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# A THEORETICAL REVIEW OF THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

**By**

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## Abstract

*The coronavirus (COVID-19) created hindrance to life across the globe in the year 2020. This study specifically sought to interrogate the effects of Corona virus Pandemic on the school activities of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. The study was anchored on Structural Functionalist Theory, gathered data through secondary sources. The study found from the reviewed literature that the Corona virus outbreak cause disruption to educational calendar of universities and other tertiary institutions, it was revealed that the major effect of the pandemic is that students who are supposed to graduate could not graduate as a result of the outbreak of the pandemic. It was also found that Classroom Lectures were canceled or postponed, suspension of research and students' projects due to COVID-19 Pandemic. The study recommends that, there is need for government to up the budgetary allocation of tertiary schools in Nigeria to enable the school management take proper action in solving the problems created by the closure of schools during the period of corona virus outbreak. Finally, government should be directive from government to all the tertiary institutions in Nigeria to adopt both physical and virtual teaching and research activities to solve any problem that may occur in the future.*

**Key words:** Academic activities, COVID-19, Effects, Pandemic, Tertiary Institutions.



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## Introduction

COVID-19 pandemic which broke out in 2019 in China and spread across the globe has affected virtually every sector of the country, including the educational sector. Ogunode, et al. (2020), observes thatCoronaviruses are a group of viruses that can cause disease in both humans and animals.Research has shown that the virus spread mostly from one person to another or when there is a close contact of about six feet or approximately two meters (Aiyedun & Ogunode, 2020). The disease is communicated through different respiratory tracts, including; mouth, nostrils, and human respiratory organs (Sahu, 2020). The virus which existence started in Wuhan China, in December 2019 and pronounced as a Pandemic by World Health Organization (WHO) on the 11th March, 2020, later on, countries throughout the world have had to enforce central criteria preventive measures, which were used during the time of Spanish Flu epidemic (Sambo, et al., 2020).

After a consistent reduction in January 2022, the number of weekly cases increased by 8% as at 13th March 2022, taking the total figure of affected people to 455 million with more than six million deaths reported in 222 countries, globally (WHO, 2022). Death rate of covid-19 differs across countries and the causes of this difference in death rate are still unclear (Jegede, 2020). Although, in some continents, age, along with those with multiple health challenges such as cardiopulmonary disease, diabetes, infants and immune-compromised individuals has been identified to have contributed to the death rate.The present number of cases can be said to be very low compared to the mobility and mortality level of covid-19 as it doesn't take cognizance of people who have no symptom or disease (Oyinloye, 2020).

In Nigeria, sample tested stands at 5,441,162 while confirmed cases of Covid-19 was stated to be 263,322 and deaths cases was reported to be 3,148, and over 257,253 have been discharged, active case was confirmed to be 2,921.At August 2022, a total of 63,346,714 vaccine doses have been administered (NCDC). Jacob (2020), also revealed that over 146 countries across the world including Nigeria declared closing of schools, by that it means throwing over 1.37 billion learners and about 60.2 million teachers out of the teaching jobs. Most governments across the globe, for the main time, ordered the use of public television channels for teaching students of secondary schools and below, and other higher institutions migrated to online teaching platforms to communicate with their students (Ogunode, 2020).

Those measures introduced to manage its spread created grave hindrance to not just the economic activity but also educational activities. Consequently, the Covid-19 eruption points out how health and educational systems are connected to each other, and how local educational systems are connected to the rest of the world. Increase level of urbanization and the growth of business and travel have influence the spread of the virus globally, movement restrictions and lockdowns within countries and across borders have created a gap in national and international educational activities particularly the academic activities due to various measures introduced across the country and has led to general decrease in educational activities across the world most especially in the developing countries interruption have also increased the fragility of the educational systems (Ali & Muhammed, 2021).

Presence of students in school is one of the best measures public schools employed to increase the skills, awareness and ability of children. Although, this prolonged period of school closure has reasonable chain on skill acquisition and the development of school children (Alaba & Emmanuel, 2020). It is important to note that schooling enhanced learning but when schools close, students are denied the opportunities for increased learning as well as academic development. Demerits of school closure are huge for under-privileged students

who tend to have little or no educational opportunity other than school teaching(Adeola, et al., 2019).

The colleges and universitiesclosure did not only disrupt lecturing of students globally, butcorresponds with key assessment period of examinations which were differed or cancelled as a result of corona virus outbreak. Afterwards, curfew and lockdown in different states were introduced to reduce the growing spread of the virus. Every citizen apart from those on essential services were expected to remain at home and keep good hand washing hygiene practices, business, offices, international and local travels were restricted public gatherings (including place of worship), schools and universities were closed, both private and public institutions. The implementation of these measures disrupted and created loopholes in the educational activities across the country. It is on this note that the study seeks to review COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on academic activities of higher institutions in Nigeria.The study was guided with the following research objectives: i. To examine educational activities during COVID-19 Pandemic. ii. To assessed the effects of COVID-19 on academic activities in tertiary institutions in Nigeria. iii. To identify the strategies used to cushion the effects of COVID-19 in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

## Methodology

This study, a theoretical review of the effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on academic activities of tertiary institutions in Nigeria employed discourse analysis as its technique of analyzing secondary data from newspapers, magazines, journals, and articles. All the findings and statement in this study were based on information from the materials reviewed from data bases such as Cross Mark Data, PubMed, Google Scholar and Research Gate.

## Literature Review

The literature review is divided into three parts, namely; conceptual review, empirical review and theoretical framework.

## Conceptual Review

This has to do with the review of major concept raging from COVID-19, Tertiary institutions etc.

## The concept of COVID-19

The World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) sees corona virus as family of viruses that brings illnesses such as common cold to more serious diseases like serious acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). The above mentioned viruses were earlier transmitted from animals to people. SARS, for example, used to be communicated from civet cats to humans while MERS moved from a type of camel (Jegede, 2020). Corona virus, as a word, originated from a Latin word, ‘corona’, meaning crown or halo (Ogunode, 2020). The dreadful corona virus, discovered by Chinese government on 7$^{th}$ January 2019 and since named SARS COVID-2 is a new breed that had not been seen in humans before (Jacob, 2020). To the WHO, pre-indication of the virus ranges from cough, fever, and difficulties in breathing in more serious invents it can bring about pneumonia, death and even organ failure, presently the count on the days of incubation period start from time of infection and the beginning of symptoms ranging from day one to 14 days. Most infected person display symptoms from five to six days. Although, infected persons may not display any symptom even if they have the virus in their body (Aiyedun & Ogunde, 2020).

On the 27th of February 2020, the outbreak of the virus was discovered in Lagos state Nigeria, from an Italian citizen who works in Nigeria and came back to the country on the 26 February, 2020 from Milan in Italy through the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, who later took ill on 26 of February and was moved to Lagos state Biosecurity facilities made for isolated patients and testing. Currently, Nigeria is having 266,593 confirmedcases of covid-19, with 3,155 deaths, reported to WHO. As of 19th March 2023, a total of 116,606,863 vaccine doses have been administered.

**The concept of tertiary institutions**

Tertiary institutions comprised all universities be it public or private owned university, polytechnic, colleges of education and technology with other institutes of post-secondary schools (Ogunode, et al., 2020). Alaba and Emmanuel (2020), posit that tertiary institution consist of non-university sector and university sectors, the non-university according to them includes; Monotechnics, colleges of education and polytechnics. Tertiary institutions in general provide opportunities for vocational, technical and undergraduate education, the academic activities usually starts in September and ends in July, majority of the universities use semester system of four-five months. While some operate from January to December, and are mostly divided into 3 terms of 10-12 weeks minimum (Ogunode, et al., 2020).

**Educational Activities during COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria: An overview**

Eze, et al. (2021), in a study investigating the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on Education in Nigeria: implications for policy and practice of e-learning using exploratory mixed method research design for the study. Revealed that the constrains of education in the time of COVID-19 pandemic are as follows, inadequate studying environment, inadequate skills, and unequal opportunities to education bringing about inadequate school healthcare and constrain in school assessment and promotion, poor achievement, bringing about poor school enrollment and inequality in education. Jegede (2020), posited that the impact of COVID-19 on primary school pupils in Nigeria including the temporary cessation of learning and teaching, temporary cassation of promotion examination, temporal cessation of out of school hours lectures, interruption of the school activities, and the lifting of enrollment of new students into primary school at the appropriate time occasioned by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Similarly, Jacob (2020) in trailing the impact of COVID-19 school close down on academic programme of senior secondary school in Abaji Area Council of Federal Capital Territory Abuja, Nigeria. As at March 30, 2021 it was predicted that 88 percent of the students in the world, making it about 1.6 billion students, were touched by the closure of schools. The majority of the students affected are in primary and secondary schools. Although, millions of students of pre-nursery and higher institutions were also among the affected learners (Abdulazeez, 2020). Over 180 countries have closed down schools globally, and some of the countries have introduced localized school shut down. Particularly, in Nigeria, some of the impact of corona virus on tertiary institution includes; interruption of academic schedule of program, decrease in international education, reduction of budget of tertiary education, stopping of international and local conferences and creating space in teaching and learning.

Opara, et al. (2020), in a study of an assessment of house hold perception on the impact of covid-19 pandemic and school closure on secondary school in Gwagwalada Area Council Abuja, indicated that some students during the time of COVID-19 pandemic school closure are not properly receiving lecture, they equally revealed that students were found to be hawking rather than studying at home at the time of school closure.

Oyinloye, (2020) in a study of impact of COVID-19 on senior secondary school student and performance in science subjects in Nigeria employed case study research design approach revealed the likelihood of increase low performance of student in passing of external exams of senior secondary school students in the yearly external examination may increase if the pandemic is not properly taking care of and brought to an end. He also found some of the factors which may have contributed to the poor passing rate of students to include poor electricity supply in Nigeria and inadequate infrastructural facilities which are lacking in majority of the schools in Nigeria.

Also, Mahdy (2020), on the impact of covid-19 pandemic on the school performance of veterinary medical students using cross-section study was carried out to analyze the data. The study revealed school shutdown to have affected the study accomplishment of students, majority of the respondents (96.7%) with different degree. The real appraisal for the e-learning in all was 5.1-2.4 while that of practical parts is 3.6-2.6. Main while, e-learning gives room to students for studying alone, it was found that the real constrain that e-learning for veterinary medical students faced majorly is how to receive the practical lectures because majority of the subject are practical. Hence, it is difficult to do that in an online platform. Students believe that it is hard to complete veterinary competencies through e-learning platform.

Seun, (2020), observed in his study on the influence of COVID-19 on the psychological wellbeing of higher institution students in Nigeria using descriptive design method indicated that being alone, stress and depression highly shape COVID-19 on the psychological wellbeing. Jegede (2020), observed that the temporary closure of schools as an effort to reduce the spread of the virus globally came along with a serious effect on the learning process of students. The pandemic largely affected education, mostly in the aspect of literacy development.

In another study Obiako and Adeniran (2020), revealed that COVID-19 has affected education in three different aspects, missed lectures for most of the pre-pandemic students, lack of ability to get vital school activities and leaving behind children at home. Hence, the above effect can be said to increase the gap in educational standard and socio-economic inequalities as a result of closure of schools in Nigeria. It is believe to be so because few percent of students who are in the city are in better position to come from financially stable home, have a better opportunity to acquire education during school shutdown through online learning, keeping behind majority of students from poor income households from the rural areas and site light villages of the country.

Sembo, et al. (2020), found that there is need for higher institutions to be given support of facilities like data for browsing, laptops, palmtops to both lecturers and students, because the new mode of teaching through virtual by teachers required that teachers have or receive the needed training and skills to aid the e-learning method. Aside the training and skills needed by lecturers, ICT tools should also be made available as it will enhance the prosperity of virtual learning.

Notwithstanding the constrain occasion by joining and embracing the online learning method, is that, it has been seen as the desirable means of learning in the time of global pandemic like the COVID-19 where the movement of people has been restricted and educational activities were closedown (Ogunode, 2020b). Approving online learning method for tertiary institution will improved the effectiveness of knowledge as both teachers and students will easily access a large number of information across the globe. Majority of tertiary institutions, lecture room

is the major constrain they have as some time there is a clashing in lecture schedule and sometimes too much population of students for a particular course.

Ogunode (2020), indicated that the online learning will totally reduce the challenges of inadequate lecture room since students can receive lecture through the e-learning system without any interruption at their own will. Online teaching and learning also give teacher and students freedom to partake in lecture from their home or wherever they are with the things they so desire when equated to the usual method of teaching where in some cases these basic needs will be lacking for comfortable learning environment. Nasir and Khan (2020), also corroborate with this in a study where they revealed that students in India have more freedom working with laptop/PC and other online learning gadgets than the usual physical lecture room.

Online learning give room for students to discuss with one another through the interaction platform which eradicate the obstacle of class attendance. It equally give room for adequate interaction and build good relationship between teachers and students. It also enable students to learn and study any time their feel like studying since the study materials are made available and the substance contain everything that was taught and accessible at any given time. Therefore, it reduces burden and increase contentment. The idea of online learning will open lecturers and students to the state of the world in reality from the lecture room knowing fully well that the globe is the world of web. The online learning will open the eyes of students to easily key into the organizations where such forum exist. Online learning can be classified to be cheaper because the benefit is more than the cost since traveling is reduce and there is little demand for infrastructural development in the aspect of building a classroom.

Jacob (2020), states that the worth of lecturing students physically involves lots of structural development, sharing and managing expenditure are very expensive when measured with the online teaching that is considered cheaper. The above indicate that making use of online teaching and learning will take care of major challenges of education particularly during the period of the pandemic, just like Anene, et al. (2014), found that the gain of using online learning in teaching students is more than that of classroom teaching, they made this conclusion after careful comparing some factors that are involved in the both mode of teaching, the numbers of students that will be teach and the kilometer at which one will travel from.

Ebohon, et al. (2021), explore the impact of COVID-19 lockdown on education in Nigeria using a cross-sectional study found how most departmental staff of universities have acquired needed understanding and information about online learning. Although, it is important for every staff members to know everything that it has do with online teaching as this will enhance the teaching and learning between lecturers and students. The major difficulty in e-learning as identify by lecturers and students from this study was the irregular teaching communication they usually have with their lecturers, and this have impacted them badly in a very big way. WhatsApp platform was form by the students mainly for the aim of aiding their learning and for interaction to take place between them through audio note or messages. It is believe by the students that virtual teaching is not effective, because they can be distracted easily, most especially those of them who come from an extended home commonly experience this kind of distraction and those them making use of smartphones for e-learning.

Majority of the lecturers agreed that clarifying delicate scientific terms to students on the platform is very had. Some time in trying to make complex terms simple, lecturers usually upload or send in a recorded voice note with complete explanation of the terms for students to

watch ahead of lecture time to give them an easier understanding before the virtual class. Students also assent that they were been loaded with too much assignments and directives that is been given to them is mostly confusing lecturers preferred given homework, verbal text and examinations. Findings further revealed that students sees too much homework and confusing directives to be unhealthy and affects students fulfillment reasonably ($P<0.05$). Meanwhile, majority of e-learning instruments give room for internet examinations. Lecturers mostly perceive online examinations as bad, because students are not been given proper invigilation thereby making it easier for them to engaged in examination malpractice.

Andersen and Nielsen (2019), it was revealed that majority of e-learning lecturers from different department were not properly provided with the needed knowledge of online teaching. They also discovered e-learning pattern and performance to be insignificant compared to the previous ways of lecturing. Although, the two method of teaching and learning was found not have any reasonable differences in the area of attitude, memory outcomes and accomplishment. Ananga and Biney (2017), in a study of effectiveness of physics e-learning lecture in tertiary institutions revealed that making use of the two mode of teaching is far better by management and teachers. The finding from the lecturers and management shows that applying the two mode of teaching was suggested by all the respondents.

Anene, et al., (2014), assess infrastructural facilities in university using descriptive analysis found that poor standard of facilities hindered a move away from the previous way of lecturing to the new method of lecturing which is the online teaching. It was further revealed from the study that majority of the respondents agreed with the move away from physical teaching to e-learning mode. However, respondents were of the believe that the facilities for online lecturing were insufficient and as such need further improvement to aid online learning.

**Empirical Review of the Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on Academic Activities of Tertiary Institutions in Nigeria.**

The empirical investigation about the effect of COVID-19 pandemic on academic activities of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. Iseolorunkanmi, et al. (2021), in a study of corona virus outbreak and lecturers reaction to online knowledge using primary data source collected through questionnaire. It was revealed that lecturer sees online teaching to be more effective. Among 192 teachers that used online teaching in the period of Covid-19 outbreak,54(28%) of them are lecturers in public institutions uses the online platform to teach their students, and majority 138 (72%) of the lecturers from private institutions use virtual lecturing methods in teaching their student, this is an indication that from the 288 teachers who participated from public institutions and 147 lecturers from the private institution who took part in the study.54 and 138 teachers making it (19%) and (81%) of the lecturers from both government owned institution and private institutions uses online learning in lecturing their students.

Jegede (2020) carried out study on the perception of university students on the impact of the corona virus on tertiary institution growth in the FCT, Abuja, Nigeria. The findings indicated that 100% of the participants concord that the corona virus cause a serious disruption to the academic activities of tertiary institutions, while 90.5% of the participants also agreed that corona virus outbreak had an impact on the budget execution of tertiary institutions in the year 2020; and 94.5% of the participants are also in agreeable opinion that corona virus disease has a strong contribution towards the decrease in the work force of tertiary institutions in Nigeria. So also 89% of the participants equally believe that virtual teaching is

the best option that can be used for conventional studying process in cases of future occurrences of health crises.

Mahdy (2020), in a study of impact of corona virus outbreak on the educational accomplishment of veterinary medical students, it was revealed that respondents employed different electronic machines for e-learning. More than half of the respondents (51%) make use of smartphones for online study, while (32.8%) used laptop and (9.6%) indicate the use of tablet and few of the respondents (6.6%) indicated that they used personal computer. The time used for e-learning are from one hours to fourteen hours daily with at a rate of 3.1-1.9 hours daily in e-learning. In the average of hour spent on e-learning 44.7% of respondents use up to 2 hours daily in e-learning, while 48.8% of respondents use up to 3-6 hours daily and 6.5% of the respondents use up to 7-4 hours per day. In another study by Mahdy (2020), on the rate of manpower and facilities of Nigerian universities before the corona virus outbreak, the respondents were questioned if they were lectured through e-learning. Among the 435 respondents who partook in the study 99 (23%) of the respondents agreed that they were trained in readiness for the task and 336 (77%) states that they was no training organized for them for the virtual learning and teaching.

**Theoretical Framework**

This paper is anchored on the structural functionalist theory which evolved from the ideas of Emile Durkheim, August Comte, Herbert Spencer, David Easton and Talcott Parsons (Parsons & Bales, 1955) cited in (Sumner, et al., 2020). The Perspective is interested on how societies maintain internal stability and live beyond. The theory also tried to explain social cohesion and stability through the concept of "solidarity". The theory also assumed there is a principle of organic relationship between the various structures/units existing in a system or society in terms of their functions. The strength of the theory is that each of the institutions, relationships, roles, and norms that together constitute a society serves a purpose, and each is indispensable for the continued existence of the others and of society as a whole. Hence, any defect in a part of the system or society creates problems to other parts, imbalances and obviates appropriate outcome.

Critically, structural-functionalism focuses on the needs of society and how human activities can relate to the satisfaction of the societal needs. However, the weakness of the theory is that, it failed to inform us about activities in everyday life and the ways in which people are active agents to meet the needs of the society.

The application of the theory to this work is that the outbreak of COVID-19 as a health shock which affected the health sector and consequently other human activities within the society such as complete job loss, closure of schools, change in mode of teaching/learning, reduction in pay from employers. Thus, this invariably affected the academic activities of educational institutions in the society with its consequences.

**Contribution to Knowledge**

The study has tried to fill a gap in the learning process in the institutions of higher learning. This gap is that most of our tertiary institutions are not pro-active to meet the exigencies or emergencies that may crop up in the educational sector. Modern life and beneath demand that our universities in particular should be fully ready to key into the technological imperative in today's learning process.

**Result and Conclusion**

Firstly, the study found from the reviewed literature that the Corona virus outbreak cause disruption to educational calendar of universities and other tertiary institutions, and also lead to the temporary secession of conferencesnationally and internationally. And noted that ICT facilities were not provided to the Universities to aid online education. The study also revealed that the directives of government for the universities to switch to online or virtual teaching were not implemented by the majority of public universities in Nigeria.

Secondly, it was revealed that one of the major effect of the pandemic is that students who are supposed to graduate could not graduate as a result of the outbreak of the pandemic, it was also found that the change from face to face lecturing to virtual was not that impactful to the students due to various reasons such as distraction from the family members of both the students and lecturers, bad internet connectivity, inability of some students having a smartphone etc.

Finally, it was also found that Classroom Lectures were canceled or postponed, suspension of research and students' projects due to COVID-19 Pandemic. It also revealed Zoom as one of the mostly used platform alongside WhatsApp, with Google classroom also being highly used by students, Microsoft Teams, Edmodo, Skype, and Google Meet which happens to be among the partially used platform for e-learning method.

The overall shutdown of schools across the country caused by the corona virus outbreak in Nigeria and around the globe which led to disruption of educational knowledge of students, interruption of school activities, hindered the writing of examination, hindrance of national and international paper presentations, widening the gap in education and possibly lead to inadequate workforce in tertiary schools. Therefore, increase in the pandemic will result to decline in the academic activities of tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

**The way forward**

i. There is need for government to step up the budgetary allocation to tertiary schools in Nigeria to enable the school management take proper action in solving the problems created by the closure of schools during the period of corona virus outbreak.

ii. It will be of great importance for government to direct all tertiary schools in Nigeria to adopt both face to face and the modern e-learning method in lecturing and research work to solve any problem that will occur in the future.

iii Government should immediately embark on the massive improvement of infrastructural facilities in the tertiary institutions across the country.

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