INTERSECTION OF COVID-19 AND EDUCATIONAL SERVICES: PROVIDING SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE FOR POLICY ADVOCACY IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The correlation between COVID-19 and educational services in Cross River State has been examined. The COVID-19 pandemic has been recorded in all countries of the world with significant adverse consequences on education. Specifically, COVID-19 is examined regarding school closures and educational disruptions, exacerbation of disparities in learning outcomes, increased school dropouts, and the ripple effect beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. The consequence has been missed education opportunities for most students, especially those in rural communities of Sub-Saharan Africa. The paper is descriptive and qualitative. Literature is obtained from secondary sources and examined through content analysis. Education should be stimulated by financially supporting school-related expenses for children whose families suffered economic hardship because of this disruption caused by the pandemic. Governments may need to provide remedial education for students who suffered due to the inability to functionally access online education. The government should check incidents of increased school drop-outs by subsidizing school materials as a means of moderating the losses experienced by all categories of learners.

Keywords: COVID-19, educational services, policy advocacy.

INTRODUCTION

The Corona Virus (COVID-19) outbreak was recorded in January 2020 in the Chinese community of Wuhan and then spread to other major cities of the world. The World Health Organisation's (WHO) Director-General declared the coronavirus infection pandemic on March 11. The consequence was the significant shutdown of the economy in the world in a bid to contain its exponential spread. The pandemic has resulted in the loss of millions of lives globally and has negatively disrupted commerce and education. This interruption has severely affected livelihood resources, trade, and supply chains, with a significant negative impact on local, national, and global economies (McCloskey and Heymann, 2020). In major urban and rural environments of the world, because of

the health risks and high mortality, governments implemented lockdowns and travel restrictions as containment measures, thus changing the lifestyles of people and organizations (Wand, Horby, Hayden, and Gao, 2020).

UNESCO (2020) has reported "that almost all governments around the world have quickly closed academic establishments in an endeavor to contain transmission of the coronavirus pandemic. These nationwide faculty closures are negatively impacting over 60% of the world student body". In addition, many alternative countries have enforced localized closures that also are impacting innumerable further students. UNESCO's (2020) data on the impact of COVID-19 on education indicated that 1,186,127,211, or 67.7% of the total students enrolled in 144 closures across the country, are affected. "The COVID-19 pandemic has affected educational systems worldwide, leading to the near-total collapse of schools (UNESCO, 2020). On March 19th, 2020, the Federal Ministry of Education in Nigeria approved school closures to respond to the pandemic. A struggle was going on before COVID-19 to ensure young children stay in school and have access to proper education, as Nigeria contributes approximately 20% of the global out-of-school population" (World Economic Forum, 2020).

The immediate ramifications of COVID-19 on the economy are evident. The primary education sector, like all others, has succumbed to the overpowering adverse effects of coronavirus. This has significantly distorted schooling life and hampered educational accessibility by some categories of students. The shutdown disrupted learning and access to vital school services, especially those in rural communities. According to UNESCO, "nearly 40 million students have been affected by school closures nationwide in Nigeria, more than 91% of which are primary and secondary students who depend on their parents' meager income to access education. COVID-19 has disrupted the learning landscape in Nigeria's Cross River State by limiting how students can access learning in rural and urban communities" (World Economic Forum, 2020).

COVID-19 "has had a negative socio-economic impact on education, especially since it involves disadvantaged students in poor rural settings whose parents are self-employed in small businesses and the artisanal fishing sector such as sources of income. As a result, COVID-19 has disrupted the learning landscape in the Nigerian environment, particularly in local and coastal communities in Cross River State". By implication, students in this environment experienced an inability to

access educational services (World Economic Forum, 2020).

Considering the current state of affairs in the present world, a continuation of learning has been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and its containment measures. As a result, the informal economy of SMEs and SMF operators cannot swiftly harness available. "COVID-19 has affected the supply of quality higher education for children. The ability of children from low- income families to build lasting pathways towards benefitting from quality education appears very remote. The collapse of sources of livelihood has further exposed the disadvantaged position of children from those homes. Schools and parents cannot tackle the most common obstacles that stand in the way of providing quality education to local communities" (Sustainable Education & Enterprise Development (SEED), 2020).

Extreme government measures "have helped slow the spread of the coronavirus. However, they have significantly threatened the survival of businesses in all sectors and industries with potentially devastating individuals, and social and economic outcomes such as massive job losses and social vulnerability. With cities closed, borders closed, roads blocked, schools closed and residential communities closed, many small businesses found they could not reach their places of work or continue to provide their economic and social services. These stringent pandemic control measures have inhibited generalization and prevented these informal economy entrepreneurs from resuming their activities, thereby disrupting the movement of goods and products and school performance" (McCloskey & Heymann, 2020).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused the partial or complete closure of schools for nearly half of the world's students, and more than 100 million additional children have fallen below the minimum level of reading proficiency due to the health crisis. This almost led to a generational disaster in March 2021. According to UNESCO (2021), "there have been widespread school closures across Africa in response to the pandemic and 97% of those surveyed said they had closed schools in their country, and 95% of them observed that all schools were forced to close. This was seen as an appropriate decision, as 92% of respondents said the closures were essential. Education administrators argue that lack of access to technology is seen as the biggest barrier to learning during the current pandemic, with schools being closed. As a result, students from rural communities are more likely to be disadvantaged. The most cited limitation is the lack of availability and accessibility of

connectivity. In sub-Saharan Africa, the most significant limitation is poor nutrition, although it is not available in most rural communities, as is the case in Cross River State in Nigeria. It is believed that early childhood students in primary and primary schools are the most likely to be disabled by the crisis and the least likely to have access to technologies necessary for learning.

Despite all efforts to create a favorable distance learning experience, it appears that school closures have resulted in real learning losses. Research analyzing these results is ongoing, but early results from Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the UK point to learning losses and growing inequalities. Alarmingly, these losses are much greater among students whose parents are less educated, a finding reinforced by a study showing that children from socially advantaged families received more support than parents during their studies during the period of closure schools" (Andersen and Nielsen, 2019).

This information from "high-income countries can also be used to predict outcomes in middle-income countries. Despite their remarkable technological capacity, even high-income European countries have experienced learning losses and greater inequality due to the abrupt transition to e-learning. These results are likely to be more consistent across low- and middle-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa, Ukraine, etc., where technological capabilities are much lower and a higher proportion of households live below the poverty line" (Maurin and McNally 2018). "Outside of the classroom, learning losses can translate into even greater long-term challenges. It has long been known that declines in test scores are associated with future declines in employment. Conversely, improved student outcomes lead to significant increases in future income, as well as additional school years, which are associated with an 89% increase in lifetime income. Left unchecked, the learning losses resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic are likely to have a long-term worsening negative effect on the future well-being of many children. These learning losses could translate into lower access to higher education, lower labour market participation, and lower future incomes" (UNESCO 2020).

School closure due to COVID-19 has caused major disruption to education around the world. Additionally, "emerging evidence from some of the region's highest-income countries indicates that the pandemic is causing learning losses and increasing inequality. To reduce and reverse the long-term negative effects, lower-middle-income and lower-middle-income countries, which

are likely to be hit even harder, need to implement e-learning programs, protect education budgets and prepare for future shocks 'by building back better" (UNESCO 2020). Given the abrupt situation, teachers and administrations were unprepared for this transition and were forced to put in place emergency distance learning systems almost immediately. Unfortunately, one of the limitations of emergency distance education is the lack of personal interaction between teacher and student. With broadcasts, this is not possible. However, "several countries have shown leadership in using other methods to enhance the distance learning experience, including social media, email, telephone, and even post" (UN 2020).

The challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic snowballed significantly into educational enterprises in all regions. The need to check the spread of the number of COVID-19 cases led to the lockdown of schools as well. In most localities, children from meager socio-economic backgrounds and homes with self-employed parents whose sources of livelihoods are micro-enterprises and small-scale fisheries mainly have been seriously disadvantaged educationally. These vulnerable children who attend low-cost private schools that are not government-funded are mostly affected. Also, students attending schools in rural communities have been affected (ECLA, 2020).

In Cross River State in Nigeria, low-cost private schools form a large part of schools that educate children and are maintained daily through dependence on the meager fees received from poor parents who work in the informal commercial sector. Before this outcome, these schools were experiencing difficulties of varying dimensions. The pandemic has negatively impacted the local livelihoods in coastal communities, thereby making these micro- entrepreneurs unable to assist their children educationally by providing them with the facility to participate in the government education programme. The proprietors of low-cost schools cannot meet the financial obligations to sustain the schools because of the collapse of the small-scale businesses of the people whose children attend such schools. The students in rural communities are not accessing online learning programmes, thus making them stagnate educationally.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study investigated the impact of COVID-19 on educational services. Specifically, it sought to:

1. Determine the association between COVID-19 and school closures and educational disruptions.

2. Examine the association between COVID-19 and exacerbation of disparities in learning outcomes.
3. Demonstrate the association between COVID-19 and increased school dropouts.
4. Investigate the ripple effects of COVID-19 beyond education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

COVID-19 and educational services

Existing literature indicates that "before the pandemic, the world already faced formidable challenges in delivering on the promise of education as a basic human right. Despite almost universal enrolment in the early years in most countries, an extraordinary number of children - over 250 million - are out of school and nearly 800 million adults were illiterate. Moreover, even for those who were in school, learning was far from guaranteed. It is estimated that around 387 million or 56% of school-aged children worldwide lack basic reading skills seen; the challenge was already daunting before COVID-19. The estimated financial gap at the start of 2020 for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 - quality education - in low- and middle-income countries was $ 148 billion per year. The COVID-19 crisis is estimated to have widened this financial gap" (UN 2020).

Many countries have (rightly) decided to close schools, colleges, and universities. The crisis crystallizes the policy dilemma between closing schools (reducing contacts and saving lives) and keeping them open (allowing workers to work and sustaining the economy). Many families around the world experience severe short-term disruption and experience severe short-term disruption as well as children's social life and learning. Education is moving online on an untested and unprecedented scale. Student assessments evolve online too, with a lot of trial, error, and uncertainty for everyone. "Many reviews were simply canceled. Importantly, these disruptions are not only short-term problems, but have long-term consequences for affected cohorts and risk increasing inequalities" (UNDP 2020).

Going to school is the best public policy tool available for raising skills; even a relatively short period of absence from school will have consequences for skills development. However, can we estimate to what extent disruptions related to COVID- 19 will affect learning? Not very precisely, since we are in a new world, we can use other studies to get an order of magnitude. Two proofs are useful. Perhaps surprisingly, there are very substantial differences between countries when it comes to teaching hours. For example, Levy (2015)

shows that the total number of weekly teaching hours in mathematics, languages , and science is 55% higher in Denmark than in Austria. These differences are large, leading to significant differences in test scores: an extra hour per week during the school year in major subjects increases test scores by about 6% of one standard deviation. In our case, the loss of about 34 hours per week of math instruction for 12 weeks could be of a similar magnitude to the loss of one hour per week for 30 weeks. So, oddly enough and certainly coincidentally, we end up again with an estimated loss of around 6% of a standard deviation. Leaving aside the close similarity, these studies probably suggest a likely effect of no more than 10% of a standard deviation but well above zero" (UNDP, 2020).

Families occupy the heart of education and are widely recognized as making a significant contribution (Bjorklund and Salvanes, 2011). Families may not be able to assist their children to learn in the same way. The assertion of (Oreopoulos, Wachter, and Heisz, 2012) is that"the time available to devote to teaching, the non- cognitive skills of the parents, the resources (for example, not everyone will have the kit to access the best material inline), as well as the amount of knowledge - it is difficult to help your child learn something that you may not understand yourself. Therefore increases the level of inequalities in human capital growth (Oreopoulos, Wachter, and Heisz 2012).

Murphy and Wyness (2020) comment that "the closure of schools, colleges and universities is not only disrupting education for students around the world, but also coincides with a period of critical appraisal, and many exams have been postponed or canceled. Internal evaluations are perhaps seen as less critical, and many have been dismissed. However, their purpose is to provide information about the child's progress to families and teachers. The loss of this information delays the recognition of both high potential and learning difficulties and can have long-term adverse consequences for the child. In the views of Andersen and Nielsen (2019) the consequences of a major computer crash in the test system in Denmark. As a result, some children could not take the test. The authors find that taking the test increased the score on a reading test two years later by 9% of a standard deviation with similar effects in math. These effects are most significant for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Significantly, the blockade of institutions does not only concern internal evaluations.

In the UK, for example, all examinations for the primary public qualifications - GCSE and A levels - have been canceled for the entire cohort. Depending on the length of the lockdown, we'll likely see similar actions around the world. A potential alternative to canceled assessments is to use 'predicted scores', but Murphy and Wyness (2020) show that these are often inaccurate and that among high-ranking students, predicted scores for those from disadvantaged backgrounds are lower than those of the most privileged. Another solution is to replace blind exams with teacher evaluations. Evidence from various settings shows systematic discrepancies between unblended and blinded exams, in which the direction of the bias usually depends on whether the child belongs to a group that usually behaves well (Burgess and Greaves 2013, Rangvid 2015). For example, if girls generally do better in one subject, an unblended assessment of a boy's performance is likely biased downward. As these assessments are a key qualification for entering higher education, the shift to non- blind subjective assessments can have potential long-term consequences for equal opportunities" (Burgess & Greaves 2013, Rangvid 2015).

It is also "possible that the careers of some students will benefit from interruptions. For example, in Norway, it was decided that all grade 10 students will receive a high school diploma. Moreover, Maurin and McNally (2008) show that the abandonment in 1968 of regular examination procedures in France (following the student riots) had positive long-term consequences on the labor market for the cohort concerned.

In higher education, many universities and colleges are replacing traditional exams with online assessment tools. This is a new area for teachers and students, and assessments are likely to have larger measurement errors than usual. Additionally, research shows that employers use credentials such as graduate rankings and averages to rank applicants (Piopuinik et al., 2020). The increased noise of candidate signals will potentially reduce matching efficiency for recent graduates in the workforce, who may experience slower income growth and higher dropout rates. This is costly both to the individual and to society as a whole (Fredriksson. 2018).

The careers of this year's graduates could be seriously affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. They experienced significant disruption in education upon graduation, experienced significant disruption in their assessments, and will likely end up graduating at the onset of a severe global recession. accepting lower-paying jobs and this has permanent effects on the careers of some Oreopoulos et al. (2012) show that

graduates of programs with high expected earnings may compensate for their poor starting point with earnings gains both within and within the company, but it has been found that graduates of other programs suffer permanent revenue losses as a result of graduating during a recession" (Oreopoulos et al. (2012).

Education disruption

The COVID-19 attack "has caused the biggest disruption in education in history, having already had a near-universal impact on students and teachers around the world, from preschools to high schools and schools technical and vocational education and training (TVET), universities, adults learning and skills development institutions As of mid-April 2020, 94% of the world's students were affected by the pandemic, representing 1.58 billion children and youth, from preschool to pre-school education higher education in 200 countries. with a level of development: for example, during the second quarter of 2020, 86 percent of children in primary education dropped out of school in countries with low human development, compared with only 20 percent in countries with very high levels of development and high human development" (UN 2020). "In Africa, particularly in the Sahel region, nationwide school closures due to COVID-19 occurred when many schools had already been closed for several months due to severe insecurity, strikes, or climatic risks. As a result, COVID-19 is worsening the education situation in sub-Saharan Africa where, before the pandemic, 47% of the 258 million out-of-school children worldwide live (30% due to conflict and emergencies).

In the most fragile education systems, this interruption of the school year will have a disproportionately negative impact on the most vulnerable pupils, those for whom the conditions to ensure the continuity of learning at home are limited. Their presence at home can also complicate the financial situation of parents, who must find solutions to provide assistance or compensate for the loss of the school canteen. In addition, there is growing concern that if these students do not receive adequate support, they may never return to school. This would further exacerbate pre-existing disparities and risk reversing progress on SDG 4 and other SDGs, exacerbating the already existing learning crisis11 and eroding refugees and the social and economic resilience of displaced people" (UN 2020).

The "disruption caused by COVID-19 to daily life has caused as many as 40 million children worldwide to lose early childhood education during their critical preschool year. As a result, they lost a stimulating and nurturing environment, opportunities for

learning, social interaction, and adequate nutrition. This is likely to jeopardize their long-term healthy development, especially children from poor and disadvantaged families. In technical and vocational education and training systems, vulnerabilities, including low levels of digitization and long-standing structural deficiencies, have been highlighted by the crisis. For example, work stoppages have made it difficult to implement apprenticeship programs and on-the-job learning modes, which are part of a functional and market-responsive technical and professional system. In the higher education sub-sector, while e-learning has typically taken place through recorded conferences and online platforms, some universities have postponed learning and teaching until further notice. Questions also remain about the harmonization of semesters and academic calendars, as some programs have been successfully implemented online, while others may not" (UNESCO 2020).

COVID-19 and knowledge outcomes

According to Matt (2020), "estimated 40% of the poorest countries did not support at-risk students during the COVID-19 crisis, and past experiences show that education and gender inequalities tend to be overlooked in response to epidemics of diseases. Household chores, especially for girls, and the work required to run families or farms, can also prevent children from having enough learning time. In addition, children with disabilities who were already marginalized before the epidemic are not always included in distance education strategies. Refugee and forcibly displaced children are further marginalized and denied access to support services offered by schools, such as school meals and psychosocial support programs" (Matt, 2020). The most vulnerable students are also among those with low digital skills and the least access to the hardware and connectivity needed for distance education solutions implemented during school closures.

In European countries, 4th-grade students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds were half as likely to access the Internet as their more advantaged peers. In 7 low-income countries, less than 10 percent of the poorest households have electricity. In addition, many students in developing countries, especially younger groups and minorities, are not fluent in the language of instruction. Even when they could access the content, and understand, the living conditions, economic stress, and low levels of education of parents, including digital skills, many children did not benefit from the stable environment and support to

the learning needed to adapt to these new teaching methods (Matt, 2020).

In most advanced countries, children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to lack reading opportunities, a quiet room, and parental support while school is closed. In low- and upper-middle-income countries, children in the poorest households receive much less help with their homework. The learning loss, both short and long-term, is expected to be significant (UNWFP, 2020). Three possible scenarios of learning loss are identified. These are presented in (UNWFP 2020) as a reduction in average learning levels for all students, a widening of the distribution of learning outcomes due to the very unequal effects of the crisis on different populations, a significant increase in the reach of pupils in part due to massive drop-outs. This suggests that an additional 25% of students could fall below the basic skill level needed to participate effectively and productively in society and in the future of learning, solely due to the closure of schools in key years of education, the impact may be greatest. Simulations from developing countries participating in the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) suggest that without correction, a learning loss of one-third (equivalent to a three- month school closure) throughout Grade 3 could lead to 72% of students falling as late as Grade 10 will have dropped out or will not be able to learn anything in school. The economic loss could be as much as $ 16,000 in lost income over the lifetime of a student, translating over time into $ 10,000 billion in lost income globally. Learners in remote localities are environmentally deficient in technology and resources to participate in education in times of school closures (UNWFP 2020).

COVID-19 and increased school dropouts

In addition to the loss of learning, "the economic impact on families is likely to increase inequalities in academic performance. If millions of people were to fall into extreme poverty, empirical evidence shows that children from households in the poorest quintiles are significantly less likely to complete primary and secondary education than those in the richest quintile; this gap can exceed 50 percentage points in many countries in sub- Saharan Africa, as well as in Haiti, Jordan, Nepal, and Pakistan"(UNESCO, 2020). UNESCO (2020) documents that an additional 23.8 million children and young people (from kindergarten to tertiary education) may drop out or not have access to school next year due to the economic impact of the pandemic alone. Therefore, the total number of children who do not return to school after school closes is likely to be even higher.

In addition, school closures make girls and young women more vulnerable to early marriage, early pregnancy, and gender-based violence, which reduce their chances of continuing their education''. Therefore, this learning crisis could turn into a generational disaster with the combined effect of the global economic impact of the pandemic and school closures. According to the Global Partnership for Education (2020), "factors influencing children's education during the COVID-19 pandemic are magnified for children with disabilities. For example, a teacher at a school for girls, including children with disabilities, in Bangui, Central African Republic, said he had not been in contact with any of his students since the schools were closed on March 27, 2020. As a result, most of the children lost the knowledge acquired before COVID-19" (UNESCO 2020).

Insurgency as a factor in school drop- out has been exacerbated by the pandemic in conflict-ridden nations. These children do not yet have access to learning. Their situation did not start with COVID-19. Before that, children did not have lessons in most places because many teachers were not available due to the increasing terrorism. There is a high possibility of recruiting children into banditry gangs due to school drop-out. A Congolese parent asserted "The fear for me about my children is that they will get lost and join armed groups in the area" (Global Partnership for Education 2020). As observed by Human Rights Watch (2020) "In Kadugli, South Kordofan, Sudan, Sudanese Rapid Support Forces paramilitaries took control of a girls' primary school on June 14, 2020, and began using it as a training base. The school was closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic at this time. The school was to reopen to allow students to take the entrance exams to high school. However, the military did not allow the school to reopen" (Human Rights Watch 2020).

Children have suffered a significant level of school dropout due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At the height of the containment measure in Lagos, Nigeria, most of the children out of school started helping parents in fishing creeks to catch or sell fish. Most schools did not engage their children in any learning activities, so they used the stay-at-home period to be productive to their families. A parent commented that "The schools have not given any kind of mission or work to continue," he said. "Now my children don't do much at home and they help me by selling fish that my dad brings back from the catch after my mom smokes them" (Human Rights Watch 2020).

COVID-19 beyond education impact

Donnelly, Patrinos & Gresham (2020) admitted that"disruption of education will continue to have substantial effects, extending beyond education. Many of these have been illustrated in previous policies and include, for example, food insecurity, economic instability, and violence against women and girls. In addition, closures of schools and other educational institutions hamper essential services to children and communities. For example, the loss of school meals and other health/nutrition services in the first months of the pandemic affected 370 million children in 195 countries, increasing hunger and nutritional deficiencies for the most disadvantaged able to adapt and cope maintain school feeding programs" (Donnelly, Patrinos & Gresham 2020).

The "disruption also affects health and psychosocial services, as educational institutions also serve as platforms for prevention, diagnosis, and counseling. As a result, vulnerable groups experience a loss of essential services and a lack of social protection mechanisms". As with previous pandemics, COVID-19 has shown that closing educational institutions poses a greater risk for women and girls, as they are more vulnerable to multiple types of abuse, such as domestic violence, relationships transactional sex, and early and forced marriages. The closures have also impacted the ability of many parents to work. "A significant proportion of working parents depend on daycares and schools. In countries like France, Germany, Italy, UK, and the US, 60% of parents could not find alternative solutions for schools and day- cares" (Donnelly et al. 2020).

Sociological implications of COVID-19 for educational services in Cross River State

The pandemic produced many uneducated children as its major social outcome in Cross River State and societies in Sub- Saharan Africa and elsewhere sharing similar characteristics. Children were deprived of formal learning. The lockdown exacerbated the level of illiteracy in most societies and made education inaccessible (Human Rights Watch 2020). Thus, children's access to education was significantly denied. Also, it led to non- accessibility to teaching syllabi and learning programme. The student-teacher interface and relationship based on specified teaching scheme were absent as most children become self-taught without formal guidance" (Human Rights 2020). Distance education adopted was less impactful in producing the necessary positive impact as students only studied fewer topics. The learning deficiency and inadequacy through distance/online learning are substantial as students also suffer from limited data. The

subjects downloaded are therefore prioritized to only essential ones (Human Watch 2020).

Many students lacked contact with their school community. The emotional and cognitive effects were also observed by Murphy & Wyness (2020) as outcomes of the lockdown. The cognitive, behavioral, and emotional well-being of learners suffered adverse consequences. Thus, the lack of emotional and social support during the COVID-19 pandemic had severe adverse consequences on the students at home. This was part of the neglected dimension of the COVID-19 experience. This situation has exacerbated gender inequality in access to education. Girls are highly disadvantaged in adjusting to formal education from a distance. For example, most schools in Nigerian rural communities had no definite instructions, and students needed to visit schoolmates for guidance during school closures. Socially and even culturally, girls are not as free as boys to visit others. In this case, visiting other homes to obtain school materials was difficult. In Nairobi, Kenya, a primary school teacher said, "All family members stay in the house morning to evening with the lockdown. I have had some of the girls call to inform me that their fathers or uncles harass them." In addition, gender role demands that girls take care of children and perform extra responsibilities and household chores (Murphy & Wyness, 2020).

Reduced accessibility to learning media such as radios, television, computers, the internet, and data incapacitated many students from engaging in remote learning. Many students do not have electricity—not even a lamp to study. Many students do not even have access to radios, let alone TVs. Many are highly disadvantaged. The social consequence of this is discrimination in access to educational services. Digital technologies have not taken care of all environments. Some environments lack access to the power supply. Therefore, people cannot benefit from online teaching programme because of the inability to access the internet, which is increasingly indispensable for education. So Digital learning is not an option.

A more significant proportion of children in most homes only joined online classes on the phone because of the lack of computers in the family. The difficulty of establishing the connection was a severe handicap because of insufficient data. Parents in some homes had to upgrade their smartphones to enhance access to online materials. This was also accompanied by the inability to subscribe for data from their civil service salary and the earnings from small-scale businesses—those who lost their jobs because of the COVID-19 pandemic

children at home (Human Rights Watch 2020).

Theoretical framework

System theory

The system theory is associated with Ludwig von Bertalanffy (1968). The basic concept of systems theory is that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. This assumes that the complex system—cannot be easily explained or rationalized when looking singularly at any one of its systems—its parts. Systems theory explains features within complex systems that seemingly could not arise in any single system within the whole. This is referred to as emergent behaviour. If a complex system expresses emergent behaviour, it has characteristics its properties do not display on their own. A system is made up of interrelated/interdependent parts. The system has the characteristic of equilibrium. A system is always moving toward homeostasis itself when presented with new environmental factors. The outputs of a system ultimately affect its inputs, causing the system to feed back into itself circularly.

Sociologists admit the usefulness of system theory in understanding the educational impacts of COVID-19 and societal dysfunctions related to individual issues. The theory helps illuminate the negative consequences of COVID-19, which is originally a health problem that has affected education, the economy, the government, and other dimensions of societal life. Covid-19 interactions with education in school closures and disruption, exacerbating disparities in learning outcomes, increased school dropouts, and even the ripple effects beyond education have had significant adverse impacts on society.

CONCLUSION

The study examined the impact of COVID-19 on the world's educational system and the response rate by these countries through technology. The scope of the study was Cross River State. It established that children living in impoverished localities lacked the technical resources in their environment to access long-distance learning during school shutdowns. The post- COVID-19 experiences have shown that technology has been a necessary part of the educational system. Based on these realities the study advocates the need to expand the frontiers of technology in the educational system at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The study recommends as follows,

1. Education should be stimulated by financially supporting school-related expenses for children whose families suffered economic hardship because

of this disruption caused by the pandemic.

2. The government should check incidents of increased school drop-outs by subsidizing school materials as a means of moderating the losses experienced by all categories of learners.
3. Government should take steps to mitigate the disproportionate hardships for poor and marginalized populations, including finding ways to provide discounted and free access to data, services, and computers and motivating instructors for extra lesson delivery commitment.
4. There is a need to complement the total financing of less privileged educational needs of students in coastal and remote communities to bridge the educational gap created due to the negative impact of the COVID-19 measures on micro-enterprises sectors.

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