



## COVID-19 SOCIAL DISTANCING AS A PREVENTIVE MEASURE: IMPLICATIONS ON ACADEMIC LIBRARIES IN NIGERIA

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### Abstract

**Purpose:** This paper aims to determine the effect of Covid-19 social distancing as a preventive measure: implications on academic libraries in Nigeria. In addition the study also examines the consequences of the implication in the face of the current economic situation, prospective look as lesson for the future, consideration of way out of presently observed effect for the future in relation to academic libraries in Nigeria.

**Design/Methodology/Approach:** This is an opinion paper based on events concerning Covid-19 in Nigeria in relation to the academic libraries. It also considers the present situation with a look into the future considering lessons to be learnt and possible future adjustments against unforeseen development.

**Findings:** Findings from the effect of Covid-19 social distancing on academic libraries, despite the devastating effect will reveal some lessons for the future and expose possible necessary adjustments that will serve as caution/action against unforeseen "negative" development such as the pandemic.

**Practical Implications:** The need to prepare the minds of the government and academic libraries for the unexpected like the Covid-19 experience, with the view of exposing possible lessons learnt from the experience and prospecting into documenting experiences for the future use and necessary adjustments against future unforeseen social development like Covid-19.

**Originality/Value:** The value of this paper lies in its appreciating the effect of Covid-19 social distancing on academic libraries and lessons learnt against future occurrences of this unexpected emergency with a view of prospective into future possible and necessary adjustments.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, Social distancing, preventive measure, implications, Academic Library, Nigeria.

**Paper Type:** Conceptual.

### Introduction

The case of novel (new) Corona virus (Covid-19) was first identified in Wuhan city, China on 31 Dec. 2019. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported a cluster of pneumonia cases caused by a new and severe Acute Respiratory syndrome Corona virus 2(SAR-COV-2). Since then the virus has spread to almost all the countries around the globe. The WHO has officially declared it a World Wide Pandemic. It declared the outbreak a global public health emergency on 30<sup>th</sup> January, 2020. It is moving like a Wild fire Afflicting and consuming the Academic elements of all races.

According to World meter's report, in the space of a few months the Covid-19 has affected 213 countries and territories around the World and

still counting even as the world continued to battle the disease.

There are 35,274,475 confirmed cases, 7,740,172 currently infected with 66,037 (1%) critical cases and 1,038,423 (-----) deaths worldwide as at 5<sup>th</sup> October, 2020 (Worldometer, 2020).

The table below shows the current statistics on history of confirmed cases and death rates by countries and Territories around the world as revealed by the information source mentioned above.

**Table showing the current history of Covid-19 confirmed cases, recovered and death rates by countries – as at 5<sup>th</sup> October, 2020. COVID-19 pandemic by location**

Location	Cases	Deaths	Recovered.
World	35,274,475	1,038,423	24,554,134
United States	7,505,022	213,056	4,873,669
India	6,623,815	102,685	5,586,703
Brazil	4,915,289	146,352	4,263,208
Russia	1,225,889	21,475	982,324
Colombia	855,052	26,712	761,674
Peru	828,169	32,742	706,223
Spain	813,412	32,225	No data
Argentina	798,473	21,018	636,659
Mexico	761,665	79,088	550,053
South Africa	681,289	16,976	614,781
France	619,190	32,230	97,900
United Kingdom	515,571	42,369	No data
Iran	475,674	27,192	392,293
Chile	471,746	13,037	443,453
Iraq	382,949	9,464	312,158
Bangladesh	370,132	5,375	283,182
Saudi Arabia	336,766	4,898	322,055
Italy	327,586	36,002	232,681
Turkey	326,046	8,498	286,370
Philippines	324,762	5,840	273,123
Pakistan	315,260	6,517	299,836
Indonesia	307,120	11,253	232,593
Germany <sup>[n]</sup>	301,571	9,602	261,915
Israel <sup>[o]</sup>	266,775	1,719	195,629
Ukraine <sup>[p]</sup>	230,236	4,430	101,252
Canada <sup>[q]</sup>	167,963	9,492	141,660
Ecuador	141,034	11,647	120,511
Romania	137,491	5,048	108,526
Bolivia	136,868	8,101	97,547
Netherlands <sup>[r]</sup>	135,892	6,454	No data
Morocco <sup>[s]</sup>	133,272	2,330	111,036
Belgium <sup>[t]</sup>	127,623	10,044	No data
Qatar	126,692	216	123,664
Panama	115,286	2,423	91,809
Dominican Republic	114,480	2,134	90,366
Kazakhstan	108,177	1,725	103,205
Kuwait	107,592	628	99,549
Egypt <sup>[u]</sup>	103,683	5,981	97,355
Poland	102,080	2,659	73,552
Oman	101,814	985	90,600
United Arab Emirates	99,733	429	89,410
Sweden	94,283	5,895	No data
Guatemala	94,182	3,302	82,828
Nepal	89,263	554	65,202
Japan <sup>[v]</sup>	85,733	1,599	78,609
China <sup>[w]</sup>	85,470	4,634	80,628
Czech Republic	83,696	757	45,176
Belarus	80,696	862	75,303
Portugal	79,885	2,018	50,454

Location	Cases	Deaths	Recovered.
Honduras	79,305	2,422	29,629
Costa Rica	79,182	950	45,007
Ethiopia	78,819	1,222	33,060
Venezuela	78,434	653	68,917
Bahrain	72,662	260	67,475
Nigeria	59,345	1,113	50,768
Uzbekistan	58,946	485	55,633
Singapore	57,812	27	57,575
Moldova	56,901	1,375	41,467
Switzerland	54,384	1,784	46,100
Armenia	52,677	984	44,710
Algeria	52,270	1,768	36,672
Austria	48,896	818	39,058
Kyrgyzstan	47,428	1,066	43,418
Ghana	46,829	303	46,060
Lebanon	45,657	414	20,243
Paraguay	44,182	929	27,203
Palestine	41,498	330	34,698
Azerbaijan	40,788	598	38,587
Kenya	39,449	735	27,035
Afghanistan	39,422	1,466	32,879
Ireland	38,549	1,810	24,000
Libya	37,437	596	22,076
Serbia	33,952	756	No data
Hungary	30,575	822	7,470
Denmark	30,057	659	23,122
El Salvador	29,450	863	234,296
Bosnia and Herzegovina	28,449	888	22,032
Australia	27,136	894	24,866
Puerto Rico	25,034	686	No data
South Korea	24,164	422	21,886
Tunisia	22,230	321	5,032
Bulgaria	21,518	841	14,984
Cameroon	20,924	420	19,764
Greece	20,142	417	9,989
Ivory Coast	19,882	120	19,449
North Macedonia	18,790	756	15,341
Myanmar	18,781	444	5,548
Croatia	17,797	300	16,031
Jordan	17,464	110	5,292
Madagascar	16,558	232	15,486
Kosovo	15,814	630	13,856
Senegal	15,094	312	12,805
Zambia	15,052	333	134,187
Norway <sup>[ad]</sup>	14,457	275	11,190
Albania	14,410	400	8,825
Sudan	13,653	836	6,764
Slovakia	13,139	55	4,828
Malaysia	12,813	137	10,340
Montenegro	12,127	179	7,953
Namibia	11,626	123	9,429
DR Congo	10,760	274	10,239
Guinea	10,754	66	10,098

<b>Location</b>	<b>Cases</b>	<b>Deaths</b>	<b>Recovered.</b>
Finland	10,538	345	8,100
Maldives	10,530	34	9,364
Tajikistan	9,852	77	8,661
Mozambique	8,979	64	5,595
Gabon	8,797	54	8,067
Haiti	8,792	229	6,949
Luxembourg	8,709	125	7,428
Uganda	8,491	79	4,470
Zimbabwe	7,858	228	6,322
Mauritania	7,511	162	7,163
Georgia <sup>[ag]</sup>	7,093	46	3,714
Jamaica	6,704	116	2,112
Cape Verde	6,205	62	5,399
Slovenia	6,103	154	No data
Cuba	5,845	123	5,232
Malawi	5,783	179	4,535
Eswatini	5,521	111	5,061
Djibouti	5,417	61	5,346
Angola	5,402	195	2,577
Lithuania	5,285	94	2,497
Nicaragua	5,170	151	2,913
Hong Kong	5,105	105	4,842
Congo	5,089	89	3,887
Equatorial Guinea	5,045	83	4,879
Suriname	4,941	106	4,741
Rwanda	4,847	29	3,197
Central African Republic	4,829	62	1,914
Trinidad and Tobago	4,763	81	2,843
Syria	4,289	203	1,130
Bahamas	4,220	96	2,290
Aruba	4,079	30	3,532
Donetsk PR	3,670	210	2,123
Estonia	3,617	67	2,755
Somalia	3,593	99	3,001
The Gambia	3,590	115	2,226
Thailand	3,590	59	3,390
Sri Lanka	3,471	13	3,259
Malta	3,327	39	2,770
Mali	3,156	131	2,467
Guyana	3,093	87	1,920
Iceland	2,809	10	2,194
South Sudan	2,715	50	1,290
Guam	2,617	50	1,887
Benin	2,357	41	1,973
Guinea-Bissau	2,324	39	1,549
Sierra Leone	2,269	72	1,706
Uruguay	2,145	48	1,844
Burkina Faso	2,123	59	1,385
Andorra	2,110	53	1,540
Yemen	2,040	589	1,307
Belize	2,026	27	1,272
Botswana	1,968	16	710
Latvia	1,945	38	1,307

Location	Cases	Deaths	Recovered.
French Polynesia	1,852	7	1,504
Togo	1,818	48	1,365
Cyprus	1,789	22	1,369
Lesotho	1,680	39	926
New Zealand	1,499	25	1,434
Liberia	1,346	82	1,225
U.S. Virgin Islands	1,326	20	1,256
Chad	1,211	85	1,070
Niger	1,197	69	1,114
Abkhazia	1,177	8	285
USS <i>Theodore Roosevelt</i> <sup>[an]</sup>	1,102	1	751
Vietnam	1,096	35	1,020
<i>Charles de Gaulle</i>	1,081	0	0
Somaliland	976	32	847
Luhansk PR	955	35	770
São Tomé and Príncipe	911	15	886
Northern Cyprus	762	4	690
San Marino	732	42	680
<i>Diamond Princess</i>	712	14	653
Turks and Caicos Islands	695	5	657
Sint Maarten	679	22	572
Papua New Guinea	539	7	519
Taiwan	518	7	485
Burundi	513	1	472
Comoros	484	7	466
Faroe Islands	472	0	432
Curaçao	462	1	242
Jersey	421	32	375
Gibraltar	416	0	351
Artsakh	404	2	337
Mauritius	385	10	344
Eritrea	381	0	353
Isle of Man <sup>[ax]</sup>	341	24	315
Mongolia	313	0	307
Bhutan	298	0	237
Cambodia	280	0	275
Guernsey	256	13	242
Monaco	218	2	181
Cayman Islands	213	1	209
Barbados	199	7	182
Bermuda	181	9	168
<i>Costa Atlantica</i>	148	0	148
Brunei	146	3	142
Seychelles	145	0	143
<i>Greg Mortimer</i> <sup>[ao]</sup>	128	1	No data
Liechtenstein	120	1	116
Antigua and Barbuda	106	3	94
Bonaire	103	1	23
South Ossetia <sup>[ay]</sup>	90	0	90
British Virgin Islands	71	1	66
Saint Vincent <sup>[az]</sup>	64	0	64
Northern Mariana Islands	61	2	19
Macau	46	0	46

Location	Cases	Deaths	Recovered.
Fiji	32	2	28
Dominica	30	0	24
Sahrawi Arab DR <sup>[ba]</sup>	28	2	26
East Timor	27	0	27
Saint Lucia	27	0	27
New Caledonia	27	0	27
Grenada	24	0	24
Laos	23	0	22
Saint Kitts and Nevis	19	0	17
Saint Pierre and Miquelon	16	0	5
Greenland	14	0	14
Falkland Islands	13	0	13
Montserrat	13	1	12
MS <i>Zaandam</i> <sup>[bb]</sup>	13	4	No data
Sint Eustatius	13	0	4
<i>Coral Princess</i> <sup>[bc]</sup>	12	3	No data
Vatican City	12	0	12
HNLMS <i>Dolfijn</i> <sup>[bd]</sup>	8	0	8
Saba	5	0	5
Anguilla	3	0	3
Solomon Islands	1	0	0
Tanzania <sup>[be]</sup>	No data	No data	No data
As of 5 October 2020 (UTC) · History of cases · History of deaths			

Equally, the Nigerian Presidential Task Force on Covid-19, during its national briefing on May 5, 2020, reported that as at January 30<sup>th</sup> when the World Health Organization (WHO) declared Covid-19 a Pandemic, there were only 7,818 confirmed cases all over the world, with majority of these (7,736) in China and 82 cases spread over 18 other countries of the world. But as at April 30<sup>th</sup> (in a space of about 3 months), there were 2,968,672 million people affected,

spreading across 212 countries. The total number of cases and deaths outside China has overtaken in total, number of cases in China where the virus originated from. Most countries all over the world now have ongoing unimaginable community spread with the virus, as does Nigeria.

Nigeria recorded her first index case of corona virus in Lagos on 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2020, as revealed by the table below:

**Tables showing the current statistics of reported cases of Covid – 19 by states in Nigeria as at 5<sup>th</sup> October,2020.**

Confirmed COVID-19 cases in Nigeria by state				
State	Cases	Active	Recovered	Deaths
Lagos	19,651	4,196	15,250	205
FCT	5,746	684	4,984	78
Plateau	3,497	749	2,715	33
Oyo	3,268	798	2,430	40
Edo	2,631	29	2,495	107
Rivers	2,517	124	2,334	59
Kaduna	2,444	57	2,347	40
Ogun	1,883	122	1,733	28
Delta	1,802	16	1,737	49
Kano	1,738	14	1,670	54
Ondo	1,635	54	1,545	36
Enugu	1,289	102	1,166	21
Kwara	1,044	37	982	25
Ebonyi	1,042	4	1,008	30
Abia	898	18	872	8
Katsina	884	19	841	24
Gombe	883	111	747	25
Osun	847	25	805	17
Borno	745	4	705	36
Bauchi	699	8	677	14
Imo	576	29	535	12
Benue	481	58	413	10
Nasarawa	452	114	325	13
Bayelsa	401	7	373	21
Jigawa	325	6	308	11
Ekiti	322	11	305	6
Akwa Ibom	293	7	278	8
Niger	259	15	232	12
Adamawa	248	23	208	17
Anambra	238	–	219	19
Sokoto	162	1	144	17
Taraba	105	10	89	6
Kebbi	93	1	84	8
Cross River	87	4	74	9
Zamfara	79	1	73	5
Yobe	76	6	62	8
Kogi	5	–	3	2
Total	59,345	7,464	50,768	1,113

Note: Data as of 2020/10/04 23:00 WAT

This is in line with the remarks by Secretary to the Government of the Federation/Chairman of the Presidentially Task Force during the national briefing on May 5, 2020, that “coming home, Nigeria’s index case was recorded on 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2020. As at 5<sup>th</sup> October,2020, Nigeria had recorded 59,345 confirmed cases, 50,768 recovered cases and 1,113 deaths.” This is in less than 7 months since the novel corona virus (Covid-19) was first detected in the country.

Since May, 2020, the scourge of Covid-19 has spread unimaginably creating more than double the fear expressed worldwide with little or no solution. The situation is calling for more caution on the parts of individuals, Community and nation through effective preventive measures like social distancing.

The World seems to stand still from the weakest to the mightiest as covid-19 crews speedily and

carelessly with complete disrespect for all nations. It is indeed a time for sober reflection filled with fears and worries. The risk posed by the covid-19, the characteristics of the virus, and the severity of resulting illness and shocking records of deaths in countries all over the world has resulted to taking drastic measures to curb the spread of the pandemic virus which has presently got no established medical solution.

Because there are not yet vaccines or treatment for Covi-19 generally, and specifically in Nigerian non-pharmaceutical interventions becomes the most important response strategies. This complies with the statement by the Nigerian Parental Task Force (PTF) on Covid-19 "in order to contain the spread of the pandemic, PTF recommended the introduction of non-pharmaceutical interventions, which includes:

- ❖ Restriction of travel to and fro 15high burden countries Worldwide.
- ❖ Detection, Testing, contact tracing and treatment
- ❖ Closure of the land, sea and air points of entry
- ❖ Lockdown of Lagos ,Ogun and Kano states as well as the FCT Abuja
- ❖ Launched the stay at home campaign.
- ❖ Closure of all schools, churches, mosque etc.
- ❖ Ban on all public gatherings
- ❖ Introduce the policy of physical distancing
- ❖ Observance of Personal hygiene like: constant washing of hands, use of hand Sanitizers etc.
- ❖ Mandatory wearing of facemasks/coverings in public
- ❖ Review non-performing loans (NPLs) Guidelines.

Interstate travels restricted to movement of goods, agricultural produce and essential services

- ❖ Mandatory 14-days quarantine for returners from other parts of the world.

- ❖ Local production of face masks, hand sanitizers, protective gear etc.
- ❖ Consumer to reduce dependence on imported commodities
- ❖ Improved surveillance system
- ❖ Identification of available capacities for isolation and treatment of covid-19 patient which has yielded over 3,787 beds across facilities.

This paper intends to x-ray the effect and implications of covid-19 social distancing as a preventive measure on academic libraries in Nigeria.

According to Wikipedia report, "The ravaging Covid-19 pandemic has affected educational system worldwide leading to total closure of all schools, and tertiary institutions to which academic libraries are attached. The report further shows that as at September 4, 2020, the learning processes of approximately 1,277 billion learners are affected due to school closures in response to the pandemic. Academic libraries are facing hard choices around which services to offer and how, in the face of restrictions ranging from minimal limitations to full closure.

Though at present tertiary institutions are completely shut down in Nigeria and discussing about the pandemic in relation to academic libraries that are not presently functioning appears unnecessary but this paper is taking a prospective look as to what will happen when the institutions eventually re-opens with limited medical solutions as at today experience. Despite the fact that the medical world have announced the praise worthy breakthrough in fighting Aids, Ebola and Lassa Fever, the fact remains that these deadly epidemic still remains with us. If Covid-19 (God forbid) forces the world to maintain social distancing, the academic libraries of higher institutions will be facing some serious problems. This situation is what this paper intends to x-ray in retrospect.

### **Social distancing implications in academic libraries**

**Concept of Social Distancing:** Social distancing until recently may have been existing in oblivion with nobody really given it deep thought or



necessary social value. Literally the Cambridge advanced learners dictionary and Thesaurus defined "Social" as relating to meeting and spending time with other people for pleasure. It also defines "Distancing" as the practice of keeping away from other people as much as possible, or of keeping a certain distance from other people, in order to stop a disease from spreading to a lot of people.

Thus, social distancing means keeping some distance in our social relationship with things and people within our environment for safety purpose. In recent time, the covid-19 pandemic have popularise the concept and expanded the scope of understanding among human community.

According to Wikipedia definition, Social Distancing is seen as a set of non-pharmaceutical interventions or measures intended to prevent spread of contagious disease by maintaining a physical distance between people and reducing the number of times people come into close contact with each other. For those with weakened immune systems, social distancing is life and death.

Alook Patel one of the ABC7 Team of novel corona virus experts, in defining social distancing considering covid-19 epidemic said that it is essentially everyone doing their best to stay away from large crowds, while trying to reduce the spread of covid-19 disease. It is the act of decreasing person-to-person contact in order to slow the spread of this disease which is highly infectious and at the same time contagious (Alook Patel, 2020). Using public transportation, visiting a place of worship, or other travelling from the home is associated with a significantly higher likelihood of testing positive with the coronavirus SAR-COV-2, while practicing strict social distancing is associated with a markedly lower likelihood, suggests a study from researchers at the John Hopkins Bloomberg, school of public health.

According to Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), social distancing means keeping space between oneself and other people outside of their homes. It is keeping a safe distance between individuals in order to reduce risks of person to person spread. It means making changes in your everyday routines to minimize

close contact with others. Social distancing recommends the limitation of human social interaction as much as possible.

Social distancing means staying home and away from others as much as possible to help prevent spread of covid-19. It encourages the use of things such as online video and phone communication instead of in-person contact (Johns Hopkins, 2020).

Social distancing is a public health practice that aims to prevent sick people from coming in close contact with healthy people in order to reduce the risk of disease transmission. It can include large scale measures like cancelling group events, closing public spaces, as well as individual decisions such as avoiding crowds (Katie Pearce, 2020). With covid-19, the goal of social distancing right now is to slow down the outbreak in order to reduce the chance of infection among high- risk populations and to reduce the burden on health care systems and workers. Experts describe this as "flattening the curve", which generally refers to the potential success of social distancing measures to prevent surge in illness that could overwhelm health care systems.

As reviewed by Jonathan Miller, social distancing means:

- Putting space between people
- Not going out unless it is necessary
- Closing schools, restaurants, shops, movie theaters and other places where people gather.
- Not getting together in person with friends
- Working from home if possible
- Not taking public transportation, including buses, subways, taxis and rideshares

Social distancing is a World Wide recommendation for safety against the unexpected Covid-19 pandemic. Social distancing is therefore a necessary measure to reduce social interactions among people and even public objects within their environments as a World Wide recommendation for safety against the unexpected Covid-19 pandemic. There will be no doubt that library operations

will need to emphasize the ..... among library users and even ..... where necessary.

**Social Implications of Social Distancing on Academic Libraries:** It is an obvious fact that Covid-19 is affecting all human activities and institutions in one way or the other. The academic libraries of higher institutions in Nigeria are definitely going to experience their own share when school eventually resumes. There will be no doubt that library need for library operations to emphasize the maintenance of required social distancing amongst users. Library even accessible objects within the library where necessary.

With discussions on re-opening campuses, academic libraries face a paradigm shift. Instead of returning to normal, librarians will be returning to a “**new normal**”, one where in-person interaction service may be impossible or no longer preferred, where collaborative study is shunned in favor of social distancing in buildings that can only safely house half of the people they used to.

Preparing for re-opening calls for review of some of the library policies and educating both patrons and library staff. Does the rules, library buildings and resources permit this to happen safely. A few healthy and safety adjustments must be made in the library now that covid-19 pandemic has changed everything. Library operations and services will no longer be business as usual. Based on trend analysis the landscape of academic libraries must change in terms of innovative collections, services, and spaces and operations.

There is need to adopt the library design for a very different future. More investment to ensure library environment is safe and welcoming in a Post Covid-19 pandemic world. Necessary design solutions to help keep the patrons and staff safe, based on the revelation of health officials that “one of the best ways to prevent the spread of Covid-19 in Nigerian, is for people to practice Social Distancing”. In addition to World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, and following precautionary measures based on the recommendations of national library associations like IFLA, adoption of social distancing in academic libraries amid covid-19 pandemic has shown that academic

libraries should re-open with precautions in place. There should be lay down Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for assuming the functioning of measures and also necessary changes to library policies in order to check the spread of covid-19 and at the same time take such measures so that faculty members, scholars, students and the community members may not suffer for want of reading materials (**Majid Baba, 2020**).

**Less social interactions among library users:** Social distancing will lead to restructuring the sitting capacities and study spaces of the major areas like the readers’ services section and computer units where users may spend a longer time in the company of others. This implies a new library design plans with spacing such that patrons can easily walk round the library floor, pass through stacks, shelves and seating areas while maintaining the required social distancing. At least in the short term, consider moving or removing some book shelves to open up tight spaces. The library staff should spend time to weed or store less-circulated materials for now, to open up the library floor space. There should be creation of additional work spaces by removing some chairs and placing acrylic barriers across tables to separate patrons. This will ensure reduction in the sitting capacity as well as maintaining at least one to two meters distance between users and staff so as to control what each user touches, coughs or sneezes on, as well as reduce the risks of the virus transmission.

For existing large tables, consider adding vertical barriers between them or placing acrylic barriers directly on the table to establish a defined and enclosed space for each user. Thus, in application, capacities of 500 users shall take only 100 users.

**Capacities of 200 users shall take only 40 users:** Capacities of 50 users shall take only 10 users. This is because more users make it difficult to maintain proper distance from one another. There should be constant active educating programmes to users on keeping themselves physically far enough from other people with no assumption that someone is not infectious if that person has no symptoms. The best caution practice is to see everybody around you as a

suspect. This is in line with scientist's estimate which shows that "the novel coronavirus is transmitted by droplets from coughs and sneezes so each infected person spreads to many people. Thus, in a crowded room full of healthy users except one person, others are infected with the virus without knowing.

**Hence social distancing is everyone's own responsibility:** Nonetheless, for many academic libraries, it may be impossible to meet social distancing standards. Libraries should also limit concentration of users and number of sections opened to users as well as stop programmes which would make users spend longer periods together (such as library orientation for the new intakes, library tour etc). In line with this, further step will be taken to give access to library database resources in an online mode. Links to these resources should be active, providing with useful links to reliable information for users on their websites. The library should provide more current healthy hygiene books into the library collections and data base for students use. It should also make available covid-19 related resources for academic research purpose. It should put together list of items than library users can access digitally from the comfort of their zones. However, online service and learning depend critically on effective library system with e-resources and seamless access from across the globe. It can only be effective where there is effective sustainable learner support in an online mode re-assigning library resources. In addition, resemble the noted that "the librarians, teachers, janitors and others cannot work from home as it is not always practical". There is need for sensitizing those who are on the frontlines, and that include librarians.

**There should be a review of library traffic flow:** The library should delineate one-way aisles to help patron avoid each other in species that do not allow for 2 meter of social distancing .the library should put up free with arrow floor clings. Keeping in mind that habit can be hard to break, at first, staff may have to remind that patrons to wait a few minutes if can they cannot safety share the space with others. The library can invest in some additional shelving unit, preferably consider mobile options to give flexibility into the future as the library

reconfigure its space, move it as need to create, define, and clarify one-way traffic routes.

Since mobile shelving is typically lower in height than statistic shelving, patron will have a line of sight through the aisle that allows them to determine whether an aisle is clear of other library users before entering that space. It can also use mobile barriers such as whiteboards or traffic barriers to further define to traffic routes.

**Reroute patron at the circulation Desk:** In libraries the areas around the circulation desk tend to be the most crowded with patrons and staff. Floor decals will help encourage safe distancing. Stick 2 meters apart to separate patrons waiting to check out materials. Add health shield with "pass-through windows to circulation desk" to help protect staff and patrons as they interact with each other.

**Reduction of Working House:** It also means the academic libraries should reduce the working hour and increase the staff strength. Meanwhile, the staff seating capacity and sharing of office tables must be discouraged. The library should not open on daily basis so as to allow any virus imported into the library die before the next use. This is in line with the revelations of a study recently published on the new England journal of medicine which found that SARS-COV-2 remain detectable on copper for up to 4hrs on card board for up to 24hours, and a plastic and stainless steel for up to two to three days. So, even if a location looks empty, surface and object could still be contaminated.

However, library tables and other surfaces cannot be empty for hours without library patrons even if they come in batches. Covid-19 can live for hours or days on a surface depending on the factors such as sunlight, humidity, and the type of surface. However, social distancing helps to limit opportunities to come in contact with contaminated surface and infected people outside the home. There should be restriction on movement of library users outside the library. They should avoid much contacts as possible keeping to it religiously, limits on where they can visit, how and with whom as they do not know the connectivity around the person.

While patrons of the library may want to use their personal sanitizers the library for health reasons should consider recommending acceptable tested brand of sanitizers by placing sanitization station at the entrance and exit, as well as other strategic places. This provides patrons with a convenient to thoroughly wash their hands before and after using the library, adding perhaps some colorful, sparkly or fruity scented soap that catch their eyes and encourage good hygiene habits.

This is in line with the report of the NCDC Director, Chikwe Ihekweazu, on his twitter page of 22 August, 2020 that “The Covid-19 pandemic has changed our lives in many ways. To control this outbreak, we must add here to measure such as wearing face masks, frequent hand washing with soap under running water and hand sanitizing, physical distancing etc”.

There should be effective and timely managing of infection which is dependent on adopting health protective behavior such as social distancing for reducing mortality. Library patron should minimize the rate at which they visit friend, family members especially as they do not know all and other none family members especially as they do not know all the connectivity around the person.

Temperature check at the point of entries should be enforced. Ensuring that both staff and users are encouraged to take time to recover when they fell ill before visiting the library. Encouraging patrons to use touch free self checkout stations whenever possible. This will help reduce the issue of multiple patrons needing to touch the same surface throughout the day. Library patrons should also avoid sharing of items among themselves.

Procurement /Acquisition division staff has to take care as they deal with the materials coming from different citizens of the country and different countries of the world. After handling of books, hands should be washed in running water for 20 seconds.

**Minimization of charging and discharging procedures:** At this period the library service of borrowing and returning books at the circulation should be minimized. The library should implement quarantine policies on

returned book books. It should rather have plans to offer remote services such as e-lending.

**Psychological Implications of social distancing on academic libraries:** There are many educational theories supporting socialization as an effective instrument for promoting learning. Socialization is an essential aspect of human successful happy living. UNESCO-IBE supporting this view states that learning is a process that brings together personal and environmental experience and influences for acquiring, enriching or modifying one’s knowledge, skills, values, attitude, behaviour and world views. (UNESCO, 1995-2020).

Lev Vygotsky in his conclusive remark on socialisation in learning states that social learning theories help us to understand how people learn in social contexts (learn from each other) and informs us on how we, as teachers, construct active learning communities. Social distancing, at first sight, seems to discourage direct socialisation. This is not to say that social distancing does not support socialisation or discourage socialization in the course of learning particularly in the use of library. Social distancing tends to promote direct psychological individualized learning rather than direct socialized learning. This process burn out of necessity (Covid-19 experience) will definitely promote concentration of learning in learning task. It will psychologically increase their strength of self discovery through concentrated self efforts of individualize studying. These advantages make a good case for social distancing and Covid-19 a blessing in disguise for the human race.

In this new order of the new normal frantic effort must be made in library operations to marry the beauty of socialization in successful learning process to the newly discovered psychologically individualized concentrated learning burn out of necessity. The library must promote indirect socialization through internet social services as emphasized earlier. While it maintains the newly discovered advantages of increase individualize concentration in the process of learning through social distancing. The library must not lose sight of the necessity of social distancing in the face of our present endemic misdominion.

### **Financial Implication of Social Distancing On Academic Libraries.**

The effect of covid-19 as emphasized earlier cut across virtually all facets of human operations. It is obvious that social distancing will have serious financial consequences on the academic libraries in higher institutions. The physical infrastructural restructuring, social amendment and facilities required to enhance a covid-19 tolerant environment in the library will need to be given necessary attention.

**Physical infrastructure:** All the social related effects discussed above in ravaging the crises to create new and innovative collections and services will involve a lot of money. In terms of library collections, services, spaces and operations to improve the institutions and satisfy the user's information needs in a Covid-19 related environment will imply extra costs on the part of the library. Some academic libraries may need entirely new structures: new buildings, furnitures, social amenities like wash hand basins etc.

The Punch newspaper of September 7, 2020, expressing the United Nations Opinion concerning re-opening of higher institutions states that "Covid-19 pandemic has created the largest disruption of educational system in history, which is coming with an unexpected financial involvement to maintain effective social distancing. Across the globe, Universities are re-opening with mixed result. The toll of the deadly virus is high and seems will continue to rise. But certainly, another serious crises looms for students, higher education and the economy, if the universities cannot finance the necessary restructuring essential for effective re-opening of the campuses in due course. In Nigeria, the academic staff Union of Universities (ASUU) supporting the United Nations view claimed that "the Universities cannot re-open now because of the issue of inadequate infrastructure which leads to over crowding in the hostels, lecture theaters and libraries". All these revelations supports the fact that much money will be needed in the academic libraries to effect the necessary physical structural adjustments for adequate social library operation particularly in a covid-19 related environment.

**Study Spaces:** In observing social distancing in academic libraries there will be new library space designs which should emphasize on open floor plans and collaborative study space. This change will involve lots of money. The patrons will be assigned to use individualized study spaces. Even where there are group studies, the guildelines on the size of groups will be enforced and effectively monitored. In existing libraries removal of tables and chairs are necessary to ensure proper social distancing. Knowing the number of the target audience served in library buildings, more study space will be needed across the institution considering departmental/ faculty library attachment. Large challenges will exist in serving the target populations in the current foot prints. Office spaces will need to be rethought too, as open concept office spaces may give way to preference for enclosure. All these adjustments will involve a lot of financial implication for successful library operations.

**Employee Safety:** there should be finance for the procurement of Personal Protective Equipment which is essential for staff on the frontlines, so as to be safe and comfortable interacting with library patrons. This financial cost is reflecting as recurrent expenditure which will attract a lot of costs. Staff may also need to work in shifts and may need to be compensated for the inconveniences not officially stated in the condition of employment.

**Social restructuring:** Library should devote vast resources to mitigate the public health of covid-19 through effective education in conferences and symposium to ensure the new normal adjustments.. The pandemic has brought into focus the running down of health and social service and widening of inequality following austerity. The pandemic crisis has acted as an infection point, throwing into sharp relief the many benefits of digital/open libraries. Patrons should come with their users communication gadgets(laptop, telephone etc) to restrict unnecessary movements in the library as well as ensure safe work environment. Devices like dual monitors, shareable screen that can be tailored to individual needs central users computer to attend to patrons, should also be introduced where necessary. The library should also provide laptop loan service which permits the

financially bankrupt patrons to loan laptops for use within the library. This service may attract a little fee.

New cleaning routines will need to be developed to ensure safe circulation of technology. All these will involve additional spending on the part of the library and even the library patrons.

**Social Media Adjustment and Facilities:** Social media networks as channels of communication and interaction helps the library to connect with the information needs of users. For online users, social networks help to create awareness and promote the exchange of queries and answers among librarian and library patrons; thus librarians are able to provide answers to the queries of online users". (Ifijeh, 2020). This could be used to attend to patrons even in their respective homes to reduce social movement. Some of the social networking used by libraries include: facebook, youtube, blogging, whatsapp, telegram, twitter, Web 2.0 tools and others. Online orientation and user training programs can be promoted through these platforms. The library should design and adopt a responsive library website which will publicize library information and reference services, enhance document delivery in order to satisfy the information needs of online library patrons. It should also incorporate Web 2.0 tools to allow users join the library's page from the institution's facebook account, using the ([www.facebookinstitution.com](http://www.facebookinstitution.com)). The users then have access to full texts of some literature on the databases provided. However, the use of social media networks for library services is still at infant stage in most Nigerian tertiary institutions because of lack of funds. There are a lot of financial challenges the academic libraries are confronted with in deploying relevant ICT infrastructures geared towards transitioning from traditional to a rapid technological advancement involving several media to provision of services in support of teaching and learning. The deployment of ICT is capital intensive, libraries are not exempted from these costs. Academic libraries in Nigeria are poorly funded. With the necessity for social distancing in academic libraries, huge expenses on the use of ICT in library operations becomes necessary. The urgency now created by Covid-19 demands

libraries sourcing immediate financial resources if they are to be operational in the present dispensation.

### **The consequences of the Social Distancing Implications in the face of the Current Economic Situation in Nigeria.**

Social distancing in relation to the devastating Covid-19 experience has divert consequences, many of these consequences have been discussed above. It cuts across social, psychological and financial area of human endeavours in general for library operations in particular. Specially, the implication of social distancing calls for increase funding of the academic libraries from within and outside the institution.

Presently the libraries of higher institutions are under-funded as revealed by current literatures.

Daniel 2013 as cited by Ifijeh and Yusuf, 2020, confirmed that "lack of funds is the major reason for the under development of libraries in Nigeria. Academic libraries get their funding mainly from the 10% recurrent budgeting allocation of their parent institutions as stipulated by the government. Though information on specific estimates of Nigerian tertiary institutions and library budgets are not available in public domain". Ifijeh also claimed that an average Nigerian University gets an estimated annual income of ₦3.6 billion from government allocations and internally generated revenue (from school fees and other sources). The library is expected to get 10% of the estimated income. However, it was noted that libraries do not get up to 10% of their institution budgets.

The bulk of library fund for public tertiary institutions come from the government Private tertiary institutions rely on their internal sources, majorly school fees. From the above literature revelations, these funds are inadequate as at present. Hence the library lack a lot of vital space, physical equipment and ICT related facilities needed for effective operations.

Unfortunately, the government of Nigeria in particular and most developing countries in general are already experiencing inadequate budget funding resources. This is due largely to

their mono economic nature – with many of them depending solely on petroleum or agriculture.

With almost all the sector of the economy (road, health, housing, education etc.) demanding more financial spending from a financially stressed government, the unexpected economic impact of Covid-19 is a devastating blow on the financial capacity of the Nigerian Federal Government.

The Vice President Yemi Osibanjo supports this in his recent presentation on the economic sustainability at the first year ministerial performance review in Abuja, as he lamented that “the poverty situation in the country, as well as the economic distortions and hardship caused by the Covid-19 pandemic are deepening daily. The pandemic has brought into focus the running down of health and social services and widening of inequality following austerity”

The chairman of the Nigerian Presidential Task Force on covid-19, at the National Press briefing of Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> August, 2020, reported that “recently the national bureau of statistics released the Q2 2020 performance of the economy. It showed that the Gross Domestic Products (GDP) slumped to -6.10% due to the impact of covid-19 on oil market. This underscores the impact of the pandemic on the global economy. The pandemic also presents us with opportunities and impetus for innovation, creativity and industrial development.

Despite the understandable financial lamentation of the federal government of Nigeria, everything possible must be done to assist academic libraries to a height that will make them operational in the face of the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### **Future Prospective Implications of Social Distancing on Academic Libraries**

The immediate effects of social distancing on academic libraries as revealed by discussions above are enormous. It cuts across library staff, library patrons, library facilities and operations. Despite the seemingly stressful demand for immediate innovation with enormous financial implication, social distancing has some future beauty to behold in prospective. If the demands

of social distancing in relation to the dreaded epidemic (Covid-19) are met, the library in the future is going to be better for it.

The library will virtually be achieving all its desired adjustments in terms of equipment and internet facilities in particular. The post Covid-19 academic libraries will present a modern down to earth equipped unit of the educational system of our higher institutions.

The institution and the Nigerian educational system will benefit largely from the development considering the central role of the library in educational institutions. Thus, the present bitter experience should not be given too much attention considering the fact that the future will bring great joy and unimaginable improvement in academic library operation in Nigeria in particular and the world at large. Considering this situation and other advantages of social distancing to be discussed later, one can to a large extent conclude for the future social distancing is a blessing in disguise. Adewale supporting this view conclude that “there is need for a well-equipped academic library on Nigerian tertiary institutions to improve the educational system. Academic library is an institution that is well established to care for the information needs of students, lecturers, researchers and other community of scholars. The government should realise the enormous power of information which is inevitably present in many sectors of Nigerian’s economy. The level and quality of academic library participation in a populace such as: education, agricultural activities, health and commercial activities are paramount contributing factors to the level of economic and all development of Nigeria”.

It is therefore important that academic libraries should be given the desired attention in the face of devastating pandemic. This is the right time for the federal government of Nigeria to do the needful to achieve the needed. So, borrowing from internal and external sources to ensure effective operation of the library as demanded by social distancing is worth an undertaking believing in the sure blessings that will follow.

Nature has made it clear that everything with disadvantages no matter how bad can have

some hidden advantages. Covid-19 been no exception could have lessons which can improve the efficiency of academic library services in Nigeria in particular and the world in general. If adequate facilities are provided to maintain effective social-distancing and less social interaction in the library, there is no doubt that library users will develop higher concentration levels, thus enabling the increase attention in the course of study and better use of the library. Libraries all over the world and other institutions may as well be preparing themselves for other unforeseen unimaginable disruption like Covid-19. These lessons learnt from Covid-19 will definitely create a psychological and emotional soft landing for the world at large. Considering the fact that institutions in the world and communities will be less panic tricking with the understanding that nothing can really bring the world to an end except by God's express permission. The lesson will definitely make man appreciate God Almighty's involvement in human existing. Thus, this paper will strive to x-ray facts concerning Covid-19 for future appreciation, use and possible development in the efficiency of academic library in Nigeria in particular and the world at large.

**Lessons not to be forgotten in a hurry:** Social distancing and her motherly associate Covid-19 has brought about some hidden experience that will not be forgotten in a hurry. These experiences are deeply rooted in the advantages or future lessons not to be forgotten in a hurry which will be discussed in this section.

**New Normal:** Covid-19 has shown us that we need to be more prepared for future pandemics in a lot of different ways. As a result, some things are inevitably going to change and will change forever. This is what we call a "**new normal**" a concept developed by Roger McNamee, the author of new normal. The new normal sees the need to continue offering services and strengthening relationships with communities by using digital libraries and online tools as preparatory measure against unforeseen future occurrences which could take over the world and displace scientific calculation as we experience in Covid-19 pandemic.

Covid-19 has changed human elements to people's interactions, says Martine Ford, a futurist who has written about the ways robots will be interrogated into the economy in the coming decades. As a pandemic grips the world, another threat to humanity's way of life is the raise of robots. For better or worse, the robots are going to replace many humans in their jobs. Covid-19 really open up new opportunities for automation. Organizations large and small are expanding how they use robots to increase social distancing and reduce the number of staff that have to physically come to work. The library can join the queue of this beautiful development in adjustment to social distancing.

Surprisingly, the University of Lagos in Nigeria recently took the delivery of three robots donated by platform capital, a global investment firm; to operate in the library and other sensitive areas within the university. Through 2021, robots workers maybe in greater demand. Roger McNamee, the author of 'new normal' as quoted in American magazine article concluded that "this new normal provides great opportunities to think out of the box in dealing with changing times" (Roger McNamee, 2004).

**Respect for herbal Medicine:** Covid-19 has revealed the efficacy of herbal medicine. The pandemic has no scientific medical solution and possess a substantial global public health threat. Tens of thousands of people, including many medical workers were infected, and thousands have died. The herbal medicine formulae and compositions of herbal to treat patients with Covid -19 has been employed as an early line of defense and is proven to be successful in many quotas in the treatment of patients. Through there are no clear cut scientific proof as to how it is working.

Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) was used in 91.50% of the covid-19 cases in china, showing encouraging results in improving symptom management and reducing deterioration, mortality, and recurrent rates. The complicated secondary metabolism of plants has been the source of countless medicinal compounds and leads for drug discovery. It is little surprise then that plant products and their analogues have been employed as an early line of defense against Covid-19. It is also reported that readily



available herbal medicines and natural products with proven safety can buy time as a successful first line of defense. We only pray and hope that man in his egocentric nature will not dismiss this natural blessings of herbal medicines as having no scientific proof against the unexpected like Covid-19.

**Eye opener:** The Covi-19 experience which has resulted in social distancing have opened our eyes to the realities of life and living. The pandemic defies scientific proof, expectations, thinking and calculation with dismay. No one on earth would ever have thought that the so called developed countries can be put down to nothing in spite of their scientific claims as the Covid-19 experience has shown.

Social distancing as a measure is exposing the fact that man can live on earth in a relatively high degree comfort without the emotional, psychologically accepted behavior of shaking hands, hugging and kissing. Man is therefore revealed as having an inherent nature of adjustment to whatever situations becomes necessary. This fact substantiate the truth in the claim that "change" is the only constant thing in life, where "change" can be defined as necessary circumstantial adjustment,

### Conclusion

This paper deals with covid-19 social distancing as a preventive measure and its implications on academic libraries in Nigeria. It went further to examine the consequences of the implications in the face of the current economic situation. It also considered the present situation with look into the future, prospective implication of social distancing on academic libraries, the lessons learnt and possible future adjustments against unforeseen development.

Social distancing which is one of the preventive measures to Covid-19 pandemic have brought some strenuous demand on the social system worldwide. The academic libraries definitely are going to experience its fair share which largely has resulted in financial stress, structural adjustment and psychological build up on the part of library staff, library patrons and the institutions to which the libraries are attached. These effects at first sight are inconveniencing

and bitter pills to swallow for all stakeholders of the academic libraries.

The government as revealed by this paper is bearing the largest share of the troubles. But if the adjustments are successfully achieved the libraries will definitely be positioned, both now and in the future to play its role as the nucleus of the academic operations in institution better than we can ever imagine in human history, considering the lessons revealed by social distancing adjustments and her motherly associate the covid-19 pandemic. Thus, in conclusion social distancing can be a blessing in disguise for the academic libraries if properly managed.

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