

HISTORICAL TREND OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND ITS IMPACTS ON EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This research examines the historical trend of the covid-19 pandemic and its impact on the educational system in Nigeria. Education is one of the many sectors with the worst impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has caused the Nigerian education system to adopt necessary measures against purely face-to-face approaches to teaching and learning in primary, secondary and tertiary's. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers and learners were helpless about how to continue learning in the face of the

pandemic. This study examines the trend and impact posed by COVID-19 on Education in Nigeria. The finding showed that the impact of education during the COVID-19 pandemic includes school closure, poor learning, unequal access to education opportunities and lacking skills. Further, the pandemic negatively impacts education, causing inadequate school enrollment, inequality in education, poor school health and challenges in school assessment and transition. It was concluded that COVID-19 has negatively impacted education in Nigeria.

Keywords: Coronavirus and Nigerian Education System

Introduction

Campbell and McCaslin (2020) observed that the COVID-19 enigma started at the end of 2019 in Wuhan, a town in China. Within a year, the entire planet had been struck by a pandemic that paralyzed the world. It halted all national and international transport. Nigeria was responsible for 3.8 percent of COVID-19 cases in Africa and 1.8 percent of all African deaths. Africa alone was responsible for just 3.3 percent of world cases and 4.0 percent of global extinction. The epidemic of Covid-19 has severely influenced Nigeria's education sector.

Alaba and Emmanuel (2020) stated that COVID-19 was first reported in Nigeria by the Federal Ministry of Health on 27 February 2020, citing the case of an Italian citizen who works in Nigeria and returned from Milan, Italy, to Lagos, Nigeria, on 25 February 2020. Since then, the number of confirmed cases of infection has soared higher in Nigeria and the world at large. As a result, Nigeria placed a travel ban on 13 countries with high instances of the virus. The United States, United Kingdom, South Korea, Switzerland, Germany, France, Italy, China, Spain, Netherland, Norway, Japan and Iran. On 11 March 2020, World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a pandemic.

Before the epidemic, the Nigerian education system used face-to-face teaching and learning in elementary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions. Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the lockdown conditions and school closure left instructors and students unsure of how to continue studying in the face of the epidemic. Concerning COVID-19's trend and its influence on Nigerian education, School closure helps a lot when it is introduced early. Had it occurred late to the outbreak, it may be less effective. It may not have had any impact at all

because by then, the disease could have gone out of hands in the school system, which is why the Nigerian educational sector remains a sensitive part of sustainable development; to this end, the development of any country is major as a result of its educational sector. Where necessities are not properly managed, reopening schools after a period of pandemic closure may result in increased infection rates, which doubled the initial figures.

The closures as a result of the pandemic affected the educational sector. It has also led to the suspension of all public gatherings, the closure of major markets, religious organizations being restricted from worshipping, and many other gatherings' activities were on hold during the trying period. Even with all these, it is difficult to measure the specific impact of school closures because it varies from place to place, person to person; the effect may be positive or effective on individuals as the case may be. In addition, the covid-19 epidemic has had a substantial economic impact on the Nigerian economy that the present level of financial volatility has not been seen. Thus the scope of this opinion paper, in the light of the above built-up historical trend on the covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria, is set to find out its impacts on the educational system in Nigeria.

Conceptual clarification

Concept of Covid-19

COVID, according to Farmer (2020), is a disease caused by a new coronavirus known as severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2; formerly called 2019-nCoV). The symptoms of the COVID-19 disease range from fever, cough, difficulty breathing, shortness of breath and other respiratory flu-like symptoms. Severe manifestations include lower tract infections such as pneumonia, bronchitis, acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS), severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), and death. In Evans (2020), SARS-CoV-2 virus causes Coronavirus illness (COVID-19), an infectious disease. When an infected person speaks, sneezes, coughs, breathes, or sings, the virus spreads in tiny liquid particles from their mouth or nose. Critical to exercise respiratory etiquette, such as coughing into a bent elbow, and to remain at home and isolate oneself until you feel better.

Historical trend of Covid-19 in Nigeria

Thelma (2020) avers that the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria is part of the worldwide pandemic of Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). COVID-19 was formally confirmed in Infectious Disease Centre, Yaba, Lagos State, Nigeria, on 27 February 2020. An Italian citizen arrived at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Lagos, at 10:00 p.m. on 24 February 2020 on a Turkish airline from Milan, Italy. He visited his company's site in Ogun State the following day, where he presented himself at his company's staff clinic. The physician on duty had a strong suspicion of the presence of the virus. This led him to refer the Italian citizen to Infectious Disease Hospital (IDH), and the COVID-19 status was confirmed (Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, 2020).

The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) started the contact tracing of 'Persons of Interest, ' which included all persons on the manifesto of the flight that brought the index case to Nigeria, as well as people who had close contact with the index case while in Lagos

and Ogun State. After two weeks, a cluster of cases was detected in Lagos and Abuja. This was noted to be the emergence of the nationwide spread of the virus. The Federal Government, through the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), restricted International commercial flights into the country, effective from 23 March 2020. Ogunode (2020), on the same day, Nigeria registered her first fatality; a 67-year-old male returnee from the United Kingdom who already had underlying medical issues managed before his death. The death occurred in the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja (Nigeria Centre for Disease and Control, 2020). The Federal Government responded with the authorization of the closure of all non-essential services (businesses and industries) and restricted movement of people in Lagos State, Ogun State and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, on 29 March 2020. Most State Governments restricted public gatherings, and there were restrictions on Inter-state movement. The Federal Government later authorized the gradual easing of lockdown in the previously restricted states on 4 May 2020.

Covid-19 and its impacts on Educational System in Nigeria

Education is critical for national and human capital development. Learning, information, skills, and habits are passed down through generations as a way of self-development. The value of education for a country's economic, social, and moral growth cannot be overstated. In this light, Uchenna, Maximus, Charity, and Chiedu (2021) emphasized that education has been challenged at all levels since coronavirus illness (COVID-19). Scientists believe that after introducing covid-19, the disease has plagued the global population as a highly contagious sickness from December 2019 until the present. The illness spreads by droplets (World Health Organization, 2020), which was captured on 4/27/2022 when this report was written. As of 7:38 p.m. on 26 April 2022, WHO has received reports of 508,041,253 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with 6,224,220 fatalities.

From Pre-Primary through Secondary School and University, the pandemic has caused irreversible damage. For example, according to (Nicola et al., 2020; UNESCO, 2020), the closure of educational institutions has impacted an estimated total of 1,576 021 858 people worldwide, accounting for 91.3 percent of all learners. In a similar line, (Fong et al., 2020; Nicola et al., 2020; Sadique Adams & Edmunds, 2008; Brown et al., 2011; UNESCO, 2020) noted that school closures entail large economic, health, and social consequences in addition to the impact on students. COVID-19 negatively influences education in Nigeria since the country's educational system was built on a fragile basis. Consequently, Oboh, Ighiwiysi and Oboh (2020) noted that it operates on a subpar platform. It's also difficult to offer a safe learning environment for pupils in overcrowded, resource-constrained schools across the country.

Many vulnerable groups, such as high population density and urban-rural split, poverty and inequality, hunger, internally displaced people, and out-of-school population, are already affecting education before Covid-19. Nigeria was estimated to have one in every five of the world's out-of-school children, with approximately 10.5 million children ranging from 5-14 years out of school (UNICEF Nigeria). As a result, although Nigeria is facing fundamental issues, educational issues have caused the country to lag in preparing young people for the future in a dynamic work environment. Due to the appearance of covid-19, Nigeria's federal government declared the closure of all schools on 27 March 2020 to prevent the illness from

spreading. This translates to a contextualized state-wide school closure in 36 states. According to Obiako and Adeniran (2021), many state Ministries of Education have begun to implement radio and television education and internet-based learning for students in public primary, secondary, and postsecondary institutions. Even though these initiatives were successful in rich nations, they have had a far-reaching detrimental influence on the schooling system in developing low-income countries such as Nigeria. For example, while the COVID-19 epidemic transforms digital and online education worldwide, primary and secondary school students in rural and underserved regions fall behind due to a lack of skills and resources to adapt or transfer to new learning channels.

Furthermore, according to Obiako and Adeniran (2020), University students who may have the capability to participate in internet-based learning meet weak internet infrastructure and a lack of regular electricity supply. For example, in most Nigerian communities, learning remotely (including radio, TV schooling, online learning applications for elementary and secondary students, virtual libraries, and online classes in institutions) is almost impossible. Limited internet access and students' inability to interact in a virtual environment impede government responsiveness in under-resourced institutions and socially underprivileged learners. As a result of these impacts, disparities in educational quality and socioeconomic equality have grown due to the country's school closures. A smaller percentage of learners in urban areas, who are more likely to come from higher-income families, have a better chance of accessing education through technology during school closures. It leaves the majority of learners from low-income families and underserved rural and suburban areas of the country. Learning in the home can also be difficult or cause difficulties for students. This is dependent on the parents' educational achievement and other responsibilities, leaving a larger gap. A percentage of the student body is behind. During the covid-19 epidemic, these issues have piqued the interest of all stakeholders in education.

In addition, the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown on the educational system is the wastage of house rents on the part of higher institution students; the lockdown has exceeded ten months and ended in Nigeria. Secured accommodations, which the students in their various institutions have paid for, lay empty during the lockdown. Some parents faced the challenges of not being able to meet up with the next due payment of their children's accommodation. A child who is supposed to pay for four years of accommodation respectively ends up paying for five years; this has resulted in extra costs for the parents because the finance incurred on such children was counted as a deficit at the expense of other developmental projects at home.

Consequently, many teachers (especially private school teachers) were not paid when schools were locked up. This made some of them unable to provide adequate needs for their families. COVID-19 pandemic has created much havoc in the lives of many teachers. They face many psychological problems such as stress, fear, anxiety, depression, and insomnia that lead to a lack of focus and concentration.

Agbele and Oyelade (2020) believe that the careers of university students in the year 2020 have been severely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Students have experienced

major teaching interruptions in their studies. Some private universities that engaged their students with online teaching could not conduct examinations or assess their students as building trust in them is a major setback in an online learning environment. In general, every university student's graduation time has been indirectly elongated, and they graduate at the beginning of a major global recession.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has harmful educational impacts as it is difficult to know how long the health predicament will last and how many individuals will be affected. At a somewhat early stage of the epidemic in Nigeria, in 2022, the educational implication has been very significant. The longer measures were taken to contain the virus, and the stricter those measures, the greater their impact on the Nigerian educational system. Therefore, Nigeria should seize the present COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity to translate the policy recommendations into a quality educational system.

Suggestion

1. Education should re-think what, where, how and when learners should learn.
2. The government should provide support such as solar-powered educational devices pre-loaded with offline academic resources to students in disadvantaged and vulnerable communities to alleviate the deleterious effect of the pandemic on education.
3. Government at all levels should implement the UNESCO 26% recommended budgetarily allocation to education for investment in the education sector.
4. There should be the inclusion of online teachings such as integrated digital learning platforms, video lessons, broadcasting through radio and TV etc., to supplement the normal classroom teaching even when there is no pandemics or disaster, most especially in Government own schools.
5. There should be uniformity in curriculum and scheme of work used by teachers from schools to schools in every facet of education. It is the duty of educational inspectors to ensure that teachers and schools adhere strictly to the planned curriculum and scheme of work.

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