

## **Awareness, Perception and Coping Strategies to Covid 19 Pandemic in Nigeria, Case Study of Kuje Area Council Abuja**

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### **Abstract**

*The study examined People Awareness, Perception and Coping Strategies to Covid-19 Pandemic in Kuje Area Councils, Federal Capital Territory, simple random techniques was used to select 100 respondents for the study. A well-structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents. Data obtained were analyzed using descriptive statistics like percentage and frequency. The respondents were within the age range of 40-60, majority (52%) of the respondents are civil servants who are majorly (83%) married with household size of between 2-10 persons. Majority (96%) of the respondents are aware about covid-19 pandemic in their area, and agreed that dry cough (23%), fever (56%), tiredness (11%) and loss of taste/smell (10%) are major symptoms of covid-19 pandemic. Mode of transmission of covid-19 according to the respondents are through body contact (23%), through body droplet like saliva and sweat (53%), shaking of hands (19%) and illicit behavior (5%). Most (67%) of the respondents have not done the covid-19 test. Coping strategies based on the respondents are through salaries (50%), donations (21%) and other (29%) means. Donations from family (48%), friends (22%), Religion Organization (13%) and Government (7%) are many coping strategies accessed by the respondents. Behavioral dimension of coping strategies of the respondents indicates washing of hands often (27%), avoiding public/events places (43%), avoiding public transportation (10%) and contact with risk group (16%). Constraints caused by covid 19 pandemic in the study area on a Likert scale are increased level of poverty (41%), high rate of sickness and disease (40%), high rate of death (59%), loss of jobs (63%) and high cost of standard of living (67%). Conclusion of the study is that people are aware of covid-19 pandemic and have developed some coping strategies to make them survival the period. Recommendations include Government must make available covid-19 testing centers closer to the people and corruption should be eliminated from the government palliatives distribution through proper monitoring and evaluation.*

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**Keywords: People, Awareness, Perceptions, Covid-19, Pandemic**

## **Introduction**

The emergence and global spread of coronavirus (covid-19) disease/pandemic has undoubtedly left the world helpless and overwhelmed because it takes the world by surprise and beat the science and knowledge of mankind. According to World Health Organization, 2020, the virus remains a public health emergency of international concern. Covid-19 pandemic has tremendously and unimaginably overwhelmed countries with the state-of the-art health infrastructural facilities/great technology, leaving developing and underdeveloped countries with poor/weak health infrastructures grappling for help from international bodies and few wealthy citizens. Globally, Coronavirus (covid-19) has claimed thousands of lives, with the Asia and European countries recording larger number of deaths. As at May 2020, United States had recorded over 100,000 deaths as a result of complications arising from COVID-19, with thousands over a million of its citizens testing positive to COVID-19 (WHO, 2020). Similarly, Spain and Italy within a space of three (3) months had recorded over 170,000 deaths respectively as a result of Coronavirus infection. This has undeniably been overwhelming for the medical personnel as well as the respective government officials of the nations of the world. United Nations (2020). West Africa, a continent with several developing

and under-developed countries has over the years been confronted with poor/weak health institutions, poor health infrastructure and brain drain because so many of the best brain have gone to other developed Nations of the world in search of better standard of living, Johnson, E. J. and Hariharan, S. (2017). The challenges are exacerbated with frequent and avoidable foreign medical trips by government officials and well to do citizen instead of fixing the ailing health sector in the country. The sub-region is also faced with unwholesome traditional health beliefs, generational myths and unhygienic health practices. In Nigeria, there has been unprecedented increase in the number of cases in recent weeks even though there are a lot of unverified data and information in relation to the figures been released time to time. The global health guidelines to curtail the spread of this pandemic include physical and social distancing, compulsory wearing of face mask, personal hygiene as well as lockdown order (Nigeria Centre for Disease Control, (NCDC) 2020). Subsequently, the implementation of strict quarantine measures and “stay at home” measures in Nigeria has kept a large number of people in isolation and affected many aspects of people’s lives (Ezpeleta L, Navarro B, Osa D, Trepal E. 2020). The effects could range from financial distress, loneliness, emotional to social difficulties. It is also likely to trigger a wide variety of psychological disorders, such as panic

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disorder, anxiety and depression, Golberstein E, Gonzales G, Meara E. (2019). Nigeria, a developing country, operates an economy where a good number of its citizens depend on daily income through petty economic activities. The government's "lockdown order" met a lot of Nigerians unawares as many were yet to come in terms and understand the nature and consequences of the spread of Coronavirus disease, Johnson, E. J. and Hariharan, S. (2017). The impacts of the lockdown can be investigated in a number of areas, ranging from financial, psychological, social and emotional perspectives and even death. In addition, one of the challenges that comes with curtailing the Coronavirus (covid-19) pandemic/disease is that an infected person might not show symptoms until up to 14 days thereby fueling disbeliefs among some individuals and communities about the existence and spread of this deadly disease, consequently strengthening the weak health structure of Nigerians. Ilesanmi, O. and Alele, F. O. (2016). Opalowo (2016) documented the Nigerian health beliefs to be traditional, with most tending to seeking spirituality and help from God (Supreme being) to keep healthy and protect them from diseases. This often leads to neglect of preventive measures and precautions.

In Nigeria, the federal and state governments were allocated funding for social welfare and palliatives to alleviate citizen's sufferings as a result of the lockdown order which is caused by covid-19 pandemic. As part of this initiative,

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indigent citizens were paid some amount of money which the government tagged as covid-19 grants or loan to cater for their needs during the period (Polizzi, C., Lynn, S.J., Perry, A., 2020). However, the initiative has been faulted with various complaints/hitches such as accusations of corruption, diversion of resources and the likes but these faulted government programs is still on-going and know evaluation or monitoring exercise has been conducted to reward or punished offenders, Dworkin J, Serido J. (2017). As the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic sweeps across the world, it is causing widespread concern, fear and stress since no Nation of the world has been able to provide drugs to the pandemic, all of which are natural and normal reactions to the changing and uncertain situation that everyone finds themselves in this 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. This entails the feeling or condition of uneasiness ascribed to a particular situation or cause.

COVID-19 is also perceived as a major threat to health and a danger to the worldwide economy, affecting people's lives by influencing their everyday behavior and causing feelings of panic anxiety, depression, and often triggering intense dread (Jiao W. Y, Wang L. N, Liu J, Fang S. F, Jiao F. Y, Pettoello-Mantovani M. 2020). During the lockdown, it is perceived that the majority of the adolescents were at home with their families. The family is the basic, foundational social unit saddled with the responsibility of providing physical, social, and

emotional support (De Frain J 2008) (Dworkin J, 2017). The problem this research work intends to solve is the level of awareness and coping strategies to covid 19 pandemic in Kuje area council Abuja Nigeria.

In coping with the Coronavirus outbreak and moving onward, public health should take precedence over personal interest which currently subsists. When public interests gain first place, information regarding COVID-19 transmission and prevention would be communicated early for the adoption of safety measures among individuals. This would then boost public trust concerning the government's decision and capacity to manage COVID-19 Olapegba P. O., Ayandele O., Kolawole S, (2020).

Hence, this study explores people awareness, perception and coping strategies to covid 19 pandemic in Kuje area council, FCT Abuja Nigeria. Specifically, the objectives of this study are to: describe the socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents, examine the level of awareness of the respondents about covid-19 pandemic, identify coping strategies of the respondents to covid- 19 pandemic, highlight constraints caused by covid-19 pandemic in the study area

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **Study Area**

This study was carried out in Kuje Area Council of Abuja (FCT). Kuje is located at the

North Central part of Abuja. The area council lies between 80 – 90 East and latitude 70 North. The area council is bordered on the Northeast part by Abuja Municipal Area Council to the west by Gwagwalada area council and to the southwest by Abuja area council. The area council covers a total land area of 1,800sq km, about 22.5% of the Federal Capital Territory. The people comprise of Gbagy, Gude, Bassa, Hausa and Fulani as long as other migrants from different parts of the country. The area council is characterized by alternate dry and wet condition with mean annual rainfall varying from 1000mm to 1500mm. The average rainfall is 1200mm and starts from late April to late October, while the dry season starts in late October to March.

### **Sampling Technique**

Purposeful sampling technique was used to select Kuje area council out of the six area council in FCT Abuja as the study areas, five wards namely Gaube, Kuchiyako, Paseli, Rubochi and Lanto were randomly selected out of the ten wards in Kuje area council and twenty (20) respondents were randomly selected from each of the five wards and administered with the questionnaires making a total number of respondents 100

### **Data Collection**

The survey was conducted using Primary data, interviews schedules and participant observations. Primary data was collected using

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a well-structured questionnaire which was administered to 100 respondents.

**Data Analysis**

The analytical tool that was used is descriptive statistics such as Frequency, Percentage Likert scale.. Objective i, (describe the socioeconomic characteristics of the respondents), objective ii (examine the level of awareness of the respondents about covid 19 pandemic), objective iii (identify coping strategies of the respondents to covid 19 pandemic) and objective iv (highlight constraints caused by covid 19 pandemic in the study area) was analyzed using descriptive statistic.

**Results and Discussion**

**Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Respondents**

The table 1 below shows the socioeconomics characteristics of the respondents in the study

area. It reviewed that 70% are male. Many (30%) of the respondents are within the age category 31-40 while others (26%) are in the age category 41-50. The result of this study agreed with Onuk, Anzaka and Luka (2010), who found that majority of the respondents are in their economic age. Majority (83%) of the respondents are married with Many (36%) of them having a household size of 7 persons and 10 persons (31%) respectively. The educational level of the respondents shows that 36% of them has secondary education while 29% and 29% has no education and primary education respectively. Majority (52%) are civil servants working in different government and private organizations, many (21%) are farmers who are into farming of different crops like rice, cassava, yam and vegetables, few (10%) are traders who interact with people regularly in buying and selling of different items to make a living.

**Table 1: Socioeconomic Characteristics of the Respondents**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	70	70.0
Female	30	30.0
<b>Age</b>		
20-30	14	14.0
31-40	30	30.0
41-50	26	26.0
51-60	23	23.0
Above 60	7	7.0
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	5	5.0
Married	83	83.0
Widow	11	11.0
Divorced	1	1.0
<b>Household Size</b>		

2	11	11.0
3	22	22.0
7	36	36.0
10	31	31.0
<b>Level of Education</b>		
No Education	29	29.0
Primary Education	29	29.0
Secondary Education	36	36.0
Tertiary Education	6	6.0
<b>Occupation</b>		
Farmers	21	21.0
Civil Servant	52	52.0
Trader	10	10.0
Unemployed	3	3.0
Total	100	100.0

**Source: Field Survey 2021**

The table 2 below shows the results of level of awareness of the respondents about covid-19 pandemic in their area and 96% are aware that covid-19 pandemic is real and they also agreed that they know someone who was affected by the pandemic. Majority (56%) identify fever as the major symptom of covid-19 pandemic, many (23%) identify dry cough as another symptom of covid-19 pandemic, tiredness and loss of taste/smell was identify as covid-19 symptoms by 11% and 10% respondents respectively. Majority (53%) of the respondents considered body droplet like saliva and sweat as mode of transmission of covid-19 pandemic, few (23%) of the respondents consider body contact with affected person as the mode of transmission while others (19%) and (5%) considered hand shakes and illicit behavior as mode of transmission of covid-19 in the study area respectively. According to 33% of the

respondents they agreed that their have done the covid-19 test and the result id negative, that put their mind at rest while majority (67%) of the respondents agreed that they have not done the covid-19 test because they lack access. Clearly, COVID-19 is having devastating consequences on the global population, the geometric rate of spread with high rate of deaths related to the virus has ignited confusion, anxiety and fear among the general public (WHO, 2020c). Globally, the continuous spread of COVID-19 disease which necessitated strict isolation measures such as lockdowns, social isolation and other preventive measures across countries of the world is expected to influence the socio-economic and mental health of the global population. Studies have reported that the pandemics presented some psychological effect on the general public including medical staff, children and even older adults (Chen et al.,

2020a; Yang et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020). Experience from previous pandemics pointed that controlling the spread of disease during a ravaging scourge is a function of people's adherence to preventive and control measures,

which largely depends on their knowledge about the disease, symptoms and precaution

**Table 2: Level of awareness of the respondents about covid 19 pandemic**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Are you aware of Covid-19 pandemic in your area</b>		
Am not aware	4	4.0
Am aware	96	96.0
<b>Do you know anyone that was affected by covid 19 pandemic</b>		
I don't know anyone affected	4	4.0
I know someone affected	96	96.0
<b>What are the symptoms you noticed</b>		
Dry Cough	23	23.0
Fever	56	56.0
Tiredness	11	11.0
loss of taste/smell	10	10.0
<b>Do you know the mode of transmission of COVID-19 disease</b>		
Through body contacts	23	23.0
Through body droplets (saliva, sweats)	53	53.0
Shaking of hands	19	19.0
Illicit behaviour	5	5.0
<b>Have you done the covid 19 test</b>		
I have done the test	33	33.0
I have not done the test	67	67.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Field Survey 2021**

Table 3 below shows coping strategies of the respondents on covid-19 pandemic indicate that salary is the major (50%) sources of income of the respondents, donations (21%) and family assistance (16%) where some of the sources of respondents during covid-19 pandemic, loan and government grant are other ways few respondents used as they sources of income during the covid19 pandemic. Access to food donations was agreed by all (100) respondents and majority (48%) are family members donations, while few (22% & 13%) are from friends and religious organizations. The government donation got too little (7%) numbers of the populations according to the respondents. Majority (43%) of the respondents avoid public places as coping strategies, many (27%) of the respondents wash or disinfect they hands as a behavioral dimension coping strategies against covid-19 pandemic, few (16%) of the

respondents avoid contact with risk persons or group and 10% of the respondents avoid public transportation in other not to contact covid-19 pandemic. In Nigeria, the federal and state governments were allocated funding for social welfare and palliatives to alleviate citizen's sufferings as a result of the lockdown order which is caused by covid-19 pandemic. As part of this initiative, indigent citizens were paid some amount of money which the government tagged as covid-19 grants or loan to cater for their needs during the period. However, the initiative has been faulted with various complaints/hitches such as accusations of corruption, diversion of resources and the likes but this faulted government program is still on going and know evaluation or monitoring exercise has been conducted to reward or punished offenders.

**Table 3: Coping Strategies of the respondents to covid 19 pandemic**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>What is your sources of income during covid 19 pandemic</b>		
Salary	50	50.0
Donations	21	21.0
Family assistance	16	16.0
Government grant	03	03.0
Government loan	10	10.0
<b>Do you have access to food donations</b>		
I have access	100	100.0
<b>Access to food donations and from who</b>		

Family members	48	23.0
Friends	22	56.0
Religious organization	13	11.0
Government	07	13.0

**Behavioral dimension of coping strategies of the respondents**

I wash or disinfect my hands more often	27	27.0
I avoid public places/events	43	43.0
I avoid public transport	10	10.0
I avoid contact with risk groups	16	16.0
I maintain 1.5m social distancing	04	04.0

**Problem focused way of coping of the respondents**

I listen to the experts and follow their advice	45	45.0
I talk to others to learn more about it	37	37.0
I have repeatedly thought about it	18	18.0

**Did you notice increase in price of food in your area due to covid 19 pandemic**

I have noticed increase	67	67.0
I did not notice increased	33	33.0

<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>
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**Source: Field Survey 2021**

The results in table 4 shows that the variables listed were all perceived to be the constraints caused by covid-19 pandemic in the study area. They include increased level of poverty (41%), high rate of sickness and disease (40%), high rate of death (59%) loose of jobs (63%), and high cost of standard of living (67%). All the variables caused one effect or another to the respondents in the study area. COVID-19 is also

perceived as a major threat to health and a danger to the worldwide economy, affecting people’s lives by influencing their everyday behavior and causing feelings of panic anxiety, depression, and often triggering intense dread (Jiao WY, et al 2020). During the lockdown, it is perceived that the majority of the adolescents were at home with their families.

**Table 4. Constraints caused by covid 19 pandemic**

Variables	S.A %	A %	N. S %	D %	S. D %
Increased level of poverty	41	45	9	3	2
High rate of sickness and diseases	40	43	10	4	3
High rate of death	59	21	9	7	4
Loose of jobs	63	22	8	4	3
High cost of standard of living	67	19	5	4	5

Note: (S.A=strongly agree, A=Agree, N.S= Not sure, D= Disagree, S.D=strongly disagree)

### Conclusion

From the finding of this study, it was revealed that most of the respondents are aware of covid-19 pandemic and they know someone that was affected by the pandemic since the major symptom according to them is fever, dry cough, vomiting and high temperature. Most respondents are civil servant who go to work everyday and interact with friends and family but because of the pandemic close interaction was reduced or where possible avoided totally. Although covid-19 test was not at the reach of majority of the respondents in the study area as such behavioral dimension coping strategies was adopted by most of them. Covid-19 pandemic brought about serious problems like sickness, death, poverty, and loose of jobs which actually have negative effect on the respondents.

### Recommendation

The following are some recommendation: Government must make available covid-19 testing centers closer to the people, Government loans and grants should be made easy for citizen to access to enable them cope with the

difficulties covid-19 pandemic brought to humanity, Government should improve on publicities and advertisement about the danger of covid-19 pandemic to human life, Corruption should be eliminated from the government palliatives distribution through proper monitoring and evaluation.

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