



Research Paper

Social Impact and Coping Strategies of Covid-19 Pandemic: Insights from Social Studies Undergraduates Students

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ABSTRACT: This study examined the social impact which the COVID-19 pandemic had on them and the coping strategies adopted by social studies undergraduates'. The study employed a sample of one hundred and eighteen (118) students. An online google form questionnaire was the instrument of data collection. Mean, t-test analysis and standard deviation were used to analyse the data collected. The study established that the pandemic had a severe social impact on social studies undergraduate students; undergraduate students' coping strategies during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown were significant. It was recommended that to reduce and avoid the social impact of lockdowns, coping strategies identified in this study can be adopted by students in other disciplines in order to mitigate the impact of boredom, stress and psychological effects of future lockdown as a result of a pandemic.

KEYWORDS: Social Impact; Covid-19; Coping Strategies, Social Studies; Undergraduates Students.

Received 20 June, 2021; Revised: 03 July, 2021; Accepted 05 July, 2021 © The author(s) 2021.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The advent of the global pandemic called COVID-19, otherwise known as coronavirus, has presented many challenges to educational, psychological, economic, health and social aspects of day to day human life. Educational institutions and students have faced the adverse effects arising from school closures in countries worldwide. The [1] estimated that about 1.7 billion learners were out of school; the impact was harmful because the educational development of these learners suffered a setback. [2] reported that in March 2020, around 3.9 billion people were under some form of compulsory lockdown. Besides, these lockdowns affected people of all social strata as the [3] stated that the world was in the middle of a global crisis health-wise like never before, fighting a pandemic that is spreading, causing deaths and untold hardship. Therefore, the pandemic is a health challenge and an educational, economic, and social crisis. [4] observed that the pandemic's economic and social implications had been a subject of research and policy responses in recent time by people, institutions and countries, and to be candid their responses was pragmatic. For instance, Delta State University's responses included developing an online learning system called DELSU Learning Management System (DLMS), an educational application developed by the school ICT unit.

Similarly, [5] also identified the pandemic's social impact and the need for more studies on the social impact of the pandemic on learners. Hence, these researchers will use this study to contribute to the literature on the pandemic's social impact. In addition, the study aims to examine the social impact of the pandemic on social studies undergraduates. Also, the study explored the coping strategies adopted by the students to navigate the period of school closure.

This paper provided answers to the following questions and hypotheses.

- I. What was the social impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on social studies undergraduates of Delta State University?
- II. What were the coping strategies adopted by social studies undergraduates of Delta State University during the Covid-19 lockdown?
- III. What can be done to mitigate the socio-impact of future pandemic lockdown on undergraduates?

Ho₁: No existence of significant social impact of Covid-19 pandemic on undergraduate students.

Ho₂ :No significant coping strategies that undergraduate students of Delta State Universities found helpful during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study adopted the Social Interaction theory as the theoretical foundation for the study. This theory explains the development of communication, emphasising the role of social interaction between people in society. It is based mainly on the socio-cultural theories of the Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky. The theory stressed that people are social beings who are socially interactive and cannot exist in isolation. It is an all-inclusive theory designed to bring people together with the sole aim of interaction. The theory replicates how society is organised socially and how humans are intrinsically linked together to communicate and relate daily. It serves the social and affective needs of people, both students and their teachers.

The social interaction theory is of utmost relevance to social studies and this study because it emphasises the importance of interaction and relationship in society, which COVID-19 restrictions interrupted. For social studies that deals with social interaction among individuals in society, physical contact is key to social interaction among people and groups. This theory's impact on this study is that it will enable individuals to appreciate interaction skills and see the socio impact of separation due to lockdowns and movement restrictions [6]. Finally, it will enable Nigerians to participate actively in social interactions and relevant activities after the COVID-19 situation.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

Socio-impact of COVID-19

The restrictions enforced by the state and federal government across Nigeria during the COVID-19 pandemic caused substantial difficulties to Nigerians' socio-economic welfare. Among the most vulnerable were students of universities and other higher institutions, as access to social services such as education, banking services, transportation and others were disrupted. This made students susceptible to all manners of socio, and psychological stress, [7] opined that educational systems in Nigeria received their share of shock from the pandemic as students in rural areas had little or no learning engagements, but their urban counterparts had engagements with internet resources. [8] revealed that children and adolescents who participated in audio-visual sessions complained of boredom. On a similar note, those without access to the internet were unhappy, experienced anxiety, fear, and showed stress symptoms. On a positive note, 43.4% of respondents said they used the period to acquire new aptitudes, while 61.1% opined an increase in family bonding.

[9] holds that the pandemic significantly impacted how higher education students lived and worked; it affected them physically and mentally, their educational process, social contacts, and emotions. The study reported that students were anxious, bored and frustrated and that the pandemic had a more substantial social impact on male students than female students. [10] did a literature review on the pandemic's impact and stated that it caused tremendous disruption to educational systems in the history of humanity as more than 94% of the entire student population in the world were affected. Physical distancing and movement restrictions affected regular educational sessions. In Nigeria, many federal universities lost the 2020 academic year. The pandemic created the need to look inward and develop digital learning at all levels of education in Nigeria to mitigate the effect of future pandemics or lockdown. [11] lamented the COVID-19 pandemic impact on children and youths' education, mental health, and social life.

[12] noted that millions of people were affected socially through social distancing, avoidance of physical contact, lack of social interactions, and the ban on public gatherings, among activities cancelled or postponed were social activities of university students. [5] alleged that international travel limitations did not help slow down the spread of the virus before mid-February 2020. Therefore, public health strategies such as testing, frequent hand washing, physical distancing and self-quarantine should be adopted as preventive measures instead of travel restrictions. [13] investigated the effect of social exclusion on individuals' health and discovered that the effect is detrimental. The study showed that people with little or no social life tend to die early than those whose social activities level is high. This can be detrimental, considering the sociable nature of undergraduates and human beings in general.

[14] lamented the hardship caused by COVID-19, as people could not carry out their social activities such as teaching and learning. Furthermore, [15] assessed the perception of Bangladesh people to ascertain the effect of the pandemic on their social and economic life, the study established that COVID-19 outbreak has undisputedly caused socio, economic and educational crisis, deprivation, social conflicts, mental stress and a fragile health system to the people. [16] shares how the pandemic has affected communal living like that lived in student hostels. [1] examined the unintended consequence of restrains norms, human rights and human dignity. These impacts can also be felt in the educational and cultural sectors as many educational and cultural events like festivals and students' sports fiesta across nations were postponed or outrightly cancelled. Many cultural values were on the brink of extinction; this is sad as cultural values instilled in students are substantial in controlling the pandemic.

[17] explained that social values such as obedience, commitment, responsibility and integrity are significant, especially to students, because they promote behavioural patterns towards compliance with governments' guidelines in curtailing the virus's spread. Students with social values and self-responsibility are more likely to comply with COVID-19 guidelines than those without them. [18] reported that there was a low perception of the virus and compliance in Nigeria, which hampered the country's effort in flattening the curve of the disease, and this can be attributed to the low level of social values among Nigerians including students of universities.

Available data and extensive research indicated an exponential increase in domestic violence cases due to lockdown caused by the pandemic, this violence affected undergraduates too as they were stalked at home. Some of these students were perpetrators, while some were victims. [19] reported that police in the Jinzhou region in China had recorded thrice the number of domestic violence in February 2020 alone, more than cases reported in the whole of 2019. Countries like Australia, Germany, South Africa, and France also recorded a similar gender-based and domestic violence increase during the lockdown. In Nigeria, lockdown, quarantine and self-isolation took a psychological toll on many students; the high rate of hunger, unemployment and poverty associated with the pandemic spiked up domestic and gender-based violence. For instance, the Lagos State Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Team (DSVRT) claimed to have received double the daily domestic violence report two days after introducing the lockdown [2]. Again, [20] asserted that Nigeria and Kenya reported a 30-50% increase in sexual and gender-based violence when the lockdown was introduced in March 2020, while Canada reported lesser domestic or sexual violence incidence.

Coping Strategies

Literature on coping strategies was extensively reviewed in relation to the major variables of the study. In order to cope with the socio impact of COVID-19 lockdown on students in North-Eastern Nigeria, radio education programs were introduced and solar radios distributed to communities in the North East. Furthermore, family recreational activities and provision of food to learners at home were also used as coping strategies by the state governments [21]. [22] submitted that about 10% to 45% of Nigerian parents continued learning activities for their wards/children by arranging a meeting between them and their teachers at home, Ethiopia reported 24% same for their wards/ children while Uganda and Malawi reported 11% and 10% respectively for their wards/children. Students of the University of Ibadan in Nigeria coped by watching movies, used social media and took part in skills development online. However, the study reported high anxiety and depression among low-income families who could not afford these luxuries [23].

[24] elucidates that spending more time indoors away from other engagements than usual provided benefits such as spending quality time with family. Moreover, it has improved the rate of doing productive things and domestic chores such as cooking new recipes, cleaning, babysitting and having fun. Thus, students will also enjoy the positives of the pandemic. Likewise, a survey by academics of the University of Plymouth reported in [25] suggested that the benefit of the lockdown to family life could be long term as it has helped parents and their children who are students to find a balance between work, school and family life. [26] also said that engaging in domestic and household chores during COVID-19 lockdown is a good tip for keeping families on track.

[27] and [28] discovered an upsurge in video gaming, e-sports and live streaming. This was attributed to the cancellation of sports activities and tournaments across the world. This upsurge was recorded because students were at home, many of whom involved in video gaming. In a similar vein, [29] exposed how rethinking television helped families maintain a state of normalcy, most essentially students'. Studies such as [30] and [31] revealed that many students coped by spending time on the internet, social media, phone and video calls with family, friends and coursemates regularly. In addition, [31] accounted that many American students adopted meditation, yoga and exercise as coping strategies while the pandemic lasted. Other strategies adopted are spirituality, such as reading their bibles, Christian books, and praying because of the pandemic's fear and uncertainties [32]. Importantly, it has been affirmed that yoga and meditation help fight stress, promote overall well-being and longevity, and research exercise and yoga boost immunity [33]. Therefore, using these methods to overcome the impact of the pandemic restrictions can help students maintain their sanity while at home.

IV. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Study Design

The study adopted a mixed-method approach, combining a questionnaire (google form) and a group interview to collect data.

4.2 Sample

All students in the Social Studies Education Department (245 students) of the Delta State University, Abraka, made up the study population. Thus, the study sample comprised 118 Social Studies Education students of the Delta State University, Abraka.

4.3 Instruments

Data collection was carried out through Google Forms online and zoom. The researchers used Google form online and Zoom Application because schools were closed down due to the government restriction of movement. Zoom was used for the interview (qualitative). Thus, only through the use of google forms online and the Zoom application could the researchers get the students to respond to the questionnaire and the interview. A request to participate in the study was sent to all students. Section A of the questionnaire included students' personal information such as gender, age and year of the study. Section B of the questionnaire contained a twenty-eight items statement designed to elicit students' response on the social impact of COVID19 and the coping strategies adopted during the Covid19 lockdown. To ascertain the social impact of COVID-19 lockdown on participants, fourteen items were raised, while to identify coping strategies, fourteen items were also formulated. The response mode was a four-point scale measurement of Strongly Agree- SA (4), Agree- A (3), Disagree -D (2) and Strongly Disagree- SD (1). The questionnaire reliability was established using Cronbach Alpha (CA), and a value of 0.91 for the total sample was obtained, showing high reliability.

A group interview as a qualitative method for the study was then conducted in a conversational pattern to gain additional information on the social impact of COVID19 and the coping strategies adopted during the Covid19 lockdown. The qualitative method would allow free interactions, increase comfort, reduce anxiety, confidence in sharing ideas, and mutual catalysts. Open-ended questions were utilised to elicit free opinions. The following questions were posed and prompt to develop the discourse: What can be done to mitigate the socio-impact of future pandemic lockdown on undergraduates?

4.4 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics of mean and standard deviation were used to analyse the data collected through the questionnaire. The equivalent mean of the raw data was used to answer the two research questions. A mean rating on the scale is 2.50 ($4+3+2+1/4 = 2.50$). Any response with a mean rating of 2.50 or above was adjudged agreed, while less than 2.50 was regarded as disagreed. The study received approval from the Ethical Board of the Social Studies Education Department. The questionnaire was anonymous (students' data were elicited but exempted their identification details). Filling out the questionnaire received the approval of students.

V. RESULTS

The study involves 118 first and second-year students of Social Science Education. A two-part questionnaire was designed to elicit information from the students, and the results of the data collected are presented in the tables below.

Q1: What were the social impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on social studies undergraduates?

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Students Response on the Social Impact of Covid19 Pandemic.

| S/N | Item Statement | Mean | SD | Decision |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------|----------|
| 1 | Covid-19 lead to the closure of educational systems | 3.37 | 0.57 | Accepted |
| 2 | Restrictive measures, particularly lockdowns, affected mental health | 3.34 | 0.63 | Accepted |
| 3 | Lockdown lead to fragmentation of social values | 3.33 | 0.88 | Accepted |
| 4 | COVID 19 lockdown caused fear and anxiety | 3.07 | 0.69 | Accepted |
| 5 | Social distancing policies of the pandemic affected social interaction | 3.04 | 0.79 | Accepted |
| 6 | Covid19 lockdown brought about economic difficulty | 3.42 | 0.71 | Accepted |
| 7 | The restrictive measures lead to stress disorders | 3.05 | 0.73 | Accepted |
| 8 | Teaching and learning was disorganized | 3.50 | 0.68 | Accepted |
| 9 | Covid19 lockdown affected school and hostel life | 3.33 | 0.54 | Accepted |
| 10 | Incidences of deprivation and human rights infringement | 3.04 | 0.63 | Accepted |
| 11 | There was an incidence of domestic/sexual violence due to lockdown | 3.32 | 0.64 | Accepted |
| 12 | Covid-19 led to the forced postponement of school event | 2.68 | 0.86 | Accepted |
| 13 | The lockdown weakened social networks and systems which provided support and regulate people's well-being | 3.48 | 0.62 | Accepted |
| 14 | Covid-19 lead to restrain and social conflict | 2.95 | 0.84 | Accepted |
| Grand Mean | | 3.21 | | |

Results in Table 1 indicated that most of the respondents accepted that the students experienced the social impact of the Covid-19 pandemic as the grand mean of 3.21 is above 2.5. From the table, the decision

demonstrates that all items were accepted as to the social impact of Covid-19. The result establishes that there is a significant social impact of Covid-19 pandemic on undergraduate students. This is because the Mean social impact score (3.21) was higher than the population ‘normal’ social impact score of 2.5.

Ho₁: No existence of significant social impact of Covid-19 pandemic on undergraduate students.

Table 2: One sample t-test of Students Response on the Social Impact of Covid19 Pandemic

| One-Sample Test | | | | | | | |
|--------------------------|-----|----------------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------|----------|
| Variable | N | Test Value = 0 | | | | | |
| | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Social Impact of Covid19 | 118 | 33.186 | 117 | .000 | 104.41525 | 98.1841 | 110.6464 |

The result in table 2 establishes that there is a significant social impact of Covid-19 pandemic on undergraduate students. This is because the Mean social impact score (3.21) was higher than the population ‘normal’ social impact score of 2.5. The social impact score was statistically significantly higher than the population normal social score, $t(117) = 33.19, p < .001$.

Q2: What were the coping strategies adopted by social studies undergraduates of Delta State University during the Covid-19 lockdown?

Table 3: Mean and Standard Deviation of Students Response on the Coping Strategies during Covid19 Pandemic Lockdown.

| S/N | Item Statement | Mean | SD | Decision |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|-------------|------|----------|
| 15 | learnt productive skills | 3.25 | 0.64 | Accepted |
| 16 | Bonded with family members | 3.40 | 0.60 | Accepted |
| 17 | Watched Television | 3.27 | 0.65 | Accepted |
| 18 | Socio-media networks | 3.27 | 0.70 | Accepted |
| 19 | Phone and video calls | 3.25 | 0.68 | Accepted |
| 20 | Domestic chores like cooking, cleaning, gardening, etc. | 3.32 | 0.58 | Accepted |
| 21 | Live streaming | 3.24 | 0.66 | Accepted |
| 22 | Sleeping indoor | 2.92 | 0.79 | Accepted |
| 23 | Exercise and workout | 2.99 | 0.78 | Accepted |
| 24 | Family recreational activities | 3.10 | 0.62 | Accepted |
| 25 | Online learning activities | 3.18 | 0.66 | Accepted |
| 26 | E-sports | 3.33 | 0.64 | Accepted |
| 27 | Spirituality | 3.09 | 0.69 | Accepted |
| 28 | Video gaming | 2.99 | 0.81 | Accepted |
| Grand Mean | | 3.19 | | |

Results in Table 3 showed that the majority of the respondents agreed that the use of coping strategies in items 15-28 helped to navigate the social impact of the pandemic lockdown as the 3.19 is above 2.5. from the table, the decision demonstrates that all items were accepted as coping strategies and were found helpful during Covid19 pandemic lockdown.

Ho₂ : No significant coping strategies that undergraduate students of Delta State Universities found helpful during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown.

Table 4: t-test of Students Response on the Coping Strategies Found Useful During the Covid-19 Pandemic Lockdown.

| One-Sample Test | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----|----------------|-----|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------|---------|
| Variable | N | Test Value = 0 | | | | | |
| | | t | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference | |
| | | | | | | Lower | Upper |
| Coping Strategies | 118 | 82.081 | 117 | .000 | 44.61017 | 43.5338 | 45.6865 |

The result in table 4 establishes effective coping strategies that social studies undergraduates found helpful during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown. This is because the Mean coping strategies score (3.19) was higher than the population 'normal' coping strategies score of 2.5. coping strategies score was statistically significantly higher than the population normal coping strategies score, $t(117) = 82.08, p < .001$.

Qualitative Analysis

Q3: What can be done to mitigate the socio-impact of future pandemic lockdown on undergraduates?

As indicated by respondents, a lot can be done to reduce the socio-impact of pandemic lockdown in the future. The first respondent believes that social media networks like Facebook, WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, and others can be used to overcome the socio impact of future pandemics. However, he saw the cost of data as a significant challenge to this option. The second submitted that an effective e-learning system to keep students occupied and busy should be explored from now, that we should not wait for any lockdown before planning for it. She also expresses the need for adequate provision of electricity to be able to achieve this.

The third respondent advocated for proper technological development of learning ICT tools. He also opined that the high cost of computers and laptops should be looked into since students may not afford them. Further, he stated that the high cost might hinder their usage, thereby unable to bear the socio-impact of lockdowns in the future. The fourth respondents explain that online classes are suitable for interactions, but poor internet network issues, especially in rural areas of Nigeria, will be a problem. The fifth suggested online lecture classrooms like zoom, google meet for interactions among students and teachers to continue.

The sixth saw social media and organising home lessons within communities in smaller groups can curb the social impact of lockdowns, while the seventh and eight respondents equally supported social media. The ninth student advocated for modernised friendly group discussions on digital platforms, acquiring various skills and helping around the house. The last respondent recounted his experience during the lockdown and concluded by saying, "I never want to experience that again. It felt like I was in prison". He suggested that the government not use lockdown, but other measures like the COVID-19 health protocols of social distancing and facemask.

VI. DISCUSSION

The results established a significant social impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on social studies undergraduate students. Thus, measures such as restriction of movement, social distancing, lockdown, and others were taken by the government to curb the pandemic's spread that affected students' social lives. This finding conforms with those observed by [34], [14], [15], [2] and [20], who in their studies reported significant social impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This study's finding did not come as a surprise since other studies have also established that the Covid-19 pandemic brought substantial difficulties and socio-economic impact on students at all levels. Social distancing policies of the pandemic affected educational systems, social interaction, increased poverty and hunger, closure of schools, social gathering centres and events, and school life restriction. It could also be emphasised that the pandemic produced social impacts such as fragmentation of social values, restrictive measures leading to a stress disorder, disorganisation of teaching and learning. This is also in agreement with the studies of [16], [19]. Thus, observing a significant social impact of the Covid-19 lockdown was expected.

Result also exposed the fact that social studies undergraduates adopted the coping strategies outlined in items 15-28 of the questionnaire to help them fight the social impact of the pandemic lockdown. Adopting these strategies assisted them in fighting stress, promoted their overall well-being and maintained their sanity. These findings are also in line with researches such as [28], [27], [26], [32], [30], [29] and [31], which revealed that these coping strategies were found useful by other people in other places to keep themselves afloat while the pandemic lockdown lasted and that these coping strategies helped students and families to maintain a state of normalcy.

From the study findings, most respondents saw social media as a major strategy for coping with a lockdown even in the future. This is in nexus with [31], [35] and [36] that reported that the internet and social media as a top coping strategy now and in the future. Other students interviewed advocated the use of online learning, digital platforms like zoom and small group discussions as future strategies. The interviewees wished lockdown never occur again.

VII. CONCLUSION

The study has provided empirical research on the social impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the students' coping strategies adopted by Delta State University undergraduate students. Thus the study had contributed to literature. The study reported significant social impact of the lockdown occasioned by the pandemic on the students, and the students agreed that spending quality time with family members, use of social

media and social networks and learning some productive skills are some of the strategies they adopted to cope with the strains, stress and boredom associated with the lockdown. These finding can be extended to other undergraduates of other disciplines as students are similar in characteristics and behaviour.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Stakeholders should reconsider the social impact of lockdowns on students during the pandemic before imposing them in future.
2. Students' coping strategies during the COVID 19 pandemic lockdown in this study can be adopted to fight boredom, stress, and the social impact of possible future pandemic lockdowns.
3. In the future, the government should strengthen plans and measures that can help students cope with learning during a pandemic, which may have social impact effect on students and others in society.

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