

The Impact of Covid-19 On Labour Market Outcomes

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered a global health crisis with far-reaching implications for various aspects of human life. This paper examines the profound impact of the pandemic on labour market outcomes, focusing on the unprecedented challenges faced by individuals, businesses, and economies worldwide. The analysis draws on a wide range of scholarly research to highlight the multifaceted effects of COVID-19 on employment, unemployment rates, job quality, and income inequality. The pandemic-induced disruptions have led to significant job losses and widespread economic uncertainty. Lockdown measures, social distancing protocols, and business closures have severely impacted several sectors, such as tourism, hospitality, retail, and entertainment. As a result, millions of workers have faced temporary layoffs, reduced working hours, or permanent job losses. The sudden contraction in economic activity has also dampened job creation and exacerbated pre-existing inequalities in the labour market. Furthermore, the pandemic has brought to the forefront the vulnerabilities and inequalities within the labour market. Low-wage workers, women, and marginalized communities have been disproportionately affected, facing higher unemployment rates and greater income losses. The shift towards remote work and digitalization has introduced new challenges and disparities, with workers in certain occupations being able to adapt more easily than others. The pandemic has highlighted the need for policies and interventions that address these disparities and provide support to the most affected groups. In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on labour market outcomes, causing widespread job losses, increased unemployment rates, and exacerbated inequalities. The paper recommended that for organizations that will be in distress, the priority should be placed on organizational adaptation and survival, and all policies and actions taken must be geared towards.

Keywords: *COVID-19 pandemic, Lockdown, social distancing protocols employment, unemployment*

Introduction

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in late 2019 has had a profound and unprecedented impact on global economies and labor markets. The rapid spread of the virus and the subsequent implementation of public health measures, such as lockdowns, social distancing guidelines, and travel restrictions, have disrupted businesses and forced millions of workers worldwide into unemployment or reduced working hours (Adams-Prassl et al., 2020). The labor market outcomes of this global crisis have been multifaceted, affecting employment rates, job security, wages, and the overall well-being of workers. COVID-19 has not only triggered a severe health crisis but also induced a significant economic downturn. The pandemic's impact on labor markets has been swift and far-reaching, as businesses across various sectors, such as hospitality, retail, and transportation, have been hit hard by the restrictions and reduced consumer demand (World Bank, 2020). In response to these challenges, governments and organizations have implemented various policies and measures to mitigate the economic fallout and support affected workers.

COVID-19 is not only a pandemic with widespread impact, it is changing the way society view and approach different aspects of business economy globally. In the area of employer-employee relationship, there is evidence of seeing changes in compensation and benefits practices mostly targeted at ensuring business continuity. Interestingly, the changes are diverse and unprecedented, just like the virus itself. The changes depend on the type of business, industry, country, extent of COVID-19 spread and disruption. One thing that is clear is that there are changing preferences and there is an emerging new economic order (KPMG, 2020).

The pandemic have started threatening the sustainability and security of jobs in Nigeria. The crisis orchestrated by COVID-19 pandemic have already metamorphosed into an economic and labour market surprise, impacting not only supply of goods and services; but also demand for goods and services. Impediments to production, initially in China and other countries of the world, but now transferred negatively on the supply chains across the world. In essence, all business enterprises, regardless of sizes, are facing serious problems, most especially in the aviation, tourism, education and hospitality industries, with a real problem of significant declines in revenue, insolvencies and job losses in nearly all sectors of the economy. By implication, sustainability of business enterprises may be particularly difficult for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) considering the corresponding impact of changes in business environment. As a result of travel bans, border closures and quarantine measures (total lockdown), many employees were lockout of their places of work or carry out their normal duties at their residence, which has far reaching effects on incomes, particularly for informal and casual employees. The outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic has far reaching effects on consumers' behaviour in many economies which has resulted to consumers' inability or reluctant in purchasing goods and services. Given the uncertain environment and fear of unknown, enterprises are likely to delay investments, purchases of goods and the employment unemployed youths (ILO, 2020).

Consequently, the changes in business environment tend to facilitate swift response to organizational change with adverse implications on product development and customers' patronage. In this circumstance, coordinated policy responses are needed for adaptation to

structural changes in business environment at national and global levels. Besides, organizational development may require good and robust multilateral leadership to reduce the direct health effects of COVID-19 on employees and their families, while mitigating the direct and indirect economic fallout of COVID-19. Protection of employees and their households from the risk of this infection needs to be a top priority of all employers of labour as emphasized in occupational health and safety policy. Introduction of strong measures to protect those facing income losses because of COVID-19 pandemic infection or reduction of the economic activity are critical to boost the economy. Guaranteed Income protection also mitigates the disincentives against disclosing potential infections, most especially amongst low income earners and already disadvantaged groups of employees (ILO, 2020).

To understand the impact of COVID-19 on labor market outcomes, numerous studies have been conducted worldwide, analyzing the dynamics and consequences of the pandemic on employment and workforce trends. These studies have examined the varying effects across different industries, demographic groups, and regions, shedding light on the magnitude and persistence of the disruptions caused by the pandemic (International Labour Organization, 2021). This paper aims to explore the impact of COVID-19 on labor market outcomes, drawing on existing research and empirical evidence. It will delve into key areas of concern, including changes in employment rates, the rise of remote work, the prevalence of temporary layoffs, the disparities faced by vulnerable groups, and the implications for job security and wages. By examining the multifaceted effects of the pandemic on the labor market, this study seeks to provide insights into the challenges faced by workers and inform policy discussions on how to address the consequences of this unprecedented crisis.

Statement of the Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on labor market outcomes, causing disruptions and unprecedented challenges worldwide. The measures implemented to control the spread of the virus, such as lockdowns, social distancing, and travel restrictions, have had far-reaching consequences on various aspects of the labor market. Understanding and analyzing the multifaceted effects of COVID-19 on labor market outcomes is crucial for policymakers, employers, and individuals seeking to navigate the current and post-pandemic economic landscape. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), the global working hours fell by an estimated 8.8 percent in 2020, which is equivalent to 255 million full-time jobs. The decline in economic activity, especially in industries heavily impacted by social distancing measures such as hospitality, tourism, and retail, has resulted in a wave of layoffs and furloughs. These job losses not only have immediate consequences for individuals and their families but also pose long-term challenges for labor market recovery and inclusive growth. In light of these challenges, this paper therefore sees to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on labor market outcomes. By examining the extent and nature of the disruptions, identifying the groups most affected, and assessing the short- and long-term implications, policymakers can develop targeted strategies to support job creation, enhance social protection measures, promote skill development, and ensure an inclusive and resilient labor market recovery.

Objectives of the Study

The aim of this study is to evaluate the impact of covid-19 on labour market outcomes. Specifically, the objectives of the study are to:

- 1: To assess the extent of job losses and changes in unemployment rates as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2: To examine the differential impacts of the pandemic on various demographic groups in the labor market, including women, young workers, and low-skilled workers.
- 3: To analyze the long-term consequences of the pandemic on labor market outcomes, including the effects on remote work, digitalization, and the overall restructuring of industries.

Literature Review

Conceptual Framework

COVID-19 Pandemic

The Coronavirus infection (COVID-19) is an emerging infectious illness which broke out during the winter of 2019 (Al-Hanawi et al., 2020; WHO, 2020a). Due to its presentations, it has been declared a public health emergency of international concern by the World Health Organization (WHO) (WHO, 2020a). An alarming response has been introduced across the globe due to its high infectiousness and case fatality rate (Zhong et al., 2020). The identification of the risks and the prevention of infectivity regarding COVID-19 have been stated to depend on human perception (Zhong et al., 2020). Especially in the submergence of an infectious disease such as COVID-19, different thoughts have shaped individuals' views on the illness.

Currently, the Coronavirus disease has spread to 213 countries with nearly 24 million confirmed cases and close to 820,000 recorded deaths (WHO, 2020b, 2020c). Publicly available reports from the Africa Centre for Disease Control (ACDC) states that confirmed cases of COVID-19 had risen to 1,203,769 and 28,289 deaths as of 25 August 2020 (ACDC, 2020). As of 25th August 2020, the West African subregion accounted for a significant proportion of cumulative COVID-19 records in Africa. In Nigeria, there are 52,800 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with a total of 1,007 deaths as of 25 August 2020 (NCDC, 2020a; WHO, 2020b). Oyo State presently holds the third spot on the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) daily COVID-19 updates, with 3058 laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 37 deaths (NCDC, 2020b). Urban areas in Ibadan, the capital city of Oyo State frequently present with confirmed cases (Enwongo, 2020).

As a part of the emergency response activities across all States in Nigeria, health education campaigns have been directed at members of the public (NCDC, 2020a, 2020b). These campaigns have been aimed at knowledge improvement and the correction of certain misconceptions that have been widely circulated among community members (NCDC, 2020a). Education on precautionary measures such as wearing of face masks, regular handwashing with soap and water or with alcohol-based hand sanitizers, and social distancing have been done (NCDC, 2020a, 2020b; Gbadamosi, 2020).

It is evident that perception shapes one's knowledge and the adoption of safety measures concerning the transmission of an infection. Data obtained from the perception of community members regarding COVID-19 could help target interventions needed to improve the knowledge of community members regarding Coronavirus. Superstitious beliefs have largely shaped the perception of most Nigerians regarding the source and cause of COVID-19 (Chukwuorji & Iorfa, 2020). At the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak in Nigeria, infected persons belonged to either the political class or high socioeconomic cadre (Chukwuorji & Iorfa, 2020). The characteristic prevalence of COVID-19 infection among this group of persons accorded COVID-19 the name, 'a disease of the rich and mighty' (Nwaubani, 2020). Few months into the COVID-19 outbreak in Nigeria, perceptions revolved around "immunity" to COVID-19 among the religious folks with a disregard of bans on religious gatherings (Lichtenstein, Ajayi & Egbunike, 2020). Such perceptions could have been influenced by several factors. Social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Twitter have been used to spread false news on COVID-19, resulting to panic disorder and anxiety among some persons and shunning of safety measures among others (Aluh & Onu, 2020; Olapegba et al., 2020). Among many persons, physical distancing, social isolations, restriction of religious and social gatherings etc. have been opined as alien solutions in overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria and Africa at large (Olapegba et al., 2020).

Labour Market

The labor market is generally defined as the set of institution-dependent forms and processes of hiring employees as well as negotiating conditions in relation to working and pay conditions. The main function of the labor market is to allocate and reallocate human resources that offer jobs and to ensure a long-term balance between supply and demand for labor. In a broader context, a labor market is defined as all the issues related to the shaping of labor supply and the demand for it. On the labor market, there are transactions of buying work, i.e. engaging employees, and transactions of selling work, i.e. reporting the willingness to take it for a specific salary. The market is a synthetic concept that defines the process by which workers' decisions about how much and for whom to work are mutually agreed upon through appropriate price adjustments (Begg et al., 1993). The labor market as a place where transactions of exchange of labor services between employees and employers take place, and the sizes of these transactions and their conditions, especially the price of these services, i.e. wages, are determined (Bosworth et al., 1996). On the other hand, the resources of the labor force are persons who perform or want to perform paid work and are able to undertake it. Therefore, the labor market belongs to the markets of the factors of production, including also such traditional markets as the market of land, real capital or money capital. Although the labor market has a number of features in common with other production factor markets, it is worth emphasizing its specificity, which results mainly from the specificity of the labor force as a production factor. A characteristic feature of the exchange in the labor market is that it takes the form of an institutionalized contract between the employer and the employee, in which the most important conditions and elements of the provision of labor services by the employee are determined. Within this specificity, new scientific sub-disciplines are created, such as intellectual capital management. In general, it should be recognized that the concept of the labor market is an analytical category useful in understanding its

basic elements and functioning as a whole within the national economy. On the other hand, much more often in the literature on the subject, the concept of the labor market refers to specific (partial) markets, which are distinguished on the basis of various criteria. Therefore, we can talk about different types of labor markets.

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The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Nigerian Situation

The origin of Covid-19 is from Wuhan City in China. It is a disease that was first observed in non-humans caused by virus called Corona. Covid-19 is an acronym for 'Corona Virus Disease' which was discovered in December, 2019, hence the name 'Covid-19'. Classified as a type B, the human to human spreading of the virus occurs due to close contact with an infected person, exposed to coughing, sneezing, respiratory droplets (Shereen & Siddique, 2020). This virus was considered a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on the 11th of March 2020. COVID-19 pandemic is a global health crisis of our time and poses great challenge on the health of people. The fight against the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic is such that has generally focused on the control of movement and isolation. Governments around the world have in most instances resorted to lockdown measures and in most cases adopted strict control of social interactions through the

enforcement of social distancing and the use of masks in public places (CSE Africa, 2020). While most developed nations such as the United States, France, Italy, and Britain have emphasized on a complete closure of interstate borders and strict stay-at-home policy; one finds that within such measures and actions pre-installed mechanisms and systems which facilitate the ease of the process (CSE Africa, 2020).

This is because apart from the high-end technological advancements in knowledge and information management, their economic systems are also robust and thus allows for them to offer substantial support and palliatives to their citizenry and business owners as a way of compensating for any loss or discomfort during the period of the lockdown (Laurence, 2011). On the other hand, the Nigerian government, like most other African countries, have had a history of debt, weak institutions, poverty and a high level of corruption and greed which over the years have crystallized into the realities and norm of their societies (Aregbeshola & Khan, 2018; Adeniran & Sidiq, 2018). Their adoption of the lockdown measure as an approach towards addressing the COVID-19 pandemic was marked by an increased level of disenchantment and frustration by the populace – especially since no adequate measures were taken to address the loss and living conditions of the citizenry (Ozili & Arun, 2020; The African Report, 2020; Muhammed, Abdulkareem & Chowdhury, 2017).

The worst hit were the businesses and industries which had to either suspend all activities due to government orders, or operate on a scale highly inefficient, discomforting and inconsistent with prior business standards and models. These have worsened the situation and contributed to an increased level of insecurity within the country, loss of jobs, crime, a decrement in living conditions and lack of trust (Ozili & Arun, 2020). Worse still is the fact that despite substantial financial contributions from well-meaning citizens and institutions, most of these monies have gone unaccounted for given the poor claims of disbursement and lost records. The adverse effects of these events have taken serious toll on the functionality of organizations and industries within the country.

As demonstrated in the previous paragraph, the imperatives of an effective and well-grounded strategy go a long way in not only addressing the health and mortality implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also ensure that the economic and living condition aspects of the country are sustained through the functionality of its industries. For as King (2002) observed, crisis management strategies should primarily protect and secure the continuity of the organization and not further its demise and loss. It is as Roux-Dufort (2000) also noted that the goal of any crisis response strategy should be to secure and shield the organization or industries weak spots from further damage and as such, effective policies would be such that are structured to provide flexible options for progress or stability despite the turmoil and challenges associated by crisis events (Pollard & Hotho, 2006; Choi, Sung & Kim, 2010).

COVID-19 Pandemic and Employees' Health

Based on popular axiom that says "health is wealth", the dangers associated to the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic have much to discuss in the consideration of its impact on employees and

organizational performance. Within the context of this paper, the problem of COVID-19 has called for examination of its implication for employees' health and survival. COVID-19 belongs to Coronaviridae family in the Nidovirales order. Corona represents crown-like that triggers on the outer surface of the virus; thus, it was named as a coronavirus. Coronaviruses are minute in size (65–125 nm in diameter) and contain a single-stranded RNA as a nucleic material. The subgroups of coronaviruses family are alpha (a), beta (b), gamma (c) and delta (d) coronavirus.

The severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus (SARS-CoV), H5N1 influenza A, H1N1 2009 and Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) resulted in acute lung injury (ALI) and acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS) which caused pulmonary failure and result in fatality. These viruses were initially believed to infect only animals until the world witnessed a severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) outbreak caused by SARS-CoV, 2002 in Guangdong, China (Zhong, et al 2003). Only a decade later, another pathogenic coronavirus, known as Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) caused an endemic in Middle Eastern countries (Wang et al, 2013).

In the recent time most especially at the end of 2019, Wuhan a promising business hub of China experienced an outbreak of a novel coronavirus that killed people in thousands and infected over one million individuals within the first fifty days of the existence of the epidemic. This virus was confirmed to be a member of the 'b' group of coronaviruses. The novel virus was named as Wuhan coronavirus or 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCov) by the Chinese researchers. The International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV) named the virus as SARS-CoV-2 and the disease as COVID-19 (Cui, et al, 2019), (Lai, et al, 2020), (WHO, 2020). In the history, SRAS-CoV (2003) infected 8098 individuals with mortality rate of 9%, across 26 countries of the world, on the other hand, novel corona virus (2019) infected 120,000 individuals with mortality rate of 2.9%, across 109 countries, till date of this writing. It shows that the transmission rate of SARS-CoV-2 is higher than SRAS-CoV and the meaning of this could be genetic recombination event at S protein in the RBD region of SARS-CoV-2 which may have enhanced its transmission ability.

With the detection of COVID-19 outbreak in Nigeria, the country still has a window of opportunity to act, and the time to further strengthen Nigeria's core capacities to respond to public health emergencies is now. The Nigerian governments and their partners must invest in epidemic preparedness and health security to promote and protect the health of its people and to avert the negative socioeconomic impact associated with outbreaks. Of relevance is mobilizing domestic and international funds for implementation of Nigeria's action plan for health security. Other priority areas include advocacy and risk communication to forestall misinformation, strengthening the country's laboratory capacities to detect threats, provision of adequate isolation facilities and enhancing capacities of frontline healthcare workers to respond to the new coronavirus and other public health threats (Dimie, 2020).

Impact of COVID-19 on Employees

According to Guy Ryder, International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Director-General on the ways to fight Covid 19 pandemic in Nigeria, workers and businesses which are facing catastrophe in

both developed and developing economies, we have to move fast, decisively, and together. The right, urgent steps could make the difference between sustainability and collapse with the shorting down of schools, worship centres and domestic and international movement negatively affect trade and travel, most businesses also had to stop, reduce or alter operations. Although, this crisis will be eventually managed, the effects will likely to live with us forever, especially on the labour market.

Majority of employers' of labour in Nigeria are hardly affected by the impact of COVID-19 on the survival of their businesses which may also affect keeping of their responsibilities to their workforce. In the recent time, Arik Nigeria announced that it had directed that 90% of its workforce to proceed on leave without pay until further notice and implementation of 80% salary cut for the month of April, 2020. The larger percentage of staff are at verge of risk of jobs loss in the country's aviation industry.

Other employers of labour affected by COVID-19 are the banking industries which have announced the commencement of layoff of their workforce and if not for the timely intervention of the Central Bank of Nigeria, almost 40% of the workforce of the banking will have been pushed into the labour market. Same situation affected the educational industry in Nigeria as it was reported in the dailies that Afe Babalola University also layoff some of its workforce to reduce the University overhead expenses as a way of mitigating against the impact of COVID-19 while Obasanjo Farm Limited also announced the sack of some of its workforce to reduce the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on the performances of the organisation as reflected in the company's balance sheet. The resultant effect of this is that employees find it difficult to meet up with their responsibility.

Government Measures to fight the impact of COVID-19 on Job Security

One of the most common measures adopted by governments is the implementation of wage subsidy programs. These programs aim to prevent mass layoffs by providing financial support to businesses, enabling them to retain employees during periods of economic downturn. For instance, the Canadian government introduced the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS), covering a significant portion of employee wages for eligible employers, thereby preserving jobs and ensuring continued income for workers (Government of Canada, 2021).

Unemployment Benefits: To alleviate the financial burden on individuals who have lost their jobs due to the pandemic, governments have expanded and enhanced unemployment benefit schemes. These measures include extending the duration of benefits, increasing the amount of financial assistance, and easing eligibility criteria. In the United States, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES). Act augmented unemployment insurance benefits, providing an additional weekly payment and expanding eligibility to include self-employed individuals and gig workers (U.S. Department of Labor, 2020).

Job Retraining and Upskilling Initiatives: Recognizing the need for workers to adapt to changing labor market demands, governments have implemented job retraining and upskilling initiatives. These programs aim to equip individuals with new skills and enhance their employability in sectors with greater job prospects. For example, the European Union launched

the European Skills Agenda, which focuses on promoting lifelong learning, improving digital skills, and fostering green skills to support sustainable employment (European Commission, 2020).

Support for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs): SMEs are particularly vulnerable to the economic impact of the pandemic. To safeguard jobs within this crucial sector, governments have implemented various support measures. These include access to loans, grants, and business counseling services. In the United Kingdom, the government introduced the Coronavirus Business Interruption Loan Scheme (CBILS) and the Bounce Back Loan Scheme (BBLs), providing financial assistance to SMEs to help them navigate the challenging economic environment and retain their workforce (Gov.uk, 2021).

Job Protection Legislation: In some countries, governments have implemented specific legislation to protect workers' rights during the pandemic. Such measures include prohibiting layoffs or implementing strict criteria for termination, ensuring that employees are not unfairly dismissed due to the economic downturn. For instance, in Brazil, the government enacted legislation prohibiting layoffs during the pandemic, thereby safeguarding job security for workers (Law no. 14,020, 2020).

Sector-Specific Support: Certain industries, such as aviation, tourism, and hospitality, have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. To address the unique challenges faced by these sectors, governments have implemented sector-specific support measures. These initiatives may include financial assistance, tax relief, and targeted incentives to promote job retention and business continuity.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a profound impact on global job security, leading governments to respond with a range of measures to mitigate the adverse effects. Wage subsidy programs, expanded unemployment benefits, job retraining initiatives, support for SMEs, job protection legislation, and sector-specific support have all played a crucial role in alleviating the immediate and long-term impact of the pandemic on employment. However, as the situation continues to evolve, governments must remain adaptive and responsive to ensure ongoing support for job security and the overall recovery of their economies.

In an unpredictable situation like this, most vulnerable people look up to the government for support. In the UK, the government promised to pay wages of employees at risk of losing their job. The same measure were being adopted by other countries of the world like Canada, Europe and other parts of the world. In the US, the Trump administration is currently pushing through a \$2 trillion stimulus package that includes payments to taxpayers as well as bailouts for hard-hit industries to mitigate COVID-19 impact.

A co-ordinated and effective response from government is urgently required because there were reports of looting in some parts of Lagos and Ogun States, which indicates the level of the current hardship. In a bid to motivate businesses to retain employees, the government has tabled an Emergency Economic Stimulus Bill 2020 before the House of Assembly. The bill states that any

company that does not disengage staff between the 31st of March, 2020 and the 31st of December, 2020 (except for reasons related to a breach of Labour Act) will get a 50% tax refund.

This is a welcome development and may encourage businesses to retain their employees and save jobs. How the government plans to finance the tax refund and pay its employees are however, not clear. The finance ministry has reviewed non-oil revenue projections downwards considering expected fall in tax revenue, customs receipts etc. The Government is keen to keep employees from losing their jobs. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) recently directed banks to suspend lay-off of their staff.

Theoretical Framework

The Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

The Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) was developed by Timothy Coombs, it offers a conceptual link and framework between crisis response strategies and the crisis situation and further describes various response strategies that could be used when faced with certain crisis situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic period. The SCCT suggests that crisis managers, who are also referred to as economic agents, such as SME operators, should match crisis response strategies to the level of crisis responsibility, financial and economic threat posed by the crisis to protect reputational assets of the business, and that, the post-crisis actions an organization takes, depends on the crisis-situation as witnessed in the COVID-19 outbreak which is termed a crisis situation by the WHO. This theory is in consonance with the findings and studies of WHO (2020), Enesi et al.,(2021), Abideen (2020), Akingbade (2021), Aderemi et al.,(2020), Gabriel et al.,(2020) and UNESCO(2020) that, the scourge of the dreaded COVID-19, requires a proactive and strategic actions to be adopted and implemented by all businesses, organizations, states, SMEs in particular and countries (whether developed or developing), to curb and mitigate the spread of the disease which has hitherto killed more than 20,000 people globally.

The SCCT is based on the premise that how an organization communicates during a crisis can have a significant impact on how stakeholders perceive and react to the crisis. It emphasizes the importance of adapting communication strategies to the unique characteristics of each crisis situation. The theory categorizes crises into three main types based on their attributions of responsibility. These types are victim crises (no organizational responsibility), accidental crises (limited organizational responsibility), and intentional crises (significant organizational responsibility). Each crisis type requires a different communication approach. The theory suggests that an organization's reputation prior to the crisis influences how stakeholders attribute responsibility. If an organization has a positive reputation, stakeholders may be more forgiving and less likely to blame the organization entirely for the crisis. The SCCT proposes four main crisis communication strategies based on the nature of the crisis and stakeholders' attributions of responsibility. These strategies include denial, diminishing, rebuilding, and bolstering. The appropriate strategy is determined by the level of responsibility attributed to the organization and the level of stakeholder concern. The SCCT also emphasizes the importance of image restoration during and after a crisis. It suggests that organizations should focus on repairing and rebuilding their reputation by acknowledging mistakes, expressing empathy, providing information, taking corrective action, and demonstrating a commitment to preventing future crises.

Conclusion

The general impact of COVID-19 is basically on all economy vis-à-vis employers, employees and Government. The actors in industrial relations in Nigeria will continue to live with COVID-19 pandemic because; the solution to eradicate the spread and the continuous existence of COVID-19 is not in sight. In an unpredictable situation like this, employees, especially from the most vulnerable sectors earlier highlighted, need to start looking at options for another sources of income in the likely event that layoffs is inevitable.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are hereby proposed for effective management of and mitigation against the impact of COVID-19 on organizational development and employees' job security in Nigeria.

1. For organisations that will be in distress, the priority should be placed on organizational adaptation and survival, and all policies and actions taken must be geared towards that. Should they be forced to disengage staff, all legal frameworks must be adequately followed to guide against any litigation or additional business risks in the future. Even the image damage could be hard to recover from.
2. On the part of Government in this current fall in price of oil products, cash flow is indeed tight. However, in this scenario, Government assistance remains very keen in the short and long term, not only in terms of survival, but also sustainability and ability to be able to emerge from the crisis with strength.
3. Minimisation of cost of governance and request for loans and grants from the international community. As the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has noted, without appropriate policy measures, workers face a high risk of falling into poverty.
4. On the part of the employees, it is high time that all employees in Nigeria should take farming as a second and alternative option for sustainability and coping strategies in case of any eventualities that will warrant non-flow of their monthly salaries. It is also recommended that schools should review their curriculum to accommodate the stand of exposing their students to entrepreneur training so as to cope with the situation of unemployment.
5. On post-COVID-19 recovery priorities, these must focus on stimulating the economy and employment. Support for small and medium scale enterprises can also not be over-emphasized, given their significance to the Nigerian economy.

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