

THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON NURSERY AND PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS IN YALA LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, OF CROSS RIVER STATE

¹Joseph Olaiya Fatoki, ²Michael Terfa Angura, ³Helen Ogah and ⁴Veronica Enemarie

^{1, 2, 3 & 4} Department of Science and Mathematics Education,
Benue State University, Makurdi-Nigeria

Abstract

The study investigated the impact of COVID-19 on nursery and primary school teachers in Yala Local Government Area, of Cross River state. Two research questions were raised for the study and two hypotheses formulated and tested at 0.05 α -level. The study used descriptive survey design. The sample for this study consisted of 100 teachers; 50 from the Nursery and 50 from the Primary sections from 10 schools selected in the study area. Multistage sampling method was used to draw the sample based on school ownership. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation for the research questions while the hypotheses were tested using t-test. Nursery and Primary School Teachers Welfare Checklist (NPSTWC) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts, two in Science Education and one in Test and Measurement from Benue State University Makurdi. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was determined using Cronbach alpha and internal consistency of instrument was obtained as 0.86. The findings revealed no significant difference on the extent to which salaries are not paid to both nursery and primary school teachers in Yala LGA ($p=0.060>0.05$). Similarly, findings also showed no significant difference between the special loans provided by government to nursery and primary school teachers in Yala LGA ($p=0.070>0.05$). It was recommended based on the findings that; the government through the Cross River State Ministry of Education (MOE), State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEB), Private School Owners and other relevant agencies should ensure that; Salaries, promotions, allowances, arrears and all the entitlements of nursery and primary are duly paid to alleviate the hardships faced by teachers even after the COVID-19 pandemic. Housing, transportation, wardrobe and other special loan facilities should be granted to nursery and primary school teachers to cushion the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic hardship.

Keyword: Covid-19, Nursery, Primary, Teachers and Impact.

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has disturbed the world's political, social, economic, religious, and financial structures. The Covid-19 was declared by the World Health

Organization (WHO) on 30th January 2020 as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). On 27th February 2020, the Federal Ministry of Health announced the confirmation of the

first case of Coronavirus disease in Lagos State, Nigeria. Alagbaso and Abubakar (2020) stated that in the same communication, the Minister of Health announced that the multi-sectorial coronavirus preparedness group led by the Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC) has immediately activated its National Emergency Operations Center.

On March 19th, 2020 a circular from the Federal Ministry of Education granted approval for the closure of all schools for a period of one month commencing from Monday 23rd March 2020 to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID19). Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in Nigeria and the declaration of the lock down the Nigerian economy has not remained the same. COVID-19 has affected almost everything in Nigeria. The Financial sector, the manufacturing sector, the tourism sector.

According to Ajiseri and Odusanya (2020) the impact of the COVID-19 on Nigerian educational institutions is more felt by the private educational institutions in the country. In Nigeria, it is worthy to note that, the private sector operates schools particularly the nursery to complement the efforts of government in providing education for all in every state of the country. Many of these schools including the public primary schools faced disruptions in their teaching routines due to school closure occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic (Bin-Nafisah et al., 2020). Teachers in both nursery and primary schools across the country were left without salaries or loan packages by the government or owners of private schools

throughout the period (Akinsehinwa, Adeniran, Olorunfemi & Aina 2022). Rather some privileged nursery and primary schools used huge amount of money to navigate or acquire technology for online classes, maintaining student engagement in order not to lose population. According to Ajiseri and Odusanya (2020) some teachers experienced a lot of hardship as salaries were not paid; some went into petty trading and many other things to make ends meet. Overall, COVID-19 has brought about changes and uncertainties that have deeply affected the lives and careers of nursery and primary school teachers in Nigeria generally and particularly in Yala Local Government Area of Cross River State.

In Nigeria, after the closure of schools on 19 March 2020 by the federal government, both private education service providers and state governments introduced online learning platforms to facilitate students' learning. However, according to a report by Education Partnership Centre (EPC, 2020), the lack of resources, teacher well-being and pedagogical support for teachers to deliver lessons online were crucial challenges to teachers' work during school closures in Nigeria. In an attempt to contain the spread of COVID- 19 majority of countries around the world educational institutions temporarily suspended in-person instruction and moved to alternative method (remote learning or online model) of delivery(Alassar & Elshafiye, (2020). According to Ceglie, Black, and Sauders (2022), a decision was made by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization based on the indications of previous investigations for pandemic situations, and it was concluded that the

closure of educational centers together with the implementation of measures such as the isolation of the sick or suspected ill in hospitals or residences, the ban on public gatherings, and the closure of roads and rail lines were effective measures to slow the advance of a pandemic. According to United Nations (2020), at the end of April 2020, educational institutions were shut down in 186 countries, affecting approximately 74% of total enrolled learners on the planet. In many countries, schools were been closed since the beginning of March 2020, while in others (e.g. mostly China and South Korea) in-person classes cancelled since January 2020. Control measures were taken to slow down the transmission of the virus. Slowing the spread of a pandemic reduces the number of active cases at a given time, and this is known as “flattening the pandemic curve”. This allows the health system some time to prepare and respond without being overwhelmed (World Health Organisation, 2020). Adherence to public health and social mitigation measures was therefore essential to the flattening of the pandemic curve.

Since the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria, government has put in place several measures to prevent, mitigate, and respond to the spread of Covid-19 across the country. These include lockdowns, movement restrictions, social and physical distancing measures as well as public health measures. Gift (2020) opine that the education sector was severely affected due to total closure of schools across the country. School closures due to COVID-19 have left over a billion teachers jobless and students out of school; Espino-Díaz, Fernandez-Caminero, and

Hernandez-Lloret, (2020) note that various governments pursued variety of approaches to mitigate school closures. At the same time, all countries including Nigeria experienced the largest economic contractions of our lifetime, reducing public budgets and household incomes. School closures led to a jump in the number of dropouts, joblessness and an erosion of learning. Bandiera, Niklas, Goldstein, Imran and Smurra, (2019), affirm that increased dropout rates are one important channel linking emergency school closures and other educational disruptions to losses in average lifetime educational attainment.

This is problematic given that teachers are critical stakeholders in fulfilling educational reforms and goals such as the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) that pattern inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all by 2030. While teachers' work mainly includes teaching and implementing the national curriculum, the outbreak of the COVID-19 disrupted education systems globally (Jegade, 2020). But no provision was made by either government or owners of private schools to address the warfare issues of teachers by payment of salaries, loan packages and so on particularly to those teachers at the nursery and primary school level (Aeron, 2020).

Many scholars have identified the damages caused by the pandemic in many countries of the world. According to Ogunode (2020), Sumitra and Roshan (2021), Akinsehinwa, Adeniran, Olorunfemi, and Aina (2022), COVID-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of education systems in human

history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 200 countries. Closures of schools, institutions and other learning spaces have impacted more than 94% of the world's student population. This has brought far-reaching changes in all aspects of our lives. Teachers in most countries were not paid salaries and allowances due to the closure of schools. Social distancing and restrictive movement policies significantly disturbed traditional educational practices. Reopening of schools after relaxation of restriction was another challenge with many new standard operating procedures put in place. Ceglie, Black, and Sauders (2022), Zhang, Wang, Yang and Wang (2020) discovered that COVID-19 forced many teachers to start other ways of livelihood. Teachers were rather within short notice, expected to take on new responsibilities in ensuring that students could continue learning during the lockdown periods of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, to the best knowledge of the researcher; Studies of measures taken regarding welfare of teachers at nursery and primary school levels during the post-COVID 19 era are scarce; a gap this study sought to fill.

Statement of the Problem

Education is not only a fundamental human right but an enabling right with direct impact on the realization of all other human rights. When education systems collapse, the peace, prosperity and productive capacities expected of societies cannot be sustained. Unfortunately, the global education system has been subjected to an extraordinary twin shock partly occasioned by the novel Corona Virus re-christened COVID-19 pandemic and global economic hiccups. Schools were closed globally in a bid to fight the

pandemic and there is a widespread global economic recession. Reopening of schools was subject to adherence of the curative measures set in place by the federal government and other bodies to prevent a reoccurrence which would certainly lead to another lockdown.

However, the major problem is that, has government at all levels in conjunction with the private sector come out with modalities to improve the warfare of teachers who are the key drivers in this industry? Is there plan to pay all the salaries arrears of teachers that was not paid for long time during the COVID-19 lockdown particularly to nursery and primary school teachers? Is there any provision for special loan packages for teachers in Nigeria to cushion the effect of COVID-19 hardship on teachers and to enable them abide with safety protocols in schools that have re-open? It is in attempt to answer some of these questions that this study was set to find out the extent COVID-19 affect the salaries of teachers in Yala Local Government Area, of Cross River state and whether government made provision for special loan packages for teachers particularly at the nursery and primary school level.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to ascertain the impact of COVID-19 on the salaries of nursery and primary school teachers in Yala Local Government Area, of Cross River state. Specifically, the objectives of the study were to:

1. Find out the impact of COVID-19 on the salaries of nursery and primary school teachers in yala LGA.

2. Determine the extent government has special loan packages for nursery and primary school teachers in Yala LGA.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study:

1. What is the impact of COVID-19 on the salaries of nursery and primary school teachers in Yala LGA?
2. To what extent has government provided special loans packages for nursery and primary school teachers in yala LGA?

Research Hypothesis

To guide the study, the following hypotheses were tested at 0.05 significant level.

- 1 H_{01} There is no significant difference on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic affect the salaries of the nursery and primary school teachers in yala LGA.
- 2 H_{02} There is no significant difference on the extent to which government has provided special loans to nursery and primary school teachers in Yala LGA.

Methodology

The study assessed the impact of COVID-19 on the salaries of nursery and primary school teachers and whether government and other stakeholders have made provisions for special loan packages for teachers in

Yala Local Government Area, of Cross River state, Nigeria. A descriptive survey design was used for the study. The population comprised all 10,688 nursery and primary school teachers. The sample consisted of 100 teachers randomly selected which comprised 50 nursery and 50 primary school teachers respectively. Nursery and Primary School Teachers Welfare Checklist (NPSTWC) was used for data collection. The instrument was validated by three experts, two in Science Education and one in Test and Measurement. The reliability coefficient of the instrument was determined using Cronbach alpha and internal consistency of instruments was obtained as 0.80. The instruments were developed on a four point rating scale of 4, 3, 2, and 1 as follows: each item in the three sections of the instrument has; Great Extent (GE) = 4pionts = 3.50 – 4.00, Moderate Extent (ME) = 3pionts = 2.50 – 3.49, Less Extent (LE) = 2pionts = 1.50 – 2.49, No Extent (NE) = 1piont= 0.50 – 1.49. The instrument was administered to the respondents by the researchers alongside one trained research assistant. The data collected was analyzed using Simple Percentage as well as mean and Standard Deviation (SD) to answer the research questions. While the three null hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using t-test.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the impact of COVID-19 on the salaries of nursery and primary school teachers in Yala LGA?

Table 1: Mean impact of COVID-19 on the Salaries of Nursery and Primary School Teachers in Yala LGA

| S/N | Items | Teachers No. 100 | | | | | |
|-----|-------------------------|------------------|------|-----|---------|------|-----|
| | | Nursery | | | Primary | | |
| | | X | SD | DEC | X | SD | DEC |
| 1 | Payment of salaries | 2.40 | 1.17 | LE | 2.34 | 1.25 | LE |
| | Promotions | 2.44 | 1.27 | LE | 2.15 | 1.52 | LE |
| 2 | | | | | | | |
| 3 | Incremental Steps | 2.28 | 1.98 | LE | 2.29 | 1.17 | LE |
| | Allowances | 2.10 | 1.98 | LE | 2.20 | 1.27 | LE |
| 4 | | | | | | | |
| 5 | Leave Bonus | 2.33 | 1.98 | LE | 2.50 | 1.51 | LE |
| | Payment of owed arrears | 1.20 | 1.05 | LE | 1.15 | 1.10 | LE |
| 6 | | | | | | | |
| | | 2.13 | | | 2.11 | | |
| | Cluster Mean | 2.12 | | | | | |

Key: Great Extent (GE) = 4, Moderate Extent (ME) = 3, Less Extent (LE) = 2, No Extent (NE) = 1.

The data in Table 1 presents the mean and standard rating on the impact of COVID-19 on the salaries of nursery and primary school teachers in Yala LGA. It was discovered that COVID-19 affected payment salaries, promotions, allowances, leave bonuses, arrears to a less extent with the total means of 2.13 and 2.11 respectively.

Also, the entire cluster had a mean of 2.12 this means that actually COVID-19 affected salaries of nursery and primary teachers with little or no increment.

Question 2. To what extent has government provided special loans packages for nursery and primary school teachers in Yala LGA.

Table 2. Mean Rating on the Extent Government has Provided Special Loan Packages for Nursery and Primary School Teachers in Yala LGA.

| S/N | Loan items | Teachers No 100 | | | Primary | | |
|-----|---------------------|-----------------|------|-----|---------|------|-----|
| | | Nursery X | SD | DEC | X | SD | DEC |
| 1 | Housing loan | 2.13 | 1.01 | LE | 1.41 | 1.21 | LE |
| 2 | Vehicle Loan | 2.55 | 1.11 | ME | 2.50 | 1.22 | ME |
| 3 | Wardroom Loan | 2.00 | 1.98 | LE | 2.48 | 1.19 | LE |
| 4 | Furniture loan | 2.64 | 1.92 | ME | 2.55 | 1.92 | ME |
| 5 | Transportation Loan | 2.50 | 1.97 | ME | 2.50 | 1.21 | ME |
| 6 | Feeding Loan | 2.44 | 1.94 | LE | 2.30 | 1.22 | LE |
| | | 2.38 | | | 2.29 | | |
| | Cluster Mean=2.34 | | | | | | |

Key: Great Extent (GE) = 4; Moderate Extent (ME) = 3; Less Extent (LE) = 2; No Extent (NE) = 1.

The data in Table 2 shows the mean and standard deviation on the extent has government provided special loans packages for nursery and primary school teachers in Yala LGA. The result reveals that government has provided special loans to nursery and primary school teachers in Yala LGA to a less extent with means of 2.38 and 2.29 respectively. The cluster mean of 2.34

also shows less provision of special loans to nursery and primary school teachers.

Hypothesis one (HO1)

There is no significant difference on the impact of COVID-19 pandemic schools on the salaries of the Nursery and Primary school teachers in Yala LGA.

Table 3. t-test of Independent Sample of the Difference in the Mean on the impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on the Salaries of the Nursery and Primary School Teachers in Yala LGA.

| Variables | N | Mean | SD | T | Df | P | Level of Sig | Dec |
|-----------|----|--------|--------|-------|----|-------|--------------|-----|
| Nursery | 50 | 2.1250 | 0.5121 | 0.055 | 98 | 0.060 | 0.05 | NS |
| Primary | 50 | 2.1050 | 0.5131 | | | | | |

The t-test of independent sample on the extent to which COVID-19 pandemic affect the salaries of nursery and primary school teachers in Yala LGA recorded t-test value of 0.055 with a p-value of 0.060 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance ($p=0.060>0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that, there is no significant difference on the extent to

which salaries are not paid to both nursery and primary school teachers in Yala LGA.

Hypothesis Two (HO2)

There is no significant difference on the extent to which government has provided special loans to nursery and primary school teachers in Yala LGA.

Table 4. t-test of Independent Sample of the Difference in the Mean Rating Scores on the Extent to which Government has Provided Special Loans to Nursery and Primary School Teachers in Yala LGA.

| Variables | N | Mean | SD | T | Df | P | Level of Sig | Dec |
|-----------|----|--------|--------|-------|----|-------|--------------|-----|
| Nursery | 50 | 2.3766 | 0.5000 | 0.055 | 98 | 0.070 | 0.05 | NS |
| Primary | 50 | 2.3200 | 0.5129 | | | | | |

The t-test of independent sample on the extent to which specified assessment methods are used in government and private secondary schools recorded t-test value of 0.055 with a p-value of 0.070 which is greater than 0.05 level of significance ($p=0.070>0.05$). Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that, there is no significant difference on the extent to which government has provided special loans to nursery and primary school teachers in Yala LGA.

Discussion

The result of the study revealed that COVID-19 affected payment salaries, promotions, allowances, leave bonuses and arrears in Yala LGA. This result is agreement with Sumitra and Roshan (2021) who reported that primary and secondary teachers' welfare was not attended to during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The result of research question 2 shows the mean and standard deviation rating on the extent has government provided special loans packages for nursery and primary school teachers in Yala LGA. The result reveals that government has provided special loans to nursery and primary school teachers in Yala LGA to a less extent. Therefore, the null hypothesis is not rejected. This implies that, there is no significant difference on the extent to which government has provided special loan to nursery and primary school teachers in Yala LGA. This result is in consonant with the findings of Ceglie, Black, and Sauders (2022) who discovered that there were no palliatives for teachers to alleviate the hardship occasioned by COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria.

Conclusion

It is concluded based on the findings that the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the salaries, special loans and palliatives of nursery and primary school teachers in Yala LGA of Cross

River was negligible as many teachers did not enjoy increment in salaries neither were they given special loans or palliatives. In as much as some schools made efforts to attend to teachers' warfare during the pandemic but majority of the teachers were left unattended to.

Recommendations

It was recommended based on the findings that; the government through the Cross River State Ministry of Education (MOE), State Universal Basic Education Boards (SUBEB), Private School Owners and other relevant agencies should ensure that;

1. Salaries, promotions, allowances, arrears and all the entitlements of nursery and primary are duly paid to alleviate the hardships faced by teachers even after the COVID-19 pandemic.
2. House, transport, wardrobe and other special loan facilities should be granted to nursery and primary school teachers to cushion the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic hardship.

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