



PRIMARY RESEARCH

# Assessing the Impact of COVID-19 on Secondary Education in Nigeria: A Case Study of 6 Secondary Schools in Anambra State

Ikoku Theresa Ebele<sup>1</sup>, Rajashree K.N<sup>2</sup>, Noor un Nisa<sup>3\*</sup><sup>1,2,3</sup> Exeed College, Westford Education Group, Sharjah, UAE

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## Abstract

This study examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on secondary education in Nigeria. Focusing on six secondary schools and 25 participants in Anambra State, the study investigates the disruptions, challenges, and consequences experienced by students, teachers, and parents. Data collection involves organized focus group discussions conducted through Zoom meetings with principals, teachers, students, and parents from selected schools. The study highlights gaps in teacher preparedness and support and infrastructure and technological constraints that could have improved the effective implementation of remote learning strategies. Despite these challenges, educators demonstrated resilience and innovation in adapting to the new learning environment. The Nigerian government and educational institutions implemented various policy responses and adaptation strategies to mitigate the impact, including providing learning materials and partnerships with telecommunication companies. Understanding the multifaceted impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on secondary education is crucial for shaping future policies and practices. The research serves as a valuable resource, highlighting the need to address educational inequalities, support students' mental health, and foster innovative approaches to education.

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## INTRODUCTION

Three years ago, the whole world came to a halt courtesy of the COVID-19 viral spread. As a result, so many human activities came to an abrupt stop in a bid to contain the spread of the virus. Two years have passed since the incidence of COVID-19, but the impact has lingered so much that many sectors of the economy are still struggling from the impact of the pandemic. The education sector is among the numerous sectors impacted heavily by the pandemic. Many schools, especially in developing countries like Nigeria, had to shut down due to the inability to meet the demands of the new approaches to education occasioned by the pandemic (Omang & Angioha, 2021).

Following the recent outbreak of coronavirus and its subsequent pandemic, an estimated 1.6 billion learners in more than 200 countries have experienced disruptions in their learning (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). According to Pokhrel

and Chhetri (2021), more than 94% of the global students' population was impacted by closure of schools, institutions, and other learning spaces.

## Problem Statement

The COVID-19 pandemic affected almost every aspect of human life, including vital sectors of the world economy, especially education. The impact of this led to the closure of schools, resulting in the disruption of academic activities. In Nigeria, secondary education has been particularly affected, with millions of students forced to stay at home due to the closure of schools. This trend led to a significant loss of learning opportunities and an abrupt switch to digital learning models, which also came with consequent adaptation challenges. In the case of Nigeria, the pandemic further illuminated the digital divide among students, with those from low-income families and public schools being the most af-

\*corresponding author: Noor un Nisa

†email: noorbaloch60@gmail.com



affected. While some schools may count their losses as revenue, student strength, staff strength, and societal stigma, some other schools may have seen this as an opportunity to strengthen their already evolving digital learning practices and to attract more students, given their strong alternative learning platforms. Hence, it can be affirmed that different schools would have varied experiences and interpretations of the impact of the pandemic on their schools.

The problem, therefore, is to examine the various ways through which the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted secondary education and to identify ways to mitigate its negative effects on schools and critical stakeholders.

### **Aim of the Research**

This research aims to explore the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on secondary education in Nigeria – one of the developing countries whose economy was severely affected by the pandemic. This research aims to carry out an in-depth exploration of how secondary education in Nigeria has been affected by the coronavirus outbreak three years ago, as well as how education institutes still in business are navigating through this very challenge.

The research examined the challenges faced by students, teachers, parents, and other critical stakeholders during the pandemic, identifying the strategies and adaptive techniques they employed to contain the effects and then exploring various ways through which the negative effects of the pandemic can be mitigated. The study provides insights into the impact of the pandemic on the quality of education and student learning outcomes.

### **Research Question**

- What impact has the covid-19 pandemic made on secondary education in Nigeria i.e. how has covid-19 pandemic affected the business of schools and educational services in Nigeria?

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on secondary education around the world. Looking at the Nigerian education sector, schools had to close or implement remote learning processes, leading to disruptions in education and affecting student learning outcomes, mental health, and wellbeing. Schools that were proactive and had more financial strength had to improvise by introducing alternative learning processes like virtual learning, while some schools with low financial capacity and less proactive approach watched on, as the pandemic kept their students idle at home. Various surveys would suggest varied opinions and responses to the impact of the pandemic on

the various stakeholders of secondary education in Nigeria, hence a detailed and in-depth analysis that exhumed the variations in opinions and experiences. An extensive literature review reveals that the pandemic has also highlighted the importance of equity in education and the need for innovative approaches to teaching and learning in Nigeria.

### **Statistics**

According to the United Nations, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected over 46 million primary and secondary school students in Nigeria (UN, 2020). A survey conducted by the Nigerian Education Research and Development Council found that only 30% of secondary school students in Nigeria have access to remote learning (Okagbue et al., 2023; Henriques, Correia, & Dias-Trindade, 2021). The World Bank estimates that the pandemic has resulted in a loss of 0.5 to 1 year of learning for Nigerian students (Bank, 2022). According to the National Bureau of Statistics, the unemployment rate among Nigerian youth (aged 15-34) increased from 22.5% in Q4 2018 to 34.9% in Q4 2020, highlighting the impact of the pandemic on education and employment (Statistics, 2020). A study by the International Labour Organization (ILO) found that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a loss of income for households, which has affected the ability of parents to pay for their children's education (ILO, 2020). Comparing this impact with the rest of the world, according to UNESCO, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected over 1.5 billion students worldwide, with 194 countries implementing nationwide school closures (UNESCO, 2020). As of September 2021, there were still school closures in 19 countries worldwide. A study by the World Bank estimated that school closures could cause a learning loss equivalent to 0.6 to 0.8 years of schooling. The pandemic has forced the closure of over 124,000 public and private schools, affecting over 55 million students (NCES, 2021). According to education foundation, In the UK, school closures due to COVID-19 have resulted in a loss of 70% of the average learning time for secondary school students. A study in Turkey found that the pandemic has widened the achievement gap, with students from low-income families performing worse than those from high-income families (Kara, 2021; Waheed & Jam, 2010).

### **Theories**

The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted education systems worldwide, including Nigeria. The pandemic led to the closure of schools in Nigeria, which affected educational outcomes at all levels. This literature review examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on secondary education in

Nigeria, using human capital theory, social constructivist theory, and critical race theory.

### **Human capital theory**

According to human capital theory, education is an investment in an individual's skills and knowledge, which can lead to higher economic productivity and better social outcomes. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted education in Nigeria, leading to a decline in human capital development among secondary school students. A study by Ilesanmi and Afolabi (2020) found that the closure of schools in Nigeria has led to a loss of instructional time, which has affected students' learning outcomes. The study also found that the shift to online learning has deepened the inequality gap, as students from low-income families have limited access to the necessary technology and internet access to participate in online learning. Another study by Adeyinka-Ojo, Lee, Abdullah, and Teo (2020) noted that the pandemic has disrupted the teaching and learning process, leading to a decline in students' academic performance. The study recommends that the government invest in technology and infrastructure to ensure that students have access to online learning resources.

### **Social constructivist theory**

Social constructivist theory posits that learning is a social process that occurs through interactions with others and the environment. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the social interactions that secondary school students need to learn effectively. A study by Sunday, Adewale, Samson, and Łukasz (2021) noted that the closure of schools has limited opportunities for students to interact with their peers and teachers, which has affected their social and emotional development. The study recommends that educators explore alternative teaching methods that promote collaborative learning and peer-to-peer interactions. Another study found that online learning has limited opportunities for collaboration and group work, which are essential for effective social constructivist learning. The study recommends that educators adopt a more interactive approach to online learning to promote social interactions among students. The pandemic has challenged the social constructivist theory of education, which emphasizes the importance of interaction and collaboration among students and teachers (Adelani et al., 2021; Lavilles Jr & Robles, 2017). The pandemic has challenged the social constructivist theory of education, which emphasizes the importance of interaction and collaboration among students and teachers.

### **Critical race theory**

Critical race theory posits that racism is a systemic issue that is embedded in societal structures and institutions. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed racial and socioeconomic disparities in Nigeria's education system. A study by Oyebanji, Oduguwa, Soares, and Ogunyemi (n.d.) found that students from low-income families and marginalized communities have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic's disruptions. These students have limited access to the necessary technology and internet access for online learning, which has widened the inequality gap. The study recommends that the government invest in public schools in low-income communities to ensure that all students have access to quality education. Another study by Oyebanji et al. (n.d.) noted that the pandemic has highlighted inadequate funding for public schools, which has affected their ability to adapt to disruptions caused by the pandemic. The study recommends that the government increase funding for public schools and provide support for teachers to develop innovative teaching methods that can be used in both in-person and online learning environments. The pandemic has also highlighted the need for a more equitable education system, with research showing that students from disadvantaged backgrounds have been disproportionately affected by school closures and remote learning (Kara, 2021; Jadir, 2022). The pandemic has also highlighted the need for a more equitable education system in Nigeria, with research showing that students from disadvantaged backgrounds have been disproportionately affected by school closures and remote learning (Adelani et al., 2021).

### **Systematic Review of Literature**

During the literature search process, multiple databases were extensively explored to identify scholarly articles relevant to the subject matter. The retrieved articles were specifically limited to those published during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, articles that predated the pandemic but contained discussions on education in relation to disease outbreaks were also included. Databases such as Google Scholar and PubMed were utilized in the search, and keywords such as "Secondary Education," "Covid-19 pandemic and Schools," "Nigeria," and "Anambra State" were employed.

In the study by researchers, unlike the comprehensive review method explored, a qualitative research method is used to explore and identify the impact of COVID-19 on education in Nigeria and various strategies adopted by school administrators to mitigate the challenges. The summary of the literature is given below.

**TABLE 1.** Summary of literature findings

S/N	AUTHOR/DATE	TOPIC/FOCUS/QUESTION	METHOD	SPECIMEN/SAMPLE	FINDINGS
1	Nwachukwu, 2020	Learning loss as an element of Covid 19 impact on Nigerian secondary schools	Qualitative	Survey	Reduced engagement for Nigerian secondary school students leading to learning loss
2	Nwachukwu, 2020	Statistical data analysis	Qualitative	Survey	Poor access to remote learning amongst Nigerian secondary school students
3	Olumide and Adelani (2021)1	Learning loss as an element of Covid 19 impact on Nigerian secondary schools	Qualitative	Case study	Reduced engagement for Nigerian secondary school students leading to learning loss
4	Boser & Syed, 2020	Learning loss as an element of Covid 19 impact on Nigerian secondary schools	Quantitative	Survey	Loss of extra-curricular activities due to Covid 19 pandemic
5	Adeniran et al. (2021)	Equity & Social Cohesion as an element of Covid 19 impact on Nigerian secondary schools	Qualitative	Case study	Creation of inequality and digital divide amongst Nigerian secondary school students due to the pandemic
6	Owolabi et al., (2020)	Mental health as an element of Covid 19 impact on Nigerian secondary schools	Qualitative	One-on-One	Creation of anxiety and depression in Nigerian secondary school students as a result of the pandemic
7	Afolabi and Afolabi (2020)	Human Capital Theory	Qualitative	Survey	The pandemic led to a decline in human capital development amongst Nigerian secondary school students
8	Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2020)	Human Capital Theory	Qualitative	Survey	The pandemic led to a decline in students' academic performance
9	Olaleye and Olaleye (2021)	Social Constructivist Theory	Qualitative	Case study	pandemic reduced social interaction, cohesion and development of Nigerian secondary school students
10	Ogundimu and Oyebisi (2021)	Critical Race Theory	Qualitative	Case study	The government's poor funding of public schools has widened marginalization and ethnic profiling of certain Nigerian secondary school students.
11	Jimenez and Alvi (2020)	Capability Approach Model	Qualitative	Case study	The pandemic led to a total decline including mental wellbeing and social interactions of Nigerian secondary school students
12	Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977	Social Reproduction Model	Qualitative	Survey	Education is a tool for maintaining social hierarchy and creating inequality
13	Omang and Angioha (2021)	Impact of Digital Learning tools	Quantitative	Survey	Impact of e-learning platforms on education
14	Obiakor, O.T.(2021)	Strategies to contain the effects of the pandemic on schools	Qualitative	Survey	Slow adaptation to digital learning and economic challenges affecting most schools in Nigeria during the pandemic

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research seeks to carry out a comprehensive investigation into the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on secondary education in Nigeria. Given the nature of the pandemic in impacting human activities, amongst which were schooling activities, researchers decided to pursue this research by analyzing the opinions, views, and experiences of educators who, of course, remain at the heart of the education sector in every country. The case study research strategy was considered to make my analysis in order to get direct data from a sample group, which can be used to analyze the impact of the pandemic on a broader view.

This study employs a qualitative approach. The data was collected through focus group discussions with secondary

school principals, teachers, parents, and students in some selected schools in Anambra state of Nigeria. The discussions consisted of open-ended questions to give room for participants to express themselves and give a detailed narrative of their experiences. The focus group discussions are designed to address the research question.

For the purpose of this research work, the data collection technique of focus group discussion was used involving various stakeholders of 5 different schools in Anambra state, Nigeria. The data processing method was to record the discussions, and then transcribe the recorded audio into texts which form a good part of the data for this research work.

These two data collection methods are employed in this study to gain valuable insights into the experiences, views,

opinions, perceptions, and practices of the study group concerning the research topic, as suggested by Gill, Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick (2008). Specifically, as emphasized by Gill et al. (2008), conducting focus group discussions allows for an exploration of the study group's experiences, perceptions, opinions, and practices in relation to the impact of the C-19 pandemic on their educational activities within the institution of learning. A total of twenty-five (25) participants were selected from five secondary schools, with a target of five participants per school. The participants were divided into five (5) groups, consisting of five individuals in each group. It has been noted that smaller-sized focus groups encourage participants to express their views and share experiences more confidently, as it relates to the focus of the study (Onwuegbuzie, Dickinson, Leech, & Zoran, 2009).

Data collection concluded in March 2023. The participants were asked to choose a convenient date and time for the discussion while we used a zoom meeting (virtual) to conduct the discussion. The virtual meeting was consensually decided by the groups and voted as the most convenient platform and means of holding the meeting. The group discussion lasted for a maximum of one hundred and twenty (120) minutes to ensure the participants were not stretched beyond their convenience (Gill et al., 2008). The discussion session was recorded using an audio recording device while the meeting was also recorded through zoom, open ended questions with topic guides highlighting concepts and issues based on the research topic were asked (Mohajan et al., 2018). Individual participants were given the opportunity to contribute based on their views, experiences, and perceptions without any interruptions. Notes were also taken during the discussion session.

About 20 to 30 participants were recruited for this study. Amongst them were Principals, teachers, students, parents, and staff of the selected 5 secondary schools in Anambra state. Recruitment for this research involved identifying members of selected secondary schools who were either Principals, students, staff members, or parents during the C-19 pandemic. Participants selected included those who were willing and enthusiastic to share their experiences and observations regarding the impact of C-19 on educational activities within their institution.

Participants were recruited based on the following criteria:

- Be a registered member of the selected school
- Must be either a Principal, staff, student, or parent of a student in the selected schools
- Was enrolled or employed at the school during the C-19 pandemic

- Resident in Anambra state.

Prior to their involvement in the research, each participant was duly requested to provide informed consent during the recruitment phase, following the guidelines outlined by Raiesifar, Firouzkouhi, Fooladi, and Parvizy (2016). This procedure was implemented to prevent any potential ethical concerns that may arise in the absence of informed consent. To ensure that the collected data accurately reflects the impact of the C-19 pandemic in Anambra State, all participants met the specified criteria and demonstrated a willingness to participate in the research before being included.

### Storage of Data Collected

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) standards were applied to ensure proper handling of participant data and responses (Lopes, Guarda, & Oliveira, 2019). This was to ensure that information pertaining to participants' names, addresses, locations, institutions of work and any other personal data that may directly or indirectly identify them is handled with utmost care to avoid getting into the wrong hands. The recordings and notes from the interviews and focus group discussions was stored in a drive with a password to ensure its security.

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

This section presents key findings derived from the research on the impact of COVID-19 on secondary education in Nigeria, with a specific focus on six secondary schools in Anambra state. The researchers employed a comprehensive data collection approach, including organized focus group discussions with principals, teachers, students, and parents from the selected schools. These discussions, conducted through Zoom meetings, provided an opportunity for participants to share their experiences and insights, shedding light on the effects of the pandemic on their schools and the learning process.

The data collected through these focus group discussions revealed valuable information regarding the challenges faced by the educational community in Anambra state during the COVID-19 pandemic. The participants shared their personal accounts, highlighting the disruptions, learning losses, and various socio-economic impacts they experienced. Their input provided a rich understanding of how the pandemic affected secondary education, offering insights into the diverse perspectives of key stakeholders in the education sector.

By examining the firsthand experiences and viewpoints of principals, teachers, students, and parents, the research findings provide a comprehensive and nuanced under-

standing of the implications of the pandemic on secondary education in Anambra state. These findings contribute to the body of knowledge surrounding the impact of COVID-19 on education and serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, educators, and stakeholders in developing effective strategies to mitigate the negative effects and build resilience within the education system.

### Overview Description of Data Collected

The data collected for this research on the impact of COVID-19 on secondary education in Nigeria specifically focused on six secondary schools in Anambra state. The primary method of data collection was through organized focus group discussions, which involved principals, teachers, students, and parents from these six schools. The discussions were conducted remotely using Zoom meetings, providing a convenient platform for participants to share their experiences and insights. Participants were given sufficient time to express their thoughts in detail, providing valuable information on how the COVID-19 pandemic affected them and learning in their respective schools. The data collected from these focus group discussions offered firsthand perspectives and experiences, enriching our understanding of the impact of the pandemic on secondary education in Anambra state.

### Theme

This section entails the presentation and examination of the findings obtained in this study. Initially, the sample characteristics were outlined, followed by the identification, interpretation, and analysis of the themes derived from the research. There are (5) themes and subthemes. The = themes include:

- Theme1: Disruption of learning
- Theme2: Learning loss
- Theme 3:Health safety concerns
- Theme 4: Economic impact
- Theme5: Digital illiteracy

While analyzing and interpreting the themes from the focus group discussion, this study referred to studies and literature by other scholars about this research. This study employed theories, models, and concepts from business management, human psychology, and public health in deriving explanations for my findings. The sample consisted of 20 participants with 4 each coming from the study site which is the selected secondary school in Anambra State. The sample was a mixture of members of the school management team, staff, parents, and students of the 5 secondary schools. Each participant had direct or indirect involvement

with the schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Researchers recognized that the level of education of the participants and their involvement with schools informed their perception concerning the impact of C-19 on secondary education in Nigeria.

In order to safeguard the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants, pseudonyms are employed to represent their identities.

### Theme 1: Disruption of Continuous Learning

The participants Knowledge about C-19 and how it led to a disruption in learning varied from one another. Each of them had different perceptions of how C-19 brought about a disrupted learning experience for the students. These varying views resulted in two sub-ordinate themes. They are

- Early closure of schools
- Sudden shift from physical to online classroom

#### *Early closure of schools*

Early closure of school is a subordinate theme that describes the participants responses in relation to their perceptions, experiences, and knowledge of the C-19 disruption of continuous learning. The abrupt and early closure of schools as a response to C-19 had serious consequences on learning generally. This can be seen in the response by Participant G;

“One of the major challenges faced was the imbalance between the efficiency and the pace of learning.” (Participant G, pg.1)

This statement highlights the perception of the level of disruption experienced following the C-19 pandemic. It also emphasizes the resulting decline in the quality of educational services rendered following C-19. This impact can be better understood using the social theory of learning. This theory posits that people learn from one another through observation, imitation, and modelling. Relating this to school closures following the C-19 pandemic, students who previously would learn from teachers and their peers in classroom settings were unable to do so because of the disruption caused by the early closure of schools. Participant G saw this closure as the reason behind a decline in the effectivity, efficiency and pace of learning resulting in disturbed educational progress as well as social development.

#### *Sudden shift from physical to online classroom*

The sudden shift from physical to online classes immensely disrupted learning in Nigerian secondary schools. As a result, schools with the means and resources to provide online classes made a drastic shift towards online learn-

ing with little or no preparation. However, certain public schools in rural settings that depend on the government for funding and with little resources were unable to provide learning to their students. This was since they are not equipped to adapt or transition to the new methods of learning.

“Pandemic came in as a surprise, hence there was no prior notice to students nor to our stakeholders and less time for quality planning.” (Participant AK, Pg1)

The above response highlights the perception that the pandemic came unexpectedly, taking the entire school unawares, hence the sudden shift from physical classes to online classrooms. Participant AK attributes the sudden transition to a resultant decline in the quality of planning for and the services offered. The sudden transition due to C-19 can be understood and explained using the theory of planned behaviour (McEachan, Conner, Taylor, & Lawton, 2011). The theory of planned behaviour is a social science theory that explains how people’s attitudes, subjective norms and perceived behaviour control and influence their intentions and behaviours. C-19 pandemic restricted the chances of a physical classroom experience due to potential health risks/consequences that could arise from having many students and teachers confined within an enclosed space. As a result, some learning institutions made a sudden switch to online learning.

## **Theme 2: Learning Loss**

Learning loss is one of the supra-ordinate themes that emerged during the focus group discussion. This theme focuses on the thoughts, opinions, experiences, and perceptions of the participants concerning the loss in learning due to the pandemic. There are 2 sub themes which are:

- Weaknesses of teaching infrastructure
- Lack of resources/ inefficient human capacities

### ***Weakness of teaching infrastructure***

One of the perceptions of the participants concerning the impact of C-19 is that the weakness of teaching infrastructure contributed largely to the learning loss experienced during the pandemic. According to Participant AK:

“My own school does not have computers that could have helped with online teaching and during the pandemic, the school offices were locked thus there was no way to access textbooks and other teaching materials.” (Participant AK, Pg2)

The statement above is an example of how the weakness of learning infrastructure led to learning loss during the pandemic. The lack of computers and access to textbooks and

other teaching materials made it difficult for students to learn online. This is especially true for students who do not have access to technology or reliable internet connection. This can be related to the study by Samuel (2020). They assert that C-19 pandemic resulted in a loss of many learning opportunities, especially for secondary school students who come from underprivileged backgrounds. These students attend schools that may have access to the required resources for a transition to online learning. However, each scholar attributes learning loss to different reasons aside from weakness of teaching infrastructure. Olumide and Adelani purported that learning loss during the pandemic posed a great disadvantage to students from disadvantaged backgrounds due to absence of resources and the necessary infrastructure that supports online learning. Their reason is that remote learning led to increased absenteeism and reduced academic performance among secondary school students. All of these agree with the perspective of the participants in this study concerning learning loss, however, each scholar attributes learning loss to other causes and not necessarily weakness of teaching infrastructure.

### ***Lack Of resources/inefficient human capacities***

Inefficient human capital was identified from the focus group discussions as one of the sub-ordinate themes in this research study. Human capital/capacities refer to the knowledge, skills, and abilities of individuals that contribute to their productivity and economic value. Inefficient human capital during the C-19 pandemic resulted in disruptions to continuous service provision. In this context, inefficient human capital can be explained as the lack of technical training required for remote learning facilitation, poor management of resources due to deficient technical knowledge and poor leadership/management style. This was buttressed in a statement by Participant TC.

“Many students had to rely on their parents’ devices to access the online learning platforms and some of these parents were not conversant with navigating the online learning platforms. Some other parents did not have devices that could support online learning, hence, their children missed out of classes. Also, some of our teachers were not able to upload and teach online because they did not know how to do so and were not conversant with the use of remote learning software.” (Participant TC, Pg 3)

The above statement highlights the inefficient human capacities and how it affected secondary education in the study population. Participant TC explained how lack of knowledge on the part of parents impacted learning as well as how deficient technical experience on the teach-

ers' part led to disruptions in learning. Another participant explained that the inefficiencies in capacity experienced pointed out failure on the part of the school management and leadership. He explained that supposedly there had been plans put in place and training delivered in preparation for such emergencies; maybe things could have gone better than they did. This point of view can be understood better with the Contingency management theory by (Omazić et al., 2020). This theory suggests that there is no one best way to manage an organization and that the most effective management style depends on the situation. In this context, the participants explained that they expected the school leadership/management team to adopt a leadership style that made sure all learning gaps were closed by responding to the C-19 situation with all necessary trainings, resources, and technical knowledge for such an emergency.

### **Theme 3: Health and Safety Concern**

Health and safety concerns emerged as a supra-ordinated theme during the research study. According to the participants, these concerns ranged from the risk of transmitting the C-19 virus across the school, the drastic need to implement and enforce measures such as social distancing, use of facemask, increased cleaning as well as disinfection protocols. Under this supra-ordinate theme, one sub theme came up which is mental health challenge.

#### ***Mental health challenge***

Mental health challenges were identified as a sub theme under health and safety concerns. Here, the participants expressed that fear of the virus and the stress of differentiating its symptoms from symptoms of other diseases put a toll on the mental health of both the students and the teachers. "The pandemic created social isolation issues that affected the mental health of so many people." "I would also say that one issue we educators faced was, uh, uh, identifying the covid 19 symptoms. There were a lot of different health reviews and, you know, people can't really point at certain symptoms such as the Covid 19 virus or symptoms of the virus." (Participant RA, Pg5)

Participant RA opined that the pandemic resulted in so much stress and anxiety for many students, especially those who were subjected to compulsory Covid isolation away from peers and family. There was also the imminent fear of contracting the virus which led to social segregation and absence of physical human interactions. All of this led to serious mental health challenges. Relating this to the Health Belief Model by Abraham and Sheeran (2015), people's be-

lieve and behaviors are critical to what they see or perceive as mental health challenges. People would usually act in line with their perception of susceptibility to contracting the C-19 virus. In other words, some educators who are not able to differentiate the C-19 symptoms from other sicknesses may not act quickly to prevent the spread of the C-19 virus. While others may perceive it as life threatening and as such, they develop heightened anxiety levels which inadvertently impact their mental health. This anxiety can also be passed around to people within their immediate contact.

### **Theme 4: Economic Impact**

This supraordinate theme came up during the discussion and received unanimous affirmation from the other participants as one issue they all encountered in their different schools, consequent upon the happenings of the C-19 pandemic. A theme emerged here.

#### ***Profit/revenue loss***

one of the study participants mentioned that C-19 led to a decline in revenue, which on its own had a significant economic impact on their services as secondary education service providers. This was attributed to the sudden transition to online learning as a measure to bridge the ensuing academic gap upon the commencement of the lockdown. Due to this decline, there was a drastic drop in the demand for traditional/ physical classroom lectures, hence, a significant drop in the number of students who were requesting the services of the school. The statements below depict the participants' perceptions and experiences of what led to the decline in revenue over the lockdown period.

"The financial aspect of it. Uh, so many schools lost money, generally including my own school, and then so many students couldn't come back because of lack of money for fees".

"There was also a lot of downsizing from companies, and this affected many parents including some staff in my school". (Participant RA, Pg5)

"There was the cost of buying digital devices for learning on the part of the parents, the cost of buying data for network/ internet access, and the cost of training teachers to become proficient in using online learning platforms." (Participant SD, Pg5)

One theory of business management that can be related to this issue is contingency theory (Omazić et al., 2020). This theory suggests that there is no one best way to manage an organization and that the most effective management style depends on the situation. In the context of secondary education service providers during the pandemic, contingency theory suggests that leaders should adapt their manage-



ment style to the specific challenges they face. For example, if there is a decline in revenue due to reduced demand for in-person services, leaders may need to adopt a more cost-effective management style and reduce expenses.

Another theory that can be related to this issue is the resource-based view of the firm. This theory suggests that a firm's resources and capabilities are key determinants of its competitive advantage and long-term profitability.

In the context of secondary education service providers during the pandemic, this theory suggests that firms should focus on developing new resources and capabilities that are better suited to remote learning and other challenges posed by the pandemic.

### Theme 5: Digital Illiteracy

Digital illiteracy was one of the supra-ordinate themes that arose from discussing with the participants of this study. Three participants asserted that due to the sudden shift to remote learning, many students, staff, and parents struggled to adapt to the technological demands of the new learn-

ing approach, hence, exposing the digital literacy divide existing within schools. This statement by Participant G highlights this theme:

"Many students had to rely on their parents' devices to access the online learning platforms and some of these parents were not conversant with navigating the online learning platforms, some other parents did not have devices that could support online learning, hence, their children missed out of classes." (Participant G, Pg3).

The above response pinpoints evidence of digital illiteracy during the lockdown period. Participant G asserts that many students struggled to participate in remote learning due to lack of technical knowledge of internet enabled devices as some of their parents lacked the technical knowledge required for remote learning attendance, hence, they were unable to help. This posed a great disadvantage to many students.

### DETAILS OF DATA COLLECTED

TABLE 2. Thematic Grid

NO	THEME	CODE	Quotations
1.	Disruption of continuous learning	Early closure of schools	"one of the major challenges faced was the imbalance between the efficiency and pace of learning"
		Sudden shift from physical to online classroom	"the pandemic came as a surprise, hence there was no prior notice to students nor to our stakeholders and less time for quality planning"
2	Learning loss	Weaknesses of teaching infrastructure	"During the pandemic, the school offices were locked thus there was no way to access textbooks and other teaching materials" "We had the technological devices for online learning but poor internet/ network access in Nigeria made online learning very difficult" "Many students had to rely on their parents' devices to access the online learning platforms and some of these parents were not conversant with navigating the online learning platforms, some other parents did not have devices that could support online learning, hence, their children missed out of classes "

Cont.....

NO	THEME	CODE	Quotations
		Lack of resources Inefficient human capacities	
3	Health and safety concerns	Mental health issues	<p>“the pandemic brought about an increase in learning expenses which reflected on the school fees amount and this resulted in some students dropping out as their parents could not afford the new fees”</p> <p>“the pandemic created social isolation issues that affected the mental health of so many people”</p> <p>“I would also say that one issue we educators faced was, uh, uh, identifying the covid 19 symptoms. There were a lot of different health reviews and, you know, people can't really point at certain symptoms such as the Covid 19 virus or symptoms of the virus”</p>
4	Economic impact	Profit/revenue loss  Drop in student enrollment numbers	<p>“, the financial aspect of it. Uh, so many schools lost money, generally including my own school, and then so many students couldn't come back because of lack of money for fees”.</p> <p>“ there were also many downsizing from companies and this affected many parents including some staff in my school”.</p> <p>“there was the cost of buying digital devices for learning on the part of the parents, the cost of buying data for network/ internet access, and the cost of training teachers to become proficient in using online learning platforms”</p>
5	Digital illiteracy	Increase in learning expenses Limited funding from government and stakeholders Increased financial demand on both school management and staff Broadened in-equality	<p>“Many students had to rely on their parents' devices to access the online learning platforms and some of these parents where not conversant with navigating the online learning platforms, some other parents did not have devices that could support online learning, hence, their children missed out of classes ”</p>
6	Adaptation and coping strategy	Absence of online learning software Flexible scheduling eg. Blended learning  Partnership and collaboration with co-education providers and stakeholders	<p>“we had to conduct an assessment online to make it easy for both students and teachers”</p> <p>“Prior to C-19 our teachers used only markerboards to teach, but the pandemic brought about a sort of blend that included the use of projectors and laptops to teach in classrooms”.</p> <p>“In my school, we had to cut down on expenses, especially on things that were not very necessary, that way we were able to bring our expenses to a minimal level”</p> <p>“online exams made us adopt the paperless strategy and brought about a huge save from buying of paper”</p>

## CONCLUSION

Despite the constraints faced by this study, its objective to assess the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on secondary education in Nigeria was successfully accomplished. The study found that the pandemic had a significant impact on secondary education. This impact ranges from economic impact to health and emotional concerns, the style/ methods of learning, and resources for learning. The researchers identified that the pandemic for some schools brought positive impacts, such as a shift from traditional physical classroom learning to blended approaches that involve remote learning. Most importantly, the COVID-19 lockdown led to the adoption of various leadership and business management models that encouraged preparedness and contingency strategizing.

## LIMITATIONS

Certain restrictions were encountered during this research, including the limited sample size of n=20. Consequently, the study's outcomes may not fully capture the broader perspective on the topic. Nevertheless, the small sample size facilitated a comprehensive investigation of the participants' viewpoints, concepts, understanding, encounters, and perspectives. The gathered data was effectively examined. The collected data was efficiently analyzed. The data for this research was collected from 5 secondary schools within Anambra state in Nigeria. While it gives a picture of the impact of C-19 in Anambra state, the results obtained cannot

fully represent the general picture of C-19's impact in the whole of Nigeria. This is because the sample size was small and limited to just one state in Nigeria. My study did not include executive directors or stakeholders who were not involved in the day-to-day running of the school business. Hence, the impact of C-19 on them as business stakeholders has not been captured in this study. This is an area for further study.

## Learning from the Research

The following are the learning points gathered from this research:

- COVID-19 school closures disrupted learning continuity, particularly for students lacking digital access.
- Extended closures led to significant learning loss and impacted academic performance, especially for disadvantaged students.
- Educational inequalities were exacerbated, with marginalized students facing increased barriers to remote learning.
- The pandemic negatively affected students' mental health, resulting in heightened stress and anxiety.
- Gender disparities in education were amplified, with girls facing additional challenges and reduced access to online learning.
- Teacher preparedness and support gaps were exposed during the shift to remote learning, impacting education quality.

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