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SOCIO-ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON PERSONAL FUNCTIONING OF VULNERABLE GROUP IN LAFIA METROPOLIS

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Abstract

This study examined the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 pandemic on personal functioning of vulnerable group in Lafia metropolis. 331 participants consisting of 171 males and 160 females with their age from 18-40 above were selected from State Social Register (SSR) (Lafia LGA) generated by State Operation and Coordinating Unit (SOCU). Survey design was adopted. The instruments used were Socio-economic impact of COVID-19 questionnaire developed by the researchers and Personal Functioning Inventory. Two hypotheses were tested using Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Independent Sample t-test. The results showed significant influence of socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on personal functioning [F (20,310) = 3.200; p< .000]. While t-test analysis showed difference between male and female on personal functioning [t (329) = .011; p<.05].The studyconcluded that socio-economic impact of COVID-19 has influence on personalfunctioning of vulnerable while gender has significant difference on personal functioning. It is therefore, recommended that psychologists and experts in other disciplines should adopt strategies in educating and reorienting the vulnerable to emulate a healthy way of living during and after the pandemic. All State governments should adopt the idea conceived by World Bank and Nigerian on NG-CARES. Also, States should come up with humanitarian services and security personnel across board; with this people would be encouraged to imbibe the culture of professionalism.

Keywords: **Socio-economic Impact, COVID-19, Personal Functioning, Vulnerable Group, Lafia Meropolis.**

Introduction

The COVID-19 crisis has brought up unprecedented and complex issues for us all. COVID-19, the defining global health crisis of this millennium was first reported in Wuhan, China in December 2019. This highly infectious disease had spread to almost every country in the world. A total of 235 countries have been identified with COVID-19 cases, exceeding a total of 35 million people world-wide and a total death of more than four million. Covid-19 is a pandemic of global concern; the virus continues to generate an extraordinary impact on global health, lives and livelihoods disrupting economies, markets and societal relations**.** Nicola et.al, (2020) research showed the COVID-19 pandemic has sparked fears of an impending economic

crisis and recession. Socio-economic impact of COVID-19 social distancing, self-isolation, and travel restrictions have led to a reduced workforce across all economic sectors and caused many jobs to be lost.

In the article published by WHO, 2021 reported that as at September 20, 2021, there have been 202,191 confirmed cases and 2,661 deaths in Nigeria. (1,295,541 confirmed cases and 29,191 deaths in all of Africa). Back in March, health policy experts expressed serious concerns on whether African countries could limit the spread of the highly infectious corona virus. One of the epidemiological models developed in March projected that by the end 2020, there would be an estimated 123 million infections and over 300,000 deaths on the African continent, in a best-case scenario. (1.2 billion infections and 3.3 million deaths in a worst-case scenario).

However, proof suggests that health related pandemic have the ability to increase the risk of domestic violence with police reports in China indicating that domestic violence increased tripled during the COVID-19 epidemic, violence against health workers due to the serious stress levels that the pandemic places on patients and abuse as well as exploitation of women and girls especially care givers (UNDP, 2020). Also, frustrations resulting from social and economic loss could play vital role into existing regional fault lines, kidnapping, banditry within Nigeria society.

In Nigeria, there has been confirmed cases of COVID-19 across the 36 states including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT). In response to curtail the spread of the virus most countries of the world, including Nigeria have imposed restriction measure which led to total and or partial closure of the economy. Governments across the world have been forced to limit public movement with extreme measures such as quarantines, lockdowns, social isolation, and restriction of movement in a bid to combat the spread of this deadly disease. The mitigation measures taken by the countries have resulted in huge financial losses in almost every industry, in every country and have also resulted in enormous psychological consequences. As other public health emergencies, COVID-19 pandemic affect one's psychological state in the short-term and mental health in the long-term.

According to UNESCO, almost 600 million learners are affected world-wide due to the pandemic (UNESCO, 2020). Youths, specifically the students, are the most vulnerable group as they are stormed with numerous impetus that leads to depression and anxiety. Several studies conducted on mental health among university students have reported high prevalence of psychological symptoms.

The UNHCR, (2020) reported that COVID-19 has negatively impacted the socio-economic status of vulnerable groups in Nigeria irrespective of their categories (refugees, IDPs or returnees) and locations. Also, they reported that restrictions imposed by government at all level in order to curtail the spread of the virus has affected the income and livelihood of the vulnerable groups, and consequently their well-being. Although, the depth and severity differ, however, the larger percentage (95%) across locations have experienced significant economic shock with limited access to basic needs (like food and shelter). Apart from the hardship imposed by the restrictions, the rise in food prices (as revealed by the CPI) also contribute a significant difficulty in the socio-economic wellbeing. The situation is expected

to be largely felt among those living on remittances (aged or students) or those with no current occupation or loss of job.

In addition, just like other citizen in the country, vulnerable groups have been denied access to social services like education, market, financial services, and so on, unlike before. However, the significance of the challenge is that, the said group are highly vulnerable and could be further subjected to all forms of social ill treatment like extortion, sexual abuse, among others. Although, some of the Vulnerable people received a significant support from government and humanitarian actors, but incidence of poverty is still in common place. The situation therefore calls for the need for advocacy and urgent intervention to reduce incidence of poverty as well as the establishment of effective adaptive mechanism that will foster restoration of life, social and economic activities among vulnerable groups. Governments, UNHCR, other humanitarian organizations as well as development actors need to join forces in order to achieve more significant result.

Personal Functioning has to do with adaptive coping strategies and healthy way of dealing with stress. Copping occurs in response to psychological stress which is usually triggered in an effect to maintain mental health and emotions that can be used to adjust to the environment.

Based on Lazarus and Folkman's model, coping could be defined as the behavioral and cognitive efforts that people use to manage the internal and external demands due to a stressful situation.

Coping mechanisms refers to the opinions and actions used by individuals to manage troubling situations. Coping mechanism involves repetitive mental and behavioral exertions to manage explicit external and/or internal difficulties that are considered as strenuous or beyond the resources of individuals. Different people may use different coping strategies in dealing the same stressor. Adaptive coping strategies are largely characterized by individuals facing problems directly, ensuring rationally representative assessments of complications, identifying and altering unhealthy emotional responses. Adaptive coping strategies include problem-solving, seeking social and emotional support that help to reduce stress, promote psychological wellbeing and improve general health outcomes. Passive coping strategies generally involve avoidance, self-blaming, and substance use which are maladaptive in nature and are more prevalent among young adults. Avoidance is mainly because one's thinking that he or she has little control to deal with the stressor. Although avoidance may seem to dispel stress temporarily, the cumulative effect will become more complex at a later stage and may lead to major and depressive symptoms and anxiety. People who use maladaptive coping strategies are known to have low life satisfaction; high negative thinking and they tend to exhibit a fight-flight response. Sex, age, and level of study are known to be associated with maladaptive coping and anxiety amongst students. It is believed that more females use maladaptive coping strategies since they are more inclined to think negatively than males.
To this end, the research is conducted to examine the socio-economic impact of Covid-19 pandemic on personal functioning of vulnerable groups in Lafia Metropolis.

Statement of the Problem

After the declaration of COVID-19 a pandemic of global concern by the World Health Organization (WHO), the virus continues to cause an unexpected impact on word health, lives and livelihoods disrupting economies, markets and societal relations. As its effects evolve, the deadly disease leaves in its wake a disturbing level of human suffering, with a world death toll surpassing 2.1 million individuals (WHO, 2020). The effects of the pandemic and the associated infection prevention and control procedures adopted to alleviate the impacts of the virus have resulted in an unprecedented reduction in human mobility, overwhelmed health systems, impeded access to education for millions of students, caused businesses and factories to shut down and disrupted global value chains and the supply of products. The combined effects of this have triggered what is already considered the worst economic recession since the 1933 great depression (WB,2020).

Although estimates for 2021 anticipate a potential recovery, the global economy contracted by 4.3 percent in 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic (UN News, 2021). Therefore, COVID-19 is likely to reverse progress made towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and undermine efforts to implement the principle of Leave of No One Behind (LNOB). So far, while Nigeria has avoided a public health crisis, on the economic front, the pandemic has disrupted lives and caused economic insecurity and hardship for households, affected business activities, and severely impacted the government's finances. The five charts below illustrate the economic impact of the pandemic (Abass, 2020). It is estimated that the COVID-19 pandemic increased extreme poverty between 88 to 93 million in 2020 (Christopher &Lakner, 2021). The total COVID-19 induced new poor in 2020 is estimated to be between 119 and 124 million. With many parts of the world now experiencing a second or third wave of the pandemic, and infection prevention and control (IPC) measures being tightened globally, it is likely the economic crisis induced by COVID-19 will be deepen and pervasive.

Certain populations are more vulnerable to the negative social and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic due to underlying wealth inequalities, social discrimination, and social exclusion (UN, 2020). Mothers and children, prisoners, older adults, persons with disabilities, and individuals and families living in poverty are key groups who may face additional challenges in enduring the effects of the pandemic (OECD, 2021). There is existing research documenting the disproportionate and varying effects of the pandemic on vulnerable populations. One study by Durizzo, Asiedu, Van der Merwe, Van Niekerk, and Günther (2021) describes the impact of the pandemic on the mental well-being of the urban poor in African countries, including Ghana, gathered from survey results (Durizzo et al. 2021). Another study in Nigeria details case reports of intimate partner violence against women in relation to economic stressors induced by the pandemic (Fawole, Okedare& Reed, 2021). However, extensive research on the effects of the pandemic on these vulnerable populations in Nigeria, especially in Nasarawa state has been limited which the study sought to examine.

Literature Review

Several studies have been conducted on the socio-economic impact of Covid-19 in Nigeria and other parts of the World. Take for example, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (2021) in its study on coping strategies to respond to the economic consequences of the pandemic highlighted some coping strategies put in place or adopted by people in the low cadre of the economy. The study highlighted that borrowing from relatives, reducing essential

expenses, increased utilization of savings, selling assets and being compelled to accept exploitative work conditions were coping strategies adopted by people to cope with the effects of the pandemic.

In another related study, UNHCR (2020) in its study on Assessment of Covid-19 Pandemic among Persons of Concern in Nigeria. The study further examined the effect of COVID-19 on Socio-economic Activities and Coping Mechanisms among People of Concerns in Nigeria among IDPs, Refugees and Returnees. Survey strata were identified to inform the sampling strategy. The result of the finding indicated that obviously, COVID-19 affected several people of concerns with most of them experiencing reduced income which stems from the restriction measures imposed by government both at state and federal level. Further disaggregation revealed that the incidence of reduced income and restriction to income cut across different classes of households' size and occupation. The situation must have forced most of the people of concerns to be solely dependent on remittances being provided by UNHCR and other humanitarian actors.

Similarly, Saalim, Sakyi, Fatema-Tuz-Zohra, Morrison, Owusu, Dalglish and Mufaro (2021) in their study on the reported health and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on vulnerable populations and implemented solutions in six West African countries using a media content analysis, found out that vulnerable groups were reported to have experienced a range of effects including economic disruptions, heightened domestic and sexual abuse, arbitrary arrests, health care inaccessibility, and educational challenges throughout the pandemic.

Furthermore, according to Bao et al., widespread outbreaks of an infectious disease, such as COVID-19, are associated with psychological distress and symptoms of mental illness. In a study conducted in China two weeks after the outbreak, it was found that 14.4% of the youth exhibited post-traumatic stress disorders. Social isolation, anxiety, distress of contagion, ambiguity, chronic stress, and economic hitches could worsen stress-related.

A survey conducted in a Spanish university found that 50.43% of the participants experienced moderate to severe psychological distress in the first week of their confinement.

Similarly, Islam et al., (2020) reported that around 15% of the students in Bangladesh had moderate to severe depression, whereas 18.1% were suffering from severe anxiety. The impact seems to be more severe among the older students who were self-financing their higher-level education.

The fear of infection, quarantine, social isolation, and a lack of self-care even leads individuals to face various critical situations in their everyday lives. Haleem et al, (2020) show that COVID–19 has affected day- to -day life and is slowing down the global economy. They argue that the economic effects of corona virus include: the slowing of the manufacturing of essential goods, disruption of the supply chain of products, losses in national and international business, poor cash flow in the market, significant slowing down in the revenue growth while the social consequences include the cancellation or postponement of large scale sports and tournaments, disruption of the celebration of cultural, religious and festive events, undue stress among the population, social distancing with peers and family members, closure of

hotels, restaurants and religious places, closure of places for entertainment such as movie and play theatres, sports clubs, gymnasiums, swimming pools and so on.

Fornaro and Wolf (2020), using a simple model, show that the corona virus trigged a negative supply shock. They suggest that drastic policy interventions both monetary and fiscal might be needed to prevent this negative supply affecting employment and productivity. Wagner (2020) showed that the health crisis transformed into an economic crisis which was amplified through financial channels. Ozili and Arun (2020) find that the increasing number of lockdown days, monetary policy decisions, and international travel restrictions severely affected the level of global economic activities and the closing, opening, lowest and highest stock price of major stock market indices in the world. Also, they observe that the imposed restriction on the internal movement of people and higher fiscal spending had a positive impact on the level of economic activities. Kuckertz et al. (2020) state that the corona virus (SARS – COV – 2) and the spread of COVID–19 disease in Nigeria led to rapid shut downs in cities and states across the country which severely affected the tourism industry. The lockdown has affected the socio–economic aspects of peoples' lives causing financial loss, health insecurity, and social distancing. Recent evidence suggests that individuals who are quarantined and kept in isolation are significantly distressed because of anxiety, anger, confusion, and post–traumatic stress symptoms (Brooks et al., 2020). Bhat et. Al., (2020) rightly pointed out that "the pandemic resulted in income loss due to job loss or reduced income due to COVID – 19 lockdown gave birth to domestic problems. Dubey et al. (2020) point out that post quarantine psychological effects may include significant socio–economic distress and psychological symptoms due to financial losses.

In relation to mental health, the literature confirms sharp differences between the genders. It is a constant in the literature that women reported worse mental health outcomes (Kvrgic et al., 2013; Giorgi et al., 2014; Van Droogenbroeck et al., 2018). Even during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, the first data collected by the researchers highlighted this trend (Casagrande et al., 2020; Wanget al., 2020; Wangetal., 2020). Furthermore, from the first studies on the psychological effects due to COVID-19, it was found that women were more affected by this situation, manifesting more negative alterations in cognition or mood and hyper arousal than males (LiuN.et al., 2020). Moreover, also with regard to loneliness, there are gender differences in the literature. Some studies show a higher prevalence of loneliness among women (Henriksenetal,2019; Pinquart and Sorensen, 2003). Research has shown that, in particular, during the COVID19epidemic,women were most exposed to stress and depressive symptoms(Casagrande et al.,2020;Wang et al.,2020;Wang et al.,2020).While in some cases, being a man is a protective factor against the risk of mild psychological distress in response to stressful events (Moccia et al.,2020). Even a month after the first cases, it was found that women showed symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder, to a greater extent than men, in terms of the negative alternation of mood and cognition and hyperarousal (Liu et al., 2020). Unlike other studies, Ahmed et al. (2020), despite having identified higher levels of anxiety and depression and a lower level of mental well-being in the population, did not, however, find gender related differences. As can be seen from the analysis of the current literature, little is known about the psychological impact, mental health and well-being of the general population, and the related gender differences at the peak of the COVID-19 epidemic worldwide.

Fabia1, Dueñas,Vigil-Colet and Figuerola (2020) in their study showed that sex and age are variables to be taken into account. In fact, women tend to show a more pessimistic attitudeinthis situation theyworrymoreaboutthehealthcrisis, are more afraid of getting infected or relatives getting infected, and spend more time talking about the disease. Women also show more stress and less self-esteem than the usual, which means that the psychological impact is worse for them than for men. This is congruent with the review by Brooks et al. (2020) on previous pandemics, which shows that being a man is one of the socio-demographic variables that can act as a protective factor.

Hypotheses

1. There would be significant socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on personal functioning of the poor and vulnerable
2. There will be a significant gender difference on personal functioning of vulnerable group in Lafia Metropolis, Nasarawa State.

Method

Design, Population, Sample size and Sampling Technique

Survey research design was adopted because of its advantage of focusing on representative sample drawn from an entire population of the study. 1,951 is the population of the study consisted of poor and vulnerable people between the age of 18-40 years and above in Lafia Local Government Area of Nasarawa State gotten from the State Social Register (SSR) generated by the State Operation Coordinating Unit (SOCU) for the year 2019 to 2021. The study adopted a convenience sampling technique to recruit participants who were willing to participate in the research. The sample size of the study was 331 participants derived from Taro Yamane's formula shown below:

$n = N$ all over $1 + N(e)^2$

$n =$ 1,951 all over $1+ 1{,}951\ (0.05)^2$

$n =$1,951 all over $1 + 1{,}951\ (0.0025)$

$n =$ 1,951 all over $1+ 6.33$

$n =$ 1,951 all over 7.33

$n = 331$

Instrument

Two instruments were used for the study. The first is ***socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 questionnaire*** developed by the researchers. 32 items were pooled with response option ranging from Strongly Agree, Agree, Not Sure, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. The scale was given to four experts who were lecturers in the department of psychology for content and face validity. After the scrutiny and expert opinions, fifteen items were deleted leaving the scale with seventeen items. Item analysis was subsequently conducted and two items were deleted leaving the scale with 15 items. The scale has a Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of 0.78.

***Personal functioning inventory*:** The instrument was developed by Kohn, Brien-Wood, Pickering &Decicco (2013) on 5-point Likert scale ranging from Strongly Agree, Agree, Unsure, Disagree and Strongly Disagree. It is a brief aspect of the inventory with 30-items that measure adaptiveness in coping, psychological coping strategies, adaptation to specific stressor and styles of the dealing with personal problems and has direct and reverse scoring system of the items. The psychometric properties of the PFI mean scores was found by Kohn et al (2003) for Canadian to be 101.71 M/F American and 100.13 for Nigerian was found by

Umeh (2004). Scores equal to or higher than the norms indicate that the clients manifest adequate coping strategies while lower indicate unadaptive coping. The internal consistency reliability coefficient is 0.90 while the Cronbach alpha is 0.92.

Results

Test for Hypothesis One

Summary Of ANOVA Showing Socioeconomic Impact of Covid-19 On Personal Functioning

SOURCE	SS	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	2309.854[a]	20	115.493	3.200	.000
Intercept	139641.451	1	139641.451	3868.615	.000
SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19	2309.854	20	115.493	3.200	.000
Error	11189.753	310	36.096		
Total	520545.000	331			
Corrected Total	13499.607	330			

a. R Squared = .171 (Adjusted R Squared = .118)

The table shows that socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 had significant influence on personal functioning [F(20,310) = 3.200, P< .000]. This means that the implications of the social and economic impact of the pandemic had significant impact on how the poor and vulnerable develop adaptiveness, psychological coping strategies and style of dealing with the situation in order to continue a healthy life during and after the pandemic. Therefore, hypothesis two of the study is accepted. Though some may develop a negative form of adaptation and psychological coping strategies that could affect the social and security structure of the society.

Test for Hypothesis Two

Summary result of the Independent Sample t-test showing the differences between male and female on personal functioning of vulnerable Group

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	t	P
PFI	male	170	75.0760	19.01	329	-1.080	.011
	Female	160	77.0938	14.52			

Table 1 shows the standardized test scores for the personal functioning of males and females. An independent sample t-test confirms that, there is a significant difference between male and female on personal functioning (adaptiveness, psychological coping strategies and style of dealing with stressors) (t (329) = .011, p =.05). This implies that both male and female copedifferently in the era of COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the research hypothesis is accepted.

Discussion

The purpose of this research work is to investigate the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on personal functioning of vulnerable group in Lafia Metropolis.

The first hypothesis stated that there will be a significant socioeconomic impact of COVID-19 on personal functioning of vulnerable. This hypothesis was accepted. This finding supported the view by Saalim et al. (2021) that COVID-19 has disruptedeconomic activities and heightening domestic, sexual abuse, arbitrary arrest and psychological distress as well as increased negative psychological coping strategies among vulnerable group. Also, Dubey et al. (2020) pointed out that post quarantine psychological effects may include significant socio-economic distress and psychological symptoms due to financial losses, lost of jobs and increased serious security threats to the nation. UNHCR (2020) in its study on Assessment of Covid-19 Pandemic among Persons of Concern in Nigeria. The study further examined the effect of COVID-19 on Socio-economic activities and coping mechanisms among People of Concerns in Nigeria among IDPs, Refugees and Returnees. The result of the finding indicated that obviously, COVID-19 affected several people of concerns with most of them experiencing reduced income which stems from the restriction measures imposed by government both at state and federal level. This practically means that socio-economic impact of COVID-19 is a major determinant of how individual psychologically develop coping strategies and adapt positively or negatively in dealing with situations at hand. Ability to adapt healthy psychological coping strategies have great association with the individual health and national security.

The second hypothesis stated that there would be gender difference on personal functioning of vulnerable group in Lafia Metropolis. However, the hypothesis is accepted. This implies that male and female response differently in terms of adaptiveness, psychological coping strategies and style of dealing with stressors when faced with difficult situation.Finding of this study is supported by the research of Liu etal., (2020) which reported that in a month after the first cases of COVID-19, it was found that women showed symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder, to a greater extent than men, in terms of the negative alternation of mood and cognition and hyper arousal.Also, with regard to loneliness, gender differences were established and higher prevalence of the loneliness was reported to be higher among women (Pinquart and Sorensen, 2003;Henriksen etal., 2019). Furthermore, during the COVID19 epidemic, women were most exposed to stress and depressive symptoms (Casagrande etal., 2020; Wang.etal.,2020;Wangetal.,2020). This study also corroborated with the study of IOM (2021) which reported that men adapt negative ways of dealing with the situation of economic hardship imposed by COVID-19. that the negative ways could be exploitation and extortion while the women could involve in heinous means of livelihood both of which \are threat to the National security.

Conclusion

The research work has established that socio-economic impact of COVID-19 is a real correlate of personal functioning (adaptiveness, psychological coping strategies and the style of dealing with personal problems), and there was significant influence of socio-economic impact of COVID-19 pandemic on personal functioning of an individual among poor and vulnerable. This implies that the economic/financial instability brought about by corona virus pandemic

to the vulnerable people in Lafia, Nasarawa State, has a negative implication on their livelihood.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions were made:

1. Psychologists and experts in other relevant disciplines with their psychological services should be encouraged and supported to educate people on adaptive coping skills that could be adopted to thrive in the face of the difficulties that COVID-19 pandemic brought.
2. Every state in the country should adopt the idea conceived by the World Bank and Nigeria Government on the Nigeria COVID-19 Action Recovery and Economic Stimulus (NG-CARES) programme because it will go a long way in supporting the poor and vulnerable in the rural area thereby giving them sense of belonging and when proper supported as designed by the programme virtually within short period of time they will recover greatly from the effect of the pandemic. If every member of the society is engaging with health economic activities without much problems issues of kidnapping, robbery, theft, and other social vices will be reduced drastically.
3. Apart from the humanitarian services provided by the Federal Government every state government be encouraged to develop state-based humanitarian assistant just like what is now obtainable in Nasarawa State.

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