

The Effect of Covid 19 Lockdown on the Performance of Health Care Employees in Enugu State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the effect of the COVID-19 lockdown on the performance of healthcare employees in Enugu State. The study area covered all the workers of the Ministry of Health in Enugu State. The population of the Study constituted of all the 262 workers of the Ministry of Health. The whole number of 262 was used due to the small population. The instruments used in data collection were questionnaires, oral interviews, books, journals, magazines, newspapers, records from the Ministry of Education, pamphlets, and other publications. All these form parts of primary and secondary sources of data. The data collected from the questionnaire were presented in a frequency tables, simple percentage was used for analysis of data gotten from the respondents while chi-square was used for testing of the hypothesis at 0.5 level of significance, the findings of the study revealed that though COVID 19 lockdown helped to stop the spread of corona virus, it also negatively impacted on the performance of health care employees in Enugu State Ministry of Health, as it caused serious economic hardship with its attendant increase in prices of food items, Nigerians, health care employees inclusive suffered untold hardship during COVID 19 Lockdown. Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made; Nigeria government should work and put facilities in place for digitalized economy, where one should easily work from home and earn his income, the state and federal government should intensify efforts to fight corruption at all level, as corruption had been an obstacle militating against effective implementation of government development policies and program, the government and the masses should always anticipate economic crisis, and make plans ahead to tackle it.

Keywords: COVID-19, Lockdown, Performance, Preventive Polices

INTRODUCTION

On the 1st of December 2019 in the city of Wuhan, China, the world awoke to the discovery of a new strain of the coronavirus family that attacks the upper respiratory system of humans, causing acute pneumonia which damages the lung and eventually kiss the host [1]. The effect of the pandemic has been devastating [2]. Data from Johns Hopkins University indicates that, as of 25th August 2020, over 23.7 million people have been infected and more than 813,000 have died from the virus globally [3]. Nigeria recorded its first case on the 27th of February, 2020, and as of 25th August, 2020, data released by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) confirmed that 52,548 people contracted the virus in the country, with 1,004 confirmed deaths [4]. Hospital and medical facilities have been stretched beyond limits. Like in other countries, Nigeria has to set up makeshift isolation and care centers to attend to people infected with the virus [5]. The medical community, acting as frontline workers, has been affected by the spread of the virus; and as in the case of other countries, a significant percentage of casualties are medical personnel [6]. Apart from the human capital costs, there have also been monumental economic losses [7]. To mitigate the spread of the virus, the Nigerian government had to close its national borders, impose restrictions on flights in and out of the country, and implement a total lockdown in selected states and cities across

the country [8]. Not only have these measures disrupted supply chains across sectors of the economy and restricted the movement of humans, but they have also resulted in untold hardship for most households [9]. However, notwithstanding these hardships caused by the COVID-19 lockdown, it is argued that these preventive and management strategies of the dreadful COVID-19 pandemic, to a very great extent, achieved the expected result, most especially in the health sector which is at the front-line of fighting assiduously the Coronavirus that had become a global threat [10]. To curtail the incidence and spread of COVID-19, Nigeria government placed restriction on movement and emphasized social distancing [11]. In some cases, there was a total lockdown leading to the cancellation of events, flights, and virtually everything that requires social, official, and religious gatherings; all these were aimed at reducing the spread of the virus [12]. On the other hand, the health sector was the most affected by the dreaded virus as many of the health care personnel had lost their precious life in fighting and curbing the spread of the virus, amidst shortage of medical equipment, inadequate funding, shortage of manpower, and unwillingness of the masses to comply with the directive of the government [13]. Notwithstanding, the health sector need to be applauded for their selfless services in fighting and saving the nation from the deadly hands of the COVID 19 pandemic, their relentless efforts had yielded the remarkable success in reducing and preventing the spread of the virus, however, this monumental success wouldn't have been possible or easy without the antecedent preventive measures of COVID 19 lock down by the Federal government [14]. It is based on this foregoing background that the researcher seeks to investigate the effect of the COVID-19 lockdown on the performance of health care personnel in Enugu State [15]. Specifically, the study sought to: ascertain the effect of the COVID-19 lockdown on the job performance of health care employees in Enugu State, determine factors militating against the performance of health care employees during the COVID-19 lockdown in Enugu State [16].

Statement of the Problem

With the incidence of the first case of coronavirus on 27th of February, 2020, the Nigerian government had come up with stringent measures in fighting the spread of the dreaded virus that had become a global threat [17].

The health sector was on the frontline in fighting the sporadic spread of the Corona virus and consequently the most affected sector by the dreaded virus as many of the health care personnel had lost their precious life in fighting and curbing the spread of the virus, amidst shortage of medical equipment, inadequate fund, shortage of manpower, and unwillingness of the masses to comply with the directive of the government, and the politicization of the COVID 19 Pandemic by unscrupulous politicians for personal gains [18]. It is based on these observed phenomenal problems that the researcher wishes to carry out empirical studies on the effect of COVID 19 Lockdown on the performance of health care employees in Enugu State [5].

LITERATURE REVIEW

Covid-19

COVID-19 disease is defined as an illness caused by a novel coronavirus now called severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which was first identified amid an outbreak of respiratory illness cases in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. It was initially reported to the WHO on December 31, 2019. On January 30, 2020, the WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a global health emergency [19]. On March 11, 2020, the WHO declared COVID-19 a global pandemic, its first such designation since declaring H1N1 influenza a pandemic in 2009 [20]. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered corona virus. Most people infected with the COVID-19 virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. Older people and those with underlying medical problems like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer are more likely to develop serious illness [21].

According to [4], Scientists are still learning about the disease, and think that the virus began in animals. At some point, one or more humans acquired infection from an animal, and those infected humans began transmitting infection to other humans [22]. The disease spreads from person to person through infected air droplets that are projected during sneezing or coughing [23]. It can also be transmitted when humans have contact with hands or surfaces that contain the virus and touch their eyes, nose, or mouth with the contaminated hands. COVID-19 was first reported in China, but it has now spread throughout the world [24].

With a population of over 200 million people, Nigeria is one of the most populous black nations worldwide. As with the rest of the world, Nigeria dealt with the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic in a somewhat different fashion [25]. On Feb 27, 2020, the first official case of COVID-19 in Nigeria was announced. The patient was an Italian citizen who had recently arrived in Lagos from Europe and who, a few days later, tested positive for the disease [26]. In Ogun state, a neighboring state to Lagos, another patient was identified and was discovered to have been in contact with the first patient [27]. Since then, the situation has developed with more cases occurring, regardless of measures initiated by the state and federal government to combat the virus and return to normalcy [28]. As of April 22, there were 873 confirmed cases, 197 recoveries, and 28 deaths [29].

COVID 19 Lockdown

The spread of the virus encouraged social distancing, which led to the shutdown of financial markets, corporate offices, businesses, and events [30]. The lockdown, imposed on 30 March in Lagos, neighbouring Ogun state, and

the capital, Abuja, meant that many businesses were closed as people were required to stay indoors, except for essential journeys. Markets were allowed to stay open for limited hours [31].

According to Anietie Ewang, a Nigerian researcher at Human Rights Watch, millions of Nigerians observing the COVID-19 lockdown lack the food and income that their families need to survive [32]. The lockdown does not apply to those providing essential services, such as food distributors and retailers, including market stalls selling food and groceries, which the government has said can operate for four hours every 48 hours [33]. The lockdown, however, prevented many Nigerians working in the informal sectors from traveling to work or conducting their business. Local food vendors and traders have expressed fears over their ability to feed their families during the lockdown, with their daily earnings their only source of sustenance [34]. An increase in food prices as a result of the lockdown also means that many cannot stock up on necessities [35].

Shops selling non-food items remained closed in Abuja, and most government offices were not open for business. Restrictions on interstate travel have made it difficult for some business owners who commute between the capital and neighbouring states [36].

Government adopting Preventive Policies.

Preventive policies are a major shift in resources from the delivery of reactive public services to solve acute problems to the prevention of those problems before they occur [37]. The Nigerian government has taken numerous health, social, and economic measures to cushion the impact of COVID-19. However, some of the policy responses have weaknesses and, taken together, are not commensurate with the magnitude of the problem [38]. Prevention represents the most important social policy agenda in modern history, but governments do not know how to take it forward [39]. In the name of prevention, the UK and Scottish Governments propose to radically change policy and policy-making across the whole of government. Their deceptively simple definition of 'prevention policy' is: a major shift in resources, from the delivery of reactive public services to solve acute problems, to the prevention of those problems before they occur [40].

WHO declared COVID-19 a pandemic on March 11, 2020, and instituted essential measures for prevention and confrontation. They included hand washing with soap and water whenever possible and alcohol gel use in situations where access to water and soap is not possible [41]. They also recommended avoiding touching the eyes, nose, and mouth, and protecting people around them when sneezing or coughing, with the adoption of a cough etiquette, by using a flexed elbow or disposable handkerchief. Moreover, the WHO indicated maintaining social distancing (minimum of one meter), avoiding crowding, and using a mask in case of flu or infection by COVID-19, or if a health professional is caring for suspected/infected patients [42].

In Nigeria, various measures – championed by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), the National Assembly, the Organized Private Sector under the aegis of the Nigerian Private Sector Coalition Against COVID-19 (Private Sector Coalition) and other key market players – have been put in place, while others being developed, to cushion the negative impact of the Corona virus on businesses, households and the larger economy. These measures include special intervention funds, credit support facilities, regulatory forbearance, and tax reliefs [43].

Performance

Performance is now a very popular word within any discussion of public management. Generally, the term is used to indicate that measurement of results (outputs/outcomes) and development of incentives for individuals and agencies have, in some way, been brought together. The responses on how to enable performance fell broadly under three headings: appointment and promotion arrangements; retention of competent staff; and managerial approaches entailing the use of specific targets with linkages to performance regimes in the public sector. Selecting the right staff in the first place is an absolute precondition for subsequent performance. Civil servants are likely to be as motivated by promotion and by recognition from their peers and the public as by financial rewards. The use of fixed-term position-specific contracts can be a tool to increase incentives for performance within a career-based system [44]. The Federal Government has designed a performance management system for its workers for effective service delivery. The initiative, which aims to entrench accountability for resource utilization and results delivered, is driven by the office of the Head of Service of the Federation, Federal Civil Service Commission, and Ministry of Budget and National Planning, with technical support from the Bureau of Public Service Reforms [45]. The performance indicator is a tool that we will use to calibrate what is expected. Before the appraisal period, there must have been a conscious, structured agreement between the employee and the employer [46]. Performance management is arguably central to employee performance and organizational efficiency and effectiveness. This assertion is based on the understanding that performance management has the potency of engendering higher levels of performance in organizations through the stimulation and direction of employees along the path of goal accomplishment [47].

Theoretical Framework

Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) Theory

[48], Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) Theory is one of the oldest social science theories. It originated in communication to explain how an idea or product gains momentum and spreads through a specific population or

social system. The end result of this diffusion is that people, as part of a social system, adopt a new idea, behavior, or product. Adoption means that a person does something differently than they had previously. The key to adoption is that the person must perceive the idea, behavior, or product as new or innovative. It is through this that diffusion is possible [49]. There are five established adopter categories; researchers have found that people who adopt an innovation early have different characteristics from people who adopt an innovation later. Based on this model, there are five strategies used to appeal to the different adopter categories: *Innovators* - These are people who want to be the first to try the innovation. They are venturesome and interested in new ideas. *Early Adopters* - These are people who represent opinion leaders. They enjoy leadership roles and embrace change opportunities. *Early Majority* - These people are rarely leaders, but they do adopt new ideas before the average person. That is, they typically need to see evidence that the innovation works before they are willing to adopt it. *Late Majority* - These people are skeptical of change, and will only adopt an innovation after it has been tried by the majority. *Laggards* - These people are bound by tradition and are very conservative. They are very skeptical of change and are the hardest group to bring on board.

Empirical Review

[50], Examined the COVID-19 pandemic and the Ethiopian public administration: responses and challenges. The study used secondary and primary datasets and content analysis. The study shows that the Ethiopian government/civil service predominantly uses the top-down institutional approach. The study found that the unresolved socio-economic and politico-administrative problems and the cultural contexts are significantly constraining the capacity of public administration and civil service to respond to the pandemic. The study concluded that the inadequate behavioral change was significantly constraining the capacity of the government to respond to the pandemic and has disrupted the economic, social, and political context in Ethiopia.

[51], investigated the effect of COVID-19 parameters and occupational stress factors on employee performance in the agricultural research sector. A research instrument, a survey questionnaire, was used. The study found that the COVID-19 parameters workplace isolation, lack of communication, family distractions, role overload, and occupational stress factors, such as role ambiguity, role conflict, career, and job-control, are statistically significant and are good predictors of performance. There are no significant gender differences observed, the post-hoc comparisons reveal significant age group differences, with the group of 20-30-year employees experiencing more stress. The study recommended that organizations should develop strategies on remote working on a long-term basis to mitigate employee stress and enhance performance.

[52], investigated the links between workplace measures implemented in response to COVID-19 and the mental health and work performance of employees in Japan. The study used a cross-sectional study of a sample from a cohort study of full-time employees. Participants (n = 1448) completed an online self-report questionnaire on March 19-22, 2020. Multiple linear regression was conducted to ascertain their fear of and worry associated with COVID-19, psychological distress, and work performance. The study found that workplace measures may promote and maintain the mental health and work performance of employees during the COVID-19 epidemic. The study concluded that the positive association between the number of measures and fear and worry about COVID-19 may reflect increased awareness about COVID-19 among employees, resulting from taking the measures.

[53], Conducted research on the impact of COVID-19 on education and on the well-being of teachers, parents, and students. The objective of the study was to explore and describe the concerns of students, parents, and teachers related to the circumstances caused by social isolation, and the perspectives of teachers and parents with regard to remote or online learning. The study adopted the qualitative research design. For data collection, semi-structured interviews were used, which were conducted with (N = 13) parents and (N = 11) teachers. Study participants are an active part of pre-university public institutions within (n = 14) municipalities from (n = 7) regions of Kosovo. The study found that the new circumstances created due to the spread of COVID-19, including changes in education, have caused a number of concerns among students, parents, and teachers in Kosovo. The study concluded that the teachers had no previous experience in conducting remote or online learning. The teachers participating in the study stated that they use a certain format for the implementation of lessons, following a similar structure to the implementation of the online format through which students have an active role during learning. The recommended that the readiness and motivation of teachers be improved to enhance their knowledge and skills that are needed to advance the quality of education, which can facilitate the creation of opportunities for the development of digital education.

[54], investigated the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on education. The study collected data through structured questionnaires administered to 200 respondents, that consist of teachers, students, parents, and policy makers selected from different countries. The study revealed that COVID-19 has adverse effects on education, learning disruptions, and decreased access to education and research facilities, Job losses, and increased student debts. The study also found that many educators and students relied on technology to ensure continued learning online during the coronavirus pandemic. The study concluded that online education was hindered by poor

infrastructure, including network, power, inaccessibility, and unavailability issues, and poor digital skills. The study recommended that all educational institutions, educators, and learners adopt technology and improve their digital skills in line with the emerging global trends and realities in education.

[55], examined the effect of COVID-19 on education in Ghana. The study employed the descriptive and explanatory design; questionnaires, in addition to library research, were applied in order to collect data. Primary and secondary data sources were used, and data were analyzed using the chi-square statistical tool at 5% level of significance, which was presented in frequency tables and percentages. The respondents under the study were 100 teachers and students of selected Senior High Schools (SHS) in the Tamale metropolitan area of the northern region of Ghana. The study found that the COVID-19 pandemic has a significant impact on education in Ghana; schools want resources to reconstruct the loss in education through the epidemic. The study concluded that the programme of activities must include planning for the impacts on the demand for education and the ability of the Ministry to supply education. The study recommended that ministry of education should observe social distancing.

METHODOLOGY

The study area covered all the workers of the ministry of Health in Enugu State. Population of the Study constituted of all the 262 workers of the ministry of health. The whole number of 262 was used due to small population. The instrument used in data collection were questionnaire, oral interview, book, journals, magazines, newspapers, records from ministry of education, pamphlets and other publications. All these form parts of primary and secondary sources of data. The data collected from the questionnaire were presented in a frequency tables, means scores and percentages were used in the analysis and tested using chi-square (χ^2).

PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

Research Question 1

Table 1: The effects of COVID 19 lock down on the job performance of health care employees in Enugu State

C OVID 19 lockdown and the performance of health care employeesin Enugu State	Frequency	Percent
COVID 19 lockdown restricted the movement of people which helped reduced the spread of the virus and invariably enhanced performance of health care workers	50	19.08
COVID 19 lockdown helped put less pressure on the few available health facilities, this also helped improved health care employeesjob performance	48	18.32
COVID 19 lockdown discouraged social gathering thus making the people conscious of the spread of the virus invariably making the to comply with sensitization campaign by health care workers	46	17.55
COVID 19 lockdown promoted personal hygiene which helped reduced COVID 19 spread, and also reduced the workload on health care workers	54	20.61
The lockdown encouraged and motivated health care employeesas they had to contend with only few infected victims	64	24.42
Total	262	100.0

Source: Researcher, 2024

From the finding of table 1, 19.08% of the respondents were of the opinion that COVID 19 lockdown restricted the movement of people which helped reduced the spread of the virus and invariably enhanced job performance of health care workers, 18.32% of the respondents were of the opinion that electronic COVID 19 lockdown helped put less pressure on the few available health facilities, this also helped improve health care employees job performance, 17.55% of the respondents concurred that COVID 19 lockdown discouraged social gathering thus making the people conscious of the spread of the virus invariably making them to comply with the sensitization campaign by health care workers, 20.61% of the respondents agreed COVID 19 lockdown promoted personal hygiene which helped reduced COVID 19 spread, and also reduced he workload on health care workers, while 24.42% of the respondents concurred that COVID 19 lockdown encouraged and motivated health care employees as they had to contend with only few infected victims. The findings of the table therefore revealed that electronic record management has significant positive effect on the performance of Enugu State University of Science and Technology and Institute of Management and Technology.

Research Question 2

Table 2: factors that militate against the performance of health care employees during COVID 19 lockdown in Enugu State

Factors that militate against the performance of health care employees during COVID 19 lockdown	Frequency	Percent
High cost of food items	60	22.90
High cost of medical consumable	47	17.93
Politicization of the COVID 19 by unscrupulous politician	52	19.84
Inadequate fund for procurement of necessary health facilities	51	19.47
Lack of support from the government	52	19.84
Total	262	100.0

Test of Hypotheses

The hypotheses were tested using the chi-square statistical tool

Hypothesis I

H₀: COVID 19 Lockdown has no positive significant effect on the job performance of health care employees in Enugu State

Table 3 was used for testing hypothesis I

COVID 19 lockdown and the performance of health care employees in Enugu State	Frequency	Percent
COVID 19 lockdown restricted the movement of people which helped reduced the spread of the virus and invariably enhanced performance of health care workers	50	19.08
COVID 19 lockdown helped put less pressure on the few available health facilities, this also helped improved health care employees job performance	48	18.32
COVID 19 lockdown discouraged social gathering thus making the people conscious of the spread of the virus invariably making the to comply with sensitization campaign by health care workers	46	17.55
COVID 19 lockdown promoted personal hygiene which helped reduced COVID 19 spread, and also reduced the workload on health care workers	54	20.61
The lockdown encouraged and motivated health care employees as they had to contend with only few infected victims	64	24.42
Total	262	100.0

Table 4: Chi Square table for testing the hypothesis

O	E	(O-e)	(O-e) ²	$\frac{(O-e)^2}{E}$
50	52.4	-2.4	5.76	0.11
48	52.4	-4.4	19.36	0.37
46	52.4	-6.4	40.96	0.78
54	52.4	1.6	2.56	0.04
64	52.4	11.6	134.56	2.57
262				3.57

Table value = 5.991, calculated value = 1.24

Decision: Since the calculated value (3.57) which is less than the table value (5.99), the H₀ (null hypothesis) is accepted. This implies that COVID 19 lockdown has no positive effect on the performance of health care employees in Enugu State

Summary of the findings

The findings of the study revealed a calculated value of 3.57 which is less than the table value of 5.99. The study revealed that though COVID 19 lockdown helped stopped the spread of corona virus, it negatively impacted on the performance of health care employees in Enugu State Ministry of Health, as it caused serious economic hardship with its antecedent increased in food items, Nigerians, health care employees inclusive suffered untold hardship during COVID 19 Lockdown.

Discussion of findings

From the finding of table 1.2 the calculated value (3.57) which is less than the table value (5.99), the H₀ (null hypothesis) is accepted. This implies that COVID 19 lockdown has no positive effect on the performance of health care employees in Enugu State. The finding of the table above is in line with the assertions of [56], that millions of Nigerians observing the COVID-19 lockdown (health care employees inclusive) lack the food and income that their families need to survive, and this will definitely negatively affect their performance. In this same vein, [37] noted that increase in food prices as a result of the lockdown also meant that many cannot stock up necessary food items essential for survival. This is an indication that Nigerians suffered untold hardship during the COVID 19 lockdown, and this to a very great extent affected the performance of health care employees who are at the frontline of fighting the dreaded Corona Virus.

CONCLUSION

The following conclusion were drawn from the findings of the study, though COVID 19 lockdown helped the spread of the corona virus in Nigeria, but not with its associated untold hardship on Nigeria populace with its antecedent increase in the price of food items, economic crisis, which resulted to lack of food and income needed for survival. Consequently, the palliative that was met to cushion the effect of the COVID 19 lockdown as not adequately distributed with politicians seizing the opportunity to enrich themselves to the detriment of the masses.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusion draw, the following recommendations are therefore made;

1. Nigeria government should work and put facilities in place for digitalized economy, where one should easily work from home and earn his income
2. The state and federal government should intensify efforts to fight corruption at all level, as corruption had been an obstacle militating against effective implementation of government development policies and program
3. The government and the masses should always anticipate economic crisis, and make plans ahead to tackle it.

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