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## COVID-19 Pandemic and Its Influence on Nigeria's Education: A Review

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### Abstract

The pandemic took the whole world by surprise and has caused considerable havoc in every area of human endeavour. The paper traced the origin of COVID-19 from Wuhan province in China to Nigeria. The pandemic generated a lot of adverse effects in the country by bringing untold hardships on the educational, economic, social, and psychological lives of the people. However, the emphasis of this paper is on the effects of the pandemic on education. This paper presents a review of the impact of COVID-19 on Nigeria's education. To this end, the author explored the educational and learning concepts with recommendations for future adjustments. The study noted that since the Federal Government of Nigeria announced the closure of its 104 Unity Schools on 26th March 2020, to check the spread of the coronavirus, all other schools, including higher institutions of learning, were also shut down. This closure order, coupled with poverty, negatively affects students' learning. School counsellors in Nigeria must reach out to students to assist in managing their emotional maladjustment and develop the resilience to cope with their studies despite the challenges of the pandemic in the education space. Additionally, access to virtual learning opportunities ought to be provided by the state and other stakeholders in education to support academic activities during the pandemic. Also, the government must ensure adequate post-lockdown plans to assist students in returning to everyday life gradually.

**Keywords:** Coronavirus/COVID-19, counselling, education, pandemic.

### 1. Introduction

The 31st December 2019 marked the beginning of a world pandemic. A disease with an unknown cause was reported in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China (Jones, 2020). However, on the 9th January 2020, The Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) unveiled the cause of this disease as it pointed to a novel coronavirus being the cause of the coronavirus disease 2019, code-named COVID-19 (The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, ECDC, 2020). What started like an endemic disease in China soon became a global pandemic. The ECDC (2020) reported that by 25th March 2020, over 416,916 COVID-19 cases were reported globally by over 150 countries. Considering its spreading pattern from Wuhan, China, where it first started, it is clear that the spread of the disease is unprecedented (Bamfo et al., 2020).

COVID-19 has become a dreaded pandemic with several adverse effects in all facets of human endeavour. The pandemic affected the economy, education, and social lives because of its devastating effects and created food insecurity, loss of income, looming debts, and other challenges in Africa (Bamfo et al., 2020; Ozili, Arun, 2020). Having assumed a pandemic status with its infectious attributes, COVID-19 poses a lot of danger to these African countries like Nigeria

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(Farayibi, Asongu, 2020; Ogunode et al., 2021). Nigeria's first COVID-19 case was reported on 27th February 2020, when an Italian citizen who visited the country became ill two days later when he travelled from Lagos to Ogun State (Ebenso, Otu, 2020; Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, 2020). His status was confirmed as a positive case of COVID-19 shortly. As the world was entangled in the scourging effects of this disease, Nigeria joined the comity of nations mourning loved ones while going through the challenges elicited by the disease after its index case and many other cases followed. Despite Nigeria's aggressive and coordinated responses to curb the spread of the disease, COVID-19 continues to affect human life adversely, as Lagos and Abuja soon became epicentres for the pandemic in Africa (Ebenso, Otu, 2020; Farayibi, Asongu, 2020; Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, 2020).

COVID-19 worsened the education system in Sub-Saharan Africa (Omang, Angioha, 2021). Before the disease outbreak, UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2019) had confirmed that 47 % of 258 million were out-of-school children, with 30 % attributable to conflict and emergencies in the region. Also, the United Nations Children's Fund and UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2015) suggested that 37 % of the internally displaced persons in Borno, Adamawa and Yobe states of Nigeria were school-aged children between 6 and 17. These reports show that even before the pandemic, countries within sub-Saharan Africa were prone to educational disruptions due to myriads of challenges. Among the several areas of human life affected in Nigeria, education stands out as one of the worst (Omang, Angioha, 2021). COVID-19 outbreak, which eventually led to an abrupt end of educational activities in Nigeria like other countries, added many challenges to the already suffering system. Thus, this paper briefly reviewed the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on education, emphasising the Nigerian situation.

## 2. Results and Discussion

### Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on Education in Nigeria

On 19th March 2020, the Federal Government of Nigeria announced the closure of its 104 Unity Schools across the country. This measure was a preventive step to check the spread of the coronavirus from 26th March 2020 through the Permanent Secretary, Federal Ministry of Education, Mr Sonny Echono, who gave the order on behalf of the Minister of Education, Malam Adamu Adamu (Ogunode et al., 2021). All other schools, including higher institutions of learning within the country, were also shut down. Closure of schools because of the coronavirus became a global trend as a response mechanism to combat the virus. Sintema (2020) reported that by the end of March 2020, over 180 countries ordered the closure of schools, with adverse effects on 87.4 % of learners (over 1.5 billion students).

Evidence suggested that Nigeria's disparity in access to the internet and electronic resources negatively affected students' learning (Ogunode et al., 2021). As the Nigerian government intensified the national COVID-19 measures like city lockdown, national palliative measures to cushion the livelihood were grossly inadequate, thereby placing poor students at the risk of not getting access to online education. Ozili (2020) opined that the pandemic outbreak caused suffering to poor Nigerian citizens because of weak institutions that could not effectively respond to the pandemic and the lack of social welfare structure that could cater to the poor and vulnerable citizens. Many students fall within the poor and vulnerable citizens who could not afford basic needs.

Additionally, the COVID-19 lockdown led to so many domestic violence cases in many homes globally, including Nigeria. Nigeria's chairman of the National Agency for Prohibition of Trafficking in Persons, Dame Julie Okah-Donli, decried rising domestic violence cases in a live broadcast from African Independent Television on 25th April 2020 as the lockdown continued. With evidence from studies by authors like Fawole et al. (2021) and Fabbri et al. (2021), the likely increase in domestic violence cases in Nigeria could negatively affect students' learning activities and learning outcomes during the COVID-19 period. Consequently, learners exposed to domestic violence during the lockdown may have learning difficulties after the exposure.

Further, many students' mental health during the COVID-19 lockdown were affected by stressful situations. Life's stressors like poverty, hunger, poor infrastructure, loneliness or boredom, loss of dear ones and domestic violence, which increased during the lockdown, could trigger mental health challenges like depression, anxiety disorder, insomnia and stress-related disorders. For example, Olaseni et al. (2020) confirmed insomnia, depression, posttraumatic stress

symptoms, and anxiety among Nigerians due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These disorders could mitigate the effective learning of Nigerian students during and after the pandemic.

### 3. Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper briefly reviewed the COVID-19 pandemic, emphasising the Nigerian situation. Additionally, the study analysed the effect of the pandemic on Nigeria's education. It is recommended that bodies like the Counselling Association of Nigeria and the Association of Professional counsellors in Nigeria provide needed learning support based on students' existing psychosocial sufferings. In conjunction with other ministries and agencies, the ministry of education should put structures that would address the educational needs of students during and after the pandemic. Online, radio and television programmes should be in place to teach students during and after the lockdown. The government should support the poor and vulnerable students to benefit from online, radio and television programmes to teach students. Finally, relevant government agents need to enlighten family members about the harmful effects of domestic violence, its impacts and what to do when there is a case of domestic violence.

### 4. Declaration of Competing Interest

The author declares that there is no interest in conflict, and all reference materials were dully acknowledged.

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