



Mathematics Learning Amidst Sit-at-Home Protests: Awareness and Perceptions among Senior Secondary School Students

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Article Info	Abstract
Received April 13, 2025	Frequent sit-at-home protests in southeastern Nigeria have disrupted the school calendar and threatened students' academic progress. This study used a descriptive survey to examine students' awareness and perceptions of sit-at-home protests and their impact on mathematics learning in Orlu LGA, Imo State. Guided by four research questions, the study adopted a descriptive survey design. Data from 116 Senior Secondary School Two (SS2) students in four public schools were collected using the Awareness and Perceptions of Sit-at-Home Protests Questionnaire (APSHQP), validated by two experts and tested for reliability, and analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Findings revealed that while students were highly aware of sit-at-home protests, their perceptions varied; some viewed the disruptions as necessary for political expression, while others saw them as harmful to their academic progress. Students faced considerable challenges in mathematics learning due to school closures, missed lessons, and limited access to learning resources. Students adopted coping strategies such as online learning, independent study, and catch-up sessions. It was recommended that schools and policymakers integrate flexible digital and blended learning models to sustain instruction. Teachers should offer mobile-friendly resources and virtual support, while schools and parents set structured home-learning schedules to keep students engaged during disruptions.
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INTRODUCTION

Mathematics is universally recognized as a fundamental discipline that supports technological advancement and economic growth, while also developing essential cognitive skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical reasoning. Its interdisciplinary significance is evident in its capacity to enhance understanding across various academic domains, particularly in the sciences (Visser et al., 2015). In the Nigerian educational system, the importance of mathematics is institutionalized from primary to tertiary levels, as evidenced by policies that require students to secure a minimum credit pass in mathematics on O-Level

examinations (e.g., WASSCE or NECO) prior to university admission. This requirement not only emphasizes the indispensability of strong mathematical competence for success in science, technology engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields but also reinforces its relevance to studies in other fields like social sciences and humanities.

Despite the recognized indispensability of mathematics, the learning of mathematics in Nigeria has faced multiple challenges, including lack of funding and resource allocation, bad governance and policy implementation, poverty and economic inequality, inadequate infrastructure, brain drain, limited access to quality education, lack of collaboration and networking, insufficient support for indigenous knowledge, gender disparities, technological gaps, language barriers, lack of student interest and motivation towards mathematics, shortage of qualified mathematics teachers, poor teacher remuneration and motivation, lack of necessary teaching aids, learner anxiety and phobia towards mathematics, teaching methods and their impact on learning, and political instability and conflict (Agbata et al., 2024; Global Education Monitoring Report Team, 2019; Niyi et al., 2018; Zeufack et al., 2021). A major ongoing challenge is the wave of sit-at-home protests in southeastern Nigeria, especially in Imo State, which has severely disrupted academic schedules and negatively impacted students' learning processes (Offor & Offiah, 2023).

A sit-at-home protest is a type of civil disobedience where individuals choose to stay indoors to disrupt business and economic activities as a form of protest. This tactic has been employed by various groups globally, but it is notably associated with the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) in southeastern Nigeria. IPOB is a separatist organization advocating for the creation of an independent Biafran state. Azubuike (2018) sees the sit-at-home protests as passive resistance and argues that the nonviolent confrontation by pro-Biafra social movements has got stronger and more popular and has gained the supports of some non-Biafran elites and groups. They have utilized sit-at-home protests to highlight their cause and to exert pressure on the Nigerian government to release their leader, Nnamdi Kanu, who is detained on treason charges.

Jacob et al. (2020) explain that the sit-at-home order was initiated in response to the federal government of Nigeria arresting and detaining Mazi Nnamdi Kanu, the leader of IPOB. Consequently, proscribed IPOB members used this order to show solidarity with their leader, Mazi Nnamdi Kanu. IPOB is the most active and largest pro-Biafran resistance group since southeastern Nigeria was reannexed into the country in 1970 (Azubuike, 2018). It was established by Nnamdi Kanu, a UK-based activist and former Radio Director under MASSOB. Kanu is well-known for utilizing media activism and social protests to advocate for the secession and freedom of the Igbo people from Nigeria (Igwebuike & Akoh, 2022).

The insecurity in southeastern Nigeria has escalated with the enforcement of a sit-at-home order by IPOB. This order mandates a complete shutdown of all activities, including school operations, every Monday and on other days when Kanu appears in court. The order has significantly impacted the economy of the Imo state especially in Orlu LGA, including the educational sector. As a result of this situation, some overzealous hoodlums have been taking advantage of the opportunity to threaten students and teachers. In fact, during the last WAEC of 2024, coincidentally, on May 30th, during the Biafra day remembrance,

it was observed that some students missed their Mathematics Examination because of the sit-at-home-protest. Comprehensive Secondary School Nkume in Njaba, Imo State, Nigeria, faced disruptions to WAEC exams in 2021 due to a sit-at-home order, resulting in students being chased from their exam halls (BBC News Pidgin, 2021). These disruptions have had profound implications on students' ability to engage effectively in their studies, particularly in a subject like mathematics, which requires consistent practice and instructional guidance.

Students' awareness of the disruptive impact of sit-at-home protests has shaped diverse perceptions and responses to their learning challenges. Research highlights divergent student responses, with some cultivating adaptive strategies such as self-directed study and reliance on online educational platforms (Anyadiegwu & Nzekwu, 2022). Conversely, negative perceptions dominate among others, particularly regarding feelings of academic isolation, limited peer interaction, and heightened anxiety over exam preparedness due to irregular classroom attendance (Offor & Offiah, 2023). These challenges are exacerbated by inconsistent access to teacher guidance and learning materials, further straining academic continuity. These difficulties are intensified by irregular access to teacher support and learning resources, further disrupting academic continuity. To mitigate these challenges, students may have adopted various coping strategies, including attending weekend classes, seeking alternative study methods, and leveraging digital tools to keep up with their studies (Offor & Offiah, 2023). Nevertheless, the efficacy of these approaches frequently depends on socioeconomic determinants, including internet availability and family support.

The ongoing sit-at-home protests in southeastern Nigeria, including Orlu LGA, have sparked significant concerns about their effects on students' academic progress. Mathematics education, which relies heavily on consistent engagement, structured instruction, and regular problem-solving practice, is particularly vulnerable to disruptions caused by frequent school closures and the unpredictability of these protests. While prior research has explored the broader implications of socio-political instability on education, there is a notable gap in understanding how students perceive the specific impact of these protests on their mathematics learning experiences (Offor & Offiah, 2023). Key aspects of students' experiences such as their awareness of the protests' impact on mathematics learning, their positive and negative perceptions of the situation, and the coping strategies they adopt remain underexplored. For instance, it is unclear how students interpret the disruptions caused by the protests or the extent to which they have adjusted their study habits to cope with the challenges. Additionally, the absence of structured support systems to assist students in navigating these disruptions may further compound learning difficulties, particularly in a subject as demanding as mathematics. Understanding students' awareness and perceptions of these challenges is critical for educators, policymakers, and stakeholders to design effective interventions that mitigate the adverse effects of the protests on learning outcomes. This study, therefore, aims to investigate the extent to which senior secondary school students in Orlu LGA are aware of the impact of sit-at-home protests on their mathematics learning, how they perceive these disruptions, and the coping mechanisms they employ to sustain their academic progress amidst these challenges.

Research Questions

The study provides answers to the following research questions: (RQ1) To what extent are senior secondary school students aware of the impact of sit-at-home protests on their mathematics learning?; (RQ2) To what extent do students perceive the sit-at-home protests as influencing their motivation and engagement in mathematics learning?; (RQ3) What challenges do students face in accessing mathematics education due to sit-at-home protests?; (RQ4) What coping strategies do students adopt to mitigate the effects of sit-at-home protests on their mathematics studies?

RESEARCH METHODS

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. This design accurately describes students' experiences by quantifying their responses on awareness and perceptions related to mathematics learning during these protests, providing actionable insights for addressing the challenges posed by sit-at-home protests.

The population of the study comprised all 1,168 Senior Secondary School Two (SS2) students in 16 government-owned secondary schools in Orlu LGA of Imo State. The sample of the study consisted of 10% of the population, totaling 116 SS2 students from four schools.

One instrument was used for data collection in this study: the APSHPQ, developed by the researcher. The APSHPQ consisted of 20 items divided into two sections: Section A and Section B. Section A collected demographic information from respondents. Section B explored students' awareness and perceptions of sit-at-home protests across four dimensions: Awareness of Sit-at-Home Protests, Positive views in students' perceptions, Negative views in students' perceptions, and Coping Mechanisms and Support. Each dimension contained five items. Each item in the APSHPQ used a five-point Likert scale with varying options depending on the cluster. Awareness of Sit-at-Home Protests and Positive views in students' perceptions cluster response options: 1 Very low extent (VLE), 2 Low extent (LE), 3 Neutral, 4 High extent (HE) and 5 Very high extent (VHE). While Negative views in students' perceptions, and Coping Mechanisms and Support cluster response options ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) to quantify responses. Two experts validated and modified the instrument—one in Mathematics Education and the other in Measurement and Evaluation. These experts critiqued the items and assessed the APSHPQ for both face and content validity to ensure the appropriateness of the language used and the adequacy of content coverage in eliciting the required information.

A total of 20 Senior Secondary Class Two (SS2) students from Owerri City Secondary School, Owerri, Imo State, were purposively selected to participate in a pilot test for the instrument titled APSHPQ. The choice of 20 participants aligns with standard practice in educational research, where pilot studies commonly involve 10–30 participants to determine the clarity, consistency, and reliability of an instrument before large-scale use (Gay et al., 2012). Participants were recruited through purposive sampling, targeting students who shared similar characteristics with those in the main study population (i.e., SS2 students in Orlu, Imo State). Permission was sought and obtained from the school authorities, and informed consent was obtained from the students. The selection aimed to ensure that the

instrument would be tested in a context similar to the actual research setting. The selected students were administered the APSHPQ in a supervised classroom setting. They were briefed on the purpose of the exercise and assured of the confidentiality of their responses. The students completed the APSHPQ, and their responses were analyzed using the Cronbach's alpha reliability technique. The APSHPQ yielded a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.82, indicating a high level of internal consistency.

The data obtained were analysed using mean (M) and standard deviation (SD) with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23. The data analysis process involved computing mean and standard deviation using SPSS version 23 to summarize and interpret students' responses on the APSHPQ across its four dimensions. For the research questions, the mean scores were compared against an acceptance level of 3.00 or above on the five-point Likert scale, indicating agreement or high extent of awareness and perception.

RESEARCH RESULTS

The presentation of results followed the sequence of the research questions posed in the study.

Table 1. Awareness of sit-at-home protests

Items	M	SD	Remarks
1. I am aware of the sit-at-home protests happening in my area	4.74	0.674	HE
2. I find it difficult to keep up with my mathematics studies during sit-at-home protests.	4.04	1.033	HE
3. I often miss important mathematics lessons due to sit-at-home protests.	4.03	0.991	HE
4. My mathematics performance has declined since the sit-at-home protests started.	3.68	1.283	HE
5. The disruption caused by sit-at-home protests makes it hard to prepare for mathematics exams.	3.78	1.133	HE
Grand Mean (GM)	4.054	1.030	HE

Table 1 presents the analysis of participants' responses concerning their awareness of sit-at-home protests and perceptions of how these protests have affected mathematics learning. While the responses revealed a high level of awareness regarding the occurrence of the protests (GM=4.054, SD=1.030). The highest agreement was on the existence of the protests (M=4.74, SD=0.674), showing strong consensus. Difficulties in keeping up with studies (M=4.04, SD=1.033) and missing lessons (M=4.03, SD=0.991) were also widely acknowledged. While performance decline (M=3.68, SD=1.283) and exam preparation challenges (M=3.78, SD=1.133) had slightly lower means, the overall homogeneous grand SD (1.030) confirms consistent student responses on the significant disruption caused by the protests.

Table 2 presents the students' perceptions of sit-at-home protests on motivation and engagement in mathematics (GM=3.754, SD=1.0472). The highest-rated perception was confidence in succeeding in mathematics despite the disruptions (M=4.41, SD=0.824), indicating strong resilience among students.

Table 2. Students' motivation and engagement impacted by sit-at-home protests

Items	M	SD	Remarks
1. Positive attitudes towards the sit-at-home protest helped me stay motivated in my mathematics studies.	4.22	1.005	HE
2. The sit-at-home protests have made me more aware of the socio-political issues in my area.	3.02	1.179	HE
3. I feel that my mathematics teacher understands the challenges I face due to the protests.	3.20	1.040	HE
4. I am able to catch up on my mathematics homework despite the sit-at-home protests.	3.92	1.188	HE
5. Despite the sit-at-home protests, I am confident in my ability to succeed in mathematics.	4.41	0.824	HE
GM	3.754	1.047	HE

Many also reported that the protests helped them stay motivated in mathematics ($M=4.22$, $SD=1.005$) and that they could catch up on homework ($M=3.92$, $SD=1.188$). However, awareness of socio-political issues ($M=3.02$, $SD=1.179$) and perceived teacher support ($M=3.20$, $SD=1.040$) were rated lower, suggesting variability in these aspects. The homogeneous grand SD (1.0472) indicates that students' responses were generally consistent, reinforcing their ability to remain engaged and motivated in mathematics despite the challenges posed by the sit-at-home protests.

Table 3. Students struggle to access math education due to sit-at-home protests

Items	M	SD	Remarks
1. I feel frustrated when important mathematics lessons are cancelled due to sit-at-home protests.	4.12	1.112	Agreed
2. I receive less support from my teachers during periods of sit-at-home protests.	3.46	1.268	Agreed
3. I find it challenging to access study materials like textbooks and notes during sit-at-home protests.	3.88	1.089	Agreed
4. I feel isolated from my classmates during periods of sit-at-home protests.	3.84	1.262	Agreed
5. It seems very hard for me to go to school on Saturdays because my parents do not allow me.	4.01	1.083	Agreed
GM	2.51	1.163	Agreed

Table 3 presents the challenges faced by students in accessing mathematics education due to sit-at-home protests ($GM=2.512$, $SD=1.163$). The highest-rated challenge was frustration over missed mathematics lessons ($M=4.12$, $SD=1.112$), indicating that students struggle significantly with disruptions to their learning schedule. Difficulty attending school on Saturdays due to parental restrictions ($M=4.01$, $SD=1.083$) and challenges in accessing study materials ($M=3.88$, $SD=1.089$) were also widely acknowledged. Feelings of isolation from classmates ($M=3.84$, $SD=1.262$) and reduced teacher support ($M=3.46$, $SD=1.268$) further highlight the barriers students face. The homogeneous grand SD (1.1628) suggests

a consistent pattern in students' responses, confirming that the sit-at-home protests significantly hinder their ability to access mathematics education.

Table 4. Coping mechanisms and support systems adopted by students

Items	M	SD	Remarks
1. I use online resources to compensate for missed mathematics lessons during sit-at-home protests.	4.19	1.021	Agreed
2. My school started Saturday classes to help us cover missed lessons.	3.36	1.477	Agreed
3. My school has provided adequate resources to help me cope with missed mathematics lessons during sit-at-home protests.	3.54	1.590	Agreed
4. I am able to catch up on my mathematics homework despite the sit-at-home protests.	3.83	1.321	Agreed
5. The sit-at-home protests have motivated me to study mathematics more independently.	4.10	1.254	Agreed
GM	3.80	1.333	Agreed

Table 4 presents the coping mechanisms and support systems adopted by students to mitigate the impact of sit-at-home protests on their mathematics learning (GM=3.804, SD=1.333). The most commonly used strategy was relying on online resources (M=4.19, SD=1.021), reflecting a strong consensus on the effectiveness of digital learning tools. Independent study was also a widely adopted approach (mean = 4.10, SD = 1.254), showing students' self-motivation. Catching up on homework despite disruptions (M=3.83, SD=1.321) and school-provided resources (M=3.54, SD=1.590) were moderately rated, while Saturday classes (M=3.36, SD=1.477) had the lowest agreement, indicating variability in its accessibility. The homogeneous grand SD (1.333) suggests consistent student responses, affirming that while coping strategies are in place, access to institutional support remains inconsistent.

DISCUSSION

This study investigated the extent to which senior secondary school students are aware of the impact of sit-at-home protests on their mathematics learning. The results reveal a high level of awareness among Senior Secondary School Two (SS2) students in Orlu LGA, with a grand mean of 4.054 (SD=1.030). This indicates that most respondents strongly recognized the disruptions caused by the protests. Specifically, students reported missing mathematics classes which may result to backlogs in lesson delivery, struggling to keep up with mathematics studies, performance decline and struggling to prepare for mathematics exams. The item with the highest mean (M=4.74) showed that students were fully aware of the ongoing protests. This finding agrees with previous studies conducted in the southeastern region of Nigeria. Offor and Offiah (2023) reported that protest-induced school closures have significantly hindered students' academic progress, specifically noting that such disruptions encumber the academic performance of secondary school students in Anambra State. Similarly, Anyadiiegwu and Nzekwu (2022) found that persistent school shutdowns due to political unrest disrupt regular

learning routines, reduce effective teaching hours, and ultimately diminish students' academic outcomes. Furthermore, Mberekpe et al. (2023) highlighted that weekly sit-at-home protests have led to chronic disruptions in academic timetables, with students frequently missing Monday lessons. This repeated loss of instructional time contributes to incomplete syllabus coverage and delays in curriculum delivery, compounding the academic challenges students face. The homogeneous grand SD (1.030) suggests a consistent pattern in students' awareness, confirming that the protests are widely recognized as a major challenge to mathematics learning.

Students demonstrated both positive and negative perceptions regarding how sit-at-home protests influence their motivation and engagement in mathematics (GM=3.754, SD=1.047). The highest-rated perception was confidence in succeeding in mathematics despite disruptions (M=4.41, SD=0.824), indicating strong resilience among students. Many also reported that the protests helped them stay motivated (M=4.22, SD=1.005) and enabled them to catch up on homework (M=3.92, SD=1.188). However, fewer students felt that their teachers understood the challenges they faced (M=3.20, SD=1.040), and awareness of socio-political issues was rated the lowest (M=3.02, SD=1.179), indicating gaps in institutional support and civic education. These findings corroborate Anyadiegwu and Nzekwu (2022), who highlighted the varied student responses to learning disruptions, with some developing effective coping strategies and others struggling to stay engaged. Similarly, Elem (2023) observed that in unstable learning environments, students often rely on self-motivation and independent study to maintain academic progress. The homogeneous grand SD (1.047) suggests that students' responses were largely consistent, affirming their adaptability despite challenges. The overall consistency in responses further highlights a general pattern of adaptive resilience while also revealing gaps in institutional support, particularly in areas such as teacher guidance and socio-political awareness.

The findings further reveal challenges that students face in accessing mathematics education due to sit-at-home protests (GM=2.512, SD=1.163). The most pressing issue is frustration over missed mathematics lessons (M=4.12, SD=1.112), reinforcing findings by Offor and Offiah (2023) that disruptions lead to gaps in students' academic progress. Other key challenges include difficulty attending school on Saturdays due to parental restrictions (M=4.01, SD=1.083) and limited access to study materials (M=3.88, SD=1.089). Feelings of isolation from classmates (M=3.84, SD=1.262) and reduced teacher support (M=3.46, SD=1.268) further compound the problem. These findings align with Obibuba (2023), who reported that interrupted academic activities negatively impact student performance. The homogeneous grand SD (1.1628) confirms a consistent response pattern, indicating that the challenges posed by sit-at-home protests are widely experienced and significantly hinder students' ability to learn mathematics.

Finally, the results show that students have adopted various coping mechanisms to mitigate the impact of sit-at-home protests on mathematics learning (GM=3.804, SD=1.333). The most commonly used strategy was reliance on online resources (M=4.19, SD=1.021), aligning with Anyadiegwu and Nzekwu's (2022) findings that students increasingly turn to digital tools during school disruptions. Independent study was also widely practiced (M=4.10, SD=1.254), highlighting students' self-motivation. Other coping mechanisms included catching up on homework despite disruptions (M=3.83, SD=1.321) and utilizing school-provided

resources ($M=3.54$, $SD=1.590$). However, Saturday classes had the lowest agreement ($M=3.36$, $SD=1.477$), indicating variability in accessibility. These findings align with Elem (2023), who reported that while e-learning and independent study help students cope, institutional support remains inconsistent. The homogeneous grand SD (1.3326) suggests that while students largely agree on the effectiveness of their coping strategies, the variability in available support systems remains a critical issue.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study confirm that sit-at-home protests significantly disrupt mathematics learning among senior secondary students. Students demonstrated a high level of awareness of the impact of these disruptions, with frequent school closures leading to missed lessons, difficulties in keeping up with studies, and challenges in preparing for examinations. Despite these challenges, many students exhibited resilience, maintaining motivation and engaging in independent study. However, gaps in institutional support, particularly in teacher guidance and access to learning resources, remain a concern. While students adopted various coping strategies—such as online learning and self-study—there was variability in the effectiveness and accessibility of school-based interventions. The study highlights the urgent need for enhanced institutional support, digital learning integration, and policy interventions to ensure continuity in mathematics education despite socio-political disruptions.

Based on the conclusion, several recommendations were made as follows. Firstly, schools and educational policymakers should expand access to online learning platforms, providing students with free or subsidized digital resources to enhance mathematics learning during school disruptions. This aligns with findings that students increasingly rely on e-learning as a coping mechanism. Secondly, schools should introduce flexible learning schedules, such as structured weekend or after-school remedial classes, to help students recover lost instructional time. This will address students' concerns regarding missed lessons and limited access to teacher support. Thirdly, teachers should receive training on digital instructional methods and crisis-responsive teaching strategies to support students effectively. Additionally, schools should establish academic support systems, including virtual mentoring and peer learning programs, to mitigate the impact of prolonged disruptions on students' mathematics learning.

This study was limited to the mathematics learning experiences of senior secondary school students in Orlu Local Government Area of Imo State. As a result, the findings may not be generalizable to students in other local government areas or states, where the impact of sit-at-home protests and students' responses may vary due to differences in sociopolitical, economic, and educational contexts. Furthermore, the study relied on self-reported data from students, which may be subject to personal biases or inaccuracies in recall. Future research could extend this investigation to other academic disciplines such as the sciences, arts, or social studies to provide a more holistic understanding of the educational implications of sit-at-home protests.

The study highlights the urgent need for schools and policymakers to develop flexible and resilient learning systems that can withstand socio-political disruptions

like sit-at-home protests. It emphasizes the importance of integrating digital tools, supporting independent learning, and strengthening teacher-student engagement to ensure continuity in mathematics instruction. Additionally, the findings call for targeted interventions to bridge gaps in institutional support and to promote equitable access to learning resources for all students during periods of instability.

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