Covid-19 Pandemic and Its Implications for the Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria

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Abstract

This study sought to ascertain the COVID-19 Pandemic and its implications for the academic performance of secondary school students in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State. Secondary school plays a foundational role and serves as the gateway to tertiary education. What a student turns out to educationally largely depends on it. Unfortunately, secondary education in the time of COVID-19 is under threat as the lockdowns and shutdowns prompted by COVID-19 have kept so many students out of school, posing a serious threat to their education, health and safety. The scope of the research work is covering secondary schools in Jos North Local Government Area. The broad objective of the study was to examine the COVID-19 implications for secondary school performance in the study area and the specific objectives were to examine the extent of academic negligence suffered by secondary school students during the COVID-19 lockdown, examined the extent to which secondary school students were abused and neglected during the C0VID-19 lockdown and the extent to which the lockdown affected the digital literacy of the unprivileged secondary school students. The study used the qualitative methodology or approach. The research results or findings show that the COVID-19 pandemic and its implications for the academic performance of secondary school students in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State. It kept the students out of school and posed a serious

threat to their health and safety. Digital learning is highly recommended.

Keywords: COVID-19 Pandemic, Lockdown, Secondary School, Academic Performance, Academic Negligence.

INTRODUCTION

Secondary school plays a foundational role and serves as the gateway to tertiary education. What a student turns out to educationally largely depends on it. Unfortunately, secondary education in the time of COVID-19 is under threat as the lockdowns and shutdowns prompted by COVID-19 have kept so many students out of school, posing a serious threat to their health and safety. The radio and television programmes and online learning which many parents resorted to have not helped matters said a very educated man. Many students especially those in rural and remote areas have no access to radios and televisions and teachers and parents with the specialized skills to mediate distance and online lessons are in short supply. Besides, with the spiralling rate of infection, there is a danger that COVID-19 could destabilise secondary education in Nigeria if adequate care is not taken. It is in the light of these problems that the current study sought to examine the COVID-19 implications for secondary school performance in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State

To halt the spread and reduce the risk of infection, Nigeria like other nations across the world implemented a nationwide lockdown. Offices, factories, businesses, churches, mosques and schools were shut down with religious people live-streaming worship and offering services digitally, workers working from home and students learning through various e-platforms. So far the pandemic has spread to 210 countries and 2 international conveyances around the worlds¹ and has continued to rise and ravage the world, defying complete understanding and solutions, including the authorized use of Hydroxychloroquine and other remedies that have not been clinically tested according to². As of today, 15th Oct 2020, the confirmed cases have exceeded 38.5 million

while the no of deaths has now passed 1 million. In addition to staggering infections and deaths, the pandemic has created a lot of social and economic issues, including student debts, digital learning, food insecurity, and homelessness, as well as access to childcare, health care, housing, internet, and disability services³. What is more, the spread has also caused fear, and harm and raised a lot of concerns among citizens around the world.

During the outbreak of COVID-19, academic life was going on as normal in the secondary school sector. There was normal face-to-face learning. The teachers were delivering instructions in the classrooms with the prescribed syllabuses according to set timetables. But when this deadly enemy entered the equation, things took a sharp turn for the worse. The students were now compelled to learn online with all the attendant problems such as the unpreparedness of many teachers and parents to assist their children in remote/online learning, lack of access to the necessary technology, inadequate network and the internet, the inadequacy of the technological formats for children with special educational needs and economic difficulties. Therefore, the research work addresses the extent of academic negligence of secondary school students during the COVID-19 lockdown; to what extent have secondary school students been neglected; or abused during the COVID-19 lockdown? And how child abuse and other risks to which many students have been exposed in the circumstances⁴. And lastly, COVID-19 lockdown impacted the digital literacy of secondary school students? Constructivism learning theory is defined as the active construction of new knowledge based on a learner's prior experience. John Dewey is often cited as the philosophical founder of this approach⁵. Bruner and Piaget⁶ are considered the chief theorists among the cognitive constructivists, while Alghofaili⁷ are the major theorists among the social constructivists⁸. Research confirms that constructivism learning theory, which focuses on knowledge construction based on the learner's previous experience, is a good bet for e-learning because it ensures learning among learners⁹. The behaviourist school or theory sees learning as a change in observable behaviour caused by external stimuli in the environment¹⁰. John B. Watson devised methodological

behaviour, which rejected introspective methods and sought to understand behaviour by only measuring observable behaviours and events¹¹.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to expose to parents, school administrators, the government and the general public the various challenges faced by secondary students during the period of COVID-19 and assist humanity in the search for solutions to coping with secondary school studies. The study will shed more light on the importance of digital literacy and online education and inspire all to embrace e-learning and other distance learning strategies as ways to overcome the barriers imposed by COVID-19 and survive the crisis through the post-pandemic era. It will add to the existing literature on COVID-19 and it could pave the way for future research. The current study has identified a few gaps in the existing literature. The gap could be found in both the content and the geographical scope of the study especially no existing literature related to COVID-19 in secondary school students in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State. Previous studies did not specifically investigate how the new coronavirus impacted secondary school students. Also, the geographical location of the current study provides an interesting gap to fill.

BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF JOS, PLATEAU STATE, NIGERIA

Jos, town, capital of Plateau state is (elevation 4,250 feet [1,295 metres]) in central Nigeria. It lies on the Delimi River and near the source of the Jamaari River (called the Bunga farther downstream). Formerly the site of Geash, a village of the Birom people, the town developed rapidly after the British learned, about 1903, of vast tin deposits in the vicinity. Africans had long gathered the metal from the alluvial beds of the Delimi and other plateau streams. In 1905 mining was begun at Naraguta Hausawa (3.5 miles [6 km] north), a tin-working centre since the 18th century¹². The metal was sent by headload to the Benue River port of Loko (150 miles [240 km] southwest), where it was transshipped to Forcados in the Niger delta for export. The Bauchi Light Railway was built in 1914 to carry the tin from Jos and nearby Bukuru

to Zaria (114 miles [184 km] northwest) and thence by main rail line to Lagos; the extension of the standard-gauge railway from Port Harcourt in 1927 opened a more direct route to the Niger delta ports, and in 1957 the Bauchi Light Railway was closed¹³.

Again, mining for columbine became important during World War II, and in the early 1960s smelters were constructed near Jos. Beginning later in that decade, the country's economy became increasingly reliant upon the petroleum industry, and the importance of mining diminished. There are deposits of kaolin (clay used in making ceramics) associated with the tin fields, and they are also worked commercially. Other local enterprises include food processing, beer brewing, and the manufacture of cosmetics, soap, and furniture. Heavy industry produces crushed stone. Jos also is a centre for the construction industry and has several printing and publishing firms ¹⁴.

Historically, some Birom worked in the mines and lived in the town, by 1905 the mineral wealth had attracted to Jos large numbers of outsiders, including Hausa, Igbo, Yoruba, and Europeans. Sorghum, millet, and acha (a grain known as hungry rice) are the chief staple crops in the area, but neighbouring farmers also cultivate cash crops (yams, potatoes, cassava [manioc], corn [maize], and green vegetables) for the Jos market. Milk products are supplied by the dairy at Vom, 18 miles (29 km) south-southwest¹⁵.

Jos, with a high elevation and one of the coolest climates in Nigeria, has been a hill resort since the beginning of World War II. Many of its streets are wide and tree-lined. The Jos Museum (1952) houses examples of terra-cotta figurines produced by the Nok culture, a civilization at flourished in the area probably between 500 BCE and 200 CE; bronze, brass, wood, and pottery artefacts are also displayed. The museum operates (jointly with UNESCO) a school for museum technicians. The town has a zoo, a wildlife park, an open-air museum of traditional architecture, and an arboretum. The University of Jos, which includes a teaching hospital, opened in 1975, and the Federal School of Medical Laboratory Technology is located in the town. Jos is served by the public, private, and religiously sponsored general and specialized hospitals. It lies on the rail spur that joins the railroad to Port Harcourt,

378 miles (608 km) south-southwest, and has road connections with Lafia, Bauchi, Kaduna, and Zaria. An airfield is 2 miles (3.2 km) South Pop. (2016 EST) Urban agglom 925, 000¹⁷.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND EDUCATIONAL SECTOR OF JOS, PLATEAU STATE

Covid-19 Pandemic

The friction arising from actual or perceived differences or incompatibilities is said to be conflict. Coronavirus (COVID-19) has continued to spread across the world following the first infections in Wuhan city in the Hubei province of China in December 2019. As of 9th May 2020, over 280,000 coronavirus-related deaths had been registered globally, with more than 4 million laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases, portraying not only the alarming levels of the spread of the virus but also its severity¹⁸. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic on the 11th of March 2020. Given its geographical spread, the pandemic is projected to have devastating effects on the global economy. According to the IMF global economic Outlook, the world economy is projected to contract sharply by 3% in 2020 as a result of the pandemic. In the same vein, the Sub-Saharan African economy is expected to contract by 1.6% ¹⁹.

Although for most people, COVID-19 causes only mild illness, it can make some people very ill and even cause death as can be seen in the US, Russia, Brazil, Italy, Germany and other countries with high fatality rates. Those, especially at risk from the virus, include the aged and people with underlying health problems (such as high blood pressure, heart problems or diabetes). Yusuf has attributed the high level of the spread to the asymptomatic nature of some of the cases²⁰. Failure to identify and properly manage COVID-19 cases places more people at risk²¹. Given that there are as yet no proven remedies against the disease and since the numbers of infections and fatalities have continued to rise, people are advised not to let their guard down. Prevention remains the best protection²².

The latest threat to global health is the ongoing outbreak of the respiratory disease that was recently given the name Coronavirus

Disease 2019 (Covid-19). COVID-19 was recognized in December 2019. It was rapidly shown to be caused by a novel Coronavirus that is structurally related to the virus that causes severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). As in two preceding instances of the emergence of Coronavirus disease in the past18 years – SARS (2002 and 2003) and the Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS) (2012 to the present) - the Covid-19 outbreak has posed critical challenges for public health, research, and medical communities.

Educational Sector in Plateau State

We are the prime mover and the executive body charged with the role to ensure total adherence to the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC) mission, vision and the set policies governing the Universal Basic Education (UBE) programme in the whole of Plateau state. The UBE Programme is a nine (9) year basic educational programme, which was launched and executed by the government and people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria in 1999 to eradicate illiteracy, ignorance and poverty as well as stimulate and accelerate national development, political consciousness and national integration ²³.

Secondary Education in Jos, Plateau State, Nigeria

Secondary Schools in Jos Plateau State, there is a popular saying, "Education breeds confidence. Confidence breeds hope. Hope breeds peace."—Confucius. It is the desire of every aspirational parent to provide their children with hope through access to quality education. Quality education, however, is not cheap anywhere in the world. Parents who want their kids to have a good education are willing to make sacrifices for their wards. There are many good secondary schools in Plateau State and its environs for parents who want the best for their children. The quest for quality education and good schools in Jos and its environs has led to the establishment of some of the best schools in Secondary Schools in that area. If you are a parent living in Jos, Plateau Jos, some leading schools offer a quality learning experience that your kids can get in Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt and other places in Nigeria. These top schools in Jos and its environs can compete with other good

schools located in different parts of Nigeria. If you are a parent living in or outside of Jos and you're looking for a good school for your children within the Plateau, the list of best secondary schools below will give you an idea of what your options are. These are the schools we will be discussing in the blog post. Top 10 Best Secondary Schools in Jos Plateau State Hillcrest School, Jos Infant Jesus Academy Fatima Girls College Baptist High School, Jos Kent Academy, Jos Hosanna College, Jos Adonai Vine School Kings and Queen Academy White Diamonds Academy Aristocrats High School Top 10 Best Secondary Schools in Jos Plateau State Hillcrest School, Jos Hillcrest is a K-12th grade International Christian School with an American curriculum. The school was founded in 1942 as a boarding school for missionary children²⁴. Today a significant number of children come from Nigeria, but a good number come from other countries²⁵.

Secondary School

Secondary school is an educational institution where the second stage of the three schooling periods, known as secondary education and usually compulsory up to a specified age takes place. It follows elementary or primary education and is sometimes followed by University education. The concept of high school originated in Scotland and is also used particularly in North America and North Western England though the two types of school are far from synonymous. There are very many different types of secondary Schools, and the language used varies around the world. Children usually go to secondary school between the ages of 11 and 16 years, and end between the ages of 16 and 18 years, although there is considerable variation from country to country²⁶.

Secondary School Students

A student is a learner. This can be a learner who is studying at a secondary school or high school and a university or college. A secondary school student is a learner, student, pupil, or educated who is enrolled in an educational institution²⁷. Mary Webster defines a student as a person who attends school, college, or university. Again, it also

means a person who studies something; especially one who attends a school²⁸.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND IMPLICATIONS FOR ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN THE JOS LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA

Academic Performance

Academic performance or achievement is the extent to which a student, teacher or institution has attained their short or long-term educational goals. Completion of educational benchmarks such as secondary school diplomas and bachelor's degrees represents academic achievement²⁹. Academic performance is the measurement of student achievement across various academic subjects within environment. Academic performance has been defined to mean the knowledge gained which is assessed by marks by a teacher and/or educational goals set by Students and teachers to be achieved over a specific period. They added that these goals are measured by using continuous assessment or examination results. Academic performance also measures education outcome³⁰. It shows and measures the extent to which an educational institution, teachers and students have achieved their educational goals³¹. Academic performance is a measurable and observable behaviour of a student within a specific period. He further intensifies that it consists of scores obtained by a student in an assessment such as class exercise, class test, mid-semester, mock, examination and end-of-term or semester examination. The definitions given by the authors show that the definition of academic performance is based on measurable outcomes such as class exercise, tests, and examinations results³²

The implication of Academic Negligence

What is the extent of academic negligence of secondary school students during the COVID-19 lockdown? It was discovered that secondary school students especially the poor are neglected academically. There are little or no steps by the Local Government Area except for the State Government which organised online studies for

Secondary Schools Students. There is little concentration given to the Students and even in this, they confirm that it was to the Primary Pupils who were given textbooks and classes with strict adherence to COVID-19 rules. For example, a senior student affirms that they were neglected and left at the mercy of Television and Radio lessons which not all of them can afford it³³.

Negligence simply means failure to give needed care or attention. Academic negligence thus is failure to fill needed educational needs. It could be caused by ignorance as in the case of one who unwittingly breaches a duty of care and injures someone. Schools have to protect students from reasonably foreseeable risks of harm³⁴. Many secondary school students have been neglected most especially those in the rural areas as they cannot easily cope with virtual learning and to suppose that they would stay devoid of structured learning, with no impact on their development, can only be considered naïve at best³⁵. The pandemic has deprived students of academic support.

The implication of Child Abuse

Secondary school students have been neglected and abused during the COVID-19 lockdown! It was found that the Students encountered serious problems. Some have been abused sexually in other to get food on their tables and for livelihood. Child abuse is any behaviour that harms a child who is under 18. Note that abuse can take many forms. It can be physical, spiritual, sexual (a blood brother impregnated his sister) or emotional³⁶. Note that it is immaterial whether it is intentional or not. Once the treatment is unfair, cruel or violent, it is abuse. Note that abuse also includes neglect-what one fails to do. As this writer wrote in one of his books, abuse and neglect go hand-in-hand such that what abuse achieves by the commission, neglect achieves by omission³⁷. Putting students in unsupervised, dangerous situations, exposing them to sexual situations, or making them feel worthless or stupid are all forms of child abuse that can leave deep and lasting scars on students. Burlew confirmed that just as ignoring student's needs and leaving them hungry, unattended to and abandoned can result in dysfunctional behaviour and abuse³⁸.

The implication of Digital Literacy

COVID-19 lockdown impacted the digital literacy of secondary school students. The researcher discovered that digital literacy or competency in using technological tools was affected negatively rather than positively³⁹. This is because many secondary students were impacted negatively. After all, there was no teacher to guide them and so they utilized sites like pornographies and nude and free sex sites. The researcher also observed that even the wealthy some also cry for reopening of the Secondary Schools because the negative influences of the internet are devastating. Indeed, a student opines that only a few teachers are computer literate in their school talk more of the students who are not even allowed to come to school with handsets⁴⁰.

Literacy is defined as the ability to read and write. It also means competence or knowledge in a particular field⁴¹. Digital literacy, therefore, is competence in the use of technical tools. It is the ability to understand and use technology⁴². They further divided the various intellectual processes associated with digital literacy into three categories: (a) locating and consuming digital content, (b) creating digital content, and (c) communicating digital content. Digital literacy is the set of skills, knowledge and attitudes required to access digital information effectively, efficiently, and ethically⁴³.

The implication of Online Education

Online education is a general concept for teaching and learning online with the help of technological tools and platforms. Online education has been traced to distance education and the emergence of digital technologies that facilitate the efficient and reliable delivery of lectures, virtual classroom sessions, and other instructional materials and activities via the internet⁴⁴. The use of appropriate educational technologies increases accessibility to learning resources such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), and multiple learning approaches to meet the need of diverse learners⁴⁵. It has improved traditional teaching, making teachers facilitators, mentors and motivators, inspiring students to participate and learn.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Therefore, the worldwide lockdown of educational establishments again is going to ignite a major break in secondary school students' education; disruptions in internal assessments; and the annulment of public evaluations for credentials or their auxiliary by a substandard substitute. Because not all secondary school students are competent to go through online learning, they still need to be guided closely. Following the findings above the researcher recommends:

- 1. The researcher is recommending the enhancement of digital learning and literacy learning in ICT in all the secondary schools in Jos North Local Government Area. That we do not know how bad the increasing spread of COVID-19 will be in secondary education in Jos North L.G.A as well as in Plateau State, Nigeria and Africa in the coming months if not years. To avoid academic negligence the paper, therefore, recommends that there should be urgent training for teachers and students on how to continue with education through pandemics.
- 2. The research work aims at enlightening or recommending to the government, teachers, parents, society and students the need for digital learning. Training and workshops for teachers, students and to some extent parents should be intensified. Government should check all secondary schools to ensure they have up-to-date elibraries. Digital literacy and computer subject should be reinforced in our secondary curriculum. That despite Government announcements to encourage students to study at home, the desire and interest of Students have reduced. Students Spent more time watching TV and playing video/computer games. Indeed, while learning from home, the environment was not always conducive for academic work given by parents or online through the TV or Radios mediums that the entire family is at home
- 3. The researcher is making the above recommendations because there is negligence and illiteracy in digital learning in Jos North Local Government Area. More so godly values and morality are missing in the secondary schools' curriculum in which teachings of respect, upholding sexuality and sex education should be brought back in the

State and Nigerian Nation. There is a need to revive all of our distorted values. Teachers, students and other people caught abusing students should be disciplined and asked to face the law to serve as a deterrent to others. Training and workshops for teachers, students and to some extent parents should be intensified. Government should check all secondary schools to ensure they have up-to-date elibraries. Digital literacy and computer subject should be reinforced in our secondary curriculum. This is so because child maltreatment increased. Secondary Schools Students faced corporal punishment, and present with more aggressive and antisocial behaviours from their elders or seniors at home. Again, the Sexual exploitation of Secondary Schools Students increased and their rights were violated.

CONCLUSION

Secondary school plays a foundational role and serves as the gateway to tertiary education. What a student turns out to educationally largely depends on it. Unfortunately, secondary education in the time of COVID-19 is under threat as the lockdowns and shutdowns prompted by COVID-19 have kept so many students out of school, posing a serious threat to their health and safety. The radio and television programmes and online learning which many parents resorted to have not helped matters said a very educated man. Many students especially those in rural and remote areas have no access to radios and televisions and teachers and parents with the specialized skills to mediate distance and online lessons are in short supply. Besides, with the spiralling rate of infection, there is a danger that COVID-19 could destabilise secondary education in Nigeria if adequate care is not taken. Apart from the number of deaths recorded, its physical, psychological and moral effects on the populace must not be forgotten in a hurry. No wonder it is said that "no one who lives through Pandemic will ever forget it",46. For instance, an illness that separates a mother from a son or a son from a mother is rather strange. In this regard, if a mother contracts the virus, invariably all the members of the family are at risk. Who then takes care

of them? Thus in the education system, the teacher is separated from the student and vice versa.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to expose to parents, school administrators, the government and the general public the various challenges faced by secondary students during the period of COVID-19 and assist humanity in the search for solutions to coping with secondary school studies. The study will shed more light on the importance of digital literacy and online education and inspire all to embrace e-learning and other distance learning strategies as ways to overcome the barriers imposed by COVID-19 and survive the crisis through the post-pandemic era. It will add to the existing literature on COVID-19 and it could pave the way for future research. The current study has identified a few gaps in the existing literature. The gap could be found in both the content and the geographical scope of the study especially no existing literature related to COVID-19 in secondary school students in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State. Previous studies did not specifically investigate how the new coronavirus impacted secondary school students. Also, the geographical location of the current study provides an interesting gap to fill.

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