



Issues Associated With Covid-19 and Its Consequences on University Education in Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the study: This study explored the various issues associated with covid-19 as well as the consequences of the pandemic focusing on university education in Nigeria.

Methodology: Using a literature review methodology, this study uses a qualitative descriptive-analytical technique. Secondary sources include scholarly publications, journal articles, and historical assessments, while primary sources include Sharma and Veer's work on the actions and issues surrounding the Covid19 outbreak and Sanz et al.'s study on the effects of the coronavirus crisis on schooling.

Main Findings: According to the study, the pandemic has caused unprecedented changes in the manner that university education is delivered in Nigeria overall, and as Nigerian universities lack a contingency plan, they must switch to an electronic form of instruction. In particular, the study discovered that the pandemic had negatively impacted student welfare and caused a discernible rise in both unintended pregnancies and school dropout rates.

Novelty/Originality of this study: Nigerian institutions lack face-to-face interaction in all its forms, and students' lives are rearranged against their desire to socialize with their classmates on campus during the pandemic. Introduction of a new standard learning platform that uses technology to replace the university's current traditional learning mode.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus disease 2019 otherwise known as COVID-19 pandemic emerged as a global disease. The first index case globally was reported in Wuhan, China in November, 2019. According to Worldometer [1], the disease had infected 116,057,203 and killed 2,576,564 persons globally as at 4th March, 2021. In Nigeria, the first case of the pandemic was reported in Lagos by the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control on February 27, 2020. Between the date when the first case was reported and March 4th, 2021, Nigeria has recorded a total of 157,671 confirmed COVID-19 cases from the 36 states and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) with 136,335 (86.48%) cases discharged and 1,951 (1.24%) deaths. The most affected States in Nigeria is Lagos with 56,273 (35.69%) infected cases, 54,307 (34.44%) discharged and 414 (0.26%) deaths. This is followed by FCT with 19,313 (12.25%) infected cases, 11,919 (7.56%) discharged and 150 (0.10%) deaths and Plateau with 8,939 (5.67%) infected cases, 8,783 (5.57%) discharged and 57 (0.04%) deaths respectively. This is followed by Kaduna with 8,610 (5.46%) infected cases, 8,374 (5.31%) discharged and 63 (0.04%) deaths. This disease was declared a national disaster by the Indian Government [2].

As a result of the pandemic which posed a threat to human existence all over the world, in March 23, 2020, the Federal Government of Nigeria through the National Universities Commission ordered the closure of both private and public educational institutions including all universities in the country. The closure of universities was not only peculiar to Nigeria. Many other countries including the world powers such as the United States of America, Germany, Britain, Canada, China etc. had earlier announced the closure of their educational institutions to prevent contracting this deadly disease before Nigeria took the same step. This was not the first time of closing educational institution in the world due to pandemic. According to United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation [3], Cambridge University was closed down in 1665 due to black plague epidemic that struck England. Incidentally, in 2020, Cambridge University was also shut down due to Covid-19 outbreak making it the second time to shut down the University while many other Universities in the United States of America, Europe, Asia, Sweden, Spain, South Africa, Ghana, Nigeria among others are experiencing this total shut down for the first time which led to suspension of conventional face-to-face activities in the Universities.

The decision to temporarily shut down Universities in Nigeria was to protect lives of citizens by adhering to the principles of social-distancing as one of the non-pharmaceutical ways of preventing the contract of the deadly disease. This was adjudged by Premium Times Nigeria [4], as one of the cheapest ways of ensuring that citizens stay safe and alive. The universities need to shut their doors since the directive was from the Federal Government of Nigeria who in addition signed a law in 2021 specifying the maximum number of people expected in any social gathering and time to spend for religious activities. It should be noted that the pandemic exposes the Nigerian universities over dependence on single-mode traditional way of instructional delivery without any back-up or alternative in case of emergency or pandemic. This pandemic differed greatly from earlier downturns in a number of ways, indicating that prior research on the effects of pandemic on higher education is only partially instructive. Thus, this study adds to the limited but quickly expanding body of research on the various issues associated with covid-19 as well as the consequences of the pandemic focusing on university education in Nigeria.

Nigeria's educational system, especially the university system, has been greatly impacted by the Covid-19 outbreak and its aftermath. The country has been struggling with disruptions to the academic calendar earlier, but Covid-19 made matters worse, making it more difficult to stabilize academic calendar and meet the rising demand for higher education. Hence, this study investigates the various issues associated with Covid-19 and its consequences on university education in Nigeria.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

2.1. Type of Research

This study uses a qualitative descriptive-analytical technique to examine the several Covid-19 difficulties and the pandemic's effects, with a particular focus on Nigerian university education. This approach makes it possible to critically and methodically examine the problems and effects of Covid-19 as they relate to Nigerian university education. The study use library research techniques and focuses on conceptual and textual analysis rather than gathering empirical field data. According to Creswell [5] a qualitative technique is suitable for examining intricate conceptual frameworks, methodical concepts, and their relevance in educational contexts.

2.2. Research Subjects

This study uses both primary and secondary sources as its subjects. Books, journal papers, and essays by Adebowale et al., Sharma, and Veer are examples of primary sources, especially those that address Covid-19 and educational delivery. Secondary sources include government initiatives, scholarly debates, and criticisms pertaining to Covid-19 and Nigerian higher education reform. Through an analysis of primary and secondary sources, this study offers a comprehensive perspective on scholars' contributions to pandemic-related concerns and their real-world consequences for educational reform.

2.3. Data Collection

The methodical literature review strategy used in this study's data collecting involves choosing sources based on their applicability, reliability, and contribution to the area. According to Malahati et al [6], the study uses document analysis and focuses on books, journal articles, and educational policy.

2.4. Data Analysis Techniques

This research uses three primary stages of content analysis and thematic analysis for data analysis. In order to ensure that only materials directly linked to Covid-19 and the conversation surrounding education are included, the first step in data reduction is to filter pertinent information from the sources that have been gathered. Second, the results are arranged into major subject categories, including Covid-19, university education, challenges, disruption, and its effects in Nigeria. Finally, in order to ensure that the findings are both theoretically sound and practically useful, conclusions are drawn and verified by integrating insights from the study and relating them to the larger conversation on Covid-19 and higher education.

2.5. Research Procedure

To guarantee methodological rigor, the research is conducted in an organized manner. Defining the research scope and selecting key subjects on Covid-19, university education, challenges, disruption, and its effects in Nigeria, as well as those pertinent to knowledge integration, are the first steps. In order to ensure alignment with the study's variables, the following step entails conducting a literature search and choosing main and secondary sources. Thematic and content analysis follows, in which key ideas from the researchers' pandemic and education study are taken out and placed in the Nigerian context. Then, in order to domesticate knowledge and emphasize its uniqueness and practical application, a comparison analysis is carried out to compare academics' positions on pandemic. Lastly, conclusions are reached and well-thought-out suggestions are made to get Nigerian universities ready for any future shutdowns brought on by pandemics.

This technique contributes both theoretical and practical insights to the discussion of the study's variables while guaranteeing that the research stays methodical, rigorous, and pertinent. In addition to addressing the gaps in the literature, this study provides a structured approach for Nigerian universities to create a more responsive and integrative university system by critically analyzing Covid-19, challenges, disruption, and its effects on universities in Nigeria.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Issues Associated With Covid-19 In Nigerian Universities

According to Ugege et al [7], the devastating effects of the Covid-19 on university systems around the world are one of the many ways and magnitudes that the pandemic has affected the planet. In Nigeria in particular, the Covid-19 pandemic has brought about hitherto unheard-of alterations in the way education is provided globally. The widespread disruptions to university instruction have been one of the Covid-19 pandemic's most notable issue in Nigeria. Many students have found it difficult to adjust to the new educational model after institutions' physical campuses were forcibly closed and switched to online study. Lack of access to technology, bad internet connectivity, and trouble interacting with online content are some of the issues that have arisen when institutions abruptly switched to remote learning. According to Yakubu and Dasuki [8] the shutdown of Universities in Nigeria as a result of Covid19 led to suspension of conventional face-to-face teaching activities. According to the authors, this affected approximately over 2 million students across universities in Nigeria. It also affected the intake of new students in Nigeria Universities. However, nobody was able to predict how long this situation will last, hence the need to embrace the new normal in educational sector. The initial measure taken by the government was total shut down of the Universities where both staff across cadres and students were directed to stay away from the Universities. However, after about six months, by November, 2020, the Federal Government of Nigeria reviewed the situation and relaxed the total shut down by directing officers above grade level 12 to resume work while others below the specified cadres are directed to work from home. It will be unreasonable to think that this situation will soon be over with this step.

The implication of this shut down on University was abrupt and in most Nigerian Universities, there seems to be no contingency plan other than to explore electronic mode of instructional delivery as the alternative. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation [3] informed that, it is high time for universities in Nigeria to start working on a way out of temporary or total lockdown crisis in educational institutions. It could be concluded that Covid19 in Nigeria adds more complexity to university education because of some unresolved issues associated with it.

Almost every element of daily life has been significantly impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, encompassing the system and university education. According to Lindzon [9], the pandemic had irreversible effects on education and the economy at every level of the system, from pre-school to higher education. In addition, Previous research [10]-[12] concluded that, the far-reaching issues of social/physical distancing and the associated lockdown measures, as well as school closures, have thwarted the education sector and has an indelible mark on the Nigeria education system. Examining the immediate and long-term effects of these changes on students' university education is crucial, especially because universities have switched to blended learning and put in place a number of mitigating strategies to guide against total stoppage of teaching and learning in educational institutions. Short-term detrimental consequences on university education could have resulted from the pandemic-related school closures and switch to blended learning. According to Ugege et al [7] the abrupt switch to virtual learning presented many students with obstacles, such as lack of internet access, technological limitations, and trouble remaining motivated and involved in a virtual classroom environment. Adebowale et al [13] study concluded that higher levels of stress, anxiety, and depression have been observed among university students as a result of extended periods of social isolation, future uncertainty, and fear of getting infected with the virus.

In a study conducted by Usman et al [14] on the assessment of Covid-19 and its impact on Nigeria's socio-economic. The study found that student wellness had suffered as a result of the pandemic. Additionally, the study discovered that the Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated socio-economic disparities at universities,

leading to a greater achievement gap among students. Students from low-income households are disproportionately affected by Covid-19 in Nigeria because they lack access to resources like technology, internet connectivity, and a cozy home atmosphere for studying. This is supported by Chavez1 et al [15] who found that during Covid-19, students from lower-income households were more likely than their richer counterparts to experience disruptions in their schooling, which would have had a detrimental effect on their activities in the university. In a related study by Saani and Sanni [16], it was concluded that the COVID-19 lockdown had a detrimental impact on civilizations, especially on the economic and educational institutions of emerging nations. In addition, World Bank Group [17] conducted a study on Covid-19 pandemic: shock to education and policy responses and found that approximately 95% of students worldwide have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic's protracted school closures and delays to schooling.

Increase in student dropout is another issues as a result of Covid-19 in universities in Nigeria. Dropout is when student withdrawn from school or an educational program before finishing it, usually before receiving a diploma or degree. Dropout in educational institution increases as a result of both institutional and personal reasons according to Wahab et al [18] during Covid-19. The most common personal reasons found in the scientific literature are socio-economic status and poor educational outcomes. In reference to the institutional component, Bungau et al [19] confirmed that the school atmosphere can significantly impact students' decision to leave school. The school climate during this period was unfriendly and difficult for some students to survive especially those from parents of low socio-economic status. The economic difficulties brought on by the lockdown prevented the majority of students from going back to school to take their examinations and complete their programme.

Studies by Edeh et al [20], also established that there are unwanted pregnancies brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic shutdown. Pregnancies are undesirable and unwanted when one or both of the biological parents do not want this pregnancy to occur at the moment of conception. According to the The Global Partnership to End Child Marriage [21], the rate of unintended pregnancies and illicit sex among college students in Nigeria rises as a result of prolonged institution closures. The study also shows that a lack of access to safe abortion services and contraception leads to more unwanted and unexpected pregnancies among married and single schoolgirls, which in turn puts more pressure on college students to get married young. Therefore, may unable to continue her education at the university because parents may not have the capacity or willingness to pay for both her education and the care of her pregnancy.

Academic return due to the covid-19 pandemic lockdown is another issues found by Burzynska and Contreras [22] in a study conducted on gendered effects of school closures during the Covid-19 pandemic. Covid-19 pandemic lockdown that halts or reverses the development of academic activities within the institution is known as an academic return. Aliyyah et al [23] concluded that long-term school closures across the nation caused many students to lose interest in learning, and those who did return to school experienced significant losses in their academic pursuits. In Nigeria, students ceased learning academic subjects in Nigerian universities during Covid-19, and freshly admitted students, whose families are less inclined to concentrate their education during school closures, became disheartened [17]. Due to the fact that only students from more affluent and educated households have the resources to learn at home via online courses, learning disparity rises.

The global labor markets and our way of life have been upended by the coronavirus pandemic. Majority of workers in universities in Nigeria, most especially those on daily paid, the self-employed and those working with private organisation lost their jobs because they have no job security. These groups of people are unable to feed themselves and provide for their families due to low and irregular wages and salaries as well as lack of government support during emergencies. In support of this, Dvorkin [24] reported that in the United States, almost 33 million people registered for unemployment insurance after losing their jobs between the middle of March and the final week of April 2020. In the same time frame, the national unemployment rate in the US rose from 3.5% to 14.7%, which was the biggest increase since World War II.

3.2. The Consequences Of Covid-19 On University Education In Nigeria

The outbreak of Covid19 pandemic has varying degrees of consequences on the entire university system in the country. It should be noted that students are admitted to the universities to study through conventional face-to-face interaction. Refusing students the "conventional interaction" describes the consequences imposed on student interactions in a conventional classroom environment. The outbreak of Covid-19 has denied students in universities in Nigeria of such opportunity. The newly admitted students who just began university education and those in the final year aspiring to graduate and participate in the compulsory National Youth service Scheme seems worst hit. This situation will increase student drop-out rate in the universities especially from those who are newly admitted into the university system. This will increase the already tensed security challenges in Nigeria as well as access and inequality in the university. Ferreyra et al [25] concluded that half of those who dropped out during Covid-19 in Latin America do so in the first year of their study.

In addition, re-arrangement of students' lives is another consequences of Covid-19. This situation has led the students to re-arrange their lives against their wish. They have been sent back home compulsorily. They

lose social interaction with their peers in the school which is part of the needed skill for employability after graduation as pointed out by Adebakin et al [26]. It also led to confinement to their family and immediate relative which implicate students' socio-emotional situation. In a study conducted in the United States of America by Chen et al [27], it was concluded that 75% of undergraduate have experienced anxiety and depression due to Covid-19 crises. The cost of university education also has its share of the consequences of Covid-19. This comprised both public and private costs. The public costs are costs bore by the government to ensure smooth delivery of university education. The cost according to Ajadi [28] include capital and recurrent costs while private cost are the ones incurred by the students, parents or guidance to ensure students receive quality university education. It includes cost of: tuition (states and private universities), accommodation, feeding, transportation, books, and photocopies. Students who reside off-campus in Nigeria individually or shared apartment continue paying for the rent despite the lockdown and suspension of face-to-face activities on campus. The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation [3] reported that students in the USA who paid \$60,000 or more for academic session and those that their face-to-face have been suspended are to be given one third of their tuition as refund to reduce their expenses on university education. In addition, it was reported that students in the University in Glasgow requested to utilize the cost of accommodation paid to the university whenever the University re-opens for face-to-face activities to cushion the effect of increase in private cost of university education. This is contrary to happening in Nigerian universities where no refund was implemented either by the university or house owners.

Covid-19 in addition led to replacement of conventional face-to-face activities. The outbreak of Covid-19 has compelled the students to a new normal learning mode. This is also referred to as the virtual mode which allows them to continue their learning. This choice demands functional internet connectivity, android phone and financial viability to sustain data purchase. However, the reality on ground in Nigeria is of irregular internet service and economic hardship confronting the low and middle-income earner to buy android phone and data for their children. Some of these students resides in the rural areas where there is no network or effective network connectivity. Watts [29] informed that the economic situation of low-income parents in Nigeria makes it impossible for their relocation to cities to enjoy better life. It does not seem those virtual teaching modes has been willingly received by Nigerian University students but are coerced to it.

Some of the reasons stem from the economic perspective and that the curriculum offered was never designed within the framework of virtual mode in Nigeria. The mode was used to bridge a gap without adequate framework and preparation on the part of the school, staff and the students. In a study conducted by Hastie et al [30], it was concluded that students cannot achieve learning objectives designed for face-to-face using other delivery mode. In addition, students' expectations are different when they enrolled in conventional universities that always employ face-to-face interaction. Pimmer et al [31] concluded that virtual learning requires more discipline and commitment on the part of the students, which accounts for high rate of success among adult learners who understood more why discipline is needed during learning using one online form or the other. The face-to-face experience is very necessary for vulnerable undergraduates who need to build their social and interaction skills.

Another consequences of pandemic is on students mobility. Since March 2020, the spread of this deadly disease has impacted negatively on Nigerian students desiring study overseas. This is because of travel ban or restrictions by many countries which have affected students travelling abroad for university education and university staff exchange programme used to boost university global ranking as concluded by Subair and Ajadi [32]. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [33] informed that more than 5.3 million students were studying outside their countries in Europe. In addition, the The Chinese Government [34] reported that 38.91% of the total foreign students are in China for university education. This crisis have serious implications on the world economy and inequalities. Consequently, student mobility was more stricter than pre-Covid-19 era where scholarships are provided through public fund which may not be available due to economic issue. Adebayo [35] reorted that the crisis also led to increase in the number of displaced student population in search for opportunities, an issue that created unforeseen challenges.

4. CONCLUSION

The situation in Nigerian Universities since the outbreak of Covid-19 which led to suspension of conventional face-to-face activities on campuses revealed that Universities are not well prepared for online teaching. This calls for urgent repositioning of Nigerian Universities for effective teaching and learning. Untimely death of the aged, job loss, obedience of non-pharmaceutical precautions, security, malnutrition, religious bias and porous borders are issues associated with Covid19 in Nigeria. The implications of Covid-19 as highlighted in this paper are: denial of students' conventional interactions, re-arrangement of students' lives, cost of university education, replacement of conventional face-to-face activities and students' mobility. In view of these, comprehensive measures should be put in place to prepare the universities to respond to future shut down that may be occasioned by any form of pandemic.

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