

The Impact of the Wuhan Coronavirus Pandemic on Education in Nigeria: A Critical Appraisal

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Abstract: This study examined the immediate and long-term impacts of the outbreak of the novel Wuhan Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) on education in Nigeria. The study, thus, argued that the temporary closure of businesses, social activities and the continued closure of schools in the face of the outbreak of the novel COVID-19 have impacted negatively on the development of education that was already in comatose state in Nigeria. To achieve the objective of this study which is to identify the immediate and long-term impacts of the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic on education in Nigeria, study adopted cross sectional research design which has three aspects via investigation of contemporary phenomenon and life context, and the use of multiple source of evidence. This research design lends itself to explorative and explanatory methods. Some solutions that could address the immediate and long-term impacts of the closure of schools in the face of the outbreak of COVID-19 in the country were suggested. However, there is the need for common understanding between the government, its agencies and other stakeholders in the cause of finding solutions to the challenges of the outbreak of the virus, and the continued closure of schools in the country; there is also the need for the government and policy makers to mitigate the impacts of the closure of schools through the provision of technologies needed to facilitate e-learning, such as computers, mobile data packages, subsidizing telecommunication and power supply bills to the citizenries, among others.

Keywords: Nigeria, Education System, Schools, Coronavirus Pandemic (Covid-19) Pandemic.

I. INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of Coronavirus pandemic also known as COVID-19 in Wuhan, the *ground Zero of the virus* and the Capital City of Hubei Province in the Republic of China on September 2019 and that which later spread to other parts of the world, has affected the entire world populace and businesses (Kim, 2020). Most importantly, the outbreak of the pandemic has impacted negatively on schools' resumptions that have long been closed down in virtually all the nations of the world, including Nigeria. Following the 27th February 2020 declaration of the first case of the virus in Lagos, Nigeria by the Federal Ministry of Health, Nigerian students seem to have been made to pay the price for this global debacle, *a war of bioterrorism*, as alleged by the conspiracy theorists, and that which has impacted negatively on the system of education in the country. Since the commencement of the directive of the Federal government to close down schools in the country, precisely on the 19

March 2020, things have never been the same for parents and students alike (Amorighoye, 2020; EiEWG, 2020).

While medical experts justified the continued closure of Nigerian schools in the face of the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, some critics, analysts and scholars argued that the continued closure of schools despite the fact that markets, churches, mosques, businesses and public offices have been long reopened for businesses, has negative impacts on Nigerian students who are already exposed to a declined standard of education. Some have also argued that the continued closure of schools across the federation would amount to unnecessary abuse or violation of the rights of Nigerian students to education, as well as obstructing the annual school academic calendar and truncating the expected year of entry; and delaying the promotion of students to the next level of studies and graduation from schools, colleges and universities.

According to the Nigerian Education in Emergency Working Group (EiEWG) (2020) the outbreak of COVID-19 and the closure of schools in the country complicated the humanitarian, development and government partnership efforts, particularly in the North-Eastern part of the country, making it very difficult for the implementation responses to COVID-19 programmes such as funding, movements from place to place and to the IDP camps, etc. Following this complicating circumstance, the EiEWG argued that the suddenness of the crisis of COVID-19 has impacted negatively on education not only in northern Nigeria that education has been continually interrupted by insurgency of the Boko Haram, but also on other regions of the country. To this effects, the questions as to why schools, colleges and universities are yet to be reopened despite the fact that adult citizens are the most vulnerable to COVID-19 attacks and not school children; and why is it that the education sector is targeted and profoundly affected despite the fact that businesses, public offices and worship centres including mosques and churches have long reopened by the government arises. These are the pertinent questions that this study intends providing answers to.

The Nature of the Problem

In the face of the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), national governments provided palliatives of all

kinds to ameliorate the suffering of the masses, and most significantly revolutionised digital and online education in their respective countries following the shutdown of businesses, social activities, places of worship and schools across the world. Unfortunately, some rural communities in Nigeria have been struggling to actualise the set objectives and the essence of engaging the Nigerian students to bridge the gaps predated by the outbreak of the virus and the subsequent closures of schools, colleges and universities in the country. Notably, the closure of schools since March 2020 in a bid to contain the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has been criticised in some quarters and has also generated a lot of perturbing national issues that are yet to be resolved. Some critics have had to argue that the continued closure of Nigerian schools in the face of the outbreak of the virus has complicated the problems in our education sector which has suffered a setback due to poor leadership, corruption, inadequate funding, and low infrastructure sector development.

Analysts and commentators all over the country, however, have no options than to raise some pertinent and perturbing questions alleging conspiracy on the part of the authorities handling the spread of the pandemic. However, the disquieting questions following the closure of schools are: how could some schools in the country that do not have the technology to cater for their students cope with the government directive to school administrators and proprietors to provide their students with online classes? Do teachers, instructors and lecturers, have the skills and resources to deliver digital or electronic learning (e-learning) or lectures to the students seated in their homes during the period of the pandemic without regular power supply? These are serious issues yet to be resolved, because in the attempt to carry out the directives of the federal government, some schools and teachers alike, especially those living in rural and urban areas and without power supply as well as the needed technologies, are unable and yet to comply with the government directives.

Taibat (2020) argued that the problems of the Federal government in the face of the outbreak of the virus in the country are absence of a clear-policy framework, how to contain the spread of the virus and how to mitigate learning disruptions before it embarked on total lockdown and closure of schools. These he argued have affected the implementations of the government directives to shutdown businesses and schools, as well as the conduct of digital learning. Undeniably, the fears generated by these perturbing issues are complemented by Amorighoye (2020) when he argued that COVID-19 has exposed the incompetence of the government of the federation, as well as the lapses of the service providers and proprietors of schools all over the country. Furthermore, he noted that the problem with the adoption of digital and online education or learning as a palliative that ensuring students at all levels in the country receive their classes while on lockdown was faced with embarrassing circumstances due to the inabilities of students,

particularly those living in rural and underserved communities to have access to these new methods of learning. The absence of power supply or the seemingly regular outage of power has posed barriers to the students in some rural and urban areas respectively, thereby sabotaging the efforts of the governments and school owners to effectively adhere to internationally accepted standard and adopted methods of impacting knowledge to students in this global pandemic era (Amorighoye, 2020).

In another development, Amorighoye (2020) argued that families that earn below \$1 per day and those that are exposed to the harsh economic realities due to the lockdown imposed by the Federal government, and those who cannot afford radios and portable solar radios; television (TV) sets; subscription to internet data; power generating set and power generating devices, subjected their wards to tireless situation and denied them the opportunity of benefiting from the electronic learning system that was generally adopted by national governments to educate students in the pandemic era. As a consequence, Nigerian students like some of their African counterparts have suffered the most, a situation that has further diminished pool of school children across the country from enjoying this adopted trend to their continued studies during the pandemic period. Some are yet to also acquire the needed skills to stay ahead in the future.

Taibat (2020) reiterating the position of UNESCO on the effect of COVID-19 and the subsequent shutdown of schools, “argued that the temporary closure of schools comes with a very high socio-economic costs with very severe impact on the students, particularly on those from disadvantaged backgrounds”. Inarguably, children on the higher end of the socio-economic background are experiencing less disruption to the adopted digital and e-learning techniques imposed on public school managements and proprietors of private schools by the government because their schools are well equipped with ICT infrastructure and can possibly afford these sophistications unlike their other counterparts from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds who do not have access to computers and other sundry devices outside their schools and lives in communities where there are no internet facilities (Taibat, 2020, Naiametrics, 2020).

Suffice it, therefore, to state that the outbreak of COVID-19 is magnifying the drop on the standard of education and educational inequality in the country because only those with access to e-learning or digital learning are the ones benefiting. This has broadened the social gaps between the have and have not instead of narrowing the gaps. Complementing this stand point, Aiyedun (2020) argued that the shutdown of elementary schools and tertiary institutions as a part of the federal government measures to contain the spread of the virus in the country, first, in Lagos, Kano and the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) (Abuja), and later on the other states of the federation has tremendously interrupted the academic calendar and affected academic syllabus for the year 2020.

From this stand point, it has become imperative to argue that all of these factors enumerated above, including corruption, low funding of the education sector, low infrastructure sector development cum insincerity on the part of the government agencies handling the spread and treatment of those infested with COVID-19, particularly the National Center for Disease Control, NCDC, as well as unpreparedness of the federal and state governments to satisfy the expectations of the masses, especially in the provisions of palliatives and social services in the face of the outbreak of the virus, and the subsequent lockdown of all aspects of human activities ranging from sporting activities, entertainment, transportation, worship centres, social gathering, businesses, education and research centres; have bedevilled the realities of human endeavours and enterprises with the education sector as the most affected by the actions of the government during this pandemic era since other sectors are gradually returning to normal activities. This study, thus, seeks to identify the immediate and long-term consequences of the continued closure of Nigerian schools, colleges and universities, since March this year following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, on education in Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine the immediate and long-term impacts of the continued closure of schools on education in Nigeria, on the one hand, and on the rights of Nigerian citizens already in schools, on the other hand, due to the outbreak of COVID-19 in Nigeria. While the specific objectives are to:

- i. Identify the immediate and long-term impacts of the continued closure of schools on education in Nigeria following the outbreak of COVID-19 in the country.
- ii. Proffer solutions to the immediate and long-term impacts of the closure of schools in Nigeria.

To this end, this study addresses the following research questions:

- i. What are the immediate and long-term impacts of the continued closure of schools on education in Nigeria following the outbreak of COVID-19?
- ii. What are the possible solutions to these immediate and long-term impacts of the continued closure of schools in Nigeria?

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

COVID-19 and the Closure of Schools in Nigeria

Following the Federal government efforts to contain the debacle of the Wuhan Coronavirus or COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent announcement of the closure of schools, colleges and universities on the 19th of March, 2020 by the Federal Ministry of Education through the Minister of Education, and that which commenced officially on the 23rd of March 2020, Nigeria's academic calendar has been seriously affected. Not only has the outbreak of the pandemic; the

immediate activation and seemingly insincerity on the part of the Nigeria Center of Disease Control (NCDC); the Federal Ministry of Health; and the subsequent closure of institutions of education in the country impacted on the already decaying standard of education in the country but to other businesses and social activities that are to date struggling to recover from the losses caused by the outbreak and total lockdown imposed by the Federal government.

It is however apparent that the impact of the unexpected outbreak of the pandemic and the closure of businesses, public sector activities and schools cannot be over emphasised. To this effect, Edeh, Nwafor, Obafemi, Shuvro, Fyनेface, Aabha and Alhuseen (2020:108) argued that, "not only has the Coronavirus outbreak posed serious concerns to global education systems but also to the efforts by national governments to contain the disease; the consequence of which prompted unscheduled closure of schools in several countries and which has left over one billion students out of school. Furthermore, they identified disruptions of learning, job losses, and decreased access to education and research facilities as the most affected since the global outbreak of the pandemic and the subsequent closure of businesses and schools.

Although, efficient and proactive responses are needed to contain community spread of the virus in Nigeria but the problem with the outbreak of the virus is that it took the whole world, including Nigeria by surprise, thus, leading to inadequate preparation on the parts of the national governments and the World Health Organisation (WHO) to contain its spread. This peculiar circumstance prompted national government and their Health Ministries to sort for effective and immediate responses to contain the spread of the virus, leading to total lockdown of businesses, public places and schools. There was also the immediate need for the developing nations, Nigeria specifically, to demand for health equipments from the developed nations of the world, including sanitizers, face masks, hand gloves and other personal protective equipments (PPE); and most importantly, the need for suspension of local and international activities, businesses, social gathering and closure of schools (Edeh et al., 2020).

Literature on the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has shown that education which is the aggregate of all processes through which a child develops abilities, attitudes and other forms of behaviour which are of a positive value to society has been seriously disrupted since the outbreak of the novel Coronavirus pandemic. Inarguably, education enables individuals to acquire appropriate knowledge, values and skills for personal development and contribute meaningfully to the development of any society. It is also a basic human right for every individual in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966) (ICESCR); the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) (CRC); the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981); the

African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) (ACRWC)' and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (2003) (African Women's Protocol), amongst other international and regional human rights instruments (Isokpan & Durojaye, 2016:3).

The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999 (as amended) (CFRN 1999), though, does not guarantee an enforceable right to education, but it draws the attention of the government to it in Chapter II as a fundamental objective and directive principle of state policy. Section 18 of the Constitution specifically provides that government shall direct its policy towards ensuring the availability of equal and adequate educational opportunities at all levels. The government, therefore, is required by the provisions of the Constitution to strive to eradicate illiteracy by providing practicable, free, compulsory universal primary education; secondary education; university education and a free adult literacy programme to the citizenries (see Section 18(3) of the CFRN, 1999).

It can be argued, thus, that among several ways in which academic calendar in the country has been truncated over the years such as incessant strike actions by the Academic Staff Union of Nigeria University (ASUU) and Nigerian Union of Teachers; and armed conflict or attacks from insurgent groups in some parts of the country, etc., the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent closure of schools, undeniably, have complicated the problems synonymous with the Nigerian education system. Literature has shown that targeted attacks; collateral damage and the military use of school buildings; death and injury to teachers and students; the fear of sending children to school and teachers' fear of attending school due to their being threatened with targeted attacks; general insecurity reducing the freedom of movement; forced population displacement particularly in North Eastern part of the country have been the major challenges facing the nation's education calendar (Isokpan & Durojaye, 2016). The closure of schools because of the outbreak of COVID-19 has further complicated the problem of Nigerians not only in the north-eastern part of the country but has interrupted education in the whole country.

Scholars and commentators who have analysed the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on education in Nigeria have argued that the outbreak of the virus in the country has disrupted the 2020 academic calendar and has prevented Nigerian students' access to education as well as diminishing the quality of the learning experience in the country. Even now that opportunity exist following the reopening of schools for the exit classes only (primary six, and junior and senior secondary school children sitting for external examinations), parents and teachers are still worried about the safety of their children and their own health. Some parents are reluctant to send their children back to school. The questions as to how prepared the relevant authorities and school proprietors are to ensure safety of

students returning to school and teachers alike, are also of pertinence. This has also posed another problem to school resumption in the country.

Reviewing Peter Barsocchini 2006 Classic movies, an American musical film directed by Kenny Ortega: High School Musical, Ndubuisi-Kanu (2020) argued that what most students look forward to is leisure during holidays, unfortunately, school children in America and other parts of the world, including Nigeria are struggling to adjust to the changing circumstance ushered in by the global outbreak of coronavirus pandemic which has changed how millions of children all over the world are educated and enjoy their leisure time. Nigerian in particular, from pre-school to university, school buildings have been shutdown not because schools are on vacation but because of the global outbreak and spread of COVID-19, she argued.

According to Oladunjoye and Omaemu (2013) cited in Isokpan and Durojaye (2016:10) attendance at school is dependent on the readiness of first, the child, and secondly, encouragement from parents, and lastly, the provision of school materials, the distance to school and, very importantly, the security of the child. The present state of health insecurity due to the outbreak of COVID-19 has been traumatic to the government, parents and children as they are forced to suspend the academic calendar and embarked on compulsory vacation in fear of the spread of the pandemic. However, one of the gravest consequences of the outbreak of the virus is that it has heightened the digital divide that exist within the Nigerian communities, especially to those that have limited access to technology or internet connections because students in the rural areas do not have access to continued learning initiated by the government to keep them busy in the pandemic period.

In the affirmative, Amorighoye (2020) argued that COVID-19 pandemic has revolutionised digital and online education not only in Nigeria but to the rest of the world, unfortunately, kids in rural areas in Nigeria have been left behind as they are not equipped to adapt to these new methods of learning following the approved closure of schools as a response to the pandemic. Apparently, this has become one of the major issues that stem from the outbreak of the pandemic and subsequent closure of businesses and schools in the country. It has also created inequality because those kids who cannot afford the luxuries associated with digital or e-learning are finding it difficult to measure up with their peers who are exposed and privileged to e-learning facilities, thus, widening the gap between these groups of students in the country.

Complementing the stand point, Obiakor and Adeniran (2020) argued that the outbreak of coronavirus or COVID-19 pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges to the already fragile education system in the country, and to the government, parents and students; the consequence of which is the limitation of students' access to learning across the country up to date. Generally, they perceived the Nigeria's education sector as not adapting to the opportunities provided by the international community's myriad of ICT programmes

because of limited funds or inadequate budget for the education sector, as well as persistent deficiencies in planning cum government inability to finance distance learning opportunities, especially for the public schools in the country; the implication of which is unnecessary denial of students, especially those in public schools access to formal learning. In this same vein, Simon and Hans (2020) argued that:

While global home schooling will surely produce some inspirational moments, some angry moment, some fun moments and some frustrating moments, it seems very unlikely that it will on average replace the learning lost from school making its outcomes unpredictable in the nearest future.

In the affirmative, Wondwosen and Dantew (2020) argued that the most painful reality of the adoption of digital learning platforms globally to ease the burden of parents, school owners and governments, as well as to complement learning in the pandemic period, is that it has created divide due to the inability of some governments, especially those of Africa, including Nigeria's to reach out to millions of students in rural communities that have no access to internet facilities and to students from low income families who are now marginalised. Yinka and Adebayo (2020) argued that the effect of the pandemic is just one out of many implications of educational inequity in the country. This has been complicated by the sophistication that follows the government directives to schools heads and proprietors to adopt digital learning platforms, video lesson, massive open online course (MOOCs) and broadcast through radio and television, all of which are not easily available and affordable to some class of persons in the society.

Without doubt, the outbreak of the pandemic has adversely affected all aspects of our lives with the education sector the most affected and school children from poor families bearing the brunt of it. Wondwosen and Damtew (2020) have identified repatriation of some international students stranded in Wuhan located in Hubei Province, China where it all began and later to other parts of the world. They argued that African foreign students, particularly those from Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, as well as Algeria and its North African neighbours seem to be the most affected. This singular move in addressing the spread of the virus, no doubt, has negative impact on the foreign students that were forcefully repatriated because of the closure of schools, colleges and universities across the world. This has also extended and disrupted the academic calendar and the schedule graduation period of the affected students all over the world (Wondwosen & Damtew, 2020).

Lagoko (2020) has suggested further extension of the lockdown and hence none reopening of schools till January 2021. He opined that reopening of schools will significantly increase the risk of children and students getting infected by the virus in school, and the risk of spreading the virus within households. He outlined the likely consequences of keeping

schools closed for long period, due to the pandemic, to include- increase in out-of-wedlock pregnancies, drop in school enrolment among young women in rural areas, families not being able to send children back to school due to lose of livelihood means, losses in learning, and limited resources of online learning- as evident from the outbreak of Ebola in Sierra Leone. Ettang (2020) reported that Nigerian Bureau of Statistics has it that only one of every four Nigerian has access to the internet, but three out of four have mobile phones. He also asserted that the cost of data subscription and electronic devices to use for effective learning in the e-learning 'new-normal' is a problem to Nigerians. Some of the persons that have internet accessible devices do not know or understand the features of these devices let alone knowing how to use them.

Reports have shown that early child education usually design to accommodate young children between the age of 3 and above and what is known as children of pre-school, nursery schools, kindergartens or day-care programmes have also been affected by the closure of schools, not only in Nigeria, but all over the world. The long-term consequences of the closure of schools are best imagined than experienced. According to UNESCO (2020) reports student drop-out rate may be on the increase after the pandemic because of the challenges that will follow the return to schools after school closure ends. In a similar manner, the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) revealed that following the outbreak and closure of schools across the world, more than 91% of students including younger infants across the world with approximately 1.6 billion children and youngsters are unable to attend physical schools leading to the introduction of distance learning programmes and open education applications and platforms for schools and teachers to use to reach out to learner or students in both remote and urban areas, all of which have far reaching economic and societal impacts not only on students and teachers but also on parents (Karp & McGowan, 2020). As pleasant as these platforms adopted as measures to regain lost time during the pandemic period, students from under-served low-income areas are left out, and are up to date unable to access these privileges making the exercise a fruitless exercise all over the country.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

The study adopted cross sectional research design to ascertain the facts and objectives of the study which are to identify the immediate and long-term implications of the outbreak of the novel COVID-19 pandemic and the subsequent closure of businesses, social activities and schools in Nigeria. The population of the study is infinite and includes teachers, school administrators, lecturers, parents and students from all over Nigeria. The sample size, representative of the population, is 384. It is determined based on Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table. The simple random sampling technique was used to distribute questionnaire to respondents and collect needed data. The

study employed the use of a structured questionnaire in collecting the data, and it comprised demographic characteristics, determining the immediate and long-term impacts of the continued closure of schools following the outbreak of COVID-19 in Nigeria, and the suggestion of possible solutions to the immediate and long-term impacts of the continued closure of schools in Nigeria. The administered copies of the questionnaires were retrieved from the respondents immediately after administration. Cronbach Alpha test was used to determine the reliability of the instrument. The Cronbach Alpha Reliability statistics gave 0.939. Data generated were analysed using SPSS version 17.0. The data were presented in descriptive statistics using simple percentages (%) and frequencies (F).

IV. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

According to table 4.1.1, about 212(55.20%) of the respondents were males while 172(44.80%) of the respondents were females. The respondents were; students 115(29.95%), parents 106(27.60%), lecturers 77(20.05%), teachers 58(15.10%) and school administrators 28(20.30%).

Table 4.1.1: Demographic characteristics of the Respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Age:		
20-29	105	27.30
30-39	135	35.20
40-49	96	25.50
>49	48	12.50

Sex:		
Male	212	55.20
Female	172	44.80
Status of Respondents:		
Teachers	58	15.10
School Administrators	28	7.30
Lecturers	77	20.05
Parents	106	27.60
Students	115	29.95

Research Question 1: What are the immediate and long-term impacts of the continued closure of schools following the outbreak of COVID-19 in Nigeria?

Findings have shown that the closure of Nigerian schools since March 2020 following the outbreak of the novel coronavirus on the country which was first recorded in Lagos, Nigeria and declared by the Federal Ministry of Health on 27 February this year, has impacted negatively to the country's education system. Further inquiries revealed that the introduction and adoption of digital or e-learning or internet learning has complicated the learning processes in the country's education due to the marginalisation of millions of students in some rural communities and those from low income families that do not have access to the luxury and sophistication associated with digital learning. To this effect, majority of the respondents strongly agreed that the continued closure of schools in the country have either short and long-term impacts or implications on our education system that is already epileptic following under funding of research institutes, colleges and universities, as well as massive corruption in the system.

Table 4.2: Immediate and long-term impacts of the continued closure of schools as a result of the outbreak of COVID-19 in Nigeria

Variables	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Loss of jobs	173	45.50	154	40.10	22	5.73	35	9.12
Non-payment of salaries & wages	96	25.00	144	37.50	77	20.05	67	17.45
Massive drop out of school children	135	35.16	173	45.05	58	15.10	18	4.69
Low enrolment in the post-COVID-19 era	116	30.20	144	37.50	96	25.00	28	7.30
Loss of income for businessmen & women	136	35.42	127	33.07	73	19.01	48	12.50
Cost of reversing gains in learning process especially those with special education needs	96	25.00	192	50.00	48	12.50	48	12.50
Complication of the learning process through digital learning	173	45.05	135	35.16	20	5.21	56	14.58
Increase in risky behaviours among students including peer pressure & substance abuse	192	50.00	127	33.07	39	10.16	26	6.77
Social Isolation among teachers & students such as social activity & human interaction	154	40.10	155	40.37	29	7.55	46	11.98

Table 4.1.2 identified the percentage responses of the respondents to what the immediate and long-term effects of continued closure of schools are. Greater percentage of the respondents agreed that the following would be the impacts of

continued closure of schools on education and citizens' rights of those already in school. They are: possible loss of jobs 327(85.15%); non-payment of salaries and wages 240(62.50%), especially to those in private sectors; massive

drop out of school children 308(80.21%) and low enrolment in the post-COVID-19 era 260(67.70%); loss of businesses and sources of income for traders and business men and women 263(68.49%); Cost of reversing gains in learning process especially those with special education needs 288(75.00%). Disengaging students from the formal learning process may have potential cost of reversing gains in learning results. As a consequence, a higher cost may arise either academically or socio-economically from disengaging students with learning challenges, especially those with special education or learning needs or with disabilities and cannot cope with the learning strategies or with access to information provided through the digital platforms.

However, extant literature revealed that apart from the direct effects of COVID-19 on schools children, the impact of the pandemic also include the possible use of school facilities as make-shift infrastructures for longer period than expected following the persistent spread of the virus. This may cause long-term disruption of and setback on education if the pandemic persists beyond this year. This may also complicate the predicament of the disadvantaged school children in the society that do not have access to internet facilities and other technical sophistications needed to remain focus to their studies during the pandemic period. Those from low-income families therefore bear the brunt of these unfortunate circumstances surrounding the outbreak of the virus and the subsequent closure of businesses and schools in the country.

In the affirmative, Wondwosen and Damtew (2020) have argued that, “the meagre institutional and national capacities in African continent, including Nigeria, weak health care systems and gregarious way of life, among other factors, may lead to catastrophic end should the outbreak of the virus continues at the rate it is now”. By implication, the persistent spread of the virus and continued closure of schools may continue to impact negatively and affects government’s commitment towards higher education in the country in particular. However, in the face of competing demands for health care, businesses and other priority sectors, serving the vulnerable and critical segments of the Nigeria’s society may be seriously affected following the continued spread of the novel virus. As a consequence, a higher cost may arise either academically or socio-economically from disengaging students with learning challenges, especially those with special education or learning needs or with disabilities and cannot cope with the learning strategies or with access to informations provided through the digital platforms. Longer closure of secondary schools on the other hand may result to increased risk of drop out for youth from lower income background (see The Guidance Note on Education Systems’ Response to COVID-19, 2020).

Research Question 2: What are the possible solutions to the immediate and long-term impacts of the continued closure of schools in the country?

Table 4.1.3: Possible solutions to the immediate and long-term impacts of the continued closure of schools in Nigeria

Variables	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Effective utilisation of education palliatives by governmental agencies	135	35.16	116	30.21	77	20.05	56	14.58
Government should ensure constant supply of electricity	173	45.05	154	40.10	20	5.21	37	9.64
Provision of solar powered electrical & education devices to specific centres in all states of the federation	96	25.00	154	40.10	86	22.40	48	12.5
Provision of technologies such as computers, mobile data packages to facilitate digital or the learning process for students & teachers	140	36.46	144	37.5	48	12.50	52	13.54
Government should encourage local & international donors to support students with technological equipments	116	30.20	173	45.05	58	15.10	37	9.70
School proprietors & management should ensure digital platforms are created for learning during the lockdown	136	35.42	115	29.95	67	17.45	66	17.18
Establishing protocols for schools’ handling of illnesses and potential cases	174	45.31	154	40.10	40	10.42	16	4.17

As shown in Table 4.1.3, majority of the respondents agreed to the proffered solutions to the immediate and long-term impacts of COVID-19 as a result of the continued closure of schools in Nigeria. According to the respondents, effective utilisation of educational palliatives by governmental agencies 521(65.37%) would be crucial in alleviating the impacts of continued school closure in Nigeria; while 327(65.10%) agreed that Government should ensure constant supply of electricity; and 250(40.0%) agreed that Provision of solar powered electrical & education devices to specific centres in all states of the federation would be crucial in solving the power component of the e-learning programme by the

government. Many teachers and students in Nigeria lack basic technological equipment such as computers and internet facilities, thus 284(73.96%) of the respondents agreed that Provision of technologies such as computers, mobile data packages to facilitate digital or the learning process for students & teachers; while 289(75.25%) agreed that Government should encourage local & international donors to support students with technological equipments. This is pertinent because government alone cannot shoulder the responsibility of providing all equipments to facilitate digital learning process; so the contribution of both local and international partners would be very vital to achieving the e-

learning programme of the government. Furthermore, since the COVID-19 pandemic is a health challenge, the health component of any outlined programme must be taken into consideration and implemented accordingly. Therefore, 328(85.41%) of the respondents agreed that establishing protocols for schools' handling of illnesses and potential cases is important for adequate diagnosis and prompt treatment of cases due to the contagious nature of the COVID-19 virus. In summary, the respondents have highlighted possible solutions to the immediate and long-term impact of the continued closure of schools on students and the general population in Nigeria.

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Findings revealed that the continued closure of schools has left basic education in the country in a dire situation complicating the already ill equipped, confusing and unhelpful learning environment, especially in public schools. Furthermore, studies revealed that the outbreak of the virus has diverted the attention of the government from other pertinent national issues such as funding of infrastructure sector development of the general public, government own schools and the fight against insurgency, to the fight against the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. By implication, the meagre resources available because of the global economic recession and the drastic drop of crude oil price at the international market which is the major source of revenue for the country has been diverted to the fight against the spread of the virus, thus, leaving other sectors of the economy including the education sector underfunded. This has also made it difficult for the government to provide the public schools sufficient palliative to improve on the e-learning programme initiated by the Federal government. Addressing the problems occasioned by the closure of schools in the country, obviously, becomes one of the essential enablers of education which means that all of the necessary infrastructure and learning facilities required for studies must be in place.

The physical condition of a school has a direct effect on teachers' morale and effectiveness, and on the general learning environment. On a normal circumstance, inadequate educational facilities in Nigeria pose threat to the right to education and are even worse now that there is the outbreak of COVID-19. Nigerian schools are ordinarily ill equipped and not conducive to learning and the low funding and continued closure of schools has left basic education in a dire situation. Access to basic education in the country despite the directive to school heads and proprietors to initiate digital or e-learning to students has been badly affected by insufficient funding and ill equipped infrastructure in public and some private schools, making it very difficult for learning programme for Nigerian students at all levels.

We can recall that businesses were shutdown as a measure to address and contain the spread of the virus but this has left some business men and women and some families out of business and some are yet to recover from the total shutdown

initiated by the government of the federation. Families that are self-employed and those that relied on the incomes from their daily businesses are yet to recover from the losses orchestrated by the total short down of businesses, air transportation and boulder closure to export and import commodities, all of which have hike the price of commodities in the country. Following the findings above, the researchers' summaries the following as the immediate and long-term impacts of the continued closure of Nigerian schools:

- i. Possible loss of jobs and non-payment of salaries or cut of wages of workers, especially that of teachers, instructors and lecturers in private schools or institutions;
- ii. Massive drop out of school children and low enrolment in the post-COVID-19 era;
- iii. Loss of businesses and sources of income for traders and business men and women; and;
- iv. Most significantly, disengaging students from the formal learning process may have potential cost of reversing gains in learning results.

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