

IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON THE WELLBEING AND STABILITY OF FAMILIES IN JOS SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF PLATEAU STATE

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ABSTRACT

This study impact of covid-19 on the wellbeing and stability of families in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State. This study employed a survey research, specifically the cross-sectional survey design which implored the use of a portion of the population to collect data. The population of the study comprised parents in the twelve (12) wards of Jos-South Local Government Area of Plateau State. There was no sampling in selecting the wards as the entire twelve wards were chosen for the study. However, a Non-Probability Sampling Technique called convenience sampling was used in selecting 120 respondents for the study. The instrument for data collection was an Impact of Covid-19 on Families Questionnaire (ICFQ) made up of 17-item statements, constructed by the researcher based on the literature reviewed. The construct validity of the instrument was established by subjecting the instrument to three experts from the Department of Science and Technology Education, Faculty of Education, University of Jos. Three research questions were raised for the study. The research questions were answered using mean and standard deviation. The findings of the study revealed that heightened family tension, worries about of family members, pressures related to going to work, substance misuse were the issues that affected families' wellbeing and stability within the study area. The study also found that as a result of Covid-19 pandemic, parents experienced mental health issues such as depression, stress, irritability, socioeconomic issues such as loss of jobs, salary cuts, loss of business, increased borrowing of loans/debts from friends and families, and increased use of credit cards and overdrafts all of which affected the wellbeing and stability of families within the study area. The study recommended that as the spread of the pandemic is being curtailed, all Covid-19 guidelines set by NCDC should be adhered to at all times. Also, government should create more empowerment programmes in order to train individuals that lost their jobs and businesses as a result of the pandemic to enable them cater for themselves and their households.

Key Words: covid19, Wellbeing, Stability, Family.

INTRODUCTION

Covid-19 pandemic which is known as coronavirus, is an ongoing global pandemic of coronavirus disease 2019. According to WHO (2020), coronavirus is majorly caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS- CoV-2). The World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of the disease a pandemic on 11th March 2020; and as of 16th November, 2021, more than 255 million cases of Covid-19 have been reported worldwide, resulting to more than 5.1 million deaths while in Nigeria, more than 213 thousand cases, resulting to more than 2.9 thousand deaths (<https://covid19.ncdc.gov.ng>). The outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic which was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan-China, is a defining health crisis of the world today, imposing major social and economic challenges. According to UNDP (2020), Covid-19 has the potential to create devastating social, economic and political effects that will leave deep and longstanding scars. As it stands today, the economies of the world irrespective of the level of acclaimed development are today overwhelmed by the ravaging dreaded coronavirus disease.

Covid-19 has had a dire effect on global economies. Rising infection rates have led to social distancing directives, persistent lockdowns, the closing of businesses, travel restraints, salary cuts,

and a looming high unemployment situation. Economic. The story for Nigeria has been no different. The country has instituted a range of measures to try to curb the pandemic. These have included waves of lockdowns in major cities, border closures and people's movement being restricted. The pandemic remains the biggest shock to the economy of not only Plateau State, Nigeria, Africa but also to the world at large. Following the imposition of stay at home orders across Jos South of Plateau State and the country at large, labour markets collapsed over roughly two weeks in late March and early April in 2020. The impact of the Covid-19 was felt even on families that lost no income by virtue of the abrupt school closures and the widespread threat of illness and death. In many instances, the school closures substantially increased the time that parents spend on their children's education (Baxter, Budinski, Carroll, & Hand, 2020; Calarco, Meanwell, Anderson, & Knopf, 2020; Sevilla & Smith, 2020). Schoolchildren were also made to feel the impact of the pandemic as school closures and learning interruptions could threaten children's learning and adjustment though the extent of this depends on the quantity and quality of parent-child interaction at home (Kuhfeld, Soland, Tarasawa, Johnson, Ruzek, & Liu, 2020). Low income children may be at greater risk for learning losses and behavioral stress than high income children given average pre-pandemic differences in parent engagement in children's learning (Kalil, Ryan, & Corey, 2012).

The novel coronavirus has been more prevalent among low income families resulting in much more anxiety in these families about threats to their health and well-being. The changes arising from the novel coronavirus can also have a direct impact on the level of distress parents and children experience arising from social isolation due to stay at home orders, including physical and social distance from their friends and schools and changes to their usual daily routines. Parental and child well-being may be diminished by concerns about their own and their family's health as a consequence of exposure to the virus itself.

The impact of Covid-19 was felt by almost every family in Jos South Local Government. As a result of the pandemic, the life condition of families suddenly and deeply changed. In the home environment, the educational role of parents for children has become even much crucial than before. Children have only their parents around them, to provide support with homework when necessary and promote a positive development and new learning experiences for toddlers and preschoolers (Wang, Zhang, Zhao, Zhang, & Jiang, 2020). Parents have been left alone not only in taking care of home-schooling their children, but also in general in the management of their children and of the home environment. All other educational services are closed, babysitters and grandparents are not available, and contact with peers is not allowed. Many parents also must do smart-working, and handling time and spaces to work with children around may be very problematic. This was supported by the findings of Baxter et al. (2020); Calarco et al. (2020); Sevilla and Smith (2020) that during Covid-19 pandemic, parents' time (especially mothers' time) in childcare has increased in the wake of school closings and stay at home orders and the effect of an increase in time with children are uncertain as caring for young children while isolated at home and potentially also juggling employment may be stressful for at least some mothers. Though quarantine means that time that can be shared with loved ones has increased, it also poses a major burden on parents' shoulders, as they are called to take an educational role while also trying to live their own lives and get on with their everyday job commitments. This situation has significantly increased the risk of experiencing stress and negative emotions in parents, with a potentially cascading effect on children's wellbeing (Sprang and Silman, 2013). Little wonder Kalil, Mayer, Delgado, and Gennetian (2019) also found that COVID-19 pandemic and the policy response to it – including stay-at-home orders, new regulations for essential workers, and school closures – may create a stressful environment for families through many channels: worries about health; pressures related to going to work, working from home or the potential of job loss and consequently income loss. This claim about the impact of Covid-19 on parents especially mothers was also substantiated by the survey Calarco and colleagues (2020) conducted on 139 mothers from a range of income levels during the spring of 2020 and found that on average mothers who have greatly increased the time they spend caring

for their children during the pandemic have disproportionately experienced substantial increases in stress, anxiety, and frustrations with their children.

Despite the positive effect of lockdowns caused by Covid-19 pandemic in reducing the number of new infected cases, the mobility restriction and social isolation associated with quarantine are major concerns for families' psychological wellbeing. Related to this, the health care situation of the country is fragile, calling for attention. Hospitals are overcrowded, and the number of deaths is still increasing, as well as the number of infected people and those recovering in hospitals (Government, 2020). It is becoming very common to know at least one person who tested positive to COVID-19 or was hospitalized, and, most regretfully, to have experienced the loss of a person due to COVID-19. This might generate fear and preoccupation in parents and children, even for families who do not have to face health problems (Liu, Bao, Huang, Shi, & Lu, 2020). Literature concerning previous experiences all over the world that may have some aspects in common with the COVID-19 situation reported a high presence of psychological distress such as depression, stress, irritability, and post-traumatic stress symptoms associated with quarantine with long-lasting effects continuing for years after the event (Brooks, Webster, Smith, Woodland, Wessely, & Greenberg, 2020).

Conditions such as extreme stress and emergency situations can increase risks for mental health disorders (WHO, 2020). Having control over one's life is critical to an individual's health and wellbeing but the coronavirus pandemic has created uncertainty and instability (Allen, Boyce, Goldblatt, & Morrison, 2020). Social networks according to Roberts, Brophy, and Bacon (2013) also have an important role in maintaining health and wellbeing, but the social distancing imposed during the lockdown has led to many people feeling disconnected and isolated. Levels of loneliness during lockdown were higher in people living with children and almost a third of parents of children aged four and under reported loneliness (Fancourt, Bu, Wan-Mak, 2020: Mental Health Foundation, 2020). Both loneliness and social isolation are associated with depression (Matthews, Danese, Wertz, Odgers, Ambler, Moffitt, & Arseneault, 2016). In addition, living without a garden in an area of deprivation and in an urban area is associated with a higher level of poor mental health, and this may have been particularly challenging during lockdown (Bowers & Strelitz, 2012).

The pandemic has given rise to new challenges like bereavement, and social distancing measures may have exacerbated grief-related trauma as families are unable to mourn together or attend funerals (ADCS, 2020). For some parents, mental health problems co-exist with other issues such as substance misuse, domestic violence or learning disabilities, and the pandemic has escalated these issues (Smith & Barron, 2020). For example, this period of prolonged confinement has led to heightened family tensions, and domestic abuse may now be present in households where it did not exist before, as a result of additional pressures such as job losses (Barnardo, 2020).

COVID-19 to a large extent has exacerbated factors which can influence the prevalence of parental depression, including economic hardship and job insecurity (Institute of Health Visiting 2020). While earnings have fallen for households across the world as a result of the pandemic, single parents have faced particularly severe losses and are more likely to be in serious financial difficulty ((Understanding Society, 2020; Kempson & Poppe, 2020). Many parents have had to reduce hours or stop work altogether to care for children at home (Gustafsson & McCurdy 2020). Those working on zero-hours contracts, or with insecure or low wage jobs are at increased risk of losing their livelihood because of this. Research has shown that experiencing a transition from employment to joblessness is significantly predictive of poorer psychological wellbeing (Flint, Bartley, Shelton, & Sacker, 2013).

Families are also facing additional costs associated with children being at home, including increased food and energy bills, investment in learning and play resources, and improved online connectivity (Child Poverty Action Group, 2020; Smith & Barron, 2020). Many families have been unable to access food, support and items needed to engage in education, and these increased difficulties in accessing the basics have impacted wellbeing and mental health (Smith & Barron 2020). A survey by Save the Children found that struggling to put food on the table or money on

the electricity meter is having a negative impact on mental health. However, families in low-paid or insecure work, who had fewer resources to begin with, have been impacted more (First 1001 Days 2020; Children's Society 2020; Save the Children 2020;). For many low-income families, an increase in household costs has coincided with a decrease in income (due to, for example, furlough, a pay cut or redundancy), at a time when they were already financially exposed, after a long period of low wage growth, welfare benefits cut and rising household costs (Action for Children). Many families were already struggling before the Covid-19 pandemic, with changes to the social security system making it harder to get support (House of Lords, 2020; Block, Featherstone, & Howes, 2020). Lower-income families are particularly likely to have increased their use of credit cards and overdrafts, as well as turning to informal loans from friends and family (Bangham & Leslie 2020).

The literature reviewed have shown the level at which Covid-19 pandemic aggravated the social life, economic, and mental health of parents which by extension affect the stability and wellbeing of family members. For instance, parental mental health problems, such as loneliness, hopelessness, depressive symptoms, and parenting stress are risk factors affecting family stability and wellbeing by creating a more stressful home environment (Conger et al., 2002). As the stresses of the COVID-19 crisis worsen parental mental health, this by extension may increase children's behavioral and socioemotional problems. It is against the bedrock that this study was intended to examine the impact of Covid-19 on the wellbeing and stability of families in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria.

Objectives of the Study

The study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. To determine the impact of lockdown as a result of Covid-19 on families' wellbeing and stability.
2. To examine the impact of Covid-19 on the mental health of parents affecting families' wellbeing and stability.
3. To determine the impact of Covid-19 on the socioeconomic of parents affecting families' wellbeing and stability.

Research Questions

The study posed the following questions:

1. What is impact of lockdown as a result of Covid-19 on families' wellbeing and stability?
2. What is the impact of Covid-19 on the mental health of parents affecting families' wellbeing and stability?
3. What is the impact of Covid-19 on the socioeconomic of parents affecting families' wellbeing and stability?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a survey research, specifically the cross-sectional survey design which implored the use of a portion of the population to collect data. The survey research design was appropriate to this study as it also allows the researcher to use a portion of the population to make generalizations on the respondents' perspectives in relation to the impact of Covid-19 on families' wellbeing and stability in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, Nigeria. The population of the study comprised parents in the twelve (12) wards of Jos-South Local Government Area of Plateau State. There was no sampling in selecting the wards as the entire twelve wards were chosen for the study. However, a Non-Probability Sampling Technique called convenience sampling was used in selecting 120 respondents for the study.

The instrument for data collection was an Impact of Covid-19 on Families Questionnaire (ICFQ), constructed by the researcher based on the literature reviewed. The construct validity of the instrument was established by subjecting the instrument to three experts from the Department of Science and Technology Education, Faculty of Education, University of Jos. Two experts from the

Home Economics and one from Measurement and Evaluation who checked the questionnaire items to ensure the appropriateness and comprehensiveness of the items in representing the content of the traits being measured. Also, to obtain the reliability of the study, the ICFQ was administered to 30 parents in Jos North Local Government Area of Plateau State and a reliability index of 0.74 was obtained using a Cronbach Alpha method.

The study sought to provide answers to three research questions. The response options to the items under the research questions were based on a four-point scales: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD) with numerical values 4, 3, 2 and 1 respectively. The answers to the research questions were analyzed using descriptive statistics, mean and standard deviation. To effect decision, an item with a mean value ($\bar{x}$) of 2.50 and above was considered "Agree" but the one mean value below 2.50 was considered "Disagree". All analyses were carried out using a Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 25.

The administration of the Impact of Covid-19 on Families Questionnaire (ICFQ) to the respondents and the retrieval of the filled ICFQ lasted for one month. At the end of the exercise, a total of 120 valid copies of the ICFQ were realized, indicating 100% retrieval.

RESULTS

This section presents and interprets the data analysis of the research questions posed by the study.

Research Question One

What is impact of lockdown as a result of Covid-19 on families' wellbeing and stability?

This research question was answered using mean and standard deviation as presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Parents on the Impact of Lockdown as a Result of Covid-19 on Families' Wellbeing and Stability in Jos South LGA of Plateau State

Item	Statement	N	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	δ	Remark
1	Heightened family tension.	120	34	41	24	21	2.73	1.06	Agree
2	Domestic violence.	120	13	18	62	27	2.14	0.89	Disagree
3	Worries about health of family members.	120	46	53	11	10	3.13	0.89	Agree
4	Pressure related to going to work.	120	19	23	46	32	2.24	1.02	Disagree
5	Learning disabilities	120	51	47	15	7	3.18	0.87	Agree
6	Substance misuse.	120	39	48	13	20	2.88	1.05	Agree

Source: Survey, 2021

Key: N = Number of Respondents, SA, A, D, SD = Responses of Respondents, $\bar{X}$ = Mean, δ = Standard Deviation, Criterion mean = 2.50

The data presented in Table 1 showed that the mean responses of the parents (respondents) on the items are within the range of 2.14 and 3.18. The table further revealed that with exception to items 2 and 4 which the respondents disagreed with as they were rated below the mean criterion of 2.50 with regards to impact of lockdown as a result of Covid-19 on families' wellbeing and stability, all other items are agreed with by the respondents. It can be deduced from the table that majority of the item statements have been agreed by the respondents. Also, the table showed that the standard deviations of the items as rated by the teachers are within the range of 0.87 and 1.06, indicating a higher degree of unanimity of response among the respondents.

Research Question Two

What is the impact of Covid-19 on the mental health of parents affecting families' wellbeing and stability?

This research question was answered using mean and standard deviation as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Mean and Standard Deviation of Parents on the Impact of Covid-19 on the Mental Health of Parents Affecting Families' Wellbeing and Stability in Jos South LGA

Item	Statement	N	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	δ	Remark
7	Depression	120	41	46	14	19	2.91	1.05	Agree
8	Stress	120	33	51	11	25	2.77	1.08	Agree
9	Irritability	120	40	47	15	18	2.91	1.03	Agree
10	Post-traumatic stress symptoms	120	49	46	14	11	3.11	0.94	Agree
11	Hopelessness	120	38	53	19	10	2.99	0.90	Agree

Source: Survey, 2021

The data presented in Table 2 showed that the mean responses of the parents on the items are within the range of 2.77 and 3.11. The table further revealed that the entire items were rated above the criterion mean of 2.50 with respect to the impact of Covid-19 on the mental health of parents affecting families' wellbeing and stability in Jos-South LGA of Plateau State. It can be deduced from the table that the respondents with the entire item statements. Also, the table showed that the standard deviations of the items as rated by the teachers are within the range of 0.90 and 1.08, indicating a higher degree of unanimity of response among the respondents.

Research Question Three

What is the impact of Covid-19 on the socioeconomic of parents affecting families' wellbeing and stability?

This research question was answered using mean and standard deviation as presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Parents on the Impact of Covid-19 on the Socioeconomic of Parents Affecting Families' Wellbeing and Stability in Jos South LGA

Item	Statement	N	SA	A	D	SD	$\bar{X}$	δ	Remark
12	Loss of jobs	120	56	47	8	9	3.25	0.88	Agree
13	Salary cuts	120	42	45	15	18	2.93	1.04	Agree
14	Loss of business	120	36	39	16	29	2.68	1.15	Agree
15	Salary increase	120	10	12	81	17	2.13	0.75	Disagree
16	Increased borrowing of loans/debts from friends and families	120	43	47	17	13	3.00	0.97	Agree
17	Increased use of credit cards and overdrafts.	120	55	46	11	8	3.23	0.88	Agree

Source: Survey, 2021

Table 3 showed that the mean responses of parents on the items fall within the range of 2.13 to 3.25. It was revealed in the table that with exception to item 15, the other items are rated above the criterion mean of 2.50 implying that the respondents agreed on the items as the impact of Covid-19 on the socioeconomic of parents affecting families' wellbeing and stability in Jos South L.G.A. Similarly, the table showed that the standard deviations of the items are within the range of 0.75 and 1.05, indicating a higher degree of unanimity of response among the teachers.

DISCUSSION

This section discusses the findings of the study by clearly stating where the findings are in agreement or disagreement with what other researchers had found prior to this study. The discussion of the findings was made in accordance with the three research questions posed by the study.

Findings based on research question one revealed that heightened family tension, worries about of family members, pressures related to going to work, substance misuse were the issues

that affected families' wellbeing and stability in Jos South LGA of Plateau State due to lockdown imposed as a result of Covid-19. This finding is in agreement with the assertion of Barnardo (2020) who established that period of prolonged confinement has led to heightened family tensions and domestic abuse as a result of additional pressures such as job losses caused by Covid-19 pandemic. To further support the findings of this study on the issue of substance misuse, Smith and Barron (2020) also opined that for some parents, Covid-19 pandemic escalated issues such as substance misuse and domestic violence. But this study disagrees with the issue of domestic violence as the respondents in the study area affirmed that such issue was not experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Findings based on research question two with respect to the impact of Covid-19 on the mental health of parents that affected families' wellbeing and stability revealed that parents within the study area experienced mental health issues such as depression, stress, irritability, post-traumatic stress symptoms and hopelessness as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. This finding is in relation with the assertion made by Hawryluck et al. (2004); Brooks et al. (2020) who asserted that COVID-19 situation births a high presence of psychological distress such as depression, stress, irritability, and post-traumatic stress symptoms associated with quarantine. These psychological issues have long-lasting effects on the people continuing for years after the event (Liu et al., 2012). To further support the findings of this study, the survey conducted by Calarco (2020) found that on average mothers who have greatly increased the time they spend caring for their children during the pandemic have disproportionately experienced substantial increases in stress, anxiety, and frustrations with their children. Parental mental health problems, such as loneliness, hopelessness, depressive symptoms, and parenting stress are risk factors affecting family stability and wellbeing by creating a more stressful home environment (Conger et al., 2002).

Findings based on research question three with respect to the impact of Covid-19 on the socioeconomic of parents affecting families' wellbeing and stability revealed that Covid-19 pandemic led to loss of jobs, salary cuts, loss of business, increased borrowing of loans/debts from friends and families, and increased use of credit cards and overdrafts. On the issues of job losses and salary cuts as found in this study, it is in agreement with the findings made by Understanding Society, (2020) who established that COVID-19 to a large extent has exacerbated factors which can influence the prevalence of parental depression, including economic hardship and job insecurity. While salaries/earnings have fallen (cut) for households across the world as a result of the pandemic, parents have faced particularly severe losses and are more likely to be in serious financial difficulty (Kempson & Poppe 2020). Many families have been unable to access food, support and items needed to engage in education, and these increased difficulties in accessing the basics have impacted wellbeing and mental health (Smith and Barron 2020). To further support the findings of this study, Bangham and Leslie (2020) opined that lower-income families are particularly likely to have increased their use of credit cards and overdrafts, as well as turning to informal loans from friends and family.

CONCLUSION

Based on the outcomes on the findings on the impact of Covid-19 on the wellbeing and stability of families in Jos South Local Government Area of Plateau State, it can be concluded that Covid-19 pandemic has aggravated the social life, economic, and mental health of families whose effects are evident in the stability and wellbeing of family members. Though Covid-19 pandemic has subsided, the economic and social forces shaping family life will remain with us and may take new shapes in the future. Understanding these phenomena, and crafting the appropriate policy response to mitigating these shocks on parents and children, should be a top priority for scholars and policy makers alike.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. As the spread of the pandemic is being curtailed, all Covid-19 guidelines set by NCDC should be adhered to at all times.
2. Government should create more empowerment programmes in order to train individuals that lost their jobs and businesses as a result of the pandemic to enable them cater for themselves and their households.

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