



Influence of Covid-19 Pandemic Lock Down on the Socio- Economic Activities of Some Selected Artisans in Benin Metropolis

Dr. S. O. Osuyi, Dr. V.O. Uwaifo

Department of Vocational and Technical Education
Faculty of Education, University of Benin.
sunday.osuyi@uniben.edu
08035696248; 09020822355

Abstract

Lock down measures employed by many countries including Nigeria to minimize the spread of COVID-19 almost crumbled the economic activities in the world. Many economic activities including Small and Medium Scale Enterprises were negatively affected. However, some were more negatively affected than others due to the kind of services they rendered. During the lock down, people still visited the saloon to make their hair, fixed their vehicles, repaired their generating sets and mended their leaking roofs among others. Therefore, this study investigated the influence of COVID-19 pandemic lock down on the socio economic activities of selected artisans in Benin metropolis. The ex-post facto research design was used to carry out the study and the population of the study was 2,840 artisans operating in Edo State. The sample size was 284, representing 10% of the population. A structured interview was the instrument used for data collection. The research questions were answered with mean (\bar{x}) statistics. It was found out that COVID -19 pandemic lock down had positive influence on the socio economic activities of motor vehicle mechanics and generator repairers. Whereas,

it had negative influence on the socio economic activities of building services providers and the hair stylists. Based on the findings, it was recommended among others that citizens of Nigeria should acquire vocational and technical skills that could provide additional means of lively hood even during pandemics.

Keywords: COVID-19, Artisans, Socio economic activities.

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic was one whose impact was unparalleled in history. Although advances in technology helped its containment, the pandemic spread still posed a strong challenge. This resulted in countries of the world gathering resources, both intellectual and financial, to combat a common enemy. In spite of this, there appeared to be an increase in the spread globally with countries recording daily deaths that increased up to a thousand and more. Reports indicate that the countries most affected by this pandemic are located in Europe and North America (World Health Organization, 2020)

According to Jacob, Abigeal, and Lydia (2020), the first known occurrence of the virus began in December 2019 in Wuhan, the capital of the Hubei province of China. It began as a form of pneumonic cases in the province. The cases were reported to the World Health Organization (WHO) country office and it was discovered to be a new strain of the SARS-CoV virus of 2002. The name Covid-19 was given to the virus by the WHO on the 11th of February, 2020. It is an acronym which stands for Corona Virus Disease of 2019. The symptoms associated with the disease are common to that of the common cold. They include fever, cough, shortness of breath, loss of smell. However, the complications are of a greater degree than the symptoms as they could lead to pneumonia, viral sepsis, acute respiratory distress syndrome, kidney failure, and many more. The complications over time was said to worsen based on the health status of the individual. (Sohrabi, Alsafi, O'Neill, Khan, Kerwan, Al-Jabir, Iosifidis & Agha. 2020)

The virus is not airborne but could spread in various ways. It was primarily spread amongst people during close contact. If droplets from infected persons fell on surfaces, people could get infected by touching an already contaminated surface. Various studies have shown that the half-life of the virus outside the human body depends on the temperature and humidity hence, different regions can have different rates of spread. The best methods of control are to avoid crowded environments, constantly wash and sanitize the hands, regularly clean possibly contaminated surfaces and constantly wear a face mask. Despite these measures, the disease found its way into almost all countries of the world including Nigeria thereby necessitating different nations to provide contextual solutions to manage the situation while awaiting a vaccine.

According to the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), (2020), the first

case of COVID-19 in Nigeria was confirmed in the Infectious Disease Centre, Yaba, Lagos State, Nigeria on the 27th February, 2020. An Italian citizen arrived at the Murtala Muhammed International Airport, Lagos at 10:00 p.m. on 24th February, 2020 on-board a Turkish airline from Milan, Italy. He visited his company's site in Ogun State the following day where he presented himself at his company's staff clinic. The physician-on-duty had a strong suspicion of the presence of the virus. This led him to refer the Italian citizen to Infectious Disease Hospital (IDH) and the COVID-19 status was confirmed (Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, 2020). The Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) started the contact tracing of 'Persons of Interest' which included all persons on the manifesto of the flight that brought the index case to Nigeria, as well as people who had close contact with the index case while in Lagos and Ogun State. After a period of two weeks, a cluster of cases was detected in Lagos and Abuja, this was noted to be the emergence of the nationwide spread of the virus.

The Federal Government responded with the authorization of the closure of all non-essential services (businesses and industries) and restricted movement of people in Lagos State, Ogun State and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja, on 29th March, 2020. Most State Governments restricted public gathering and there were restrictions on Inter-state movement. The Federal Government later authorized the gradual easing of lockdown in the previously restricted states on the 4th May, 2020. The nationwide spread of the virus led to the Federal government of Nigeria taking certain measures to contain the virus. The available information on the virus and the welfare of her citizenry were guiding beacons in periodic restrictions to maximize containment. Educational and Religious institutions were the first bodies restricted before containment

measures extended to non-essential services. The great lockdown was meant to curtail further spread of covid-19 virus.

The covid 19 lockdown led to closure of very many institutions and organizations including businesses of all sorts. Transporters were also affected because there was a drastic reduction in the number of commuters. The lock down, no doubt affected the economy of the country thereby increasing the level of poverty in the land. This led to government, charity organizations and individuals to engage in giving out palliatives to the poor and less privileged.

Despite the lockdown and its adverse effects on people's live and livelihood, the small scale business owners were still engaging in their daily activities as usual. In this study, technicians and artisans were used interchangeably and were considered to be categories of skilled persons who provide services of our daily needs. For example, the motor vehicle mechanic and those into maintenance and repair of building: bricklayers; carpenters; electrical installation technicians; plumbers; painters. Others who are self-employed include: electronics technicians, GSM repairers, television and other house hold appliances repairers, and the hair stylists: barbers and hair dressers opened their shops daily during the lockdown to attend to customers. Self-employed workers are those who operate personal businesses that involve buying, selling and rendering of labour including independent contractors, day labourers, or gig workers (Abraham et al, 2020).

Motor vehicle mechanics are artisans who specialized in the repair and services of motor vehicles. They diagnose and repair faults in the different systems of motor vehicles .Their workshops are found in different locations within Benin metropolis. Some of the mechanics are graduates of technical college while others are trained under the open apprenticeship system. The

services rendered by motor vehicle mechanics are needed even during pandemic periods and other forms of crises in the country. During such period, motor vehicles owners carry out maintenance to enable them move around easily with their motor vehicles. The bricklayers, carpenters, electrical installation technicians, plumbers and painters are other categories of artisans whose services are needed to carry out maintenance in buildings irrespective of the prevailing situation in the country. Auto-mobile technology is the learning of basic knowledge and skills necessary to diagnose and repair mechanical defects in motor vehicles. The artisans trained for diagnosing and repairing faults in motor vehicles are known as motor vehicle mechanics (Schaller, 2010) These artisans were able to sustain their means of livelihood during the COVID-19 pandemic lock down. In recent times, communication has become a key to day to day activities. The convenience provided by the use of mobile phone cannot be over emphasized. The repair of cell phone has become a lucrative business to the technicians. According to Okala (2015) regular maintenance of house hold appliances is key to comfortable living in the modern world. They seemed to become busier during the pandemic lockdown. People needed to fix their faulty cell phones during the lock down to enable them communicate for business transactions and for other reasons.

It was observed that these categories of artisans were still engaged in rendering their services despite the pandemic lockdown. During the lockdown, people needed to service and repair their motor vehicles and their generator sets, mend their leaking roofs, fix their faulty plumbing system and ratify electrical faults in their houses, repair their cell phones, television and other electronic gadgets. Indeed, it seemed that it was the period of lockdown that people visited the hair saloon most. Therefore, the activities of these categories of artisans involved in these

services seemed not to have been affected by the lockdown as one would imagine. These artisans, through their skills were able to render useful and relevant services to various individuals and households, thus, likely making a lot of income for themselves and their families. This is exactly what Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) seeks to achieve.

Technical and Vocation Education and Training encourages skill acquisition; knowledge and attitude needed for professional careers, and through its orientation, the social and economic inclusion of the rural population and the marginalized communities are addressed (Okala,2015). Considering the fast evolving changes in world economy occasioned by the forces of globalization and ICT expansion, coupled with the fact that foreign investors place premium on skills and technical competencies of local workforce, neglecting the TVET sector will be tantamount to compromising the wellbeing of the populace and the national economy. Boström (2013) described TVET as any educational programme (including training of artisans) organized to orientate people into skills acquisition, as well as teach them the attitude and knowledge necessary for the appropriate utilization of such skills. It is education designed to develop specific occupational skills. TVET creates educational background necessary for democratization of entrepreneurial skills in a broader and in an organized manner for a chosen occupational field. TVET thus has the potential to train the skilled workforce that the nation needs, and create employment for the youths to emerge out of poverty.

The nature of the vocational skills acquired through TVET is such that they are on daily demand. In other words, the services rendered by these entrepreneurs, technicians and other small-scale business owners are so crucial that they are regularly required regardless of the situation prevailing in the

country. This implies that these groups of persons and their services to a large extent are not limited by time or seasons. This fact makes it arguable that the technicians or small scale business owners, like other businesses, seemed not to have been adversely affected by the lockdown due to the covid 19 pandemic. It is against this background that the researchers therefore wished to examine the extent to which the lockdown due to covid-19 pandemic influenced the economic activities of technicians or artisans in Benin metropolis in Edo State.

Statement of the Problem

Despite the funds provided for quick economy recovery from the pandemic, several micro, small and medium scale enterprise seem not to have fully recovered from the effect of COVID-19 pandemic. However, many technicians and artisans continued with their economic activities uninterrupted. Within this said period for example, the artisans were able to take their services to locations where there were no restrictions of movement. It is therefore likely that the COVID-19 pandemic did not affect the activities of artisans as it did on the activities of conventional buying and selling businesses. However, what is not yet clear to the researchers is the extent to which COVID-19 pandemic lock-down influenced the economic activities of artisans within Benin metropolis; hence the need for this study.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study was to determine the influence of COVID-19 pandemic on the socio-economic activities of some selected artisans in Benin metropolis, Edo State. Specifically, the study determined:

1. the extent to which covid-19 pandemic influenced the socio-economic activities of motor vehicles mechanics in Benin metropolis;

2. the extent to which covid-19 pandemic influenced the socio-economic activities of building services providers in Benin metropolis;
3. the extent to which covid-19 pandemic influenced the socio-economic activities of electrical and electronic appliances repairers in Benin metropolis;
4. the extent to which covid-19 pandemic influenced the socio-economic activities of hair stylists in Benin metropolis.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the study.

1. To what extent did covid-19 pandemic influence the socio-economic activities of motor vehicles mechanics in Benin metropolis?
2. To what extent did the covid-19 pandemic influence the socio-economic activities of building services providers in Benin metropolis?
3. To what extent did the covid-19 pandemic influence the socio-economic activities of electrical and electronic appliances repairers in Benin metropolis?
4. To what extent did covid-19 pandemic influence the socio-economic activities of hair stylists in Benin metropolis?

Methodology

The study adopted the ex-post facto research design to investigate the influence of COVID-19 pandemic on socioeconomic activities of some selected artisans in Nigeria. This design was considered appropriate because the event of lock-down has already taken place and cannot be manipulated.

The population of this study consists of 2,840 technicians within Benin metropolis.

This includes Motor Vehicle Mechanics, building services providers, electrical and electronic appliances repairers and hair stylists.

The sample size consists of 284 technicians in Benin metropolis. This represents 10% of the population of the study. Proportionate sampling technique was used to select the sample size of the study. That is 10 percent of every category of artisans were selected.

Research Instrument

Data used for the study were collected with a structured interview. The interview schedule was designed with 24 item statements to suit all artisans listed. Each item statement has response indicating frequencies of patronage per week before the pandemic lock down and during the pandemic lock down. The responses were rated seven times a week such that each response to each item was recorded over seven.

The instrument was validated by three experts in the department of Vocational and Technical Education, Faculty of Education University of Benin. Their suggestions were incorporated into the final draft of the instrument.

A test-retest reliability method was used to ascertain the reliability of the research instrument. The instrument was administered twice for a pilot study which involved a total of 20 artisans who were part of the population but not the sample. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) statistics was used to calculate the r-value and it yielded 0.69.

The researchers administered the instrument personally together with four research assistants who were properly briefed on how to conduct the interview. The exercise lasted for five days. It was one hundred percent return rate.

Method of Data Analysis

The data collected from the respondents were organized into tables. The responses to each item statement was converted to mean value. Therefore, there were mean values for each item statement before and during COVID-19 pandemic lock down. The mean difference for each item was also estimated. If the mean difference is of positive value, it means that COVID-19 lock down had a positive influence on the socio-economic activities of artisans in Benin metropolis. And, the COVID-19 lock down had a negative influence on the economic activities of artisans in Benin metropolis if the mean difference is of negative value.

Results

The results of the study are presented as follows

Research Question One: To what extent did covid-19 pandemic influence the socio-economic activities of motor vehicles mechanics in Benin metropolis?

Table 1: Mean responses on the extent to which COVID-19 pandemic influenced the socio-economic activities of motor vehicles and generator mechanics.

S/N	Interview Questions	Mean Before Lockdown	Mean During Lockdown	Mean Difference	Remark
1.	How many times did you come to the workshop in a week?	28.00	22.00	-6.00	Negative
2.	What was the rate of patronage weekly?	26.32	32.84	6.52	Positive
3.	What was your average income in a week?	25.20	36.00	10.80	Positive
4.	How many repairs did you make in a week?	28.00	32.88	4.88	Positive
5.	What was business generally like?	22.00	30.24	8.24	Positive
	Grand mean	25.91	30.79	4.88	Positive

Table 1 shows the mean difference in the socio-economic activities of motor vehicles and generator repairers before and during the covid-19 lock down. Item 1 had a mean difference of -6.00 in favour of before lock down and was recorded as negative effect while items 2, 3, 4 and 5 had a mean difference of 6.52, 10.80, 4.88 and 8.24 respectively. This implies that the COVID-19 pandemic did not influence motor vehicle and generator mechanics positively. This means that COVID-19 pandemic affected the socio-economic activities of motor vehicles and generator mechanics positively.

Research Question Two: To what extent did covid-19 pandemic influence the Socio-economic activities of building services and repair providers in Benin metropolis?

Table 2: Mean distribution of responses on the extent to which covid-19 pandemic Influenced the socio-economic activities of building services and repair providers

S/N	Interview Questions	Mean Before Lockdown	Mean During Lockdown	Mean Difference	Remark
1	How many times was your services requested?	5.50	5.00	-.50	Negative
2	How many repairs did you carry out in a week?	7.81	5.21	-.26	Negative
3	What was the rate of patronage in a week	8.00	7.41	-.59	Negative
4	How many new clients did you receive in a week	8.00	6.00	-2.00	Negative
5	What was your average income in a week?	9.00	6.23	-2.77	Negative
	Grand mean	7.66	5.97	-1.69	Negative

Data in Table 2, revealed that items 1,2,3,4 and 5 have mean differences of .50, -2.6, -0.59, -2.00 and -2.77 respectively. It implies that socio-economics activities were better before the lockdown than during the lock down. This means that the extent to which covid-19 pandemic influenced the socio-economic activities of building services and repair providers negatively in Benin metropolis.

Research Question Three: To what extent did covid-19 pandemic influence the socio-economic activities of electrical and electronic appliances repairers in Benin metropolis.

Table 3: Mean distribution of responses on the extent to which covid-19 pandemic influenced the socio-economic activities of electrical and electronic appliances repairers

S/N	Interview Questions	Mean Before Lockdown	Mean During Lockdown	Mean Difference	Remark
1	How many times did you open shop in a week?	7.66	7.00	-.66	Negative
2	How many repairs did you carry out in a week?	5.50	8.00	2.50	Positive
3	What was the rate of patronage in a week	6.10	9.00	2.90	Positive
4	How many new clients did you receive in a week	6.10	8.54	2.44	Positive
5	What was your average income in a week?	5.00	8.10	3.10	Positive
	Grand mean	6.07	8.13	2.06	Positive

Data in Table 3 shows the mean difference in the socio-economic activities of electrical and electronic appliances repairers before and during the covid-19 lock down. It can therefore be seen that item 1, have a mean difference 0.66 in favour of before pandemic lock down while items 2, 3, 4 and 5 have mean differences of 2.50, 2.9, 2.44 and 3.10 respectively in favour of during pandemic lock down. This means that covid-19 pandemic influenced the socio-economic activities of electrical and electronic appliances repairers positively in Benin metropolis.

Research Question Four: To what extent did covid-19 pandemic influence the socio-economic activities of hair stylists in Benin metropolis?

Table 4: Mean distribution of responses of the extent to which covid-19 pandemic affect the socio-economic activities of hair stylists.

S/N	Interview Questions	Mean Before Lockdown	Mean During Lockdown	Mean Difference	Remark
1	How many times did you come to the workshop in a week?	8.80	4.11	-4.69	Negative
2	What was the rate of patronage daily?	7.15	3.00	-4.15	Negative
3	What was your average income in a week?	6.83	3.76	-3.55	Negative
4	How many new clients did you receive weekly	7.55	3.00	-4.55	Negative
5	How can you rate the challenges encountered in your business daily?	6.00	2.56	-3.44	Negative
	Grand mean	7.27	2.56	-4.71	Negative

Table 4 reveals the mean difference in the socio-economic activities of hair stylists before and during the COVID-19 pandemic lock down. It can be seen that items 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 have mean differences of -4.69, -4.15, -3.07, -4.55 and -3.44 respectively, thereby giving the impression that hair stylists had poor patronage during the lock down. This means that the covid-19 pandemic influenced the socio-economic activities of hair stylists negatively.

Discussion of Findings

The findings revealed that covid-19 pandemic influenced the socio-economic activities of motor vehicles mechanics positively. This means that motor vehicle mechanics were still actively going about their businesses and even had more jobs during the period of the lock-down due to COVID- 19. This finding was corroborated by the study of Fernandes (2021) who found that motor vehicle mechanics were busier during the covid 19 lock-down period than they were before that time. The author explained that staying at home afforded people the opportunity to engage the services of vehicle repairers to critically examine the condition of their vehicles.

It also was revealed from the findings that covid-19 pandemic lockdown influenced the socio-economic activities of building services and repair providers negatively. This finding supported the findings of the work of Adegboye, Adekunle, and Gayawan, (2021) who reported that the activities of building services providers were put on hold due to the fear of been infected by covid 19 virus because the job involved many people working together. However, Baldwin and Tomiura (2020) contradicted this finding in their report that house maintenance works were not affected by the lock down as the services of artisans were needed during the pandemic lockdown.

Again, the finding revealed that covid-19 pandemic influenced the socio-economic activities of electrical and electronic appliances repairer positively. In relation to this finding, Fernandes (2021) stated that the activities of repairers of electronic and electrical appliances during the lock down was significantly different from what it used to be before the period. That is more persons repaired their damage electrical appliances during the lock down probably to enable them listen to radio news

broadcast and watch television during their stay at home.

Covid-19 pandemic affected the socio-economic activities of hair stylists negatively. In support of this finding, Baldwin and Tomiura (2021), found that hair stylist and beauticians were negatively affected by the lockdown. This was probably due to the fact that people had become enlightened about the mode of transmission of the covid 19 virus and avoided close contact with those outside their homes. This finding was also buttressed by Bermeo and Bartels (2014) who posited that in situations of global emergencies, people turn to trusted hands and those within their enclaves for whatever assistance they can get.

Conclusion

It is clear from the findings of the study that despite the perceived and expected negative effect of Covid-19 pandemic lock down on business activities in Nigeria, some artisans were not totally affected economically. In other words, while many business owners and employees experienced lack and hardship because they could not continue with their jobs, the artisans were very much engaged with activities that yielded income for them. This is not to say that artisans did not experience lack or financial challenges, but that they were more financially stable than other business owners and many individuals who were totally dependent on salaries.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are made based on the findings and conclusion.

1. There is need to expose youths to skill acquisition programmes in order for them to be self-dependent.
2. Employees who solely depend on salaries should be encouraged to establish viable and sustainable businesses as additional sources of income for sure sustainability.

3. Artisans should be provided with soft loans so as to enable them expand their business coverage and enable them to accommodate more apprentices.
4. Citizens of Nigeria should engage themselves in skill acquisition irrespective of their conventional occupation for sustainable means of lively hood.

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