

How Did They Cope: Analyzing the Effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on Private School Teachers in Ekwusigo Local Government Area, Anambra State of Nigeria

Ilodibe Stephen Ifenna¹, Patrick, Ogechukwu Blessing²

¹*Faculty of Politics and Public Management, Department of Administrative Management, Southwest University, Chongqing 400715, China*

²*Faculty of Education, Department of Education, Leadership, and Management, Southwest University, Chongqing 400715, China*

Abstract: This quantitative research analyzed the effects of COVID-19 Pandemic on private school teachers in Nigeria and investigated into their coping strategies. The effects included loss of job, depression from prolonged inability to afford basic needs. These teachers coped through starting a second stream of income, gifts and borrowed funds, and importantly noting that there were little or no government assistance. The researchers also investigated to know whether the gender, grades taught by the teachers and locations of school showed any meaningful difference when compared against their level of perception of the effects of the pandemic on them. There was no meaningful difference with regards to teachers' gender and grades taught when compared against their perception of the effects of pandemic on them but there was a significant difference with regards to location of school (urban, suburban and rural) taught. The research revealed that these teachers who could barely live off on their meagre salary pre-pandemic suffered amid the pandemic and proffered important recommendations for individual and national references. This research employed the survey research method, private school teachers filled the questionnaire online, and the data collected was analyzed using the SPSS 20 program. This research also provided a significant comparative analysis of private schools funding in Nigeria and other countries, thereby revealing how private schools funding and existence have been paid little or no attention in Nigeria.

Keywords: Covid-19 pandemic, Private schools, Private school teachers.

I. BACKGROUND OF STUDY

The coronavirus pandemic is an unknown acute respiratory tract infection which broke out first in Wuhan, China in late 2019 and suspected to be sourced from a seafood market as bats were understood to be the potential reservoir of SARS-CoV-2 (Giovanetti et al., 2020; Paraskemis et al., 2020). According to Guo et al., (2020), World Health Organization, (2020), & Hui et al., (2020), the new coronavirus which is contracted through contact with infected humans has the following signs of human infection to include respiratory symptoms, fever, and cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In severe cases, COVID-19 infection can cause

pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome, kidney failure, and even death.

The coronavirus outbreak initially spared Nigeria and many other African countries with no recorded case as of January 2020. This luck, however, did not last. But by late February, Nigeria reported its first case (Hussain, 2020). In the middle of March 2020, the Federal Ministry of Education approved school closures as a response to the pandemic. Ever since, Covid-19 has deeply affected schools' academic activities and interrupted the income inflow for schools and teachers. The pandemic unmasked substantial inequities in the education sector but private and non-governmental sectors have been tirelessly working to salvage this situation (Amorighoye, 2020).

II. THE IMPORTANCE AND IMPACT OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS IN NIGERIA

In an ever-changing world and with the need to give their children the best education, parents preferred private school education to public school education. The reasons may include smaller classes, parents' involvement, a safer environment, dedicated teachers, etc. (Ewuzie, 2020). Teachers in private schools are famous for being more dedicated to child learning than teachers in public schools. Reportedly, even though private school teachers work hard and long hours, the majority of them are underpaid and work under poor, unethical conditions. It is also proven that students who attend the private schools in Nigeria outperform the students in the public schools academically (Olasehinde & Olatoye, 2014; Levi, 2016).

The private school operators have been formidable partners with the government over the years to meet Nigerians' educational needs. Nigeria is reported to currently have 43 federal universities, 52 state universities, and 79 private universities. Data sourced from the statistics provided by the National Bureau of Statistics confirmed that there are 967, 847 public secondary schools in Nigeria and 279, 204 private secondary schools (registered) in 2017 (Deji-Folulite, 2020).

Though these school owners are in business, they have served to support the government in making education reachable and accessible. It was of suggestion that the government worked out some palliatives, funding and support for registered and approved private schools to ease the burden of keeping schools running and paying salaries without students.

III. IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND PRIVATE SCHOOL TEACHERS

Private schools, being a private business, have been severely affected by the pandemic. The extreme economic drop-down situation has made it difficult for private school owners, especially the schools with a fewer population of students, to keep up with the salary payment for the teachers. The months of school close down has been challenging for private school teachers. Before the advent of the coronavirus pandemic, they had to live on their meager salaries, but with the uncertainty of when schools will resume made their lives more robust. As the purchasing power for these teachers has dwindled consistently, spending every kobo has come with in-depth deliberations and considerations for families (Ewuzie, 2020).

Most private school teachers believe that teaching in private schools is temporary and precedential to getting a better job. Even as most private school teachers are underpaid and can't take proper care of their families, still, most end up working as private school teachers for decades, and some for their entire life. However, the spread of COVID-19 and the shutdown of schools due to the pandemic had left the private school teachers in a more difficult situation than ever because most private school teachers have been denied remuneration during this COVID-19 shutdown. Kelechi (2020) noted that most private schools generate funding through school fees paid by students, therefore payment of salary is a great challenge due to the shutdown, and this has thrown the private school teachers into great lamentation over unpaid wages and scouting for means of survival. According to Jeromy (2020) and Kelechi (2020), 90% of incomes in the private schools are generated from student's school fees. If parents are not paying school fees, no revenue will be generated and it will be impossible for school management to pay salaries. Therefore, since the shutdown of schools due to the COVID-19 pandemic in March, most private school teachers did not receive any form of salary from their employers. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is so hard and has stricken the private school teachers payrolls in Nigeria, unlike in the U.S.A where some aid packages were given to the private sectors.

IV. COMPARATIVE ANALYSES OF PRIVATE SCHOOLS FUNDING IN NIGERIA AND OTHER COUNTRIES

In Nigeria, private schools being considered exclusively as a private business are entirely left with their burden, with no government financial support or assistance though this is not the case comparatively in some other countries. Knowing the importance and roles the private schools have played in their educational system, some countries provide their private schools with funds support and financial assistance. For

instance, in the United States, funding for private schools is not just through students' tuition, but also includes endowments, scholarship/school voucher funds, donations, and grants from religious organizations or private individuals.

According to a live interview on private school funding in the United States with Moffett (2020), most private schools are entirely funded by private institutions in the United States. This means that private individuals or companies donate funds to the school to aid in paying for materials, school outings, and even school personnel salaries. Private schools also receive funds from their students, as they charge tuition for students to be admitted. Private schools receive federal funds in the form of grants, should they choose to offer scholarship opportunities so that underprivileged students can attend the institution. If a private school is associated with the local public school district, the school can receive some federal aid from the government when it comes to day to day operations of the school. If a private school is entirely funded with private funds, then the school's achievement or lack thereof is accountable to the individual donors. This means privately funded schools can risk losing funds if the private investors are not pleased with the results and decide to stop giving funds to the school. Suppose a private school receives any funds from the government (federal funds), in that case, the school is accountable to the federal government and the stipulations placed on them by the federal government concerning the aid.

In the Netherlands, anyone can start a school so long as it meets the government requirements and therefore entitled to government funding. According to Jozef et al. (1997), in the Dutch educational system, as provided under article 23 of the country's constitution, the government gives equal funding to private schools just like the public schools. Private schools, just like public schools, are funded equally by the national administration, and parents are given the option of choosing from several schools in the vicinity of their homes. On the contrary, in Nigeria, the constitutional provision for free education from primary to university in section 18(3) CFRN (Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria) is merely a theoretical fantasy. Also unlike in the above mentioned countries, Jeromy (2020) & Kelechi (2020) observed that Nigerian private schools generated from students' school fees. If parents are not paying school fees, no revenue will be generated and it will be impossible for teachers' salaries to be paid.

V. RESEARCH AIM & QUESTIONS

The period of school lockdown in Nigeria because of the pandemic was very challenging for private school teachers. Several teachers sourced for other means of income. Some teachers started up new businesses, while some applied to work with other establishments. There were some who held private online classes for students preparing for the Nationwide Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination and for other students whose parents could afford to pay for

online private tutoring. Having been a difficult time for private school teachers who are not being paid like the government-employed teachers, this research aims at exploring and analyzing the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on private school teachers in Nigeria. In this context, answers were sought to these following questions:

1. What are the effects of covid-19 pandemic on private school teachers in Nigeria?
2. Does the perceptions of the research respondents show a meaningful difference in terms of gender, grades taught, and location of school?

VI. METHODOLOGY

This is a descriptive research in the survey model. The population of the study are teachers who work at the private schools in Ekwusigo local government area of Anambra state. The sample under study in this research were 59 private school teachers working in the Ekwusigo local government area (made up of 4 towns) in Anambra state, South east Nigeria. Teachers were selected randomly from 5 private schools.

Participants: 59 questionnaires were used in data analysis. The split between genders were almost same with 50.8% male (n: 30) and 49.2% female (n: 29). Among the teachers who participated in the study, 10.2% were preschool teachers (n: 6), 3.4% were kindergarten teachers (n: 2), 38.9% were primary school teachers (n: 23), and 47.5% were secondary school teachers (n: 28). More than half of the participating teachers worked in the urban area of the local government 69.5% (n: 41), while the rest participants worked in the rural 15.3% (n: 9) and sub –urban areas 15.3% (n: 9).

Data instrument, collection and data analysis: A self-developed data collection instrument was used in this study. The questionnaire was developed from previous researches and relevant literature and designed to suit the context of the private school teachers being surveyed. Due to the lockdown and restriction of movement in Nigeria at the time of this survey, the questionnaires were made available and accessible online, as recommended by Ofodum (2020). The questionnaire was prepared in a way as to enable the respondents to convey their challenges, difficulties, experience, and feelings during this COVID-19 global pandemic as a private school teacher. The first 3 questions requested information on gender, grades/levels taught, and location of school. The second 6 questions were designed on a dichotomous likert scale in order to detect and measure the frequency of opinions on indicated items. The scale items were answered on a rating scale from 1 “True” and 2 “False”. The last 3 questions focused on eliciting responses on the consequential challenges from the pandemic, viable means of income during the pandemic, and what their plans were when schools resume. The survey tool was reviewed and corrected by experts in statistics and educational measurement/evaluation in Southwest University, Chongqing, China and Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nigeria. The

statistical package for the social sciences (SPSS) 20 program was used for statistical analysis of the data collected by the surveys filled in correctly and fully according to the explanations in the frame of the general aims of the study. The frequency, percentage, arithmetical mean and standard deviation of the answers were calculated. Independent t-Test and One-Way ANOVA were performed to analyze the data.

VII. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Research Question 1: What are the effects of covid19 pandemic on private school teachers in Nigeria?

The covid19 pandemic had dire effects on the private school teachers. The daunting challenges of unexpected unemployment, coupled with putting up with expenses on life's basic needs, led to hunger, boredom, anxiety, and depression. 16.9% of the private school teachers (n=10) reported "loss of job" as one of the COVID-19 pandemic effects on them. 71.2% of the teachers (n=42) reported "paused flow of income" as a resultant consequence of the global pandemic. 28.8% of the teachers (n=17) pointed out "boredom, anxiety and depression" as some of the pandemic implications. 3.4% of the teachers (n=2) noted that their flow of income was altered, and they faced the challenges of "starting up a second stream of income" that will thrive and sustain them through the pandemic and beyond, possibly.

As weeks of lockdown has led to the retrenchment of millions of workers in Nigeria, Nigeria faced its worst unemployment disaster and economic instability since independence (Anudu, 2020). In response to the investigation on their viable source of income and livelihood during the pandemic, 13.6% of the teachers (n=8) reported "income from my school" as their primary source of income. 47.5% of the teachers (n=28) noted income from "personal side business" as a means of survival during the pandemic. 32.2% of the teachers (n=19) noted reliance on "money saved before the pandemic" as a means of survival during the pandemic. 35.6% of the teachers (n=21) reported "help from working family members and relations" as a viable source of sustenance during the pandemic. Other sources of little income for some teachers (5.1%, n=3) were income from virtual learning and home lessons and other unidentified sources.

Amid the unprecedented and abrupt crisis, it was increasingly difficult to see into the future. Responding to the survey on individual plans after the pandemic is over, 52.5% of the teachers (n=31) noted, "resume work as usual" as part of their plans. 15.3% of the teachers (n=9) pointed out "leave the teaching career" as their intention after the pandemic subsides. 22% of the teachers (n=16.9) reported that they would "work for a while before leaving." 16.9% of the teachers (n=10) intends to "apply for a government teaching job." 10.2% of the teachers (n=6) reported their intention of "starting a business" after the pandemic.

From the above responses, it is revealed that teachers who have managed the stipends they earn from teaching in private

schools pre-pandemic suffered from lack and abandonment during the pandemic. Some are working hard to recreate and build their lives around opportunities that will help them cushion the effects of the ongoing pandemic presently and stand better chances of withstanding future occurrences. They intend switching careers to business or other promising fields or apply to be employed in government schools, state, or federal. It can also be deduced that the private schools in Nigeria may be facing the risk of a heightened degree of teacher attrition on school resumption. The uncertainty of what the future holds for the frustrated private school teachers and incapacitated private school employers calls for attention.

Research Question 2: Does the perceptions of the research respondents show a meaningful difference in terms of gender, grades taught, and location of school?

Teachers' Gender

T-test was done in order to determine whether the perceptions of the teachers shows a significant difference or not according to teachers' gender. The results according to participants' gender are shown in Table 3. In this study, the rule according to Levene's test was employed,

If $P < 0.05$, reject H_0 and accept H_1 . The variances are significantly different. So we cannot assume they are equal. If $p > 0.05$, accept H_0 . This means that variances are not significantly different. So we can assume they are equal.

Table 1: T-test results on perceptions of the private primary school teachers on the effects of the pandemic according to gender.

Gender	N	X	sd	df	t	p
Male	30	10.63	1.033	54	2.091	.008
Female	29	9.93	1.510			

Here, the teachers' perception of the pandemic effects were compared against their genders. According to the results of the analysis, there were 30 male participants (50.8%) and 29 females (49.2%). The perceptions of the effects of the covid19 pandemic on private school teachers in Ekwusigo local government area of Anambra state do not show a meaningful difference according to gender [$t(54) = 2.091, p > .05$], therefore, the perceptions of the effects of the covid19 pandemic by the male and female teachers in the private schools of Anambra State are not significantly different based on gender. This implies that the resultant situations experienced by teachers due to the pandemic had equal effects on males and females.

Grades taught by the teachers

Table 2. ANOVA results on perceptions of the private primary school teachers on the effects of the pandemic on them according to grades taught.

Grades taught	N	%	X	sd	df	F	p
Preschool	6	10.2%	8.33	.516	3	7.515	.000
Kindergarten	2	3.4%	11.50	.707	55		

Primary school	23	38.9%	10.70	1.063			
Secondary school	28	47.5%	10.29	1.301			

Perceptions of participants were surveyed according to the grades taught. The grades taught by these teachers were grouped in the four levels generally accepted by the education system in Nigeria, they included Preschool, Kindergarten, Primary School, and Secondary School. According to the results of the analysis, the perceptions of the effects of the covid19 pandemic on private school teachers in Anambra shows no meaningful difference according to the grades and levels taught by them [$F(3-55) = 7.515, p > 0.000$]. In other words, the experiences of the private school teachers during the pandemic were similar for all irrespective of the grades taught by the teachers.

Location of school

Table 3. ANOVA results on perceptions of the private primary school teachers about the effects of the pandemic on them according to location of their schools.

Location of School	N	%	X	sd	Df	F	p
Rural	9	15.3%	10.44	.882	2	1.832	.170
Urban	41	69.5%	10.10	1.393	56		
Sub-urban	9	15.3%	11.00	1.225			

The location of school of the private school teachers were examined in three categories – Rural, Urban, and Sub-urban. According to the results of the analysis, the perceptions of the effects of the covid19 pandemic on the teachers at the private schools of Anambra state shows a meaningful difference according to participants' location of school [$F(2-56) = 1.832, p = .170$]. The above result shows that the effects of the covid19 pandemic on private school teachers significantly differs according to the location of the schools the teachers taught in. This result can be due to be the obvious differences between the urban and rural areas which includes the accessibility to certain social amenities and infrastructure, better transport facilities and easy reach for flexible opportunities that are available in the urban areas and difficult to access in the rural areas. This result implied that private school teachers in the rural areas were affected the most by the school lockdown due to the pandemic than the teachers in the sub-urban and urban areas.

VIII. CONCLUSION

From the above research, we can deduce that even though the private educational institutions have greatly assisted in boosting education in Nigeria, the private school teachers who are major stakeholders in the business of teaching and learning were seriously affected by the pandemic which led to shut down of schools, giving rise to many job retrenchments, paused flow of income, hunger, boredom, anxiety, and depression, and frantically search for other streams of income to sustain themselves and their families. This research

revealed that several private school teachers would opt for government job placements and better job opportunities in other fields/careers which provide job securities and emergency benefits, leading to the prediction of possible high teacher attrition on school resumption. This study also revealed that the pandemic affected the private school teachers in similar ways except a significant difference between the teachers in the rural, suburban, and urban areas. As the government provided little or no support within this period, the private school teachers developed their own coping strategies which included starting business, borrowing money and receiving assistance from friends and family.

IX. RECOMMENDATION

There are a number of recommendations that emerge from this research.

1. Salaries paid to private school teachers in Nigeria should be reviewed and adjusted according to the country's minimum wage. Being the largest employer of labor, the government may set a standard salary structure which may serve as reference for private institutions. In this way there will be less underpayment of hard working citizens and the attrition from private school teaching can be minimized.
2. Private school funding must not be left for private school owners alone. The government, companies and individuals ought to be encouraged to support by funding and donating to the private schools and as well require accountability and transparency on financial management. These financial assistance will significantly finance salary payment, especially in critical situations like the COVID-19 pandemic, without excessive dependence on students' tuitions, it will subsidize the cost of studying in the private schools and may provide scholarship opportunities for under-privileged kids in the private schools.
3. For the present and ongoing pandemic situation and for future outbreaks, the government should work out some palliatives for private institutions in order to ease the burden of keeping the schools running and paying salaries without students.
4. Strict regulations should be put in place to regulate the establishment of private schools in order to make sure that they meet up with the financial capability to keep the school financial system up and running and not as business institutions established for the mere sake of making profit and gains.
5. Private schools should be cared for by the government just as the public schools because they are also there for the benefit of the public as obtainable in the Netherlands and not just neglected as a private business because they are owned by private individuals.

REFERENCES

- [1] Adedigba, A. (2020, May 19). Owners lament as coronavirus restrictions take toll on Nigerian private schools. Retrieved from <https://www.premiumtimesng.com/news/headlines/393516-owners-lament-as-coronavirus-restrictions-take-toll-on-nigerian-private-schools.html>
- [2] Amorighoye, T. A. (2020, June 2). COVID-19 has exposed the education divide in Nigeria. This is how we can close it. Retrieved from <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/06/education-nigeria-covid19-digital-divide/>
- [3] Anudu, O. (2020, August 20). Nigeria faces acute job losses as covid19 incapacitates employers. Retrieved from <https://www.google.com/amp/s/businessday.ng/exclusives/article/nigeria-faces-acute-job-losses-as-covid-19-incapacitates-employers/amp/>
- [4] Aunga, S. O. (2018). Ethnic metaphors and metonymies in the construction of national unity in Kenya: A cognitive linguistics perspective. (Unpublished PhD Thesis). Southwest University, Chongqing, China.
- [5] Chimeziri, N. G. (2016). Review of the best interest of a child's custody in Nigeria. A graduation thesis presented at Law Faculty, Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nigeria.
- [6] Deji-Folutile, O. (2020, April 30). Nigeria: Unlocking the Economy and Plight of Private School Owners. Retrieved from <https://allafrica.com/stories/202005010126.html>
- [7] Ewuzie, K. (2020, July 7). School closure: Private school teachers groan under backlog of unpaid salaries. Retrieved from <https://businessday.ng/education/article/school-closure-private-school-teachers-groan-under-backlog-of-unpaid-salaries/>
- [8] Giovanetti, M., Benvenuto, D., Angeletti, S., & Ciccozzi, M. (2020). The First Two Cases of 2019-nCoV in Italy: Where They Come From? *J Med Virol*, 1-4.
- [9] Guo, Yan-Rong & Cao, Qing-Dong & Hong, Zhong-Si & Tan, Yuan-Yang & Chen, Shou-Deng & Jin, Hong-Jun & Tan, Kai-Sen & Wang, De-Yun & Yan, Yan. (2020). The Origin, Transmission and Clinical Therapies on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Outbreak – an Update on the Status. *Military Medical Research*, 1-5.
- [10] Hui, D. S., Azhar, I. E., Madani, T. A., Ntoumi, F., Kock, R., Dar, O., Ippolito, G., Mchugh, T. D., Memish, Z. A., Drosten, C., & Zumla, A. (2020). The Continuing 2019-nCoV Epidemic Threat of Novel Coronaviruses to Global Health — The latest 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak in Wuhan, China. *International Journal of Infectious Diseases*, 91, 264-266.
- [11] Hussain, T. A. (2020, May 20). Education and COVID-19 in Nigeria: Tackling the Digital Divide. Retrieved from <https://worldliteracyfoundation.org/education-and-covid-19-in-nigeria/>
- [12] Jeromy, K. (2020, July 10). Malawi breaking online news source. Retrieved from <https://allafrica.com/stories/202005040189.html>
- [13] Josef, M. M., Jan V. D., & Frans, J. D. (1997); School finance and School choice in Netherlands. *Economics of Education Review*, 16(3), 329-335.
- [14] Kelechi, E. (2020, July 10). School closure. Retrieved from <https://businessday.ng/education/article/school-closure-private-school-teachers-groan-under-backlog-of-unpaid-salaries/>
- [15] Levi, D. K. (2016). An Analysis of Factors Influencing Students' Academic Performance in Public and Private Secondary Schools in Rivers State-Nigeria. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(28).
- [16] Moffett, C. M. (2020). A live interview on private school funding in the United States; Interview conducted in Yubei Congqing, China by Ilodibe, S.I.
- [17] Ofodum, O. (2020). Analysis of essay research and method. (Unpublished PhD Thesis). Southwest University, Chongqing, China.
- [18] Olasehinde, K. J. & Olatoye, R. A. (2014). A Comparative Study of Public and Private Senior Secondary School Students' Science Achievement in Katsina State, Nigeria. *Journal of Educational and Social Research MCSER Publishing*, 4(3).

- [19] Paraskevis, D., Kostaki, E. G., Magiorkinis, G., Panayiotakopoulos, G., Sourvinos, G., & Tsiodras, S. (2020). Full-Genome Evolutionary Analysis of the Novel Corona Virus (2019-nCoV) Rejects the Hypothesis of Emergence as a Result of a Recent Recombination Event. *Infectious Genetic Evolution*, 79.
- [20] Tsakuwa, M. B. (2015). *An Analysis of written errors in essays of secondary school English language teachers in Gombe Metropolis, Nigeria*. (Unpublished M. Ed. Dissertation), University of Ilorin, Ilorin.
- [21] Ukah, F. O. (2011). *The administration of retirement policy in Nigerian public sector, implementation problems: the case of university of Nigeria Nsuka*. A thesis presented at Department of Public Administration and Local Government, University of Nigeria Nsuka.
- [22] World Health Organization (2020). *Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Situation; Report- 5*, 25 January 2020. Geneva, Switzerland