
Covid-19 Pandemic and Educational Development in Rivers State, Nigeria

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Abstract

The study centres on two state owned degree awarding tertiary institutions: Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education. Prior to Covid-19, the mode learning was face to face. This, however, was interrupted by the pandemic, with lecturers and students being forced to online teaching. This study examines the nature of tertiary educational development in Rivers State before Covid-19 pandemic; investigates the setbacks caused by Covid-19 pandemic and investigates how Covid-19 impacted on tertiary educational development in Rivers State, Nigeria. The research adopted secondary and primary means in gathering the data. The study design was the descriptive survey method using purposive sampling technique. The population of study comprises both Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University staff of 4,291, with a sample size of 400 respondents. The structural functionalism theory of Talcot Parson is used to guide the study. The findings showed that: Covid-19 delayed students' graduation; affected various universities budget plan and academic calendar. It led to poor school enrolments, poor school health and a decline of revenue. Thus, the study recommends that Government should make adequate provision for online learning platform in schools; and that there should be greater awareness on Covid 19.

Keywords: Covid-19, Education, Development, Online Learning.

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected educational systems worldwide, leading to the total closure of classroom learning in pre-primary, primary, high-school, colleges and universities. According to Hillary (2020) the effects of the virus can never be overemphasized as it affects health, education, economy, politics, and many other institutions of the society. The education sector was never excluded from the effects of the virus as we saw total closure of schools thereby hindering classroom activities to hold as usual.

Chineze *et al.* (2020) opined that Covid-19 situation has changed the way we live, move, and for the education system, it has

also changed the way we manage the resources and the situations. Chineze asserted further that, this is contingency situation that requires contingency management response and functions. According to Levi (1999) education in Nigeria in the 21st century has been seen as a means of enriching oneself. He further argues that schools in Nigeria are more interested in graduating students that are unemployable, thus increasing the level of unemployment in the country.

Before the outbreak of Covid-19, there were several other pandemics that have affected the educational system in the past. Some of such pandemics include; the 14th Century era, ranging from 1,346 to 1,353 where there was a Black Death (it is also referred to as the bubonic plague) its spread

at that time quickly across Europe, killing almost half the population of the continent. Later, Oxford University in England reacted by sending most of their students and staff away from campus, to protect them from the disease and prevent further spread. During the next several centuries, the plague continued to ravage Europe. But Institutions of higher education implemented escape plans and became skillful at moving students and staff far off into the countryside to protect them from being infected by and spreading these deadly plagues (Burnham, 2009).

Burnham in a study on school closures proposed that closing schools during the midst of a pandemic may contribute to as much as a 15 percent reduction in cases. This is exactly how many urban areas, such as Boston, Denver, Kansas City, Philadelphia, Portland, and many others reacted to the Spanish flu, by closing many K-12 schools, some for up to 15 weeks in the fall of 1918.

The Western African Ebola virus epidemic which occurred during 2013–2016, was the most widespread outbreak of Ebola virus disease (EVD) in history, causing major loss of life and socio-economic disruption in the region, mainly in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The first cases were recorded in Guinea in December 2013; later, the disease spread to neighboring Liberia and Sierra Leone, with minor outbreaks occurring elsewhere (Deirdre, 2017). Also, the 1957–1958 Asian flu pandemic was a global pandemic of influenza which destroyed many activities at that time. A virus subtype H2N2 that originated in Guizhou in southern China was another deadly disease that killed some people. The number of deaths caused by the 1957–1958 pandemic is estimated between one and four million worldwide, making it one of the deadliest pandemics in history. A decade later, a reassorted viral strain H3N2 further caused the Hong Kong flu pandemic (1968–1969) and killed many persons. Although, there are a lot of studies conducted to access the impact of effects of Covid-19 pandemic such as Adhlakun (2020); Survey of the Experience and Opinions of Educators and Technology Specialists (2020), Hilary

(2020), Orji (2020), and Peterson (2020) among others.

However, most of these studies looked at the effects of Covid-19 pandemic either on economy, politics, or education as a whole. To the limited knowledge of this study, there is no study that has captioned the interplay of Covid-19 pandemic and tertiary educational development in Rivers State, Nigeria. It is against this background that this study attempts to fill the existing gap in knowledge. Extrapolating from the foregoing, the following research questions are formulated to aid the study.

1. How was the nature of tertiary education in Rivers State before the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic?
2. What are the setbacks caused by Covid-19 pandemic on tertiary educational development in Rivers State?
3. How can the challenges faced during Covid-19 pandemic on tertiary educational development be mitigated?

The aim of the study is to examine the effect of Covid-19 pandemic on the education educational development in Rivers State. In order to realize the stated aim, the study will determine the following objectives:

1. examine the nature of tertiary educational development in Rivers State before the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic
2. To investigate the setbacks caused by Covid-19 pandemic on tertiary educational development in the Rivers State
3. To examine how the challenges faced during Covid-19 on tertiary educational development in Rivers State be mitigated.

METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive survey design. This method was found appropriate for the study, since the researchers are mainly concern with the development and setbacks in tertiary educational system in Rivers State, Nigeria during the Covid-19 pandemic. With this method, the researchers get responses

from students, academic and non-academic staff from both universities etc. The population of this study comprised of staff and students of Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education, Nigeria. The total population size taken is 46,291 respondents. The sampling technique adopted was the purposive and sample size includes 400 respondents.

Table 1: Population Size of IAUE and RSU

Designation	Population Size	Percentage
IAUE	16,352	46.3
RSU	29,291	53.7
Total	46,291	100

Source: Field Survey 2020-2021

The study made use of Taro Yamane formula to determine the sample size as stated below:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + (e)^2}$$

Where

n = Sample size required

N = Study Population

e = allowed error (%)

From the above formula, we calculate our population size as thus,

$$n = \frac{46,291}{1 + (0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{46,291}{1 + 0.0025}$$

$$n = 46,291$$

$$1 + 46,291 \times 0.0025$$

$$n = 46,291$$

$$46,292 \times 0.0025$$

$$n = 46,291$$

$$115.73n = 400$$

A total of four hundred (400) structured questionnaire was administered, out of which three hundred and ninety copies which represents 95% of the study population was retrieved. Of these, 45.4% of the respondents were males, while 54.6% were females.

Table 2 shows that 22.9% of the respondents are in level 100, 22.2% in 200 level, 18.3% in level 300, 16.2% in level 400 and 12.2% of the respondents are in post graduate programmes, and 8.2% of the population are either lecturers, level 500 or other qualifications.

Table 2: Analysis of respondents by Educational Level (Qualification)

Level	Freq.	Percent
100	90	22.9
200	87	22.2
300	72	18.3
400	63	16.2
PGD	48	12.2
Others	32	8.2
Total	392	100.0

Source: survey data 2021

Table 3: What was the nature of tertiary education in Rivers State before the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic? (N=392)

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
There was no online learning	80	20.4	262	16.8	40	10.2	10	2.6
Uninterrupted academic calendar.	92	23.5	250	63.8	36	9.2	14	3.5
Smooth teacher – student interaction/ relationship.	94	23.9	236	60.2	45	11.5	17	4.4
Classroom management	98	25	116	29.6	90	22.9	88	22.5
Access to learning	166	42.3	88	22.4	65	16.5	73	18.6
High level of comprehension during lecture.	99	25.2	155	39.5	46	11.7	52	13.4
Low performance of students.	15	3.8%	85	8.9	240	61.2	102	26.1
Average performance of students.	112	28.6	220	56.2	35	8.9	25	6.3
High performance of students.	103	26.3	210	53.6	46	11.7	33	8.4
Lack of learning facilities.	80	20.4	98	25	113	28.8	101	25.8
Academic stability	86	21.9	216	55.1	55	14.1	85	8.9

Source: Survey Data 2021.

Table 4: What are the setbacks caused by Covid-19 pandemic on tertiary education? (N=392)

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Disruption of academic calendar.	98	25	247	63.1	27	6.8	20	5.1
Delay in student's graduation.	96	24.5	249	63.5	22	5.6	25	6.4
Delay in students' mobilization for NYSC	95	24.2	250	65.8	18	4.6	29	7.4
Delay in student's examination and continues assessment.	235	59.9	110	28.2	28	7.1	19	4.8
Poor implementation of government educational programs	105	26.8	220	56.2	47	11.9	20	5.1
Impromptu shutdown of academic activities	205	52.3	120	30.6	40	10.2	27	6.9
Financial burden on the parent sustaining online learning	216	55.1	109	27.8	37	9.9	30	7.6
Lack of equipment and facilities to sustain online learning.	100	25.5	225	57.4	50	12.7	17	4.4
Poor internet network in some parts of the state.	98	25	240	61.2	32	8.2	22	5.6
Financial constraints on the part of the students to access online learning.	302	77.1	40	10.2	30	7.6	20	5.1
Lack of in-service training on the teachers with ICT platform.	95	24.2	250	63.8	29	7.4	18	4.6
Lack of classroom management on the part of the teacher.	88	22.5	207	52.8	57	14.5	40	10.2
Inability of students to properly access lectures in the classroom.	99	25.2	226	57.6	43	10.9	44	6.3
Poor adoption of teaching and learning methods.	110	28.1	215	54.8	50	12.7	17	4.4

Source: Survey Data 2021.

Table 5: How can the challenges faced during Covid-19 pandemic on tertiary education in Rivers State be mitigated? (N=392)

	Strongly agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Establishment of reliable online learning platforms.	90	22.9	255	65.1	24	6.2	23	5.8
Training and retraining of academic staff on the use of ICT	112	28.5%	218	56.6%	42	10.7%	20	5.1
Program planning for subsequent pandemic	95	24.4%	200	51.1%	57	14.5%	40	10.2
Provision and installation of ICT learning facilities	250	63.7%	98	25%	24	6.2%	20	5.1
Intermittent use of ICT teaching and learning platform	40	43.4%	212	54.1%	6	1.5%	4	1
Reliable academic programs.	155	39.5%	216	55.1%	13	3.3%	8	2.1
Visible and practicable educational development plans.	96	24.5%	249	63.5%	37	9.4%	10	2.6
Employment of more qualified teachers.	240	61.3%	108	27.5%	30	7.6%	14	3.6
Proper adherent to Covid-19 rules and regulation.	102	26.1%	246	62.7%	24	6.1%	20	5.1

Source: Survey Data 2021.

DISCUSSION

The study investigated the impacts of Covid-19 pandemic on tertiary educational development in Rivers using Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education respectively. Research question one investigated the nature of tertiary institutions in Rivers State before the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic, and the results showed that highest number of respondents agreed to the questions therein which covers 62.8% of the study population. This indicated that there was stability in the tertiary educational sector especially the two universities under study, before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic etc. The findings are in line with the assertion by Okadigbo (2019) when analyzing education in Nigeria, disparities in Federal and State-owned Universities, where he opined that, state owned universities though more costly, they are more articulated. The findings also prove that the Rivers State government overtime has invested so much in the tertiary educational development in the state in other to stand out.

Research question two investigated the setbacks caused by Covid-19 pandemic on tertiary education in Rivers State, and the results showed that highest number of respondents agreed to the questions/assertions therein which covers 60% of the total population under study. This indicated that Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the academic calendar in Rivers State, etc these results are in line with the findings of Adalakun (2020) who asserts low income among parents, etc. Research question three investigated the mitigations to the challenges caused by Covid-19 pandemic on tertiary institutions in Rivers State, and the results showed that highest number of respondents agreed to the questions therein with a total of 61.1% of the study population. This indicated that there is need for some measures to be taken to mitigate the setbacks/challenges caused by Covid-19 pandemic on tertiary education in Rivers State especially the two universities under study. These results are in line with the assertion of Chineze *et al* (2020) that the management of education in the era

of Covid-19 needs internet communication and proper learning facilities. However, the findings are in line with the Orji (2020) who opined that the solutions to the impacts of Covid-19 pandemic on education are based on improving learning facilities and application of ICT in tertiary institutions in the state. These findings are in support of the option of Jackson (2020) who suggested that there should be training of teachers on the use of ICT to aid learning during subsequent lockdown.

More so, the findings have revealed that mitigations to the challenges of caused by Covid-19 pandemic are key to help curb subsequent pandemic. More so, the encouragement of training and retraining of teachers and provision of advanced computer gadgets for ICT are all means of mitigating the effects of Covid-19 pandemic. Another point to note is the proper adherence to the rules and regulations of Covid-19 pandemic and all round awareness will also help to curb the spread of the virus in Rivers state which would not further affects the state educational development processes.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study showed that Covid-19 pandemic has affected the growth of educational development in Rivers State; Nigeria. Covid-19 pandemic experience also presented chances for the nation to realize the poor condition of its educational system. Some of the main problems that have confronted the Nigerian education system, as discovered by this study, include the challenge of online teaching and training during the luck down period, uninterrupted academic calendar, average performance of students, affected academic stability, delay in graduation, poor implementation of government educational programs, poor internet network in some parts of the state and institutions, financial constraint to access online learning etc.

Also, the Covid-19 pandemic has serious negative impacts on the tertiary education in Rivers State. The effects are evident on the poor implementation of online learning, students drop out from school due to

financial constraints, no proper provision of online learning by the government, poor electricity supply by the government etc. This study proves that Covid-19 pandemic distracted the Rivers State government to implement their educational policies and the Covid-19 plague has affected the Rivers State improved plans on information and modern means of technology for schools in Rivers state, Nigeria.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Arising from the findings of this study, the following are the recommendations for the government to implement and provide effective educational system in Rivers State, Nigeria:

- i. Government should make adequate plan ahead and make provision for online learning platform in Rivers State University and Ignatius Ajuru University of Education.
- ii. Government should identify the main setbacks caused by Covid-19 pandemic and tackle them appropriately.
- iii. Heads of tertiary institutions under study should provide the continues retraining of staff and students in modern means and application of information and communication technological tools in order for them to handle further plague in Rivers State.
- iv. There should be adequate awareness as regards to the third wave of Covid-19 plague
- v. Government should set up education task force to restrategies on new measures to improve the educational system to meet up the academic calendar in line with the Federal government of Nigeria guidelines in new curriculum development.
- vi. Government should employ ICT experts to manage the use of information technologies in the various schools. Also, there should be a link between the government and network providers to provide programmed network solutions for users.

CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP

The study has shown that Covid-19 pandemic has unhelpful impacts on tertiary education which has resulted to delay in students' graduation, loss of jobs, disruption of academic calendar, among other effects.

This imprint of this work on the minds of scholars, government, teachers, students, school owners and the public at large is that Covid-19 pandemic has impacted negatively on tertiary education in Rivers State. These impacts are so overwhelming that most of the students have dropped out of school for the inability of the parents/guidance to sustain the learning model during the Covid-19 lockdown. Some students lost interest in education and decided to abandoned school for other endeavors of life. The findings of this study are indeed useful to researchers for future studies and also to the academic world at large. Also, the study area serves as contribution to knowledge.

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