

# Sociological reflections on the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

This paper on the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. Based on sociological perspectives, the main objective of the paper is to examine and measure the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on: (i) income (ii) quality of life and (iii) standard of living in Nigeria. Data for this study were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were derived from self-administered questionnaire and informal interviews held with labour leaders, community and religious leaders, artisans and employers of labour in the private sector of the economy. For the primary data, a sample of one thousand respondents drawn from the six states comprising the southwest geo-political zone of Nigeria. The secondary data were derived from news bulletins, television and radio broadcasts, newspapers and magazines, online social media among others. Data were analyzed using simple percentages and content analysis. The study was anchored on the functionalist perspective. The main thrust of our arguments is that whatever happens with Covid-19 pandemic and the health sector in general will trigger some ripple effects in the other social institutions that makes up the society. No social institution is an island unto itself; every social institution works in an interdependent and interrelated manner

to maintain stability and equilibrium in the society. The main finding of the study is that demand for social services dropped, while people who worked in the private sector experienced significant drop in their incomes. The findings of the study largely revealed that the Covid-19 pandemic had significant negative impact on incomes, quality of life and standards of living of the average Nigerian. These three variables took a nose-dive since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic and thereafter. Again, there are no adequate social security or social capital or social safety nets for many Nigerians, this aggravated the severity of the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The palliatives offered by government at all levels of governance are paltry and grossly inadequate to alleviate and mitigate the overwhelming negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a matter of fact, findings from this study revealed that the Covid-19 pandemic has aggravated the incidence, severity and depth of poverty among Nigerians. The main thesis of the paper is that the government needs to do more to cushion the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria by putting in place some social welfare programmes which will have direct positive impact on incomes, quality of life and enhance the standards of living of the average Nigerian. This paper recalls demand for fundamental revisions of the political economy framework and macro-economic policies in a way that enhances the welfare of the Nigerian working class and the masses at large.

*“The Coronavirus pandemic poses an unprecedented challenge to many of the assumed certainties of our lives, as all the emergencies are completely, changing the setting of our work, our relations and social expectations. ...”* Teresa Consoli (2020:1).

## **Introduction**

The Covid-19 pandemic came all of a sudden late in the year 2019 and before we knew it, it became a global phenomenon. Today, many countries across the world are facing unprecedented challenges and multiple social problems as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Covid-19 pandemic triggered a series of radical transformations, changing the very nature of everyday life and eventually creating a new normal. (Consoli 2021; Maikomo, Targema and Obun-Andy 2021) Nigeria and her citizens are no exception to all the foregoing problems associated with the Covid-19 pandemic. (Amusan and Agunyai 2021)

Coronavirus began as a health crisis but with grave impact on the people- and snowballed into an economic and fiscal crisis with a high risk of negative social

implications. In Nigeria, the Naira came under severe pressure and inflation a permanent feature of the economy. (Gbemisola, Palacios-Lopez, McGree and Amankwah, 2020; UNDP Nigerian Brief 2020C; WHO 2020).

Sociology as a discipline from inception emerged out of crises, it was largely a response to make sense of a world where all that was solid melted into the air. Sociology was designed to provide answers to social problems, most especially those emerging unexpectedly and largely unanticipated. (Haralambos and Holborn 2004; Giddens, Duneier and Appelbaum 2005)). Today, everything changed- work, homes, church, business, transport and travels, new diseases hitherto unknown, etc.

The ongoing Covid-19 pandemic is more or less the crisis of our times. Practically we cannot run away from its devastating impact, but we must be prepared to address the new challenges arising from it. Scholars are now asking new questions – for instance, what is social distancing and how can it slow down the spread of Covid-19 pandemic? New concepts are emerging and some of these are listed in the next paragraph; new methods of investigation of the social are being articulated – how can social science research be done in the most effective ways without face-to-face interaction and observation? Is participant observation not been relegated to the background if the emphasis on social distancing is sustained?

Invariably and without restrictions, the Covid-19 pandemic has changed the narratives. These are narratives about lockdowns, physical distancing, social distancing, face-masking, internet church and online congregations, working from homes and virtual learning among others. Face-to-face interaction has been replaced with face-to-screen interaction in many instances and Social life has changed in all its ramifications. Notable among these concepts is ‘Social distancing’ a concept that was restricted to sociological discourse in the past now features prominently in everyday discourse (Consoli 2020; Pearce 2020).

What is Covid-19? According to the World Health Organization, (2021): Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Most people infected with the virus will experience mild to moderate respiratory illness and recover without requiring special treatment. However, some will become seriously ill and require medical attention. Older people and those with underlying medical conditions like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, chronic respiratory disease, or cancer are more likely to develop serious illness. Anyone can get sick with COVID-19 and become seriously ill or die at any age. (WHO 2021, <https://www.who.int/health>; U.S. CDC, 2022; Johns Hopkins Medicine, 2022, <https://www.hopkins>; Merriam-

Webster, 2023). The symptoms of coronavirus according to the empirical studies by Johns Hopkins Medicine (2022) include: \*Cough, \*Fever or chills, \*Shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing, \*Muscle or body aches, \*Sore throat, \*New loss of taste or smell, \*Diarrhea, \*Headache, \*New fatigue, \*Nausea or vomiting, and \*Congestion or running nose.

## **Objectives of the study**

This study was specifically designed to empirically investigate:

- (i) The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on incomes, quality of life and standard of living among Nigerians
- (ii) To examine how people perceive Covid-19 pandemic and what can be done to alleviate the negative impact of the pandemic

## **Statement of the problem**

Relying largely on secondary statistical analysis and information obtained from the WHO Health Emergency Dashboard (<https://extranet.who>) assessed on 10 September, 2021; it was reported that Nigeria has 197,773 confirmed cases of Covid-19, 2,585 deaths and a total of 5,001,836 vaccines doses administered. It is clear that the Covid-19 pandemic is problematic for Nigeria. First, the percentage of the population that have been vaccinated is small and insignificant for a nation with a population of 200,000,000 as at December, 2021. This is more or less an indication that only 2.50% of the population have been vaccinated. (NCDC, 2021- [info@ncdc.gov.ng](mailto:info@ncdc.gov.ng); WHO 2021)

Second, Covid-19 pandemic has inevitably made social life more difficult; “social distancing” has made all forms of social interaction more difficult- as there is a new normal about how things can be done. According to Consoli (2020:1): “How can we experience proximity while social distancing is a value? This tragedy is our tragedy, it is not happening to one family, to one village or one city. It is happening to a generation, and it is part of our collective history.” In another instance, WHO et al (2020) stated that the Covid-19 pandemic has led to a dramatic loss of human life worldwide and presents an unprecedented challenge to public health, food systems and the world of work. The economic and social disruption caused by the pandemic is devastating, destructive and impoverishing. (Consoli 2020; UNDP Nigeria Brief 2020C; Inegbedio 2021)

In Nigeria, social life and all forms of sociality is completely regulated- embracing, handshakes, French kiss- kissing on the lips, dancing, clubbing, drinking and partying, closeness in sitting arrangements, physical body contact, curfew is in place, concerts and other crowded activities etc., are all forbidden. The government reduced gatherings of religious groups and social functions, among others, to 50 per cent attendance, while official engagements, meetings, and conferences were mandated to hold virtually. (Presidential Steering Committee on Covid-19, May 10, 2021) Again, the use of face masks creates identification problems as people hardly recognize one another in the public space. This is a new normal classified as part of the Covid-19 restrictions and it is rigidly enforced in Nigeria. (Human Rights Watch and Justice and Empowerment Initiatives, 2020).

Third, travelling became somehow restricted while the cost of foreign travels became highly prohibitive as a result of the required multiple Covid-19 tests and increase in the cost of flight tickets. This inevitably affected people's capacity and intention to move around to transact their businesses and this in turn affected their earnings and incomes. (Gbemisola *et al.*, 2020; Inegbedio, 2021). The socioeconomic distress associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, health implications, to those affected especially the most vulnerable individuals and groups in Nigeria exert pressure on service delivery infrastructure and the societal cost in terms of well-being is enormous (Amusan and Agunyai 2021;WHO 2020; UNDP Nigeria Brief 2020B; Amusan and Agunyai 2021)

Today, the problem of the Nigerian state is that the government has been laden with the challenging task of managing a health crisis in an already weakened economy; an economy that has a healthcare system characterized by lack of human resource, adequate financing and equipment. On a final note, incomes, quality of life and standard of living of the average Nigerian inevitably took a nose-dive with the Covid-19 pandemic.

### **Significance of the study**

The body of the existing literature shows clearly that because the Covid-19 pandemic is a contemporary phenomenon, there is a dearth of empirical studies and no existing sociological reflections on it in Nigeria. (Amusan and Agunyai 2021) In India, many empirical studies from the sociological perspective have been conducted on the Covid-19 pandemic, it sad to observe and note that the same trend cannot be found in Nigeria.

(WHO 2020) At the moment, all that is available is the general reportage by the World Health Organization (WHO), The Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), journalists and the social media. These reports focus on the incidence and prevalence of Covid-19, incidence of mortality, morbidity or illness, the political economy of the pandemic vis-à-vis public finance- spending on health infrastructures, drugs and vaccines and provision of palliatives to cushion the effects of the pandemic. The incidence of poverty, population dynamics and the impact of the pandemic on labour, productivity and Gross Domestic Product were also considered. (Amusan and Agunyai 2021) There is thus a gap in knowledge which must be filled. This understandable because not everything about a phenomenon or a social problem can be done in a single study. This study is a modest effort to lay a foundation for bigger and more robust studies in the direction of three variables (i) income (ii) quality of life and (iii) standard of living. In addition to the foregoing, efforts will be made to sensitize the government about the categorical imperatives which are needful for alleviating the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria.

## **Literature and background**

This study was designed from a pure sociological perspective to investigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on three main variables which appear pervasive in contemporary discourse on the phenomenon. These variables are: (i) income (ii) quality of life and (iii) standard of living. We shall now proceed to operationalize each of them in turn.

### ***Income***

Simply put, income is money received from one's employment. It is money earned from doing work or received from investments. It could be earnings from wages and salaries or profits from a business or investment. Four things can happen to an individual's income: (i) it could be stable over a period (ii) it could increase over a period (iii) it could decrease over a period and (iv) it could be outrightly lost or come down to a zero level (this happens if an individual loses his or her job. (Investopedia 2022). Basically, income refers to the money that a person receives in exchange for their labour or products.

Indeed (2023) defined income that an individual or business receives in exchange for providing labour, producing a good or service or investing capital. Individuals usually earn income through wages or salary, businesses on the other hand earn income from selling goods or services above their cost of production. However, from all indications, there is no single, universal definition of income: income is defined according to the context in which the concept is used.

### *Indices for measuring income*

Income: having a stable income or feasible means of livelihood. Wages and salaries that can sustain an individual and his or her household. This is measured in terms of (i) Adequate (ii) Inadequate (iii) grossly inadequate (iv) No salaries at all.

### *Standard of living*

Basically, standard of living is what it costs an individual or a family to live or to sustain a living. In general, standard of living refers to people's level of prosperity (wealth), comfort, material possessions, and necessities. According, to the Investopedia Team (2022), standard of living is the material wellbeing of the average person in a given population. It focuses on basic materials factors such as income, Gross Domestic, Life Expectancy, and economic opportunity. For the Wallstreetmojo Team (2023), standard of living denotes the quality of life lived by individuals. It often refers to the affordability of necessities, comforts and luxuries purchased by individuals to enhance their wellbeing. When calculating a nation's standard of living, we take into account factors such as employment, poverty rates, affordable housing, and the Gross Domestic Product. Again, we also take into account inflation, the cost of goods and services, infrastructure, and economic and political stability. (Marketbusinessnews 2021). Again, the higher the standard of living of a country, the better the life of its citizens. Standard of living vary from one country to another.

### *Indices for measuring standard of living*

In the Literature there are many indices for measuring Standard of Living and these include the following: (i) Per capita Gross domestic Product (ii) Human Development Index (iii) Inflation adjusted income per person (iv) Poverty rate (v) Access and quality of Health Care (vi) Income Growth Inequality, and (vii) Educational standards among

others. (Wallstreetmojo Team 2023). For our purpose in this study, a change in the standard of living is conceived in the three dimensions which comprises of remaining either stable, going up or going down. This is then measured in terms of the inflationary trends within the economy, fluctuation in incomes, unemployment or outright loss of jobs and the lack of financial capacity to live the lives people have been living before the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic.

### *Quality of life*

According to Google's English dictionary as provided by Oxford Languages (2022): Quality of life is the standard of health, comfort and happiness experienced by an individual or group (<https://oup.com>). Quality of life is defined by World Health Organization as 'individuals' perception of their position in life in the context of the culture and value systems in which they live, and in relation to their goals, expectations, standards and concern'. (WHOQOL, 2020). Quality of life depends on multiple factors, depending on the individual, but having access to good healthcare, clean and safe housing, healthy food, and a job that pays a living wage, will improve one's quality of living (Kagan 2022). An individual's quality of life is defined as how they feel about their current circumstances in life. This includes their concerns, expectations, and goals in addition to how they feel about their overall wellbeing. An individual's quality of life is influenced by a wide range of factors, including their wealth, income, and free time (Mukesh 2023).

In the words of Teoli and Bhardwaj (2023), Quality of life (QoL) is a concept which captures the well-being, whether of a population or individual, regarding both positive and negative elements within the entirety of their existence at a specific point in time. The common facets of QoL include personal health (physical, mental, and spiritual), relationships, education status, work environment, social status, wealth, a sense of security and safety, freedom, autonomy in decision-making, social-belonging and their physical surroundings.

According to McCall (1975), Kagan, (2022) and Teoli and Bhardwaj, (2023) the best way of approaching quality of life measurement is to measure or gauge the extent to which people's 'happiness requirements' are met, that is, those requirements are a necessary (although not sufficient) condition of anyone's happiness- those without which no member of the human race can be happy.



Quality of life is a broad multidimensional concept that usually includes subjective evaluations of both positive and negative aspects of life. What makes it problematic and challenging to measure or evaluate is that the concept “quality of life” can be perceived and defined differently by individuals, groups and even the academic community. But for our purpose in this study, the concept QoL is conceived in terms of the level of comfort which people enjoy in life when they live in a specific environment. This is what the Yoruba people of the southwest Nigeria translate as “*gbigbe aye irorun, idunnu ati idera*” which means “living a life of comfort and happiness” or a sense of well-being.

Quality of life refers to how well we live, i.e., the general well-being of people and societies. It is the standard of happiness, comfort, and health that a person or group of people experience. Living in good health or having access to the necessary healthcare needs is also part and parcel of the QoL index (Kagan 2022).

At the moment the quality of life among Nigerians is nothing to write home about. According to Numbeo (2021) Quality of Life Index by Country; the three leading countries in the world are:

1. Switzerland -188.36
2. Denmark -186.25
3. Netherlands -180.27

The leading country in the African continent is South Africa on the 39<sup>th</sup> spot but with 131.37, Morocco is on the 61<sup>st</sup> spot with 105.04, Egypt is on the 76<sup>th</sup> spot with 87.21, Kenya on the 79<sup>th</sup> spot with 79.92 and Nigeria on the distant 83<sup>rd</sup> spot with 54.71. When talking about the quality-of-life index globally, Nigeria is in the rear (Numbeo 2021; U.S. News and World Report. “Best Countries to Live in the World”). In a more recent document, Numbeo (2022), the following information were obtained:

Rank	Country	Quality of Life Index
1.	South Africa	136.0
2.	Tunisia	114.6
3.	Morocco	107.5
4.	Kenya	92.5
5.	Egypt	89.9

From all indications, it is clear that Nigeria is in the rear among the leading nations in the African continent.

### *Indices for measuring quality of life*

In the Literature there many indices for measuring QoL. This includes: (i).Health (ii) Social relationships (iii) Emotional Wellbeing (iv) Quality of Environment (v) Personal Safety (vi) Belonging (vii) Work and (viii) financial Material Wellbeing. (Williams and Wood-Dauphinee 1989; WHOQOL, 2012, and Eurostat, 2023). But in this study, we adopted the following indices:

- (i) Leisure and social interactions
- (ii) Material living conditions (income, consumption and material conditions)
- (iii) Economic security and physical safety, and
- (iv) Governance and basic rights.

The investigation will be around (i) Financial Material Wellbeing (ii) Stable work/employment with fixed and continuous wages and salaries and (iii) Living in good and radiant health, and (iv) Social relationships.

### *Social life and social interaction*

One prominent feature of social life is the freedom of speech and the inherent capacity to move freely and mix with people without restrictions. This also enhances the QoL because it is associated with happiness and emotions. Virtual learning, lockdowns and social distancing is significantly hindering social life and all manners of social interaction among Nigerians most especially the youths in general. According Consoli (2020, 2):

“The Covid-19 emergency is affecting the youth, all students who very responsibly are studying online, following hours of explanations from videos, tablets, and phones, and diligently stay at home. They are missing their partners and a relevant part of the socialization process, and after all the attempts to preserve them from the abuses of the “virtual life”, it is precisely that life that is now the only one available for them.”

### *The Nigerian healthcare system*

According to the UNDP Nigerian Report, April 2020A, the Covid-19 pandemic is far more than a health crisis as it affected individuals, societies and the economy significantly. While the impact of the pandemic varies from state to state because healthcare infrastructure is not equally spread, it increased the incidence of poverty in Nigeria. The pandemic placed immense and unprecedented pressure on the country's underinvested healthcare system. Evidence from the report indicates that around 20 percent of Covid-19 cases require hospitalization and another 7.5 percent require intensive care which were not readily available. Invariably the healthcare infrastructure in Nigeria which hitherto has not inadequate inevitably became overstretched.

In this same document, the assessment of eight treatment centres by WHO showed that majority of the treatment centres are not well equipped and the capacity to respond to emergencies is particularly weak in the Northern part of Nigeria.

This problem is further compounded by lack of supportive medical equipment such as surgical masks, gloves, and ventilators in adequate or sufficient quantities.

Again, Garba, Zakaria, Salihu, Danlami, Faruku and Bala (2020:4) captured succinctly the situation during the Covid-19 pandemic with regard to the Nigerian health sector when they stated that: "Given the complex nature of the country, large size population, poor health care system manned by inadequate diagnostics and isolation centres, as well as corruption; fighting this public health crisis is therefore fraught with numerous challenges including: poor preparedness and response plan."

### *The Covid-19 pandemic and incomes*

Since the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, major economic activities have been crippled worldwide, Nigeria inclusive, owing to the lockdown in major economies of the world. In a report by WHO *et al* (2020), it was stated that without the means to earn an income during lockdowns, many are unable to feed themselves and their families. For most, no income means no food, or at best, less food and less nutritious food. According to Inegbedio (2021), the implication of this is that circular flow of income has been significantly constrained and inevitably reduced since a reasonable proportion of the productive factors are currently lying fallow or idle.

Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdown policy of the Nigerian government, even though had proven to be effective in the control of the spread of the virus, adversely triggers household crises. These crises range from hunger, gender violence, shortage of food, low purchasing power and negative coping strategies. (Amusan and Agunyai 2021).

### *The Covid-19 pandemic and the incidence of poverty*

This can be analyzed on two fronts: First, the UNDP Nigerian report for April 21, 2020(C) stated that restrictions on movement, curfews, and shut-downs disproportionately impact the poor and their livelihoods.

Second, in this place is the argument that there are basically no pro poor shut down strategies in Nigeria. This may be due to the fact that Nigeria has never experienced such a shut down before nor has ever happened in the past. The distribution of paltry sums of money and food assistance under the guise of palliatives and social welfare did not provide the needed relief and succor for the poor, the needy and the downtrodden.

### *What the Covid-19 pandemic and poverty is doing to the poor*

WHO *et al* (2020), reported that with low and irregular incomes and a lack of social support, many of the poor work often in unsafe conditions, thus exposing themselves and families, to a series of avoidable additional risks. When the poor begin to experience income losses, they resort to negative coping strategies, such as distress sale of assets, predatory loans and child labour among others.

### *Significant job losses which aggravated the level of unemployment*

The UNDP Nigerian report, (2020B) stated that there were significant disruptions. in Nigeria's services, trade and financial sectors. The contraction in these sectors resulted in significant job losses both in the formal and informal labour markets. This had a direct negative impact on incomes, QoL and the standard of living among Nigerians.

Again, Ogadimma (2021), and Adebimpe, Adetunji and Nwachukwu (2021) also established the thesis that the Covid-19 pandemic caused significant job losses and increased the incidence of unemployment in Nigeria.

### *The Covid-19 pandemic and palliative measures*

As a way of cushioning the effect of the lockdown, the government rolled out palliative measures for certain groups. This included three months holidays for those holding *Trademoni, Marketmoni, and Farmermoni* loans issues by the Bank of Industry, Bank of Agriculture, and the Nigeria Export and Import Bank. The government also provided direct distribution of food items and cash to 3.6 million households which were for the most vulnerable in the society. (Onyedika *et al.* 2020)

Again, Inegbedio (2021) reported that government did both cash transfer programme and food assistance as palliatives to cushion the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. In same manner, Oladeinde (2021) reported the Federal government disbursed 288 billion naira from the 500 billion naira set aside for the Covid-19 intervention programmes through its Economic Sustainability Plan. Finally, the cable.ng (2020) and Nairametrics (2021) both reported the Nigeria Incentive- Based Risk Sharing System for Agricultural Lending (NIRSAL) Microfinance Bank which was initiated by the Central Bank of Nigeria to disburse loans for households and businesses (Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises- MSME's) affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2020 the loan is fixed at a maximum of 50 million naira while in 2021 it was reduced to a maximum of 25 million naira.

Oladeinde (2021) among others reported that the Covid-19 palliatives, most especially food assistance were hijacked and distributed among party loyalists. This was the more reason why there were cases of mass looting of warehouses with Covid-19 food palliatives were stored by the down-trodden and the poor.

### **Theoretical framework**

From all indications, there is the categorical need to anchor this work to a particular theoretical perspective. This is a convention and a much respected tradition and intellectual practice in Sociological and Anthropological discourse. Even though there is an array and volumes of theories available for use, we are adopting the functionalist perspective for this study. This will be from the Parsonian perspective. While functionalists before Parsons attempted to produce explanations of everything that exists and happens in a particular time, Parsons tried to use Functionalism to create a general theory of how all social system work. (Nickerson 2023).

What is “Functionalism”? Functionalism is a school of thought that views society as a complex but orderly and stable system with interrelated and interconnected structures and social patterns that run or operate to meet the needs of individuals or groups in a society. Functionalism is a perspective that views society as a complex system of interrelated parts, which works in an interdependent manner such that a disequilibrium in any part of the system will cause a disequilibrium in other parts of the system. (Parsons 1951 and 1960).

Human societies are made up of different social institutions which works in an interdependent and interrelated manner. The notable social institutions are: (i) Economy (ii) Education (iii) Politics/Government. (iv) Health (v) Religion, and (vi) Family among others.

For the purpose of our discussions here, Covid-19 pandemic is a social problem that comes under the umbrella of Health as a social institution. How then can functionalism be used as an explanatory tool for the understanding of the Covid-19 pandemic? In the first place, during the Covid-19 pandemic, there was a continuous lockdown and severe restriction on movement of the people by the government in Nigeria. Coupled with this is the enforcement of social distancing. In Nigeria, The Police and other law enforcement agencies were ordered to enforce restrictions on movement and social distancing to the letter. The implementation of these policies had adverse and untold effects on other social institutions directly. First and foremost, Covid-19 pandemic had significant impact on the Economy. In many work places and the industry, people were unable to go work and do their daily chores to earn a living. Those who could do not have access to their clinics and medics and their health was inevitably compromised. A sick worker cannot be a productive worker and so the workplace loses on the long run. As a matter of fact, many social services could not be rendered on the virtual platforms because some social services require face-to-face interaction e.g. barbing, hair dressing, medical diagnostics, and nursing services among many others. At the end of the day, the Covid-19 pandemic affected people’s incomes, their Quality of Life, aggravated the incidence of poverty and on the long run affected the Gross Domestic Product of the nation.

Secondly, there is the education sector. During the Covid-19 pandemic, teaching and learning could not take place effectively and many of the schools were forced to shut down. Some of the schools tried to be innovative by erecting online and virtual platforms but their efforts were not as effective because of many reasons which include: (i) inadequate power supplies all over Nigeria (ii) many indigent students could not

afford the equipment to facilitate e-learning at their own expense and (iii) the cost of data is prohibitive. During the Covid-19 pandemic, teaching and learning were significantly and adversely affected.

Thirdly, Covid-19 pandemic affected Religion as a social institution. According to Karl Marx (1970), religion is the opium of the masses but during this period, the masses were denied access to their regular places of worship as a result of the enforcement of social distancing, lockdowns and restrictions on movements in Nigeria. Other forms of religious activities such as face-to-face evangelism, public crusades and the likes took a nose dive. Even though some religious organizations and Christian bodies tries to overcome these challenges by erecting online and virtual platforms, this had limited success as a result of some of problems that we have stated earlier in this place.

Furthermore, the Covid-19 pandemic had significant negative impact on governance and the structures of governance in Nigeria. During this period, there was significant pressure on government to spend more money on the provision of emergency medical kits, emergency wards, vaccines, ventilators, provision of more oxygen cylinders and aggressive provision of palliatives. The government also had to spend more on the security agencies, most especially the Police and the Nigerian Immigration services. Invariably, the Covid-19 pandemic inevitably increased public spending and expenditures.

Finally, during the Covid-19 pandemic, the family was at the receiving end. The enforcement of social distancing and lockdowns meant forceful stay at home for most family members. This invariably means that the parents are unable to go to work to earn their regular incomes, moonlight to get additional incomes while the children are unable to go to school. Some parents reported that they spent more money on feeding at this time because the children were just eating, playing and watching television programmes most of the time. Many families record very dull moments during this period and it was very devastating.

According to Haralambos and Holborn (2004), the starting point for Parsons is that all social phenomenon or problems can be understood in terms of how they help society to function effectively or otherwise. When a person is sick, they are unable to perform their social roles normally. Parsons argued that the best way to understand illness sociologically is therefore to view it as a form of deviance, which disturbs society's functioning, in just the same way as crime does.

From the foregoing discussions, it is clear that a social problem emanating from a particular social institution can without restrictions translate directly into problems in other social institutions in the same society. It is clear that the Covid-19 pandemic which is a problem from the health sector has significantly and adversely touched the school, church, workplace and the structures of governance in Nigeria. In other words, whatever happens in the health sector via Covid-19 automatically triggers some ripple effects in all the other social institutions in the society.

### **Research design and methodology**

Data for this study were collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were derived from self-administered questionnaire and informal interviews held with labour leaders, community and religious leaders, artisans and employers of labour in the private sector of the economy. The secondary data were derived from news bulletins, television and radio broadcasts, newspapers and magazines, telephone conversations, online social media among others.

The main thrust and focus of this study is on what happened in Nigeria *vis-a-vis* the Covid-19 pandemic between December 2019 and December 2021. The Telephone conversations with leaders of the following unions- (i) NUJ, (ii) NULGE, (iii) NURTW, (iv) PMAN, and PENDAN took place between June and October, 2022. The review of Newspapers and Magazines which includes- (i) The Nigerian Tribune, (ii) The Premium Times, (iii) The Guardian, and (iv) The Nation took place from June 2020 and throughout the year 2021. The programmes from the following television stations were monitored and reviewed from June 2020 and throughout the year 2021. These are: (i) African Independent Television (AIT). (ii) Television Continental Nigeria (TVC), (iii) Channels TV, and (iv) Arise TV. Finally, Radio Broadcasts from the following stations were monitored and reviewed from June 2020 to December 2021. These are (i) Osun State Broadcasting Corporation, Osogbo (OSBC), Ondo State Radio Corporation (OSRC) Akure and, (iii) Broadcasting Corporation of Oyo state (BCOS) Ile-Akede, Ibadan.

The fieldwork for the collection of Primary Data was conducted from June to October, 2022. The analysis of data was done from November to December, 2022; while Report Writing was done between January and March, 2023.

The following occupational/professional groups were used for the study and these are:

1. National Union of Local Government Employees (NULGE)



2. National Union of Road Transport Workers (NURTW)
3. Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT)
4. The Association of Nigerian Barbers (ANB)/ Nigerian Association of Hairstylists (NAH)
5. Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and League of Imams and Alfas (LIA).
6. Performing Musicians Association of Nigeria (PMAN)
7. Nigeria Hotel Association (NHA)
8. Petroleum Dealer's Association of Nigeria (PEDAN)
9. Nigeria Bar Association (NBA)
10. Nigeria Civil Service Union (NCSU)
11. Motor Mechs and Technicians Association of Nigeria (MOMTAN)
12. The Restaurant and Food Services Proprietors Association of Nigerian (RFSPAN)
13. Nigeria Union of Journalists (NUJ)
14. National Association of Nigeria Nurses and Midwives (NANNM), and
15. Nigeria Union of Tailors (NUT)

The study was conducted in the southwest geo-political zone in Nigeria. A sample of 1000 respondents were chosen in all for the study with the following distribution:

- (1) Lagos state- 200, (2) Oyo state- 200, (3) Ekiti state-150, (4) Ogun state-150,
- (5) Ondo state- 150, and (6) Osun- 150.

Using purposive sampling technique, the structured questionnaire was administered on the respondents in the different locations. Lagos and Oyo states had bigger samples allocated to them because they have the highest number of people among the states from the southwest geo-political zone. (Nigerian Finder, 2023). With regard to the Key Informant Interviews, 2 respondents purposively selected from among the leaders/members of the executives of each of the occupational groups were reached from each of the Local Government Councils in all the states selected for this study. There were 137 Local Government Councils from the southwest geo-political zone, and

when this is multiplied by two, 274 respondents were used for the key Informant Interviews. For the self-administered questionnaires, the 15 listed occupational/professional groups were used to divide the sample size allocated to each of the states after the figures for the Key Informant Interviews were deducted.

S/No.	SELECTED STATES	NUMBER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT COUNCILS	KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW	SELF-ADMINISTERED QUESTIONNAIRE	TOTAL
1.	Lagos	020	040	160	200
2.	Oyo	030	066	134	200
3.	Ogun	020	040	110	150
4.	Osun	030	060	090	150
5.	Ekiti	016	032	118	150
6.	Ondo	018	036	114	150
TOTAL	06	137	274	726	1000

(Source: Fieldwork, 2022)

The foregoing discussions are presented in Table 1 as presented here.

**Table 1: Distribution of Self-Administered Questionnaire and Key Informant Interviews Across the States and Local Government Councils in Southwest, Nigeria**

### Questionnaire/Interview schedule

Questions were asked about the personal characteristics of the respondents such as age, gender, ethnicity, education and marital status.

**Table 2.** *Interview Guide: Qualitative Questions*

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***Income***

What is your income before the Covid-19 pandemic?

What is your income during the pandemic? Did you experience any drop in your income or earning?

If yes, is the drop in your income significant?

Would you say your income is adequate and enough to sustain you and your household during the pandemic? If No, why?

Was your income regular and stable during the Covid-19 pandemic?

If no, why?

Did you experience any income stoppage during the pandemic?

If yes, what did you do to survive?

Did you get any form of assistance or palliative from any quarters? Government, Religious bodies or NGOs. Be specific.

If yes, are these palliatives of financial assistance adequate enough to sustain you and enhance good life?

Did you benefit from any loan or welfare package from any source?

How will you describe your income in relation to the cost of everyday life?

Adequate                      Inadequate                                      Grossly Inadequate

---

***Standard of Living***

During the Covid-19 pandemic, did you enjoy and lived in good and radiant health?

If no, why?

Did you have access to your healthcare givers and facilities when the need arose during the pandemic?

If no, why?

During the pandemic, were you able to work without restrictions?

If no, why?

Did the inflationary trend associated with the pandemic affect your lifestyle and everyday living? – (e.g. feeding and consumption patterns).

Did the pandemic in any way impoverish you?

If yes, how?

In general, how will you describe your Standard of Living during the pandemic? Did it rise, fell or remain stable?

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### *Quality of Life*

Was your social relationships in any way hindered during the pandemic?

If yes, how?

Was any of your leisure and recreational activities hindered or prohibited during the pandemic?

If yes, what are these activities?

Did the Covid-19 pandemic in any way affect your “Emotional Wellbeing”?

If yes, how?

Was your “Personal Safety” in any way compromised during the pandemic?

If yes, how?

Are you aware of any social welfare packages during the pandemic?

If yes, list them?

Did you benefit from any of these social welfare schemes?

If yes, were these benefits enough to cushion the negative impact of the pandemic?

Do you think that the government is doing enough to cushion the negative impact of the pandemic?

If no, what do you think should have been done?

Do you think that your “fundamental human rights” were breached and encroached during the pandemic?

If yes, in what ways?

In general, do you think that your “Quality of Life” was compromised during the pandemic?

If yes, how?

Despite all that happened during the pandemic, were you able to maintain your usual state of happiness and comfort?

If no, why?

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### **Analysis of Data**

#### *The personal characteristics of the respondents*

The mean age of the respondents is 39.9, and with regard to gender, the Males 56%, and Females 44%. The ethnic origin of the respondents reveals that Yoruba constitute 68%, Ibo 22%, Hausa 8% and others 2%; while the date revealed that 60% of the respondents are married, 30% single and 10% were either separated or divorced. In terms of

education, 5% had no formal education, 15% had elementary education, 36% had secondary education, 30% had degrees and others, 14% of them had postgraduate degrees.

Second, we continue with Table 2, which was obtained from WHO and NCDC reports on the incidence of Covid-19 in Nigeria as at 12 September 2021.

**Table 3: Confirmed Cases of Covid-19 Pandemic in Nigeria by State**

<b>States Affected</b>	<b>No. of Cases (Lab Confirmed)</b>	<b>No. of Cases (on admission)</b>	<b>No. Discharged</b>	<b>No. of Deaths</b>
<b>Lagos</b>	74,881	3,591	70,638	652
<b>FCT</b>	20,891	645	20,068	178
<b>Rivers</b>	11,376	780	10,458	138
<b>Kaduna</b>	9,359	93	9,200	66
<b>Plateau</b>	9,246	92	9,093	61
<b>Oyo</b>	8,530	794	7,553	183
<b>Edo</b>	5,914	741	4,967	206
<b>Ogun</b>	5,329	86	5,164	79
<b>Akwa Ibom</b>	4,221	645	3,534	42
<b>Ondo</b>	4,148	272	3,800	76
<b>Kano</b>	4,129	76	3,942	111
<b>Kwara</b>	3,688	422	3,207	59
<b>Delta</b>	3,173	532	2,556	85
<b>Osun</b>	2,820	68	2,667	85

<b>States Affected</b>	<b>No. of Cases (Lab Confirmed)</b>	<b>No. of Cases (on admission)</b>	<b>No. Discharged</b>	<b>No. of Deaths</b>
<b>Enugu</b>	2,675	112	2,534	29
<b>Nasarawa</b>	2,426	42	2,345	39
<b>Gombe</b>	2,328	50	2,234	44
<b>Katsina</b>	2,214	50	2,129	35
<b>Anambra</b>	2,173	97	2,057	19
<b>Ebonyi</b>	2,048	13	2,003	32
<b>Abia</b>	1,880	59	1,796	25
<b>Imo</b>	1,784	95	1,650	39
<b>Ekiti</b>	1,651	294	1,332	25
<b>Bauchi</b>	1,568	13	1,538	17
<b>Benue</b>	1,512	70	1,418	24
<b>Borno</b>	1,344	0	1,306	38
<b>Adamawa</b>	1,153	23	1,098	32
<b>Bayelsa</b>	1,132	101	1,004	27
<b>Taraba</b>	1,074	36	1,014	24
<b>Niger</b>	1,001	67	914	20
<b>Sokoto</b>	796	2	766	28
<b>Jigawa.</b>	573	12	545	16
<b>Cross River</b>	542	52	469	21
<b>Yobe</b>	501	2	490	9

<b>States Affected</b>	<b>No. of Cases (Lab Confirmed)</b>	<b>No. of Cases (on admission)</b>	<b>No. Discharged</b>	<b>No. of Deaths</b>
<b>Kebbi</b>	458	9	433	16
<b>Zamfara</b>	253	2	243	8
<b>Kogi</b>	5	0	3	2

The summary of reported cases of Covid-19 from Table 1 above is as follows: confirmed cases : 198,796, active cases 10,038; discharged cases 186,168; death: 2,590 (Source: <https://covid-19.ncdc.gov.ng> and [info@ncdc.gov.ng](mailto:info@ncdc.gov.ng) The official website of the Nigerian Centre for Disease Control, NCDC). The data collected from different sources were triangulated and reported simultaneously here. The highlights of the findings are: 1) Loss of jobs – throwing people into the already over-burdened and oversaturated labour market. 2) Some work places and organizations placed workers on half salaries. The private sector employees were the worst hit. 3) Some work places and organizations stopped the payment of salaries and allowances out rightly. 4) Some work places and organizations experienced complete lack of patronage and eventually shut down, e.g., hotels, catering outfits, clubs, restaurants, markets, etc.

With Covid-19 pandemic- the poor, the aged became more vulnerable to all manners of suffering and crisis. Those who usually take care of them could no longer afford to do so. There were increased cases of neglect of the elderly. Prolong lockdowns, curfews and restriction on movement which forcibly and compulsorily made people stay indoors, significantly aggravated the incidence and severity of poverty. Covid-19 palliatives such as cash transfer programmes and food assistance did not go round and on many occasions were given to party loyalists and supporters. The healthcare infrastructure is not enough to accommodate the number of emergencies occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The majority of the respondents, 69% of them, reported that they reduced food consumption drastically sometimes to a level of inconvenience since the advent of Covid-19 pandemic. As a matter fact, prices of essential food items such as rice, beans, yams, maize, beverages, flour, sugar, eggs, and all manners of cassava products had

risen astronomically during the pandemic period. This from all indications have direct negative impact on both the QoL and the standard of living.

With regard to people's perception of Covid-19 pandemic, a large chunk of our respondents, about 67% perceive the virus as deadly, risky, should be avoided like a plague and should not be toyed with; 13% of them described it as the white man's disease aimed at reducing the population of the black race; 9% believed that their natural body immunity and some herbal mixtures they have taken will subdue the virus while the remaining 11% felt indifferent about it entirely.

When asked the question about what can be done about the virus and the inherent hazards, 67% said that they need to protect themselves adequately from been infected with the virus. The respondents in general stated that they need every available assistance from the government on two grounds. First is the provision of free health services in case they get infected with virus while the second is to cushion the negative impact of the pandemic by providing all manners of social security and welfare packages.

We shall now turn to pay specific attention to each of the three variables adopted and used for analysis in this study.

### *Income*

There was significant loss of incomes by a large chunk of our respondents. Majority of the respondents, forty-three percent reported significant reduction in their incomes, forty percent experienced stable incomes while the remaining seventeen percent lost their incomes out rightly.

Only those who work in the public sector and a few respondents from the private sector had stable incomes since the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic.

For those in the private sector, there was significant reduction in incomes, while some of them lost their jobs out rightly.

For the respondents engaged in private businesses, there was significant loss of incomes while for others, their businesses collapsed.

In general, demand for both essential and non-essential goods and services fell drastically as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. But it was more severe for non-essential services.



People engaged in social services such as musicians, event planners, caterers, beauticians, barbers, fashion designers, hairdressers and artisans in general experienced significant reduction in the level of patronage. For others it was a case of outright lack of patronage accompanied with total loss of incomes.

There were lockdowns and restriction on movement occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic which not only reduced the consumption of non-essential commodities in general, but affected the income-generating capacity of many of our respondents.

The prolonged border closures killed the businesses of some of our respondents out rightly.

As a matter of fact, virtually all the casual workers in our sample lost their jobs and incomes.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, findings from this study showed that work was significantly affected along three dimensions comprising of the following:

1. Working continuously      **43%**
2. Not working at all      **23%**
3. Some periods out of work      **34%**

The percentage of those working continuously is low while those not working at all or some period out of work is significant, and this has the capacity to aggravate the incidence of poverty except some social security or welfare packages are put in place.

1. *In our place of work, everybody has been placed on half salaries. Suffering don begin.*
2. *Six months into Covid-19 crisis, we were sacked. The management said there will contact us when the economy improves in the future.*
3. *I am a transporter. Because of the lockdown, people are not travelling again. For two weeks turn did not reach me in the park. I took loans to sustain my family. This covid no be joke at all.*
4. *I am a textile dealer. Since Covid started, people have stopped buying clothes. I have to pay rent on my shop and my attendants. I am experiencing zero income at the moment as nothing is coming in. My shop is full of stock without buyers.*
5. *Covid-19 na big problem, na big wahala. The thing don scatter my business- no market. Money don finish for my hand, na from hand to mouth we dey live.*

## *Quality of life*

Results from this study showed clearly that the Covid-19 pandemic brought significant untold hardship, discomfort, pain, anguish and the preexisting level of happiness among the average Nigerian was compromised. Over seventy per cent of our respondents claimed that their wellbeing is nothing to write home about.

People no longer do things nor have access to the things that gives them comfort and make them happy. Many of the respondents are unable to secure comfortable accommodation because they were either ejected by their landlords because they lack the financial capacity to pay. One respondent said:

*“My landlord has given me quit notice. My rent expire during the lockdown. All available financial resources went on buying food items. I have no choice than to move to a residence that is not comfortable nor convenient.”*

Some now trek longer distances because they could no longer afford the increase that came on the cost of transportation as a result of the need to maintain social distance in commuter buses. Three of the respondents said:

1. *Na so so I dey waka about, I no get money for transportation again.*
2. *Cost of transportation has increased. Social distancing has entered the transport system. Sometimes I trek to work in order to cut down transportation cost. I am tired every day.*
3. *Passengers no dey come for motor parks again, many of them dey trek to work and market whenever they get chance. Na big problem for us as transporters.*

Others stated that they now eat what is affordable as against what is suitable; while some respondents claimed that they were not able to access health care facilities at some critical times when they had health challenges. Three of the respondents said:

1. *The thing wey dey pain me be say I no get chance make I see my doctor again o, Na small small medicine I dey buy for corner corner.*
2. *Nobody talk about quality of life anymore these days. Every focus is about how to survive. We eat whatever is available even at the expense of our health. We are praying that things will change.*
3. *During the Covid-19 palaver, na chop money everybody dey find. Health don become secondary matter. Make man chop first.*

In this study, inflation and the continuous devaluation of the Naira was a matter of concern. It was particularly bad for people who earn and live on fixed wages and salaries; and most critical for people who lost their jobs or means of livelihood to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Inflation was a continuous phenomenon occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic because wages and salaries have either stagnated or reduced or outrightly lost. From all indications, the quality of life of the average Nigerian has been compromised as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Two of the respondents spoke:

1. *Inflation no allow us chop better food again o. We just dey fill our stomach with anything that is available. Food na food.*
2. *During Covid-19 pandemic, inflation rose rapidly to over 20%, the value of the naira fell significantly and the thing scattered everybody. I am not eating well anymore, everyday na the same story everywhere for everybody. I am praying make better things happen for Nigeria.*

Finally, sixty per cent of the respondents talked about corruption in government, lack of corporate governance, transparency and allegations of corruption in social intervention programmes in Nigeria. This they believe is having significant impact on their quality of life during the Covid-19 pandemic. Four of the respondents spoke:

1. *People wondered how school children could be fed by the Federal Government while at home with their parents. The Covid-19 social intervention in nothing but a scam.*
2. *This obodo Nigeria no go better, corruption and nepotism don enter everything we dey do. If you no know person, na so you go suffer.*
3. *In Nigeria, those entrusted with governance are not trustworthy. Some people in government refused to distribute the Covid-19 palliatives to the masses. God punish them.*
4. *Covid-19 pandemic is another opportunity for those in power to steal and loot public funds. Accountability is not in our Dictionary in Nigeria. God help the poor and the downtrodden.*

### ***Standard of living***

Empirical evidence from the data generated for this study largely showed that there was a significant fall in the standard of living of the average Nigerian. This is attributed to the following factors:

- (i) Significant loss of incomes among the populace
- (ii) Increasing incidence in the level of unemployment
- (iii) Persistent inflation and continuous devaluation of the Naira and
- (iv) Lack of adequate social security and welfare packages for the average Nigerian.

The Covid-19 pandemic worsened the plight of many Nigerians and left many people struggling to afford and meet other basic needs.

The Federal and State government support, including cash transfers and food assistance reached only an insignificant percentage of the people. Again, what was given from various sources were grossly inadequate to meet the needs of the people. Many people practically live in hunger, starvation and acute state of deprivation.

Two notable extracts from the opinion expressed by three of the respondents corroborates our position:

1. *We no longer eat regularly. Sometimes the formula is 1-0-1 or 0-1-1.*
2. *The price of food, water, transport and other essentials have risen sharply beyond the level of affordability. Government must come to our aid.*
3. *There was hunger before the Covid-19 pandemic. Now the level of Hunger has been aggravated. Who will rescue us?*
4. *My standard of living dropped because of inflation and the corresponding increase in the cost of living occasioned by the Covid-19 pandemic. Life is what matters now.*
5. *To say Covid-19 pandemic is accompanied by massive suffering and hunger is an understatement. Nigerians suffered to no end and without reprieve nor sustained assistance from government.*

## **Discussion of findings**

This study concentrated its focus largely and exclusively on the ways in which Covid-19 pandemic affected three variables and these are: - (i) income, (ii) Quality of Life and, (iii) standard of living. We shall proceed by discussing each of them one after the other.

## *Income*

The findings from this study revealed significantly that Covi-19 pandemic did collateral damage to everybody- be it individuals, groups, religious organizations, corporate bodies and even the government. The pandemic prevented individuals from making money, businessmen from doing their business, churches and mosques from holding their congregational programmes and government ending up with significant decrease in their internally generated revenues. The impact of this problem is more severe at the level of the individuals, most especially traders, the self-employed people, businessmen and those who work in the private sector of the economy.

Again, with the Covid-19 pandemic, some businesses and work organizations closed down and automatically threw their workforce into the already saturated labour market in Nigeria. The period under discussion witnessed mass retrenchment, downsizing, rightsizing in many work places which consequently aggravated the incidence of unemployment and poverty. Some organizations as a coping strategy resorted to payment of half salaries or occasional engagements of workers at reduced rates. This finding corroborate the works of UNDP, (2020A); WHO *et al*, (2020), Inegbedio, (2021) and Ogadimma, (2021) when they argued that the pandemic significantly caused drop in incomes and loss of employment for quite a large chunk of people in the lower segments of the society.

This scenario is a tragedy of unimaginable proportions because of the political economy of the Nigerian state and lack of corporate governance. According to Wallstreet Team (2023), in the western world, access to education, food, clothing, shelter, medical care and essential social services are taken for granted. The people also have the right to security in the case of unemployment, illness, old age, disability, widowhood, or other forms of loss of livelihood due to events beyond their control. But it is sad to report that the opposite is the case in Nigeria. There are no social welfare schemes in place to cushion the overwhelming negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. This finding affirms the UNDP Reports (2020A and 2020B), and Garba,*et al* (2020) where it was specifically stated that there are no adequate social welfare schemes in Nigeria and the macroeconomic policies are not effective,

Again, the problem arising from the lack of social welfare schemes is lack of corporate governance and institutionalized corruption. The government tried to provide some palliatives and financial assistance to cushion the effect of the pandemic. But this did not work because it was paltry and the process of distribution was compromised by the unscrupulous politicians who diverted the palliatives to their

party loyalists and cronies. In many states of the federation, the government stored the food meant for distribution until the poor attacked the store houses and looted the food items. This corroborates the report of Sanni, (2020); and Human Rights Watch and Justice and Empowerment Initiatives, (2020) when they reported how the distribution of palliatives were largely compromised.

### *Standard of living*

Findings from this study indicates that Standard of Living (SOL) fell significantly for more than 60% of the respondents in this study. The fall is associated with traders, artisans, self-employed, private businessmen and most of those who work in private organizations. This is because the incomes of people in these categories fell significantly while some experienced zero level incomes as a result of downsizing and retrenchment in their work places.

But for those who work in the public sector and big conglomerates like Banks among others, the contrary is the case. This is because government at all levels in Nigeria and the big bureaucracies paid their employees regularly during the pandemic. This is understandable because both the government and the big bureaucracies had the capacity to pay during the period without compromising the standard of living of their employees.

It is evidently clear from our findings in this study that a downward review or outright loss of incomes automatically triggers a fall in the standard of living of the people concerned. In essence, income and standard of living are closely interrelated in a way that a fall or loss of income will trigger a corresponding fall in the standard of living; most especially in a nation where appropriate social welfare scheme is not put in place.

Again, the political economy of the Nigerian state is tailored in such a manner that enhances a regime of inequalities- anti-people policies, poor macroeconomic framework and endemic poverty thereby compromising the plight of the working class and the masses. This is line with the submission of Inegbedio (2021) when he argued that Covid-19 pandemic deepened the severity of poverty in Nigeria because the government did not have any structure to protect the masses and the downtrodden.

Our main thesis in this section is that if all things remain equal, when income falls, the standard of living falls and *vice versa*.

## *Quality of life*

The findings on the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on QoL in Nigeria is revealing. The findings are presented along these thematic issues:

- (i) Leisure and social interactions
- (ii) Material living conditions (income, consumption and material conditions)
- (iii) Economic security and physical safety, and
- (iv) Governance and basic rights.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Leisure and social interactions were significantly curtailed as a result of the restrictions by the government. The Law enforcement agents complied with the restrictions to the letter. Partying, clubbing and all forms of asocial gathering were proscribed. Leisure and recreational activities in the public places were prohibited. In general, social life was placed under significant restrictions, and this was significantly affirmed by Ogadimma, (2021).

It is important to reiterate the fact that at this time under review, the material living conditions- income, consumptions and material conditions of the people were significantly affected adversely. As a result of falls or outright loss of incomes, people's welfare- what they eat, drink and wear were compromised. Most of our respondents; 56% of them stated that they could no longer afford to eat their regular meals and the conventional three square meals per day. Some of the respondents resorted to food rationing and skipping meals thereby compromising their dietary standards. This corroborates the findings of Amusan and Agunyai (2021) when they reported severe food crisis in many Nigerian households during the pandemic.

Some of our respondents, 42% of them stated that they could not afford to pay electricity bills and slept in the dark at some point during the pandemic; while about 40% of them no longer have access to safe water. Again, 30% of the respondents disengaged from using their personal automobiles and resorted to trekking and using public transport; while 52% of them could no longer pay their health bills. Others claimed that they stopped attending clinic altogether thereby compromising their health.

In terms of economic and physical security, 57% of the respondents confirmed that their economic security was compromised largely because of falls in incomes, outright loss of incomes, persistent inflation and instability in the value of the domestic

currency- the Naira. This category of respondents argued that the government palliatives and other forms of financial assistance were grossly inadequate and did not go round the working class people and the masses. They recalled that it was party loyalists and the cronies of the ruling elite that benefitted from these palliatives.

Furthermore, 50% of the respondents stated that during the pandemic, their physical safety and personal security were compromised. It was reported that the incidence of thefts, robberies, kidnapping, and abductions among others increased during the Covid-19 pandemic. This finding corroborates the findings of Osah and Adewumi, (2020); Ogadimma, (2021) and Adebajo, (2022) where they concluded that Covid-19 pandemic increase the incidence of criminality and security challenge in Nigeria.

With regard to Governance and Basic Rights, 70% of the respondents argued that the restrictions on movement and social activities is nothing more than a direct encroachment into the “fundamental human right” of the people as entrenched in the Nigerian constitution which allows freedom of movement and association. They went further by saying that the restrictions on movement hindered their capacity to earn incomes. The issue of corruption and lack of corporate governance also came up again. Nigerians don’t trust their leaders sufficiently while they described the palliatives offered by government and the financial assistance as a scam. A particular reference case was cited as a typical example:

The Minister of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development reported that a sum of #523.27m was spent on the “Home Grown School Feeding Programme” on 124,589 households across the Federal Capital Territory, Lagos and Ogun states during the Covid-19 lockdown.(Sanni, 2020)

Members of the public, the media and the civil societies queried the rationale for this unsubstantiated public spending and described it as an evidence of corruption by those entrusted with governance. The following questions were posed: (i) who are the vulnerable people befitting from the palliatives and process used for the selection and distribution. (ii) Why was the distribution done when the schools were shut down during the pandemic and (iii) how were the school children identified and tracked? From all indications and the perspective of our respondents, allegations of corruption in social intervention programmes abound in Nigeria and this have direct negative impact on the Quality of Life of the people.

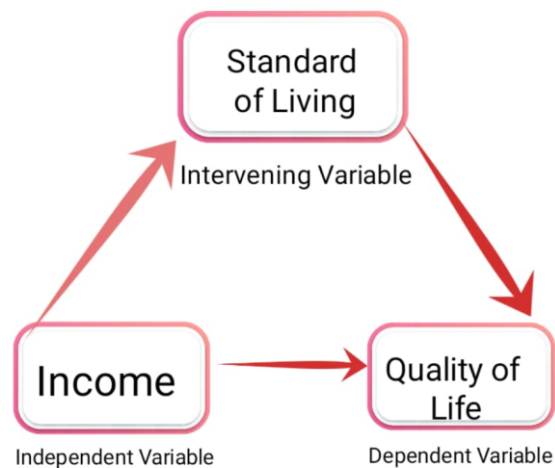
The findings from this study shows very clearly the relationship among the three variables used for the analysis and discussions. The findings showed clearly that when



income falls, or it is lost or denied; it automatically triggers a corresponding fall in the Standard of Living and this again triggers a corresponding fall in the Quality of Life. Income is therefore at the centre and main determinant in the analysis. From all indications, Income appear to be the strongest and the most potent variable and is taken as the independent variable. The more potent between the two remaining variables is the Standard of Living; and is taken as the intervening variable while Quality of Life is taken as the dependent

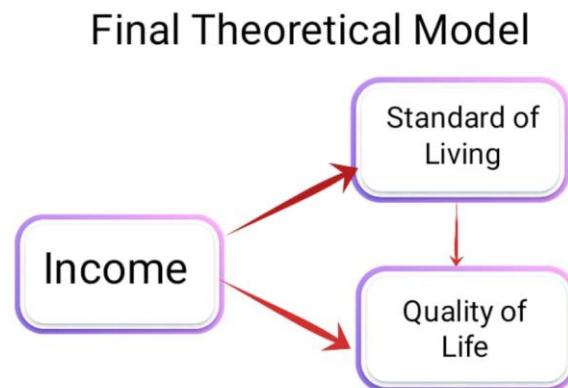
Again, the foregoing discussions among the variables also indicates that both the Standard of Living and Quality of Life are determined and significantly influenced by Income directly without taking any of them as the intervening variable. The foregoing discussions are illustrated in the Figures 1 and 2 as presented here:

**Figure 1: Initial Theoretical Model of the Relationship among Income, Standard of Living and Quality of Life.**



Source: Original Illustration by the Author.

**Figure 2: Final Theoretical Model of the Relationship among Income, Standard of Living, and Quality of Life.**



Source: Original Illustration by the Author.

## **Recommendations**

Every social problem has a sociological dimension and Covid-19 pandemic is not an exception. We shall now turn to me some recommendations arising from the findings in this study. Empirical evidence from this study showed and suggest that there is clearly the inevitable need to obtain very accurate figures about the incidence of the Covid-19 in Nigeria. This is because the incidence of the Covid-19 pandemic is under reported. This will enable the government to plan adequately about how to effectively tackle the pandemic and at the same time tackle all manners of social problems emanating from it.

The Covid-19 crisis has revealed and highlighted the critical need for a robust and functioning social security system to allow all Nigerians to achieve an adequate standard of living.

All the different types of palliatives were identified by our respondents and information gathered from the secondary sources. So much needs to be done in this area of palliatives most especially in the area of cash transfer initiative and food assistance. First is the fact that government should improve efforts towards enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the distributive mechanisms to reach people that are worst hit by the pandemic. Empirical findings in this study suggests that on many occasions, the so-called food shared did not get to the poor and the downtrodden.

One notable observation in this study about the poor and casual workers is that this category of people doesn't usually have savings. This is because little or nothing is

left from their wages or daily earnings after catering for the essentials of life. The poor live daily and from the hand to the mouth. Whenever there is any crisis or pandemic, they are usually the worst hit. This category of people needs to be helped with all manners of social welfare packages whenever there is a crisis and government must be proactive about this.

Second, there are no laid down parameters for determining the beneficiaries. Whenever anything free is being doled out in Nigeria, everyone struggles for it whether they are eligible or not. The eligibility criteria for determining who gets the palliatives must be objectively stated from the start.

In addition, there was evidence that the process of distribution of palliatives became highly politicized in many places. Some politicians restricted the sharing of the palliatives to party loyalists and supporters. This is not a good report about the process of distributing the palliatives and must be revisited in subsequent exercises to ensure fairness and equity.

Finally, the agencies of government such as National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) and the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social Development must be proactive and sufficiently empowered to tackle all manners of pandemics and emergencies whenever they occur. It is clear from all indications that the Covid-19 pandemic caught Nigeria largely in a state of unpreparedness and this must be avoided in the future.

## **Conclusion**

Covid-19 pandemic took the battle to the world unprepared; the world has no choice but to fight back. One basic philosophy of life is that you don't solve a problem by running away from the problem, but you tackle the problem head-on. Covid-19 pandemic is devastating, catastrophic and deadly, and as such, we must plan consciously to reduce the incidence of the mortality, morbidity, and all manners of the social problems associated with the pandemic.

Our final thesis is that this needed intervention must be done on three fronts. First is the need to tackle the coronavirus itself and prevent it from escalating and doing more damage to our nation and the world at large. Second, is the categorical imperative and need to tackle all the social problems originating from the Covid-19 pandemic. This requires both conscious and concerted efforts of individuals and the government, but it

is a task that must be done. Third, is the fact that the social welfare package in Nigeria is still far from what is obtainable in the western world like America, Germany, Britain, France and Canada among others. There is the categorical need for the institutionalization of a new political economy and macro-economic policies that favours the working class and the masses in general.

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