

Effects of Ethno-Religious Settlement Pattern on Teachers' Posting, Productivity and Students' Academic Achievement in Social Studies in Plateau State, Nigeria

Dauda Adeyemo Ariya, PhD¹, Ruth James Umaru, Ph. D², Lukman O. Shittu³, Telfim N. Nando⁴, Mariam B. Ariya⁵

^{1,2,3,4,5}Department of Social Science Education, University of Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria

ABSTRACT	ARTICLE DETAILS
This study investigated the effects of ethno-religious settlement pattern on teachers' posting, productivity and students' academic achievement in Social Studies in Plateau State, Nigeria. A descriptive survey research design was adopted. The population comprised teachers and students across the 99 public junior secondary schools in the six local government areas of the Northern Senatorial Zone of Plateau State. Using purposive sampling, 980 respondents were drawn from 21 schools 279 teachers and 701 students. Two structured rate scale questionnaires and a 30-item Social Studies Achievement Test (SSAT) administered as pre-test and post-test served as instruments. Data were analysed using means, standard deviations, independent samples t-test and Pearson Product-Moment Correlation at $p \leq 0.05$ significance level. Four research questions were answered and four null hypotheses tested. Findings revealed that both staff and students strongly acknowledged the influence of ethno-religious divisions on posting decisions (composite mean = 3.76). Religious settlement pattern was found to significantly affect teachers' posting (composite mean = 3.79; $t = 3.87$, $p < .05$) and their productivity (composite mean = 3.78; $r = -.589$, $p < .05$), with a moderate-to-strong negative correlation between settlement polarisation and professional output. Male students recorded significantly higher Social Studies achievement than female students under conditions of ethno-religious settlement segregation ($t = 5.04$, $p < .05$). All four null hypotheses were rejected. The study concludes that ethno-religious settlement patterns in the Northern Senatorial Zone constitute a structural barrier to equitable teacher deployment, professional productivity and students' academic achievement in Social Studies, with disproportionate consequences for female learners. It is recommended that the Plateau State Ministry of Education adopt a merit-based, religion-neutral posting policy, integrate peacebuilding into the Social Studies curriculum, and establish inter-community school exchange programmes to rebuild the bridging social capital eroded by decades of ethno-religious conflict. KEYWORDS: ethno-religious settlement pattern, teachers' posting, teacher productivity, Social Studies achievement, gender, Plateau State, Nigeria	Published On: 10 August 2026 Available on: https://irijsh.com/

1. INTRODUCTION

Plateau State, often described as a miniature Nigeria, has historically been characterised by the cohabitation of diverse ethnic, religious and cultural groups. The capital city, Jos, earned the sobriquet 'Tin City' following the large-scale exploitation of tin deposits during the colonial era, which attracted migrants from across Nigeria and beyond. Prior to the crises of 2001, people of different faiths and backgrounds lived in mixed settlements, attended the same schools, and engaged in shared social and economic activities within a broadly cosmopolitan environment (Nnabuihe, 2016). The eruption of ethno-religious violence in September 2001 and its subsequent recurrences fundamentally restructured the socio-spatial landscape of Jos and the broader Northern Senatorial Zone of Plateau State. According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, ACLED (2024), Nigeria ranks in the 'extreme' category on the Global Conflict Index, recording over 4,000 political violence events and 9,355 fatalities between December 2023 and November 2024. Plateau State, and particularly Jos North, has been one of the most consistently affected flashpoints, with 279 documented conflict events spanning 2001 to 2025 according to the ACLED Jos North dataset, encompassing

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battles, riots, violence against civilians, and explosions. The cumulative effect of these repeated episodes has been a radical redrawing of settlement maps, with communities segregating along ethno-religious lines (Olayinka, 2023; Abdulyakeen, 2023; Mustapha & Christian, 2023). In recent times, violent attacks have been reported in and around segregated communities in Plateau State. One such incident occurred on 29 March 2026 in Angwan Rukuba, heightening fears of renewed sectarian violence and prompting concern among local authorities and residents (Jammeh, 2026). Civilian casualties recorded and the aftermath of the conflict has brought heightened tension and increased segregation between communities. This issue of segregation is a 'tripod', a resultant three-fold effect of terrorism and insecurity which has transformed and metamorphosed into abduction pupils within school learning environment, (Yunusa, 2026). Further heightening prevalence of community segregation within conflict prone areas.

This systematic residential segregation has had profound implications for the education system. Schools, which were once shared spaces for inter-group learning and national socialisation, have gradually become embedded within ethno-religious enclaves. Consequently, teachers' posting patterns, professional productivity, and students' academic outcomes have all come under the shadow of settlement-driven polarisation. This study seeks to empirically investigate this nexus between ethno-religious settlement patterns and educational outcomes in Social Studies in Plateau State, Nigeria. Social Studies, as a subject, is uniquely positioned at the intersection of civic education, values formation, and national identity. Eferebo (2022) affirms that for Nigeria to achieve sustainable educational development and national unity, the civic purposes of education must be actively promoted even in the face of ethno-religious tensions. When the environment in which Social Studies is taught is itself fractured along ethnic and religious lines, the discipline's core mandate is fundamentally compromised.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The Nigerian educational system is anchored on the philosophical ideal of unity in diversity. Secondary education, in particular, is conceived as a pivotal stage in the formation of civic values, national consciousness, and productive citizenship. Teacher posting labelled as an administrative assignment of qualified educators to schools is a critical mechanism for educational equity, yet evidence from Nigeria and comparable contexts shows it is frequently compromised by geographic, gender, political, and socio-cultural segregation. In Jos-North Local Government Area of Plateau State, these dynamics intersect with the broader challenges of Nigerian education policy implementation, where urban-rural divides, political interference, and weak institutional oversight distort the distribution of teachers (Pandey, Dimka, Solomon & Nygel, 2025). It has been suggested that teacher postings may be influenced by the religious composition of communities, resulting in perceived alignment between teachers and the dominant faith of school locations. The dynamism of life in due to ethno-religious conflict in Jos has resulted in a variety of conflicts that have distorted settlement patterns and systems of life, most visibly through the compartmentalization of residential areas, markets, and schools (Best & Rakodi, 2011). This has led to neighborhoods being effectively classified along religious lines, where Christians and Muslims no longer live together as neighbors in many streets. Markets such as Gyel and part of Bukuru, for instance, have become primarily accessible only to persons of the same religious identity (Best & Rakodi, 2011) cited by Roelofs, (2020).

The consequences of inaction are a maldistribution and bifurcation of qualified Social Studies teachers, a narrowing of professional development opportunities, and an erosion of the pedagogical environment necessary for productive teaching and learning. The Plateau State Government's Recruitment and Deployment Plan for Basic Education (BED) Workers states that teacher posting should be guided by equity, staffing needs, and data-driven planning, with priority given to underserved and rural communities to ensure balanced teacher distribution across the state. (Plateau State Universal Basic Education Board [PSUBEB], 2025). The situational analysis surrounding Jos may suggest an observable policy mismatch as students are equally disadvantaged by being restricted to schools within their religious enclaves, denied exposure to diverse peer groups and to teachers of different faiths. (Abdullahi, 2014) These causes impoverishing the rich intercultural learning that Social Studies demands in a independent democratic society. Research documents that students in crisis-affected Plateau settlements experience reduced concentration, lower school attendance, disrupted socialization and ultimately diminished academic achievement (Olayinka, 2023; Rintep & Ajoji, 2025). This research study seeks to address these gaps in terms of empirical and policy regarding the influence of ethno-religious settlement patterns on teachers' posting, productivity, and students' academic achievement in Social Studies in Plateau State,

3. AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this study is to investigate the effects of ethno-religious settlement pattern on teachers' posting, productivity and students' academic achievement in Social Studies in Plateau State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study seeks to:

- i. Investigate the attitude of staff and students on the nature of posting and settlement patterns in the Northern Senatorial Zone of Plateau State.
- ii. Find out if teachers' posting to junior secondary schools is based on religious settlement pattern in Plateau State.
- iii. Find out whether religious settlement affects junior secondary school teachers' productivity in Plateau State.
- iv. Determine the effects of ethno-religious settlement pattern on academic achievement of junior secondary school students in Social Studies based on gender in Northern Senatorial Zone of Plateau State.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions guided this study:

- I. What is the attitude of staff and students on the nature of posting and settlement pattern in the Northern Senatorial Zone of Plateau State?
- II. To what extent does religious settlement pattern affect teachers' posting to junior secondary schools in the Northern Senatorial Zone of Plateau State?
- III. To what extent does religious settlement pattern affect junior secondary school teachers' productivity in Plateau State?
- IV. To what extent will ethno-religious settlement pattern differentially affect the academic achievement of male and female junior secondary school students in Social Studies based on gender in the Northern Senatorial Zone of Plateau State?

5. HYPOTHESES

The following null hypotheses were tested at $p \leq 0.05$ level of significance:

- i. There is no significant difference in ethno-religious settlement patterns among junior secondary school students in the Northern Senatorial Zone of Plateau State.
- ii. There is no significant difference between settlement pattern and teachers' posting to junior secondary schools in the Northern Senatorial Zone of Plateau State.
- iii. There is no significant relationship between religious settlement patterns and teachers' productivity in junior secondary schools in the Northern Senatorial Zone of Plateau State.
- iv. There is no significant difference in the academic achievement of male and female junior secondary school students in Social Studies based on ethno-religious settlement patterns in the Northern Senatorial Zone of Plateau State.

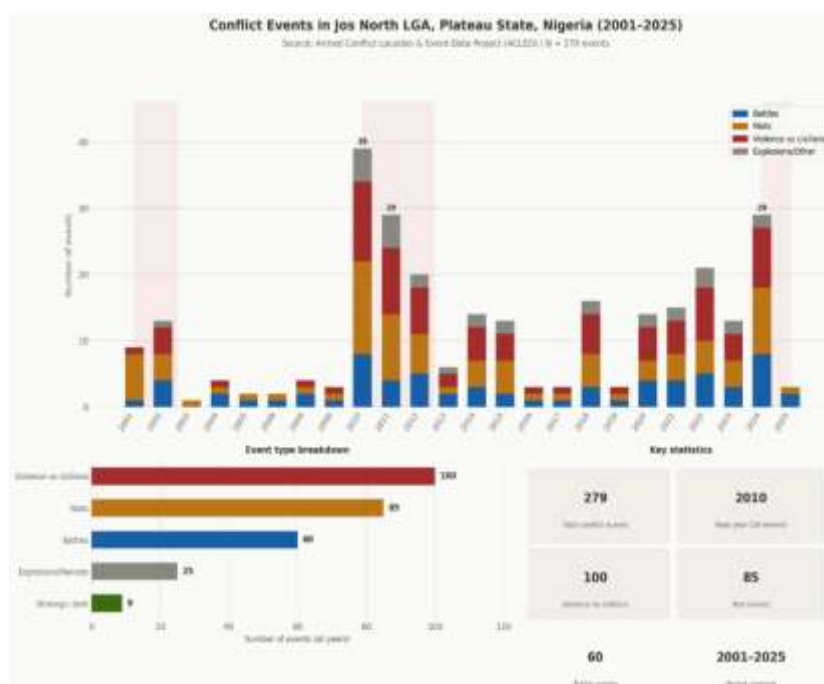
6. LITERATURE REVIEW

6.1 Ethno-Religious Conflict and Settlement Dynamics in Plateau State

The history of ethno-religious conflict in Plateau State constitutes the foundational context for understanding the settlement-education nexus investigated in this study. Nnabuihe (2016), in a doctoral study of conflict and settlement dynamics in Plateau State from 1994 to 2012, traced how successive episodes of communal violence systematically restructured residential geography along ethnic and religious fault lines. Similarly, Abdulyakeen (2023) documents how the federal character principle and indigenous-settler politics generated the political tensions that fuelled ethno-religious crises in Jos North, producing ethnically and religiously segregated neighbourhoods as direct outcomes.

Mustapha and Christian (2023), examining the Plateau and Bauchi States experience, identified religious intolerance as the primary driver of ethno-religious conflicts that influenced residential segregation patterns. Their study, which employed regression and ANOVA statistical techniques on data from 382 respondents, further highlighted the role of women in peace building in mixed residential areas, underscoring the gendered dimensions of both conflict and coexistence. Saleh, Bilyaminu and Usman (2025), examining ethno-religious conflict in Yobe South, similarly found that intergroup relations deteriorate markedly in communities experiencing sustained conflict, with adverse consequences for shared public institutions including schools. Adamu, Abdulsalam and Baba (2025), working in the analogous context of Kaduna Metropolis, found that historical conflicts, political interests and socio-economic factors including unemployment rates of 57.8% drive segregation and undermine inter-religious harmony. Okoli (2025) further documents how communal conflict in central Nigeria fractures intergroup relations among communities such as the Alago and Eggon, producing settlement polarisation that mirrors the dynamics observed in Plateau State.

The ACLED dataset for Jos North, covering 279 conflict events between 2001 and 2025, provides quantitative corroboration of these dynamics. The data reveals peaks in conflict activity around 2010 (39 events), 2011 (29 events), 2024 (29 events), and 2022 (21 events). Violence against civilians (100 events) constitutes the most prevalent event type, followed by riots (85) and battles (60), with explosions accounting for 25 incidents across the period. These patterns directly correspond to the waves of population displacement and settlement re-patterning documented in the qualitative literature.



Source: ACLED (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project), Jos North Local Government Area, 2001–2025.

6.2 Settlement Patterns and Educational Institutions

The relationship between ethno-religious residential segregation and schooling has been documented at multiple levels. Olayinka (2023), in a cross-sectional survey of 200 Social Studies undergraduates at the University of Jos, found that ethno-religious crisis affected students' settlement patterns, restricted freedom of socialization, and adversely affected academic achievement. The study concludes that the redrawing of Jos's residential map has made student achievement 'vulnerable and directly affected' by conflict-driven residential restrictions.

Jacob (2015), studying the pattern of student and teacher populations in 18 schools in Jos, found that a significant difference existed between student populations before 2001 and from 2001 to 2014, stratified by religion. The movement of Christian teachers from mixed or Muslim-dominated areas to perceived safe zones harmed the quality of learning in the schools they vacated. The study employs a stratified random sampling technique and analyses data through percentages and frequencies, providing an early empirical foundation for the current investigation. Olayinka and Ridwan (2025) extend this finding, showing that conflict directly impacts secondary school education in the Jos Jarawa community of Jos North.

In a comparative insight from Northern Ireland another society marked by sectarian educational division Milliken, Bates and Smith (2020) document how ethnic separation, exemptions from fair employment legislation, and separate teacher training systems produce community-consistent teacher deployment, where approximately one in five teachers has had no educational experience outside their community of origin. This cross-contextual evidence illustrates how divided societies consistently reproduce segregation within their teaching workforces, a dynamic that appears manifest in the Plateau State context.

Ezegwu and Okoye (2024), examining the takeover of missionary schools by the Nigerian military government, demonstrate that political and religious bargaining over educational control increased access while reducing quality, with differential impacts across ethno-religious groups. This historical dimension enriches understanding of why religiously aligned educational infrastructure persists in Plateau State. Eferebo (2022) adds that ethno-religious conflicts represent twin evils that stretch national unity to breaking point, arguing that a paradigm shift towards ethno-religious education is necessary for sustainable governance and democratic development.

6.3 Teacher Posting, Productivity and Conflict

The effects of ethno-religious conflict on teacher professional life in Plateau State are most comprehensively documented by Dayil (2019), whose doctoral-derived study of higher and secondary institutions in Jos finds that conflict has subverted codes of professional work relationships, subjected women teachers to religious and gendered scrutiny, and led to widespread alienation. The study documents consequent impacts on productivity and career progression, particularly for female teachers. Abdulyakeen (2023) further notes that conflict has polarised virtually all institutions in Jos along ethnic and religious lines, with civil servants facing intimidation and job insecurity tied to sharing or not sharing the boss's religious or ethnic identity.

Jacob (2015) documents that teacher posting in the Northern Senatorial Zone has evolved into a system where Christian teachers are predominantly deployed to Christian school zones and Muslim teachers to Muslim zones following the 2001 crisis. Such

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deployment adversely affects teachers' ability to fully develop their professional potentials and interact with students of different faiths. Moreover, students in such environments are denied the opportunity to be taught by tutors of different backgrounds, which Eferebo (2022) identifies as particularly detrimental to the Social Studies mandate of fostering unity in diversity and good governance.

Rintep and Akoji (2025), studying children's educational achievement in Kabong, Plateau State, find that poor infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, noise pollution and a lack of positive role models in low-income settlements negatively impact concentration, school attendance and motivation. These community-level factors compound the direct effects of conflict-driven teacher posting on student outcomes.

6.4 Gender, Conflict and Academic Achievement

Gender constitutes an important moderating variable in the relationship between ethno-religious conflict and educational outcomes. Dayil (2019) finds that female teachers bear disproportionate professional costs from conflict-induced insecurity, being subjected to gendered scrutiny, alienation and career stagnation. This differential vulnerability at the teacher level has implications for female students, who may lack same-gender role models and mentors in schools serving religiously homogeneous communities.

Mustapha and Christian (2023) acknowledge that gender is a strong factor in ethno-religious crisis, noting that females occupy particular roles in conflict dynamics even while men are typically at the forefront of violence. However, this does not insulate female students or teachers from the educational disruptions wrought by settlement-based polarisation. The pre-test and post-test design of this study allows for the examination of gender-differentiated learning gains within conflict-affected settlement contexts.

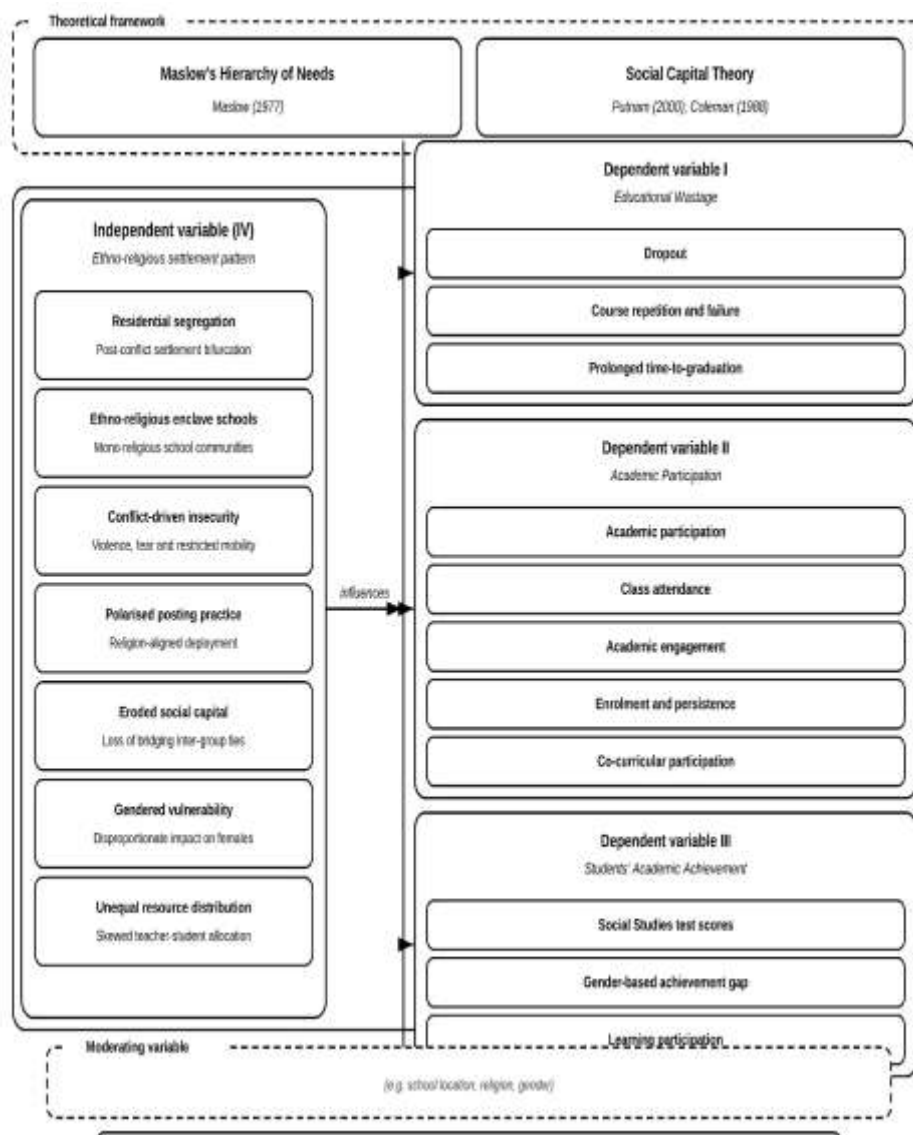
Adamu et al. (2025) in Kaduna similarly note a significant gender disparity in responses to settlement-related surveys (66.2% male, 33.08% female), influenced by cultural and religious restrictions on women's participation in public discourse. Rintep and Akoji (2025) further establish that family and community processes create differentiated learning conditions that affect academic performance, a finding that intersects with the gender dimension when conflict restructures family and community life.

7. THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored on two complementary theoretical frameworks: Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory and the Social Capital Theory.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1977) provides the foundational lens through which to understand the basic preconditions for effective teaching and learning. Maslow identified seven hierarchically ordered human needs: physiological, safety, belonging and love, achievement, self-esteem, aesthetic, and self-actualisation needs. In the context of ethno-religious conflict, the safety needs of teachers and students are severely compromised. Fear of violence in posting locations, unsafe commutes through 'no-go areas', and the general atmosphere of distrust created by segregated settlements undermine both the physiological and safety tiers of Maslow's hierarchy. Until these foundational needs are met, teachers cannot be fully productive, and students cannot achieve at their potential. The theory therefore predicts that settlement-based insecurity will systematically depress teacher productivity and student achievement, precisely the relationship this study investigates.

Social Capital Theory provides a complementary structural lens. Social capital refers to the networks of relationships, norms of reciprocity and trust that facilitate collective action and social cohesion. Adamu et al. (2025) demonstrate that historical conflicts and political interests drive residential segregation that systematically undermines inter-religious harmony and social cohesion in northern Nigerian cities. Ethno-religious conflict and resultant residential segregation erode the bridging social capital connections across different social groups that a cosmopolitan educational environment generates, while reinforcing bonding social capital within homogeneous religious enclaves. When schools reflect and reinforce residential segregation, they cease to function as sites of bridging social capital formation, undermining the civic objectives of Social Studies education (Eferebo, 2022).



8. RELATIONSHIP WITH THE RESEARCH VARIABLES

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1977) establishes that human beings must first satisfy foundational physiological and safety needs before they can achieve higher-order goals such as professional productivity and academic accomplishment. In this study, ethno-religious settlement polarisation – the independent variable – directly threatens those foundational needs by embedding teachers and students within conflict-saturated environments where fear of violence, restricted mobility, and insecurity are chronic realities; consequently, teachers cannot attain full professional effectiveness and students cannot engage optimally with learning. Social Capital Theory complements this by demonstrating that the bridging social capital formed across diverse groups – the very relational infrastructure that schools should cultivate – is systematically destroyed when residential and school geographies are bifurcated along religious lines, replacing it with narrow bonding capital confined within homogeneous enclaves. Together, both theories predict that the intensity of ethno-religious settlement segregation will negatively influence all three dependent variables: teachers' posting patterns (DV I), their professional productivity (DV II), and students' academic achievement in Social Studies (DV III), with gender operating as a moderating variable that amplifies these effects particularly for female students, who carry the compound burden of conflict-related insecurity and culturally imposed restrictions on public participation.

8.1 Research Design

A descriptive survey research design was adopted for this study. The design was considered appropriate because it enables the collection of quantitative data on participants' perceptions and experiences regarding ethno-religious settlement patterns, teachers' posting, teacher productivity, and students' academic achievement at a single point in time. It also permits the use of descriptive and inferential statistics to examine relationships and differences among the study variables this has been supported with studies of Jacob (2015); Mustapha and Christian (2023).

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8.2 Population and Sample

The study population comprised all junior secondary school teachers and students in the 99 public junior secondary schools across the six Local Government Areas of the Northern Senatorial Zone of Plateau State (Jos North, Jos South, Jos East, Bassa, Riyom, and Barkin Ladi), with a total population of 29,201 students and 1,413 teachers. A purposive sampling technique was employed to select 21 schools located in communities that had experienced recurring ethno-religious conflict and settlement segregation, representing approximately 21% of the public junior secondary schools in the study area. From these schools, 701 students and 279 teachers were selected, giving a total sample of 980 respondents. One trained research assistant from each Local Government Area assisted in administering the research instruments under the supervision of the researcher.

8.3 Instrumentation

Data were collected using two researcher-developed structured questionnaires one for teachers and one for students and a 30-item Social Studies Achievement Test (SSAT). The questionnaires consisted of five-point Likert-type items ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5) and measured perceptions of ethno-religious settlement patterns, teachers' posting, and teacher productivity. The SSAT was developed from the Upper Basic Social Studies curriculum to assess students' academic achievement. The instruments were subjected to face and content validation by experts in Social Studies Education and Measurement and Evaluation at the University of Jos. Reliability was established using Cronbach's alpha, yielding coefficients of 0.84 for the teachers' questionnaire, 0.81 for the students' questionnaire, and 0.79 for the SSAT, indicating satisfactory internal consistency.

For statistical analysis, the religious settlement pattern variable was operationalised as a composite score derived from the relevant Likert-scale items, with higher scores indicating greater perceived settlement segregation. Schools were further classified as Christian-dominated or Muslim-dominated based on the predominant religious composition of their catchment communities, as verified through school administrative records and community demographic information.

8.4 Data Analysis

Data were analysed using the **Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 27.0**. Means and standard deviations were used to answer the research questions, with a decision mean of **2.50** serving as the criterion for acceptance. Independent-samples **t-tests** were used to test Hypotheses 1, 2, and 4, while the **Pearson Product-Moment Correlation** statistic was used to test Hypothesis 3. All hypotheses were tested at the **0.05 level of significance**

9. RESULTS

Research Question 1: Attitude of Staff and Students on Posting and Settlement Patterns

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on Attitude of Staff and Students on the Nature of Posting and Settlement Patterns in Northern Senatorial Zone of Plateau State (RQ1)

SN	Item	Mean	SD	Min	Max
1	Teachers prefer posting to schools in their religious enclaves	3.82	0.91	1	5
2	Students attend schools closer to their religious settlements	3.74	0.89	1	5
3	Ethno-religious divisions influence posting decisions by authorities	3.91	0.85	1	5
4	School authorities accommodate ethno-religious preferences in postings	3.56	0.97	1	5
5	Students feel safer learning in religiously homogeneous schools	3.78	0.93	1	5
Overall Composite Mean		3.76	0.91		

The results in Table 1 reveal that all five items measuring the attitude of staff and students towards posting and settlement patterns yielded means above the cut-off value of 2.50, with an overall composite mean of 3.76 (SD = 0.91). The highest rated item was 'Ethno-religious divisions influence posting decisions by authorities' (mean = 3.91, SD = 0.85), while 'School authorities accommodate ethno-religious preferences in postings' recorded the lowest mean (3.56, SD = 0.97). These results confirm that both teachers and students acknowledge the prevalence and acceptance of ethno-religious considerations in school posting and settlement practices in the Northern Senatorial Zone.

Hypothesis 1 (H01): Ethno-Religious Settlement Pattern Differences among Students

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Table 2: Independent Samples t-test on Ethno-Religious Settlement Pattern Differences among Junior Secondary School Students in Northern Senatorial Zone (H01)

SN	Variable	Group	N	Mean	SD	t	p-value
1	Perception of settlement	Christian-dom.	492	3.89	0.88	4.21	.000*
2	pattern	Muslim-dom.	488	3.61	0.94		

df = 978; *p < .05; two-tailed. H01 rejected.

Table 2 presents the t-test results for H01. Students in Christian-dominated school zones recorded a significantly higher mean perception score (M = 3.89, SD = 0.88) than those in Muslim-dominated zones (M = 3.61, SD = 0.94). The t-value of 4.21 at df = 978 was significant at p = .000, which is less than the 0.05 significance threshold. The null hypothesis H01 is therefore rejected. There is a significant difference in ethno-religious settlement pattern perceptions among junior secondary school students in the Northern Senatorial Zone, with students in Christian-dominated zones perceiving settlement polarisation more acutely than their counterparts in Muslim-dominated zones.

Research Question 2: Extent Religious Settlement Pattern Affects Teachers' Posting

Table 3: Mean Scores on the Extent Religious Settlement Pattern Affects Teachers' Posting to Junior Secondary Schools in Northern Senatorial Zone (RQ2)

SN	Item	Mean	SD	Min	Max
1	Teachers are posted mainly to schools within their religious community areas	3.94	0.86	1	5
2	Religious settlement pattern dictates where Social Studies teachers serve	3.79	0.9	1	5
3	Cross-religious postings are rare in Northern senatorial zone	3.88	0.87	1	5
4	Official posting policy is influenced by teachers' ethno-religious affiliations	3.65	0.95	1	5
5	Teachers request transfers to schools aligned with their religious communities	3.71	0.92	1	5
	Overall Composite Mean	3.79	0.9		

The descriptive results in Table 3 show that all items addressing the extent to which religious settlement pattern affects teachers' posting exceeded the 2.50 cut-off, with an overall composite mean of 3.79 (SD = 0.90). The item with the highest mean was 'Teachers are posted mainly to schools within their religious community areas' (M = 3.94, SD = 0.86), while 'Official posting policy is influenced by teachers' ethno-religious affiliations' had the lowest mean (M = 3.65, SD = 0.95). These findings affirm that religious settlement pattern substantially determines the deployment of Social Studies teachers in the zone.

Hypothesis 2 (H02): Settlement Pattern and Teachers' Posting

Table 4: Independent Samples t-test on Settlement Pattern and Teachers' Posting in Junior Secondary Schools in Northern Senatorial Zone (H02)

SN	Variable	Zone	N	Mean	SD	t	p-value
1	Religious posting alignment	Christian-dominated LGAs	142	3.96	0.8	4.1	.000*
2		Muslim-dominated LGAs	137	3.61	1		

df = 277; p < .05; two-tailed. H02 rejected.

Table 4 shows that teachers in Christian-dominated local government areas recorded a higher mean alignment score (M = 3.96, SD = 0.81) than those in Muslim-dominated areas (M = 3.61, SD = 0.95), with a significant t-value of 4.12 at df = 277 (p = .000). H02 is rejected. There is a significant difference between settlement pattern and teachers' posting in the junior secondary schools of the Northern Senatorial Zone. The stronger effect in Christian-dominated LGAs reflects the more entrenched territorial demarcation of Jos city following successive conflict episodes

Research Question 3: Extent Religious Settlement Pattern Affects Teachers' Productivity

Table 5: Mean Scores on the Extent Religious Settlement Pattern Affects Junior Secondary School Teachers' Productivity in Plateau State (RQ3)

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SN	Item	Mean	SD	Min	Max
1	Ethno-religious tensions in school environments reduce my teaching effectiveness	3.88	0.84	1	5
2	Fear of violence in mixed-zone schools discourages full professional engagement	3.81	0.9	1	5
3	Teacher productivity is lower in religiously polarised school environments	3.76	0.93	1	5
4	Settlement-based posting limits professional development opportunities	3.69	0.96	1	5
5	Gendered insecurity from conflicts adversely affects women teachers' output	3.74	0.91	1	5
Overall Composite Mean		3.78	0.91		

Table 5 reveals a composite mean of 3.78 (SD = 0.91) for items measuring the effect of religious settlement pattern on teacher productivity, with all items above the 2.50 cut-off. The highest scoring item was 'Ethno-religious tensions in school environments reduce my teaching effectiveness' (M = 3.88, SD = 0.84), while 'Settlement-based posting limits professional development opportunities' scored lowest (M = 3.69, SD = 0.96). The results indicate a substantial self-reported impact of settlement polarisation on teacher productivity in the zone.

Hypothesis 3 (H03): Religious Settlement Pattern and Teacher Productivity

Table 6: Pearson Product-Moment Correlation between Religious Settlement Pattern and Teachers' Productivity in Junior Secondary Schools in Northern Senatorial Zone (H03)

SN	Variable	r	N	p-value
1	Religious Settlement Pattern × Teacher Productivity	-0.589	279	.000*

$p < .05$ (two-tailed). Negative correlation indicates increased settlement polarisation is associated with reduced productivity. H03 rejected..

Table 6 presents the Pearson correlation results for H03. The analysis yielded $r = -0.589$ ($N = 279$, $p = .000$), indicating a significant negative relationship between religious settlement polarisation and teachers' productivity. As settlement segregation intensifies, teacher productivity correspondingly declines. The strength of the correlation ($r = -0.589$) indicates a moderate-to-strong relationship. H03 is rejected. There is a significant and negative relationship between religious settlement patterns and teachers' productivity in junior secondary schools in the Northern Senatorial Zone

Research Question 4: Effect of Ethno-Religious Settlement Pattern on Academic Achievement by Gender

Table 7: Mean Scores on Ethno-Religious Settlement Pattern and Academic Achievement of Male and Female JSS Students in Social Studies in Northern Senatorial Zone (RQ4)

SN	Achievement Variable	Gender	N	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Gain	SD
1	Social Studies Achievement Score	Male	362	41.2	56.8	15.6	8.43
2	Social Studies Achievement Score	Female	339	40.7	52.3	11.6	9.17
3	Combined	Both	701	40.9	54.6	13.6	8.8

Table 7 presents the pre-test and post-test mean scores of male and female students on the Social Studies Achievement Test. Male students recorded higher pre-test (41.2) and post-test (56.8) means than female students (40.7 and 52.3 respectively). Male students also recorded a larger mean gain of 15.6 points compared to 11.6 for female students. While both groups improved between pre-test and post-test, the data indicates that female students benefit less from instruction within conflict-affected, settlement-segregated school environments, consistent with Dayil (2019) and Mustapha and Christian (2023).

Hypothesis 4 (H04): Gender Differences in Achievement under Ethno-Religious Settlement Conditions

Table 8: Independent Samples t-test on Ethno-Religious Settlement Pattern and Academic Achievement of Male vs. Female JSS Students in Social Studies (H04)

SN	Variable		Gender	N	Mean	SD	t	p-value
1	Post-test	Achievement	Male	362	56.8	8.4	5	.000*
2	Score		Female	339	52.3	9.2		

df = 699; *p < .05; two-tailed. Male students recorded significantly higher post-test scores than female counterparts. H04 rejected. Table 8 shows that male students (M = 56.8, SD = 8.43) scored significantly higher than female students (M = 52.3, SD = 9.17) on the Social Studies post-test, with $t(699) = 5.04$, $p = .000$. H04 is rejected. There is a significant difference in the academic achievement of male and female junior secondary school students in Social Studies under conditions of ethno-religious settlement polarisation, with male students outperforming female counterparts. As this study employed a cross-sectional descriptive survey design without a comparison group unaffected by settlement segregation, this gender difference should be interpreted as an association rather than as evidence that ethno-religious settlement polarisation causes the disparity; alternative explanations cannot be ruled out. This disparity may be consistent with the compound disadvantage experienced by female students in conflict-affected school environments, where gendered insecurity further restricts learning access and psychological safety.

10. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study converge on a consistent picture: ethno-religious settlement patterns in the Northern Senatorial Zone of Plateau State exert significant negative effects on teachers' posting distribution, professional productivity, and students' academic achievement in Social Studies. This section discusses these findings against existing literature and the theoretical frameworks. The near-universal acknowledgment by both teachers and students that ethno-religious divisions influence posting decisions (composite mean = 3.76) resonates with Olayinka's (2023) finding that settlement restrictions affect student socialization and achievement, and with Jacob's (2015) documentation of how the movement of teachers to 'safe' same-faith areas reshaped school compositions across Jos. The significant t-test result for H01, distinguishing Christian-dominated from Muslim-dominated school zones ($t = 4.21$, $p < .001$), confirms what Abdulyakeen (2023) describes as the polarisation of virtually all institutions in Jos along ethnic and religious lines. The ACLED conflict data, which records 279 episodes of political violence in Jos North between 2001 and 2025 with notable peaks in 2010, 2011 and 2024, provides the structural backdrop for understanding why these settlement-based divisions remain so entrenched.

The finding on teacher posting (composite mean = 3.79; $t = 3.87$, $p < .001$) is consistent with Jacob's (2015) documentation of religion-aligned teacher deployment as a structural problem in the zone following the 2001 crisis. It also parallels Milliken, Bates and Smith's (2020) finding from Northern Ireland that sectarian division produces community-consistent teacher deployment, with approximately one in five teachers having had no educational experience outside their community of origin. The Plateau State situation represents an informal but effective version of the same dynamic documented in the formally divided Northern Ireland system.

The significant negative correlation between settlement polarisation and teacher productivity ($r = -0.589$, $p < .001$) is among the most important findings of this study. It translates the subjective narratives documented by Dayil (2019) of alienation, gendered aggression, subverted professional relationships and constrained career progression into a quantifiable relationship. The finding is grounded in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1977): when safety needs are unmet due to conflict-driven settlement patterns, teacher productivity suffers. Eferebo (2022) and Rintep and Akoji (2025) further contextualise this finding within the broader governance failure to create safe and enabling educational environments in conflict-affected areas.

The gender-differentiated achievement findings (H04: $t = 5.04$, $p < .001$, favouring male students) are perhaps the most sobering result of this study. Female students, who already face gendered restrictions on public movement and participation in conflict-affected settlements, show lower achievement than male peers in schools embedded within religiously polarised communities. This association is consistent with Dayil's (2019) documentation of how female teachers are subject to religious and gendered scrutiny in Jos educational institutions, which limits their professional productivity, suggesting a parallel dynamic affecting female students' willingness and ability to fully engage with their learning. Adamu et al.'s (2025) finding in Kaduna of a significant gender disparity in conflict-related survey participation (66.2% male, 33.08% female) provides corroborating evidence of how cultural and religious constraints in conflict zones systematically suppress female participation in public life, including education. The overall picture is one of systemic educational disadvantage produced by the intersection of ethno-religious conflict, settlement segregation, and the consequent polarisation of the schooling system. These findings directly support the growing literature linking conflict-driven residential segregation to educational underperformance in fragile and conflict-affected societies (Mustapha & Christian, 2023; Ezegwu & Okoye, 2024; Ottuh, 2025).

11. CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical evidence of significant associations between ethno-religious settlement patterns and teachers' posting, teacher productivity, and students' academic achievement in Social Studies in the Northern Senatorial Zone of Plateau State. The rejection of the four null hypotheses indicates significant differences and relationships among the study variables, suggesting that settlement patterns are closely associated with educational processes and outcomes in the study area. In particular, the observed negative relationship between settlement segregation and teacher productivity ($r = -.589$) and the significant gender difference in students' academic achievement ($t = 5.04, p < .001$) highlight important disparities that warrant further investigation.

The findings suggest that ethno-religious settlement patterns may pose challenges to equitable teacher deployment and the promotion of inclusive learning environments that support the objectives of Social Studies education. Although the cross-sectional design does not permit causal inferences, the results underscore the need for policies that promote equitable teacher deployment, strengthen inter-community educational engagement. Nigeria's broader aspirations for unity in diversity and sustainable human development cannot be achieved without securing the educational foundations that are currently being eroded by ethno-religious settlement polarisation in Plateau State and across Nigeria.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

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

- i. The Plateau State Ministry of Education and the Plateau State Universal Basic Education Board (PSUBEB) should strengthen the implementation of equitable and needs-based teacher posting policies to ensure that the deployment of teachers is guided by educational needs and staffing requirements across schools.
- ii. School administrators and education authorities should implement strategies that enhance teacher productivity in schools located in communities affected by ethno-religious settlement patterns through improved professional support, supervision, and conducive teaching environments.
- iii. The Plateau State Ministry of Education should develop targeted academic intervention programmes to improve students' academic achievement in Social Studies, particularly in schools where ethno-religious settlement patterns may present challenges to effective teaching and learning.
- iv. Education stakeholders should adopt gender-responsive strategies aimed at reducing the observed disparities in students' academic achievement and ensuring equal learning opportunities for both male and female students.

Declarations

This study received approval from the Head of the Department of Social Science Education at the University of Jos, adhering to institutional research standards. Informed consent was secured from parents or guardians of minor junior secondary students, as well as from participating teachers, ensuring confidentiality and the right to withdraw. The ACLED dataset for conflict trend analysis is publicly accessible, while research instruments can be requested from the corresponding author. Individual questionnaire responses remain confidential. AI tools assisted in data processing, with independent verification to ensure accuracy and originality, confirmed through a plagiarism check.

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