

Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the Academic Performance of Secondary School Students in Ikere Local Government Area of Ekiti State**Margaret Olanireti AYODELE (Ph.D) & Samuel Olabode DADA (Ph.D)**

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Abstract

The study investigated the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the academic performance of secondary school students in Ikere Local Government Area of Ekiti State, Nigeria. A total of 20 students were selected using simple random sampling. Three research questions were raised to guide the study. Questionnaires were used to collect data. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages. Face and content validity were ensured, and reliability was assessed using a test-retest method. This was conducted at a school that was not part of the sample group. The instrument was administered twice within a two-week interval to five (5) students. The response was correlated using Pearson's Moment Coefficient. The reliability coefficient is 0.89. Data was collected and analysed. Findings revealed that students encountered challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as schools were closed. The study concluded that the lockdown of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic has damaging effects on the teaching and learning process. Based on the findings, it was recommended that the government should ensure that the COVID-19 pandemic does not recur in Nigerian society.

Keywords: COVID-19 pandemic, Academic performance, Secondary school students, Ikere Local Government, Ekiti State, Nigeria.

Introduction

Coronavirus is a family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS). The most recent coronavirus (sometimes referred to as the novel coronavirus) is called COVID- 19, and was first detected in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 as "pneumonia of unknown origin". As the world becomes increasingly interconnected, so do the risks. Since its first cases in China, COVID-19 has spread to almost every country worldwide. The COVID-19 pandemic has not stopped at national borders, and with rapid contamination, the COVID-19 outbreak spreads rapidly not only in China, but also to almost all countries worldwide

Though the world has dealt with other pandemics in the past, COVID-19 has been spreading fast. Additionally, the virus is highly contagious and can spread between people before symptoms appear. Since the virus is previously unknown, highly contagious, and passes easily from one person to the next, public health and government officials around the world worked hard to contain the spread of the virus; therefore, the World Health Organisation (WHO) announced it as a global pandemic on March 12, 2020

The signs of infection include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. In more severe cases, it can lead to pneumonia, multiple organ failure and even death. Current estimates of the incubation period - the time between infection and the onset of symptoms - range from 1 to 14 days. Most infected people develop symptoms within 5 to 6 days. However, infected patients can also be asymptomatic, meaning they do not display any symptoms despite having the virus in their systems

The coronavirus pandemic has no boundaries, and its effects are large and fast. Just within a few months of the outbreak of the disease, it drastically changed the lifestyles of the entire world, with billions of people being forced to stay at home, observe self-isolation, and work and learn from home. It limited people's freedom to move, trade, or associate. Not only did COVID-19 cause a total lockdown in many countries across the world, but it also caused the death of thousands of people, including women and the elderly.

Nevertheless, several governmental measures were taken to counteract the risk of disease spreading. These measures include travel restrictions, mandatory quarantines for travelers, social distancing, bans on public gatherings, school and university closures, business closures, self-isolation, asking people to work from home, curfews, and lockdowns. This affected all aspects of human activity globally, ranging from education, research, sports, entertainment, transportation, worship, social gatherings and interactions, the economy, businesses, and politics.

The education sector remains one of the worst-hit by the Coronavirus outbreak. This is because the global lockdown, which led to school closures, disrupted educational systems. The coronavirus pandemic created serious disruptions in academic activities, as well as in career plans

It is a fact that the Covid-19 pandemic influenced teaching and learning across all educational settings, from university to secondary and elementary levels, across all subjects of study. The major development associated with the National Policy on Education (NPE, 2008) is the pride of place it has given to education. Schools cannot dispense with them in their learning activities. Very importantly, the policy endorsed the view that teaching in our Secondary Schools must be seen as one of the avenues for establishing a strong basis for the production of effective citizens and for forging a cohesive society that will support the notion of nation-building.

The above statement implies not only a perception of Education as understanding human relationships, but also its aim of producing citizens with skills, competencies, moral values, and reasoned judgment to live, interact, and contribute positively to the economic, social, and political development of Nigerian Society. The conditions of teaching and learning are important for skill acquisition, and many variables influence them. The acquisition of these skills and competencies requires a stable and conducive learning environment, which the unpredictable waves of the pandemic might have disrupted.

Shocks prompting school closures (e.g., extreme climate events, epidemics, etc.) and other factors may have significant effects on teaching and learning, including reduced school attendance, increased dropouts, learning loss, teenage pregnancy, child labour, and malnutrition. Hence, the need for this research is to determine how the pandemic has affected the achievement of educational goals, including skill acquisition, occupational competence, self-reliance, and productivity.

The outbreak of the pandemic led to the outright closure of all educational institutions and other learning centres to slow the spread of COVID-19, disrupting the schooling of approximately 50 million students, representing more than 90 per cent of total enrollment. To ensure continuity of learning while schools are closed, Nigeria has utilised various remote learning delivery channels, including television, radio, online platforms, and take-home packages. In addition, governments and educators have begun to plan accelerated learning and catch-up programs to recover learning lost due to these interruptions

The nationwide school closure in Nigeria during the Covid-19 pandemic lasted much longer than expected, up to 7 months, on top of the time most students already spent at home for almost 7 months without explicit face-to-face instruction from teachers. Meanwhile,

teachers had to scramble to adapt content for an online platform and Learners themselves are faced with isolation, anxiety about a deadly virus, and uncertainty about whether another lockdown will occur. Apart from these, social distancing measures to curb the ongoing spread of the virus have limited students' access to learning activities and instructional materials. In so many ways, the current situation is unprecedented for most learners today. Therefore, researchers need to consider the various effects of the pandemic on learners' learning outcomes and ways to mitigate these effects. Thus, this study aims to investigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the academic performance of secondary school students in the Ikere Local Government Area.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated for this study:

1. What are the challenges encountered by students and lecturers as a result of the COVID-19 school closures in Secondary schools in Ikere Local Government?
2. Does COVID-19 have any impact on teaching activities in Civic Education in Secondary schools in Ikere Local Government?
3. What are the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on learning outcomes and educational achievement of students in Civic Education in Secondary schools in Ikere Local Government?

Review of Literature

Concept of Teaching and Learning

Teaching is a central concept in education and in any academic setting. There are various definitions of teaching, as well as many activities involved in the teaching and learning process. Nwabudike (2017) defined teaching as the conscious and deliberate effort by a mature or experienced person to impart information, knowledge, skills and so on to an immature or less experienced person, with the intention that the latter will learn or come to believe what is taught. Egba (2016) explained teaching to mean the various types of principles and methods of educating or instruction that are used to impart knowledge and skills on students by an instructor, while Tyarkoni (2015) defined teaching as assisted performance beyond the zone of proximal development' (assisting learners to perform beyond their current capacity).

In view of the above assertions, teaching can be defined as a systematic activity designed by a teacher or instructor to facilitate learning, enabling learners to construct worthwhile knowledge and skills. Teaching is an academic process that involves two groups of people: the teacher/instructor and students/learners, and information that includes knowledge and is transmitted. Given the activities involved in teaching, the concept of teaching is preferably discussed as teaching and learning. Shehu (2016) cited teaching and learning as two sides of a coin, because teaching is meaningless without learning; hence, teaching without learning is considered mere talking. For teaching to be meaningful, it must be effective in promoting knowledge, skills and values. In view of this, a document by Taatgen (2001) stated that the accepted criterion for measuring good teaching is the amount of learning outcomes demonstrated by the school-age learners and also through the perspective of learners 'engagement in the teaching and learning process. The report characterised effective teaching as: (a) teaching for understanding – teaching in ways that help learners understand ideas and perform proficiently, and (b) diversified – teaching in

ways that would help diverse learners to find a productive path to knowledge and constructively also. Ayodele (2023) cited effective teaching and learning as follows:

1. Inquiry-based: teachers should build the subject program around the inquiry process by (a) selecting content and adapting curricula to address students' learning needs, interests and prior knowledge. (b) Developing activities and assessments that promote students 'depth of understanding, (c) working together as colleagues across disciplines and class levels.
2. Facilitate learning: Teachers should guide and facilitate learning with a variety of strategies, such as (a) helping students focus their inquiries and ideas (b) orchestrating student discussion (c) requiring students to share responsibility for their own learning (d) modeling curiosity, scepticism, and the skills of inquiry.
1. Provide learning environment: Teachers should create and manage learning environments that (a) provide enough time for extended inquiries, (b) are safe but flexible and supportive of students' activities and actions, (c) feature materials and tools for doing and use of resources outside school.
2. Create classroom community: Teachers should develop communities of learners in which all members (a) respect the ideas and diverse experiences of others, (b) collaborate and make decisions about the contents and context of their work, (c) adopt the intellectual rigour and attitudes that make learning possible, and (d) engage in ongoing formal and informal discussion. (Borich, 2008)

Concept of Covid-19 Diagnosis

The diagnosis of COVID-19 can be based on a combination of epidemiologic information (e.g., a history of travel to or residence in affected region 14 d before symptom onset), clinical symptoms, CT imaging findings, and laboratory tests (e.g., reverse transcriptase polymerase chain reaction [RT- PCR] tests on respiratory tract specimens) according to standards of either the WHO (2020) or the National Health Commission of China (2020). It should be mentioned that a single negative RT-PCR test result from suspected patients does not exclude infection. Clinically, we should be alert to patients with an epidemiologic history, COVID-19–related symptoms, and/or positive CT imaging results. So far, there has been no evidence from randomised controlled trials to recommend any specific anti-COVID-19 treatment, so the management of COVID-19 has been largely supportive (WHO 2020). Currently, the approach to COVID-19 is to control the source of infection; use infection prevention and control measures to reduce transmission risk; and provide early diagnosis, isolation, and supportive care for affected patients (Gonzalez et al., 2020). A series of clinical trials are being carried out to investigate interventions that are potentially more effective (e.g., lopinavir, Rabiou and Olaitan, 2014).

In Nigeria, the federal government ordered a total closure of all schools. The decision was largely applauded, and the National Universities Commission (NUC), a regulatory body for all universities in Nigeria, also issued a follow-up directive to all universities in the country to shut down. The government also suspended social gatherings and asked workers to work from home. An Italian who was reported to be the first coronavirus case in Nigeria was successfully treated and discharged, according to the government, but new cases emerged thereafter. Thus, the country needs to do more to improve disaster preparedness and response. In Ghana, schools were shut down to contain the spread of coronavirus disease. The government also released 100 million US dollars to enhance the fight against the pandemic. The country reacted proactively to contain the spread of the Virus. In Madagascar, the country has recorded zero COVID-19 deaths so far and has claimed a breakthrough in Herbal

medicine for COVID-19 treatment. However, the WHO issued a warning that such a claim has not been scientifically approved and cannot be recommended by the organisation as a cure for COVID-19.

It is important to note that while many countries were shutting down schools, others, such as Singapore, Sweden, Brazil, and Australia, kept their schools open as a strategy to contain the contagion. The untimely closure of schools was a good supportive measure to contain the spread of the disease. Still, it also had adverse consequences for millions of students globally, who faced multiple challenges in their education.

The Effects of the Coronavirus on School Closures

School closure refers to the closure of schools due to the pandemic, emergencies, labour strikes, disasters, or deliberate efforts to reposition a school or curb crime on a given campus or environment. This means that school closures are not only for emergencies or pandemics, but also a deliberate way to address identified gaps in a given school. For instance, in Nigeria, the government or school authorities often shut down schools to address security issues such as cultism, terrorism or violent protests on the campus. Gewertz (2017), cited in Ben, Mathew, and Kristen (2016), reported that "Obama's administration endorsed closure as part of an array of strategies to turn around 5,000 failing schools in the United States during his regime. Even though school closures may sometimes be warranted, the recent ones due to the coronavirus are detrimental to many educational systems worldwide. As of 23 March, 2020, over 1.3 billion learners were out of school due to school closures in response to COVID-19 (Wikipedia, 2020e).

According to Erika and Nicholas (2020), school closures can either be reactive or proactive. Erika and Nicholas further stated that schools are closed reactively upon the discovery of a coronavirus case among students, staff, or parents. Proactive school closure occurs before the disease even reaches the school's doors. Michael (2020) opined that school closures due to coronavirus have posed new problems, such as how to facilitate the transition to online and at-home learning and how to support those who rely on schools for food and housing security. (Erika and Nicholas, 2020)

School closures due to coronavirus tend to increase pressure on students, teachers and parents, especially those with limited digital skills, education and resources for continued learning. It increases the burden on parents, not only to struggle to provide for the home, but also to supervise their children and ensure they learn at home. Unprecedented school closures increase pressure on hospitals, as they must cater to as many health situations as possible that school health centres would have ordinarily handled.

Coronavirus school closures could increase student debt, delay student graduations, and shatter students' academic dreams, as well as the program schedules of educational institutions. Protracted school closures may increase the dropout rate due to a loss of interest and a lack of resources to continue. If not well managed, school closures can also increase crime rates, as prolonged closures can lead to idleness that contributes to negative peer influences and youth involvement in crime. Education jobs were also affected; many workers risk pay cuts or even disengagement from work during unscheduled school closures. Erika and Nicholas (2020)

According to UNESCO (2020b), some of the harmful effects of school closures due to the coronavirus are as follows:

1. Interrupted learning: Schools provide essential learning, and when they are closed, students are deprived of opportunities for growth and development.

2. Nutrition: Many youngsters rely on free or discounted school meals for healthy nutrition. This is compromised due to school closures related to the coronavirus.
3. Unequal Access to digital learning portals: lack of access to technology or good internet connectivity for continued learning during school closures.
4. Increased pressure on schools and school systems that remain open; Localised school closures place burdens on schools as parents tend to redirect their children to open schools.
5. Social Isolation: Because educational institutions are hubs for social activity and human interactions, school closures can deprive youth and children of some social communications and socializations that are essential to learning, development and creativity Research activities were negatively affected because school closures and lockdowns limit researchers' ability to conduct researches particularly in situations whereby face-to-face interactions with students and teachers are required or access to school facilities or research laboratories were denied. School-driven innovations and research are also affected by school closures.

Erika and Nicholas (2020) suggested that closing schools are not the only option to mitigate the coronavirus. They advocated for authorities to give parents some flexibility to choose what is best for their families, while implementing stronger mitigation measures. However, unlike Erika and Nicholas, the president of the New South Wales Teachers Federation opposed reopening schools during the coronavirus outbreak. He believed that "the design of their schools and the size of the classrooms make it impossible" to implement social distancing in schools (Michael, 2020). To mitigate the effects of school closures, educators and learners had to rely on technological tools and platforms to ensure continued education. Consequently, it is important to acknowledge in the present study that, despite the perceived challenges posed by school closures due to the coronavirus pandemic, school closures remain one of the most effective measures to halt its spread. Erika and Nicholas (2020).

Impacts of Covid-19 on the Nigerian Education System

In Nigeria, the outbreaks of Lassa fever, bird flu, monkey pox, Ebola disease and others didn't weigh down the socio-economic and educational system as of the case of coronavirus, this has been raising dust in the country, educational system and heartfelt burden to the concern personnel, knowing well the possible effects of the prolong holidays as a result of the pandemic. Adebajo (2020). The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on education will be examined in the aspect of

1. school management
2. finance
3. graduates and school leavers
4. learners' welfare

Impacts of Covid-19 on School Management

Going to school is the best public policy tool for developing skills and potential. School time can be fun, and, from an economic point of view, the primary purpose of schooling is to increase a child's ability to become a useful and acceptable member of society. Even a relatively short time in school has a lasting impact on a child; a short period of missed school may have consequences for future skill development. This is why we cannot estimate how much the COVID-19 interruption will affect learning; it is only the visible effect we can see, the gradual decay of inbuilt abilities may not be easily noticed or precisely measured. We are now in a new world, far different from what we used to know. The school time tables and

schedules have changed, and, in fact, at the resumption of schools after the lockdown, so many grounds need to be covered for the Nigerian educational system to compete with the world's. School facilities have been underutilised during lockdown; some may have been damaged due to prolonged inactivity.

According to UNESCO, about 35.9 million primary and secondary school learners are currently out of school due to school closures. For primary schools, this number totals approximately 25.6 million students, of which about 87 per cent (23.5 million) are students enrolled in public schools. The numbers are just as stark for secondary school learners. Of the roughly 10.3 million secondary school students who are out of school as a result of the closures, approximately 81 per cent (8.4 million) of them are public school students. There is no assurance that all the learners who left the school will be back in school during the pandemic lockdown; some may have changed their life views, seeing going to school as a waste of time, some may have died, some will change schools, some may have joined bad groups, shifting their attention away from school. Etc. This is where parents' and guidance's work should come into play to ensure learners' proper welfare, even while they stay at home. Unfortunately, learning at home is also limited, given the literacy levels of some parents in Nigeria; not every parent can handle the pedagogical aspect of parenthood, and, beyond other parental commitments, there are other considerations to be made. The effect of this may not be easily noticed now; a child in this category is naturally exposed to a serious academic crash if there are no proper interventions, until the ban on movement is lifted. Schools are reopening, and most students will not be learning.

Impacts on Educational Finance

The sudden interruption of the education system in Nigeria due to the pandemic has led the government, parents, individuals, ministries of education at various levels, and other concerned personnel to shift their plans and strategies to finance the education of their children and the education system as a whole. There is no doubt that the school calendar will be extended, and while this is underway, there will be additional payments at various levels of the educational system. During the lockdown, some parents were forced to procure laptops, Android phones, television cables, and other ICT devices to ensure their wards kept up with innovations in online classes at various levels, designed to enable teachers to reach out to their students.

Most of the developing private schools in Nigeria could not afford the payment of their staffs during the period of lockdown because students are not in school, some have not paid the school levies before the emergence of the pandemic leading to school proprietors not having access to inflow of income to welfare their staffs working in their respective schools, in fact there is fear of whether private some schools in Nigeria will be able to survive and keep existing after the pandemic lockdown. Even with a standing order that says 'no work, no pay' in Nigeria, during the lockdown, governments at some levels still ensured continuous payments to staff in schools and ministries of education, knowing well that they were not working for their earnings. There is no doubt that the expenses incurred by workers during the period of lockdown are mere gifts and not payment for work done. This will surely affect future educational finance because the working time does not tally with the staff's payment. Actually, this developmental move is nobody's fault because no one could have predicted that the world would face this great challenge. The government tried to ensure the welfare of workers during the pandemic lockdown with the belief that they are the oil keeping the engine of the national economy running. The sad truth about this development is that, if it persists, it may have serious implications for governments' commitment to the education

system amid competing demands from healthcare, business, and other sectors serving vulnerable segments of society. Adebajo (2020)

Methodology

The research design used in this study was descriptive survey research. The population consisted of senior Secondary School students from selected secondary schools in Ikere Local Government, selected through simple random sampling. The instrument used in the study was a self-structured questionnaire. The instrument had two sections. Section "A" consisted of the bio-data, while section "B" consisted of items designed to generate data used to answer the research questions. The instrument's validity was ensured, and its reliability was established using the test-retest method. This was done in a school which was not part of the sample group. The instruments were administered twice over a 2-week interval to 5 students. The response was correlated using Pearson's Moment Correlation Coefficient of 0.89. The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to the sampled respondents, who then completed it for analysis.

Results

Research Question 1: What are the challenges encountered by students as a result of COVID-19 is in Ikere-Ekiti?

Table 1.

S/N	ITEMS	SA	A	SD	D	X	DECISION
1	The teachers have to repeat the concepts/topics that the students have learnt before lockdown	12	5	2	1	3.0	Accepted
2	Students have to readapt to the school activities	10	5	3	2	3.42	Accepted
3	The abrupt shift to learning from home amid the challenges of the pandemic made student struggle with learning	8	6	4	2	3.22	Accepted
4	Students have grown so used to home environments that learning becomes more tiring for them	9	8	2	1	3.1	Accepted
5	Many students are unable to resume back to school due to financial paucity	13	4	2	1	3.3	Accepted
6	Many students are unable to resume back to school due to early pregnancy and death of parents	14	3	2	1	3.4	Accepted
7	Many students do not see the need to return to school again after the lockdown	7	6	4	3	3.0	Accepted

Table 1 above shows the challenges students faced due to COVID-19 school closures. With a Grand Mean of 2.95, items 1-7 were accepted because their mean values were greater than 2.50. The critical value is higher than the statistical value. This leads to the acceptance of the statements. According to the statistics, respondents agreed, with a mean score of 3.0, that teachers need to repeat the concepts/topics that students had learnt before the lockdown. With a mean score of 3.42, the respondents agree that students have to readapt to the school activities. It was agreed, with a mean score of 3.22, that the abrupt shift to remote learning amid the *challenges* of the pandemic made students struggle to learn. With a mean score of 3.3, respondents affirmed that many students are unable to return to school due to financial paucity. Respondents agreed with a mean score of 3.4 that there is a reduced population of students in school due to early pregnancy and the death of parents. And finally, with a mean score of 3.0, the respondent reveals that many students do not see the need to return to school after the lockdown.

Research Question 2: Does COVID-19 have any impact on teaching activities in Secondary schools in Ikere Local Government?

Table 2

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	X	Decision
1.	Adhering to COVID-19 protocols has disallowed group activities	16	2	1	1	3.36	Accepted
2.	Social distancing measures does not enable instructional materials to adequately cater for students	12	5	2	1	3.44	Accepted
3	COVID-19 have necessitated changes in some cases caused serious disruptions to students activities	8	7	3	2	3.34	Accepted
4	Shifting to virtual teaching during the pandemic affect teaching and learning	12	5	2	1	3.46	Accepted
5	Some students have difficulty concentrating and often manifest symptoms of depression in the class especially those who were bereaved	11	6	2	1	3.36	Accepted

The analysis of data collected, as presented in Table 2, to determine the impact of COVID-19 on teaching activities shows that all items of the instrument addressing the issue were rated positively, with ratings above the criterion mean of 2.5. The statistics in Table 2 indicate a mean score of 3.36, suggesting that adhering to COVID-19 protocols has prevented group activities. The respondents, with a mean score of 3.44, reported that social distancing measures do not enable instructional materials to cater to students adequately. The table further revealed that, with a mean score of 3.34, COVID-19 has necessitated changes in some cases, causing serious disruptions to students' activities. It is also affirmed with a mean score

of 3.46 that shifting to virtual teaching during the pandemic affects teaching and learning. It is also affirmed with a mean score of 3.36 that some students have difficulty concentrating and often manifest symptoms of depression in class, especially those who were bereaved. The grand mean of 3.4 indicates that all the statements are accepted.

Research Question 3: What are the impacts of the global pandemic on learning outcomes and educational achievement of students in Education in Secondary schools in Ikere Local Government?

Table 3

S/N	Items	SA	A	D	SD	Mean	Decision
1	COVID-19 has had varying impacts on the cognitive adjustment of students to academic activities	8	7	3	2	3.34	Accepted
2	The rate of reading ability of students is slower now compared to before	11	7	-	2	3.6	Accepted
3	Many students have forgotten concepts, terms and facts	7	6	4	3	3.2	Accepted
4	Unequal learning ability or disparities in students’ learning ability and outcome	9	5	4	2	3.4	Accepted
5	Most students desire only to play and demonstrate loss of interest in learning	13	4	2	1	3.3	Accepted
6	Unavailability of ICT resources for online learning makes students passive	14	3	2	1	3.8	Accepted
7	The prolonged lockdown down retarded the learning ability of students	9	8	2	1	3.7	Accepted

Table 3 above shows the effects of the global pandemic on students' learning outcomes in Civic Education. It revealed, with a mean score of 3.34, that COVID-19 has had varying effects on students' cognitive adjustment to academic activities. With a mean score of 3.6, the table further revealed that students' reading ability is slower now than before. The table also revealed that, with a mean score of 3.2, many students have forgotten concepts, terms, and facts. The table further revealed that, with a mean score of 3.4, there are unequal learning abilities and disparities in students' learning outcomes. With a mean score of 3.7, the table further revealed that the prolonged lockdown retarded the learning ability of students. With a mean score of 3.8, the table further revealed that the unavailability of ICT resources for online learning makes students passive. With a mean score of 3.7, the table finally revealed that the prolonged lockdown retarded the learning ability of students.

With a Grand Mean of 3.22, items 1-7 are accepted because their means are greater than 2.50. The critical value is higher than the statistical value. This leads to the acceptance of the statements.

The results obtained from these findings indicated the Challenges encountered by students as a result of the COVID-19 school closures. It was revealed that teachers have to repeat the concepts/topics that students learnt before the lockdown. Secondary school students had to readapt to school activities, and the abrupt shift to remote learning amid the pandemic made learning even more difficult. Also, the results revealed that adhering to COVID-19 protocols has prevented group activities, as social distancing measures do not allow instructional materials to cater to students adequately. Shifting to virtual teaching during the pandemic affects teaching and learning; some students have difficulty concentrating and often manifest symptoms of depression in class, especially those who were bereaved.

Discussion

The discussion of the findings is done based on the specific research objectives. After various data were collected, presented and analysed, the following findings were reached

The findings revealed the challenges students faced due to COVID-19 school closures in secondary schools in Ikere-Ekiti. The results of these findings indicated that teachers had to repeat the concepts/topics that students had learnt before the lockdown, students had to readapt to school activities, and the abrupt shift to remote learning amid the challenges of the pandemic made it difficult for students to learn. Many students were unable to resume school. Some were due to financial paucity, early pregnancy, death of parents and finally, many students do not see the need to return to school again after the lockdown. The findings of Schleicher (2020) on students displaced by Hurricane Katrina indicated that they had difficulty concentrating and often manifested symptoms of depression in the months following the hurricane. Insecurity, loss of family income, loss of family members to the coronavirus, and fear of catching the virus themselves are reported by Gonzale, Rubia and Sacha (2020) to have a drastic effect on students

These findings indicated the impact of COVID-19 on teaching activities. It was revealed that adhering to COVID-19 protocols has disallowed group activities. Social distancing measures do not enable instructional materials to adequately cater for students, as they necessitated changes which, in some cases, caused serious disruptions to students' activities. The shift to virtual teaching during the pandemic affected teaching and learning. Also, some students have difficulty concentrating and often manifest symptoms of depression in class, especially those who were bereaved. This aligns with the findings of Ben, Mathew, and Kristen (2020) that the coronavirus disrupted educational activities and reduced educational opportunities for children. It displaced students and teachers and created multiple barriers in teaching and learning. The study indicates that COVID-19 lockdowns tend to increase memory and learning loss. This aligns with an earlier assertion by Onyema (2020) that school closure can add stressors for students already contending with learning challenges.

Regarding the global pandemic's impact on students' learning outcomes, it was revealed that COVID-19 has had varying effects on students' cognitive adjustment to academic activities. The rate of students' reading ability in Civic Education is slower now than before, and many students have forgotten concepts, terms, and facts. Unequal learning ability or disparities in students' learning ability and outcome, and the prolonged lockdown, have retarded the learning ability of students, while the unavailability of ICT resources for online learning makes students passive

Conclusion

Schools are not simply a means of knowledge transfer; they are also hubs of social activity and human interaction, and therefore play an important role in socialising young people and undergraduate students, often providing learners with their only source of support, whether academic or psychosocial. When schools are closed, many students miss out on social contact that is essential to learning and development. For that reason, the disruptions caused by COVID-19, which denied students access to formal classroom education for more than seven months, led many to miss a stimulating and enriching environment, learning opportunities, social interaction, and, in some cases, adequate nutrition. From the findings of the study, it was concluded that, as much as the effect of the pandemic has been, it is evident in the rate at which reading comprehension and concentration rate of Civic Education students have become slower, demonstrating memory loss, reduced learning speed, overzealousness for play and less interest in learning activities. Therefore, teachers, parents, school owners, and students have many roles to play to ensure that the effects of COVID-19 do not leave a lasting vacuum in students' lives.

This study has revealed that the COVID-19 pandemic has various effects on students. Many students were unable to resume school after the COVID-19 pandemic due to financial paucity, early pregnancy, death of parents, and many students do not see the need to return to school again after the lockdown. Also, teaching activities were affected, which resulted in a negative impact on students. These include low cognitive adjustment to academic activities in Civic Education, slower reading rate, unequal learning ability or disparities in students' learning ability and passive attitude towards learning

The findings of this study show that the COVID-19 pandemic school lockdown has damaging effects on the teaching and learning process and, inevitably, on students' academic performance. In this case, much needs to be done by the government, teachers and parents to savage the situation.

Recommendations

Based on the findings, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

1. It was evident that it was only a simulated environment that could rekindle students' learning spirit. To make up for learning losses, there is a massive need for the provision and use of instructional materials and learning aids in schools to boost students' interest, attract attention, and motivate learning. This will enable them to readjust to the school environment and learning situations. This will also stimulate their readiness to learning
2. Teachers' methods of teaching should be student-friendly (ensuring the participation of both the teachers and the students). This will enhance learning readiness, attract and stimulate the senses towards things that have been forgotten
3. Teachers at all educational levels should be encouraged to pursue both long- and short-term in-service training to keep abreast of new teaching approaches and enhance the quality of teaching and learning in schools. This is because by so doing, their power of knowledge and command of experience would be greatly enhanced to adjust effectively to the new normal introduced by the Covid-19 pandemic
4. Making teachers' salaries and compensation very attractive will enhance teachers' performance. The government should endeavour to pay greater attention to motivating

teachers through financial incentives, as they are considered very important in enhancing their appreciation of the profession and, consequently, their impact on productivity.

5. Teachers should be encouraged to use a variety of teaching methods. Civil Education teachers should combine more than one suitable teaching method while teaching a particular topic or concept. This will help students understand the concept being taught.
6. Government and school owners should equip schools with electronic devices, such as computers and smartphones, to access the internet and equally provide training for teachers
7. The Nigerian (Federal) government should see the integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in schools as an embracing initiative for educational development. It should support this by allocating and releasing adequate funds to invest in massive Internet connectivity and to purchase and install ICT infrastructure. ICT infrastructure, including affordable and reliable internet facilities and data packages, when provided, can enhance seamless learning at all times without necessarily requiring face-to-face contact with teachers/instructors.
8. The pandemic accelerated the digital agenda in training and digital learning. It will be important to capitalise on this achievement and make sure that learning attained through digital learning is validated, recognised, and used.

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