

COVID-19 AS CAUSATIVE TO NEW-NORMAL LIFESTYLE: IMPLICATION FOR COUNSELLING

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Abstract

Human society is dynamic with abundant changes and innovations. The effects of COVID-19 panic have caused a massive change to man's daily lives, changes that often happened rapidly and abruptly. Behavioural science theory identifies several attributes of individuals and their surroundings that are causally related to behavior towards guiding practitioners in the selection of psychological, behavioural, social and environmental targets for invention. The adaptive and protective behavior change in response to public health emergencies is emphasized by the World Health Organization (WHO), who provide risk communications guidelines designed to encourage individuals, families, communities to act and protect themselves. This paper examined response of people to precautionary instructions to the infectious disease – coronavirus ravaging the world. It also discussed how COVID-19 pandemic has reordered people's lifestyles and stakeholders' responses. The study concluded that a cooperative effort of both the health-sector practitioners, media and counselling professionals is germane during and after the emergency period. Among others, the study recommended that social re-engineering of man should be sporadically done via electronic media, religious centres and schools. Furthermore, the government should provide funds for researchers and social agents for reorientation and development of "new-normal" lifestyles; towards effort at containing the deadly disease.

Keywords: COVI-19, New Normal, Life Adjustment, National Development

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 as a pandemic disease started spreading in African continent in February, 2020. World Health Organization (2020) describe coronavirus (COVID-19) as family of viruses that cause illnesses ranges from the common cold to more severe diseases: acute respiratory syndrome(SARS) and Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS). The deadly disease emerged as a viral infection that is inflicting the social, religion, financial and political patterns of the world. The first viewed case of the novel disease (COVID-19) is traced back to December 2019 in Wuhan, Hubei, in China (Tang et al., 2020).

On 11th March 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak of a new type of coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, that causes COVID-19

respiratory diseases. The pandemic has devastated parts of Asia, Europe, and the United States of America (USA), with the world recording so enormous and alarming death rate. Data from Africa shows low number of reported COVID-19 deaths; despite high level of disease transmission with the unknown projected trend of the pandemic. As at 30th June 2021, the virus has spread worldwide, with over 7,410,510 confirmed cases; and 418,294 deaths. However, the long term impacts of the pandemic on health and development are likely to be the major concern; not just to African countries but to the world. The disease spread from person to person through infected air droplets that are projected during sneezing or coughing. It can also be transmitted when humans have contact with hands or surfaces that contain the virus and

touch the eyes, nose, or mouth with the contaminated hands (WHO, 2020).

A crisis on this scale can reorder society in dramatic ways, for better or worse. The advent of COVID-19 is an event that reshaped society in lasting ways, from how we travel and buy homes, to the level of security and surveillance people are accustomed to, and even to the language we use. A global, novel virus that keeps man contained in homes for months is reorienting people's relationship to government, outside world, even to each other. The questions arose are "Will nations closed? "Will touch become taboo? What will become of restaurants, religious activities, etc.? Invariably, "change is inevitable, imminent and valuable". Even geography confirmed it that the world / globe / earth do rotate. So, with the rotation of the earth, change in climatic conditions, culture, tradition and ways of doing things is inevitable. Also, the man on the planet earth must react and adapt to the changes.

Change is imminent, so also life adjustment is inevitable. Life adjustment is not at all time smooth but most of the time found rough and painful. It usually ends with ripening its benefits for those that properly manage the trying period that called for change. In Africa, it seems almost everyone is a laggard, it takes longer period to respond to changes in advent of it.

The term "counselling" includes work with individuals and relationships which may be developmental, crisis support, psychotherapeutic, guiding or problem solving. The task of counselling is to give the 'client' an opportunity to explore, discover and clarify ways of living more satisfying and resourcefully (Long & Young, 2007). Technological development has brought what is called e-counselling into the prestigious counselling field. E-counselling is the utilization of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in guidance counselling process. ICT is used extensively in the delivery of career information and guidance (Watts, 2001). Such usage covers a wide range of applications. Key trends includes its increased

accessibility, its increased interactivity, and the more diffuses origination of ICT based resources. The role of ICT in guidance can be seen in three ways: as a tool, as an alternative, or as an agent of change. The growth of websites and helplines as forms of technology-driven mediated service delivery means the that the potential of ICT as change agent is now greater than ever before. The telephone, websites and e-mail, alongside face-to-face facilities, could be alternative service; or they could be portals into a wide, flexible and well-harmonized network of services (Owolabi, 2018).

The world has changed, the change is on daily basis increasingly becoming fast that whoever do not key-in now, will suffer the severe consequences. Dwelling on the past beliefs and practices can hinder growth and it is extremely dangerous.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

It is worthless for a man to be a laggard; especially now that the pandemic is a close-mark to human race. Laxities in precautionary measures giving by the health practitioners has led the world to another pandemic called Delta COVID which is deadlier than COVID-19. Even, the counsellors do not show concern. No convincing collaboration with the education sector (especially counselling field) by the health sector; to join force in combating this menace. Joining hands with media or National Orientation Agency (NOA) alone is not enough to effectively educate people on the need to contain the disease.

Generally, Nigeria's education sector is not adapting and is expected to struggle on that front for the foreseeable future. However, the consequential socio-economic burden will be borne disproportionately by students in public schools, as compared to those in private schools. While several private schools have initiated distance learning programmes, and taking advantage of the myriad of ICT-learning opportunities provided by the international community, the government limited is limited by funds

and persistent deficiencies in planning, is yet to put in place any versatile / worthwhile plan for providing distance learning opportunities for public schools. The implication is that students in various institutions currently have no formal learning plans and could be missing learning altogether. The time for change is now. The specialized cooperative work of counselling profession is highly needed and inevitable, to combat the disease.

Based on the second wave of COVID-19, the federal government has re-introduced restrictions which include physical contacts, hence the need to make provision for programmes that will cushion effects of the pandemic. Where the challenge lies is the fact that most Nigerians doesn't have resources to prevent contact with the infectious diseases. It is so worst, that many cannot even afford to buy face-mask of N100, not to talk sanitizer. Thus, many people become recalcitrant to the precautionary measures against COVID-19. Then, what is the way out?

LIFE BEFORE COVID-19 PANDEMIC - THE NORMAL

We live in a heterogeneous and relationship-oriented society as Nigeria, COVID-19 outbreak has affected lives once and for all. The way we live, work and co-exist has not been the same again. Average Nigerians love partying, club; so they put on cloths and very happy when in the midst of friends having fun. Social gatherings were seen as means of fellowshiping with others among family, friends and neighbours. In orthodox churches like Catholic, Anglican and Methodist, sharing of Holy Communion used to be celebrated with "one cup" for every communicant to eat and drink from; because of belief in oneness in Jesus Christ and confession to joint-heirs in His body and precious blood. Then, visiting a sick person was done willingly, without boundaries and free of fear of contacting any infectious diseases; be it at homes or in the hospitals. Restrictions from visiting sick ones in the hospital was not there, hand washing was properly

enforced and only done when about to and after eating. Coughing in the society was seen as normal sickness and not as deadly as it is taken to be now. There was mutual co-existence; people did freely hand-shake, hug, peck and even kiss. There was nothing like "stay at home policy" or "gathering of not more than fifty people" in a particular place. Work is done at work places, thereby give room for co-work of staffs without delay. This was unlike during pandemic lockdown when much work was scheduled to some workers on a particular level, e.g. officers on level 12 and above are being overloaded with work in the office while workers below are on work-from-home. Business operations were carried out at centers without fear of any deadly health challenge, but joy of buying and selling and thus improved economy of the country. Physical class lessons for students at all levels, i.e. from primary to tertiary institutions. These, and many other instances were how we live freely and healthier before COVID-19 crept into the world.

POST COVID-19 LOCKDOWN LIFESTYLES - THE NEW NORMAL

With the presence of deadly virus in the world, which has killed many people; lessons learnt from it is termed "new normal", which have form part of man' lifestyle. The disease has no cure, but can be prevented. Behavior and habit changes are also directly linked to the extent of exposure to new environments. Five key trends in the behavioural changes emerging from the impact of COVID-19 are:

1. *Increased digital adoption:* people shifting to digital platforms for day-to-day needs.
2. *Change in mobility patterns:* less use of public transport, more remote working, etc.
3. *Change in purchasing behavior:* move to value-based purchasing and online shopping.
4. *Increased awareness of health:* wearing of masks, increased hygiene, healthy eating, etc.

5. *Change in interpersonal behavior:* increased divorce, increased pet adoption, etc.

These trends are interconnected and overlapping.

Increased digital adoption: Virtually all meetings and conferences are now held via zoom and e-conference / teleconferencing. Most purchases are made online and supplied via home delivery. Some members of religious organization now worship via e-channels on television. Some workers are still observing “work from home” policy. Most students still prefer taking lectures and write exams online. All these reduce physical contacts and invariably killing rate of infections by the deadly virus.

Change in mobility patterns: In view of the adverse effect of COVID-19 on people, countries naturally applied various precautionary measures that affected mobility, to keep the pandemic under control, so that the public health can be preserved. Some of the precautions, which affect transportation both directly and indirectly can be summarized as mobility restrictions, indefinite closure of schools, local lockdowns, curfew and weekend lockdowns, quarantines in residential areas, bans on flights, isolation rules and social distancing. Mobility was restricted to immediate environment that many workers work from home; students receive online lessons and wrote examinations online. Social gatherings were cancelled and subsequently reduced to maximum of twenty to fifty people, well kitted and protected with face masks, regular washing of hands with soap and application of hand sanitizer. Outdoors engagement was banned for those aged 65 and over. This is important because such limitations have a negative impact on the economic development, especially in terms of employment and welfare (Yilmazkuday, 2020)

Change in purchasing behaviour: The advent of COVID-19 pandemic changed many business models. A number of drivers have changed and disrupt consumption habits. These includes social contexts such as life events – marriage, childbirth etc., and new technology. The e-

commerce sector has responded rapidly to the challenge of creating positive experiences in response to the pandemic. The pandemic has increased people’s use of digital tools in life and business to stay connected in a world that is physically disconnected.

Increased awareness of health: To prevent infection of the virus, people now observe thorough hand-washing at intervals of five minutes, wear face / nose masks and keep at least five-feet social distance from each other. It has become a taboo for more than fifty people to gather in a place. In short, general hygiene is strictly observed in every sector / facet of life.

Change in interpersonal behavior: People now work from different homes without physical contact. Students in institutions receive lectures and interact with lecturers / classmates and write examinations online. The deadly disease has negatively affected a lot of things ranging from broken homes, financial handicap, small business close down, poor feeding or increased vulnerable people.

COVID-19 EFFECTS ON NATION’S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The COVID-19 pandemic has had far-reaching economic consequences beyond the spread of the disease itself and efforts to quarantine it. As the SARS-CoV-2 virus has spread around the globe, concerns have shifted from supply-side manufacturing issues to decreased business in the services sector. The pandemic caused the largest global recession in history, with more than a third of the global population at the same time placed on lockdown (WHO, 2020).

Supply shortages affect a number of sectors due to panic buying, increased usage of goods to fight the pandemic, and disruption to factories and logistics. There have been instances of price gouging. There have been widespread reports of shortages of pharmaceuticals, with many areas seeing panic buying and consequent shortages of food and

other essential grocery items. The technology industry, in particular, face delays in shipments of electronic goods.

Global stock markets fell on 24th February 2020 due to a significant rise in the number of COVID-19 cases. By 28th February 2020, stock markets worldwide saw their largest single-week declines since the 2008 financial crisis. Global stock markets crashed in March 2020, with falls of several percent in the world's major indices (IBM, 2020). Possible instability generated by the outbreak and associated behavioural changes result into temporary food shortages, price hikes, and disruption to markets. Price rises was felt most by vulnerable populations who depend on markets for their food as well as those already depending on humanitarian assistance to maintain their livelihoods and food access. As observed in the 2007 – 2008 food prices crisis, the additional inflationary effect of protectionist policies through import tariffs and export bans could cause a significant increase in the number of people facing severe food insecurity worldwide.

The pandemic has forced to switch plans globally. All fashions, sport, and technology events was cancelled or have changed to be online. While the monetary impact on the travel and trade industry is estimated to be in billions, and it is increasing on daily basis. Amidst the recovery and containment, the world economic system is characterized as experiencing significant, broad uncertainty. Economic forecasts and consensus among Macroeconomics experts show significant disagreement on the overall extent, long-term effects and projected recovery. Therefore, risk assessments and contingency plans must be taken with a grain of salt, given that there is a wide divergence of opinion.

Adjusting to the New Normal

The effects of COVID-19 panic have caused a massive change to our daily lives, changes that often happened abruptly and rapidly. Life adjustments often come with a wide range of experiences and emotions. Sometimes the transition can feel smooth and other times the journey to

the new normal is choppy or downright bumpy! Some people may find themselves in survival mode, gathering information and resources necessary to function at school, work, as a person, and in relationships with others. Others may be attempting to settle into their new routines. For some, this may mean “trying to combat social isolation”. To many, it means learning how to live (or re-live) with friends, family members, partners, or roommates, which is not always easy. A lot of people struggle to find a distraction-free space at home that is conducive to do productive and effective work. For myself, I feel like it takes twice as much time, effort, and energy to do even simple tasks, which can be quite draining. Others may be struggling with the fatigue, frustration, sadness, anger, grief, and anxiety (among other things) of adjusting. Some people (and I hope there are a lot of people out there), have gone through the adjustment process and are finding comfort in their new norm. In all of these, here are a few important things to remember:

1. This situation is both uncertain and temporary! It is okay not to feel okay. It is also okay (and encouraged) to seek help and support!
 - a. Consider this a time to reflect on who you want to be, during this time.
 - b. Focus on what is within your control.
 - c. It is good to be informed, and it is a really good idea to take seriously the conversations, news, and information related to COVID-19.
2. Adjustment is a process that looks differently for most people. This process is not liner or well-defined. Patience and flexibility are really important.
 - a. Please be respectful of where you are in the process (some self-compassion can go a long way) and also of where others are.
 - b. It is okay to be curious about where your friends, family, and others are in their process and to seek to understand their wants and needs at this time. Don't forget to tell them what you want and need too!

3. Setting a routine can be really helpful in addition to doing schoolwork, make sure to schedule time for your physical and emotional health, fun, recreation, social connection, and stress relief!
4. It is okay to set boundaries, even with family members, friends, and professors.

Life adjustment work and process is a collective responsibility of people living together. Thus, people found some peace in the chaos, learned something about themselves and the world.

Riding out the Storm of COVID-19, the following should carefully be observed:

1. Limit Social Media Exposure: to avoid constant overflow of virus information.
2. Do a flash-back of difficult time that was successfully managed in the past. Be resilient by looking 5 years ahead to imagine.
3. Think of what can be controlled right now.
4. Try something new.
5. Visit free APPS and websites that promote mindfulness, stress management, and explore grief. Examples are: (a) Headspace, (b) Shine, (c) Calm, (d) Fear, (e) Care for anxiety; (f) Video information on overcoming grief and for dealing with loss.

Training / Lessons from Covid-19 Pandemic Experience

New ways of living and relating with people have emerged and have come to stay with man in this world. What lessons has this pandemic taught man? For example, many people now work from home. Suddenly, many big corporations are finding out that they do not need all the gigantic office edifices again. Some have even moved their operations entirely online. Many students now go to school online. Most financial transactions are now done through online banking. At a time during the lockdown, shops were refusing to collect cash for fear of the infectious virus. It

has become a necessity for people without ATM card to endure hardship before transacting business in banks. Handshakes has been replaced with ‘shoulder bomb’. The usual greetings of peace during communion service is now done by waving hands at each other from a distance and wearing of face masks is now compulsory. Some religious organizations now set-up online platforms to conduct worships / services, take offerings and other payments / collections; as numbers attending programmes physically has dropped. Zoom invitation are now being sent to people to attend programmes online, even wedding, birthdays etc.

It is on record that many of the latest world’s greatest corporations grew stronger during lockdown against pandemic. For instance, most people never heard / use Zoom before the pandemic. The company’s fortune has grown so big that everybody is using zoom to hold online meetings since the pandemic started. A former Governor once said that he was offered opportunity to invest in this company some years ago but turned it down. Today, he is full of regret. Many other stories abound.

Conclusion

The experience of living through COVID-19 is changing the world in which we live and our behavior. Changes that provide positive experiences are likely to last longer, particularly those driven by convenience and well-being, such as digital adoption, value-based purchasing and increased health awareness. This provides an opportunity for insurer to offer innovative, modular, granular, value-based and integrated products to meet consumer needs. It is vital that insurers understand consumers’ preferences to stay relevant and adapt accordingly.

“It has been craziness, eye-opening, challenges and rewards, all at the same time; but we never could have anticipated this” said Leopold. Regent University Psychology and Counselling Assistant Professor Dr. Vanessa Kent broke down some pandemic trends that may be here to stay. The shift towards ‘e-commerce’, or online

shopping because of convenience and 24/7 service make people love it; and it is not going away – said Dr. Kent. Working from home, “I don’t see think we’re ever going to go back to 9-5, Monday through Friday in a cubicle,” said Dr. Kent. “It just isn’t going to because we know we can be very productive at home. And not having those long commutes, may be even shrinking the carbon footprint as a result of not being out in traffic.”

The rising use of telehealth. “People are caring about their health,” said Dr. Kent. “They really want to see somebody and yet may be can’t get an appointment close-by. Now, it is just right on there on their screen.” Keeping in touch with loved ones, and being able to stay connected to our family, our friends” Those are things that we’ve said we can’t do without,” said Dr. Kent. “So, I think the fears will fade, the relationships will stay.”

Another pandemic trend that Dr. Kent said deserves an honorable mention is the change in travelling, vacationing and crowded party or places. People are still doing it, she said, but they are not necessarily hopping on planes and going far distances. Instead, they are hopping in the car and going to drivable destinations or doing road trips. She does believe, however, that long-distance travel will return at some point after the pandemic. Dr. Kent said these pandemic life changes could be for the better. Mudway and Leopold said they couldn’t agree more. “I can’t say that we will never go back (to the recreation center), but we’re pretty much set,” said Leopold. “There’s really no excuse when your gym is a couple of steps down the hallway.” Change they say is the only constant thing, haven’t known that we should therefore learn to adjust to change, although not easy but necessary.

Recommendations

The study therefore recommend as follows:

- There should be social re-engineering through schools.

- Agents for social change like teachers, priests, journalists and medical practitioners should be motivated by agencies to serve.
- Government should provide fund for researchers and agents for social change (especially counsellors), to re-orientate and attitudinize the populace; to embrace all changing life supports.
- Government should ensure that the “social welfare package” for people is wholistic, it should reach the vulnerable especially.
- Individuals should stop being recalcitrant, but respond to change appropriately, as the situation calls for it.
- Despite been vaccinated, it is important to continue to: maintain physical distancing, avoid crowds, avoid poorly ventilated spaces, and wash your hands regularly.
- Technology should further be integrated into the breach of education, and will continue to play a key role in educating future generations.
- In a world where knowledge is a mouse-click away, the role of the educator must change too.
- Counsellors should rise up and globally market their profession via service delivery, for attitudinal change in man’s lifestyles; even at this trying but demanding period.

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