

## The Psychological Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic and Innovative Solutions for Sustainable Development in Nigeria

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### Abstract

The current COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a global crisis with short and long term implications for health, the economy and social relations. Many schools and other educational institutions have been closed down all around the world due to the impacts of COVID-19 and this is having an undeniable psychological effects on children in developing countries like Nigeria. For poor households in Nigeria, a reduction in income means reductions in essential expenditures on health and food, whose effects are especially grave for their children who struggle to feed every day. This research paper highlights the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on health (physical, mental and emotional), education and safety in Nigeria. It further explores the psychological effects of COVID-19 such as anxiety, fear, stress, hunger, etc. on different classes of individuals in Nigeria and innovative solutions for sustainability. This study identifies poetry as one of the valuable tools which can be used to educate, ameliorate and mitigate the psychological effects of COVID-19 in Nigeria. It further provides evidence-based policy recommendations to help in achieving quick policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic in developing countries like Nigeria.

**Keywords:** COVID-19; Education; Health; Mitigation; Nigeria

### Introduction

The 2019 corona virus disease (COVID19) pandemic is a public health emergency of international concern and poses a challenge to psychological resilience, economy and social life of people. Research data are needed to develop evidence-driven strategies to reduce adverse psychological impacts, economic recession and disturbance of social life during and after the pandemic. The new virus, a global threat [1] caused by a novel corona virus was first detected in December 2019 around a seafood market in the Chinese city of Wuhan Hubei Province [2]. It is by far the largest outbreak of a typical pneumonia since the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak in 2003. The new virus with symptoms of infection including fever, chills, cough, sore throat, breathing difficulty, myalgia, nausea, vomiting, and diarrhea was named as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome-Corona Virus (SARS-CoV2) or novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV), was designated by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020 as coronavirus disease-19 (abbreviated "COVID-19") and officially declared it as a pandemic on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020 [3]. The total number of cases and deaths caused by COVID-19 exceeded those of SARS within weeks of its initial outbreak [4].

The Covid-19 pandemic has led to the closing down of many places of worship, educational institutions, companies and businesses globally which affected economies with profound psychological impacts on individuals. Many of these religious institutions and other companies had to resort to the use of online platforms in their operations until the lockdown is relaxed or removed completely. Many schools and other educational institutions have been closed down all around the world due to the impacts of COVID-19 and this is having an undeniable psychological effects on children in developing countries like Nigeria. For poor households in Nigeria, a reduction in income

means reductions in essential expenditures on health and food, whose effects are especially grave for their children who struggle to feed every day. This has resulted in drastic psychological effects of COVID-19 such as anxiety, fear, stress, hunger, etc. on children and other different classes of individuals in Nigeria.

### Methodology

Generally, this paper aimed to examine the psychological impacts of covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria and innovative solutions for sustainable development. This paper examined current progress with the use of poetry in mitigating the psychological impacts of covid-19 for sustainable development in Nigeria through existing literature review. It also identified the innovative ways of educating communities and institutions in Nigeria on the psychological impacts of covid-19 pandemic and innovative solutions for sustainable development in Nigeria. The main purpose of this research paper was to survey theoretical backgrounds and previous studies on earlier proposed psychological impacts of covid-19 pandemic and innovative solutions for sustainable development in Nigeria.

### Results and Discussion

Poetry is a vital and effective tool which can be used in the global response to the covid-19 pandemic. It has the capacity to help people easily understand the impact of covid-19, encourages changes in their attitudes and helps them mitigate and adapt to covid-19 pandemic for global sustainability. The researchers on the basis of online survey and media reports that emerging studies into Covid-19 together with lessons from past outbreaks suggest that the pandemic could have profound and potentially long-term impacts on psychological, health, economic, social and religious life. Rapid and rigorous research accessing the impact of Covid-19 on psychological health of people is needed to limit the impact of the pandemic. The present pandemic is clearly having a major social and psychological impact on the whole population, increasing unemployment, separating families and various other changes which are generally considered as major psychological risk factors for anxiety, depression and self-harm. The recent studies conducted by Bilal, *et al.* [5] revealed that awareness, attitude and practice of people towards prevention of COVID-19 is important. We can control COVID-19 spread till some treatment is developed by following religious teachings which boost our optimism and advisory of the World Health Organization (WHO). The use of poetry in educating communities and institutions in Nigeria about Covid-19 encourages creativity and increases literacy amongst the students and teachers.

### The Benjy poetry and music global concepts

The Benjy Poetry and Music Global Concepts is one of the new companies in Nigeria which among other things is very passionate about climate change education. This passion to see the environment kept clean and green has led to a lot of study and research work on climate change education, adaptation and mitigation. This has also engineered the writing of climate change poems and recently, poems on covid-19 to help promote the right attitudes and behaviors needed to safe-guard our environment. Below is one of those poems on covid-19 advanced by the Benjy poetry and music global concepts:

POEM: STAY HEALTHY, STAY HAPPY

Stay healthy, Stay happy

Stay strong, Stay safe

In an atmosphere of serenity

Hope soars above the plague.

Stay healthy, Stay happy

Stay home, Stay hopeful

There's a brighter future we see

Despite the peril so awful.

Stay healthy, Stay happy

Stay smiling, Stay singing

Joyful heart is good medicine

A therapy for the sinister sting.

Stay healthy, Stay happy

In a serenade of love for the conquest

Embrace love, hope and peace

Hope roars for the conquest.

Stay healthy, Stay happy

This plight of pain do not fear

Even if the glimmer simmers through the night

The voice of hope will bring comfort and cheer [6-8].

#### Case study: POEM "STAY HEALTHY, STAY HAPPY" Review by Barr. James Hope

Benjamin Anabaraonye's poem "Stay Healthy, Stay Happy" came at a time when the world globally has recorded series of death from a pandemic known as COVID-19. The outbreak has infected over 3 million people globally with hundred thousands of deaths. It is said that the pandemic is one of the defining global health crisis of our time and the greatest the world has faced as a challenge since the second World War, thus, affecting all the countries of the world. The impact of this outbreak has caused a lot of hardship to the economic development of the world, to food security and agricultural livelihoods, to health and just to mention a few.

Staying healthy is very vital and it requires hard-work and smart lifestyle. Health is the basic commodity that the whole world cherishes, and with the pandemic, it is a thing of concern to public health globally. The poet took time to express and sensitize the public on the need to enhance healthy lifestyle by deliberate cleanliness of the environment and making it serene and safe. (s.1). Benjamin believes that there is hope for our future and hope for the world if there is simple adherence to some of the simple guidelines that will provide a safe, secure environment. A careful look at some of the safety tips as provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) and Red Cross society [9] will help strengthen the poet's position on the need for safety measures in mitigating the impacts of covid-19 pandemic. They are as follows:

1. Washing of hands often and regularly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after being in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing. Use a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol where soap and water is not available and avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.

2. Avoid close contact with people who are sick. Some people without symptoms may be able to spread the virus. To this end, stay home as much as possible and avoid non-essential travel, practice social distancing by keeping at least 2 meters from others if you must go out in public and stay connected with loved ones through video and phone calls, texts and social media.
3. Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face cover or face mask when around others and when you must go out in public. Use a tissue to cover your nose and mouth and throw used tissues in a lined trash can. If a tissue isn't available, cough or sneeze into your elbow. Wash your hands immediately.
4. Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, counter-tops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets and sinks.

The above guidelines are essential in achieving the poet's objective of enlightening the public on the need for public safety against any form of disease. Staying healthy brings about a happy society.

### Poetic techniques in the work

1. **Theme:** The theme of the poem is "centered on the need to ensure a healthy clean and safe environment".
2. **Tone:** The tone of the poem is advocative, educating, approving and supporting.
3. **Mood:** The mood of the poet is hopeful, assured and inviting.
4. **Techniques uses:**
  - i) Use of conjunction "hope and peace (s. 4 ln. 3)", "comfort and cheer (s.5 ln 4)",
  - ii) Repetition "stay healthy, stay happy"
  - iii) Personification "the plight of pain do not fear" and "Hope soars above the plague".
5. **Rhyme:** The poem contains five stanzas of four lines each. The writer adopts the end rhyme scheme of ABAB. With punctuations at the end of every stanza coined to give a better understanding of the verse. The writer was expository, yet enlightened and educative in his choice of words.
6. **Language:** The author used simple language in conveying his message, and can be understood by all persons including children irrespective of grades. The language is conveyed through the use of 3<sup>rd</sup> person narrative technique.

In conclusion, I strongly agree with the poet stance on the need to stay healthy even at a time like this and I join in advocating for this great initiative. With the choice of the use of simple language, even children will learn and read this work, and it will serve as a basic tool through which they will be sensitized. The message of hope in the poem will also help reduce fears, anxiety and imagined potent danger associated with the pandemic. I am very positive that the poem will help ameliorate, mitigate and educate the public of any of such potential fears for "hope soars above the plague" and knowledge is also a necessary key [10-13].

### Recommendations

The current Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a global crisis with short and long term implications for health, the economy and social relations. It is therefore important for entrepreneurs in Africa to understand the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and to seek out ways

to mitigate for our sustainable development. I believe that these positive attitudes suggested below will enable African entrepreneurs to survive and thrive despite the Covid-19 pandemic. They are as follows:

- A. **Be positive:** Do not give in to depression, anxiety, stress and fear. Fill your mind with hope and be optimistic about your business. Read good books, cherish inspiring poetry and listen to beautiful music that will help boost your mental and emotional health amidst the pandemic.
- B. **Be protective:** Protect yourself from dangers of contracting the Covid-19 disease by wearing your face mask properly. Wash your hands regularly with soap and water; use hand sanitizers and disinfectants both at home and in your office regularly. Practice social distancing as recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO). You should be prayerful too.
- C. **Be selective:** Minimize watching, reading or listening to news about Covid-19 that causes you to feel anxious or distressed. Seek information only from trusted sources and mainly so that you can take practical steps to prepare your plans and protect yourself, loved ones and your business. Gather information at regular intervals from the WHO website and local health authority platforms to help you distinguish facts from rumours.
- D. **Be supportive:** Givers never lack. As an African entrepreneur, you need to recognise that this is a good time to reach out to those in need all around you. You can start by donating food items, clothing, hand sanitizers, and toiletries to those in your community who are desperately in need of them. Covid-19 has led to severe hunger in many communities in Africa and you can do your part in helping to eradicate hunger and make the world a better place.
- E. **Be affirmative:** The lockdown period is a valuable time to appreciate the beautiful gift of family and friends. It's a wonderful opportunity to show appreciation to family members and friends who have been very supportive to your business. Send affirmative emails, texts and notes of appreciation to your friends including the mentors in your business. Appreciate yourself by eating healthy and delicious meals to stay alive and strong. With the beautiful gift of life, hope shines brighter everyday! Finally, stay safe, stay strong! [6-8].

### Conclusion

The novel coronavirus (Covid-19) has been discovered to not only affect our physical health but can also harm our mental health. Its impacts are profoundly felt on the mental health of affected individuals which can in turn affect their communities and institutions negatively. The current Covid-19 pandemic has resulted in a global crisis with short and long term implications for health, the economy and social relations. It is therefore important for health care workers, entrepreneurs and various communities in Africa to understand the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and to seek out ways to adapt and mitigate for our sustainable development. Interventions to address the psychological impacts of covid-19 need to be well coordinated in order to tackle the problem in a holistic manner. Further research in this field of study to enhance adequate knowledge and appropriate adaptation and mitigation to Covid-19 in Nigeria need to be well encouraged.

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