

Unintended Impact of COVID-19 on Vulnerable Groups

Private School Teachers



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#VulnerableGroup



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The Unintended impact of COVID-19 on Vulnerable groups is a research project under the COVID-19 Transparency and Accountability Project (CTAP).

This research work seeks to document the physiological, psychological, economic, social and professional impact of COVID-19 on private school teachers during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020. The research work was carried out in 4 states of Nigeria – Kano, Imo, Lagos and FCT Abuja.

This research work was carried out by Eduplana for the CTAP project which is executed by BudgIT Foundation, Connected Development and Global Integrity.

The COVID-19 Transparency and Accountability Project (CTAP) is an initiative that seeks to promote accountability and transparency through the tracking of COVID-19 intervention funds across 7 African countries – Cameroon, Ghana, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone.

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CONTEXT

The devastating effect of COVID-19 is felt across the different sectors in Nigeria. From the health sector to the economy; lives were lost, businesses crashed and the numbers could be calculated.

According to the World Bank, Nigeria's economy contracted by

6.1% 

year on year in the second quarter of 2020 (which is the steepest in the last 10 years) **while**

27% 

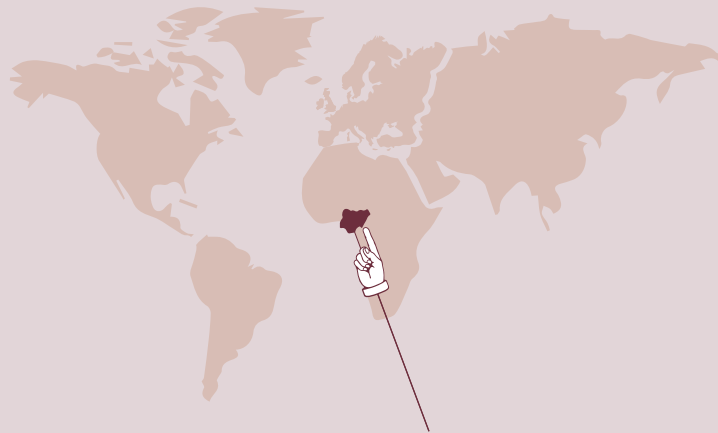
labor force (over 21 million Nigerians) are unemployed. So far, Nigeria has recorded



166,730 cases and



2,117 deaths as at June 2021.



In the education sector, a struggle was ongoing prior to COVID-19 to ensure young children stay in school as Nigeria contributes approximately

20%
of the total global
out-of-school population.

On 19 March 2020, the Federal ministry of Education approved school closure as a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. According to UNESCO, almost

40 million



learners have been affected by the nation-wide school closures in Nigeria.

Digital and online learning had become widely popular in Nigeria as schools were forced to adapt due to the COVID-19 lockdown. As at May 26, 2020, only 23 states and the FCT had started digital learning for children in their state via Radio and Television according to an Eduplana survey.

For private school teachers, they moved online to conduct classes for their students using the various online learning platforms. While teachers in government schools were paid, that wasn't the case for private school teachers during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Despite the federal government effort to engage private school teachers to access the N100bn Central Bank of Nigeria credit support intervention fund. Majority of private school teachers reported the process was poorly implemented, marred by various levels of funds mismanagement.

Despite various donations by private individuals and organizations during the COVID-19 lockdown, private school teachers complained bitterly about neglect and lack of support from government and schools management.

Being the intellectual base of the nation, they felt forgotten and unaccounted as citizens of Nigeria. In our focus states --- Kano, Imo, Lagos and FCT Abuja, private school teachers share their struggle and means of survival during this dreaded COVID-19 lockdown.

Responses from the various state government shows lack of a teacher's database or welfare intervention for private school teachers or total neglect.

*10 of 14 private school teachers interviewed
in Nigeria didn't receive government support
during the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020.*

Introduction

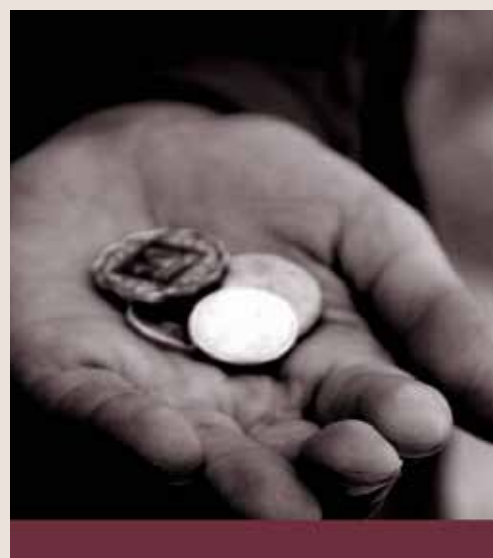
This research work aims to explore how private school teachers coped with the COVID-19 lockdown across 4 states of Nigeria. The continuous culture of education neglect in Nigeria has deepened so much that teachers don't believe in demanding accountability from the system. Government officials believe there's nothing they should do to improve private school teachers' welfare. Hence the cycle continues and there's so much suffering among vulnerable while the government at the centre pretends it cares about their welfare.

Citizens' welfare programmes have been poorly implemented and in cases where there has been intervention programmes like the conditional cash transfers, it has been marred by cases of corruption and embezzlement.

For vulnerable groups like private school teachers in our focus states, they lamented bitterly about neglect by the federal government, state government and even parents.

They shared harrowing stories of becoming a bus conductor, food rationing for kids, moving to the village, going back to their aged-parents for survival. A common trend shows there was not much intervention from the government despite numerous donations during the COVID-19 lockdown.

We observed private school teachers had to resort to begging for support on social media platforms or opening go-fund me accounts in order to survive during this period. An obvious example was the viral video of a private school teacher in FCT Abuja who shared a crying video on how he couldn't survive with his family and needed support.





This wasn't the only case as our research shows that majority of private school teachers were not paid salaries during the 7-months COVID-19 lockdown. In some cases of payment, they were paid five thousand naira for internet data stipend for a duration of 2 months during the COVID-19 lockdown. There were cases of depression, massive private school teachers' resignation, high students' dropout, memory loss, poor academic performance due to the COVID-19 lockdown. While there has been an initial intervention by the various government agencies like the Federal ministry of Education, Teachers Registration Council

of Nigeria (TRCN) promised to intervene. Our engagement and letters to these agencies shows not much is being done to address these welfare gaps for vulnerable groups like private school teachers.

Over the years, challenges like lack of an open database on private school teachers, lack of regular updates on teachers' welfare has not been addressed. This has posed the challenge for government to implement programmes that can effectively address the welfare of vulnerable groups like private school teachers.

While COVID-19 has ensured that pressure for reform on private school teachers' welfare has been intensified by citizens and civil society, without effective mechanisms to address this by government agencies, much change will not be achieved.

Across the states, we can tell similar stories about the impact of COVID-19 on private school teachers and their education sector. School-aged children enrolment and attendance has drastically reduced, motivation is at an all-time low with teachers seeking other opportunities for survival in case of another pandemic like COVID-19.

With the evidence of government neglect and negligence to prioritize their welfare, private school teachers' attention is now divided between finding alternative business options and classroom teaching which means learning will suffer among school-aged children. This has the potential to contribute to the increasing number of out-of-school children and poor learning achievements.

Looking at the pivotal role of technology in ensuring welfare packages are improved and bringing governance closer to vulnerable groups like private school teachers. This research shows majority of teachers saying the government can use this in terms of data gathering and ensuring payments verification is effective.

However, there's a challenge for government agencies to adopt technology in order to improve welfare and service delivery for vulnerable groups like private school teachers. This research work shows that majority of private school teachers agree that any effort to reform the welfare system for vulnerable groups without adoption of technology will only fail.

The impact of weak reforms could be catastrophic if another pandemic like COVID-19 happens. The time for effective reform and change is ticking if the government plans to truthfully reform the welfare system for vulnerable groups like private school teachers in Nigeria.

VULNERABLE GROUP FEEDBACK



In our visit to the focus states, this research highlights stories of some of the private school teachers. We tried to get their perspectives from three perspectives.

First, how they reacted when they heard about the COVID-19 lockdown. Second, how they coped mentally, socially and economically during the COVID-19 lockdown. Third, what they expected the government should have done and necessary measures to take to avert future occurrences.



IMO STATE

Surviving mentally during the lockdown

“During the COVID-19 lockdown, I exhausted all the money and foodstuff at home.

My biggest worry was survival and paying my house rent, electricity bill and other household needs.

I had to beg parents to release their children, by practicing social distancing, I conducted home lesson for 4 weeks.

I couldn't continue the home lesson classes due to parents' complaints and inability to pay. I had to enrol to a sewing school to learn fashion design and that's how I survived mentally the remainder of the COVID-19 lockdown” according to

ANNABEL,
A private school teacher.

Lack of Government intervention

“Private schools are owing their teachers yet there's lack of support from the government.

Government may claim they don't have these schools data but these are the same schools they collect different levies from.

So I believe they have private schools data but have refused to assist private schools during the COVID-19 lockdown” From

ANGELA,
A private school teacher.

Imo State

Double workload, no teachers' pay after resumption

“Due to the COVID-19 lockdown, private school teachers suffered the most. This was the period I had to undergo operation and there was simply no way to make money or anyone to help in paying for my operation bills.

As private school teachers, we were neglected the most as no one paid us be it

school owners or the government.

When schools resumed, our workload doubled in an effort to cover the subjects' curriculum students missed out on due to the lockdown“. From

CYNTHIA,

A private school teacher.



KANO STATE

Difficult period, wish it never happens again in my lifetime

“The COVID-19 lockdown was a difficult period for me as a private school teacher that I never wish for again especially in a country with weak institutions like Nigeria. Some of my friends had to travel to his parents place in order to feed. He stopped teaching because he couldn't return when schools resumed as there was no

funds to travel.

It was a difficult period to feed, while the school management tried to support teachers, they also struggled financially.”

MICHAEL,

A private school teacher.



Kano State

Poor enrolment and teachers resignation

“Before the COVID-19 lockdown, we had about 800 – 900 students, now we had about 350 students. Due to the COVID-19 lockdown, teachers left because the school management couldn’t pay salaries. Before the lockdown, we had 25 teachers, now we have 13 teachers.

Even with students that have resumed, we struggle for them to catch up with what they’ve learnt before. This is taking an emotional stress and physical toll on the available teachers.”

ZAINAB,
, a private school teacher

Lack of support from Federal, State Government and Parents

“Private school teachers suffered a lot during the COVID-19 lockdown. Government did not support us, Parents did not support us, Schools didn’t have any other means to pay teachers salary.

For some private schools, they loosed their learning facility as they couldn’t

renew their rent. The lockdown period was a huge loss for private school owners.”

AUDU,
a private school Principal

FCT ABUJA

Stopped teaching, can't rely on government or private school owners

“As a private school teacher, the COVID-19 lockdown was a mentally depressing time for me.

Feeding was hard to come by, my church initially helped out with foodstuffs. As the lockdown continued, I had to join my mother in selling food at her shop.

I couldn't continue with the shame and started selling

computer wares online, as for me I won't be going back to teaching in the classroom. The COVID-19 lockdown has shown me I can't rely on private schools management or government for support in cases of future pandemic.

JOSEPH,
a former private school teacher.

Started selling pap and bean cake to survive

“During the COVID-19 lockdown, as a private school teacher there was no support from my school owners and I didn't even get any form of support from the federal government. With 2 kids at home, I had to call my parents in the village for financial support.

As the lockdown continued, in order to survive, I had to bring out my kitchen utensils outside my gate to start making bean cake and pap.”

CHINENYE,
A private school teacher.



LAGOS STATE

Least paid profession, inhumane treatment by government

“Before the COVID-19, private school teacher’s salary isn’t enough to survive. Private school teachers are the least-paid profession and we’ve had to survive inhumane living conditions on the job despite our immense contribution to human capital develop-

ment in Nigeria. I had to ration food for my kids and sometimes they don’t eat in a whole day during the COVID-19 lockdown.”

NOIMOT,

a former private school teacher.

No government support, ran into debts

Before the COVID-19 lockdown, schools management owed staffs salary for many months. Private schools use examination period to bring in debts from parents who are owing school fees. It was during this period that the COVID-19 lockdown started and it affected a lot of schools and teachers.

The lack of government support really affected me and my family. While I tried applying for most of the government welfare programmes, I didn’t access any and ran into debts. This is the story of me and many of my friends during the COVID-19 lock-

PETER,

A private school teacher.

Lagos State

The right time for government to prioritize teachers welfare

“As the intellectual base of this nation, government cannot continue to neglect private school teachers. This is the right time for government to prioritize the welfare and care of teachers; both private and public school teachers.

If any of these children are left out, they won't be useful or contribute to the future economy of this nation and rather become a burden”

HEZEKIAH,
, a private school teacher

CONCLUSION

Addressing the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable groups like private school teachers will require necessary measures and steps to ensure accountability and effective service delivery. In order to ensure effectiveness, a combination of these measures must be adopted.

We've continued to seek engagement with the various government agencies in these focus states. For states like Lagos and the FCT Abuja, there has been responsiveness to seek better solutions to

improve private school teachers' welfare with further engagement. However, the willingness to embark on these necessary reforms is still weak as there remains a lot of blame sharing among government officials.

The continuous role of civil society and citizens' engagement to call for the government to prioritize welfare of vulnerable groups is seen as a critical step to recognize this challenge and becoming a government priority.

In order to ensure this, some of our recommendations include;

1. The government needs to develop an online directory of vulnerable groups like private school teachers and ensure regular updates whereby it is open to every citizen to access their needs anytime, anywhere.
2. Development of a public-private partnership between government and private school owners to develop a welfare trust fund for private school teachers in cases of future occurrences like the COVID-19 pandemic so their welfare can be prioritized.
3. Government should setup a taskforce that will begin to access the status of private school finances to ensure they can address teachers' welfare and school management in cases of future occurrences like the COVID-19 pandemic.

