

# A Multi-Sectoral Assessment of the Impacts of Covid-19 Pandemic Outbreak on Organisational Functionality in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examined the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the functionality of organizations in Nigeria. The study is qualitative and adopted a phenomenology design, with primary data collection instrument consisting of interviews and observations. 15 participants were adopted from five organizations each; selected purposively from five notable sectors in the country. Analysis was issued-based and focused on the use of a priori themes such as provided by the research questions of the study. Findings revealed that one of the differentiating impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on organizations was based on their forms of operation and the level to which their services or functions were digitized or virtual. While some organizations have only been able to operate minimally, others have shifted their focus to their online platforms. This paper concludes by affirming that while most crisis events have adverse effects and damage to the organization, the approach and strategic response of organization is a key factor in determining the level of their loss, and their capacity for resilience and stability in such crisis. The paper further recommends that: (1) organisations should increase the digitalization of their activities and works especially in this period of the Covid-19 pandemic (2) Organizations should focus on building robust and yet flexible operational processes not fixated by location or region given the dynamic nature of the business environment.

**KEYWORDS:** Organizational functionality, COVID-19, Pandemic, Banking, Transportation, Agriculture, Hospitality, Education

## INTRODUCTION

The world woke up in the year 2020 with great hope and flamboyant expectations about the new year. Unknown to all however, a terrible threat was lurking around and waiting for a bold manifestation. The name later became Coronavirus. This strange disease has altered nearly everything one can think of, yet its ravaging consequences remain ongoing, with great impact on the health, social, religious and economic life of people. Due to the insufficient knowledge about the mode of transmission of the disease, world leaders were quick to impose various degrees of restriction on the freedom that people hitherto enjoyed with respect to the mode of associating with others.

In Nigeria like most other countries, the federal government-imposed restriction of movements across states and cities. State governments also restricted both intercity and intracity movements. Beyond the restriction of movements, large human gatherings were prohibited making it difficult for businesses to operate. In some extreme situations, people were asked not to go out of their houses except on state permission. These restrictions and the fear associated with the coronavirus pandemic brought about unforeseen troubles for business organisations. These troubles are so

strange and lacks any documented solutions. Consequently, the functionality and survival of these businesses have been terribly threatened. It is on this backdrop that this study was initiated to ascertain the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on corporate functionality and the response strategies adopted by organisations. To achieve the objectives of this study, some research questions are put forward as follows:

1. What key functions of organizations are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. How does the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic differ across industries?
3. What strategies have been adopted to address the COVID-19 pandemic by organizations?

## Literature

### Theoretical Foundation

#### Situational Attribution Theory

The general statement of the situational attribution theory follows the view that individuals or groups often base their actions on their judgement and interpretation of causes or events external to them (Coombs & Holladay, 1996; Coombs, 2007). That is to say, decisions and behaviour are explained from the position of the context of the individual or

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organization. The application of the situational attribution theory varies given its noted flexibility in explaining not only group behaviour but individual choices and decisions (Lalonde, 2004). In applying it in this study, one may argue that decisions of organizations and their choice of methods in dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic should be such that emanates from an understanding of their own context. That is to say, an effective crisis response strategy against the COVID-19 pandemic should be such that emerges not from borrowed models but rather, solutions or approaches premised on the experiences and shared interpretations of the members of the group.

Ulmer, Seeger and Sellnow (2007) opined that organizations are key players within their societies as their activities drive and provide for the wellbeing, growth and development of such societies. Organizations can therefore be considered a growth machinery of their societies. Unfortunately, societies are complex and comprise of a mix of dynamic factors which interact on a daily basis, producing both positive and negative effects on the functionality of the organization (Coombs & Holladay, 1996). While sometimes organizations may stand to benefit from the availing opportunities within their environment, there are certain times when their environment spews out issues or situations that may be possible as considerable crisis and risk to the organization's functionality; one of such is the recent COVID-19 pandemic which has of recent disrupted the functionality and operations of organizations and their relative markets and economies across the world.

A strong and effective response strategy would as such focus first on identifying the unique characteristics of the industry, build on the competencies and strength of the organization, and thereafter develop strategies and response approaches which accommodate the unique characteristics of their industry (Coombs, 2007). According to the situational attribution theory, organizations will be more informed about the requirements and necessary response design for addressing their situations if they understand and have good knowledge of the possible ways such crisis event could affect their organization. In this way, responses would also be channelled towards protecting the vulnerable features and functions of the organization. Lalonde (2004) affirmed that crisis management is a primary function of the leadership of the organization; and the success of which defines their knowledge ability of their organization, functions and their environment.

The situational attribution theory, offers the required framework and foundation for this study in its assessment of the nature of impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on organizations, and the basis of such, as well as the unique attributes that define the industry of the organization, in the development of strategic responses. The theory as such, offers explanation on the need for responses which are premised on not only addressing the spread and impact of crisis on the organization, but which are also considerate of the nature and distinct attributes of the organization. This position is captured in Coombs (2007) that while crisis situations may have significant impact on the organization, the decisions and approach towards ameliorating such impacts may, if not effective, further aggravate and amplify the crisis and lead to more grievous situations.

### **The COVID-19 Pandemic and the Nigerian Situation**

The origin of Covid-19 is from Wuhan City in China. It is a disease that was first observed in non-humans caused by virus called Corona. Covid-19 is an acronym for 'Corona Virus Disease' which was discovered in December, 2019, hence the name 'Covid-19'. Classified as a type B, the human to human spreading of the virus occurs due to close contact with an infected person, exposed to coughing, sneezing, respiratory droplets (Shereen & Siddique, 2020). This virus was considered a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on the 11<sup>th</sup> of March 2020.

COVID-19 pandemic is a global health crisis of our time and poses great challenge on the health of people. The fight against the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic is such that has generally focused on the control of movement and isolation. Governments around the world have in most instances resorted to lockdown measures and in most cases adopted strict control of social interactions through the enforcement of social distancing and the use of masks in public places (CSE Africa, 2020). While most developed nations such as the United States, France, Italy, and Britain have emphasized on a complete closure of interstate borders and strict stay-at-home policy; one finds that within such measures and actions pre-installed mechanisms and systems which facilitate the ease of the process (CSE Africa, 2020). This is because apart from the high-end technological advancements in knowledge and information management, their economic systems are also robust and thus allows for them to offer substantial support and palliatives to their citizenry and business owners as a way of compensating for any loss or discomfort during the period of the lockdown (Laurence, 2011).

On the other hand, the Nigerian government, like most other African countries, have had a history of debt, weak institutions, poverty and a high level of corruption and greed which over the years have crystallized into the realities and norm of their societies (Aregbeshola & Khan, 2018; Adeniran & Sidiq, 2018). Their adoption of the lockdown measure as an approach towards addressing the COVID-19 pandemic was marked by an increased level of disenchantment and frustration by the populace – especially since no adequate measures were taken to address the loss and living conditions of the citizenry (Ozili & Arun, 2020; The African Report, 2020; Muhammed, Abdulkareem & Chowdhury, 2017). The worst hit were the businesses and industries which had to either suspend all activities due to government orders, or operate on a scale highly inefficient, discomfiting and inconsistent with prior business standards and models. These have worsened the situation and contributed to an increased level of insecurity within the country, loss of jobs, crime, a decrement in living conditions and lack of trust (Ozili & Arun, 2020). Worse still is the fact that despite substantial financial contributions from well-meaning citizens and institutions, most of these monies have gone unaccounted for given the poor claims of disbursement and lost records.

The adverse effects of these events have taken serious toll on the functionality of organizations and industries within the country. As demonstrated in the previous paragraph, the imperatives of an effective and well-grounded strategy go a long way in not only addressing the health and mortality implications of the COVID-19 pandemic, but also ensure that

the economic and living condition aspects of the country are sustained through the functionality of its industries. For as King (2002) observed, crisis management strategies should primarily protect and secure the continuity of the organization and not further its demise and loss. It is as Roux-Dufort (2000) also noted that the goal of any crisis response strategy should be to secure and shield the organization or industries weak spots from further damage and as such, effective policies would be such that are structured to provide flexible options for progress or stability despite the turmoil and challenges associated by crisis events (Pollard & Hotho, 2006; Choi, Sung & Kim, 2010).

Having established the need for a revisiting of the country's strategic response to the COVID-19 pandemic, given the distinctiveness of contexts and unique industry forms, this paper addressed the experiences of selected organizations within some notable industries in the country, Nigeria. The idea is to identify the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic has affected their functions and their relative response strategy in coping and addressing the menace. This would also help identify the unique characteristics of each industry and as such pave the way for further policy designs structured in way that is considerate of these unique characteristics. The following sections therefore address the empirical features and aspects of the study and provide insight as regards the experiences, encounters and behaviour of organizations amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Research Methodology

The research design adopted in this investigation is the phenomenology design. This choice follows the goal of the research to identify and investigate the experiences of individuals and groups within a context and in line with occurrences and events within the same context (Daly, 2007). The population for this study comprises of 25 organizations from 5 different industries within the country – Nigeria. The specific organizations are their related industries are as follows –

1. **Banking industry** – (a) First bank of Nigeria, (b) Access bank (c) Polaris bank, (d) Wema bank, (e) United Bank for Africa (UBA)
2. **Transport industry**– (a) Greno Inter-City Express Ltd, (b) G. Agofure Motors, (c) ABC Transport Company, (d) God Is Good Motors (e) Peace Mass Transit
3. **Education industry**– (a) University of Port Harcourt, (b) American University of Nigeria, (c) Lagos State University, (d) Rivers State University (e) Covenant University of Nigeria
4. **Hospitality industry**– (a) Novotel hotel, (b) Igoni Grand View Hotel, (c) Aldgate Congress and Resort, (d) Le Meridian Hotel, (e) Mingi Hotel
5. **Agriculture industry**– (a) Vegetable Farmers in Rivers State, (b) Tomatoes and Fruit (Water Melon, Cucumber, Pineapple), (c) Farmers in the North, (d) Siat (Palm Oil Farmers and Producers), (e) Yam Farmers in Rivers State, Poultry Farmers (Vintage Farms Rivers State)

Three referents are selected from each of the organizations, giving a total of 75 participants for the study in line with Firmin (2008) view that the emphasis of qualitative research is not placed on the sample representativeness but rather on the indepthness of experiences and the quality of the observations.

Data were gathered from primary and secondary sources. The primary instruments for data collection were the interview and observation while the secondary source of data collection was through the internet. The design for the interviews was that of one-on-one with open-ended questions supported with re-emphatic questions for opinion verification. Interviews were very brief but consistent across participants and organizations with a maximum time range of 15 minutes. Observations were carried out through the researchers' visit to some of the organizations with notes taken on the functionality and on-going actions or inactions at these organizations. Analysis of the study is issue-based and adopted a priori themes as the basis for labelling and categorization. The computer assisted qualitative software utilized in the analysis of the data was the MAXQDA software version 2018.

### Findings

The findings of this study are reported in line with the experiences of the respondents within the organizations in each industry.

#### The Banking Industry:

As the reality of Covid-19 pandemic fully unfolds, businesses, particularly the banking sector has been greatly impacted. Some aspects of their operations were badly disrupted, as all banks were shutdown at some point. While some banks are still suffering from the impact of the pandemic, others have perfectly adjusted to ensure continued service delivery. The following are the findings of the impact of Covid-19 and the response strategies of some banks studied.

#### First bank of Nigeria

First Bank Nigeria Limited is a premier bank in West Africa, established in 1894. It offers comprehensive retail and financial services through more than 57,000 business outlets to over 17 million customer accounts. First bank has its subsidiaries in UK, Republic of Congo, Ghana, Gambia, Guinea, Sierra-Leone and Senegal.

Respondents from this bank on the key features and functions affected by the COVID-19 pandemic noted that the impact of the pandemic was more significant on functions related to their physical operations such as customer servicing at branch offices, and access to supplies such as diesel service. *Most of our office utilities are drawn from the organizations considered as non-essential so it affected us seriously.* Respondents also noted that: *Given the low turnout of customers at the offices, some staff were asked to stay back and some branch activities suspended, thereby raising tensions and concerns about job security and continuity of work in the organization.* Another respondent noted that: *With all the suspension going on, a lot of relationships were strained and a lot of workers were really tensed up.*

One of the major characteristics of the banking industry as respondents affirmed is its capacity for both online and physical service offerings. While some customers (mostly the elderly ones) had some challenge with shifting their banking transactions towards a more dominant online function, the use of internet banking increased and more clients/customers were able to adjust over time. One of the respondents noted that: *The shift was also considered a good thing for us as it reduced some of the crowding and social control issues at some branches, especially after the lockdown*

periods. Notes taken from the observation also reiterate this fact as evidence revealed social control systems where customer waiting spots were moved outside the banking halls and the use of face-masks were considered as mandatory before entry. All first bank branches visited also showed a lower number of staff as compared to periods prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Access Bank Nigeria

Access bank is a full-service commercial bank operating through a network of 600 branches and service outlets, spanning three continents, 12 countries and has 29 million customers. Due to merger, the bank employed 28,000 people in its operations, sub-Sahara Africa and the United Kingdom with representative offices in China, Lebanon, India and UAE. Following observations and notes, it was found that, Access bank suspended operations in some branches at vulnerable spots. This made it difficult for many of their outsourced workers to perform duties as usual. This also raised serious concerns on job security as the rumour making the rounds had it that the bank had plans of dismissing 75% of its workforce as well as close 300 branches. This position was cleared as the bank stressed that the closure of banks needs the approval of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN), that what was done was the suspension of operations following the directive of CBN. A respondent affirmed that, due to the impact of Covid-19, not all its branches would be fully opened for in-branch services until later in the year.

A major response strategy adopted by the bank to mitigate the effect of the pandemic on its operations, is to open ten (10) Access CLOSA outlets in six cities in Nigeria. The CLOSA branches are Access Bank's Branded Cabins situated in Metropolitan areas offering banking services for its customers. According to a respondent, the branches/outlets will be located not less than three kilometres or not more than twenty kilometres from the nearest existing Access bank branch and would offer banking services such as, cash deposit and withdrawals (no third party withdrawals), customer on-boarding, funds transfer subject to the limit of N150,000, BVN enrolment, card issuance, card activation, cheque deposit, bills payment and ATM services. According to the respondent, these CLOSA branches will be managed by Access Bank and Agency Banking Representatives. It was also found that, the bank has urged its customers to leverage in their digital channels in carrying out transactions.

### Polaris Bank

Polaris Bank was established by the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) on September 21, 2018. It commenced service having purchased the defunct Skye bank. It has over 300 branches in every corner of the country and prides itself in delivery exceptional customer experience leveraging best in Information Communication Technology.

Given the level of disruption Covid-19 has caused in the banking business operations, Polaris bank physical banking services were affected and some branches temporary shutdown to ensure the safety of their staff and customers. It was observed that, all non-essential visitors were advised to contact them through digital, virtual and online channels, including social media, telephone, e-mails and calls to promote social distancing. Entrance into all their branches was limited, also international travels were banned for their staff and staff who returned from other countries were asked to compulsorily self-isolate for fourteen days.

According to a respondent, the response strategy of the bank to the Covid-19 situation was to activate its Business Continuity Plan in order to keep their banking services available. Consequently, they have:

1. Strengthened their digital banking platform to cater for the expected significant increase in level of transactions.
2. Upgrade their Information Technology infrastructure to keep their digital service efficient.
3. To put recovery centers in place to enable them respond to potential business disruptions in the shortest possible time frame.

### WEMA Bank

WEMA bank is a Nigeria commercial bank founded in May 1945; its headquarters is in Lagos Island and has its branches in South-South, South West and Federal Capital Territory, Nigeria. It operates a network of over 149 branches and services station backed by robust ICT platform across Nigeria.

Like every other bank, it was observed that WEMA bank had its physical operations disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic such as, customer service, withdrawals and deposit over the counter. Despite the impact of Covid-19 on the banking sector, a respondent noted that, the disruption has had a positive impact on WEMA bank. This is as the bank was able to achieve all of its plans, one of which is making WEMA Alat a strong platform where customers 'cash out' with so much ease.

A major Strategy advanced by this bank as response to the pandemic and to mitigate its sore effect on their customers was to put in place a Business Continuity Plan, such as WEMA Alat designed to ensure that business operations are not badly impacted. WEMA bank has also offered its customers a moratorium on repayment of SME loans during the pandemic as noted by another respondent. The bank in putting certain framework in place to ensure its staff are equipped and the safety of its customers across all its physical touch points.

### United Bank for Africa plc (UBA)

UBA Plc. is a Pan African financial bank established in 1949 with its headquarters in Nigeria. It has subsidiaries in 20 African countries and offices in London, Paris and New York. The Covid-19 had a toll on the business operations of UBA as some core aspects of their physical functions were disrupted since banks were shut down and sometimes opened only for five hours in a day.

As a way of responding to the pandemic in order to meet the needs of customers, UBA upgraded its banking applications with a digital dominance across Africa. Another respondent emphasized that *UBA has provided the best value for their customers through a more interactive and user-friendly interface that will give customers all over Africa access to banking right from the comfort of their home*. Other advancement made in response to the pandemic are: the introduction of UBA Bumper Account, Target Account and Diaspora Banking all targeted at Africans.

### Transport industry

The transport industry is one of the industries that have been impacted on by this pandemic. Road transport industry is one of the industries that cannot be done without. Their services are so essential that without them, it would be

difficult surviving as we all need food, medical products, drinks, sanitary product and human carried about from one place to another to sustain human existence. Road transportation is the backbone of global network. Technologies vary greatly in efficiency, efficiency determines how fast human capital and consumables are able to get to where they are needed, and road transportation has greatly enhanced this distribution to a very large extent. Farmers wouldn't have been able to get their produce to the market without road transportation. Even those who love flying (aircraft) cannot get to the airport without the support of road transport. However, COVID-19 pandemic has greatly influenced the operations of this industry. This impact boomerangs as it affects other sector of the economy either negatively or positively. This segment looks at the five land/road transport companies within Port Harcourt and the various impact the pandemic has had or still having on them.

### **Greno Inter-City Express Ltd.**

Greno Inter-City Express is an indigenous road transport company that was established in the year 2000 with its head office at Abuja. It was initially introduced to cater for intra city transport within Abuja metropolis but later went into intercity services. Their major routes are Port Harcourt to Abuja and Port Harcourt to Lagos. The company's Port Harcourt office is situated at number 7, Olu obasanjo road, adjacent Rivers Transport Company. The company uses the Sienna type of SUV and has staff strength of about 40 personnel. This includes drivers, mechanics and admin staff. An inquiry into their salary structure revealed that each driver is paid the sum of #20,000 on monthly basis.

A chat with the Managing Director of the company – Mr. Thomas Trever revealed the following:

- A. The fare from Port Harcourt to Abuja that initially cost #8,000 has been increased to #15,000 while Port Harcourt to Lagos that initially cost #7,000 has been increase to @12,000.
- B. When asked about the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on their operations, he posits that the impact is a positive one because:
  1. It has increased per capital income for the business. Before COVID-19 pandemic, the total amount received per trip was fifty six thousand naira only (#56,000) but now receives seventy five thousand naira (#75,000).
  2. It makes their work easier since they do not need to take more than five (5) passengers in a trip as against the seven (7) previously carried.
  3. It has reduced the weight of load on the vehicle because of the reduction in the number of passengers conveyed from 7 to 5 and
  4. Has helped their company to restructure their services to customers' needs.

To Greno Inter-City Express Ltd. COVID-19 is a blessing in disguise because of its positive effect. One would have expected a decrease in the number of passengers because of the increase in transport fare but surprisingly, the researcher met quite a number of persons who were waiting for charter services especially to Abuja, Lagos and Kano.

A further inquiry into their response strategies to curb the effect of COVID-19 portrays the following:

1. Wearing of face mask is a most for all passengers and employees.

2. Provision of temperature checks for all passengers before embarking on a journey and after disembarking from the vehicle.
3. Provision of hand sanitizer for both passengers and customers at their offices.

### **G. AGOFURE MOTORS (GAM)**

The Agofure Motors is an indigenous road transport company established in 1995 with head office at P.T.I. Road, Effurun, Delta State. Their Port Harcourt Office is situated at number 9 Oluobasanjo road, by waterlines. The company engages in inter-state and inter city services within Nigeria. The company prides itself with providing world-class comfort to travellers who would otherwise use air service and are accustomed to a certain level of comfort. The company has terminals across different part of Nigeria such as Lagos, Abuja, Port Harcourt, Onitsha, Enugu, etc.

Agofure Motors has a variety of passenger capacity vehicles which includes the Scania Marcopolo, Toyota Coaster, Toyota Hiace and Coaster buses with passenger capacity that ranges from 59 to 29. Their staff strength is over 200 inclusive of drivers, mechanics and administration personnel. Their terminals are across states in the country excluding Edo and core Northern States. The company engages in haulages services for individuals and businesses seeking to transport large materials and goods around cities and within the country as well as providing courier services across the nation.

The drivers in this company are not placed on monthly salary but paid according to the number of trips they travel. For example, a driver who conveys passengers to Warri is paid one thousand five hundred naira (#1,500) per trip while trips to Lagos attracts payment of four thousand (#4,000).

COVID-19 seems to have its toll on Agofure Motors as evidenced from information elicited from the Manager of their Port Harcourt Office. He narrated that before COVID-19 pandemic, the company used to load as much as 20 buses especially during festive periods to Edo and Lagos state. But the pandemic has reduced the number of vehicles loaded to about one or two. He lamented that often times, unregistered vehicles that loads along the road charge prices that are disturbing thereby depriving them of such passengers. He further went to state that there have been drastic reduction in the number of staff and a cut in the salaries of the admin staff. He narrated that the Scania Marcopolo with passenger capacity of fifty nine (59) has been reduced to twenty nine (29) with a little increment in the transport fare. The Toyota Coaster and Hiace with passenger capacity of fifteen (15) has also been reduced to nine (9) followed with a little increment in the cost of fare. It was discovered that the fare from Port Harcourt to Lagos which initially cost seven thousand, five hundred and fifty naira (#7,550) has been increased to eleven thousand, two hundred and fifty naira (#11,250) while trip from Port Harcourt to Warri that initially cost two thousand, five hundred and fifty naira (#2,550) now goes for three thousand, seven hundred and fifty naira (#3,750). However, the amount paid her drivers was not increased. Thus, reduction in number of passengers coupled with increasing cost of maintenance negatively impacted on Agofure Motors.

Agofure Motors response strategies adopted are as follows:

1. Increment in transport fare
2. Layoff of some administrative staff.
3. Removal of money paid on luggage to attract new customers and retain old ones.
4. Friendlier clerks
5. All staff and passengers must wear face masks.
6. Hand sanitizers and washing of hands for passengers.

### ABC TRANSPORT COMPANY

The ABC transport company is also an indigenous land transport company established in 1993 with its head office at Owerri in Imo State. The company provides road transport services within and outside Nigeria. The company classifies its coach services into the executive express, shuttle services, coach West Africa, cargo express, sleeper services and sprinter service. Its bus capacity ranges from 14 to 52 seater vehicles. Due to its relentless efforts in providing quality transport services across West Africa, it has earned a number of awards. In ABC, online booking options are available through the company's website or mobile app. A 5% discount is given when a commuter books via their mobile app. The requirement for a trip to another West Africa country is: a current international passport/Ecowas passport and a current vaccination against yellow fever amongst other things. The Coach West Africa comes with the following facilities: air-conditioning, on-board TV, luxurious seats. Toilet facility and cold-bar and restaurant services. As a way to encourage patronage, every passenger who make up to eleven trips within a year is given a free ticket to his/her twelfth trip including a gold card which entitles such to some privileges. They also offer discounted fare to students and youth corpors who have valid identity card and 50% discount for children. Her drivers are well trained and maintain a standard speed to ensure the safety of its passengers. The company also provides city transit inn to her passengers in Abuja at a very moderate cost. The company's City Transit Inn has a luxurious and well-furnished room perfect for leisure and business.

ABC cargo express services allows items of various weight and sizes to be delivered to their destinations across and outside the country.

ABC routes from Port Harcourt are Abuja, Lagos, Awka, Calabar, Enugu, Owerri and Uyo. The Coach West Africa takes passengers to and from Accra in Ghana, Lome in Togo and Kouhounou in Cotonou.

COVID-19 pandemic also has its toll on the management and staff of ABC transport company as evidenced in the number of passengers' bookings in their dockets. Before the pandemic, the sprinter service (non-video 14-seater) used to take seven thousand and fifty-naira (#7,050) for trips from Port Harcourt to Abuja but now charges ten thousand five hundred-naira (#10,500) with only seven (7) passengers per trip. Port Harcourt to Lagos which use to be six thousand five hundred and fifty naira (#6,550) now goes for ten thousand six hundred naira. A further inquiry into the impact of covid-19 on their operations revealed that there had been a decrease in the number of clerks and motor boy. However, there is no decrease in the salary of their staff.

ABC response strategies towards this pandemic portrays a little bit of creativity as water dispenser for hot water was

displayed in their Elioizu office, also hand sanitizer and hand washing bucket and soap was put at strategic points in their office. They admit if this pandemic prevails, they may have to delve into other business venture or go into partnership with other road transport company to avoid cancelling of trips as a result of few passengers. If this collaboration is done, it will be the first of its kind, although the spokesperson talked with did not disclose the transport company they intend collaborating with.

### GOD IS GOOD MOTORS (GIGM)

God Is Good Motors (GIGM) is also an indigenous road transport company incorporated in 1998. Its headquarter is located at Benin-City of Edo state. GIGM is among the leading transport operators in Nigeria that provides transport facilities within and outside the country. The company offers courier services through their subsidiary named GIG logistics. The logistic unit provides domestic, corporate and international courier solutions. They offer e-commerce logistic services which supports business to business, business to customer and multiple channel retailer logistic solutions. Also, bus charter/hire services are available.

Their vehicles are of different types, they include: Toyota haice buses, Toyota sienna minibuses, Mercedes benz sprinter buses and the luxury GIGM.com prime buses. They also offer pick-up services for light travellers and those not able to find their way around their various parks. GIGM makes an estimate of fifty (50) trips daily around their twenty nine (29) terminals across the country.

This transport and logistics company had their fair share on the impact of COVID-19. Their Port Harcourt office visited at number 228, Aba Road, by Bori-Camp was met with scanty passengers booking to various destinations even though the researcher got there before 8:00am on Wednesday. That period is usually their rush hour. Surprisingly, no vehicle had embarked on any trip as at that period owing to the fact that passengers were very few. The account officer who doubles as the manager stated that trips to Abuja had been cancelled twice because of lack of passengers. He declared that the number of passengers per trip has been reduced to half of what they were loading before the pandemic. However, there had been slight upward review of cost of fare. He also affirms that the number of staff has been slashed to accommodate the new management style. This is to enable the company to be able to attain their vision and mission and compete favorably in the industry. Their response strategies include (a) maintaining of 6ft (2m) distance from other travellers at all times (b) washing of hands before purchasing ticket and boarding (c) the use of face mask is compulsory (d) a slight increase in the cost of fare and (e) staff layoff.

### PEACE MASS TRANSIT (PMT)

Peace Mass Transit (PMT), a subsidiary of Peace Group Nigeria, is an indigenous transport company that was established in 1995. The transport company commenced operations with only two buses at their UNN, Nsuka office. However, the company currently have a fleet of almost 2000 buses including Foton and Toyota Hummer buses. The company's head office is situated at number 4 Okpara Avenue, Enugu while their Port Harcourt office is located at number 216 Aba Road. PMT delivers road transport services to major cities across the country. Reservations are made online through their website and payment is also done over

the counter for those not able to make online bookings and reservations. A chat with the head of operations at their Port Harcourt office uncovered the following: (a) COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacts the company as they are yet to get the kind of rush envisaged (b) there is decline in passengers and revenue, (c) employees not directly linked to the operations of the company were asked to leave, they include the janitors, and few of the counter cashier whose duty was to receive payment.

Their response strategies were similar to other road transport companies. They are (a) increase in transport fare (b) total compliance with COVID-19 procedures such as compulsory wearing of face mask by passengers, temperature checks on all passengers and customers, washing of hands with soap and water and the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers (c) redundancy, only personnel directly linked to their operations were retained.

Having looked at the various impact of COVID-19 on road transport companies, it is important to mention that its effect is not totally bad because these companies have found a way to shift the negative outcomes on their passengers. Whether a passenger likes it or not, the bulk of the load is spread amongst them through the increase in the cost of transportation. Also, it is pertinent to note that the vehicles used in these operations will also benefit because the weight per trip on these vehicles have reduced and social distancing is maintained, the era where passengers will have to be packed like sardines is over. This will result in minimal maintenance cost of the vehicles.

### Education Industry:

Education is the process of imparting and transmitting knowledge, skills and values from one generation to another. It plays a crucial role in the lives of individuals and is also beneficial to the society. Hence, the goal of every educational institution is to impart knowledge, values, and skills to learners for the overall development of the society. This industry has been affected globally by the Covid-19 pandemic, leading to the temporal shutdown of schools to contain the spread of the virus. In similar vein, on March 19th, the Federal Government of Nigeria announced the temporal shutdown of all educational institutions. Millions of students from crèche to tertiary were forced to stay at home to practice social distancing until the pandemic is brought under control.

Following observations and notes, it was found that there were scanty activities and staff presence at the Educational Institutions studied. Some respondent affirmed that the COVID-19 pandemic had affected both academic and non-academic activities of these institutions with lower level staff ordered to stay at home; this is as the students were also asked to stay at home as concerns were raised about their safety. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is considered as very severe on the education industry as the traditional mode of learning in the schools is the classroom method. As one respondent opined: *The universities are like a ghost towns now, although some lecturers still visit and carry out consultative activities in their offices, it is not the way it was before.* To fill this lacuna created in the education industry, the following are the response strategies of the tertiary institutions studied:

### University of Port Harcourt

The University of Port Harcourt is a non-profit public higher educational institution (Federal Government of Nigeria owned institution), located in Choba a suburban setting of Port Harcourt, Rivers State. One of the major strategies advanced by the University is the ongoing shift towards online classes. But as one respondent noted: *Even if you are to run online classes, you will require some background administrative functions which cover records, database management, and processing of students' scores.* This view is echoed by another respondent who observed that: *the drive for online classes at this period can be considered as a badly timed action. Universities ought to have advanced this learning form long ago and should have to wait for this kind of crisis to wake them up.* However, observations show that efforts are being made to ensure progress as the university is currently re-evaluating its online protocols and systems and at the same time integrating the necessary infrastructure for such actions.

### American University of Nigeria (AUN)

American University of Nigeria (AUN) is a private university located in Yola, Adamawa State of North-eastern Nigeria. The university was established in 2003 by Atiku Abubaka, the former Vice President of Nigeria along with other local and international statesmen and academic leaders. It was the first American style university in Sub-Sahara Africa offering undergraduate, graduate and professional courses. AUN is currently in session using a digital platform.

It was found that, even before the shutdown of schools due to the pandemic, AUN had map out strategies to transit to an online learning situation because they had envisaged that the Covid-19 situation will escalate to the point that schools might be shutdown. On the 31<sup>st</sup> of March, AUN made a seamless transition to online learning. The administrative activities of the university have been digitalized using an open enterprise resource planning and uses Canvas, a digital learning platform to provide tutoring, evaluation, and educational resources including international books and journals for students. Canvas platform is a cloud-based Learning Management System (LMS). It is a scalable platform that can be used by educational institutions of all sizes and types, from individual classroom to large universities with blended or fully virtual learning environment.

Furthermore, the university has no worries about its students struggling with the transition since they have tech-savvy students mostly from the upper-middle class families rather they focused on helping and training lecturers adapt to the platform. The university had scheduled to hold examinations in April before the shutdown of schools; this did not change as Canvas platform was used for the Exams. The transition to online learning however led to a restructuring of the institution and some staff were led-off honourably with full contractual benefits. With the emerging structure, only critical positions remained.

### Lagos State University (LASU)

Lagos State University (LASU) was established in 1983, it is a public university located in Ojo a town in Lagos State, Nigeria. It was found that in response to the pandemic, the Lagos State University in April launched its distance learning software, Envivo, given that it holds an Open Distance Learning (ODL) license.

Findings revealed that the email system of LASU students was activated and since the shutdown, the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Olanrewaju Adegun Fagbuhum has been using it to communicate with students and lecturers. Lectures were trained to use the Envivo platform and also allowed to use other platforms like Zoom, WhatsApp and Telegram. Despite the challenges experienced by both the lecturers and students, such as: poor power supply, money for data and purchase of smart phones and other devices for lectures as narrated by the respondents, the online learning is still on and the lecturers are giving their best.

### **Rivers State University (RSU)**

Rivers State University (RSU) formally known as Rivers State University of Science and Technology (RSUST) was established in 1980 from the Rivers State College of Science and Technology which was established in 1970. It is located in Nkpulu-Oroworukwo in Port Harcourt, the Capital of Rivers State.

In response to the covid-19 pandemic ravaging the world, it was found that the university had earlier announced the commencement of online academic activities from May 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020, that the post graduate students were to start lectures using web-based video conferencing options while the undergraduates were scheduled to write an online examination on the 11<sup>th</sup> of May, 2020, this according to the Registrar of the University, was in compliance with the Rivers State Government on e-learning. Following this development, the lecturers of the university were trained on the modalities of e-learning. Due to the prevailing circumstances surrounding online learning, the undergraduate online examination was postponed indefinitely while the post graduate lectures are still on. At the post graduate level, lectures, presentations, seminars, and defence are held via Zoom application or platform and assignments are submitted to the email address of the lecturers. The Zoom platform is a video communication that provides video telephony and online chats service through a cloud-based peer-to-peer software platform that is used for distance education and relations.

### **Covenant University (CU)**

Covenant University (CU) is a private Christian university established in 2002 located in Ota, Ogun State, Nigeria. It is a member of the Association of Common Wealth Universities, Association of African Universities and is accredited by National Universities Commission. The university was established by World Mission Agency and the Living Faith Church worldwide, founded by the David Oyedepo, the presiding Bishop of Living Faith Church. The academic programmes run in four colleges of Business and Social Sciences (CBSS), College of Leadership Development Studies (CLDS), College of Engineering (COE), and the college of Science and Technology (CST) and it also runs post graduate programmes.

It was found that Covenant University made a quick pivot to e-learning in response to the shutdown of the education sector due to the covid-19 pandemic. Before the shutdown, Covenant had developed an online platform and repository educational resources. The university is plugged into international academic journals and allowed lecturers to upload PowerPoint presentation to students. Since the module did not support real-time learning, video

conferencing or class attendance. Lectures quickly switched to alternative platforms like Zoom and WhatsApp, to continue real-time learning with students. They organized students into WhatsApp and Telegram groups and lecturers are using administrator privileges on these applications to hold classes and mark attendance. Once a class starts, the lecturer will ask students to indicate attendance, a few minutes later, chats are locked. It is reopened for students to ask questions or answer questions.

### **Hospitality Industry**

The hospitality industry is one of the sectors that have been hit the hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic, with many of the employees either out of work or losing hours due to travel restrictions, the shutdown of businesses, total lock down of social activities and social distancing. The hotels have been experiencing very low patronage.

### **Novotel Hotel**

The result from the investigation into Novotel hotel, as a unit of the hospitality industry, revealed that the operations of the hotel were high on health protocols and had also downplayed their services. According to one of the respondents: *We are very careful about how our functions are interpreted by the government authorities and so services at the restaurants and diners have been temporarily suspended till further notice. Existing guests are served in their rooms and visitors served out by the pool side. That way we can monitor their spacing and distancing.* From this position, it was observed that the operations of the hotel had been minimized to avoid altercations with government agents and also to ensure guests were safe. Observations also revealed that most of the halls and entrances, as applicable in First bank, had been installed with hand sanitizers dispensing machines. Respondents also noted that although, in the earlier periods associated with the spread, hotel management had experienced some challenges with materials sourcing, especially with regards to kitchen items, diesel and other daily utility goods, they were able to establish supply contacts that were more consistent over time.

One of the responses adopted by the hotel management was their increased reassurance and request of customers for patience and understanding during the period. In some instances, free services such as light breakfast and tea, were made available to existing customers as care was taken to ensure the hotel did not run at a loss. Respondents note that most of the customers have been very cooperative and have expressed gratefulness towards management for allowing them maintain their rooms during the period. This is as one respondent stated that: *while some other hotels actually requested for existing customers to vacate their rooms due to fears of government actions against them, an agreement was reached by the hotel management of this hotel and its existing customers on their stay and a re-evaluation of room charges during the period.* This, as observed, helped strengthen the trust and cooperation between management and its customers.

### **Igoni Grand View Hotel**

Igoni Grand View Hotel is a 3-star hotel located at number 115, kilometer 25, airport road, by Rukpokwu new road roundabout, Port Harcourt. Among the facilities of this property are a restaurant, room service and a shared lounge,

along with WIFI. The hotel features an outdoor swimming pool, fitness centre, evening entertainment and a 24-hour front desk. Guest rooms in the hotel are equipped with a flat screen television. The hotel has a total number of 50 rooms. And their staff strength is about thirty (30) consisting of the manager, admin staff, receptionists, security guards, swimming pool attendant and coach, chefs, marketers on commissions, waiters and waitresses, laundry men/women, cleaners.

It has quite a number of departments ranging from kitchen and restaurant to housekeeping and janitors, bar and karaoke to gymnasium, pool and security and administration which consist of the manager, accountant, front desks officers, supervisors, etc. Their room types are standard single room, Superior single room, deluxe single room, executive suite, deluxe suite, and two-bedroom suite.

The various prices for their respective rooms stated in dollars are: the presidential suite goes for \$261; the premium suite goes for \$131; the executive suite goes for \$62; the executive double room goes for \$54; the standard double room goes for \$47 while the classic studio goes for \$42. All the rooms have one double bed. In addition, breakfast is available per person for #3,100, lunch for #4,650 while dinner is for #4,650. While a complimentary local cuisine breakfast is served daily from 7:00am to 9:00am.

The hospitality industry is about the most hit in the covid-19 pandemic. Data gathered from Igoni Grand View Hotel revealed that there has been a significant drop in their number of guests and services. The swimming and gymnastics section has been totally shut down. It was revealed that before the pandemic, people who did not book for accommodation before weekend hardly gets weekend accommodations. Some persons may have had to book for reservations a week earlier in order for them to get accommodation but the pandemic has really slowed their operations.

As a measure to curb the negative impact on Igoni Grand View Hotel, some of her staff has been layed off, there has also been a little decrease in the prices of the rooms, and however, prices on food menu are not affected. Also, there has been increase reassurance and request of customers for patience and understanding in this period. It was also observed that the halls, entrances and poolside of the hotel had been installed with hand sanitizer dispensing machine, the wearing of face masks wasn't an option as everyone must have this on before entering the gate of the hotel. Some facemasks were also seen at the front desks, this was to enable those who needed to purchase at #500 each.

#### **Aldgate Congress Hotel and Resort**

The Aldgate Congress Hotel is an indigenous hotel located at **No 308 Sani Abacha Road, GRA Phase 3, Port Harcourt, Rivers State**. The Aldgate Congress Hotel has a collection of rooms that come in the categories of: Gate Room, Deluxe Room, Resort Room, and the Congress Suite. Each of these rooms comes with nice amenities that include a telephone, luxurious bed, air conditioning, private bathroom with shower facilities, study desk and armchair, flat screen television set with access to a variety of local and international Channels, refrigerator, wireless internet

connectivity, in-room mini bar, bedside drawer and a door with key card security system. Impressive hospitality services such as tight security arrangement, a well-equipped gym, restaurant with tasty dishes on offer, outdoor pool, bar/lounge, sufficient parking space, plus an event hall are available to guests in this hotel. Extra services accessible at the Aldgate Congress Hotel include Laundry services, Taxi pickup, and a Gift shop.

The researcher visited Aldgate hotel on the 8<sup>th</sup> of July, 2020 to have a one on one interview with the staff on the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on their business. The respondents expressed in a disappointed tone how badly their business was hit by the lock down of activities in the state, the respondents noted that hotels specifically were asked to shut down in Rivers State during this Covid-19 period, 40% of their staff lost their jobs because the hotel was not functioning and as such couldn't pay staff salary although there have been an ease on the lockdown, the hotel is still struggling with patronage as people are careful on visiting hotels since it is a public place and the risk of contracting the virus is higher in public places.

When asked what their response strategies are in this period of pandemic in order to keep business afloat, the respondents said they did absolutely nothing, as they were not allowed to even open up business or allowed to go to work. But right now, they have taken measures to observe personal protection practices like fumigation of the hotel rooms and environment, making available tap and liquid soap where guests can wash their hands before entering the premises. They also have sanitizer dispensers at every corner of the building accessible to customers at all time, every visitor and staff must wear face mask before entering the business premises and temperature check equipment are also used by the securities to check each visitor before they can be allowed to access the business premises.

#### **Le Meridian Hotel**

Le meridian hotel also known as Ogeyi place hotel is a 4-star luxury apartment owned now by Marriot International, located at Phase 2, G.R.A, 45 Tombia St, New GRA 500272, Port Harcourt Offering an outdoor pool and a restaurant. It also offers Free Wi-Fi access as part of its attraction. The hotel has several executive rooms such as the deluxe king guest room, deluxe twin guest room, executive one-bedroom king suite with polo view, presidential suite, executive city view suite and diplomatic suite, with each having a different price range. Each room is furnished with air condition. Private bathroom also comes with a hairdryer. Other facilities offered at the property include an ironing service. Extras include a desk, a laptop safe and ironing facilities and free parking.

The respondents from this hotel mentioned that business was hardly hit by the lock down enforced by the government in order to curb the corona virus, since the lock down; the hotel stopped its operation of booking guests, workers were stopped from going to work since everyone was ordered to stay home. The respondents revealed that this was not a good time for hotel business owners because of the loss incurred and zero patronage. However, the staff were still paid while at home and the company did not sack any of their staff.

According to the respondents some the strategies advanced by the hotel management that have enabled them to remain in business and still pay their staff are:

1. Ogeyi place hotel took advantage of social media platform to market and distribute their varieties of food to customers in different places in Port Harcourt and they operated it as essential commodity which have exemption from the government to operate. Respondents said they made more sales from social media this period as they offered online ordering of food delivery and pick up through the Jumia foods (a third party) since their site was not known to deliver food to outsiders except guest and walk in guests and their social media presence wasn't strong enough to pull the traffic they needed for their new found food delivery business, hence they partnered with a popular food marketplace. A respondent affirmed that even after the lock down eased and they are back to operation, that the use of social media to market their restaurant arm of the business has come to stay as they actually make more money from that unit. The respondent revealed that they made up to 60% of their regular revenue through online services.
2. The respondents also said they sold meal kits, where every raw ingredient used in preparing a particular delicacy of theirs can be made available to customers and direction on how to prepare them is given. As more restaurants shut down and grocery stores shorten their operating hours, many people are meeting their fresh food needs with meal kits.

#### **Mingi Hotel Rumuomasi**

Mingi Hotel is an indigenous hotel owned by the late Chief Kelvin Alagoa who was rumoured died of corona virus. The hotel is located in Uyo Street, Rumuomasi in Port Harcourt.

Following observation and note, it was observed that there were scanty activities in the hotel premises. A respondent from the hotel revealed that since the lock down in Rivers state, the hotel has not been in operation and there has been low patronage. The respondent noted that even now that there has been an ease of the lockdown, the hotel is still struggling with patronage, and customers are no longer coming because the hotel is suffering the stigma of being a place where one can contract corona virus since it was rumoured that the owner died of Covid-19 and the manager also contracted it. The respondents revealed that even though Government assisted in the fumigation of the hotel, both inside and outside, yet customers will not patronize them because of the said stigma.

When asked what they did as a company to diversify in this period of Covid-19, the respondents replied that they did absolutely nothing, as the hotel was totally shut down during the Covid-19 period.

#### **Agriculture Industry**

The Covid-19 pandemic is a global crisis which is already affecting the agricultural sector. Farming households in Nigeria are apparently in a state of overwhelming fears concerning their mainstay with the recent clampdown as a result of the new Corona virus pandemic. This global crisis is envisaged to have more tangible effects on crop production in widespread States and Nigeria at large. The country risks a looming food crisis unless measures are taken to protect

the most vulnerable realities; keep food supply chains alive and mitigate the pandemic's effects across the food system. Thus, the ability of different farming firms to increase food production is pertinent in this pandemic and beyond. The following are the impact of Covid-19 on firms in this sector and the response strategies advanced by these firms.

#### **Vegetable Farmers in Rivers State**

Rivers state people were majorly known as farmers, which was their major occupation before the discovery of oil in commercial quantity in 1951, which implies that agriculture was the main source of survival to everyone in the state then. According to the sample survey carried out by the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources, about 40% of the rural inhabitant were committed to farming in 1983 and 39% (760,000 hectares) of the state total land mass particularly in the upland area is suitable for cultivation. Major cash crops produced are oil palm products, rubber, cocoyam, raffia palm, jute and other crops grown for food such as vegetables, mango, pepper, banana, plantain, cassava etc

The shutdown of markets and border closure has affected active few farmers in the state positively as the information gathered from the farmers and market women have it that agricultural produces prices have been inflated so high such as:

1. 50 kg of Garri usually N18, 000 is now N25, 000 and still increasing and basin usually sold for N2000-2500 depending on its quality now go for N6000 and above.
2. Tomatoes usually 5-8 fruits for N200 are now 3-4 fruits for N200.
3. Plantain usually for about six fingers for N400 is now 3-4 fingers for 400 and so has its effect on other agricultural produce.

The researcher visited some local vegetable farmers and inquired on how the Covid-19 pandemic has affected them, they complained about the closure and lockdown of the major markets in the cities which is their major customers in the vegetable market. In addition, restricted access to markets for farmers also facilitates spoilage and wastage of highly perishable foods. Lack of labourers to get to the farm and harvest these vegetables is also a huge problem as everyone is been asked to stay home due to the corona virus pandemic. Restrictions on transportation also didn't make it easy for vegetable farmers at first, not until exemptions were given. Because of how perishable these vegetables are, after the lockdown, farmers went to their farms and met their crops like okro get over mature, Pumpkin leaves some turned yellow and did not produce too well because of much weed.

Vegetable farmers' response to Covid-19 pandemic:

1. Increment of prices of the little vegetables they were able to salvage from the neglected farm due to restriction of movement by the government in order to curb the spread of the virus.
2. Distributions of farm produce to smaller stores instead of waiting for the major markets to open.

#### **Tomatoes and Fruit (Water Melon, Cucumber, Pineapple) Farmers in the North**

Tomatoes are vegetables that are predominantly grown in the north likewise fruits, but mainly consumed in the

southern part of the country. Nigeria remains the largest producer of tomato in Sub-Saharan Africa according to a research carried out by the **National Horticultural Research Institute** (NIHORT), with production of 1.5 million metric tons per annum with an estimated demand of 2.5 million metric tons. Farmers from the north depend heavily on transportation to get their products from the farm to various parts of Nigeria but since the Covid-19 pandemic, government has put so many restrictions on activities in the country in order to curb the spread of the virus, this restrictions include interstate lockdown, social distancing, close down of schools, stay at home measures etc, the interstate lockdown affected greatly the movement of vehicles to and fro throughout the whole federation.

The restriction on transportation mode and social distancing greatly affected the transportation of tomatoes from the northern part of the state to various states where they are been needed and sold, even though there was an exemption for agricultural products which are among the essential, the social distancing also affected the number of labourers needed to harvest these fruits from the farm, as such, these fruits gets ripened and fall off on their own, they get rotten with time as they lay on the soil without proper preservation. This has made the farmers incur loss as the fruit which they labored to cultivate lay waste in large quantity in the farm leading to spoilage and wastage of this highly perishable goods.

Some of the strategies advanced by these farmers are:

1. Sun drying / machine drying of these fruits including tomatoes in order to preserve them. When tomatoes are dried, they can be used at any time and season as drying the fruit usually helps it have a longer shelf live.
2. Creating shift for the labourers as a way of social distancing in order to reduce crowding in the farm.

#### **SIAT (Palm Oil Farmers and Producers)**

SIAT Nigeria limited is an indigenous company located in Ubima , Rivers State, they are one of the Nigeria's leading palm oil producers and farmers.

The researcher got to the office located in Ubima to conduct an interview on how they have been thriving during this pandemic period. The researcher met with the production manager who obliged us some minutes of his time, when asked how they have been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, he stated that they have reduced the number of staff that normally comes to work every day due to the social distancing law put by the government, this have seriously affected production. Due to restrictions in movements and social distancing, there is shortage of labour for production, harvest and post-harvest activities which could subsequently culminate to high cost of production and disruption in crop production cycles. He also stated that the restriction in human and movement of vehicles have made supply difficult as mostly their customers come from the north to purchase palm oil.

SIAT response strategies:

1. Initiate shift schedule for workers in order to increase production and maintain social distancing (workers come to work and stay for straight two weeks before going back home for another set to resume)

2. Put all measures as in compliance with Covid-19 prevention stated by the government by purchasing and maintaining personal protective equipment to protect their employees and consumers
3. They sought for permission from the state government to be able to move their product through transportation to the north which was granted as there was already a standing exemption for essential commodities

#### **Yam Farmers in Rivers State**

The researcher went to interview some yam farmers in their various farms in the rural areas, these yam farmers confessed that they have made more sales this Covid-19 period than other times when there was no pandemic as tubers of yams were ordered in large numbers by the Rivers state government to be used as palliatives for Rivers State residents in order to reduce the hunger effect caused by the corona virus .

#### **Vintage farms Rivers state (Poultry Farm)**

Vintage Farm is an indigenous company located at Elele Okinali in Rivers State. The company runs a very large poultry farm consisting of fishery, birds, piggery, snail farming, rabbit, goat, cow and eggs. During a chat with the executive manager and other respondents at vintage farm, it was revealed that the company has lost about a one third of their resources due to the pandemic. He blamed this on the lack of adequate information by the populace and media houses, that there was a rumour in the air when this whole corona virus started that birds were the main carrier of the Covid-19 virus which has caused many people to avoid eating chicken for some time until the air was cleared about the actual cause of the virus, that alone reduced sales.

Another issue was the serious logistics and distribution challenges. The respondents revealed that in this corona virus situation, they have lost between 35 and 40 per cent of their resources because sometimes they cannot sell but they keep producing. He revealed that the poultry business is very expensive to run now. There is a high cost of doing business because the prices of fingerling, day-old chicks have gone up. Fingerlings used to sell for N50 before the lockdown but right now, it costs N120. The immunization for the fish and day-old chicks used to cost N175 but now it costs N300. After all these expenses, when you go to the market to sell them, you won't be able to make a profit. The buyers would be bargaining low prices, far below what they have invested in the business. On the other hand, if the company refuses to sell them, the fish and chicks or birds will remain with us in the farm consuming a lot of food because if you don't feed them, they will die and that becomes a double loss for the company.

During a chat with the manager of vintage farms, he revealed that they also have a hatchery where they hatch day-old-chicks, which is like some kilometers away from the main farm, now these hatched chicks cannot be delivered to the farms because of the distance and lockdown been put as a measure to curb the spread of the virus. he mentioned that Eggs are supposed to be the number one thing as a palliative, in fact, the demand for eggs is supposed to have risen drastically due to its nutritional content but the reverse is the case ,according to him he said the company has started counting their losses due to dwindling demand for eggs at this period with the closure of schools, because according to

him, he mentioned that statistics shows that school children consume more eggs than adults, moreover, he said retailers of poultry products are no longer operating in the state, making it difficult for them to sell their produce.

He also pointed out that chicken joints, restaurants, hotels and other eateries are not operating during the lockdown and these are the major consumers of poultry products, as you are aware. Moreover, the present weather isn't helping matters as eggs keep getting spoiled because we can't take them to the market. *According to him, presently, the major problem poultry farmers are experiencing is not related to chicken, but in the demand and supply for eggs.* The glut, he said, has caused the prices of eggs to fall from the usual N1,000 per crate to N800 as the supply has overtaken demand.

Vintage farms strategies to ensure they make sales and still remain in business:

1. The management decided to turn to social media in order to channel sales through that medium, they employed digital marketer that would manage their social media page and advertise their products.
2. They resorted to killing the birds and preserving them in a cold room where they remain frozen for a very long time.
3. They made use of delivery companies to waybill these farm stocks to their customers.

### Discussion of the Findings

Findings from the analysis above show that industries differ substantially in their experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings show that while some industries require a complete shutdown of activities, some others which are considered as essential were allowed to operate but with strict adherence to health protocols and rules. From the analysis, it is evident that most of the organizations were able to thrive due to their adoption of online platforms and social media utilization (Mitroff, 2008). This aligns with the considerations of Thiessen and Ingenhoff (2011) who argued that one effective approach towards crisis was the management and control of information. According to them, the organization should be able to disseminate the information that is useful to building trust and informing the public and customers of their commitment to resolving and addressing crisis situations. Negative information should be curtailed to assuage fear and panic. Another noted finding was the usefulness of online business platforms which in a way ensured activities continued despite ongoing drawbacks at the office.

The study through its findings advances the need for increased digitization of organizations activities and work. This was revealed to be effective in the banking, and could have effectively served the interest of the education industry, however, their lack of infrastructure and supportive systems were a major hindrance and set-back to its adoption. Rosenblatt (2002) affirmed that successful organizations are pre-emptive and not reactive. In his view, the development of supportive infrastructures and the adoption of technological systems should not be a push factor or outcome as driven by the outcome of crisis, but rather an acknowledgement of the strength and possibilities occasioned by such infrastructure given the changes and growth in the environment.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

Crisis management is essential for the survival and longevity of organizations. Organizations must be able to plan ahead, and make arrangements for events which may be outside their control or predictions; hence, their focus must be on building robust and yet flexible operational processes not fixated by location or region but also expressing the capacity for virtuality as well as tangible office service offerings. The findings identify responses associated with each organization as inherently defined by their operational forms and the features of their industries thus, affirming to the postulations of the situational attribution theory. This paper therefore concludes that while most crisis events have project adverse effects and damage to the organization, the approach and strategic response of organization is a key factor in determining the level of their loss, and their capacity for resilience and stability in such occasions of crisis. Therefore, the study recommends the following:

1. That organizations should increase the digitalization of their activities and works especially in this period of the Covid-19 pandemic.
2. That organizations should be proactive and not reactive in developing supportive infrastructure and adoption of technological systems.
3. Organizations should focus on building robust and yet flexible operational processes not fixated by location or region given the dynamic nature of the business environment like the current one precipitated by the Covid-19 pandemic.
4. Organisations should leverage on technologies to build strong virtual work systems and make work more of what people do and less of where they go.

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