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PERCEIVED MENTAL HEALTH IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON ADOLESCENT IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN AWKA SOUTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA IN ANAMBRA STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study examined the perceived mental health impact of covid-19 on adolescents in secondary schools in Awka South Local Government Area, Anambra State. 3 Research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey research was used for the study. The population of the study consists of 2032 secondary school students from 3 different schools in Awka South Local Government Area. The simple random sampling technique was used to select 90 Adolescents in 3 different secondary schools. The researcher developed a questionnaire titled Perceived Mental Health Impact Questionnaire (PMHIQ), was used for the study. The instrument was subjected to both face and content validity by two experts. The reliability of the instrument was established using the Cronbach alpha method. The reliability yielded coefficients of 0.766 which indicated a positive and high reliability and was considered reliable and acceptable for the study. The data collected was analyzed using mean score. The study revealed that adolescents in secondary school have a good perception of covid-19; adolescents in secondary school experienced a mental health impact of covid-19 and also was affected in one way or the other during the covid-19 pandemic and lock down period in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. The study concluded that the perception of adolescents depends mainly on their beliefs that covid-19 exists and that it can be transmitted from one person to another, and also the attitude, behaviour and aspects of mental health of adolescents involving stress, anxiety and depression was affected by covid-19, especially during the lockdown period. Based on the findings of the study, the study recommended that adolescents in secondary school should be impacted with the right knowledge about covid-19 in other to develop the right attitude and behaviour towards the disease and proper care and attention should be accorded to the mental health of adolescents in secondary schools.

Keywords: Mental Health, COVID 19, Adolescents, Behaviour

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic began in China in December 2019 and quickly spread around the world. The first case of the novel strain of the Coronavirus was reported in Wuhan, Hubei province in China on November 17, 2019 according to the South Morning China Post and ever since, there has been a world-wide exponential increase in the number of infections and casualties. With 3 889 841 cases reported in 187 countries as of May 8, 2020 (Covid-19 interactive dashboard). COVID-19 is an infectious disease that causes respiratory illness, with symptoms of cough, fever, and in more severe cases, difficulty in breathing. This disease spreads primarily through contact when an infected person either coughs or sneezes openly, when a person touches a surface or object and then touches the eyes, nose, or mouth.

COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown has brought about a sense of fear and anxiety around the globe. This phenomenon has led to short term as well as long term psychosocial and mental health implications for children and adolescents. The quality and magnitude of impact on minors is determined by many vulnerability factors like developmental age, educational status, pre-existing mental health condition, being economically underprivileged or being quarantined due to infection or fear of infection.

There are more than 2.2 billion children in the world who constitute approximately 28% of the world's population. Those aged between 10 to 19 years make up 16 % of the world's population (UNICEF, 2019). COVID-19 has impacted the lives of people around the world including children and adolescents in an unprecedented manner. Throughout the world, an essential modus of prevention from COVID- 19 infection has been isolation and social distancing strategies to protect from the risk of infection. On these grounds, since January, 2020, various countries started implementing regional and national containment measures or lockdowns. In this backdrop one of the principal measures taken during lockdown has been closure of schools, educational institutes and activity areas. These inexorable circumstances which are beyond normal experience, lead to stress, anxiety and a feeling of helplessness in all. (Bo Shen, Xiao Yi, Yaoting Sun, Xiaojie Bi, Juping Du, Chao Zhang, Sheng Quan, 2020).

COVID-19 has resulted in far more widespread impact on the everyday lives of children and adolescents around the world than SARS, MERS or H1N1. For example, the United Nations (UN) Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization approximated that school closures affected 862 million children and young people, an estimated half of the global student population. This has led many scholars to express concerns over the likely psychological impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children and adolescents. (United Nations, 2020).

A study conducted in three African countries; Ethiopia, Burkina Faso, and Nigeria. The first cases of COVID-19 were reported in late February in Nigeria and in March in Burkina

Faso and Ethiopia. In each country, one rural site and one urban site was included: Nouna (rural) and Ouagadougou (urban) in Burkina Faso, Kersa (rural) and Addis Ababa (urban) in Ethiopia, and Ibadan (rural) and Lagos (urban) in Nigeria. Briefly, households were selected. It was discovered that although adolescents have thus far been spared of the most severe direct health effects of the COVID-19 disease compared with other population groups, adolescents have unique education, developmental, and health needs, many of which may be hampered by the public health measures in place to combat the virus. One major impact of the pandemic on adolescents is the exacerbated inequities in education. The nationwide closures of educational establishments severely disrupt education for adolescents. Our study shows that the schools in which most interviewed adolescents attended were closed in response to the pandemic. Even in countries where alternative education channels such as radio, television, or online education programs were available during the COVID-19 crisis, they were not accessible or affordable to adolescents in poverty or remote areas. Our results show that online education was generally uncommon and particularly rare in rural or less developed settings. As a result, the school closures leave a large proportion of school-going adolescents with disrupted or suboptimal education and deprive many entirely of any education. Over half of the adolescents in most sites in our study self-reported to have less ability to continue learning during the pandemic. Therefore, in countries where primary and secondary schools have remained closed for a prolonged duration, rapid and adaptive actions need to be taken to address access to and the quality of remote learning opportunities for adolescents. (Gilbert, Pullano, Pinotti, Valdano, Poletto, Boëlle P-Y, d'Ortenzio, Yazdanpanah, Eholie, Altmann, 2020)

In addition to the direct loss of formal education, the critical social protective functions of schools are lost with school closure, which may result in increased child labor, early marriages, adolescent pregnancies, transactional sex, gender-based violence, mental health issues, or exposures to risky behaviors such as tobacco smoking and drug use. Recently, a survey in Kampala, Uganda, reported that COVID-19 lockdowns were associated with a higher prevalence of unhealthy behaviors such as tobacco smoking/chewing, alcohol drinking, and substance use (such as marijuana). Due to the increased risks of such issues and the direct deprivation of educational opportunities, many adolescents in SSA may not go back to school even after schools reopen after a crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. In the current study (except in Nigeria), around half of the adolescents perceived it very difficult to catch up on their education after the pandemic, a large proportion of whom may choose not to continue their education.(Gilbert M et al, 2020).

It has been indicated that compared to adults, this pandemic may continue to have increased

long term adverse consequences on children and adolescents. Shweta Singh, Deblina Roy, Krittika Sinha, (2020). The nature and extent of impact on this age group depend on many vulnerability factors such as the developmental age, current educational status, having special needs, pre-existing mental health condition, being economically under privileged and child/ parent being quarantined due to infection or fear of infection. The following sections discuss about findings of studies on mental-health aspects of children and adolescents impacted by COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns being implemented at national or regional levels to prevent further spread of infection.

Hence a research on the perceived mental health impact of covid-19 is paramount. Also to better understand the basic concepts in this research, the following definitions are given; Adolescents, a transitional phase of growth and development between childhood and adulthood. The World Health Organization (WHO) defines an adolescent as any person between ages 10 and 19. This age range falls within WHO's definition of young people, which refers to individuals between ages 10 and 24. The age range stated by WHO denotes mostly students that fall into secondary school and undergraduates in university. While mental health is a state of well-being in which an individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to his or her community.

Statement of Problem

As a major virus outbreak in the 21st century, the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic has led to unprecedented hazards to mental health globally. While psychological support is being provided to patients and healthcare workers, the general public's mental health requires significant attention as well. This systematic review aims to synthesize extant literature that reports on the effects of COVID-19 on psychological outcomes of the general population and its associated risk factors. ((Li Z, Ge J, Yang M, Feng J, Qiao M, Jiang R, 2020)

Besides the biological context, and due to the wide and long-lasting changes in daily life it may cause, coping with it represents a challenge to psychological resilience. Previous studies have shown that epidemics and contamination outbreaks of diseases have been followed by drastic individual and social psychosocial impacts, which eventually become more pervasive than the epidemic itself (Li Z, Ge J, et al. 2020). Vicarious traumatization in the general public, members, and non-members of medical teams aiding in COVID-19 control. (Brain BehavImmun, Braz, 2020) Currently, due to this pandemic, high levels of anxiety, stress and depression have already been observed in the general population, (Wang C, Pan R, Wan X, Tan Y, Xu L & Ho CS, 2021). Immediate psychological responses and associated factors during the initial stage of the 2019 Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) epidemic among the general population.

A rapid systematic review, based on studies mostly from high-income countries, suggests that children and adolescents may become more susceptible to depression and anxiety during and after enforced isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The prevalence of depression, anxiety, and moderate to severe psychological distress were generally low across sites in our study. Results are in line with a recent survey in Uganda, which reports that only 1.2% of adolescent boys or young men contemplated committing suicide due to COVID-19. Additional studies are needed to assess the long-term adverse consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental well-being of adolescents in SSA. (Gilbert M et al, 2020).

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the course of this research work;

1. What are the perception of adolescent in secondary school students on covid-19in Awka South Local Government Area, Anambra State?
2. What are the perceived mental health impact of COVID - 19 on adolescents in secondary school students in school adolescents in Awka South Local Government Area, Anambra State?
3. What are the possible effects of the mental health impact of covid-19 on adolescents in secondary school in Awka South Local Government Area, Anambra State?

Research Method

Research Design

This study employed descriptive survey design. The study is carried out in Awka South Local Government Area in Anambra State. The population of the study comprised of 2032 adolescents in 3 secondary schools, one private school, one government school and one missionary school in Awka South LGA, Anambra State. The sample size for the study consisted of a total of 150 adolescents in secondary schools, students randomly selected (50 each) from six (3) different secondary schools (one private, one missionary and one public/government) in Awka South LGA. The sampling technique employed is random sampling through which 50 students were randomly selected as respondents for this research.

The instrument used for collection of data was a structured questionnaire titled Perceived Mental Health Impact Questionnaire (PMHIQ). The questionnaire was developed based on the research questions formulated for this study. The questionnaire is made up of two sections (Sections A and B). Section A is designed to capture the profile of the respondents (Gender, Age, type of school and level of Education), while section B is designed to help elicit information from the respondents on the subject matter of this research. The questions in section B were designed in-line with the research questions formulated for this study. The responses of the respondents were rated using modified 5 point

Likert rating scale of; Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Undecided (U), Disagreed (D), and Strongly Disagreed (SD).

The questionnaire was designed by the researcher, it was confirmed and validated by the researcher's supervisor

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument was determined using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient to ascertain the internal consistency of items in the sections of the instrument. This technique is appropriate for this study because it is ideally suited for providing a good estimate of the internal consistency of questionnaire items. The instrument was given to 90 secondary school students in Awka South Local Government Area. The average reliability coefficient of 0.77 was obtained as shown in appendix B, for the study and was considered highly reliable and fit for the study.

Method of Data Collection

A total of 90 questionnaires were administered by the researcher to the selected respondents in their schools who responded to the questions in the questionnaire. Out of 90 copies of the instrument administered, 85 (95%) of the instrument were correctly filled and returned, while 5 (5%) were either misplaced or not correctly filled. The study concluded that the returned copies are enough to generate a valid result and conclusion.

Method of Data Analysis

To analyze the data collected the mean values of the responses given by the respondents on each of the questions were computed and presented in tables. Also the frequencies of responses was collected In order to accurately determine the degree of agreement and disagreement to the questions in the questionnaire

Decision Rule

To accept or reject an agreement or disagreement of the respondents to each of the questions, decision is based on the average value of the responses compared to the average value of the responses rating scale. The mean value of the rating scale is obtained as 5+4+3+2+1= 15, 15/5 = 3.0 Accept when the computed average of the responses is ≥ 3.0 and reject if computed value is less than 3.0

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Presentation of Results

Research Question 1: what are the perceptions of adolescents in secondary school students on covid-19 in Awka South Local Government Area, Anambra State?

Table 1: Mean rating of the perceptions of adolescents in secondary schools on covid-19

S/N	Perceptions Of Adolescents In Secondary School Students On Covid-19	Yes	No	Grand Total	Mean	Decision
1	I understand that Covid-19 exist	80	5	85	1.94	Accepted
2	Covid-19 can spread from one person to another	79	6	85	1.93	Accepted
3	Covid-19 can affect my mental health	76	9	85	1.89	Accepted
	Total Mean				5.76	
	Cluster Mean				1.92	Accepted

The analysis on Table 1 shows the mean scores of adolescents in secondary school on their perceptions of covid-19 in Awka South Local Government Area. The data analyzed revealed that adolescents in secondary school accepted the items 1-3 on the perception of adolescents in secondary schools towards covid-19, this is because the mean scores is above 1.5of which it is the study mean score cut off put point for acceptance. In other words, the grand mean 1.92 also confirms that all items are how adolescents in secondary school perceive covid-19 in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. The study therefore confirms that an adolescent in secondary school accepts the fact that covid-19 exist, that covid-19 can spread from one person to another, and that covid-19 can affect ones mental health in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Research Question Two: what are the perceived mental health impacts of covid-19 on adolescents in secondary school in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State?

S/N	Perceived Mental Health Impacts Of Covid-19 On Adolescents In Secondary School	SA (5)	A (4)	U (3)	D (2)	SD (1)	Grand Total	Mean	Decision
4	Covid-19 stopped students from going to school	40 (200)	42 (168)	- (-)	3 (6)	- (-)	85 (374)	4.40	Agreed
5	Covid-19 lockdown period stopped students from visiting fellow students and friends	35 (175)	40 (160)	- (-)	10 (20)	- (-)	85 (355)	4.18	Agreed

6	Covid-19 lockdown period made students to stop reading	9 (45)	8 (40)	3 (9)	40 (80)	25 (25)	85 (199)	2.25	Disagreed
7	Covid-19 control measures of social distancing made students afraid of touching their peers	30 (150)	38 (152)	4 (12)	10 (20)	3 (3)	85 (337)	3.96	Agreed
8	Covid-19 control measures stop students from engaging in sports and games	26 (130)	47 (188)	- (-)	10 (20)	2 (2)	85 (340)	4.00	Agreed
9	Covid-19 lockdown periods restricted general movement and that of students	38 (190)	44 (176)	- (-)	3 (6)	- (-)	85 (372)	4.38	Agreed
10	Covid-19 lockdown period resulted to bulky academic work load afterwards	38 (190)	4 (16)	- (-)	2 (4)	- (-)	85 (210)	4.40	Agreed
11	Covid-19 lockdown period made some students lazy towards their academics	22 (110)	49 (196)	- (-)	1 (28)	- (-)	85 (334)	3.93	Agreed
12	Covid-19 lockdown period resulted in the rush of academic and school activities	19 (95)	53 (212)	- (-)	19 (38)	- (-)	85 (345)	3.92	Agreed
13	Covid-19 brought out the fear of always washing hands to avoid contacting the disease	28 (140)	57 (228)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	85 (368)	4.33	Agreed
14	Covid-19 increased the stress of always wearing a nose mask	30 (150)	55 (220)	- (-)	- (-)	- (-)	85 (370)	4.35	Agreed
15	Covid-19 made students anxious about maintaining personal distance with peers	7 (35)	24 (96)	- (-)	46 (92)	8 (8)	85 (231)	2.72	Disagreed
16	Covid-19 lockdown period made students think a lot about their problems leading to depression	- (-)	55 (220)	7 (21)	23 (46)	- (-)	85 (287)	3.38	Agreed
17	Covid-19 lockdown period made some students want to drop out of school	6 (30)	46 (184)	16 (48)	17 (34)	- (-)	85 (296)	3.48	Agreed
18	Covid-19 lockdown period made some students not to feel like studying their books	23 (115)	45 (180)	- (-)	17 (34)	- (-)	85 (329)	3.87	Agreed

19	Covid-19 lockdown period made it difficult for students to reconnect with their peers	- (-)	16 (64)	4 (12)	46 (92)	19 (19)	85 (187)	2.20	Disagreed
20	Covid-19 lockdown period made it difficult for students to make new friends	27 (135)	46 (184)	- (-)	12 (24)	- (-)	85 (343)	4.04	Agreed
21	Covid-19 lockdown period made it difficult for students to access some social amenities like libraries	27 (135)	51 (204)	- (-)	7 (14)	- (-)	85 (353)	4.15	Agreed
22	Covid-19 lockdown period made it difficult for students to participate in social activities	31 (155)	46 (184)	- (-)	8 (16)	- (-)	85 (355)	4.18	Agreed
23	Covid-19 lockdown period made some students not to feel safe from covid-19 disease	- (-)	2 (8)	8 (24)	38 (76)	37 (74)	85 (182)	1.71	Disagreed
24	Covid-19 lockdown period increased the academic stress of students	23 (115)	50 (200)	- (-)	9 (18)	3 (3)	85 (336)	3.95	Agreed
25	Covid-19 lockdown period made students not to be sociable	- (-)	16 (64)	4 (12)	49 (98)	16 (16)	85 (190)	2.24	Disagreed
26	Covid-19 lockdown period made it difficult for students to maintain stable relationship among peers	18 (90)	48 (192)	5 (15)	12 (24)	2 (2)	85 (323)	3.80	Agreed
27	Covid-19 lockdown period made students afraid of associating with other people	- (-)	18 (72)	7 (21)	38 (76)	22 (22)	85 (191)	2.25	Disagreed
28	Covid-19 lockdown period made students afraid of studying and exams	20 (100)	46 (184)	2 (6)	15 (30)	2 (2)	85 (322)	3.79	Agreed
29	Covid-19 lockdown period made some students hopeless and sad	17 (85)	43 (172)	4 (12)	17 (34)	4 (4)	85 (307)	3.61	Agreed
30	Covid-19 lockdown period increased peer pressure on students	15 (75)	48 (192)	4 (12)	17 (34)	1 (1)	85 (314)	3.69	Agreed
	Total Mean							97.16	
	Cluster							3.60	Agreed

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The analysis on Table 2shows the mean rating of adolescents in secondary school on the perceived mental health impacts of covid-19 in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. The data analyzed revealed that adolescents in secondary schools agreed to most of the items 4-30, as regards the perceived mental health impact of covid-19 on adolescents. With the study mean score of 3.0 as cut off point for acceptance in using a Likert scale, the grand mean also confirms that in one way or the other adolescent in secondary have experienced a mental health impact as a result of covid-19. The study therefore concluded with the data collected that adolescents in secondary school have had mental health impacts in the various ramifications mentioned in the above Table 2 in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State.

Summary of the Findings

The study findings are summarized as follows:

1. The study showed that adolescents in secondary schools have a perception of covid-19 disease. Generally adolescents in secondary school accepted the fact that covid-19 exist, that covid-19Can spread from one person to another and that covid-19 can affect their mental health in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State.
2. The study revealed that there is a perceived mental health impact on adolescents, especially throughout the pandemic outbreak, the period of lockdown together with some of the control measures of covid-19 affected adolescents in secondary schools in Awka South Local Government Area, Anambra State.

Discussion of Findings

Perception of adolescents in secondary school in Awka South Local Government Area in Anambra State showed that adolescents in secondary have a reasonable perception of covid-19. This is as a result of adolescents in secondary schools agreeing to the fact that covid-19 ex6ists, that covid-19 can spread from one person to another, and that covid-19 can affect our mental health, in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. The findings is in agreement with the discoveries of Erick Baloran (2020) and that of MdAbdulWadood,ASMAMamunandMdAbdurRafi(2020).ErickT.Balorn(2020)said that students were aware of the covid-19 pandemic and possessed sufficient knowledge about this global concern even though there were still gaps in various points. Md Abdul Wadood, ASMA Mamun and MdAbdur Rafi (2020) also agreed that students understood how the virus spreads, its symptoms, and the precautionary measures needed to be done by both individuals and the general community. Also the researchers revealed that Rajshahi university students had average knowledge on symptoms, protective way and transmission of covid-19 Female students were more knowledgeable than male.

The perceived mental health impact of covid-19 on adolescents in secondary schools in Awka South Local Government Area in Anambra State showed that adolescents in secondary schools are in agreement that some adolescents felt lonely and sad during the covid-19 lockdown period, also the covid-19 lockdown period increased the academic stress of students. The control measures mandated by Government and The National Centre for Disease Control, such as social distancing made some students afraid of touching their peers, brought out the fear of always washing hands to avoid contacting the disease and also increased the stress of always wearing a nose mask. The findings also revealed that Covid-19 lockdown period made students think a lot about their problems leading to depression, and also made it difficult for students to participate in social activities, the above experiences and more are what most adolescents went through as a result covid-19 coupled with its restrictions and limitations, mostly owing to the control measures in Awka South Local Government Area in Anambra State. The findings is in agreement with the discoveries of Erick T. Baloran (2020) who revealed that majority of the students displayed anxiety during the entire period of lockdown. They mostly were worried about food and financial resources, and a percentage of the students avoid social contact, large meetings, and gatherings. This confirmed the research of Deblina Roy, SarvodayaTripathy&Sujita Kumar Kar (2020), who in agreement reported that individuals were worried for themselves and their families during the on-going pandemic. People could have limited social contact and avoided mass meetings. Besides, Joyce Lee (2020) affirmed that the covid-19 pandemic affects students' mental health. Gilbert Sterling Octavius, Felicia RusdiSilviani, and AndryJuliansen (2022) also agreed thatcovid-19 has been found to be associated with adolescent's mental health changes, especially the fear of covid-19 in a population with adequate exposure of covid-19 proved to create adverse mental health condition such as anxiety and depression. Adolescents who had experienced previous trauma with addition of social isolation/quarantine and loneliness were more prone towards anxiety and depression during and even after the enforced isolation ended. The study done by Shuang-JiangZhou,Li-GangZhang,Lei-LeiWang&Zhao-ChangGuo(2020) showed that prevalence of mild-to-severe depressive and anxiety symptoms in Chinese adolescents during the covid-19 period. There was also prevalence of adolescents with both depressive and anxiety symptoms.Covid-19 has been found to be associated with mental health changes in adolescents which meant management of covid-19 should also focus on mental health as well.

Conclusion

The study concluded that the perception and the perceived mental impact of covid-19 on adolescents in secondary schools in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra

State depends on the knowledge of the adolescents on covid-19 and its effects. Ruling the existence of mental health impact on adolescents in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State, ranging from depression, anxiety and stress and other diverse mental impact of covid-19, also driving at Government and Stakeholders paying more attention and focus on mental health of adolescents as a result of covid-19.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Adolescents in secondary schools should be impacted with the proper knowledge of covid-19, by teaching them in schools, including it as topics in their subjects as health education, organizing health talks and campaigns on covid-19 so as for them to develop the right attitude and have a positive perception towards covid-19.
2. Proper care and attention should be given in assessing and monitoring the mental health of adolescents in secondary schools by providing mental health care services and making it very accessible and available for adolescents. Also going round schools with mobile health care and rendering mental health care and conducting regular checkups in determining the level or state of mental health of adolescents in secondary schools.
3. Government, Agencies and Stakeholders in community organizing programs and activities that will help adolescents to cope with the adverse effects of covid-19, organizing and giving out relief items and personal protective equipment's, such as palliative and also creating policies that will address the state of the mental health of adolescents.

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