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Influence of corona virus disease (COVID-19) on spiritual well-being and insecurity among Nigerian citizens

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the influence of the coronavirus diseases (COVID-19) on spiritual-wellbeing and security among Nigerian citizens. A descriptive research design was adopted. Two hundred and forty-five (245) respondents were conveniently sampled. A self-developed (likert design) and validated questionnaire with reliability coefficient of .52 and .68 was used as data collection instrument. Data was collected with the help of six research assistants. Frequency count and simple percentages were used for the analysis of demographic characteristics while descriptive statistical analysis served as the statistical tool for data analysis. The results revealed that COVID-19 had great influence on spiritual well-being (Weighted mean = 2.92) and insecurity (Weighted mean = 3.09) among Nigerian citizens. The study concluded that COVID-19 significantly influenced the spiritual life of the Nigerian populace. It was also concluded that there was a breakdown of law and order as a result of the prolonged lockdown. COVID-19 caused tremendous human suffering and challenged the most basic foundation of societal well-being. It has affected human personal security. Joint efforts of religious bodies, civil society, the police or military, civil defense organisations and vigilante groups would serve a common purpose of bringing an end to insecurity crisis in Nigeria. Social work's role is to ensure that all people to have access to competent social protection systems. Social work provides social protection as a tradition of alleviating the impacts of insecurity, poor health, economics and social vulnerability and can help preserve basic standard of living for all. There is need for social workers to be involved with religious groups and institutions to ensure the social, emotional and spiritual well being of people.

KEY TERMS: COVID-19, corona virus disease, insecurity, lockdown, pandemic, Nigeria, religion, spiritual well-being

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INTRODUCTION

Nigerians like any other African countries are spiritual and religious. In the advent of the corona virus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, most Nigerians if not all could have resisted the stay-at-home order which restricted the generality of people from moving about and indeed from worshipping. The pandemic had negative impacts on religion. Services were cancelled and Sunday schools closed from worship services. A practical example however revealed that cluster of families gathered in house cells (house fellowship) to worship even with masks on, sanitizers applied, and social distancing observed. Time span was reduced to ensure families do not stay together for long during house cell fellowships. Religious adherents were observed to have offered prayers for an end to the pandemic while those infected were prayed for. This article presents results from a study of the influence of the coronavirus diseases (COVID-19) on spiritual-wellbeing and security among Nigerian citizens.

BACKGROUND

Religious worship

Social welfare wings of religious organizations suffered extra costs to provide disinfectants, face shields, patient monitors, food substances and other palliatives. This was done in collaboration with the Nigerian Interreligious Council (NIREC) which declared a season of prayer and fasting for the country. Worship centers were closed down because of the lockdown. The pandemic placed all religious activities on hold. Many worshippers abandoned services to abide by government restrictions for large groups in order to slow down the spread of the coronavirus pandemic. However, gathering lies at the very heart of religion. Therefore, the right to gather lies at the very heart of religious freedom. People frowned at the government restrictions because they believed it was extraordinary. Kali (2020) found that, the religious practices of hundreds of millions of people are undergoing profound challenges as a result of COVID-19. Religious leaders are prompted to appeal for safety precautions among followers but also to embrace spirituality in terms of dedication to prayers to confront the health, social and economic challenges ahead. Kali (2020) further reported that messages were sent by religious leaders who had regularly offered prayers and words of support to their communities to ease worries over the COVID-19 pandemic. Kali concluded that many of the world faithful have altered long-standing religious practices to avoid the spread of the new coronavirus. In line with the above, Salaudeen (2020) the head of the Nigerian Center for Disease Control (NCDC) that "COVID-19 is still a fight for life". It was affirmed that COVID-19 does not respect faith, gender, race, age, social status and other demographic realities. It is therefore needful for the religious leaders to play critical role in combating the effects of COVID-19 pandemic.

Security

Insecurity is an absence of protection or safety which is the core element of this study. Conceptualizing insecurity, it is a state of being prone or vulnerable to danger or threat of danger. Achumba, Ighomereho and Akpan-Raboro (2013) see insecurity as the state of being exposed to risks or anxiety. Life and properties are no longer safe because COVID-19 brought insecurity to life and property in Nigeria. The Nigerian Inspector General of Police (IGP) reported 717 cases of rape in the first five months of 2020. In the subsequent month (June 2020), six people were feared dead in one of the local governments in Nigeria. The lockdown created fear because of breakdown of law and order. In essence, the nature of changed rapidly at global level. Insecurity is something that many people struggle with. Omonijo (2017) found that people that are insecure deep-down feel that they are unworthy; but then, actions and words often have the opposite meaning. Insecurity increases when the past continues to become the future when people have not reformed their past fear or failures. Some school of thought said it is normal to have some levels of insecurity because it has come to stay with the man existence, but it is not always healthy to do so. It has become a major challenge within different countries in the post war era and it is more critical in the African societal context. Obasanjo (2020) highlighted post pandemic consequences as food and employment insecurity; change in pattern of living including traveling, innovation science and technology; digitalization and artificial intelligence; diversification of the economy and enhancement of export commodities. Obasanjo advised that Nigeria should get it right otherwise the nature of problems confronting Nigeria will lead to uncertainty, bleak economic downturn and pervasive insecurity. He further advised that security is prerogative duty of the government at all levels. Individuals can only act within the laws made and enforced by governments. Insecurity is one issue of communality among Nigerians. Boko Haram terrorists, bandits, herdsmen and farmer clashes, kidnapping, militancy, armed robbery have held Nigerians hostage in their father land. It is sad to note that security forces kill more Nigerians than COVID-19 in many parts of the country. Whereas, the community need to seek common grounds to facilitate common solution to insecurity in the land.

As at 16 April 2020, coronavirus had killed 12 people according to Health Ministry but the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) recorded evidence of 18 people killed by the law enforcers since the lockdown began on 30 March, 2020. These death cases were said to be extrajudicial; the cause of which were attributed to the call out of the police and army to enforce the law of variety of restrictions from gathering ranging from social, religious, academics and community meeting among others.

Action Fraud (2020) reported cybercrime that nearly 970,000 worth of fraud associated with corona virus scam between February and March 2020 most of these were associated with online ordering of goods such as face masks and hand sanitizers that never arrived and bogus door to door home testing kit scam. COVID-19 precipitated criminality and also brought the supply of fake drugs and medicines. These result in profiteering on the part of companies supplying scarce goods at exorbitant prices. Omonijo (2017) found that although no society is strictly immune against insecurity, the nature of and rates of occurrence as well as the negative implications on societal development varies from one society to another.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted descriptive survey research design with a population of 245 respondents purposively selected. The research was designed to answer these two questions:

1. How does Covid-19 influence spiritual well-being of Nigerian citizens?
2. Will Covid-19 significantly influence insecurity among Nigerian citizens?

Convenient sampling was adopted to access information from respondents. A self-developed, validated (likert design) questionnaire with a reliability of .52 and .69 titled: "Influence of COVID-19 on Spiritual well-being and Insecurity Questionnaire" (ICSIQ) with two sections was used as instrument for the study. Section A dealt with the demographic characteristics while section B elicited statements on variables for the study. It sought responses on: Strongly Agree = SA; Agree = A; Disagree = D and Strongly Disagree = SD with a rating scale of 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The researcher and six trained research assistants administered the questionnaire which was collected on the spot and was coded for data analysis. Simple percentages and frequency count was adopted for the demographic characteristics while descriptive statistical analysis was used to bring out the real beauty of the participants' responses which were also recorded in percentages and the weighted mean of each documented raw without any modification. The results were interpreted directly from the descriptive tables.

RESULTS

The demographic characteristics shows that 34 (13.9%) of the participants were within 20-30 years of age; 70 (28.6%) were within 31-40 years; 48 (19.6%) were within 41-50 years; 48 (19.6%) were within 51-60 years of age and 45 (18.4%) were above 60 years of age. Further, 194 (79.2%) were male and 51 (20.8%) were female. It was also revealed that 175 (71.4%) of the respondents were Christians; 67 (27.3%) were Muslims and 3 (1.2%) were unclassified religious believers. The result shows that 139 (56.7%) were private entrepreneurs; 76 (31.0%) were government employees; 6 (2.4%) were Artisans, and 24 (9.8%) petty traders. By state of origin, 120 (49.0%) of the respondents were from Oyo state, 21 (8.6%) from Ogun state, 3 (1.2%) from Kwara State, 6 (2.4%) from Edo State; 6 (2.4%) from Ondo State; 3 (1.2%) from Delta State; 12 (4.9%) from Ekiti State; 55 (22.4%) from Osun State; 5 (2.0%) from Abia State; 12 (4.9%) from Lagos State and only 2 (0.8%) from Akwa Ibom State. RQ1. How does Covid-19 influence spiritual well-being of Nigerian citizens?

Table 1: Influence of COVID-19 on spiritual well-being

s/n	COVID-19 and spiritual well being	SD	D	A	SA	\bar{x}	S.D
1	People had to reorganize small cell prayer meetings to prevent social contacts	6 2.4%	8 3.3%	146 59.6%	85 34.7%	3.27	0.64
2	The lockdown distorted weekly, daily and specialized prayer meetings	9 3.7%	23 9.4%	132 53.9%	81 33.1%	3.16	0.74
3	Social media are the last result for prayer meetings	21 8.6%	38 15.5%	91 37.1%	95 38.8%	3.06	0.94
4	Church closure hindered corporate prayers	20 8.2%	25 10.2%	133 54.3%	67 27.3%	3.01	0.84
5	Mosque closure distorted prayer sequence	42 17.1%	40 16.3%	111 45.3%	52 21.2%	2.71	0.99
6	Personal prayer lifestyle is grossly affected	68 27.8%	60 24.5%	87 35.5%	30 12.2%	2.32	1.01
Weighted mean = 2.92							

Key: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree

Table 1: shows the influence of COVID-19 on spiritual wellbeing. It shows that "People had to reorganize small cell prayer meetings to prevent social contacts" (\bar{x} =3.27) ranked highest by the mean score rating and was

followed in succession by “The lockdown distorted weekly, daily and specialized prayer meetings” ($\bar{x}=3.16$), “Social media are the last result for prayer meetings” ($\bar{x}=3.06$), “Church closure hindered corporate prayers” ($\bar{x}=3.01$), “Mosque closure distorted prayer sequence” ($\bar{x}=2.71$) and lastly “Personal prayer lifestyle is grossly affected” ($\bar{x}=2.32$) respectively.

RQ2: Will Covid-19 significantly influence insecurity among Nigerian citizens?

Table 2: Influence of COVID-19 on security

s/n	COVID-19 and insecurity	SD	D	A	SA	\bar{x}	S.D
1	Youths in some urban centers unleashed terror on innocent citizens because they cannot feed themselves during the lockdown	6 2.4%	5 2.0%	126 51.4%	108 44.1%	3.37	0.65
2	Lockdown spurred breakdown of law and order	11 4.5%	23 9.4%	131 53.4%	80 32.7%	3.14	0.76
3	Crime waves are on the increase because of COVID19	26 10.6%	20 8.2%	96 39.2%	103 42.0%	3.13	0.96
4	Restrictions of movement of essential workers may cause more medical and social problems	24 9.8%	8 3.3%	129 52.7%	84 34.3%	3.11	0.87
5	Communal life was threatened with letters of attacks from marauders	24 9.8%	31 12.7%	109 44.5%	81 33.1%	3.01	0.92
6	Future food security is highly threatened	30 12.2%	29 11.8%	111 45.3%	75 30.6%	2.94	0.96
7	Disruption of waste disposal system in the living environment constitute health and social problems	32 13.1%	22 9.0%	121 49.4%	70 28.6%	2.93	0.95
Weighted mean = 3.09							

Key: SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree

Table 2 shows the influence of COVID-19 on insecurity. It shows that “Youths in some urban centers unleashed terror on innocent citizens because they cannot feed themselves during the lockdown” ($\bar{x}=3.37$) ranked highest by the mean score rating and was followed in succession by “Lockdown spurred breakdown of law and order” ($\bar{x}=3.14$), “Crime waves are on the increase because of COVID-19” ($\bar{x}=3.13$), “Restrictions of movement of essential workers may cause more medical and social problems” ($\bar{x}=3.11$), “Communal life was threatened with letters of attacks from marauders” ($\bar{x}=3.01$), “Future food security is highly threatened” ($\bar{x}=2.94$), “Disruption of waste disposal system in the living environment constitute health and social problems” ($\bar{x}=2.93$).

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study revealed that COVID-19 greatly influenced spiritual well-being of the Nigerian people. In this study, 213 out of 445 respondents agreed that the lockdown distorted their daily weekly and specialized cooperate prayer meetings. It is quite interesting to note that only 117 agreed that their personal prayer lifestyle was grossly affected by the pandemic while 128 disagreed meaning that their personal prayer lifestyle was not in any way disrupted by the pandemic. The study established that COVID-19 had negative impact on security of people and properties generally. It was recorded in some parts of Nigeria that hoodlums threatened to attack various communities. This is in line with the outcome of this research where 189 respondents attested that acts of violence against lawful residents were actually carried out in places like Lagos and Ibadan respectively. Other Nigerian urban cities were not left out of the mayhem unleashed on innocent people especially in order to get money, loot properties and food substance at the peak of the pandemic. The result further revealed that more than 95% of respondents (234 out of 245) agreed that youths in urban centers unleashed terror on innocent citizens because they cannot feed themselves and also because they are daily income earners. In the same trend, it was recorded in this research that 111 respondents said the lockdown spurred the breakdown of law and order while 199 agreed that crime waves were on the increase. It is pertinent that there could be food insecurity or shortage in the nearest future. This is in line with the result that 186 respondents agreed that future food security is threatened across the globe. In this trend, Obasanjo (2020) also found that insecurity could be one of the post COVID-19 pandemic consequences in many parts of Africa. Obasanjo condemned the Nigerian government security architecture because it cannot give any individual any hope. Also, in line with this result, Selvaratnam (2020) found that there is an alarming rate of potential for sexual abuse cases and criminality to rise during and after the pandemic. There is the likelihood of

risk of safety threats from far and near. In this trend, Action Fraud (2020) found that cybercrime could also become a security threat now and in the future. Walsh (2020) found that COVID-19 precipitated criminality around the globe. Unemployment brought criminality and insecurity to a higher level in Nigeria.

IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Social work's role is to ensure that all people have access to competent social protection systems. Social work provides social protection as a tradition of alleviating the impacts of insecurity, poor health, economics and social vulnerability and can help preserve basic standard of living for all. There is need for social workers to be involved with religious groups and institutions to ensure the social, emotional and spiritual well-being of people. Further, social workers are core members of the health team who should support individuals and families especially during the stay-at-home period. Specific recommendations are:

1. Governments should ensure victims' needs and safety are considered to prevent untimely deaths and to enhance speedy recoveries.
2. There is the need to strengthen the police force and provide it with skills to prevent violence.
3. Infrastructure and services for psychological relaxation, stress reduction and enhanced physical activities should be provided to families and communities.
4. Social workers should be involved and be prepared to manage emergencies of COVID-19 magnitude. Academic curriculum should also reflect preparedness and management of disasters at all levels of social work trainings.
5. There is the need to research the psychological impact of social distancing and confinement.

CONCLUSION

The study concluded that COVID-19 significantly influenced the spiritual life of the Nigerian populace. It was also concluded that there was a breakdown of law and order as a result of the prolonged lockdown. Because Nigerians are hardworking, it became too difficult for them to adjust to sedentary and a bleak future. To reform and restructure security architecture, structure and arrangement must devolve more security responsibility on the community, local and state authorities. Efforts must be geared towards working out permanent solution that will move criminals from crimes and take away insecurity from the land. The issue of lockdown was because of the fear of spread of coronavirus. Notably and regrettably, by March 2020, security services enforcing the lockdown have killed more people than the coronavirus itself in many parts of Nigeria. It could be adjudged that COVID-19 caused tremendous human suffering and challenged the most basic foundation of societal well-being. It has affected human personal security. Joint efforts of religious bodies, civil society, the police or military, civil defense organisations and vigilante groups would serve a common purpose of bringing an end to insecurity crisis in Nigeria.

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