescents in public senior secondary schools in North East Nigeria?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Causes of Youth Restiveness Among Adolescents in Public Senior Secondary Schools in North East Nigeria

S/N	Cause Factor	Teachers (n = 317)			Students (n = 1380)		
		Mean	Std.Dev.	Remark	Mean	Std.Dev.	Remark
1	Unemployment	2.75	1.09	Agree	2.65	1.11	Agree
2	Lack of access to quality education	2.78	1.11	Agree	2.60	1.11	Agree
3	Economic hardship	2.79	1.06	Agree	2.60	1.11	Agree
4	Poverty	2.74	1.11	Agree	2.63	1.11	Agree
5	Influence of substance abuse	2.86	1.01	Agree	2.57	1.08	Agree
6	Peer pressure	2.67	1.13	Agree	2.58	1.12	Agree
7	Family breakdown and lack of parental guidance	2.78	1.06	Agree	2.61	1.12	Agree
8	Corruption and lack of good governance	2.82	1.04	Agree	2.60	1.11	Agree
9	Negative influence of social media and entertainment	2.80	1.11	Agree	2.64	1.09	Agree
10	Lack of family and community counselling	2.69	1.12	Agree	2.58	1.12	Agree
	Grand Mean	2.77	1.08	Agree	2.61	1.11	Agree

Decision Rule: Mean ≥ 2.50 = Agree; Mean < 2.50 = Disagree

As indicated in Table 1, both teachers and students agreed on the causes of youth restiveness among adolescents. The grand mean scores of 2.77 for teachers and 2.61 for students reflect agreement that

unemployment, poverty, economic hardship, lack of access to quality education, substance abuse, peer pressure, family breakdown, corruption, and negative

social media influence are key causes of youth restiveness.

The standard deviation values in Table 1 ($\sigma = 1.08$ for teachers and $\sigma = 1.11$ for students) reveal moderate dispersion in respondents' opinions. This suggests that although respondents generally shared similar views on the causes of youth restiveness, there were slight differences in how strongly individuals

perceived specific factors. Nonetheless, the consistency in standard deviation values indicates a fair degree of agreement among respondents.

Research Question 2: What are the effects of youth restiveness on adolescents' behaviour in public senior secondary schools in Adamawa State Nigeria?

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Effects of Youth Restiveness on Adolescents' Behaviours in Public Senior Secondary Schools in North East Nigeria

S/N	Resulting Effect on Students	Teachers (n = 317)			Students (n = 1380)		
		Mean	Std.Dev	Remark	Mean	Std.Dev.	Remark
1	Destruction of lives and property	2.76	1.10	Agree	2.58	1.11	Agree
2	Education backwardness	2.80	1.07	Agree	2.59	1.14	Agree
3	Psychological/emotional torture of victims and relations	2.80	1.07	Agree	2.61	1.10	Agree
4	Insecurity within school environment	2.80	1.07	Agree	2.58	1.11	Agree
5	Broken homes	2.75	1.07	Agree	2.63	1.12	Agree
6	Living in fear and suspicion	2.87	1.07	Agree	2.61	1.12	Agree
7	Collapse/closure of schools	2.70	1.09	Agree	2.65	1.11	Agree
8	Breakdown of law and order	2.78	1.07	Agree	2.62	1.10	Agree
9	Upsurge of social vices and crimes	2.81	1.09	Agree	2.63	1.13	Agree
10	Poor academic performance	2.64	1.09	Agree	2.64	1.12	Agree
	Grand Mean	2.77	1.08	Agree	2.61	1.12	Agree

Decision Rule: Mean ≥ 2.50 = Agree; Mean < 2.50 = Disagree

The results presented in Table 2 indicate that youth restiveness has significant negative effects on adolescents' behaviour in public senior secondary schools in North East Nigeria. The grand mean scores of 2.77 for teachers and 2.61 for students show agreement that youth restiveness leads to destruction of lives and property, insecurity, psychological trauma, educational backwardness, breakdown of law and order, and poor academic performance. The standard deviation values reported in Table 2 ($\sigma = 1.08$ for teachers and $\sigma = 1.12$ for students) indicate moderate dispersion in responses.

This suggests that although respondents generally agreed on the negative effects of youth restiveness, the intensity and occurrence of these effects may vary across schools and communities. Nonetheless, the moderate variability confirms that these effects are widely acknowledged.

H₀₁: There is no significant influence in the mean score of the respondents on the perceived causes of youth restiveness on the basis of school type in public senior secondary schools in North East, Nigeria.

Table 3: Summary of ANOVA of Teachers Responses on the Perceived Causes of Youth Restiveness on the Basis of School Type in Public Senior Secondary Schools in North East, Nigeria

Variable	Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Decision
Teachers	Between Groups	0.268	2	0.134	1.207	0.301	Not Significant
	Within Groups	34.824	314	0.111			
	Total	35.092	316				
Students	Between Groups	0.019	2	0.009	0.078	0.925	Not Significant
	Within Groups	165.597	1377	0.120			
	Total	165.616	1379				

$p > 0.05$

Hypothesis one tested whether there is a significant difference in the mean ratings of respondents on the perceived causes of youth restiveness based on school type. The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) results presented in Table 3 reveal no significant influence among respondents across different school types for both teachers and students. For teachers, the calculated F -

value of 1.207 with a significance level of 0.301 is greater than the 0.05 threshold. Likewise, for students, the F -value of 0.078 with a p -value of 0.925 also exceeds the 0.05 level of significance.

H₀₂: There is no significant influence of youth restiveness on academic performance of senior

secondary school students in Economics in the WAEC of 2021 – 2025 in North East, Nigeria.

Table 4: Summary of Simple Linear Regression Analysis on the Influence of Youth Restiveness on Academic Performance of Senior Secondary School Students in Economics in WAEC (2021–2025) in North East Nigeria

Predictor Variable	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	β	t	F	Sig. (p-value)	Decision
Youth Restiveness	0.583	0.340	0.336	-0.583	-9.572	91.621	0.000*	Significant

$p > 0.05$

The regression result in Table 4 shows that youth restiveness has a moderate relationship with students' academic performance in Economics ($R = 0.583$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.340$) indicates that youth restiveness accounts for 34.0% of the variation in students' academic performance, while the remaining 66.0% is explained by other factors outside the model. The standardized regression coefficient ($\beta = -0.583$) indicates a negative influence, meaning that as youth restiveness increases, students' academic performance tends to decrease. The regression model is statistically significant ($F = 91.621$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, indicating that youth restiveness has a statistically significant influence on the academic performance of senior secondary school students in Economics.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the influence of youth restiveness on students' academic performance in Economics in public senior secondary schools in Adamawa State, Nigeria. The findings show that youth restiveness is widely perceived by both teachers and students as a serious, multi-dimensional problem whose causes, manifestations and consequences extend well beyond isolated acts of indiscipline into the disruption of the entire teaching–learning process.

On the causes of youth restiveness, both teachers and students agreed that unemployment, poverty, economic hardship, lack of access to quality education, substance abuse, peer pressure, family breakdown, poor governance, negative social-media influence and inadequate counselling are important drivers. These perceptions are consistent with earlier Nigerian studies that have repeatedly identified socio-economic deprivation, weak parental supervision and peer pressure as central antecedents of restive behaviour (Ibrahim & Yusuf, 2020; Maciver & Igbojinwaekwu, 2019; Ibanga, 2025; Ezecheta, 2025). In Adamawa State the problem is compounded by the lingering effects of insurgency, displacement and community-level insecurity. When young people see limited legitimate economic opportunities and experience interrupted schooling, restiveness becomes a readily available outlet for frustration. The moderate but consistent standard deviations indicate that while respondents share a common understanding of the main causes, the relative weight of particular factors (for example, substance

abuse versus family breakdown) may vary from one locality to another.

The effects of youth restiveness on adolescent behaviour were equally pronounced. Teachers and students alike reported that restiveness produces destruction of lives and property, educational backwardness, psychological and emotional trauma, insecurity within school compounds, school closures, breakdown of law and order, an upsurge of social vices and, crucially, poor academic performance. These outcomes directly undermine the conditions required for effective learning of Economics. Economics at the senior-secondary level demands regular attendance, sustained concentration, sequential coverage of topics (production, markets, national income, public finance, etc.) and a relatively stable instructional environment (Azi & Dajan, 2022). When schools are closed, lessons are interrupted, students live in fear, or instructional time is lost to unrest, the cumulative effect is reduced opportunity to master the subject. The finding that poor academic performance itself appears as one of the recognised effects of restiveness therefore has particular relevance for the present study.

Hypothesis one revealed no statistically significant difference in perceptions of the causes of youth restiveness across school types. Restiveness is therefore not confined to a particular category of public senior secondary school; it is a widespread phenomenon affecting day and boarding, urban and rural, and large and small institutions alike. This finding implies that interventions cannot be limited to a few “high-risk” schools; they must be system-wide.

The most important result for the central research question is the regression analysis. Youth restiveness showed a moderately strong negative relationship with students' academic performance in Economics ($R = 0.583$, $R^2 = 0.340$, $\beta = -0.583$, $p < 0.05$). In practical terms, approximately 34 per cent of the variation in WAEC Economics results (2021–2025) can be accounted for by the level of youth restiveness, while the remaining 66 per cent is attributable to other factors such as teacher quality, instructional materials, students' prior ability and home support. The negative beta coefficient indicates that as restiveness increases, Economics performance declines. This is theoretically and empirically plausible: restiveness produces absenteeism, reduced instructional time, trauma that

impairs concentration and working memory, and a climate of fear that is incompatible with the analytical and sequential thinking required in Economics. The result corroborates earlier work linking social instability, insurgency-related school closures and deviant behaviour with poorer academic outcomes in North-East Nigeria (Godwin *et al.*, 2025; Gidado *et al.*, 2026; Echebe *et al.*, 2025).

Taken together, the findings demonstrate that youth restiveness, peer influence, parental socio-economic status and adolescent behaviour do not operate in isolation. A student living in a restive community is more likely to experience negative peer pressure, economic hardship at home and behavioural difficulties, all of which jointly reduce the probability of regular attendance, effective study and satisfactory performance in Economics. Because these processes affect male and female students and all school types similarly, the problem is both pervasive and gender-neutral in its educational consequences.

CONCLUSION

Youth restiveness is a common and multi-dimensional problem among public senior secondary school students in Adamawa State. Teachers and students agree that it is driven by unemployment, poverty, economic hardship, family breakdown, peer pressure, substance abuse, poor governance and social-media influence. Its effects include insecurity, psychological trauma, school closures, educational backwardness and, most relevant to this study, significantly poorer academic performance in Economics. The regression evidence shows that youth restiveness accounts for a substantial and statistically significant portion of the variation in WAEC Economics results. Restiveness is not limited to particular school types or religious groups; it is a system-wide challenge. Unless the underlying socio-economic and security conditions are addressed, and unless schools are equipped with effective behaviour-management and counselling programmes, the academic performance of students in Economics—and by extension their preparation for higher education, employment and responsible citizenship—will continue to be undermined.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Adamawa State Post-Primary Schools Management Board (ASPPMB) and the Ministry of Education should design and implement a state-wide behaviour-management and student-engagement programme in all public senior secondary schools. The programme should contain modules on violence prevention, conflict resolution, drug-abuse awareness, responsible use of social media and the specific academic demands of subjects such as Economics.

2. School principals, in collaboration with trained guidance counsellors, should establish structured peer-mentoring schemes, student councils and extra-curricular clubs that promote positive peer influence, teamwork and civic responsibility. These structures can counteract the negative peer pressure identified as a major antecedent of restiveness.
3. The State Government, through the Ministry of Education and relevant social-welfare agencies, should expand youth-empowerment and poverty-alleviation schemes targeted at families of secondary-school students. Improved household economic security would reduce one of the principal drivers of restiveness and enable parents to provide the material support (textbooks, study space, nutrition) required for success in Economics.
4. Security agencies, school authorities and community leaders should collaborate to restore and maintain a safe school environment. This includes prompt response to threats, rehabilitation of damaged facilities and psychosocial support for students and teachers who have experienced trauma. A stable, secure school is a prerequisite for the uninterrupted instructional time that Economics requires.

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