

The Effect of COVID – 19 on Academic Achievement of Senior Secondary School Students in English Language

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Abstract

The effect of COVID – 19 pandemic on the academic achievement of senior secondary school students in the rural communities of Akwa Ibom state of Nigeria was studied. Five hundred (500) students were randomly selected from 2057 Senior Secondary School Class Two (SSC2) students. The scores of the students in English Language were collected from the terminal examination result broad sheets. Using causal comparative (ex- post facto) design, the analysis of data revealed that there existed significant differences in academic achievement of the students before and after the COVID – 19 pandemic. Students' achievement declined after COVID -19, due to the negative effect of the pandemic on learning and education in general. Students need palliatives and motivations to recover from shock caused by the COVID – 19.

Keywords: COVID – 19; Academic; Achievement; Effect; Students; Pandemic; Palliative; English Language; Rural Communities

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

The advent of COVID -19 resulted in special distancing, leading to closure of schools during lock down and other measures that were used to ensure safety while learning. This phenomenon did not go down well with learners and teachers alike. Learning gaps were created during the pandemic which led to disruptions (common wealth, 2022) that resulted in drop in enrolment and marginalization, especially for girl children. Gonzalez *etal* (2020) carried out a study with 458 students from Universidad Autonoma de Madrid in Spain and discovered that there was a significant positive effect of COVID–19 on students’ performance. In their finding they unveiled that students studied harder during the lock down which resulted in higher achievement.

Chertoff, Zarzour and Harvey (2020) decried the adverse effect of COVID - 19 on the education of trainees in radiology, admitting that social distancing led to drop in patients’ volumes resulting in virtual lesson causing disruption and shift in the mode of examination. Donnelly, Patrinos and Greshan(2021) complained that COVID-19 caused disruption in learning in Europe and measures adopted to support learning failed to yield desired effect. eLearning Africa and Edtech Hub (2020) equally confirmed that COVID – 19 pandemic caused serious adverse effect on education which could not be mitigated. Human Right Watch(2020) pinpointed that COVID -19 pandemic resulted in inadequate and complete lack of education for children in rural communities in Africa, while Burges and Sievestsen (2020) advanced that there was serious negative impact of COVID–19 pandemic which led to extended years of graduation for students thereby prolonging their period of graduation. In Nigeria the story was not different. The negative effect of COVID -19 could not even be remediated by introduction of e – learning (Eze, Sofethe, Onyishe and Ezeadi, 2021).

The variance in academic achievement of students in secondary schools in the rural communities due to COVID–19 is not clear but finding reveals that the pandemic had serious negative impact on learning worldwide. This study is conducted to determine the effect of the COVID–19 pandemic on academic achievement of secondary school students in the rural communities in Akwa Ibom State of Nigeria.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The wave of the pandemic that hit the world in 2020 led to closure of schools and restriction in movement. There was no direct teacher to student class lesson for of not less than three months. During the period there were series of interventionist strategies that were introduced, including radio programme for primary and secondary schools’ students. In some advanced countries zoom was introduced to promote learning. These strategies utilized during the lockdown were not accessible to school children in remote area where radio signals and internet facilities were poor. Even when the schools resumed, there was social distancing and wearing of face mask which hinder interaction.

This raises doubt on the effectiveness of learning. It became pertinent to examine the effect of the pandemic and associated hindrances on achievement of students in secondary schools in

the rural areas. If any different exist between the achievement student before the pandemic and associated lockdown and after, when school resumed, is the focus of this study.

1.3 Hypotheses

There is no significant difference in the achievement of Secondary School students in English Language before and after the COVID – 19 pandemics.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine the effect COVID-19 on the achievement of student in English language.

It will also determine whether the various strategies used to mitigate the effect of the lockdown on learning was successfully in the rural communities.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study reveals the impact created by the various measures taken by the government to ensures that school children learned notwithstanding the COVID–19 pandemic and its associated problems - such as lockdown, social distancing and wearing of face mask. It shows the different in achievement of students before and after the COVID–19 pandemic thereby giving indication on the need for superior strategy for learning during emergencies like the pandemic.

2. Review of Related Literature

The out break of COVID-19 brought an alarming change that produced colossal changes in many fields of life including education. Hoofman and Secord (2021) decried the irritating changes which the COVID-19 brought to education and averred that the pandemics brought negative impact to education for all ages resulting in project lost at all levels leading to increase anxiety and depression. Terada (2020) pinpointed that the COVID-19 pandemics resulted in exacerbated inequality that deterred some learners and advocated that they need help from teachers. Particularly spotlighting inequalities in America, lamented that though school closure affect all learners but that worse hit are those living in poverty, who has not only suffered detrimental effect on their learning but also on their mental health due to lack of access to help which the school used to offer them. He foresees serious reading difficulty after the pandemics which will negatively affect students' achievement in English Language.

School closure and social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemics was a thing of concern to students as it affected learning and created emotional challenges (Wang *et al*, 2022) which resulted in an alternative method of teaching and learning. The classrooms were moved into online without any recourse to whether the learners were cognitively and emotionally prepared for effective learning in virtual environment or the media for facilitating the learning. A study of 1316 adolescent high school students of about 16 years of age and 668 college students of about 20 years of age it was discovered that there existed a positive correlation between online

readiness, competency and achievement.

Notwithstanding the popular findings that COVID- 19 pandemics has a serious negative on learning, study conducted by Core *et al* (2021) using 4800 year 3 and year 4 students who were select from 113 NSW public schools showed no significant difference in the achievement in mathematics and Reading. The achievement of students were compared in 2019 and 2020 and was discovered that there was no significant different in the achievement test scores. The lack of difference in achievement in this study was attributed to high dedication to duty put in by the teachers during the COVID- 19 in the New South Wales of Australia.

Chertoff, Zarzour and Harvey (2020) decried the adverse effect of COVID - 19 on the education of trainees in radiology, admitting that social distancing lead to drop in patients' volumes resulting in virtual lesson, causing disruption and shift in the mode of examination. This was one negative consequences of the Pandemics on learning. All over the globe the impact of the pandemics was highly felt. The negative influence of COVID-19 pandemics was felt Africa, America, Asia, Australia and Europe. Donnelly, Patrinos and Greshan(2021) complained that COVID-19 caused disruption in learning in Europe and measures adopted to support learning failed to yield desired effect. eLearning Africa and Edtech Hub (2020) equally confirmed that COVID – 19 pandemic caused serious adverse effect on education which could not be mitigated. Human Right Watch (2020) pinpointed that COVID -19 pandemic resulted in inadequate and complete lack of education for children in rural communities in Africa. This was collaborated by Burges and Sievestsen (2020) who advanced that there was serious negative impact of COVID–19 pandemic which lead to extended years of graduation for students thereby prolonging their period of graduation. In Nigeria the story was not different.

The negative effect of COVID -19 could not even be remediated by introduction of e – learning (Eze, Sofethe, Onyishe and Ezeadi, 2021). This resulted in serious setback in learning. The learning of English Language was equally affected.

The variance in academic achievement of students in secondary schools in the rural communities due to COVID–19 is not clear but finding reveals that the pandemic had serious negative impact on learning worldwide. This study is conducted to determine the effect of the COVID–19 pandemic on academic achievement of secondary school students in the rural communities in Akwa Ibom Stated of Nigeria.

Gonzalez *etal* (2020) carried out a study with 458 students from universided Autonoma de madrid in Spain and discovered that there was a significant positive effect of COVID–19 on students' performance. In their finding they unveiled that students studied harder during the lock down which resulted in higher achievement. This finding is not supported by others and might have been a rare occurrence. Hashemi and AdunGyamfi (2021) studied the effect of COVID- 19 on 1231 comprising of 867 males and 364 females selected from public and private universities in Afghanistan who had online learning during the lockdown. They discovered the COVID-19 pandemics had negative on the academic performance of the Afghan students. It was also discovered that the students were highly dissatisfied with the online instructions.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research is a causal comparative or ex – post facto study. It collected already existing data and analyzed to draw inference and conclusion.

3.2 Samples and Sampling Techniques

A total of 500 senior secondary class two (SS2) were used for the study.

The subjects were randomly sample from a total of 2057 students in SSS2 in 10 secondary schools in rural communities, purposively sample from public secondary school in Eket senatorial district of Akwa Ibom state, which was randomly selected from the three senatorial districts of the State.

3.3 Instrumentation and Data Collection

The instrument for the collection of data for the study was terminal examination result sheets. The broad sheets for the first term results of the 2019/ 2020 session which was in December 2019 and the broad sheet of third term result which examination was taken in September 2020 after the lockdown were used to collect the data.

The scores of the 500 hundred students in English Language (a compulsory subjects at this level of education) were randomly sampled and used for data analysis.

3.4 Data Analysis Procedure

The data were analysis using by calculating the mean and standard deviation of the scores which were used to test the hypotheses. All the hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance using t – test (t – ratio).

4. Date Analysis and Results

4.1 Hypothesis

There is no significant difference in the achievement of Senior Secondary School students in English Language before and after the pandemic.

Table 1: t – ratio of scores of students in English Language Before and After the COVID - 19 Pandemics

Term	Mean score	Standard Deviation	N	Degree of Freedom	t - ratio	Critical Value	Decision
Before the COVID – 19 Pandemic	68	7.3	500	498	18.5	1.96	Reject
After the COVID – 19 Pandemic	47.4	8.1	500	498			

With mean score of 68 and standard deviation of 7.3 before the pandemic as against mean score of 47.4 and standard deviation of 8.1 after the pandemic, it is clear that there was a significant difference in achievement in favour of the period before the pandemic, $t = 18.5$ which is greater than 1.96 the criterion value of t -ratio at 0.5 levels of significance shows that the difference was significant. Hence rejection of the null hypothesis.

4.2 Discussion

The result of the testing of the three hypotheses indicates that there existed significant differences in the achievement of senior secondary school students before and after the COVID – 19 pandemics, students' achievement in English language declined after the COVID – 19 pandemics. The result of the first term examination which was the last term before the outbreak was significantly higher in the three subjects. The second term took place during the COVID – 19 pandemics and it was obvious that the students could not do well because it was crashed.

The third term which was in September, 2020 in Akwa Ibom State and was the first term after the pandemics. The achievement scores of the students were reasonably lower than the first term showing that the students did not recover from the pandemic. The COVID – 19 pandemics had serious impact in the achievement of the learners who did not recover even after one term.

There is need to provide incentives as well as remedial measures like after school and weekend lessons to help students cope with the effect of the lockdown on learning. Government should introduce new books that would simplify the subject matter and make learning easy as well as other motivational strategies like introduction of palliatives such as free books, pens, mathematical sets, pencils and wears like polo shirts with inscriptions “good bye to COVID – 19 pandemics” to induce the learner and help them forget the harsh condition they went through during the pandemic was not friendly to learning and schooling.

The findings of the study however, agrees with Commonwealth (2002), Chertoff, Zarzour and Harvey (2020), Donnelly, Patrinos and Gresham (2021) as well as Eze, Sofothe, Onyishi and Ezeadi (2021) who decried the negative effect of COVID – 19 on learning and school programmes.

The findings differ strongly from that of Gonzelez *et al* (2020) which asserted that COVID – 19 had significant positive effect on the learners after university level, pinpointing that the students use the lockdown to study harder resulting in higher achievement. This may be one out of hundreds but could not be true for many situations due to fear of infections or losing family member to the pandemic as well as other distractions.

Nevertheless, human right watch (2020), E – learning Africa and EdTech Hub (2020) as well as Barges and Sievestsen (2020) still confirm that COVID – 19 had negative effect on learning. They asserted that this was caused by lockdown and suggested that steps should be taken to mitigate the ugly effect on learners.

5. Recommendations and Conclusion

5.1 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations are made:

1. Both the teachers and students should be motivated to work harder so as to improve student's achievement in English language.
2. More time should be allocated to the teaching and learning of English Language so as to cover what was not done during the COVID-19 pandemics.
3. English teachers should be given in-service training on how to cope with helping the students to recover from the effect of the pandemics.
4. Both the students and teachers should be given palliative and other forms of motivations to help recovery from the adverse influence of the pandemics.
5. New books should be produced that can be used to assist the teachers and students overcome the negative consequences of the pandemics.

5.2 Conclusion

The study revealed that COVID – 19 pandemics had a serious negative effect on learning and achievement of students at the Senior Secondary School level in the rural communities in Akwa Ibom State. It is discovered that there exist significant differences in the achievement of learners in English Language which is a compulsory subject. The achievement of students in these subjects declined after the COVID – 19, leading to lower achievement scores than before the pandemic. It is therefore essential to introduce palliative and other forms of motivation to enable learners recover from the shock created by the COVID – 19 pandemics that negatively affect their performance.

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