

Lawrence Olusola IGE¹Dare Rilwan AMUSA²**Covid-19 Lockdown and Vulnerable Groups in Lagos State, Nigeria***Received: 10 June 2023 / Accepted: 22 June 2023 / Published: 1 August 2024*

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Abstract

COVID-19 met the entire world unprepared, hence, the impact was felt in all sectors of many countries especially in the developing countries. The developed countries were able to manage the post COVID-19 crises while the developing countries like Nigeria are still battling in the euphoria of the past. Most people live from hand to mouth even before the pandemic and during the lockdown process they were unable to perform any economic activities. This lingers for a long time, posing a ripple effects on the post pandemic time. Despite the assistance receive from major international bodies, the vulnerable groups in Nigeria are part of the people who suffer major loss during and after COVID-19 with less attention given to them by the Government. The study therefore, x-ray the challenges faced by the vulnerable groups during COVID-19 and post pandemic in Nigeria.

Keywords: *Vulnerable Groups, COVID-19, Pandemic, Lockdown*

¹ Lawrence Olusola Ige PhD, Department of Adult Education, University of Lagos, Nigeria, Email: lawige@unilag.edu.ng.

² Department of Adult Education, University of Lagos, Nigeria, Amusadare31@yahoo.com.

Introduction

The economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria, a lower-middle income country, has been significant, with plunging oil prices in particular affecting Nigeria's heavily oil dependent economy (World Bank, 2021). It is also important to mention that the economic impact of Covid-19 has worsened poverty levels in Nigeria, which even prior to the pandemic hosted more than ten percent of the world's extreme poor, defined by the World Bank as people living on less than \$1.90 per day. As was the case in most parts of the world, women in Nigeria have been disproportionately harmed by the economic impact of the pandemic. Nationwide household surveys on the socioeconomic impact of Covid-19, conducted by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), a federal government agency, found that among people surveyed in September 2020 who were working before the crisis, women were almost twice as likely to have become economically inactive than men (13 percent versus 7 percent). Aside from the women, there were so many other vulnerable groups affected with the pandemic.

Vulnerability is the degree to which a population, individual, or organization is unable to anticipate, cope with, resist, and recover from the impacts of disasters. It is often defined as a potential consequence of many risk factors, but which risk factors should be considered as the most important remains a question for debate. Vulnerability may be caused by insufficient social integration (non-participation informal and informal social networks, including leisure activities, insufficient social support and social isolation) and insufficient cultural integration which involves norms and values related to active social citizenship and non-compliance with normative requirements such as a poor work ethic, abuse of the social security system, criminal behaviour, 'inappropriate' treatment of women and men's duties and rights, non-participation in a neighborhood or in social activities in general (Jehoel-Gijsbers & Vrooman, (2007) cited in Sobowale, 2020).

Vulnerable groups in the context of how people are affected during COVID-19, are the women that are low income earners, the elderly, the ill or people with pre-existing conditions and people with series of disabilities. All these people are affected differently during the pandemic and after pandemic (NBS, 2022). For instance, NBS surveys have shown that, although many people have been able to resume work or other economic activities, many Nigerians are still earning less than before the pandemic. Over 67 percent of households interviewed nationwide in 2020 reported that their total income had decreased compared to August 2019. This is

because there was salary slash for those who are working in the organization who are supposedly low income earner. This also affected those who are supposed to assist the vulnerable with some cash or gift items.

Lagos, a state in the southwest Nigeria, is called a land of opportunities with a population of 20 million spanning across high income to low income earners. People from across the world come to Lagos to look for job or have a means to an end. However, despite the growing number of high-end apartment buildings in Lagos state, majority of the vulnerable groups in the state live in informal housing because of the high rent. Many in the hundreds of slums or informal settlements spread throughout the city, and which often lack security of tenure, access to water, education, healthcare, transportation, and sanitation. Some of the vulnerable people also works in the informal sector ranging from street traders, street beggars, taxi drivers, and tradespeople, to food vendors and hairdressers. The combination of poverty, reliance on the informal economy, and the relatively high cost of living made urban poor communities in Lagos State extremely vulnerable to the economic impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Covid-19 pandemic had a devastating impact on the livelihoods and access to food of urban communities in Lagos State, as a five-week lockdown, the prolonged economic downturn that has accompanied the pandemic, and rising food prices left many households including the vulnerable groups struggling to feed their families. Aside from the economic sector, the impact of the lockdown was also felt in virtually all the major sectors that affects the livelihood of the people. In the same vein, the vulnerable groups felt the impact of lockdown in the health sector. Vanguard Newspaper in April 2023 also reported that most people in Lagos state especially the vulnerable are unable to access the healthcare facilities as they cannot afford to pay for the COVID-19 test and almost all the primary healthcare centres are filled with people under observation leaving no space for people coming for other clinical issues. The issue is also compounded with high prices of drug and restriction of movement which limited the number of pharmacy opening the store.

Similarly, the pandemic also affected education of the child of vulnerable people. An article submitted by World Economic Forum (2020) opined that the immediate costs of the COVID-19 pandemic to education in Nigeria are evident. With school closures persisting for months, students, especially the most vulnerable, are missing out on learning. The government and individual schools are adapting by switching mediums and delivering learning through digital

platforms. Nonetheless, the country's severe digital divide (in terms of infrastructure and expertise) exacerbates pre-existing educational inequalities. Muthuraman & Al Hazi (2020) assessed the impact of COVID-19 in the Education sector and promoted awareness of the impediments to education. The researcher reported that COVID epidemic has not only exposed Nigeria's inadequate health infrastructure and services, but it has also highlighted the truth of education's dilapidation and under-funding. Aside from the health sector, COVID-19 has had little influence on education. As a result of the absence of infrastructure essential for operating virtual courses, the bad internet network, the unreliable power supply, the high cost of mobile data, and other obstacles, opening our schools virtually is not only difficult but also impossible in Nigeria. There were already a lot of kids out of school before the epidemic, and now there are even more kids out of school owing to the outbreak.

The impact of the pandemic lockdown was also felt in the financial situation of the vulnerable groups. Ihekweazu (2020) reported the experience of people who were retrenched or demoted from their work, people who were unable to pay for their house rent as a result of inability to open their store or shop. Generally, people who suffered most from the lockdown are people who sell perishable items like food, the street hawkers, street beggars and those who live from hand to mouth as they were unable to go out despite the lockdown starting unaware. Moreso, The lost livelihoods, reduced income, and rising food prices caused by the Covid-19 pandemic have devastated many Nigerians' ability to feed their families. The NBS data confirmed that 58 percent of households interviewed nationwide in 2020 had run out of food in the past 30 days, a period that included the March 30 to May 3, 2020 lockdown. More than one quarter of respondents and 35 percent of the vulnerable households recounted that they or a member of their household had not eaten for a whole day during the last 30 days due to lack of money or other resources.

Even after the lockdown ended in May, Nigerians continued to experience hunger at levels higher than before the pandemic. An NBS survey administered in August 2020 found that 59 percent of households, 61 percent in the vulnerable people had run out of food in the past 30 days. By November 2020, six months after the lockdown ended, an NBS survey found that almost half (48 percent) of all households had run out of food because of lack of money or other resources in the past 30 days, and in 18 percent of households at least one member of the household went without eating for a whole day. These numbers equate to millions of Nigerian households and tens of millions of individuals who have gone hungry during the pandemic.

It is not uncommon to note that two years after the lockdown, it is disheartening to note that up till date the effect of the lockdown still lingers as most of the vulnerable groups have not been fully restored. It is also imperative to note that with the number of assistance, loan and help that Nigeria government receives before, during and after the lockdown, her citizens still struggle to leave beyond 1\$ dollar per day which is the benchmark for poverty level. This is evident in the high number of unemployed people as a result of the pandemic, the economic situation of the country, the number of businesses that have been closed and the increased rate of school drop-out based on economic issue and effect of lockdown, hence, the motivation for the study to examine the influence of COVID-19 lockdown on vulnerable groups in Lagos state, Nigeria.

Problem Statement

COVID-19 as a deadly infection and its rapid spread brought about the issue of lockdown in many parts of the world, Nigeria inclusive. Lockdown was seen as the only option to curtail the spread of the virus but it is at the detriment of so many sector of the economy. Although lockdown was declared all over the nation but in Nigeria, the vulnerable groups were severely affected during and after the lockdown. It seems that the COVID-19 lockdown affects the healthcare system of the vulnerable group and this brought about so many dead as various health centres were not accessible even with the fact that they were open. It also appears that the lockdown also affects the education of the vulnerable groups as submitted by Muthuraman & Al Haziazi (2020). Some of the children of school ages were not able to attend classes and they are unable to afford the virtual classes which were organized by the standard and highly revered schools, hence, the increase in the number of out of school children. There are also indications that the lockdown also affects the financial situations of the vulnerable groups as they are unable to work since some of them are low income earners and people that feed from hand to mouth or depend on other people who were not paid during lockdown. It also appears that the ripple effect of lockdown is also felt in the cost of food items which is the basic necessities for the vulnerable groups as they are unable to afford a daily meal during the lockdown and even after the lockdown. Despite the amount of aids received by the Governments at all level, the vulnerable group had a rough and tough time as the impact is still felt in two years after the lockdown. These serves as motivation for the study to examine the influence of COVID-19 lockdown on vulnerable groups in Lagos state, Nigeria.

Purpose of the study

The general objective of the research is to examine the influence of COVID-19 lockdowns on the vulnerable groups in Lagos state, Nigeria. The specific objectives are to:

1. Investigate the effects of the COVID-19 lockdown on the health care of the vulnerable groups in Lagos state, Nigeria;
2. Determine the effects of the COVID-19 lockdown on the financial situation of the vulnerable groups in Lagos state, Nigeria;
3. Assess the influence of COVID-19 lockdown on the education of the vulnerable groups in Lagos state, Nigeria;
4. Ascertain the influence of COVID-19 lockdown on the basic necessities of the vulnerable groups in Lagos state, Nigeria.

Research Questions

1. What are the effects of the COVID-19 lockdown on the health care of the vulnerable groups in Lagos state?
2. What are the effects of the COVID-19 lockdown on the financial situation of the vulnerable groups in Lagos state?
3. To what extent does COVID-19 lockdown influences the education of the vulnerable groups in Lagos state?
4. What is the influence of COVID-19 lockdown on the basic necessities of the vulnerable groups in Lagos state?

Research Hypotheses

H₀ 1: COVID-19 lockdown has no significant effect on the financial situation of the vulnerable group in Lagos state.

H₀ 2: COVID-19 lockdown has no significant effect on the education of the vulnerable group in Lagos state.

Methodology

The study adopted descriptive design to have a full glance of the study. Data was collected through the use of closed ended questionnaire from the vulnerable groups in Lagos state. Split half reliability technique was used to determine the validity and reliability of the test. Three hundred and twenty (320) respondents were selected through Yamane sample formular in seven local governments being one third of the twenty local governments in Lagos state. This was done to ensure that major local government where vulnerable people lives were captured and to enable generalised of he study. Likert four point scale was used in the questionnaire. The result was analysed with simple percentages to answer research questions raised and Pearson product moment correlation was used for hypotheses formulated at 0.05 significant level.

Data Analysis

Table 1

Research Question One: What are the effects of the COVID-19 lockdown on the health care of the vulnerable groups in Lagos state?

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total
Lockdown worsened the accessibility of daily routine healthcare	104 (32.5%)	111 (34.7%)	59 (18.4%)	46 (14.4%)	320 (100)
During lockdown, the vulnerable are exposed to risk of complications	118 (36.9%)	103 (31.2%)	51 (15.9%)	38 (11.9%)	320 (100)
It is very difficult to access healthcare facilities during lockdown	140 (43.8%)	96 (30%)	35 (10.9%)	49 (15.3%)	320 (100)
Getting drugs for other ailment during lockdown was very easy	66 (20.6%)	70 (21.9%)	120 (37.5%)	74 (23.1%)	320 (100)

Table one shows that 215(67.2%) of the respondents agreed that lockdown worsened the accessibility of daily routine healthcare, 221(68.1%) agreed that during lockdown, the vulnerable are exposed to risk of complications, 236(73.8%) of the respondents also agreed that It is very difficult to access healthcare facilities during lockdown while 194(60.6%) disagreed that getting drugs for other ailment during lockdown was very easy.

Table 2

Research Question Two: What are the effects of the COVID-19 lockdown on the financial situation of the vulnerable groups in Lagos state?

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total
Lockdown denied people the means of sustenance	120 (37.5%)	117 (36.6%)	50 (15.6%)	40 (12.5%)	320 (100)
So many people were retrenched or sacked during lockdown	124 (38.8%)	106 (33.1%)	45 (14.1%)	35 (10.9%)	320 (100)
People are richer during lockdown more than before lockdown	30 (9.4%)	39 (12.2%)	145 (45.3%)	106 (33.1%)	320 (100)
People find it difficult to meet their financial responsibility during lockdown	186 (58.1%)	90 (28.1%)	32 (10%)	32 (10%)	320 (100)

Table two shows that 237(74.1%) of the respondents agreed that lockdown denied people the means of sustenance, 230(71.9%) agreed that so many people were retrenched or sacked during lockdown, 251(78.4%) of the respondents also disagreed that people are richer during lockdown more than before lockdown while 276(86.2%) agreed that people find it difficult to meet their financial responsibility during lockdown.

Table 3

Research Question Three: To what extent does COVID-19 lockdown influences the education of the vulnerable groups in Lagos state?

Response	Number of Respondent	% of respondents
Very large extent	200	62.5
Large extent	70	21.8
Mild extent	30	9.4
No influence	20	6.3
Total	320	100

Table three shows that 200(62.5%) of the respondent opined that lockdown influences the education of the vulnerable group in a very large extent, 70(21.8%) of the respondents opined that the lockdown affect education of the vulnerable group in a large extent, 40(9.4%) of the respondents also opined that the influence of lockdown on the education of the vulnerable

group is very mild, while 20(6.3%) of the respondents opined that there is no influence of lockdown on education of the vulnerable groups in Lagos.

Table 4

Research Question Four: What is the influence of COVID-19 lockdown on the basic necessities of the vulnerable groups in Lagos state?

Items	Strongly Agree	Agree	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total
As a result of COVID-19 lockdown so many people cannot afford food prices	110 (34.4%)	110 (34.4%)	50 (15.6%)	50 (15.6%)	320 (100)
Food supply during COVID-19 lockdown was very low	118 (36.9%)	110 (34.4%)	42 (13.1%)	50 (15.6%)	320 (100)
COVID-19 lockdown affects the earning of people negatively	149 (46.7%)	96 (30%)	35 (10.9%)	40 (12.5%)	320 (100)
COVID-19 affected the income-generating capacity of households of daily income earners	120 (37.5%)	84 (26.3%)	66 (20.6%)	60 (18.8%)	320 (100)

Table 4 shows that 220 (68.8%) of the respondents agreed that as a result of COVID-19 lockdown so many people cannot afford food prices, 228 (71.3%) agreed that food supply during COVID-19 lockdown was very low, 245 (76.7%) of the respondents also agreed that COVID-19 lockdown affects the earning of people negatively while 204(63.8%) agreed that COVID-19 affected the income-generating capacity of households of daily income earners.

Table 5

Hypotheses Testing

COVID-19 lockdown has no significant effect on the financial situation of the vulnerable group in Ifako-Ijaye LGA of Lagos state

COVID-19 LOCKDOWN	FINANCIAL SITUATION OF VULNERABLE GROUP
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COVID-19	Pearson	1	.806**
Lockdown	correlation		.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	320	20
Financial	Pearson	.806**	1
Situation	of Correlation	Sig.	.000
Vulnerable	(2-Tailed)		
Group	N	320	320

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 5, illustrates that the Pearson product moment correlation index obtained is positive at 'r' = 0.806. The significance or p-value = 0.000 which is less than predetermined alpha=0.05. This result indicated that COVID-19 lockdown has significant effect on the financial situation of the vulnerable group in Lagos state. In conclusion. Since the null hypothesis stated is rejected, it implies that there is a significant relationship between COVID-19 lockdown and the financial situation of the vulnerable groups in Lagos state.

Table 6

Hypothesis 2

COVID-19 lockdown has no significant effect on the education of the vulnerable group in Ifako-Ijaye LGA of Lagos state.

		COVID-19	EDUCATION OF
		LOCKDOWN	THE VULNERABLE
			GROUP
COVID-19	Pearson	1	.807**
Lockdown	correlation		.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)		
	N	320	320
Education	of Pearson	.807**	1
the Vulnerable	Correlation	Sig.	.000
Group	(2-Tailed)		
	N	320	320

**Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 6 illustrates that the Pearson product moment correlation index obtained is positive at ' r ' = 0.807. The significance or p-value = 0.000 which is less than predetermined $\alpha=0.05$. This result indicated that there is significant effect of COVID-19 lockdown on education of the vulnerable group. In conclusion. Since the null hypothesis stated is rejected, it implies that there is a significant effect of COVID-19 lockdown on the education of the vulnerable groups in Lagos state.

Discussion of Findings

Findings from research question one show that respondents opined that lockdown worsened the accessibility of daily routine healthcare, during lockdown, the vulnerable are exposed to risk of complications, it is very difficult to access healthcare facilities during lockdown not to mention getting drugs for other ailment. This is in line with Muthuraman & Al Hazi, (2020) findings that lockdown strategies worsened the accessibility of routine health services because of the sudden freezing of economic activities and significant adverse impact on income across various employment categories which left vulnerable groups at risk for preventable diseases and complications, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Also, The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) supported the result through their submission that the reduction in access to healthcare and general disruption are expected to have devastating effects, including a significant increase in child and maternal deaths. An increase in the death rate by 10% is also anticipated in countries with higher HIV/AIDS burdens because of the COVID-19-related interruption of the medical supply chain.

Findings from research question two and hypothesis one show that lockdown denied people the means of sustenance, so many people were retrenched or sacked during lockdown, people are not richer during lockdown more than before lockdown and people find it difficult to meet their financial responsibility during lockdown. This is in line with Ngozika, Dominic, Ogechi, Mathias, Paul & Onu (2023) findings that prolonged lockdown was distressful to both individuals and businesses. Many artisans that depended on daily wages were worse off. The lockdown prevented them from performing their daily vocations, thereby denying them means of sustenance. While government paid salaries of public servants, private business operators could not pay their staff and some were retrenched. Moreso, the study of Sheptak & Menaker (2020) corroborated the finding that the Nigeria economy being predominantly constricted even before the pandemic was characterized by huge unemployment and underemployment rate. As a result of pandemic, many employee working in private organisations either lost their jobs or have to accept pay cuts to remain working.

Findings from research question three and hypothesis two show that COVID-19 lockdown influences the education of vulnerable groups to a very large extent. This is in line with the study of Guan, (2020) that the crisis of COVID-19 has exacerbated preexisting educational disparities by reducing the opportunities for many of the most vulnerable children, youth, and adults, those living in poor or rural areas, girls, refugees, persons with disabilities and forcibly displaced persons, to continue their learning. Similarly, the education disruption has had a big effect on their learning. Meanwhile, the study is also corroborated by the submission of UNESCO (2020), that the closure of schools has affected 36,400,000 primary and secondary school learners across Nigeria, including those in internally displaced camps. Few of these learners - mostly from financially privileged households - have access to quality learning opportunities from the comfort of their homes.

Lastly, findings from research question four showed that as a result of COVID-19 lockdown so many people cannot afford food prices, Food supply during COVID-19 lockdown was very low, COVID-19 lockdown affects the earning of people negatively and affected the income-generating capacity of households of daily income earners. This is in line with World Bank (2020) report that the pandemic is creating tensions for food availability and accessibility in many countries. Again, scientific observation indicates a shortage in household food within the first week of the lockdown. The finding is also supported by the study of Onyekwena & Ekeruche (2020) that the pandemic has affected the income-generating capacity of households on contract job or daily income earners. This finding is the same with Buja et al. (2020) who found that one of the lockdown crises is restrictive preventive measures, which ultimately affect labour wage and household income. It is imperative to note that there is a strong correlation between COVID-19 and low purchasing power of households, considering the inability of some households to access sufficient, nutritious and safe food.

Conclusions

It is imperative to note that the study was able to found that the impact of lockdown especially on the vulnerable groups was high in at least five major sector that affects their livelihood even some years after the lockdown. Therefore, there is need for adequate provision for the masses especially those who only feed from hand to mouth to reduce the poverty level in the society. The study therefore recommend among others that health centres should be more proactive during pandemic so as to encourage people to visit them, the society should be encouraged to patronize the small scale business so that they can thrive during and beyond pandemic,

employers and friends should always look out for vulnerable people during pandemic as they are most hit by such and Government at all level should wake up to their responsibility in providing palliative that will be adequate and sufficient for the citizens especially those who are mostly affected with the lockdown process.

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