



EDUCATION ADVANCEMENT AND THE SIT-AT-HOME ORDERS: LEGAL AND ACADEMIC IMPACTS FOR POLICY ADVOCACY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Sit-at-home orders have emerged as a recurring form of protest in parts of Nigeria, often resulting in widespread closure of schools and restriction of movement. This opinion paper examines the legal and educational implications of these orders on the educational advancement of children. From an analytical standpoint, the paper argues that while such directives are often framed as instruments of political expression, their unintended consequences significantly disrupt the educational process and undermine the rights of children to uninterrupted learning. The paper interrogates the legal dimensions of these disruptions by considering the obligations of the state and society to protect children's right to education as guaranteed under the Child Rights Act and international frameworks such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Educationally, repeated school closures, irregular attendance, and psychological insecurity among students are argued to contribute to declining academic performance, reduced curriculum coverage, and widening learning inequalities.

Keywords: Sit-at-Home Orders, Children's Rights, Legal Implications, Educational Advancement.

Introduction

Education is widely recognized as a fundamental human right and a critical instrument for social and economic development. It plays an essential role in shaping the intellectual, moral, and social capacities of children while preparing them for responsible participation in society. Despite these guarantees, the Nigerian education system continues to experience various disruptions resulting from socio-political tensions, insecurity, and civil unrest. In recent years, the emergence of sit-at-home orders in parts of southeastern Nigeria has become a notable phenomenon affecting social and institutional activities, including education. Sit-at-home directives typically involve the restriction of movement and the closure of businesses, markets, and schools as a form of protest or political expression. While such actions are often intended to communicate political grievances, they have generated unintended consequences for the education sector. Research has shown that disruptions caused by insecurity and political unrest significantly affect school attendance, teaching effectiveness, and students' academic progress (Omede & Okafor, 2022; Nwankwo, Okeke, & Eze, 2023). In view of these concerns, it becomes necessary to examine the legal and educational implications of sit-at-home orders on the educational advancement of children. Such an examination is important in understanding how recurring disruptions affect learning continuity, academic progress, and the broader realization of children's right to education, while also



identifying policy and legal responses that can protect children's educational opportunities in contexts of socio-political instability.

Brief Historical Background of Sit-at-Home Orders

Over time, the enforcement of sit-at-home orders became more frequent, particularly from 2021 onward, when weekly Monday sit-at-home directives were announced in parts of the region. These orders often resulted in widespread closure of schools, government offices, and commercial establishments, sometimes accompanied by fear of violence or intimidation against individuals who failed to comply. Research indicates that the persistent enforcement of these directives has had profound implications for economic productivity, mobility, and access to essential services, including education (Ezeibe, Oguonu, & Ajaero, 2019; Onuoha, 2022).

The historical development of sit-at-home orders in southeastern Nigeria therefore reflects a transition from symbolic political protest to a recurring social phenomenon with broader societal consequences. While proponents often frame the action as a legitimate tool for political expression, scholars and policymakers have increasingly raised concerns about its unintended effects on economic stability, social life, and the functioning of public institutions such as schools. In particular, the repeated closure of educational institutions has drawn attention to the potential long-term implications for children's learning opportunities and educational advancement.

Conceptual Clarifications

Sit-at-Home Orders

Sit-at-home orders refer to organized directives or calls for individuals to remain indoors and suspend normal social and economic activities within a particular area as a form of protest, civil disobedience, or political expression. Such directives often involve the closure of markets, businesses, public institutions, and schools for a specified period. According to Okafor and Nnaemeka (2021), sit-at-home protests are a form of collective nonviolent resistance used to draw attention to political grievances or perceived injustices by disrupting routine activities within a society.

Educational Advancement of Children

Educational advancement of children refers to the progressive development of children's knowledge, skills, competencies, and academic achievements through structured learning processes within formal and informal educational settings. It encompasses not only academic progression from one level of education to another but also the overall intellectual, cognitive, and social development that occurs through consistent participation in educational activities. Scholars have emphasized that educational advancement is closely linked to access to quality schooling, effective teaching, and a stable learning environment that enables students to engage continuously with instructional materials and learning opportunities (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015). Furthermore, consistent school attendance and uninterrupted learning experiences are critical factors in promoting academic success and long-term educational outcomes among children (UNESCO, 2021). When educational systems experience disruptions such as school closures or



restrictions on movement, children's learning trajectories may be negatively affected, leading to delays in academic progression and reduced educational attainment.

Children's Rights to Education

Children's rights to education refer to the legally recognized entitlement of every child to access free, equitable, and quality education that promotes their full development and prepares them for responsible participation in society. This right is widely recognized in international human rights instruments such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which obligates states to make primary education compulsory and accessible to all children. Similarly, Nigeria has domesticated these principles through the Child Rights Act, which affirms that every child has the right to education and requires government authorities to ensure the provision of educational opportunities for all children. Scholars have noted that the realization of children's right to education depends not only on the existence of legal frameworks but also on the availability of safe and stable learning environments that allow children to attend school regularly and participate effectively in educational activities (Tomasevski, 2001). Consequently, any situation that prevents children from accessing schools or participating in learning activities may constitute a challenge to the full realization of their educational rights.

Educational Implications of Sit-at-Home Orders

Sit-at-home orders have increasingly generated significant concerns regarding their effects on the education sector, particularly in regions where such directives occur repeatedly. Education systems depend largely on consistency, structured schedules, and regular interaction between teachers and learners. When schools are forced to close due to movement restrictions or fear of violence associated with sit-at-home directives, the continuity of teaching and learning is disrupted. Scholars have emphasized that interruptions in schooling reduce instructional time, weaken students' engagement with learning materials, and create gaps in knowledge acquisition that may take considerable time to recover (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015). In areas affected by recurring sit-at-home orders, these disruptions often extend beyond temporary closures to produce long-term consequences for children's educational development and academic progression.

Disruption of Academic Calendar and Learning Process

One of the most immediate educational consequences of sit-at-home orders is the disruption of the academic calendar. Schools operate according to structured timetables designed to ensure that students receive adequate instructional hours within a term or academic year. When schools are closed unexpectedly or repeatedly due to enforced stay-at-home directives, these schedules become difficult to maintain. Teachers may be unable to complete planned lessons, while students lose valuable learning time that is essential for mastering academic concepts

Research on school disruptions indicates that prolonged interruptions to classroom instruction can significantly affect students' learning processes, particularly in subjects that require continuous practice and teacher guidance (UNESCO, 2020). The absence of regular classroom interaction also limits opportunities for collaborative learning, assessment, and feedback, which are essential components of effective teaching. Consequently, repeated school closures caused by sit-at-home



orders may lead to delayed academic progression and difficulties in meeting educational targets within the school year.

Impact on Academic Performance and Curriculum Coverage

Sit-at-home orders also affect the ability of schools to adequately cover prescribed curricula within the designated academic period. According to Akpunonu, (2019), Okechukwu (2025) and Ilodigwe (2026), when learning days are lost, teachers often face the challenge of compressing large volumes of instructional content into shorter time frames. This situation can lead to rushed teaching methods, superficial coverage of topics, and reduced opportunities for revision and reinforcement of learning materials.

Empirical studies have demonstrated that reduced instructional time and inconsistent school attendance are associated with lower academic achievement among students (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015). Again, as noted by Ucheagwu-Okoye (2025) and Akpunonu and Eze (2021), in many cases, students may struggle to keep up with lessons that were missed during school closures, leading to gaps in knowledge and declining academic performance. Furthermore, students preparing for external examinations may be particularly affected because incomplete curriculum coverage can hinder their readiness for assessments. As a result, repeated disruptions in schooling may contribute to widening educational inequalities, especially for children who lack access to alternative learning resources outside the classroom.

Psychological and Social Effects on Children

Beyond academic consequences, sit-at-home orders may also have psychological and social effects on children. Ucheagwu-Okoye (2019), Eze (2023) and Anushiem and Anushiem (2025) stated that the uncertainty and fear that sometimes accompany these directives can create anxiety and insecurity among students. Children who frequently experience disruptions in their schooling environment may develop feelings of frustration, stress, or disengagement from educational activities. According to Loades et al. (2020), disruptions to children's normal routines, including school attendance and peer interaction, can negatively affect their emotional well-being and social development.

According to Akpunonu, and Eze, (2022) and Eze, and Iloka (2022), schools provide more than academic instruction; they also serve as spaces where children develop social relationships, communication skills, and emotional resilience through interaction with peers and teachers. When students are repeatedly confined to their homes due to sit-at-home directives, these opportunities for social learning are reduced. As rightly stated by Anushiem, Anushiem, Nwakoby and Ilodigwe (2025), prolonged isolation from school environments may therefore weaken children's sense of belonging and motivation to participate in academic activities. Over time, such psychological and social challenges may further hinder children's educational advancement and overall development.



Opinion and Critical Analysis of Sit-at-Home Orders

Eze and Iloka (2022), Anushiem (2024) and Chukwuma (2025) had stated that the phenomenon of sit-at-home orders in southeastern Nigeria presents a complex intersection of civil rights, socio-political activism, and the fundamental rights of children to education. While proponents argue that such orders serve as legitimate forms of political expression and social mobilization, this opinion paper contends that their recurrent enforcement has far-reaching negative implications for the educational development of children. Again, as noted by Iloka, (2021) and Eze and Chukwuma (2023) and Anushiem (2026), schools are the primary institutions for formal learning, and repeated closures disrupt not only instructional delivery but also the broader social and cognitive development of learners. Empirical evidence indicates that interruptions to school attendance leads to gaps in curriculum coverage, declining academic performance, and, in some cases, permanent disengagement from education (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2015; Okeke & Nwoye, 2021).

From a legal perspective, sit-at-home orders often create conditions that conflict with the obligations of the state under both national and international law. Akpunonu, (2025) and Iloka, (2023) and Eze (2022) noted that the Child Rights Act and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child clearly enshrine the right of every child to access education without obstruction. Recurrent school closures undermine these rights, raising questions about the state's capacity to balance the protection of civil liberties with its responsibility to safeguard the welfare and rights of children (Tomasevski, 2001; Udeh & Ugwu, 2022). This legal tension underscores the need for proactive measures to prevent children from being collateral victims of socio-political conflicts.

Critically, while civil protest is a legitimate democratic tool, its execution should not jeopardize the education and long-term development of children. As stated by Iloka, and Eze (2022), Chukwuma, (2020) and Iloka (2022), the recurring disruption of the academic calendar and learning processes suggests that sit-at-home orders, if unregulated, risk creating a generation of learners who are academically disadvantaged and socially marginalized. Policy interventions, such as remote learning, flexible academic scheduling, and legal enforcement to ensure safe school attendance, are necessary to mitigate these effects.

Policy and Educational Implications and recommendation

One major implication is the need to strengthen institutional capacity at the state and local government levels. Schools, teacher unions, and education ministries must collaborate to implement early warning systems and coordinated responses that safeguard students and staff while minimizing educational losses. Parents and community leaders also play a vital role in supporting compliance with safety protocols and facilitating learning continuity at the household and community levels.

Ucheagwu-Okoye (2021), Chukwuma (2025) and Anushiem (2025) had noted that the closure of schools and disruption of learning continuity not only affects academic outcomes but also undermines the broader objectives of human capital development, social cohesion, and economic growth. From a policy perspective, it is imperative that the government and educational



stakeholders adopt proactive strategies that both protect children's rights and accommodate the realities of socio-political unrest.

Based on these considerations, the following recommendations are proposed:

- i. Establishment of Emergency Educational Continuity Plans: Governments should mandate that all schools develop protocols for remote learning, catch-up programs, and flexible timetables to ensure minimal disruption during sit-at-home orders.
- ii. Investment in Digital Learning Infrastructure: Expand access to online and blended learning platforms to allow students to continue academic activities safely from home during enforced closures.

Conclusion

From an analytical and policy perspective, the paper concludes that protecting children's educational rights must take precedence even in contexts of socio-political unrest. Effective mitigation requires coordinated policy interventions, including the establishment of emergency learning continuity plans, investment in digital learning infrastructure, legal enforcement to safeguard education, community engagement, and psychosocial support for students. By implementing these measures, the negative consequences of sit-at-home orders can be minimized, ensuring that children continue to benefit from consistent learning opportunities and holistic development.

Ultimately, the study underscores the need for a balanced approach that respects civil protest while prioritizing the educational welfare and rights of children. Guaranteeing uninterrupted access to education is not only a legal obligation but also a social and developmental imperative, essential for fostering human capital, social stability, and the long-term prosperity of the nation.

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