



Research article

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Socioeconomic effects of COVID-19 on health information management education in selected Nigerian universities

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ABSTRACT

Background/Objective: COVID-19 is a pandemic infectious disease ravaging the whole world with eventual manifestation in Nigeria on February 25, 2020. The Federal Government of Nigeria responded to the pandemic by taking some measures which include nationwide school closure. This brought a halt to all academic activities in Nigerian Universities. This study investigated the socio- economic effect of COVID-19 on Health Information Management's (HIM) education in selected Nigerian universities as well as the challenges of online lecture as adopted during the pandemic. **Methods/Design:** This study is a cross-sectional descriptive study. The study was carried out at Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria and Adeleke University, Ede, Osun State, Nigeria. Questionnaire was the main instrument used for this study. The study was carried out during the period of school closure due to COVID-19 pandemic. The study population was four hundred and twenty-three HIM students from the two selected universities. Total enumeration technique was used. The research data was analyzed using frequency counts and simple percentages. **Results:** The study revealed that sudden school closure due to COVID-19 pandemic disrupts academic activities, threatens tuition and might elongate the period of graduation. **Conclusion:** School closure due to COVID-19 pandemic has both social and economic effect on HIM education and it has its associated challenges.

Keywords: Social effect, Economic effect, COVID-19 pandemic, challenges HIM education, Nigerian universities

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INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 is a pandemic disease ravaging the whole world. Before the spread of this disease to Nigeria, the Federal Government of Nigeria had declared her readiness to strengthen surveillance at five international airports in the country to prevent the spread of coronavirus¹. The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control also announced their setting up of corona virus group as well as their readiness to activate its incident system if any case emerged in Nigeria². Following the discovery of COVID-19 pandemic in China and other countries worldwide, the Federal Government of Nigeria set up a Corona virus Preparedness Group to mitigate the impact of the virus if it eventually spreads to the country^{3,4}. The World Health Organization's

declaration of Nigeria as one of the 13 African countries at high-risk of the spread of the virus further propelled Federal Government (FG)'s preparedness for COVID-19 disaster⁵. Eventually, Nigeria confirmed her index case in Lagos State on February 25, 2020⁶⁻¹⁰. The FG's responses include awareness creation, sensitization of COVID-19 prevalence in Nigeria, introduction and enforcement of preventive and precautionary measures such as: hand washing with soap and water, the use of sanitizer, face mask, social distancing, lockdown and indefinite schools' closure in the country. In fact, the indefinite school closure brought a halt to all academic activities in Nigerian Universities¹¹.

Literature revealed that more than 1.5 billion students and youth across the planets are affected by school and university closures due to the COVID-19 outbreak¹². Few institutions have been responding to and complying with COVID-19 protocols in order to mitigate its impact. As part of the response to curbing the pandemic in Nigeria, a Nigerian university started developing a ventilator. After the initial suspension of academic activities in Nigeria, few universities mostly privately owned universities adopted online method of lecturing. The danger of contamination had prompted some Universities to move their courses online. This study assesses the effects of school closure due to COVID-19 pandemic on HIM education in selected Nigerian Universities.

METHODS

Study setting

The study was carried out at Lead City University, Ibadan, Oyo State and Adeleke University, Ede, Osun State, both in South-western region of Nigeria. These are two of Nigerian Universities that are running degree programme in Health Information Management and adopted online lecturing during the school closure due to COVID-19 pandemic. Lead City University is a private university in Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria¹⁵⁻¹⁷. The University was founded in 2005. It was accredited by the National University Commission and approved by Federal Government of Nigeria. The University has graduated more than 5,000 graduates. The school offers various programme suitable for both the young adolescents and adult working class. Programme are offered by specialized faculties in Social Sciences and Entrepreneurial Studies, Information Technology, Basic Medical and Applied Sciences and; Law. The University runs post graduate, undergraduate, pre-degree, certificate and diploma programme.

Adeleke University is a private faith-based learning institution located in a serene and nature friendly atmosphere of 520 acres of land in the historic town of Ede, Osun State, Nigeria. The University was founded in 2011 by Dr. Adedeji Adeleke, through the Springtime Development Foundation (SDF), a philanthropic, non-profit-making organization established to assist indigent students to benefit from quality higher education. As a higher institution that is based on the Seventh-day Adventist philosophy of education, Adeleke University forms part of the over 100 worldwide institutions running on this philosophy. The motto of the university is 'Education, Excellence and Character'¹⁸.

Study design

This study is a cross-sectional descriptive study.

Study population

Population for this study comprises HIM students across all academic levels from Adeleke University (275 students) and Lead City University (148 students), totaling 423 students.

Sampling technique

Total enumeration technique, where every study had the opportunity to participate was used.

Sample size

A total of 423 HIM students of 423 were recruited into the study however, only 185 (43.7%) students responded and returned the completed instruments.

Data collection tools

Questionnaire was the main instrument used to explore the effect of school closure due to COVID-19 pandemic on HIM education in selected Nigerian Universities. The questionnaire was generated by the author using Google form and has three sections. Section A captures responses to the participant's socio-demographic data. Section B with 3-items captures the

participant's responses to questions on the social effect of school closure due to COVID-19 pandemic. Section C with 8-items captures the participant's responses to questions on the economic effects of school closure. Section D with 8-items captures the respondent's responses to the questions on the challenges of school closure. The instrument was administered through the online learning platform. This attracted sufficient responses for analysis.

Data analysis and management

Data analysis was done using SPSS to compute descriptive statistics such as frequency counts and simple percentages.

Ethics considerations

Official approval to conduct this study was obtained from the Dean, Faculty of Basic Medical Sciences and the HOD of Lead City University and Adeleke University respectively.

RESULTS

Responses to the demographic data of participants reveals that the majority of participant were between 21 and 40 years of age and the majority were female (130, 70.3%), Students from Lead City University, Ibadan accounted for more than two-third (127, 68.6%) of participants Responses to the social impact of COVID-19 pandemic revealed that the majority (160, 86.5%) of participants strongly agreed that sudden school closure due to COVID-19 pandemic disrupts academic studies while many participants (121, 65.4%) admitted that online lecture was adopted during the close-down of the school due to COVID-19 pandemic. Responses to the economic impact of COVID-19 pandemic on participants revealed that the majority (113, 61.1%) strongly agreed that sudden school closure threatens tuition while a smaller portion (69, 37.3%) agreed that some Universities will be forced to merge or close down. Responses to the challenges of online

lecture revealed that the majority (126, 68.1%) of strongly agreed that COVID-19 pandemic might elongate the period of graduation of final year students while a greater majority (147, 79.5%) reasoned that limited stakeholder's ICT skill is a challenge.

DISCUSSION

Findings from this study reveal that COVID-19 pandemic had socially impacted HIM University education. These findings on social effects of COVID-19 on HIM education conform with the literature. For instance, switching from didactic (in-class) lecture to online lecture is in agreement with studies that institutions have worked towards 'business continuity', attempting to mitigate learning interruption by moving online¹⁹. Findings on sudden school closure due to COVID-19 pandemic disrupted academic studies agree with UNESCO's affirmation that 9.8 million African students are experiencing disruption in their studies due to the closure of higher education institutions¹¹. Sudden school closure became inevitable as a result of COVID-19 pandemic that is spreading like bush fire within and across the countries. Total lockdown and school closure rendered the school library physically inaccessible thus denying the students the opportunity of enjoying the school library services that enhances career progression. Private universities adopted virtual lecturing so that the student's academic activities are not disrupted and final year students graduated in record time.

The study revealed the economic effect of school closure due to COVID-19 pandemic on HIM education in selected Nigerian Universities. For instance, the study revealed that sudden school closure threatens tuition. Tuition plays a major role in the economic life of every private university and it is one of the major sources of income for Private Universities and their host communities. The study also revealed that

prolonged school closure leads to deeper financial strain. When tuition are not paid, the source of financing university's expenses will be stretched so as to meet the financial needs of the private universities. The study equally revealed reduced school enrolment as one of the economic effects of school closure on HIM University Education. This is perhaps due to the reduced or loss of income from the sponsors of the HIM students. The study revealed cancellation of discretionary spending as an economic effect of COVID-19 pandemic on HIM education. This is due to reduced income. Findings of this study conform to a study that universities will see reductions in their budgets, potentially proving catastrophic for small private institutions²⁰. Findings on the economic effect of COVID-19 pandemic on loss of income is in tandem with UNESCO's assertion that strict isolation measures, the closure of schools and workplaces, and loss of income to many families has had, and will continue to have, significant negative impacts upon education, health, and well-being. Findings on domestic distraction from online lecture conforms to UNESCO study that 7 per cent of their participants were concerned about domestic violence²¹.

Findings on economic effect of COVID-19 pandemic on retrenchment, salary reduction and loss of income conforms with UNESCO's assertion that strict isolation measures, the closure of schools and workplaces, and loss of income to many families has had, and will continue to have, significant negative impacts on education, health, and wellbeing²¹. Findings on economic impacts also suggest the possibility of merging or total close down of some private Universities as a result of reduced income to finance the university education. The study found that there were challenges with online lecture due to school closure. These findings tally with previous research. For instance, finding on the challenge of

internet connectivity and irregular power supply is in congruent with the assertion of UNESCO that going online is not that simple on a continent where only 24% of the population of African students have access to the internet, and poor connectivity, exorbitant costs and frequent power interruptions are serious challenges. UNESCO confirmed that percentages of households with internet connection by world region reveal that, in Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, a majority of households lack connectivity²¹. Another challenge found that the period of final year student's graduation can be elongated. This is possible if virtual academic activities are not adopted, it means the school will open for academic activities after the COVID-19 pandemic. Finding on domestic distraction from online lecture agrees with UNESCO study that 7 per cent of their participants were concerned about domestic violence²¹. The finding on limited ICT skills conforms to UNESCO's assertion that forty percent of teachers in OECD countries, on average, lack professional ICT skills and knowledge²¹.

Study limitations

Absence of many students as a result of the pandemic affected response rate.

CONCLUSION

Outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic had and still has direct effects on HIM education in selected Nigerian Universities as evidenced by sudden school closure which led to adoption of virtual methodologies for academic activities and many economic effects on HIM university education. HIM students from these universities faced a lot of challenges with the virtual methodologies. However, the universities will gain experience in innovative virtual lecturing methods, which is the new normal in academic arena in Nigeria.

Table 1: Socioeconomic effects of COVID-19 and challenges of online lecture

Item	S/ Agreed N(%)	Agreed N(%)	D N(%)	SD N(%)
<i>Social impact</i>				
Sudden school closure due to COVID-19 disrupts studies	160(86.5)	23(12.4)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)
Inaccessible school library	122(65.9)	50(27)	10(5.4)	4(2.2)
Adoption of online lecture	121(65.4)	63(34.1)	1(0.5)	1(0.5)
<i>Economic impact</i>				
School closure threatened tuition	113(61.1)	62(33.5)	4(2.2)	6(3.2)
Reduced enrolment	92(49.7)	82(44.3)	9(4.9)	2(0.1)
Retrenchment	78(42.2)	84(45.4)	13(7)	10(5.4)
Salary reduction	73(39.5)	78(42.2)	22(11.9)	12(6.5)
Cancelled discretionary spending	76(41.1)	91(49.2)	9(4.9)	10(5.4)
Some universities will be forced to merge or close down	35(18.9)	69(37.3)	54(29.2)	28(15.1)
Deeper financial strain	70(37.8)	97(52)	12(6.5)	7(3.8)
<i>Challenges of online lectures</i>				
Issues with internet connectivity	108(58.4)	67(36.2)	6(3.2)	4(2.2)
Irregular electricity power supply	108(58.4)	64(34.6)	10(5.4)	3(1.6)
Inadequate funding of university education system due to reduced income	96(51)	78(42.2)	11(5.9)	0
Limited ICT skills	64(34.6)	83(44.9)	29(15.7)	10(5.4)
Possible elongation of graduation	126(68.1)	54(29.2)	2(1.1)	3(1.6)
Border closure hinders international studies	105(56.8)	70(37.8)	7(3.8)	4(2.2)

Recommendation

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made:

1. The Federal Government should formulate forward-looking policy on education by redesigning lecturing processes to adopt the new normal educational system.
2. Government should provide financial support for students and institutions and also make it easier for higher education institutions to access government loans as at when necessary

Universities should:

3. Decide on the use of appropriate technologies based on the reliability of local power supplies, internet connectivity, and digital skills of teachers and students.
4. Adopt the use of virtual libraries and encourage the use of user-friendly applications for their studies.
5. Embark on extensive advert and awareness creation about admissions and assurance that academic activities are not disrupted. As much as possible, most school activities should be changed to virtual. Efforts should be geared towards keeping enrolment increasing and students are motivated to pay the school without any delay.
6. Adhere strictly to academic calendar. Efforts should be geared towards students graduating in record time based on the academic calendar.
7. Partner with internet providers and governments to overcome this critical challenge by negotiating zero-rated access to specific educational and information websites and offer data bundles to the students and staff
8. Partner with electricity providers and governments to overcome the challenge epileptic of power supply.

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The.

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Authors Contribution:

OEO conceived of the study, initiated its design, participated in literature search, data abstraction and collection, analysis & coordination and drafted the manuscript.