

IMPACT OF CORONA VIRUS PANDEMIC ON AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION STUDENTS AND LECTURERS IN UNIVERSITIES IN SOUTH EAST NIGERIA

BY

¹ONAH, F.C., ¹EZEBUIRO, F.N., EKENTA, L.U. & EKWUEME, S.U

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR (EKWUEME, S.U)

1. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION, UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA, NSUKKA

ABSTRACT

The study was on impact of coronavirus pandemic on students and lecturers of agricultural education in Universities in South-East Nigeria. Two research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study and was conducted in South East Nigeria. The population for the study was 473 consisted of 52 agricultural education lecturers and 421 agricultural education students in South East Nigeria. The total population was involved in the study since the population was manageable. Two questionnaires were used to collect data for the study. First one contained 10 items and collected data from the students on the impact of corona virus pandemic on students while the other contained 10 items focused on the impact of corona virus pandemic on lecturers. Cronbach alpha was used to determine internal consistency of the questionnaire which yielded a coefficient of 0.76 and 0.79 for the student and lecturer questionnaires respectively. Mean was used to answer the research questions. The findings revealed 10 impacts of coronavirus pandemic on agricultural education students in the area and 10 impacts of coronavirus pandemic on agricultural education lecturers in the area. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that; The government should provide the resources such as stable electricity and ICT facilities required for interactions between the lecturers and students through the digital space. This will help students keep up with their school programme while preventing the spread of the virus; and online conferences should be organized for lecturers so that they can network with their peers and this would bring some relief to them

Keywords: Coronavirus, Students, Lecturers, South East Nigeria.

INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus is a pandemic disease and deadly to the entire universe. This is because the preceding pandemic diseases such as Ebola, Spanish flu and the rest that have similar characteristics with coronavirus, have claimed millions of lives globally at the peak of their existence. Even with the known cure to some of the pandemic diseases that are still much around, thousands of lives were still lost globally on yearly basis. Conversely, coronavirus is extremely transmittable and infectious from an individual to another, and one infected individual can infect on average, six persons (Yan, Shin, Pang, Meng, Lai, You, Zhao, Lester, Wu & Pang, 2020). Apart from the fact it leads to death of numerous people, there also remains the aspect of human suffering as well as significant macroeconomic consequences on the economy (Obayori, Nchom & Yusuf, 2020).

Coronavirus was discovered in China and is a virus transmitted via respiratory droplets with mild, non-specific symptoms, such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, muscle pain and tiredness (Paintsil, 2020). More serious cases can develop severe pneumonia and acute respiratory distress syndrome that can lead to death. Although there is a vaccine to combat coronavirus, it doesn't seem to have gotten to Africa in large quantities and no cure has yet been found despite medical research to gain a better understanding about the novel disease (Shereen, Khan, Kazmi, Bashir & Siddique, 2020). The outbreak of coronavirus caused immediate closure of economic activities in continents of the world such as Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe and America. To buttress this claim, empirical

evidence suggests that if the virus is not contained quickly, it will close down more businesses and lead to high rise in unemployment and a weighted average hit of 1.5% to 2020 global GDP and 0.2% to long-run global GDP (Karen & Preston, 2020).

Nigeria as a nation first witnessed the outbreak of Coronavirus in Lagos state on the 27th February, 2020 which eventually spread to all states of the federation. The alarming rate of increase in coronavirus cases in Nigeria led the federal government to immediately close all the borders of the country, business activities as well as institutions of learning amongst others in order to prevent the fast spread of the deadly virus. However, the macroeconomic implication of these actions is not farfetched as it has led to rise in unemployment, in which companies were forced to downsize their workers as production was not at optimum (Punch News, 2020). Workers who lose jobs due to closure of businesses do no longer earn income and therefore lower consumption, eventually depressing aggregate demand. Similarly, there is rise in inflation level of goods and services. For instance, the prices of staple food such as garri, yam, palm-oil, tomatoes and rice amongst others increased (Obayori, Nchom & Yusuf, 2020). This was so because farmers do not have access to market to sell their products as a result of the total or partial lockdown imposed on many states of the federation. Similarly, in the education sector, the pandemic has grounded all academic activities in terms of learning and research. Also, students that were preparing to write their final examination and defend their final dissertation couldn't do that since e-learning is not functional in many Nigerian universities. All these negatively affect the output in the educational sector (Torales, Higgins, Castaldelli-Maia & Ventriglio, 2020). Although the federal government has released huge amount of money and some medical equipments to fight the novel coronavirus in Nigeria but this does not seem to include the education sector.

Corona virus pandemic has affected the educational sector. According to the United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF) (2020), about 1.6 billion children and young people are unable to be physically present at school due to the temporary closure of schools that have impacted over 91 percent of students globally. Although some schools can endeavour to provide online classes, this is unavailable to the majority of students in Universities in Nigeria (Garba-Yola, 2020). Since school closures, many families in Nigeria have found themselves unable to help their children keep track with their education. Although learning platforms have been launched by UNICEF and Microsoft to assist students continue their education at home in other parts of the world, this is largely unavailable in resource-limited settings like Nigeria where many students lack computers or high-speed internet services, making a considerable number of families unable to afford or sustain its use as a means for educating their wards (UNICEF, 2020). Although some Universities fully aware of these challenges have opted to have online learning, there are many more children in semi-urban and rural areas without access to internet services and very limited electric power supply (Kalu, 2020). These students are more disadvantaged because they have no access to formal education in this period. The impact of coronavirus on lecturers and students in Nigeria that lack access to online facilities is yet to be assessed.

It is plausible that prolonged physical and social distancing, lockdowns and closure of schools could harm the psychosocial wellbeing of lecturers and students of agricultural education in Universities. Mental problems ranging from stress to anxiety, depression and sleep disorders have been reported in students in epidemic settings (Oboh & Oboh, 2020). Students who also suffer from the effects of an abusive parent or guardian regularly because there is nowhere to seek help and avenues to let out their frustrations are very limited due to the closure of schools. Furthermore, the onset on the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) strike around the period of the lockdown due to disagreements with the Federal Government of Nigeria led to the denial of salaries causing untold hardships for the lecturers. What happens to lecturers and students, who eventually become coronavirus positive, get treated, recover and are reintegrated back into their schools and the society remains to be seen. Although it seems to be a general consensus that coronavirus has an impact on students and lecturers, no empirical study to the knowledge of the researchers has been done on impact of coronavirus on students and lecturers of agricultural education in Universities in South-East Nigeria.

The South East region is one of the six geopolitical zones in Nigeria. The region consists of the following states; Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. The indigenes in this region are predominantly Igbo people. The South East region has five universities that offer agricultural education programme and these are; University of Nigeria, Nsukka; Ebonyi State University; Enugu State University of Science and Technology, Michael Okpara University, Umudike and Abia State University. Lecturers and students of agricultural education have been at home for over eight months primarily because of the lockdown and secondarily due to strike actions. The lockdown also affected movements which restricted movements to markets and places of worships. This would likely affect the lecturers

and students especially considering high cost of available food stuff and almost no form of assistance from the Government despite the rumoured provisions of palliatives. It is against this backdrop that the current study sought to ascertain the impacts of coronavirus pandemic on Agricultural Education Students and Lecturers in Universities in South East Nigeria.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of the study was to ascertain the impact of corona virus pandemic on agricultural education students and lecturers in universities in South East Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to ascertain the;

- i. impacts of coronavirus pandemic on agricultural education students in universities in South East Nigeria
- ii. impacts of coronavirus pandemic on agricultural education lecturers in universities in South East Nigeria

Research Questions

The study was guided by the following research questions;

- i. What are the impacts of coronavirus pandemic on agricultural education students in universities in South East Nigeria?
- ii. What are the impacts of coronavirus pandemic on agricultural education lecturers in universities in South Eastern Nigeria?

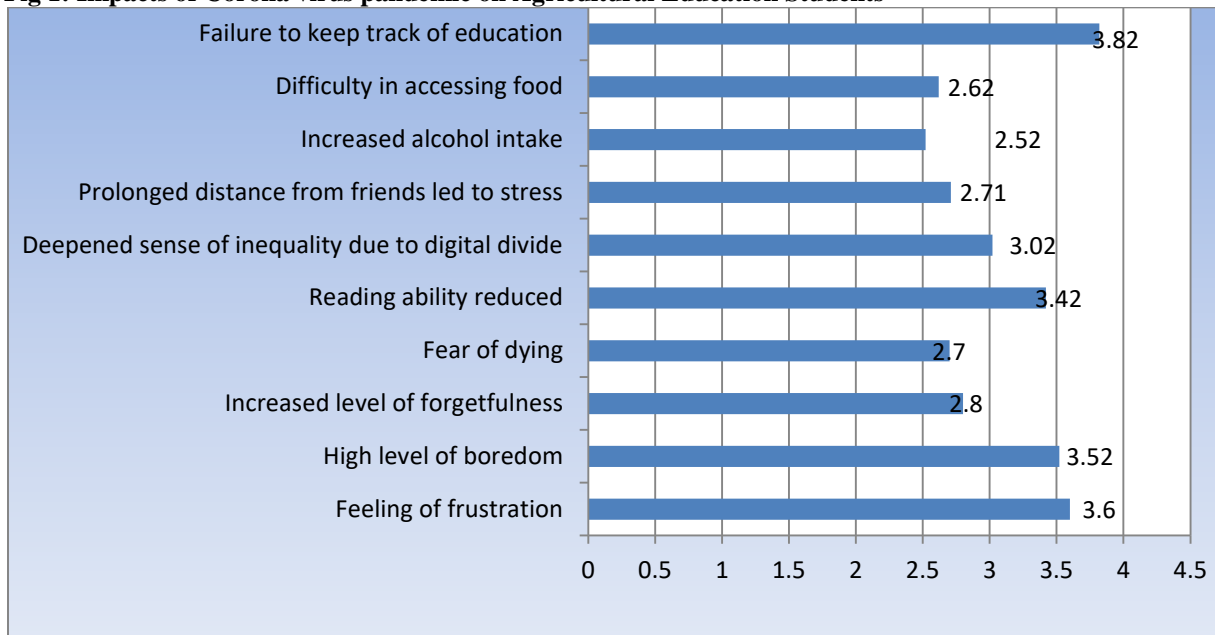
Methodology

Descriptive survey design was adopted for the study and was conducted in South East Nigeria. The population for the study was 473 consisted of 52 agricultural education lecturers and 421 agricultural education students in South East Nigeria. The total population was involved in the study since the population was manageable. Two questionnaires were used to collect data for the study. First one contained 10 items and collected data from the students on the impact of corona virus pandemic on students while the other contained 10 items focused on the impact of corona virus pandemic on lecturers. The responses for the two questionnaires were Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD). The two questionnaires were face validated by five experts from the Department of Agricultural Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. Cronbach alpha was used to determine internal consistency of the questionnaire which yielded a coefficient of 0.76 and 0.79 for the student and lecturer questionnaires respectively. The questionnaires were administered on the 421 respondents and there was a 72% return rate which equates to 303 respondents. Mean was used to answer the research questions while interpretation was done with a graph. Mean cut off point of 2.50 was applied in decision making. Hence, any item with mean value of 2.50 or above was interpreted as agreed while items with mean less than 2.50 were interpreted as disagree.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the impacts of coronavirus pandemic on agricultural education students in universities in South Eastern Nigeria?

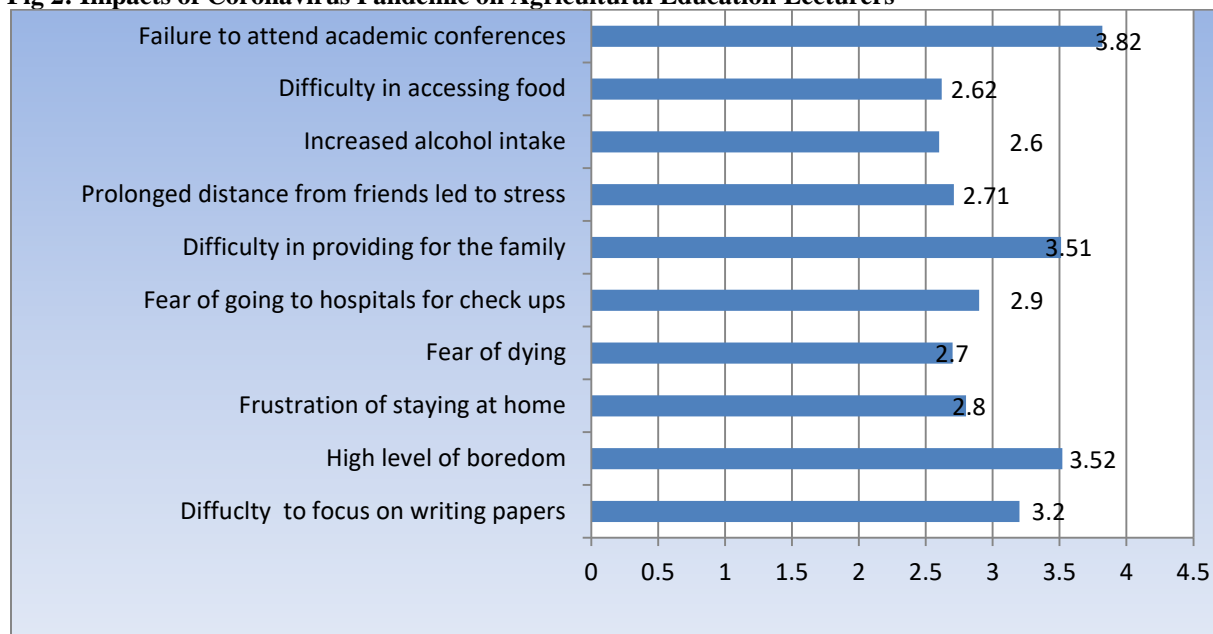
Fig 1: Impacts of Corona virus pandemic on Agricultural Education Students



N = 303

The findings from Figure 1 revealed that all the items had mean values above 2.50 indicating that the respondents agree that all the items were the impacts of coronavirus pandemic on agricultural education students in universities in South-East Nigeria.

Research Question 2: What are the impacts of coronavirus pandemic on agricultural education lecturers in universities in South Eastern Nigeria?

Fig 2: Impacts of Coronavirus Pandemic on Agricultural Education Lecturers

N = 303

The findings from Figure 1 revealed that all the items had mean values above 2.50 indicating that the respondents agree that all the items were the impacts of coronavirus pandemic on agricultural education lecturers in universities in South-East Nigeria.

Discussion of the Findings

The findings revealed the impacts of coronavirus pandemic on agricultural education students includes; Feeling of frustration, high level of boredom, increased level of forgetfulness, fear of dying, reading ability reduced, deepened sense of inequality due to digital divide, prolonged distance from friends led to stress, increased alcohol intake, difficulty in accessing food and failure to keep track of education. The findings are in line with UNICEF (2020) who found out that many individuals feel stressed from prolonged distance from friends which has also led to increased intake of alcohol and narcotics. The findings are also in line with Obayori, Nchom and Yusuf (2020) who found out that coronavirus pandemic led to increased fear of dying among many individuals.

The findings further revealed that the impacts of coronavirus pandemic on agricultural education lecturers includes; Difficulty to focus on writing papers, high level of boredom, frustration of staying at home, fear of dying, fear of going to hospitals for checkups, difficulty in providing for the family, prolonged distance from friends led to stress, increased alcohol intake, difficulty in accessing food and failure to attend academic conferences. The findings are in line with Karen and Preston (2020) who found out that coronavirus pandemic and its resulting stress has made it difficult for lecturers to focus on writing papers. The findings are also supported by Oboh and Oboh (2020) who found out that failure to attend conferences where lecturers network with colleagues from other schools is a major frustration felt by lecturers.

Conclusion

Coronavirus pandemic has changed numerous things in today's world. Among the prominent changes is the need for social and physical distancing to curtail the spread of the virus. This has led to the closure of schools all over the world including universities in South East Nigeria. This closure has impacts on the activities of students and lecturers of agricultural education in such universities. The impacts of coronavirus pandemic on agricultural education students includes; Feeling of frustration, high level of boredom, increased level of forgetfulness, fear of dying, reading ability reduced, deepened sense of inequality due to digital divide and prolonged distance from friends led to stress, among others. On the other hand, the impacts of coronavirus pandemic on agricultural education lecturers includes; Difficulty to focus on writing papers, high level of boredom, frustration of staying at

home, fear of dying, fear of going to hospitals for checkups, difficulty in providing for the family and prolonged distance from friends led to stress. These are negative effects and if allowed for too long, they might have long term consequences for lecturers and students of agricultural education. In order to mitigate these negative effects, some recommendations are made.

Recommendations

1. The government should provide the resources such as stable electricity and ICT facilities required for interactions between the lecturers and students through the digital space. This will help students keep up with their school programme while preventing the spread of the virus
2. Online conferences should be organized for lecturers so that they can network with their peers and this would bring some relief to them.
3. Academic activities should be broadcasted through radios which are cheap and readily available in rural areas to keep students occupied at home which would prevent them from indulging in excessive alcohol intake

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- Garba-Yola T. (2020). Due to coronavirus, Adamawa unable to pay March salary, N32, 000 minimum wage Official. *Nigerian Tribune*. 2020.
- Kalu B. (2020). coronavirus in Nigeria: a disease of hunger. *Lancet Respiratory Medicine*, 8(6), 556-557.
- Karen, A. CFA, & Preston, C. (2020). *Morningstar's view: The impact of coronavirus on the economy*. <https://www.morningstar.com/articles/971254/morningstars-view-the-impact-of-coronavirus-on-the-economy> .Retrieved on 10th March, 2020
- Obayori, J.B. Nchom, H. & Yusuf, L.O. (2020). Economics of pandemic in Nigeria: The coronavirus experience. *British International Journal of Education and Social Sciences*, 7(4), 23 – 30.
- Oboh, S.O., & Oboh, O.J. (2020). Coronavirus pandemic outbreak and government policy on educational infrastructure in Nigeria. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 8(2), 1010 -1019. DIP:18.01.146/20200802, DOI:10.25215/0802.146
- Paintsil, E. (2020). Coronavirus threatens health systems in sub-Saharan Africa: the eye of the crocodile. *Journal of Clinical Invest*, 130(6), 2741 - 2744.
- Punch News (2020). Domestic airline ground 76 planes and 6000 workers redundant <https://punchng.com/domestic-airlines-ground76-planes-over-6000-workers-redundant/> Retrieved on 29/03/2020
- Shereen, M. A., Khan S., Kazmi, A., Bashir, N. & Siddique, R. (2020). Coronavirus infection: Origin, transmission, and characteristics of human coronaviruses. *Journal of Advanced Research*, 16; 91-98.
- Torales, J. Higgins, M., Castaldelli-Maia, J. M. & Ventriglio, A. (2020). The outbreak of coronavirus coronavirus and its impact on global mental health. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 66(4), 317 - 320.
- UNICEF (2020) *UNICEF and Microsoft launch global learning platform to help address coronavirus education crisis*. Author
- Yan, Y., Shin, W., Pang, Y.X., Meng, Y., Lai, J., You, C., Zhao, H., Lester, E., Wu, T. & Pang, C.H. (2020). The first 75 days of novel coronavirus (SARSCoV-2) outbreak: Recent advances, prevention, and treatment. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 2(1), 23 – 30. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17072323>