

COVID-19 IMPACT ON LOCAL COUNCILS' ADMINISTRATION: REFLECTION ON ADAMAWA STATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SERVICE COMMISSION

by

Abubakar Mohammed Sambo* ⁽¹⁾, **Muawiya Shuaibu** ⁽²⁾ and **Hammadu Manu** ⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ Department of Political Science, Federal University Kashere, Gombe State, Nigeria.

⁽²⁾ Department of Public Administration, School of Business and Administration, Adamawa State

polytechnic Yola, Nigeria

*Corresponding Author asambomohammed@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This paper examined the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on local government administration in Nigeria. Covid-19 is a global pandemic that have affected almost all segments of human life globally, which causes set-back and distraction world-wide; economically, socially, technologically, and administratively. The entire world has become disturbed due to the loss of human lives, economic recession, social restrictions, and the psychological trauma due to the fear of the covid-19 pandemic. Data were sourced from both primary and secondary sourced. Structured questionnaire was administered to the staff of Adamawa state local government service commission, Random sampling method; was used to draw the sample size. Simple percentages technique was used to analyses the data collected from the field. It has been discovered that there was a total break down on the administrative system such as Recruitment, Promotion, Transfer, Formulation, and Implementation of policies that will enhance growth and development of local government system generally. Additionally, poor internet facilities, lack of skilled personnel and misused of available resources contributed to the problems of local council administration. The paper recommends that internet facilities, skilled personnel and proper utilization of resources are highly required to enhance and make the administrative system of local government administration ever ready to tackle the administrative challenges generally, so as to tackle future problem that will hinder local government administration in Nigeria.

Key words: Covid-19, Local Government, Administration, Local Government service Commission

Introduction

Nigeria has experienced different systems of local government administration since the amalgamation of the northern and southern protectorates in 1914. The genesis of local government administration can be traced back to the pre-colonial period. There was the existence of emirates system of Sokoto and Borno caliphates: Ibadan, Egba, Ekiti and Oyo empires. In these kingdoms Emirs, Obas and Chiefs held away over the governance of their respective domains. Moreover, in these areas there were smaller districts, villages and words that were subjected to kingdom and emirate government. This smaller or subordinate level of government could be seen or described as local government. Then indirect rule was introduced by colonialist, which later degenerated into direct rule because the traditional rulers became mere local agents of colonial officers (Ugwu, 2002). Native administrative system was established and continued to thrive in the north until the emergence of modern local government system from 1952-1965 and era of caretaker committee and sole administrator system. However, since 1970 the number of local governments rose from 299 in 1970 to 301 in 1979 and 781 in 1981 when the states were given authority to create local government. After

the overthrow of civilian government in 1984 the numbers of local government councils was again reduced to 301 and later they increased to 499 in 1987, 589 in 1991 and 774 since 1996 to date after series of reforms from pre-colonial system to colonial system before 1950s through the use indirect rule of native authority to rule grassroot people. Local Government has enjoyed several reforms in Nigeria Wilson's; (2013) Reforms continued in the administration of local government from 1950 up to 1976 when uniform local government system was established. Later other reforms followed in 1984, 1988, 1989 and 2004. Presently the local government council administration is now the responsibility of the State House of Assembly.

Nigeria operates the presidential system of government since 1979. The local government administration as the third tier of government in Nigeria has its power divided in to three arms of government. The idea of local government administration in Nigeria was conceived in order to accelerate development and as well as create opportunity for the people at the local level to participate and hold those in power accountable for the roles they play in government. There is plurality in administrative structure performing different function in both legislative and executive arms through formulation and implementation of policies and programmes in the local government.

Local government and local government service commission performed administrative functions such as recruitment, promotions, transfer, discipline and retirement of personnel. Rewards and sanctions shall be based on concrete measurable performance while all promotions shall be on relative merit in local government. Local government has power to promote and give appointments to all staff on grade level G1-06. The head of the department of personnel management prepares at the end of every year a comprehensive staff list showing the order of seniority of staff in each of the grade level 01-06. On the other hand, the secretary of the local government service commission prepares same in respect of officers on grade level 07 and above within each cadre. Seniority shall be based on the provision of the existing rules and regulation of the commission. To manage human resources in a constructive way it is sometimes necessary to transfer employees to other jobs while sanctions are imposed for deviant behaviours. Consequently, disengagement of staff from service follows at 60 years of age and or after 35 years in services. All the above administrative functions have been affected by covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria. Being the primary unit of administration in Nigeria, the negative impact of any kind of scourge, particularly the Covid-19, will be disastrous to the local government workforce, thereby affecting the states workforce and the country's workforce as a whole. While no one can dispute the role of local administration in bringing about enhanced capacities and development generally, covid-19 and its political or non-medical measures put in place, had really affected the workers productivity and functions. This study examined the impact of Covid-19 on local councils' administration with reflection to Adamawa State Local Government Service Commission

The Study Area

Adamawa state came into existence in 1991. It was created from the defunct Gongola state, resulting into Adamawa and Taraba states. It is located in the northeast region of Nigeria and found on the coordinates of 9.3265N 12.3984. With an international postal code of 640001 and an estimated GDP of 3.8billion dollars (Kingmakers, 2021) in 2018. With its political and administrative capital city in Yola, the state has 21 local government areas: Gombi, Demsa, Fufore, Ganye, Girei, Guyuk, Hong, Jada, Lamurde, Madagali, Maiha, Mayo-Belwa, Michika, Mubi North, Mubi South, Numan, Shelleng, Song, Toungo, Yola North, and Yola South. that are both linguistically and culturally heterogeneous. Adamawa shares international boundary line with the republic of Cameroon and Chad.



Figure 1: Map of Adamawa, showing all the 21 local government areas

Literature Review

In December 2019, a lower respiratory tract febrile illness of unknown origin was reported in a cluster of patients in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. A novel strain of coronavirus isolated from the bronchoalveolar lavage of the patients was determined to be responsible for the outbreak (Hosseiny, M., Kooraki, S., et al, 2020) and has rapidly spread across continents (Lupia, T., Scabini, S., et al. 2020) Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) an illness caused by a novel coronavirus called severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (He, F., Deng, Y., & Li, W. 2020), which was first identified amid an outbreak of respiratory illness cases in Wuhan City, Hubei province, China it was initially reported to the world health organization (WHO) on December 31, 2019. On January 30, 2020, The WHO declared the Covid-19 outbreak a global emergency. On March 11, 2020. The WHO declared Covid-19 a global pandemic. The Covid-19 acronym is derived from Coronavirus Disease 2019, the name was chosen to avoid stigmatizing the virus origin in terms of population, geography or animal association. The pandemic of COVID-19 has been affecting all spheres of human endeavor in the recent time. As the coronavirus affects public health services at global level, it also does to global economies and administration in some part of the world. The pandemic of COVID-19 is worrisome because it is inevitable in leading to the global economic recession. World Health Organization (2020) notes that, the victim of COVID-19 will surely experience respiratory illness and older people and more importantly, people with medical or health problems such as diabetes, cancer respiratory disease among others are likely to be infected with COVID-19. It is reiterated that COVID-19 can spread easily through the nose or mucus discharge and droplets of saliva especially through sneezes and coughs (World Health Organization, 2020).

However, the most common symptoms of the disease are fever, dry cough and tiredness. The severe symptoms are chest pain, loss of speech and difficult breathing. Globally, many lives have been taken as a result of the prevalence of coronavirus. Hence, it is important to adhere to preventive measures especially by washing hands, using sanitizers etc. as directed by the health workers (World Health Organization, 2020). Various literature reviewed in examining the effect of covid-19 in Nigeria, have established the negative effect on the country in many ways. For instance, Yusuff (2020) evaluated the Impact of corona virus on small and medium enterprise with the aim of building a comprehensive theoretical basic which is geared toward charting a forward for post-Covid-19 economic recovery of the country.

China is a major exporter of commodities to African countries, and the negative effect on China's economy as a result of COVID-19, automatically anticipated to have trickle down consequences for the continent because of the symbiotic economic relationship between the continent and China. Some preventive actions that were deployed and imposed so as to control the possible spread of the coronavirus include. These control measures include "restricting non-essential activities, closing schools and universities, encouraging people to stay home, the lockdown of entire cities, requiring essential businesses to run skeletal operations and employees should work from home. (Ozili, 2020).

A number of scholars have examined the effects as well as the multiplier impacts of Covid-19 on various aspect of the Nigerian state and the Nigerian economy. For instance, studies like, the "Impact of COVID -19 pandemic lockdown on distribution of inorganic pollutants in selected cities of Nigeria", for instance was examined by Fuwape, Okpalaonwuka, & Ogunjo, (2021). Additionally, was examined by Jacob, O. N., Abigeal, I., & Lydia, A. E., (2020) Similarly, study in respect of the "Impact of COVID-19 on the higher institution's development in Nigeria", likewise, "Covid-19 pandemic, global trade wars and impact on the Nigeria economy (Marshal, Nwadochi, & Oriakpono, (2020)

More so, Stanley and Nkaporbu (2020) have assess the socio-economic implication of the Coronavirus pandemic on the general population with focus in Nigeria. They found that Covid-19 has negatively impacted socio-economic activities. This finding has shown socio-economic activities, which is being implemented by constituted local authority in most of the settlements in Nigeria has suffered serious set-back as a result of the pandemic. In the same vein, Peterson (2020) analyses the covid-19 situation in Nigeria where he found the situation has affected all segment of human life in the country as most of the activities were stopped especially administrative activities because of the inability to work from home. Mulibiham et'al (2020), examine the impact on covid-19 on food security where the Panel data evidence shows that Nigerian food security was affected significantly as a result of Covid-19 and this has distorted administration especially at local government level.

Administration generally is a process and procedure, method and methodology, manner and mannerism for implementation of policies, programmes and project of any establishment. Covid-19 seriously have affected all aspects of human life globally, especially administration and administrative activities because they are the engine room and machinery, which are responsible for the day-to-day running of any establishment especially the Nigerian local government service commission.

Francis and Ifeolowa, (2020) investigated the Impact of Covid-19 pandemic: lesson from Nigeria. The Nigerian civil service has experience exemption from their respective services. The federal government of Nigeria enforced an initial two-week lockdown on March 30th, 2020, for the three (3) states out of the 36-state of Lagos, Abuja and Ogun. On April 13th, 2020, federal government also extended the lockdown for additional two (2) week. Markets, Schools, Religion and social gatherings, international and national movement, and non-essential services were close down completely.

However, the essential services were exempted from the ban, which includes but not limited to hospital and all related medical establishment as well as organization in health care delivery services together with manufacturing and distributions industries. Part of the exemption for the lockdown are food processing, distribution and retail companies; petroleum distribution and retail companies; power generation, Transmission and Distribution Companies; private Security Companies; Workers in Telecommunication companies broadcasters, print and electronic media staff who can prove they are unable to work from home; all sea port in Lagos; vehicle and drivers conveying an essential cargoes from port to other part of the country; as well as all vehicle conveying food and other essential humanitarian items into Lagos, Ogun and Abuja from other parts of the country.

To “provide national policy direction, subsequently, the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19 was established by the President”, on March 9, 2020, Public policy was deployed to manage and control the dreadful effect of covid-19 on the government employees. Public policy as an instrument “to development in a bid of resolving a social problem and uplifting the standard of living of the citizenry; (Okaisabor, 2021), fully came up with an effective strategy to contain the spread. The restriction of movement of people via an administrative order was put in place.

Federal, State and Local government ministries, parastatals, commission and agencies were also lockdown as a measure to avoid spread of Covid-19 in Nigeria. While other ministries, Agencies, Commission and parastatals were able to work from home especially Federal ones, local government service commissions have been affected seriously as a result of this lockdown. Because they were not able to work from home as a result of absent of wireless internet facilities. This has affected recruitment, promotions, transfers, sanction/punishment and all other administrative activities as a result of Covid-19 Pandemic. Based on the above literature these papers embark on examining the effect of Covid-19 on local government administration in Nigeria a reflection of Adamawa state local government service commission.

Methodology

This study adopted both primary and secondary sources of data collection in conducting this research. For the primary source, interviews were conducted and for the secondary source, books, journals, and other secondary materials were used. A number of literatures were reviewed with the view of having sufficient information on Covid-19 and its negative implications in Nigerian, and specifically to the employees of the civil service commission in discharging their administrative as well as regulatory activities on local governments administration in Adamawa state. Therefore, the interviews conducted were on staff of the commission, to survey the effect of Covid-19 on local government administration in Adamawa state. The population for the study covers the entire staff of the commission in Adamawa state, comprising of three hundred and twenty-three (323) staff.

Sampling Technique

Random sampling technique was used in selecting working population of the study where eighty-five (85) employees were selected and placed on the sampling frame. All the Senior and Junior staff was selected to be part of the focus group interview.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Biodata of staff of Adamawa state local government service commission.

Gender	Male	Female	Total
Population	55	30	85
Age-grade	18-35yrs	36-55yrs	55yrs above
Number	20	40	15
Grade-level	07-10	11-14	14 & above
Number	30	35	20
			85

Table 2: Interview Questions

number	Variable	yes	no	Total
1	Does Promotions of staff in Adamawa state local government service commission been affected by Covid-19	73	12	85

2	Does Transfers of staff in Adamawa state local government service commission been affected by Covid-19	60	25	85
3	Does Sanction/punishment of staff in Adamawa state local government service commission been affected by covid -19	56	29	85
4	Do you have available wireless ICT that will enable you work from home	4	81	85
5	Are you Trained and know how to use wireless ICT	21	64	85
6	Do you think Wireless ICT will enable work from home	70	15	85
7	Do you think Wireless ICT will promote administrative activities and enhance efficiency and effectiveness of administration in local government service commission	76	9	85

Local government service commission has a combination of different age group of staff 18-35, 36-55, and 56 years above. Mostly those within 36-55yrs of age bracket are more in the local government service commission and constituted 60% of the total population of the staff. This is an indication that active ages are more in the service commission. Nevertheless, local government service commission has a combination of both gender of males and females who are active in the service of the commission. Additionally, different staff are of different grade levels performing different administrative activities for the service delivery of the commission as revealed by the respondents during the interview.

Interview Results

From the interviews conducted with the staff of the commission that are on different grade levels, it was revealed that:- the Adamawa state local government service commission had all their statutory roles of recruitment, promotions, transfers, punishment/sanction and other administrative work affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. This is because, in the midst of the pandemic, all staff of the commission could not work from home. Administratively, this has hindered the roles, operations, efficiency and effectiveness of managing the local government councils in Adamawa state as well as the commission itself. This therefore directly affected the administration and regulations of local governments in the state, as there was no Recruitment, Promotions, Transfers, Sanction/Punishment and other administrative activities as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Moreover, Adamawa state local government service commission have no wireless ICT facilities as revealed from the interviews conducted, majority of the staff are unable to use wireless ICT services because they lack the basic training on how these equipment's are operated. More so, availability of internet services and other ICT equipment with proper training will enable the staff of Adamawa state local government service commission to work from home with respect to the performance of their basic roles of recruitment, implementation of promotions, transfers, sanction/punishment of staff and other administrative activities that promotes efficiency and effectiveness in the local government service as revealed from the interviews conducted.

Absent of wireless ICT gadgets constitutes the most basic issues of local government service commission in Adamawa state with regards to working from home, during the period of the pandemic. This led to total shutdown of the basic administrative functions and aspect of

the commission. Promotion is among the most affected aspect of local governments staff because many of them were due for promotion. Knowing fully that promotions is among the component that motivates staff in the local governments and also help improve their job performance, this has been taken-off because of the lack of basic facilities that that can provide for alternative continuous administrative responsibility of the staff at the local councils. Alternatively in its absence, their services were hindered by covid-19 and send majority of staff home to stay for a period of time with nothing to accomplish as their official responsibility. This seriously affected their performance and commitment even after resumption from Covid-19 break.

Conclusion and Recommendation

It is unarguably true that the local government administration in Nigeria plays vital roles in the development of local government areas specifically and the federating states in general. This has brought in so many measures that necessary for the realization of the country's national development objectives. Adamawa state local government service commission is an engine room for the administration of local government councils in the state through recruitment, promotion, sanction and other administrative activities of senior staff that promote efficiency and effectiveness of local government. This study embarks on examining the effect of Covid-19 on local government administration in Adamawa state, reflecting on the Adamawa state local government service commission.

Based on the data collected and analyzed it has established that the fact that Covid-19 really affected the working and performance of the commission, and that the works of commission were hampered by lack of the internet and other ICT facilities. Arising from these, this paper recommends the following: The creation of a functional ICT department in the local service commission as well as in all the local government councils' headquarters. The provision of adequate wireless ICT infrastructure to the commission with adequate training to the staff. Routine training and re-training of staff through workshops and seminars should be of utmost importance. Effective and efficient utilization of funds for appropriate use and maintenances of the ICT infrastructure for the commission should be put in place. With these the commission will perform an effective, strong and robust administrative as well as the supervisory role on local government councils and administration in the state.

References

- Amare, M., Abay, K. A., Tiberti, L., & Chamberlin, J. (2020). *Impacts of Covid-19 on food security: panel data evidence from Nigeria* (Vol. 1956). Intl Food Policy Res Inst.
- Cao, Y. C., Deng, Q. X., & Dai, S. X. (2020). Remdesivir for severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 causing COVID-19: An evaluation of the evidence. *Travel medicine and infectious disease*, 35, 101647.
- Chima, P., & Abdulhamid, O. S. (2015). Local government administration in Nigeria: the search for relevance. *Commonwealth Journal of Local Governance*, (18), 181-195.
- Fuwape, I. A., Okpalaonwuka, C. T., & Ogunjo, S. T. (2021). Impact of COVID-19 pandemic lockdown on distribution of inorganic pollutants in selected cities of Nigeria. *Air Quality, Atmosphere & Health*, 14(2), 149-155.
- He, F., Deng, Y., & Li, W. (2020). Coronavirus disease 2019: What we know? *Journal of medical virology*, 92(7), 719-725.
- Hosseiny, M., Kooraki, S., Gholamrezanezhad, A., Reddy, S., & Myers, L. (2020). Radiology perspective of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): lessons from severe acute respiratory syndrome and Middle East respiratory syndrome. *American Journal of Roentgenology*, 214(5), 1078-1082.

- Jacob, O. N., Abigeal, I., & Lydia, A. E. (2020). Impact of COVID-19 on the higher institution's development in Nigeria. *Electronic Research Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 2(2), 126-135).
- Lupia, T., Scabini, S., Pinna, S. M., Di Perri, G., De Rosa, F. G., & Corcione, S. (2020). 2019 novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) outbreak: A new challenge. *Journal of global antimicrobial resistance*, 21, 22-27.
- Marshall, I., Nwadochi, K. C., & Oriakpono, A. E. (2020). COVID-19 pandemic, global trade wars and impact on the Nigeria economy. *Academic Journal of Current Research*, 7(5), 71-82.)
- Ojo, A.A., Vickers, D. & Ballas, D. The Segmentation of Local Government Areas: Creating a New Geography of Nigeria. *Appl. Spatial Analysis* 5, 25–49 (2012)
- Okaisabor, J. O. (2021). Public policies against Covid-19 pandemic in Nigeria: Challenges, effects, and perceptions. *Journal of Public Administration and Social Welfare Research*, 6(1), 16-28.
- Oluwaseun, O; and Babajide, O. (2021) Evolution and spread of Covid-19 in Nigeria. *Journal of the Centre for petroleum energy, Economic and Law (CPEEL) university of Ibadan Nigeria.*
- Ozili, P. K. (2020). Covid-19 pandemic and economic crisis: The Nigerian experience and structural causes. *Journal of Economic and Administrative Sciences.*
- Peterson, A., Largent, E. A., & Karlawish, J. (2020). Ethics of reallocating ventilators in the covid-19 pandemic. *Bmj*, 369. Peterson, A., Largent, E. A., & Karlawish, J. (2020). Ethics of reallocating ventilators in the covid-19 pandemic. *Bmj*, 369.
- Ugwu, S. C. (2001) *Issues in local government and urban administration in Nigeria*, Enugu, Academic Publishing Company.
- Wilson, G. (2013). The politics of local government reforms and democratic governance in Nigerian local governments. *Developing Country Studies*, 3(1).
- Yesufu, S. (2021). The socio-economic impact of the Covid-19: a South African perspective on its impact on the socio-economic, inequality, security, and food systems. *Science Rise*, (4), 68-79