



## Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Nigerian Case

Suleiman, Mohammed Saeed

Khon Kaen University, Thailand  
Federal University, Gashua, Yobe State, Nigeria  
email: mohammedsaedsu@kkumail.com

### Abstract

Since the discovery of the COVID-19 pandemic and declared as a pandemic by World Health Organization (WHO) in 2020, the pandemic has turned out to be the most shocking in the world presently. It has a serious impact on human resources and other components of societal advancement. The paper examined the impact of the pandemic in Nigeria, using secondary data. It pointed out the impact of the pandemic on social and economic development. The pandemic constitutes serious health and socio-economic challenges not limited to the Nigerians only but the entire humanity in general. In Nigeria, the pandemic has been a great threat to social and economic wellbeing and the survival of the infected and affected people. People have destabilized many households impacting their sources of income and livelihoods due to the pandemic leading to poor purchasing power especially among the weak Nigerians. The infected and affected people suffer from stigma and discrimination in society with negative impacts. The pandemic also affects the education and future socio-economic development of young Nigerians. The study noted that human and material resources devoted to managing and controlling the pandemic could have been utilized for the social and economic growth of the citizens and the country. This paper recommends that the Nigerian government should introduce sustainable policies and strategies for managing the pandemic, for instance, actions must be targeted to support the most vulnerable people. Government should come up with means of training people on how to enhance their capacities on COVID-19 management and the public healthcare system and the economic system need to be revitalized.

**Keywords:** COVID-19, Impact, Nigeria, Pandemic, Stigma

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Ph.D. Student of Sociology, Department of Social Sciences, Division of Sociology and Anthropology,  
Khon Kaen University, Khon Kaen, Thailand/ Federal University, Gashua, Yobe State, Nigeria  
Email: [mohammedsaedsuleiman@fugashua.edu.ng](mailto:mohammedsaedsuleiman@fugashua.edu.ng)    [mohammedsaedsu@kkumail.com](mailto:mohammedsaedsu@kkumail.com)



## Introduction

Since the discovery, the COVID-19 caused by the SARS-CoV-2 Virus has sent serious shockwaves across the world, and Nigeria as a nation is not left out of the shocks as noted by Suleiman and Shehu (2021) that the outbreak of the Corona virus has increased tension and anxiety among Nigerians and the pandemic as a public health catastrophe has caused severe human suffering and loss of life. According to WHO (2020), COVID-19 started to spread in China around December 2019. Before spreading to other parts of the world, it was declared as a pandemic by 11 March 2020 and it is observed that the horrible impact of this pandemic is conspicuous in a notable economic recession, change in the standard of living in most of the countries of the world (Suleiman and Shehu, 2021). It is important to point out that COVID-19 have no respect for status and it can be contracted by anyone irrespective of the status and the elderly people are more vulnerable as advanced by Goldman (2020); Mamum et.al. (2020) that the new Corona Virus being referred as SARS-CoV-2 has affected all age groups, with the worst manifestations and highest death rate commonly detected among the older people.

It is pertinent to mention that most governments globally temporarily closed public institutions such as schools and places of work, banned public events and gatherings, closure markets and supermarkets, restricted movement of people in an attempt to control the further spread of the pandemic noted by Owusu-Fordjour, Koomson, and Hanson (2020) that most countries affected by the COVID-19 try to slow down the further spread of the pandemic by imposing strong measures such as the prohibition of public events and gatherings, workplace closures, stay at home order, restrictions on both domestic and international transport, testing and tracing of contacts infected, closure of educational institutions. Meanwhile, all the restrictions put in place by different governments globally and seeing those restrictions as perfect ways of reducing the further spread of the pandemic, however, have their negative impact on people, economy, lifestyle among others as observed by Aslam (2020) that physical closing of public places and restrictions on public gatherings may prove to be the well-organized way of curtailing the further spread of the virus, yet it has caused numerous challenges in the society such as global economic recession, lifestyle changes.

Hence, the COVID-19 pandemic is no more a public health issue but rather a pandemic that is multifaceted and affecting every aspect of life worldwide. The pandemic response affects health, economic, social/physical gatherings, family relationship, health related behaviours, disruptions of essential services, education, transportation. Similarly, the pandemic response also leads to social disorder and psychological effects among others. Therefore, this study on the impact of COVID-19 in Nigeria is timely and imperative to comprehend the stress and fretfulness among Nigerians due to the existence of the pandemic.



## **Theoretical Framework**

This paper is theoretically guided by Parson's (1951) Sick Role Theory (SRT). The theory as proposed by Parsons provides a social justification of illness and the economic demand of the sick and his or her relatives in search of treatment from qualified and proficient health personnel. The sick person is exempted from all social and economic tasks to seek out healthcare for his or her benefit and that of the society since it is expected that the sick get well quickly and resume his or her normal activities or roles for the smooth functioning of the society which COVID-19 presently hinder such societal expectation of the sick. It is significant to point out that the treatment and management of the pandemic can be costly and constitute a huge social and economic burden to the sick and his household members. To this end, the COVID-19 pandemic could be continuous and nonstop because of the pattern of the spread of the pandemic.

The fundamental idea of the SRT is based on four basic principles with two obligations and two rights. The first obligation is the sick person is excluded from normal social roles as seen in the case of COVID-19 patients; the second obligation is the sick person not responsible for his condition as seen in the case of this pandemic it is beyond anyone control. The two rights are 1) the sick person should try to get well as seen in the case of COVID-19, patients are exempted from the normal roles as temporary and condition to regain normal health status, therefore, the sick person is expected to get well, 2) the sick person should seek out for professionally competent advice and cooperate with the health workers as noted by Cockerham (2007) that the sick person is expected to cooperate with the health workers in the course of recovering from the sickness.

To this end, in the search for cure and reduction in the further spread of the COVID-19 pandemic stop the sick person and others from social and economic activities or practices and increasing the burden of the households to the point of the social and economic impoverishment that can lead to the total collapse of the households as seen in the case of the pandemic and its impact on Nigeria as noted by Suleiman and Shehu (2021) that in Nigeria while some people can work from home, some may not be able to work from home such people in public services, industries and low income who mostly work on daily pay with poor savings net and implication led to the loss of income, many debts, poor nutrition, rent arrears among others. Kuhn (2016) that the growth of the informal performance of the economy in some countries has created a large group of people who are vulnerable as they cannot get sick pay, they are on zero hours contract or self employed.

## **Methodology**

The paper utilized secondary data; the data both theoretical and empirical on the impact of COVID-19 inferences were generated from different sources. Hence, documentary sources like publications and documents of the different various national and international governmental and non-governmental



organizations were employed. Besides, books, published journal articles were utilized. Therefore, the extracted related data from these sources concerning the goal of the paper were arranged thematically for the description of the analysis.

## **Results of Impact of COVID-19 in Nigeria**

### **Economic Impact**

The economic impact of the pandemic is not limited to the infected or the affected households, but extended to the wider society thereby leading to a cross-border economic disaster as noted by Naidoo and Fisher (2020) that COVID-19 pandemic has distrusted the means of livelihoods, cost trillions of dollars with looming global recessions. Similarly, it is worth noting that in efforts to isolate cases and reduce the transmission rate of the pandemic, countries across the globe introduced and implemented strict measures like compulsory lockdown and border closure with economic implementation as observed by Bachman (2020), Sarkis, Cohen, Dewick, and Schroder (2020) that the obligatory national lockdown as a measure to limit the transmission rate of the pandemic have shattered the core sustaining pillars of the modern world economic with shock arising from the pandemic and percolate through nations and affecting production, disrupting supply chains and unsettling the financial markets.

It is pertinent to mention that some of the people in Nigeria work from home and some may not be able to work from home like people in public services, industries, and low income who mostly work on daily pay with poor savings net and by inference, it has caused loss of income, many debts, poor nutrition, rent arrears among others as observed by Kuhn (2016) that the growth of the informal performance of the economy in some countries has created a large group of people who are vulnerable as they cannot get sick pay, they are on zero hours contract or self employed. In a related development, Ozili (2020) asserts that the monetary authority adopted the accommodative monetary policies and offered a targeted ₦3.5trillion loan support to some sectors in Nigeria by the government and these efforts should have prevented the economic crisis from occurring but it didn't for the reason that economic agents could not freely engage in economic activities for fear of contracting the COVID-19 disease that was spreading very fast at the time. Thus, as one of the means of maintaining the well-being of Nigerians, the government responded to the COVID-19 disaster by providing financial assistance as a palliative to businesses and a small number of households that were affected by the outbreak of the pandemic to cushion the effect. It is pertinent to mention that the COVID-19 outbreak economically affected the well-being of Nigerians and contributed to the unemployment rate in Nigeria.



## **Social Impact**

The social implication of COVID-19 revolves mainly on stigmatization and discrimination of the infected and suspected person and his household members. Goffman (1963) described stigma as an undesirable or a discrediting family attribute that an individual possesses and by reducing the individual status in the eyes of the society. Similarly, Mbonu, Borne and De Vries (2010), Okoronkwo, Okeke, Chinweuba and Iheanacho (2013), Weine and Kashuba, (2012) maintain that discrimination is a result of stigma when there is any type of distinction, exclusion, or restriction that is demonstrated against any person due to any attribute or any personal feature. COVID-19 is known with stigma and infected persons suffer from the social stigma of different types that can inform of social isolation, rejection, and social discrimination as seen in the case of the pandemic as observed by Brooks et.al. (2020) that compelling people to self isolation or quarantine causes psychological harm and quarantine of people exposed to an infectious disease is associated with negative psychological effects, including post-traumatic stress symptoms, which may be long lasting. Consequently, stigma is unfavourably affecting the interaction of households, isolated and quarantined individuals in the society leading to rejection, isolation, depression.

## **Health Impact**

The pandemic is not mere a health trend but an impact on everyone as observed by Moukaddam and Shah (2020) that the pandemic is no more a medical phenomenon but it affects individuals and society leading to disruption, anxiety, stress, and stigma. Similarly, the impact of the pandemic is harsher on developing countries like Nigeria that have a weak public health infrastructure and poor social welfare and there is the link between income and health as noted by Benzeval et. al. (2014) that there is a link between income and health and it is well established and performed through numerous mechanisms. By implication, the pandemic has a serious health impact on Nigerians wellbeing.

The deteriorating public health sector in Nigeria made it complex for Nigerians to manage the rapid spreading of the COVID-19 pandemic as observed by Muhammad, Abdulkareem, and Chowdhury, (2017) that the public health sector in Nigeria has poor infrastructure such as poor emergency services, the limited number of ambulance services, unproductive national health insurance systems, lack of adequate primary health care facilities, and these identified problems in the public health sector in Nigeria have constantly been linked to the high maternal and infant mortality rates in the nation.

## **Education Impact**

The pandemic has caused surprising and expected experience in the educational sector in Nigeria since its emergence and it has led to huge challenges to the education system. The government actions have



followed a strict rule of limiting physical contact as one of the means of reducing the further spread of the pandemic leading to the closure of schools and the introduction of online, radio, and television learning as observed by Cao et.al. (2020), Owusu-Fordjour, Koomson, and Hanson, (2020), Schleicher (2020) that due to closure of schools, libraries, educational community have made concerted efforts to maintain learning continuity during this period and children/students have to rely more on their resources to continue learning remotely through internet, television, and radio, new assessment methods emerged. Similarly, the pandemic has forced teachers in Nigeria to adjust to the new modes of delivery teaching unfamiliar to them as noted by Schleicher (2020) that teachers also had to adapt to new pedagogical concepts and modes of delivery of teaching for which they may not have been trained.

In addition, the pandemic impact on education budget in Nigeria, the 2020 education budget was reduced despite it is one of the sectors with lower budgetary allocation and implication, the education may likely expect low budget and less growth which is detrimental to human capital development and wellbeing of Nigerians as noted by Al-Samarrai, Gangwar and Gala (2020) that it is predicted that the pandemic will lead to slower growth in government expenditures in the coming year or years and if the share of the government expenditures devoted to education remains unchanged, thus, education spending would continue to grow significantly at lower rates compared to the record of growth before the outbreak of the pandemic.

To this end, the pandemic impacts the wellbeing of Nigerians and requires attention to sustain the secure wellbeing of the people because the wellbeing of the people revolves around humans, linked to different types of development in the living conditions like social, economic, political, cultural and educational.

## **Conclusion**

COVID-19 pandemic constitutes serious health and socio-economic challenges not limited to the Nigerians only but the entire humanity in general. In Nigeria, the pandemic has been a great threat to social and economic wellbeing and the survival of the infected and affected people. People have destabilized many households impacting their sources of income and livelihoods due to the pandemic leading to poor purchasing power especially among the weak Nigerians. The infected and affected people suffer from stigma and discrimination in society with negative impacts. The pandemic also affects the education and future socio-economic development of young Nigerians. The study noted that human and material resources devoted to managing and controlling the pandemic could have been utilized for the social and economic growth of the citizens and the country.





## Recommendations

This paper recommends that:

1. The government needs to introduce sustainable policies and strategies for managing the pandemic. For instance, actions must be targeted to support the most vulnerable people
2. Government should come up with means of training people on how to enhance their capacities in COVID-19 management
3. The public healthcare system and the economic system require to be revitalized
4. Lockdown, social/physical distancing must be accompanied by measures to safeguard the incomes of poor people
5. Educational institutions need to strengthen their evidence based practices

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