

Perceived Impact Of Covid-19 Pandemic On Social Health Of Single Mothers In Obio/Akpor L.G.A, Rivers State

Abstract

The study's goal was to ascertain how the COVID-19 pandemic was believed to have affected the social health of single mothers in River State's Obio/Akpor L.G.A. A cross-sectional research design was employed in the study. Taro Yamane's technique was used to determine a sample size of 285 out of the 1000 single mothers that made up the study's population. To find responders, a multi-stage sampling strategy was employed. The tool used to collect data was a questionnaire that was self-developed, validated, and pretested. Research issues were addressed using descriptive statistics of frequency and percentage, and the hypotheses were tested using the Chi-square test statistic. In Obio/Akpor L.G.A., single mothers' perceived social health was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic (63.7%). The pandemic of COVID-19 had a substantial ($p < 0.05$) effect on the social health of single moms in the research region. In Obio/Akpor L.G.A., there was a strong perception of the COVID-19 pandemic's influence on the social health of single moms. It was suggested that when formulating specific policies, legislators take social health support into account.

Keywords: Perceived Impacts, Social Health, Covid-19 Pandemic, Single Mothers

1. Introduction

The pandemic resulting from Coronavirus 19 had lots of impacts on various aspects of life. In this study, the interest is not on studying coronavirus as a disease but on the impact the pandemic had on the social health of single mothers. How some activities of the pandemic like quarantine, lockdown and social distancing impacted the social health of this group of women. Wang et al. (2020) opined that crisis periods are usually periods of impacts on all aspects of health and well-being with the attendant social, emotional, and psychological distress and the associated symptoms, including stress, worry, and panic among the general public. Understanding the extent to which such pandemics affect social and mental health as well as other facets of life is therefore vital (Al-Rabiaah et al., 2020; Davico et al., 2020; Torales et al., 2020).

Restrictions on movement, being apart from friends and family, having little independence, and being afraid of the future are all things that could make the negative psychological and social effects worse (Brooks et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2007; Paris, 2020). Serafini et al. (2020) emphasized that several stresses, such as extended quarantine periods, anxiety about contracting an infection, discomfort, loneliness, boredom, confinement, insufficient knowledge, and financial loss, might exacerbate poor mental and social health. Several studies have examined the gender dimension of the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic (Alon et al., 2020; Wenham et al. 2020; Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security, 2019). Therefore, there is a need to investigate the perceived impacts of COVID-19 on the social health of single mothers in the Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria.

This paper examined the perceived impact of COVID-19 on the social health of single mothers in the Obio/Akpor Local Government Area of Rivers State, Nigeria. The study would achieve the objective of determining the perceived impacts of the COVID-19

pandemic on the social health of single mothers in Obio/Akpor L.G.A. of Rivers State based on the socio-demographics of age, level of education, and occupation.

2. Materials and Methods

The study was carried out in Obio/Akpor L.G.A of Rivers State, Nigeria using a cross-sectional research design. The population size of the study was 1000 single mothers and a sample size of 285 was calculated using Taro Yamane's formula. A multi-stage sampling technique was used to recruit the respondents. The LGA was clustered into communities, wards, village and family heads. The different family heads listed the number of single mothers in their families that the self-developed, validated and pretested questionnaire was administered to. To address research issues, descriptive statistics of percentage and frequency were employed, and the Chi-square test statistic was employed to evaluate the hypotheses.

The phrase "social health" describes how individuals build wholesome and constructive interpersonal connections with one another. People who are in good social health are better able to manage their emotions and feel supported in day-to-day activities. Getting out and socializing, participating in community events, and avoiding isolation are just a few strategies to attain this kind of health. Good social health is demonstrated by a robust support network, strong social networks, and strong interpersonal interactions. Better mental and physical health are supported by good social health. We run the risk of experiencing social isolation, physical health issues, low self-esteem, anxiety, depression, and other mental health illnesses, as well as a lower quality of life, when we have poor social health (East Tennessee State University, 2022).

3. Results

Results in Table 1 show that the COVID-19 pandemic had a high perceived impact (63.7%) on the social health of single mothers in the studied population.

Table 1: The frequency of perceived impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the social health of single mothers in Obio/Akpor, Rivers State

Perceived impacts of Covid-19 (n=285)					
S/N	Items	Yes		No	
		F	%	F	%
1	Did you experience loneliness during the lockdown as a single mother?	251	88.1	34	11.9
2	Did you experience anxiety during the pandemic?	223	78.2	62	21.8
3	Did your mental stress level increase during the pandemic?	247	86.7	38	13.3
4	Were you afraid of the pandemic as a single mother?	262	91.9	23	8.1
5	Did you receive good social support during the pandemic?	261	91.6	24	8.4
6	Did you feel connected with the television religious worship?	161	56.5	124	43.5
7	Did you gain excessive weight during the lockdown due to lack of exercise as a single parent?	136	47.7	149	52.3
8	Did you engage in heavy alcohol intake	52	18.2	233	81.8

	to reduce stress during the pandemic?				
9	Did you use smoking to make yourself happy during the lockdown?	28	9.8	257	90.2
10	Did the social distancing hinder the care you get from others?	231	81.1	54	19.9
11	Did the pandemic make you feel pained being a single mother?	146	51.2	139	48.8
	Average	182	63.7	103	36.3

Key for interpretations of Tables 1 and 2:Less than 39% implies low perceived impact; 40 – 59% implies average perceived impact; 60 -79% implies high perceived impact; 80% and above for very high perceived impact. ‘Yes’ is the indication of perceived impact.

Table 2 shows that single mothers aged below 25 years (50.7%) and those aged 25 -44 years (47.4 %) both had an average perceived impact while those above 44 years had a high perceived impact (64.6%) on their social health (P< 0.05). Table 2 further showed that single mothers with no formal education (33.3%), primary education (38.7 %) and secondary education (38.2%) all had low perceived impact while those with tertiary education (43.5%) had an average perceived impact of the pandemic on their social health (P< 0.05). It was also revealed in Table 2 that single mothers across occupations had average perceived impacts of the pandemic on their social health; those with no jobs (44.3%), those who were self-employed (40.6%) and those employed (42.5%).

Table 2: The frequency of perceived impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the social health of single mothers in Obio/Akpor, Rivers State based on age, level of education and occupation

Yes F/%	No F/%	Yes F/%	No F/ %	Yes F/%	No F/ %	Yes F/%	No F/ %	P- value
Based on age								
< 25 years (n=79)		25-44years (n=145)		>44 years (n=61)				
37(47.4)	42(52.6)	74(50.7)	71(49.3)	41(64.6)	20(35.4)			0.00001
Based on the level of education								
No formal education (n=8)		Primary(n=46)		Secondary (n=123)		Tertiary (n=108)		
3(33.3)	5 (66.7)	18(38.7)	28(61.3)	47(38.2)	76(61.8)	47(43.5)	61(56.5)	0.00001
Based on occupation								
No job (n=32)		Self-employed years (n=133)		Employed (n=120)				
14(44.3)	18(55.7)	54(40.6)	79(59.4)	51(42.5)	69(57.5)			

4. Discussion

Table 1 revealed that the single mothers in Obio/Akpor LGA had the high perceived impact of covid-19 pandemic on their social health (63.7%). This agrees with the findings of Paris (2020) and Alon et al. (2020a). This is not surprising because the LGA is the epicentre of social activities in Rivers State.

The results in Table 2 indicate that single mothers significantly have different perceived impacts of the pandemic on their social health based on their ages which agrees with Melo and Soares (2020) who found significant differences in the effect of the pandemic on health based on age. The results could stem from the fact that single mothers beyond 44 years would have more responsibilities attributable to age and with less assistance. The table further showed that participants with tertiary education had a higher impact than their counterparts. This is expected with the social networking and relationships of women with tertiary education; social distancing, and staying at home will impact their social health significantly. This is consistent with the study of Bassuk et al. (1999) and Paris (2020) who found that educational level was significant in perceived stress by individuals during the pandemic. Table 2 also showed that single mothers had the average perceived impact of the pandemic on their social health across all occupations. This could be as a result of the lockdown which forced everyone to stay at home and be exposed to the same concerns. This agrees with Wang et al. (2020).

5. Conclusion

There was a high perceived impact of covid-19 pandemic on the social health of single mothers in Obio/Akpor L.G.A. Based on the findings of the study it was recommended that social health support should be considered by policymakers when making certain policies.

References

1. Alon, T., Doepke, M., Olmstead- Rumsey, J., & Tertilt, M. (2020a). The Impact of COVID- 19 on gender equality (No. w26947). National Bureau of Economic Research. Doi:10.3386/w26947
2. Al-Rabiaah, A., Temsah, M. H. Al-Eyadhy, A. A., Hasan, G. M., Al-Zamil, F., Al-Subaie, S., Alshime, F., Jamal, A., Alhaboob, A., Al-Saadi, B., Somily, A. M. (2020). Middle East Respiratory Syndrome-Corona Virus (MERS-CoV) associated stress among medical students at a university teaching hospital in Saudi Arabia. *J. Infect. Public Health*, 13 (5), pp. 687-691, [10.1016/j.jiph.2020.01.005](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jiph.2020.01.005)
3. Bassuk, S. S., Glass, T. A. & Berkman, L. F. (1999). Social disengagement and incident cognitive decline in community-dwelling elderly persons. *Ann. Intern. Med.*, 131, 165–173. doi: 10.7326/0003-4819-131-3-199908030-00002
4. Brooks, S. K., Webster, R. K., Smith, L. E., Woodland, L., Wessely, S., & Greenberg, N. (2020). The psychological impact of quarantine and how to reduce it: a rapid review of the evidence. *Lancet*, 395, 912–920. doi: 10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30460-8
5. Davico, C., Ghiggia, A., Marcotulli, D., Ricci, F., Amianto, F. & Vitiello, B. Psychological Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Adults and Their Children in Italy. *Front Psychiatry*. 2021 Mar 12;12:572997. doi: 10.3389/fpsy.2021.572997. PMID: 33776812; PMCID: PMC7994767.
6. East Tennessee State University (2022). What is social health? Accessed on 10/10/2022. <https://study.com/academy/lesson/what-is-social-health-definition-examples.html>
7. Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (2019), <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/WPS-Index-2019-20-Report.pdf>

8. Lee, A.M., Wong, J.G., McAlonan, G.M., Cheung, V., Cheung, C., Sham, P.C., Chu, C.M., Wong, P.C., Tsang, K.W. & Chua, S.E. (2007). Stress and psychological distress among SARS survivors 1 year after the outbreak. *Can J Psychiatry*, 52(4):233-40. doi: 10.1177/070674370705200405. PMID: 17500304.
9. Melo, M. C. A. & Soares, D. D. S. (2020). Impact of social distancing on mental health during the COVID-19 pandemic: An urgent discussion. *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, 66(6), 625–626. doi: 10.1177/0020764020927047 journals.sagepub.com/home/isp
10. Paris, M. (2020), “What’s a ‘Shelter in Place’ Order, and Who’s Affected?” *Wired*, accessed March 23, 2020, <https://www.wired.com/story/whats-shelter-placeorder-whos-affected/>.
11. Serafini, G., Bondi, E., Locatelli, C. & Amore, M. (2020). Aged patients with mental disorders in the COVID-19 era: The experience of Northern Italy. *Am. J. Geriatr. Psychiatr*, 28, 794–795. doi: 10.1016/j.jagp.2020.04.015.
12. Torales, H., Rios-Gonzalez, C., Barrios, I., O’Higgins, M., Gonzalez, I., Garcia, O., Castaldelli-Maia, J. M. & Ventriglio, A. (2020). Self-perceived stress during the quarantine of the COVID-19 pandemic in Paraguay: An exploratory Survey. *Frontiers Psychiatry Public Mental Health*, 26, page 1. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsy.2020.558691>
13. Wang, C., Pan R., Wan, X., Tan, Y., Xu, L., McIntyre, R.S., N. Choo, F.N., Tran, B., Ho R., Sharma, V. K. & Cyrus Ho, C. (2020). A longitudinal study on the mental health of the general population during the COVID-19 epidemic in China. *Brain, Behavior, and Immunity*, 87, 40-48, ISSN 0889-1591, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bbi.2020.04.028>.
14. Wenham, C., Smith, J., Davies, S.E., Feng, H., Grepin, K.A., Harman, S., Herten-Crabb & Morgan, R. (2020). The social and economic impacts of COVID-19 fall harder on women than on men. Governments need to gather data and target policy to keep all citizens equally safe, sheltered and secure. *Nature*, 583, 194-198. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-02006-z> Doi:
15. World Health Organization (WHO). COVID-19 Weekly Epidemiological Update- 15 June 2021, World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland (2021), Available online: <https://covid19.who.int/Google Scholar>