SECONDARY SCHOOLS' RESUMPTION AND SCHOOL COMMUNITY ADJUSTMENT: IMPLICATING THE NEW NORMAL IN COVID 19 PANDEMIC IN CROSS RIVER STATE

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Abstract

COVID-19 is a zoonotic disease, which is transferable from animal to human beings. Corona virus is highly virulent ,and its unprecedented speed of transmission from one person to another resulted to the rapid spread globally, thus causing the pandemic. Covid-19 pandemic impacted almost all facets of human endeavor, disrupted normalcy in both education and economic sectors, causing so much pain and stress to vulnerable individuals ,groups and systems. Some of the experiences in these notable sectors are discussed in this paper. One fact that is clear to educationists , economists, psychologists and among other stakeholders, is that there is always an aftermath of a disastrous event which could cause obvious shifts in many systems. It could be negative or positive. In the case of COVID-19, the devastation was unprecedented. Its negative impact left both physical and emotional injuries that need to be healed. Through desk research and researchers experience, this paper was written. However, the focus of this paper is to present the disruption in the educational sector as it affected school operations. The paper highlighted how the impact on the economic sectors influenced the shifts in the education system operations. The paper also explores some of the sustainable recovery strategies galvanized by some stakeholders to help countries and people mitigate the negative spillover effects of the covid-19 pandemic events on society.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, School operations, education and economic sectors, individuals and communities.

Introduction

COVID-19 pandemic destabilized the world's economy in diverse aspects. In particular, it affected the education and economic sectors. COVID-19 negatively affected business activities of many people and increased hardship, especially vulnerable ; youths and women who live on subsistence wages. During the pandemic, reports show that the Nigerian economy experienced some shifts in business and returns on investment. The same shift invariably impacted experiences in the education sector, because during the peak of COVID-19 schools remained shut and at post COVID-19 efforts at implementing the "new normal" modified the routine of schools and offices like banks and big shopping malls, this naturally led to issues of adjustment, adaptation and sustainable live practices among people. Economically, the cost of some essential commodities escalated while some goods were not available due to restrictions on international travels and cross border businesses. Livelihoods conditions were most impacted due to lockdown and curfews. Again, the hardship experienced was very severe for the most vulnerable groups that depend on street jobs for income. In particular are internally displaced persons living in camps, youths and women living in different difficult terrains and communities. Palliatives from Government and some Aid agencies were disbursed to alleviate

suffering but due to mismanagement by some individuals responsible for the distribution, the vulnerable were marginalized and denied access to the palliative items meant for them (Olawoyin, April21, 2021). Also those whose businesses depended on importation and exportation suffered deprivation due to border closure at the peak of the pandemic. Many who did not have any meaningful skill became helplessly dependent on anyone who cared to extend hand of charity. There was also an upsurge of criminality in the society; rise in rape cases and domestic violence was unprecedented, which increased the issue of insecurity and public safety. In the light of the above, authors of this paper consider that the COVID-19 experience should be taken as an eye opener. Thus there is need to chronicle the effects of the pandemic and intensify advocacy for recovery strategies leading to proactive efforts. As this may embolden individuals and communities alike towards surviving future pandemics and other unplanned natural hazards .Similar influence is expected on the Nigerian government and other concerned stakeholders with especially in the education and economic sub-sectors. Thus, the present paper set out to highlight some of such recovery strategies. These strategies if followed through would improve the economy and help Nigerians recover from the impact of COVID-19 pandemic and stay strong.

Statement of the problem

Schools are educational institutions, the agents for the implementation of society's curriculum. Also, through the school, socialization and human capital development is guaranteed for society. The society depends on the educational system for the continuous transmission of its culture, ideals, norms and values including the production of low, middle and high skilled labour for its workforce (Orji, 2021). This process was going on until the advent of COVID-19, which brought about shutting down of schools and the economy in general. Consequently, operation of schools was disrupted and shut down. There was much apprehension among education stakeholders, particularly about how teaching-learning activities would be managed without worsening or further spreading the virus. Some private schools that embarked on online teaching and learning realized the efficacy of online apps but the exorbitant cost needed to fund it made it not feasible. There was fear and apprehension among education stakeholders. The Nigerian Center for Disease Control (NCDC) and the World Health Organization (WHO) gave guidelines for prevention of spread of COVID-19 and this set the pace for the 'new normal' behaviour.

The already crisis-ridden Nigerian public education sector (Nwagwu, 2003) lacked the basic infrastructure and social support to foster adjustment of pupils and students (Orji, 2021). It became obvious that the state of infrastructure in the Nigerian educational system has not improved (Nwagwu, 2003). This is because the public schools are still lacking in basic infrastructure for teaching and learning. With COVID-19, the researchers noticed the lapses in the school system became very obvious, particularly as it relates to overcrowding caused by inadequate classrooms and space for healthy school activities and safety. Inadequacy of facilities and learning resources has been a characteristic feature of most public schools in Nigeria. Hence, the strain on the school system caused by COVID-19 pandemic has given a new narrative to be followed particularly as it concerns adjustment to social interactions, personal hygiene and school health. According to the Federal Ministry of Education (FME, 2006) most schools in Nigeria have not met the minimum safety standard that will amply ensure sustainable safe setting for proper academic activities as enumerated in the National School Health Policy.

Based on the above observations, there was need for social support from government and non-government agencies to foster suitable school environment to ensure continued teaching and learning. The Impact of COVID-19 on educational systems resulted in school closures, learning gaps, and the need to adapt, by adjusting from face-to-face classroom interaction to remote learning classrooms, particularly for higher education institutions. This was a serious challenge. The expected shift was hardly achieved by many public primary, secondary and tertiary schools during the COVID-19 era. However, in post-COVID-19 era, adaptation was more developed ,specially in the introduction and use of e-learning apps and low-tech resources,; tapes, radio broadcast etc. The use of social media links were growing means of information sharing and dissemination. However, most classrooms were still operating on face-to-face level of teaching and learning across all levels of education. The reason, of course, was not far from the challenges of funding, digital literacy and lack of infrastructural development.

Purpose of the study

The main purpose of the study was to examine school resumption and school community adjustment: implicating the new normal in Covid 19 Pandemic in Cross River State – Nigeria.

Specifically, the study sought to examine the relationship between:

1. School resumption preparation in tackling Covid 19 pandemic and the resultant spread of the diseases in Cross River State
2. Community preparation and handling the new normal and implication of Covid 19 pandemic in Cross River State
3. The level of readiness of school community relationship in coping spread of covid 19 pandemic diseases in Cross River State.

Research questions

1. In what ways do school resumption preparation in tackling Covid 19 pandemic relates to the resultant spread of the diseases?
2. In what way do community preparation and handling the new normal relates to the implication of Covid 19 pandemic?
3. In what way does the level of readiness of school community relates to coping of the spread of covid 19 pandemic diseases?

Statement of hypotheses

1. There is no significant relationship between school resumption preparation in tackling Covid 19 pandemic and the resultant spread of the diseases
2. There is no significant relationship between community preparation in coping with Covid 19 pandemic and the spread of the diseases
3. There is no significant relationship between the level of readiness of school community and coping of the spread of covid 19 pandemic diseases

Methodology

The research design adopted for this study was correlation design. This design is deemed appropriate because it involves accurate and objective collection of data by describing the existing phenomena as at the time of the study (Isangedighi, Joshua, Asim & Ekuri 2004). Thus, the design is appropriate for the study because it provides ample opportunity for the researchers to study the existing phenomena. The study area was Cross River State. Cross River is a state in South-South with 18 Local Government Areas and its Capital is in Calabar. Geographically, Cross River State occupies a total area of 20,156 square kilometers (7,782sq mi) and shares boundary with Benue State in the North, Ebonyi and Abia to the West, to the East by Cameroon and to the South by Akwa Ibom and Atlantic Ocean. The state had an estimated population of about 2.89 million people in 2016 (2006 Census) and 3.738 million in 2016 (population projection, 2016) with a density of 190 km^2 (480/sq mi). [Source: National Population Commission of Nigeria (web), National Bureau of statistics (web)]. It has coordinates of $5^0$45'N and $8^0$30'E and belongs to tropical rainforest belt with humid climate of about 1300 3000 mm rainfall and mean annual temperature of 30^0C. The population of the study consisted of all the teachers in all the public secondary schools in the three Education Zones of Cross River State in 2018/2019 academic session. The total population was 4929 teachers in 246 public secondary schools as presented in Table 1. The study adopted cluster and simple random sampling techniques. To obtain a representative sample for the study, cluster sampling technique was used first, to select the required number of schools. The population was divided into zones (clusters) namely: Calabar, Ikom and Ogoja Education Zones. Afterword, 10% was used to select 8, 9 and 7 schools from Calabar, Ikom and Ogoja Education Zone respectively. This same method was used to select the required number of teachers in each zone. Furthermore, a simple random sampling technique was employed to select the actual schools used in the study. To achieve this, names of all the schools in each zone were written on pieces of papers, mixed and selected, and schools whose name appeared were used for the study. The sample size consisted of 493 teachers in 24 schools (10%) selected from 4929 teachers in 246 public secondary schools in Cross River State. Therefore 212 teachers were selected from 8 schools in Calabar Zone, 156 from schools in Ikom and 125 from 7 schools in Ogoja zone totaling 493 teachers in 24 schools in the three (3) zones as presented in Table 2. The instrument used for data collection was tagged; "Secondary Schools' Resumption and School Community Adjustment" (SSRSCAQ) The questionnaire had two sections namely: Section A contains 36 items, 6 each and section B

which contained 12 items, making it a total of 48 items. Section A measured the independent variables while section B measured the dependent variables. The questionnaire items had four options namely: strongly agree (SA), agree (A), disagree (D) and strongly disagree (SD).

The instrument was subjected to face and content validity. This was achieved by reading the construct and comparing to the stated objectives and hypotheses experts in test and measurement. This was to ensure that items were clear, concise and not ambiguous, and relevant to elicit required data to test the hypotheses. To ensure the reliability of the instrument a trail test was conducted where the questionnaires were administered to 50 teachers in two schools in Akpabuyo and two schools in Odukpani Local Government Areas, outside the proposed sampled schools. The reason for using 50 teachers was that, considering the sample size used in the study, the researchers believed 50 was appropriate. Cronbach's alpha reliability test method was adopted to achieve the internal consistency. The reliability coefficient obtained yielded 0.79 to 0.89 for sub variables of independent variables and 0.92 for dependent variables. This shows that the instrument was reliable.

TABLE 1
Population distribution of teachers in public secondary schools in the three education zones of Cross River State

S/N	Education Zone	No. of Secondary Schools	No. of Teachers
1	Calabar Education Zone	81	2118
2	Ikom Education Zone	94	1562
3	Ogoja Education Zone	71	1249
	Total	**246**	**4929**

Source: Planning, Research and Statistics Department, Cross River State Secondary Education Board, 2018.

TABLE 2
Sample distribution of teachers in public secondary schools in the three education zones of Cross River State (10%)

S/N	Education Zone	No. of Schools	No. of Teachers
1	Calabar Education Zone	8	212
2	Ikom Education Zone	9	156
3	Ogoja Education Zone	7	125
	Total	**24**	**493**

Presentation of results

Ho1: There is no significant relationship between school resumption preparation in tackling Covid 19 pandemic and the resultant spread of the diseases

TABLE 3
Regression results of school resumption preparation and Covid 19 spread.

	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	30.327		22.745	.000
School resumption preparation	.546	.372	8.815	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Covid 19 spread

Note: R = .372; R^2 = .138; F(1,484) = 77.709*; P = .000

Table 3 indicated that the F-ratio obtained in establishing the prediction of school resumption preparation and Covid 19 spread is 77.71 ($p<.05$). This was seen to be significant since the obtained p-value, (.000) is less than .05 level of significance used in the study.

With these results, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant prediction of school resumption preparation and Covid 19 spread was rejected. It was alternately accepted that there is significant prediction of school resumption preparation and Covid 19 spread. The R which is the correlation coefficient of the independent and the dependent variable was obtained to be .37 ($p<.05$), which is significant.

TABLE 4

Regression results of community preparation and coping with Covid 19 spread

	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	32.924		25.553	.000
Community preparation	.437	.307	7.098	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Coping with Covid 19 spread

Note: R = .307; R^2 = .094; F(1,484) = 50.382*; P = .000

Table 4 showed that the F-ratio obtained in establishing the prediction of community preparation and coping with Covid 19 spread is 50.382 ($p<.05$). This was seen to be significant since the obtained p-value, (.000) is less than .05 level of significance used in the study. With these results, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant prediction of community preparation and coping with Covid 19 spread was rejected. It was alternately accepted that there is significant prediction of community preparation and coping with Covid 19 spread.

The R which is the correlation coefficient of the independent and the dependent variable was obtained to be .31 ($p<.05$), which is significant. This indicated significant relationship between community preparation and coping with Covid 19 spread. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is .09 indicating that up to 9 percent of variance in community preparation is explained by coping with Covid 19 spread.

TABLE 5

Regression results of level of readiness of school community and tackling Covid 19 spread

	Unstandardized Coefficients B	Standardized Coefficients Beta	T	Sig.
(Constant)	28.580		19.515	.000
Level of readiness of school community	.620	.386	9.215	.000

a. Dependent Variable: tackling Covid 19 spread

Note: R = .386; R2 = .149; F(1,484) = 84.917*; P = .000

Table 5 indicated that the F-ratio obtained in establishing the prediction of level of readiness of school community and tackling Covid 19 spread is 84.917 ($p<.05$). This was seen to be significant since the obtained p-value, (.000) is less than .05 level of significance used in the study. With these results, the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant prediction of level of readiness of school community and tackling Covid 19 spread was rejected. It was alternately accepted that there is significant prediction of level of readiness of school community and tackling Covid 19 spread. The R which is the correlation coefficient of the independent and the dependent variable was obtained to be .39 ($p<.05$), which is significant.

This indicated a significant relationship between level of readiness of school community and tackling Covid 19 spread. The coefficient of determination (R^2) is .15 indicating that up to 15 percent of variance in tackling Covid 19 spread is explained by level of readiness of school community.

Discussion of findings

The discussion of the findings was carried out based on the results of the tested hypotheses. Therefore, the findings of the study revealed that there is a significant relationship between school resumption preparation and Covid 19 spread in Cross River State, Nigeria. These imply that, the more they prepare the more they reduce the spread of Covid 19.

School resumption preparation and Covid 19 spread

The study revealed that school community preparation for resumption is a prerequisite for reopening of schools with the intention of curbing the spread of Covid 19 pandemic. This findings is supported by the views of (Nwagwu 2023) and (UN 2020) who agreed that observing covid 19 safety protocols are required before and during school resumption as the ultimate goal would be to reduce the spread of the pandemic.

Community preparation and coping with Covid 19 spread

The findings of the study revealed that, there was a significant relationship between school resumption preparation and Covid 19 spread. The analysis and result of hypothesis one as presented in Table 4 showed that a calculated F-value was 77.709 $p < .05$, 1,484 df.

The finding was in line with Simmons (2010) who observed that school resumption preparation and Covid 19 spread

Level of readiness of school community in tackling Covid 19 spread

Also, Nwagwu (2003) Olawoyin (2022) and OECD (2020) were in aggrement that the level of readiness of school community reduces the spread of Covid 19 Pandemic. The findings also recommended strict observance to the protocol of Covid 19 of physical distance, used of noise mask, maintaining high level personal hygiene and avoiding overcrowded places. The findings were also in leak with views of Onyekwena and Ekereuche (2020), Ogunwale Oladele, Adedeji and Afolabi (2020) that for Covid 19 free school session the community must be ready to comply with the protocol restricting its spread.

Conclusion

For school safety and disease free in students, teachers interaction is advisable for the school and the community to appreciate the seriousness of Covid 19 infections and its attendance effect in teaching and learning. The vitual option of classroom interaction may be explored now than ever before to reduce physical contact of getting in touch with infected persons.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made

1. Schools preparing for resumption must adhere strictly to the protocol of Covid 19 which include physical distances,
2. Frequent use of noise mask,
3. Avoiding overcrowded places,
4. Frequent use of hand sanitizers,
5. Maintaining personal hygiene and
6. Isolation if infected by the Covid 19
7. Subject ones to testing center
8. Exploring and using virtual means of classroom interaction

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