



Effect of COVID-19 Guidelines, Restrictions and Religious Institution Activities on Corporate Social Responsibility

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 caught the globe unaware and the abnormal ways of life become normal while the normal becomes abnormal. Majority of organizations and institution where more than 5 people gather become a threat to the community due to fear of COVID-19 spread. The national government was advising that any gathering were more than household numbers gathers should be shutdown to avoid the spread of the pandemic and COVID-19 bill was passed in order to legalise directives and punish offenders. In the period, some Pentecostal churches were reported to have flouted the COVID-19 protocol rules in the period. This paper was drawn to examine the positive or negative effects of COVID-19 guidelines compliance in by religious organizations in Akinyele Local Government Area of Ibadan and its effect on the transmission or restriction of the spread of COVID-19 in other Local Government Areas of Ibadan metropolis, especially the Ibadan North LGA. Akinyele Local Government Area was considered purposefully because it is a suburb of Ibadan with

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many towns and villages. People used to migrate from Akinyele in large population to Ibadan metropolis from Monday to Friday. Situated on corporate social responsibility theory, the study underpins that corporations are saddled with economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic obligations to the community. The study adopts a qualitative research approach to investigate the operations of religious organizations during the pandemic lockdown.

Keywords: Corporate social responsibility; COVID-19; compliance; ethics; relativism.

1. INTRODUCTION

COVID -19 which has its root in China in the year December 2019 held the whole world in ransom in 2020. The negative effect of the virus cannot be overemphasized as millions of people tested positive, millions are undergoing treatment and millions of lives had been lost. As at 15th of February 2021 there were 109,448,208 reported cases of Coronavirus Disease worldwide, 2,412, 815 deaths were recorded while 81, 545, 097 COVID-19 patients had recovered. The total reported cases in Nigeria was 146, 184 with 1, 752 deaths (Worldometers, 2021). The virus is spread and transmitted through direct contact with the droplets from an infected person or when surfaces that are contaminated are touched [1]. Hence, there was the need for physical distancing and isolation in some instances. The total lockdown of countries of the world in 2020 affected economic life, social life as well as the academic life. In Nigeria, there was total, targeted and partial lockdown and closure of interstate borders of the 36 States of the nation. The resultant effect was untold hardship negative economic impact on a nation who already had an economic recession in 2016. Importation of goods reduced, the demand for oil, which is a major source of income in Nigeria reduced, investors could not operate due to border closure and eventually, the local goods and services were inflated [2]. In order to cushion the effect of the hardship on the masses, the Federal Government rolled out palliatives in form of foodstuffs, Tradermoni, Marketmoni and Farmermoni loans especially for the vulnerable in the society [1]. The measures were not enough for the masses either because of lack of proper mode of distribution or hoarding on the part on those saddled with the responsibility of distribution [3]. The Federal Ministry of Education closed all schools in the Federation from Monday 23rd March 2020 to prevent the spread of the Corona virus. Students would not resume until about six months later. A state of emergency was declared in the education sector especially with the movement of teaching and learning processes to online. One of such

also is the establishment of the Nigeria Education in Emergency Working Group (EiEWG) in the North East [4]. Christian worship, which is the central activity of the church was affected as worship centers were also locked down [5].

On this note, the paper centered its objectives on the follow:

- i. To establish the effect of COVID-19 guidelines and compliance on religious activities
- ii. To establish the correlation between COVID-19 guidelines and compliance on religious activities.
- iii. To test the effect of COVID-19 restriction and precautionary behavior on people of Akinyele Local Council.

2. REVIEW OF EXISTING LITERATURE

Before the advent of the pandemic in Africa, Lone and Ahmad [2] predicted that the Africa would be very vulnerable due to weak health systems, poverty and some other climatic conditions. Surprisingly, in spite of the advancement in health systems, other continents especially the Europe were worst hit by the pandemic [6]. The Federal government placed travel ban on flights after 3 weeks of the pandemic in Nigeria with the request that those who were returning from abroad self-isolate. Many Nigerians returned but never self-isolate and some believed that the climatic and environmental conditions would not allow the pandemic to thrive well in Nigeria [7]. Many Nigerians see COVID -19 as another commodity from the government. Therefore, instead of complying with the COVID-19 eradication measures put down, they developed the conspiracy theories for whatever the government is doing: palliative measure is a conspiracy to embezzle, lockdown is a conspiracy not to care for the masses, and the daily increase in the number of cases was a conspiracy to receive foreign financial aid [8]. Some see the disease as a "rich man's disease", "an exaggeration by political leaders and media, "a Chinese biological

weapon”, “a population control strategy” and “a plague caused by sins” [9]. Aiyewumi and Okeke [10] opine that some Nigerians see the disease as a myth seeing it as a hoax and that Nigerians are immuned to the virus. All these views about the pandemic stem from the fact that the mortality rate of the Pandemic in Nigeria is very low when compared to other nations of the world with well-developed health facilities in comparison to Nigeria with lack of good health facilities. Nevertheless, many already contacted the virus but they were without COVID-19 symptoms.

Though many are still living in denial of the existence of COVID-19 [11], “the new social normal adversely impacts livelihood and survival chances, amidst grossly inadequate palliatives” [12]. There was the reality and necessity of lifting the ban on movement because continued lockdown would increase social –economic problems such as poverty and unemployment within the Nigerian Society [12]. Kalu [13] describes COVID-19 as a disease of hunger in Nigeria. da Silva observes, “...these emergency times of digital participation in Eucharistic celebrations, we are compelled to rethink the physicality of liturgical and sacramental actions” [14] The Holy Mass, which traditionally holds within the ambient of the Church is now transmitted by network [14]. Hence the virtual church becomes a place, a people and a presence [15].

On the necessity of COVID-19 prevention compliant protocol, da Silva [14] opines that Christians should not allow the pandemic situation to serve as a barrier to growth, but they should be innovative and make the best of the opportunity which the pandemic situation presents to them. Etienne [16] avers that for compliance to be achieved the various strands of motivation for compliance and noncompliance must be taken into consideration. Miko, Tanko and Abbas [3] highlight BVN, Phone Lines, Politicians and Religious/Traditional Leaders as Channels of distribution of the Federal Government palliatives to the poor and vulnerable. They however note that the Religious/Traditional Leaders’ Channel, though not 100 per cent perfect is still the best and should be adopted by the Federal Government of Nigeria. The implication is that the Religious organizations have a strong role to play in the era of COVID-19 Pandemic. Raimi, Patel, Yekini and Aljadani [17] observe that corporate scandals, poor compliance with rules as well as violations of human rights thrives within host

communities because the eclectic approach has not been explored. If this would be achieved the religious organizations must have emotional attachment, understand the scriptural provision on voluntary charities, effectively adopt the celestial rewards and punishments attached to charity works, and seeing social responsibility as a duty to God and an ethical value. According to Raimi, et al. [17], where laws and legal sanctions are not effective, the doctrines of the religions “on philanthropy/charities are strengths for CRS compliance as well as enhancing social, accounting and environmental disclosures and reporting.” Corporate Social Responsibility (CRS) is also referred to as corporate sustainability, social responsibility, and corporate citizenship. Vohra and Sheel [18] reveal that organisations’ goal in CRS is not only to make profits but also to benefit the societies they found themselves and invariably deriving positively from the kind gestures they initiated.

The Church is well known for her doctrines and traditions. The Church though is divided into different strands known as denominations, has four features/doctrines which are biblical and must be exhibited in all the church denominations. These features are baptism, worship, ministry and ‘good work’ [19]. However, the mode (tradition) of doing the doctrine differs from one denomination to the other. On baptism, while some Christian denominations practice sprinkling of water, others hold to baptism by immersion. In the same vein, the mode of worship differs from one denomination to the other. Some denominations believe in relatively calm and silent environment during worship, while others would prefer ‘making a joyful noise to the Lord’. Also, part of ministry for some denominations is for the pastor or members to visit a dying or sick person physically for spiritual purposes; it is not so for others. Besides, the way of ‘good works’ differ from one Christian denomination to the other. These doctrines and traditions may have both positive and negative effects on the health of adherents to the extent that adherents may “... experience subtle psychological, social, and spiritual strains related to religious beliefs that distress them, their family, and their support network. Religious beliefs cause patients to forego needed medical care, refuse life-saving procedures, and stop necessary medication, choosing faith instead of medicine” [19]. Rumum [19] notes that religion impacts adherents either to eat meat or not to eat meat, to allow Blood Transfusion and organ transplantation or not, and to seek medical

attention from physicians. In Christianity, faith is demonstrated by good works and there is a relationship between changes in the individuals' environment and the changes in the actions of the individual [20]. This is what makes some practices seemingly awkward in selected churches of Akinyele Local Government Area, Ibadan. It is awkward not willing to associate with believers, not willing to identify with believers by visiting them in times of troubles, not willing to do and follow Religious Traditions and Practices.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

The research design used in this paper was an empirical cross-sectional design. This is a study in which data is gathered systematically over a period of time in order to answer a research question.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

The study adopts the use of primary data from religious leaders in Akinyele Local Government

Area, Ibadan. Data for studies were gathered from participants who voluntarily participated in the study. The target population comprised of religious institutions that had been in existence since 2010 till 2020 when COVID-19 stroke the economy. The population of the study was 73 religious leaders in Akinyele Local Government Area, Ibadan. The population of the study was grouped into stratum on the basis of religion and years in service. A sample size of 30 participants were selected for study on stratified basis. The selection of the sample in each group (stratum) was based on the proportion of the number of COVID-19 confirmed cases in each stratum.

Data analysis was carried out to determine:

- i. To establish the correlation between religious activities and corporate social responsibility
- ii. To test the effect of COVID-19 restriction and precautionary behavior on people of Akinyele Local Council.

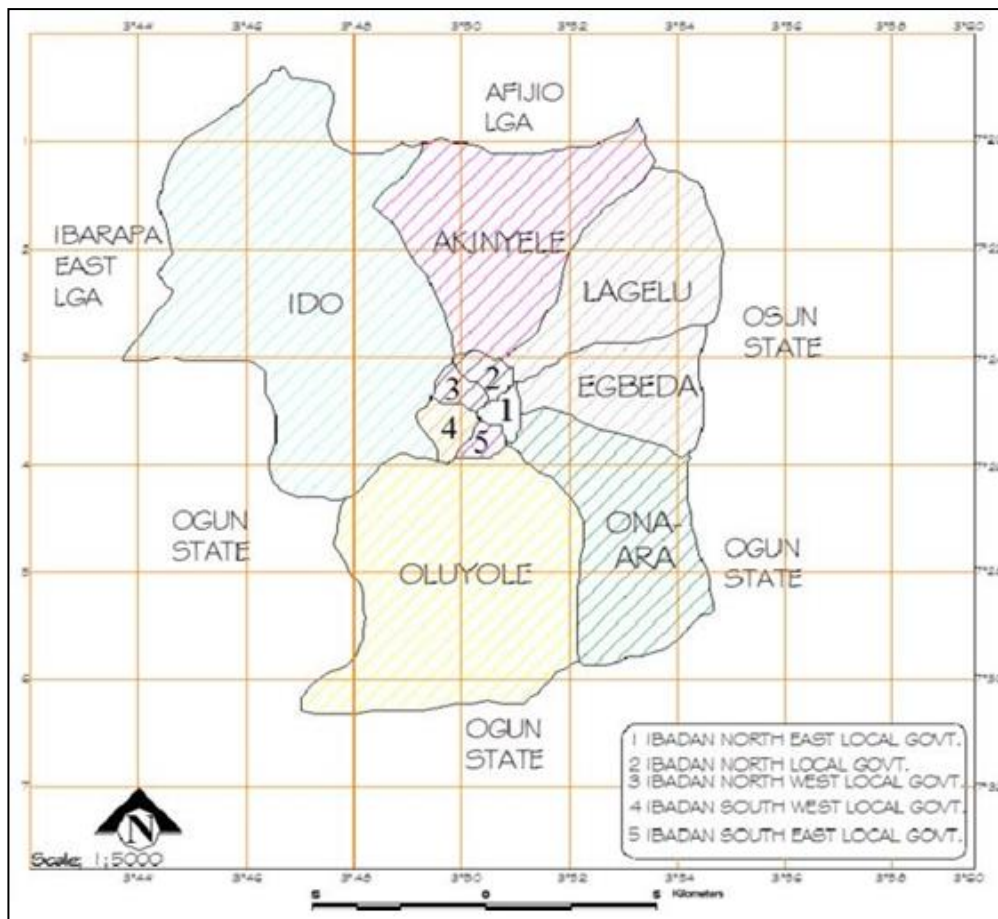


Fig. 1. Map showing the Local Government in Ibadan land Situation among selected Churches in Akinyele Local Government Area (ALGA), Ibadan

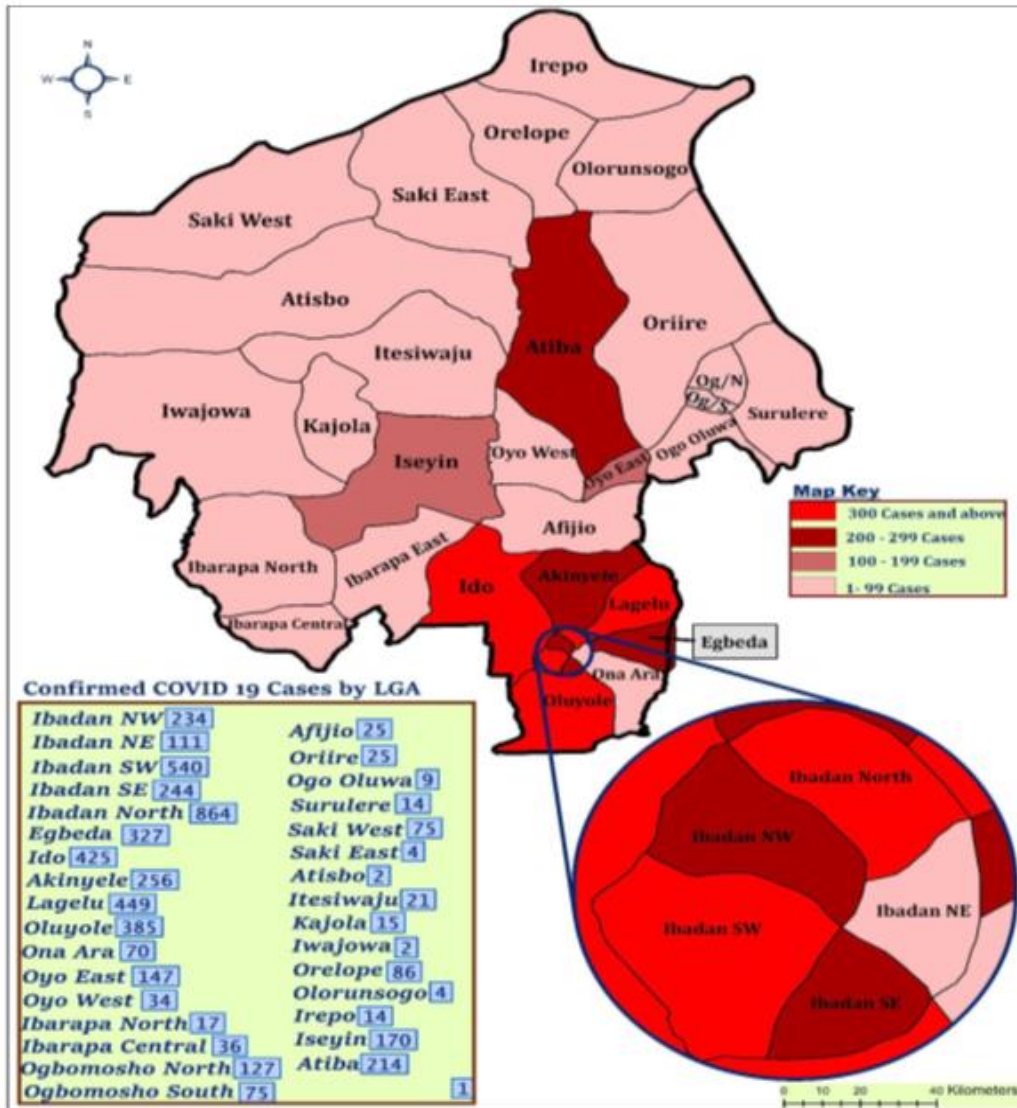


Fig. 2. Number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in each Local Government Area of Oyo State as at February 5, 2021

(Source: Oyo State COVID-19 Emergency Operation Center)

The hypothesis that we examined are:

- Hypothesis 1:** To establish the effect of COVID-19 guidelines and compliance on religious activities.
- Hypothesis 2:** To establish the correlation between COVID-19 guidelines and compliance on religious activities.
- Hypothesis 3:** To test the effect of COVID-19 restriction and precautionary behavior of people of Akinyele Local Council on religious institution CSR.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis employed inferential statistics in analyzing the data. Data were analyzed using simple OLS regression model, describing the variable as dependent variable, and independent variable. A computer statistical package EXCEL was used to solve the simple regression equation in this study. In analyzing the relationship between COVID-19 guideline and its effect on religious activities, we considered the COVID-19 guideline and compliance and religious activities over the period of our study. The sample period is determined by the availability of data and information gathered from the respondents. The study considered functional form of relationship

between youth COVID-19 guidelines and compliance with the religious activities. Our theoretical model is:

$$P_t = f(X_{t-1}) \quad (1)$$

$$P_t = A + BX_{t-1} + U_t \quad (2)$$

Where,

P_t is the religious activities of selected activities prior to COVID-19 period. X_{t-1} is the average COVID-19 guidelines per religious institution in period of study.

B is the coefficient used to measure the COVID-19 restriction sensitivity to religious activities.

U_t is the error term.

A is a constant term.

4. RESULTS

In our analysis, we introduce a 3 month lag between dependent and independent variables. To test the relationship between COVID-19 restriction and religious activities, we conducted regression analysis. T-test statistic is employed to measure the degree of the influence (significance) of COVID-19 guideline and restriction on religious activities. R^2 is used to measure the extent to which the religious activities determined CSR in the period, and r , correlation coefficient, is used to measure the relationship between the religious activities (the dependent variable) and CSR (independent variable). With a view to determining the correlation between religious activities and CSR, COVID-19 guideline influence on CSR, we examined the correlation coefficient between the CSR and COVID-19 guideline and carried out a test of the parameter of the explanatory variable (COVID-19 guideline), using t-statistic at 5% level.

4.1 Correlation Results

The correlation coefficient(r) for the dependent and independent variable is - 0.1283 and X_{t-1} P - Value= 0.7840. As observed, the correlation coefficient (r) is very low and insignificant and P-Value is too high. These results suggest that there is no relationship between COVID-19 guideline (restriction) and CSR delivery to the people of Akinyele Local Government area. These results show that religious activities has

no relationship with CSR activities of observed religion institutions. This finding confirms that hypothesis 1 is consistent with the findings of Garba, [8], Hager, Odetokun, Bolarinwa, Zainab, Okechukwu, and Al-Mustapha [6], Ilesanmi, and Afolabi, [11] which suggest relationship between COVID-19 guideline and religious activities. Also, our finding shows a negative and non- significant correlation between COVID-19 guideline, religion activities and CSR of observed institution. This finding also agrees with the findings of Berger, [21], Chia, [5], they claimed that the ecclesiology of digitalization is separating life together a time of Pandemic.

4.2 Regression Analysis

To test the effect of COVID-19 restriction and precautionary behavior of people of Akinyele Local Council on religious institution CSR, we carried out regression analysis. The simple coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.01645. This implies that only about 1.65 percent of the variation on COVID-19 restriction is explained by covid-19 guideline. Moreover, the coefficient of X_{t-1} (B) is -362.744, its standard error is 1254.234 and its t-statistic is -0.282. Our test, two-tail test, shows that the coefficient of X_{t-1} (COVID-19 guideline) is not significant at the 5% level ($p = 0.7840$). This result confirms the second hypothesis and is consistent with the findings of Kalu [13], he found that relationship between covid-19 guideline and restriction and CSR. This result shows that religion institutions'COVID-19 guideline and restriction has no effect on their CSR. The results of our econometric model has been given below.

Model Summary:

Regression Equation: $P_t = 147.064 - 362.744X_{t-1}$
 Standard Error: 90.384. 1254.234
 t-statistic: (1.627)(-0.282)
 P -Value: 0.1650.7840 R^2 0.016453891
 Adjusted $R^2 = -0.18025533$

5. DISCUSSION

Fig. 1 shows the eleven Local Government Areas (LGAs) in Ibadan metropolis. The map reveals that five of the LGAs (Ibadan North West, Ibadan North East, Ibadan South West, Ibadan South East and Ibadan North) are located within Ibadan city while six of the LGAs (Ido, Egbeda, Akinyele, Lagelu, Oluyole and Ona Ara) are located outside the city and they share boundaries with other LGAs from Oyo, and with Osun and Ogun

States. Ibadan is a major commercial city in the South West of Nigeria; hence there is always, the inflow of people into the city either for commercial or for administrative purposes.

Akinyele Local Government Area (ALGA), shares boundary with two LGAs (Iseyin and Afijio LGAs) of Oyo State. There is, always the movement of people, even from other LGAs through Afijio and Iseyin LGAs to Ibadan city center through ALGA. Ibadan city is the commercial hub due to locations of major businesses like the first University in Nigeria; University of Ibadan, the Polytechnic, the University College Hospital (UCH), the biggest food market in Oyo State, Bodija Market, some zonal Headquarters of Banks and companies, and the Cocoa House among other things are situated in Ibadan. Due to relatively low cost of living in ALGA when compared to the five LGAs within the city, many people who work in the city center are residing in ALGA. People migrate from ALGA in large population, to Ibadan city center from Monday to Friday. There is therefore the mingling with a large number of people from within Oyo State and other states of the Federation. It is very easy for COVID-19 to be imported and transmitted through ALGA and to other LGAs especially Ibadan North Local Government Area that is a major boundary to ALGA and that as at February 05, 2021 has the Highest confirmed cases of COVID-19 (See Fig. 2).

The researcher carried out a random observation for a period of six Sundays in some churches that were randomly visited from the 28th of March to the 4th of April, 2021. The numbers of Churches that have water, soap or hand sanitizers outside the churches were noted. The researcher did not inform any of the churches visited. Most times the researcher posed like a worshipper too.

Some of the churches especially the Catholic and the Protestant denominations did well by adapting some of their church's traditions to COVID-19 guideline compliance. The Sacrament and the taking of the Lord's Supper are now done differently. In the Catholic Church the practice before the pandemic was that every worshipper drinks the wine from the same cup. However, findings reveal that some of the Catholic Churches are now using the wine and bread that has been packaged for individual worshipper. The same thing was observed in the Protestant and Pentecostal denominations.

However, findings reveal that in the midst of the pandemic members do gather for naming, marriage, and funeral ceremonies. They also do house warming, birthday parties, and a host of other ceremonies which usually take place on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Members would go to the Church on Sunday to do the Thanksgiving service. During thanksgiving services, they dance, hug each other and extend hands of fellowship to each other. Home visitation by members barely suffered in ALGA. On the first Sunday of observation to some of the Churches, only 50% of the two hundred worshippers observed washed their hands with soap and water before entering the Church. No hand sanitizers were provided outside the church. Majority (95%) used the face mask wrongly. They did not use it to cover their mouths, nor their noses; face masks should rather be called chin masks. A large percentage of worshippers would put the face masks in their chins. This was worrisome because of the possible transmission of COVID-19 during praise and hymn singing. By the 4th of April, almost all the churches observed have neglected the COVID-19 prevention guidelines and protocols. Hence, the citizens of the ALGA do not comply totally to the COVID 19 guideline and protocol compliance. It was however observed that no arrests were made for those contravening the COVID-19 prevention guideline and protocols within the periods of the research.

The effect of not wanting to forgo some church tradition on the part of Churches in ALGA can be seen in Fig. 2. ALGA, as at February 5, 2021 had a total of 256 confirmed cases COVID-19. However, ALGA neighbouring LGAs recorded highest numbers of confirmed cases: Ibadan North (864), Ibadan South West (540), Ido (425) and Lagelu (449) contravene.

6. SUMMARY

Inflation caused by COVID-19 pandemic (youth unemployment) is one of the major macroeconomic problems that confront countries and particularly the Nigerian economy today. Attempts by the government to control this menace have not provided a long lasting solution. Therefore, the knowledge of the implication of youth unemployment on Nigeria inflation is a necessary requirement to evolving a long term solution. The paper ascertained the effect of youth unemployment on inflation in Nigeria. The data properties favoured the use of the vector error correction methodology.

Using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation analysis, results showed that the explanatory variables (mobility restrictions and other precautionary behavior) significantly and positively impacted on the rate of inflation in Nigeria during the period of COVID-19. The explanatory variables accounted for 82% of the variation in inflation during the period with the error terms capturing 18% of the variation. Attempts should be made to control the menace of youth unemployment in Nigeria through promotion of alleviating policies that increase productivity, household income and domestic food security.

The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on youth unemployment and inflation. It also aims at making up for the limited scholarly research in Nigeria on the implication of youth unemployment on Nigeria inflation and its relationship. The findings of this study will aid understanding of youth unemployment as it affects the economy through price inflation. The findings will help individuals and group to understand need to increase employability rate for proper decisions in their decision making processes. The results aim at persuading managers to implement youth unemployment actions in a greater extent in order to reduce inflation level of commodities. This paper contributes to the idea that the causes of inflation are multi-dimensional and dynamic, requiring full knowledge at any point in time to be able to proffer solutions to the inflationary trends in the country

7. CONCLUSION

There are a lot of reasons why religion intuitions engaged in COVID-19 guideline and acceptance to the restriction. Some emphasized that their agreement with the COVID-19 was as a result of policy and law. They also claimed that active or inactive compliance with the law is a function of personal belief and experience with the virus itself. In another, conclusion, it was observed that creation of goodwill, friendly conducive environment for worship is the sole responsibility of the religion centers not minding whether or not the members are well fed. In fact, the data analysis of some variables show that when citizen are comfortable the quest to attend any religion program are minimal. Therefore, CSR or not the primary motive of religion institutions is to take back from the member because it is the right thing to do for the society and environment. Introduction of palliative measure was never a

concern because yet the religion leaders claimed that it is the responsibility of the government. Of course we have 45% of this variable with a claim that practicing CSR is important, because they see it as good public relations and ethical.

This study in an effort to establish the relationship between COVID-19 guideline and CSR found that majority of the clergy did not understand what CSR means and they have tactically been carrying out CSR unknowing fully to them. The paper also attempt to find out if COVID-19 guideline and restriction actions have effect on the intuition activities. Data obtained for 3 months lag shows that the understanding of COVID-19 guideline was poor and due to lack of evidence based experience with the virus, attitude toward the restriction was poor.

The results of our research are consistent with the larger portion of studies. A negative and non-significant relationship between CSR and youth COVID-19 guideline is found. The results of our econometric model appears to be statistically insignificant and show that there is no relationship between COVID-19 guideline and CSR and that youth COVID-19 restriction has no effect on CSR. Given these findings, we recommend that clergy should engage in only necessary COVID-19 guideline and restrictions, such as social distancing, use of face mask, hand washing, sanitizing of hand.

We also recommend that clergy should engage in corporate social responsibility activities because, a socially responsible institution is likely to have good reputation which may encourage worshippers and foster relationship between members and clergy. The simple reason for it, is that these institution built greater loyalty and commitment from their members. The relationship between COVID-19 guideline and restrictions on CSR (palliative measure) is an area that has not been researched thoroughly in Nigeria, we therefore suggest that future research should focus on resolving the controversies surrounding the effect of COVID-19.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to solve the problem of inflation, more so, COVID-19 pandemic caused inflation, special measures, in conjunction with reduced youth unemployment, will continue to be needed for some years to come. The study recommends that;

1. A key way to reduce the inflationary trend in Nigeria is to re work youth unemployment.
2. With a call for the adoption of macroeconomic policies that increase productivity, household income and domestic food security, it helps stimulate youth employment.
3. Companies can improve one or two elements of working capital, primarily trade receivables, inventory, and trade creditors. If these elements are focused on, many companies can reduce the burdens of declining sales and improve cash flow.
4. In order to prevent increased inflationary trends, there must be a pre-planning team that collects future information, develops scenarios, and identifies options and procedures for acting tactically and strategically.

The Church as a unit of the society is capable of helping to reduce or increase the spread of the Pandemic. The church must be willing to do everything within her power to aid the eradication of the pandemic from Oyo State. Hence, the church must forgo those practices that are inimical to the generality of the society. Such traditions as gathering of large crowds for naming, wedding, funeral, birthday, house warming and a host of other ceremonies should be avoided. Churches in ALGA should strictly follow the COVID-19 prevention guidelines and protocols put in place by the government. In fact, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) Akinyele Zone would do well to form COVID-19 compliance unit. This unit would be saddled with the responsibility of enforcing the guidelines and protocol,

It is observed that the Oyo State Government focuses her attention so much on the rate of confirmed cases in the five LGAs within Ibadan metropolis to the neglect of the LGAs especially ALGA of Oyo State. The Oyo State government should consider ALGA as a red zone for COVID-19 and the guideline and protocols for prevention must be taken seriously in ALGA.

9. LIMITATION AND FURTHER STUDY

From the research work, it was revealed that the determinants of inflation are multi-dimensional and dynamic. Therefore, the multi-dimensional and dynamic nature of the determinants of

inflation for further researches could be conducted to continuously make recommendations to curbing inflationary tendencies in Nigeria. More studies should be carried out to inculcate other determinants of inflation in Nigeria particularly those relating to COVID-19 pandemic.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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