

# Covid-19 Pandemic, Socio Economic Lockdown and Crime in Enugu State

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## Abstract

The aim of the present study was to examine COVID-19 pandemic, socio economic lockdown and crime based on the experiences and responses of workers in Enugu state southeast Nigeria. It is a qualitative study and the interviews were interpreted using an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). The interview questions includes (i) what are your experiences during COVID 19 pandemic lock down? (ii) What was the rate of crime in your area and state generally during the lockdown? (iii) How did the economic lockdown affect your job/work? Semi-structured interview was used to collect data from the participants. The participants were workers in different organizations (government and private).

Thirty five workers participated in the study. The lowest qualification of the workers was secondary school certificate examination. The participants were both married and singles, their ages were between 21-40. The results showed that COVID 19 pandemic seriously affected workers (government and private) very badly, many breadwinners lost their jobs and source of livelihood during lockdown, inclusively many private organizations were closed down and the workers were faced with unemployment and untold hardship. The findings shows that COVID 19 posed a serious threat on the lives and wellbeing of workers at large.

Keywords: COVID-19, Enugu state, workers, unemployment, hardship

## INTRODUCTION

Pandemics are situations that have ensued at different stages in human history (Ferguson et al., 2020). In the world, there have been many occurrences and human calamities and there has been an outstanding rise in the rate of pandemics from the year 2000 and thereafter. This is mostly the result of a rise in the incidence of viral diseases in animals (Madhav et al., 2017). Recently, Madhav et al. (2017) and Fan et al. (2018) have argued that a large-scale global pandemic was imminent. Ferguson et al. (2020) assert that COVID-19 is the most severe outbreak since the

Spanish Flu epidemic in 1918 (Barro 2020).

The Covid-19 pandemic has produced a global catastrophe that threatens the socioeconomic growth of all nations (Qiu, Chen & Shi, 2020). During the first half of the year 2020, the world has been gripped by a pandemic. Initially referred to as a novel coronavirus (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2, or SARS-CoV-2), it was eventually dubbed Coronavirus Disease-19 or COVID-19 (Qiu, Chen & Shi, 2020). Originating in the Chinese City of Wuhan in the province of Hubei, COVID-19 has

rapidly spread across the globe, causing a human tragedy and enormous economic devastation. By mid-June, there were over 8 million COVID-19 cases worldwide, with over 436,000 fatalities (Qiu, Chen & Shi, 2020). Given the rapid development of COVID-19, nations around the globe have adopted a variety of public health measures to prevent its spread, including social isolation (Fong et al.2020). As of 18 July 2020, the region had registered 701,573 infections, 14,937 deaths, and 369,120 recoveries, according to information acquired from the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (2020a) (World Health Organization and African Union Member States, 2020). Africa accounts for around 5% of reported cases globally (World Health Organization and African Union Member States, 2020). A regional analysis reveals that Southern Africa topped the list with more than 364,100 cases, while central Africa reported the lowest number of infections with approximately 42,900 cases (Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, 2020b).

### COVID 19 PANDEMIC

A public health emergency relating to COVID-19 by World Health Organization (WHO). Research shows that few children got COVID-19, although they are still investigating the reasons for this. However, while some viruses are highly contagious, it is less clear how rapidly coronaviruses will spread. Symptoms vary from person-to-person with COVID-19. It may produce few symptoms, it can also lead to severe illness and may be fatal (Luk, Li, Fung, Lau & Woo). Scientists cannot easily cultivate human coronaviruses in the laboratory unlike the rhinovirus, which is another cause of the common cold. There is no cure, so treatments include self-care and over-the-counter (OTC) medication. People can take several steps, including: resting and avoiding crowded areas,

constant washing of hands under running water and use of hand sanitizers, avoiding contact with eye, nose and hands, use of face mask, cough in one's elbow.

On February 27, 2020, the first COVID-19 case in Nigeria was confirmed. The Nigerian government promptly organized a twelve-member task committee for coronavirus control. The nation's borders were locked down and cities were placed under lockdown on March 23. Some commercial organizations and institutions that provided redundant services were dismantled, and a lack of basic utilities to support remote work caused a number of private enterprises to lay off personnel. In Nigeria, only privately managed higher education institutions enrolling less than 6% of university students use distant learning (Adedigba, 2018). (Adedigba, 2018). The release of inmates who have served five years in jail for minor offenses. As of 14 May 2020, roughly 4,971 incidences of COVID-19 have been confirmed (including 113 frontline health care employees); 1,070 persons have been discharged, and 164 deaths have been reported (Nigerian Centre for Disease Control, 2020). (Nigerian Centre for Disease Control, 2020). More so, in Nigeria, the COVID 19 outbreak was first recorded in Lagos Nigeria in march 2020 and since then the virus as of 31<sup>th</sup> may 2020 have entered 35 states of the federation with Lagos recording 4755 cases, FCT (Federal capital territory) 951 cases etc. Nigerian government is seriously putting all measures in place to curtail the rapid spread of the virus in all the state of federation. Some of the measures includes massive sensitisation of masses, sharing of palliatives to all the states of federation, nation-wide lock down, curfew, lock down of markets, schools, recreation centres and worship centres. Massive production, sharing and distributions of hand sanitizers, face mask and running taps/ buckets at

strategic places in different states of the federation (Tasse, 2020).

### **SOCIO ECONOMIC LOCKDOWN**

In south east Nigeria, as of on 31<sup>th</sup> May Enugu recorded 18 cases, Ebonyi 33 cases, Imo 33 cases, Anambra 10 cases and Abia 7cases. In Enugu the state governor is seriously putting measures in place to make sure that the virus is prevented from spreading in interior villages where it may be very hard to handle appropriately because of inadequate facilities in place. Masses were advised to report any suspected case in their area. In parkline hospital where the cases are being handled NCDC are working together with the doctors and nurses to make sure that the patients are being handled appropriately, so far few deaths have being recorded. Although samples from Enugu are being taken to Ebonyi state for screening (Mba, 2020).Government of Enugu state have distributed palliatives to all the local government in the state. Also free face mask, hand sanitizers and liquid soap were shared round the state, both in city and villages. More so , government have set up teams that goes round to make sure that inhabitants of the state observe the social distancing measures, including sanitation modalities that would help to stop the spread of the virus both in city and villages. Sensitization programmes have being on in both television and radio stations in the states to create awareness and to educate inhabitants of the state on the proper hygiene (Okon, 2020).In religious centres the socio economic lockdown affected the daily and weekly gatherings in worship centres. Individuals observe their services through internets and media. That really affected the large gatherings that were formally observed in different worship centres. These worship centres became the shadow of its former self. Also in markets traders that deals with food items, beverages, medicals and super

markets were the only ones that were allowed to open three times in a day. In banks and shopping moors customers are not allow to enter banking hall at once, customers must wash their hands at the entrance and wear their face mask (Okon, 2020).

### **CRIME**

The COVID-19 epidemic has introduced a new system that affects the whole human population. As a result of the unimaginable hardship that the pandemic has brought to the lives of families, particularly those that depend on their daily labor for sustenance, residents are gravely grumbling. Due to social distancing regulations, commuters are complaining of a rise in their commuting costs. Also, workers are objecting vehemently because small business owners are collapsing and certain companies and ministries are slashing workers' wages due to a decline in the state's GDP. Private and independently-owned businesses are closing regularly (Enoh, 2020).

The crime rate became very high during the socio economic lockdown. The rate at which arm robbers invade people's houses was on an increases, in fact gang robbery became the order of the day. The cases of rape also was very high. The quick mobilisation of watchmen by inhabitants of some neighbourhood saved some families from losing their valuables to the criminals the arrest of almost 200 suspects. Different methods were being used by theses hoodlums in their operation, in some regions, criminals conduct street raids. Armed with clubs, machetes, and iron rods, the bandits broke into homes, stole property, and assaulted some inhabitants who resisted. Due to the prevalence of this type of robbery, families maintain vigilance to prevent attacks on them. Due to lack resources, the

government police on their side were unable to combat the criminals. In spite of this, the police declared that they were increasing their forces "in light of recent criminal activity in border villages"

**Research questions:**

1. What are your experiences during COVID 19 pandemic lock down?
2. What was the rate of crime in your area and state generally during the lockdown?
3. How did the economic lockdown affect your job/work?

**METHOD**

**Participants**

Thirty five participants partook on the interview. The participants were workers in different organisations and they includes, ministries, organizations etc. The participants were asked to report their experiences during COVID 19 pandemic lockdown. The lowest qualification of the workers was secondary school certificate examination. The workers were all located in Enugu, Enugu State Nigeria. Their ages ranges from 21 to 60.the participants include twenty male and fifteen females. The consent of each of the workers that participated in the study was sought and they were assured of the confidentiality of their responses.

**Instrument**

The participants were interviewed. They were asked to relate their experiences during COVID 19 pandemic, the effects of socio economic lockdown and the rate of crime in their area and state in general.

**Procedure**

Thirty five participants were interviewed. The interview on each participant took about 20 to 40 minutes to be completed. All the respondents volunteered to participate in the study. The participants were randomly selected from different organisations. After the interview, the interview questions were transcribed. Each script was examined in details. Following several readings, the researcher was able to consider similarities and differences in how the informants discussed the same phenomena. The next thing was thematic analysis. Some of the themes formed natural conceptual categories.

**Design/Data Analysis**

The study is an exploratory qualitative study that uses interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to interpret the interview questions. The design of the study was interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) design. Thematic analysis was used to analysis the interview questions.

**Results and Discussion**

<b>Research questions</b>	<b>Dominant Responses</b>
<p>1. What are your experiences during COVID-19 pandemic lock down??</p>	<p>‘eemh is nothing to write home about at all, after eating one will be idle doing practically nothing, it is not easy at all, there is nowhere to go or visit. (Pause...frowns...’who I am to say no to stay at home when the whole world was on lockdown. Also I have my children sitting at home too, feeding more than five persons was not an easy task (laughs). After spending so much on feeding, I feel helpless and hopeless cos the burden is too much...</p>

	(Expresses anger facially). I don't want to continue to transfer aggression cos the problem is a universal one (smiles).Haaaah! co what? Please I don't want to remember that at all.....in fact 2020 is a minus to my year of birth... ( frowning)
<p>2.What was the rate of crime in your area and state generally during the lockdown?</p>	<p>Haaaah! the crime rate escalated ohh...God... there is no night you don't hear shout of theft in the nearby street. Policemen got tired of arresting hoodlums cos the cell was already over populated. In fact in my street everybody became a security/ watchman to avoid super story (laughs...).</p> <p>'In my area, some families have to lock themselves in for days to avoid opening their doors to disguised criminals...' on one occasion, i woke up around 1am and i heard some neighbours screaming and calling for people to come out and defend them..... nna no one went. On another incident, it was like a movie scene, we got information that armed robbers were around. I made my way to the entrance of the house and found out that other neighbours were all out with weapons (such as machetes and clubs)'. 'I quickly ran back into the house to fetch my machete and joined other residents to form a barricade to prevent the hoodlums from invading our street. We stayed awake until 7am before dispersing to our homes'. That was not the first time our area was targeted by criminal gangs</p>
<p>3. How did the economic lockdown affect your job/work?</p>	<p>(Responses like...no! no!no! It was not it at all... if that I have farm land I would have cultivated it...smiles, just to set my hands on something...)</p> <p>Responses like...not minding that my salary was not always enough, they did not pay us at all cos I work in school yet they mandated us to be using our money to buy data for on-line tutoring. They lie against you... cos you are a teacher... you will not say anything because if you do, they will sack you without looking at your face... especially we are that in private schools.</p>

**Discussion**

The participants in the study expressed their personal experiences

during COVID 19 pandemic socioeconomic lockdown. The result shows that the pandemic affected the lives

of all inhabitants and this can be as a result of total/ partial lockdown of activities, long suffering and fear of what the future holds. These has been the major challenges facing most inhabitants because large percentage of inhabitants live on daily living for survival. For example some of the reposes like –‘eeemh is nothing to write home about at all, after eating one will be idle doing practically nothing, it is not easy at all, there is nowhere to go or visit. (Pause....frowns...’who I am to say no to stay at home when the whole world was on lockdown not that I prefer it. The management cut down on the number of workers because they think that they cannot cope...’ ‘We are hired and fired’. These agrees to the findings that states that COVID 19 pandemic brought a lot of hardship and poverty, to this extent, inhabitants sees COVID 19 as a menace to the entire society.

More so, on the rate of crime in your area and state generally during the lockdown? The result shows that crime rate was on a very high increase. For example responses like... ‘Haaaah! The crime rate escalated ohh...God... there is no night you don’t hear shout of theft in the nearby street. Policemen got tired of arresting hoodlums cos the cell was already over populated. In fact in my street everybody became a security/ watchman to avoid super story (laughs...). ‘In my area, some families have to lock themselves in for days to avoid opening their doors to disguised criminals...“ on one occasion, i woke up around 1am and i heard some neighbours screaming and calling for people to come out and defend them..... nna no one went.

Also, in the research questions like how did the economic lockdown affect your job/work? Result from data extract shows that emotions (feelings) also plays a vital role in accessing the reactions and responses of workers. It is clear that some workers were deeply affected by the pandemic compared to others. Some

workers means of lively hood was closed down outrightly. Responses like...not minding that my salary was not always enough, they did not pay us at all cos I work in school yet they mandated us to be using our money to buy data for on-line tutoring. They over work you... cos you are a teacher... you will not say anything because if you do, they will sack you without looking at your face...especially we are in private schools. The effect the pandemic had on the lives of workers differs a lot based on the nature of job the workers does (some workers are in private establishments/jobs). And for this reason directly or indirectly that affect the feelings (well- beings) of workers generally.(Responses like...no! no!no! It was not it at all... if that I have farm land I would have cultivated it...smiles, just to set my hands on something...enjoying what is happening at all ... if ...smiles, am just passing time...)

This study's findings indicate that the global spread of COVID-19 has wreaked havoc in Enugu State and Nigeria in general. Immediate adoption of precautionary and preventative actions must be maintained. It is imperative to address the threats posed by the pandemic of COVID 19 to the economic well-being of citizens and the increase in crime rate. Government’s mistrust, ignorance, denial, and misdirected religious zeal negatively impacted the socioeconomic behavior of Nigerians. Approximately 80% of Nigerians live on a daily pay check, with no reserves to act as a buffer during the shutdown (Kalu, 2020). These individuals and their families were unable to comply with COVID-19 precautions due to hunger they encountered. As a result of the government's incapacity to provide social safety nets for the enormous number of destitute citizens, there arose several cases of civil disobedience and bribery of law enforcement officers to get passes, as well as increase in criminal activities.

According to the National Human Rights Commission, within three weeks of lockdown, 18 people were killed extra judicially by security officers who brutally enforced lockdown (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2020b). Most Nigerian ideas surrounding the virus's origin and causes were erroneous and also based on superstition (Olapegba et al., in press). The first confirmed instances of COVID-19 involved government officials and persons with high socioeconomic standing. Consequently, the majority of people initially assumed that HIV was a sickness of the wealthy (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2020a; Nwaubani, 2020). Several religious leaders in the Muslim northern region of Nigeria did not believe in the transmission of coronavirus, according to the chairman of the Nigerian Medical Association (see <https://www.youtube.com/>).

Total economic lockdown failed in Nigeria because it made life more difficult for the masses, because they were not able to do their businesses to feed their family members. An estimated 2 million children and 7 percent of women of reproductive age in Nigeria are malnourished (UNICEF, 2015; USAID, 2018). Loss of funds can result in numerous illnesses, fatalities, and a significant increase in the crime rate. Beginning in early May 2020, the lockdown will be removed, allowing people to once again earn a living. Certain restrictions, such as a prohibition on public meetings and interstate and international travel, the obligation to wear face masks when leaving the house, and other World

Health Organization recommendations for preventing the spread of the Covid-19 virus remain in effect. Despite the difficulty of maintaining the minimum physical distance, Nigerian merchants can now conduct business on the world's greatest open markets. These marketplaces are not product-restricted, and purchasing takes long journeys, haggling, navigating massive crowds, and direct involvement with vendors aiming to lure customers to their businesses (Nwaeze, 2018).

## CONCLUSION

Over the past 50 years the emergence of many different coronaviruses that cause a wide variety of human and veterinary diseases has occurred. It is likely that these viruses will continue to emerge and to evolve and cause both human and veterinary outbreaks owing to their ability to recombine, mutate, and infect multiple species and cell types. Future research on coronaviruses will continue to investigate many aspects of viral replication and pathogenesis. First, understanding the propensity of these viruses to jump between species, to establish infection in a new host, and to identify significant reservoirs of coronaviruses will dramatically aid in our ability to predict when and where potential epidemics may occur.

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