

The Impact of the Economic Crisis on the Educational Sector in Lebanon in Terms of Student Enrollment, Quality of Education, and Teachers' Motivation

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Abstract

Lebanon, a nation renowned for its diverse culture and resilient populace, is currently grappling with an unprecedented economic crisis marked by hyperinflation, soaring unemployment rates, currency appreciation, and mounting public debt. This crisis has not spared the cornerstone of Lebanon's development and hope for future generations, its education system. This study aims to investigate the multifaceted impact of the economic crisis on Lebanon's education sector, focusing on student enrollment, education quality, and teachers' motivation. The research findings reveal significant correlations between the economic crisis and its adverse effects on these aspects, both from the perspectives of students and teachers. The study underscores the urgency of addressing the challenges faced by the education sector in Lebanon during this crisis. It highlights the need for targeted interventions, including financial aid programs, resource allocation, and measures to boost teacher motivation, to support students, educators, and educational institutions. These measures are crucial for safeguarding Lebanon's human capital development, economic growth, and the long-term resilience of its education system. Further research is encouraged to delve deeper into the specific mechanisms through which the economic crisis impacts education in Lebanon, offering valuable insights for policymakers and stakeholders in the pursuit of a brighter future for Lebanese students and educators.

Keywords: *Economic crisis; Educational Sector; Lebanon; Quality of Education; Student Enrollment; Teachers' Motivation.*

Introduction

Lebanon, a nation famed for its wide range of cultures and tough populace, has recently been engulfed in a massive economic crisis that has never been experienced (Shuayb & Doueiry, 2023; Yacoub & Al Maalouf, 2023). The nation's economy is in shambles because of this crisis, which is marked by hyperinflation, skyrocketing unemployment rates, a fast-appreciating currency, and increasing public debt. It has also shocked the country's social structure. One crucial area that has been severely impacted as Lebanon deals with the wide-ranging effects of this economic unrest is education. The education system, which has historically been viewed as a cornerstone of development and a source of hope for future generations in Lebanon, is currently faced with several difficulties that jeopardize its very existence.

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Considering the foregoing, this study aims to examine the economic crisis' effects on Lebanon's educational sector. This study seeks to give a thorough knowledge of the difficulties experienced by students and educators. Thus, the main research question is as follows: What effects does the economic crisis have on Lebanon's educational sector in terms of student enrollment, quality of education, and teachers' motivation?

This study tends to give insightful information that can assist policymakers, education stakeholders, and civil society groups in developing practical measures to lessen the negative consequences of the crisis by dissecting the complexity of these difficulties. Coordinated efforts must be made to protect every child and young adult in Lebanon's right to a high-quality education, ensuring their fair access to opportunities and equipping them with the skills they need to face the difficulties brought on by the economic crisis. The ultimate objective is to support the improvement and preservation of Lebanon's educational system, guaranteeing that the young people of the country continue to benefit from high-quality education and persevere in the face of hardship.

Studying the effects of the economic crisis on the education sector in Lebanon, particularly in terms of student enrollment, quality of education, and teachers' motivation, holds significant importance. Lebanon is facing a prolonged economic crisis with severe repercussions (Ala'a & Sallam, 2023). Understanding how its education sector copes with and adapts to such crises can provide insights into the resilience and adaptability of educational systems in challenging environments. Furthermore, education is a cornerstone of human capital development. Analyzing the impact of the economic crisis on student enrollment and the quality of education helps assess potential long-term effects on the nation's human capital, which is vital for economic growth and development. In addition, economic crises often exacerbate social inequalities. Investigating how the crisis affects student enrollment can shed light on whether it widens educational disparities, potentially leading to future societal challenges. Furthermore, teacher motivation is essential for effective teaching and learning (Amponsah et al., 2023). Examining how the economic crisis affects teachers' motivation can inform strategies to support educators during economic downturns, which is crucial for maintaining educational quality. Studies about the well-being of teachers during disasters, conflicts, and pandemics in contexts like Lebanon are considered few. Research in this area can provide evidence-based insights for policymakers to make informed decisions. It can help identify areas that require intervention or resource allocation to mitigate the negative effects of the crisis on education. Since no previous study has tackled this topic in Lebanon, this study tends to fill a gap in the literature. Lessons learned from the Lebanese context can have broader relevance for countries facing economic instability and crises.

Literature Review

Lebanon Amid the Economic Crisis

Lebanon, with its rich history and cultural heritage, has long grappled with political instability, economic challenges, and social unrest (Anouti & Enna, 2023). The economic crisis that began in 2019 has exacerbated these problems, driven by structural issues, corruption, political mismanagement, and unsustainable economic policies (Danielle et al., 2023). Critical sectors like money transfers, tourism, and banking, key to the country's economy, suffered significant setbacks. Remittances, a substantial GDP component, decreased due to expatriates' financial struggles amid the global economic downturn and COVID-19. Lebanon's once-thriving tourism sector also suffered due to political unrest and the economic crisis, with travel restrictions and negative perceptions deterring visitors (Danielle et al., 2023). The banking industry, previously an economic engine, lost trust due to mismanagement, resulting in a banking crisis, capital controls, and currency shortages (Baumann, 2023). This led to hyperinflation and a weakened Lebanese pound. The devastating Beirut Port explosion in August 2020 further strained resources and

diverted attention from pressing social and economic needs. The education sector, a cornerstone of Lebanon's society, faced significant challenges in terms of fairness, access, and quality due to the economic crisis (Ismail et al. 2023). Lebanon has been dealing with a serious and diversified economic crisis for some years. Political instability, misunderstanding of public finances, a high level of public debt, currency depreciation, and inflation are all outcomes of the crisis (Danielle et al., 2023). The severe depreciation of the Lebanese pound has been one of the most significant outcomes of the economic crisis. This depreciation has resulted in rising costs for necessities, adding to hyperinflation. The cost of living has risen considerably, reducing individuals' and households' purchasing power (Lukashuk & Ajib, 2023). Also, as a result of the economic crisis, there is widespread unemployment and fewer work prospects. Many firms have struggled to stay in business, resulting in layoffs and losses. Economic activity disruption has stretched the labor market and increased social and economic challenges (Danielle et al., 2023). Furthermore, Lebanon has one of the world's highest levels of state debt (Diwan & Chaoul, 2023). Mismanagement of the public purse, corruption, and unsustainable fiscal policies have all contributed to the country's debt load (Diwan & Chaoul, 2023). The inability to service this debt has exacerbated the economic downturn (Diwan & Chaoul, 2023). In addition, Lebanon's banking industry, previously seen as the backbone of the economy, has also been badly impacted (Gharib et al., 2023). Capital controls, withdrawal limitations, and concern about the financial system's viability have all contributed to a loss of trust in banks (BARAKAT & ALTUG, 2023). Finally, political insecurity and governance issues have exacerbated the economic catastrophe (Fahed-Sreih, 2023). The execution of critical reforms and actions to solve the problem has been delayed by a lack of qualified governance and political deadlock (Zougheib, 2023).

Educational Sector in Lebanon Before The Crisis

Lebanon's education system is distinguished by its diversity, historical relevance, and problems. Lebanon has a lengthy educational legacy, with a well-established system that includes several levels, languages of teaching, and types of institutions (Aboulebdé, 2023; Al Maalouf et al., 2023). Preschool education, primary education, intermediate education, secondary education, and higher education are the several levels of education in Lebanon (Herz, 2023). Arabic is the predominant language of teaching in state schools and many private schools, but French and English are frequently used as supplementary languages, notably in higher education (Aboulebdé, 2023). In Lebanon, primary and secondary education are both free and obligatory, with both private and public institutions accessible. The government funds public schools, but the education system confronts issues such as overcrowded classrooms, obsolete curricula, and unfair resource allocation. Private schools play an important part in the educational environment, providing a variety of curricular alternatives, frequently based on overseas programs. Lebanon has a strong higher education industry, with multiple colleges and institutes providing a wide range of academic degrees. Higher education is highly respected in Lebanon, and students seek degrees in a variety of subjects (Boustani, 2023). The distinctive sociocultural setting of Lebanon leads to a bilingual and multicultural learning environment. Because of the existence of many religious and ethnic populations, educational options have become diversified, representing distinct language and cultural backgrounds (Khoury & Zakarian, n.d).

Impact of the Economic Crisis on the Educational Sector in Lebanon

The economic crisis has cast a long shadow over Lebanon's numerous sectors (Kharroubi et al., 2021), with impacts reaching the foundation of the country's future, education. Lebanon's education sector, which was once known for its dedication and obedience to learning, now faces a variety of obstacles because of the country's continuous recession. This issue has not only shaken the foundations of students' access to excellent education, but it has also floated across the educational ecosystem, affecting instructors, institutions, and the whole educational experience. As families' resources dwindle and institutions

grapple with budgetary restrictions, the effects of the economic crisis on Lebanon's education system have sparked worries about equality, educational quality, and the country's long-term prospects for human capital development.

The socioeconomic circumstances of Lebanese families have gotten worse as a result of the economic crisis (Dagher et al., 2023). Higher pricing for goods and services, including university fees, are the result of declining incomes and declining currency value (Kharroubi et al., 2021). Due to the high expenses of private education, many families find it difficult to give their children access to a decent education in these settings. A rise in unemployment as a result of the challenging economic climate has also impacted household earnings (Youssef, 2020). Even less money is available for families to spend on their children's private education when they already struggle to satisfy their fundamental requirements. This fact has increased the financial pressure on families who want to provide their children with a higher education but are limited by their budgets (Kharroubi et al., 2021). The capacity of families to pay for private education has also been negatively impacted by the devaluation of the national currency (Dagher et al., 2023). The cost of tuition and other educational expenditures, which are frequently estimated in foreign currency, has increased significantly in local currency terms. As a result, many families now find it even more difficult to finance private school due to rising expenses in already weak local currencies.

Overall, the financial instability brought on by Lebanon's economic crisis has put private education more out of reach for many families. Especially for private schools, it is critical to implement measures and regulations to increase the financial accessibility of education. Grants or scholarships for low-income families, public-private partnerships to lower tuition costs, and steps to stabilize the economy to lower inflation and poverty are a few examples of what this may include. currency decline (Dagher et al., 2023). These initiatives would contribute to ensuring that all kids, regardless of their socioeconomic situation, have the chance to get a great education.

Impact of Economic Crisis on Student Enrollment

Holley & Harris (2010) investigated how economic difficulties affect the college admissions process and how colleges manage enrollment during economic crises. Several public colleges and institutions provided the data for the collection. The people at those universities who could offer insight into funding, financial aid, and enrollment management were chosen. The economic crisis had a significant impact on student enrollment, according to the authors.

Sheldon (2003) focused on the recession's effects on community colleges. It looked at how diminished state funding has a negative impact on community college education and student support networks. The article concludes with an illustration of how fee increases in the 1990s decreased enrollment in California's community colleges and decreased transfers to universities. According to the study's findings, community college's ability to provide universal access may be hampered by budget cuts since education and student support services decrease.

Desruisseaux (1998) surveyed students to investigate the impact of the economic crisis on enrollment. They found a less than 10% drop in those enrollments, a much lower rate than anticipated. The reason was because educational institutions have taken steps to ease the impact of the crisis on students.

Thus, based on previous studies, the first hypothesis of this study is as follows: Student enrollment in Lebanon's educational sector is impacted by the economic crisis.

Impact of Economic Crisis on the Quality of Education

Bamigboye et al. (2016) studied the impact of the economic crisis on education in southwest Nigeria. They found that it had had negative effects on teachers and students.

They also found that funding in the educational sector decreased which led to a decrease in the quality of studies.

Heyneman (1990) argued that economic crises significantly diminish educational standards in underdeveloped nations. While these crises often prompt modifications to educational policies, they may not always be positive changes. Such adjustments can impact instructors' pay and working conditions, the division of public and private roles in education management, and the expected functions of the educational system. Nevertheless, financial crises may also have some advantages, including increased professional credibility in education administration and the recognition that educational policy challenges are not exclusive to underdeveloped nations. Lessons can be drawn globally, but underdeveloped education systems will still lack resources compared to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) nations. Multilateral solutions, rooted in international agreements on the importance of basic education, may be necessary.

This gap in literature in previous studies related to the impact of the economic crisis on the quality of education led to the development of the second hypothesis of this study which is as follows: The quality of education in Lebanon is impacted by the economic crisis.

Impact of Economic Crisis on Teachers' Motivation

Peek (2008) discovered that because crises and disasters are frequently unforeseen, they often leave people in states of shock and denial and increase their susceptibility to losing motivation. Thus, the most typical symptoms experienced by instructors following disasters and crises include mental instability, worry, emotional anguish, lack of sleep, and melancholy.

A study was undertaken by Berger et al. (2018) to look at the motivation and emotional health of instructors. The study's findings demonstrated that the teachers experienced emotional issues including weakness and dissatisfaction while they were instructing.

O'Toole and Friesen (2016) looked into how disasters affect teachers' emotional health and emphasized the importance of offering instructors enough emotional support so that they could successfully meet the emotional requirements of their students. The authors emphasized the significance of comprehending the effects that disasters and traumatic events may have on teachers' well-being so that schools may be prepared to address these effects. The authors also stressed the necessity for schools to provide instructors with enough emotional support so that they may successfully meet the emotional requirements of their children.

In order to comprehend Lebanese teachers' opinions of their subjective well-being during times of crisis, Atchan (2022) undertook a study. The author noted that since October 2019, Lebanese citizens in general and school teachers in particular have faced extremely difficult circumstances, putting their lives and livelihoods in danger. These circumstances include political upheaval, an economic meltdown, a pandemic around the world, and one of the largest non-nuclear blasts in recorded history. This study looked at how private school instructors felt about their mental health in light of the political, social, and health instability that followed the explosion at the Beirut port. To understand the viewpoints of the instructors regarding their subjective well-being, the study used a mixed-method research design that triangulated data from a quantitative survey, semi-structured interviews, and auto-ethnographic journals. The quantitative findings demonstrated that the explosion and the related crises had a significant negative influence on the well-being of the instructors. The majority of the teachers claimed that they had not received the help they needed to endure and manage during these trying circumstances. More than half of the participants said they intended to leave Lebanon, and the majority of the teachers similarly acknowledged high levels of stress and a sense of insecurity there. The findings

from the quantitative data are supported by the qualitative data, which revealed themes that highlight the teachers' painful experiences during this protracted social crisis. Participants poignantly described how they struggled with their mental health after the blast and stressed the importance of assistance. Therefore, putting teachers' well-being first is essential for their continued participation as Lebanese citizens and as educators who are crucial to maintaining Lebanon's sick educational system.

Thus, the third hypothesis of the study is as follows: Teachers' motivation is impacted by the economic crisis.

Methodology

The study uses the positivism philosophy and deductive reasoning. A quantitative method was used. Two questionnaires were sent; one for students and one for teachers. The questionnaire sent to students included questions related to the impact of the economic crisis on their enrollment and the quality of their education. The questionnaire sent to teachers included questions related to the impact of the economic crisis on their motivation and the quality of education. Random sampling was used to obtain the two samples. A sample of 674 Lebanese students and 272 teachers working in Lebanese educational institutions was obtained. SPSS was used to analyze the cross-sectional data obtained.

Results

Students Survey Results

Cronbach Alpha was used to test the internal reliability of the data. A value of 0.787 (Table 1) was obtained which is greater than 0.7. This means that the data is reliable.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.787	12

Table 1: Cronbach Alpha for Students' Survey

Table 2 shows the results of the Pearson correlation. As shown, the economic crisis has a significant impact on student enrollment ($r=0.528$, $p\text{-value}=0.000$) and the deterioration in the quality of education ($r=0.701$, $p\text{-value}=0.000$) in Lebanon from the perspective of students.

Correlations				
		Economic Crisis	Student Enrollment	Quality of Education
Economic Crisis	Pearson Correlation	1	.528**	.701**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	674	674	674

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2: Pearson Correlation between Economic Crisis, Student Enrollment, and Quality of Education

Teachers Survey Results

Cronbach Alpha was used to test the internal reliability of the data. A value of 0.777 (Table 3) was obtained which is greater than 0.7. This means that the data is reliable.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.777	12

Table 3: Cronbach Alpha for Teachers' Survey

Table 4 shows the results of the Pearson correlation. As shown, the economic crisis has a significant impact on teachers' motivation ($r=0.508$, $p\text{-value}=0.000$) and the deterioration in the quality of education ($r=0.713$, $p\text{-value}=0.000$) in Lebanon from the perspective of teachers.

Correlations				
		Economic Crisis	Teachers' Motivation	Quality of Education
Economic Crisis	Pearson Correlation	1	.508**	.713**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	272	272	272
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Table 4: Pearson Correlation between Economic Crisis, Teachers' Motivation, and Quality of Education

Discussion of the Findings

Discussion of Students Survey Results

The finding that the economic crisis has a significant impact on student enrollment and the deterioration in the quality of education from the perspective of students in Lebanon carries several important implications and discussions. This suggests that as the economic crisis intensifies, these two variables also tend to worsen.

The significant positive correlation between the economic crisis and student enrollment implies that as economic conditions deteriorate, students in Lebanon are more likely to face challenges in pursuing further education. This is due to financial constraints, reduced access to scholarships, or concerns about the long-term value of education in a struggling economy. The findings of this study are in line with the findings of Desruisseaux (1998), Holley & Harris (2010), and Sheldon (2003) who discussed student enrollment amid the economic crisis.

The even stronger correlation between the economic crisis and the deterioration in the quality of education highlights a concerning trend. As the economic crisis worsens, the quality of education in Lebanon, from the perspective of students, declines significantly. This could manifest in various ways, such as a shortage of resources, reduced teacher motivation, or curriculum limitations. The findings of the study are in line with the findings of Bamigboye et al. (2016) and Heyneman (1990) who discussed the quality of studies amid the economic crisis.

Discussion of Teachers Survey Results

The finding that the economic crisis has a significant impact on teachers' motivation and the deterioration in the quality of education from the perspective of teachers in Lebanon is of great significance and raises several important points for discussion.

The positive correlation coefficients indicate strong positive relationships between the economic crisis and both teachers' motivation and the deterioration of education quality. This suggests that as the economic crisis intensifies, these two variables also tend to worsen, from the perspective of teachers.

The significant positive correlation between the economic crisis and teachers' motivation implies that as economic conditions deteriorate, teachers in Lebanon are more likely to experience a decline in their motivation levels. This can have detrimental effects on the teaching-learning process, as motivated teachers are often more effective in the classroom. The findings of the study are in line with the findings of Atchan (2022), Berger et al. (2018), O'Toole and Friesen (2016), and Peek (2008)

The even stronger correlation between the economic crisis and the deterioration in the quality of education emphasizes the gravity of the situation. From the perspective of teachers, as the economic crisis worsens, the quality of education in Lebanon deteriorates significantly. This may manifest in various ways, such as a shortage of teaching resources, low morale among educators, or inadequate professional development opportunities. The findings of this study are in line with the results of Bamigboye et al. (2016) and Heyneman (1990).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusion

The study aimed to investigate the impact of the Lebanese economic crisis on student enrollment, the quality of education, and teachers' motivation. For this reason, two surveys were sent, one for students and one for teachers. The findings of the study collectively highlight the profound impact of the economic crisis on various facets of Lebanon's education sector, both from the perspective of students and teachers.

These findings have significant policy implications for Lebanon. If the economic crisis indeed contributes to reduced student enrollment and a deterioration in education quality, policymakers may need to consider targeted interventions to support students and educational institutions during economic downturns. This could include financial aid programs, resource allocation, and measures to boost teacher motivation. Also, if the economic crisis indeed leads to reduced teacher motivation and a deterioration in education quality, policymakers should consider targeted interventions to support educators and improve the learning environment. This could involve measures to address teacher remuneration, professional development opportunities, and resource allocation to schools.

A decline in student enrollment and educational quality can have long-term consequences for a nation's human capital development and economic growth. Ensuring access to quality education during economic crises is critical for a country's future prosperity. Also, a decline in teacher motivation and a deterioration in education quality can have long-term consequences for a nation's educational system and, subsequently, its human capital development. Ensuring that teachers remain motivated and that the quality of education is maintained during economic crises is crucial for the country's future.

Further Research

To deepen our understanding, further research could explore the specific mechanisms through which the economic crisis affects student enrollment, education quality, and teachers' motivation in Lebanon. Qualitative research and interviews with students, educators, and policymakers can provide valuable insights into the challenges faced and potential solutions.

In conclusion, the finding of a significant positive correlation between the economic crisis and its impact on student enrollment, the quality of education, and teachers' motivation underscores the need for attention to these issues in Lebanon. It highlights the urgency of addressing the challenges faced by students and the education sector and the importance of supporting teachers during times of economic instability.

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