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Strategies for Improving Socioeconomic Well-being of Families in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State

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Abstract

The scourge of COVID-19 has crippled many businesses in Nigeria while some are still struggling to overcome the associated negative social effects. The socioeconomic wellbeing of many families has been threatened and this calls for the need of exploring strategies in improving their socio-economic wellbeing. This study seeks to determine strategies for improving the socio-economic wellbeing of families in Awka South LGA of Anambra State. This paper has three research questions that guided the paper and three hypotheses. This paper adopted a cross-sectional descriptive survey design. The population is families in Awka South LGA, Anambra State. A total of 307 sample size was determined using the Taro Yamane formula for sample size determination however, the analysis was done with 231 correctly returned responses. Cluster sampling and simple random sampling techniques were used to select required households. A 4-Likert structured online questionnaire was used to collect data for the study. Descriptive statistics, which comprised mean scores and standard deviation were used to analyze the data got from the questionnaire. Simple linear regression was used to test the hypotheses at 0.05 significant level. The study found that strategies such as developing online marketing, entrepreneurial, and managerial skills for generating jobs and income can improve the socio-economic wellbeing of families amid COVID-19. The study recommended that the government agencies such as the National Directorate of Employment and in collaboration with Non-Government Organizations need to create innovation hubs to help families develop employability skills or self-employment skills that are viable in an online-driven economy/labour market stimulated by COVID 19 pandemic.

Keywords: *Agriculture, Coronavirus, Entrepreneurship, Marketing Strategies, Socioeconomic-wellbeing.*

Introduction

Coronavirus (COVID-19) came with lots of challenges that affected the entire world especially Africa, although, the number of COVID-19 cases and fatalities might still appear comparatively low in Africa than in other world regions. However, the looming health shock of COVID-19 has disastrous impacts on the continent's already strained health systems and

has turned into a social and economic emergency (OECD, 2020). On that note, the scourge of COVID-19 has crippled many businesses in Nigeria while some are still struggling to overcome the associated effects. This has made many families struggle to survive and their socioeconomic wellbeing has been threatened.

In Nigeria, the first confirmed case of COVID-19 was declared on February 27, 2020, and the first case of COVID-19 in Anambra State was announced on April 11, 2020, by the National Center for Disease Control (NCDC) (Garda World, 2020). However, Anambra State, like other Nigerian states, made steps to halt the spread of COVID-19 in the state. According to Ayadiuno and Ndalue (2020), non-essential activities were restricted, schools and universities were closed, people were encouraged to stay at home, entire cities were locked down, essential businesses were required to run skeleton operations, and employees were required to work from home.

In light of the measures taken to halt the spread of the COVID-19, socioeconomic activities in African countries such as Nigeria, where Anambra State is located, were inevitably affected, and policymakers were forced to use economic policies, both fiscal and monetary policies, to mitigate the negative impact on the economy (Ayadiuno & Ndalue, 2020). COVID-19, according to Haleem et al (2020), has an impact on people's lives by slowing the world economy. The report further showed that COVID-19's economic effects caused a reduction in the production of critical items, a disruption in product supply chains, losses in national and international business, poor cash flow in the market, and a considerable decrease in revenue growth.

Moreover, the effect of COVID-19 has continued to restrict movement in many nations which has commerce and tourism (Stanley, Nkporbu, and Stanley, 2020). As a result of the worldwide economic recession due to the pandemic, an unprecedented number of individuals have lost their jobs. Apart from the implications of demand and supply, COVID-19 has had a negative influence on financial markets, with substantial drops in bond rates, oil, and equity prices (Stanley, Nkporbu, & Stanley, 2020). On the other hand, Haleem et al (2020) posited that the social consequences include the cancellation or postponement of large-scale sports and tournaments, disruption of celebration of cultural, religious, and festive events, undue stress among the population, social distancing with peers and family members, closure of

hotels, restaurants and religious places, closure of places for entertainment like the movie and play theatres, sports clubs, gymnasiums, swimming pools among others have been enormous.

Given these socioeconomic effects of COVID-19 on the wellbeing of families all over the world, states in Nigeria like Anambra State were not immune from these effects. However, the Federal Government of Nigeria rolled out palliative measures for targeted groups but, lamentations have trailed the distribution of government palliatives by the masses as many alleged that the process of distribution of palliatives was politicalized and diverted (Eranga, 2020). According to United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2000), a larger percentage (95%) of families in Nigeria including Anambra still suffer from the economic shock with limited access to basic needs (like food and shelter). As a result of slow economic bounce back due to the pandemic, high inflation across goods and services has also contributed to significant difficulty in the socio-economic wellbeing of many families in Nigeria (UNHCR, 2000). A report from the Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (2000) revealed that 79% of Nigerian households reported a decrease in income since mid-March 2020. The pandemic reduced income inflow in families, increased the poverty rate, led to poor feeding habits and to loss of jobs which increased depression and frustration (Mirian, Danjuma, and Amaonyeze, 2021). This has resulted in unintended hardship and catastrophic repercussions for people. This begs the question of how people might mitigate these conditions by developing strategies to improve their socio-economic well-being in the COVID-19 era. It is on this backdrop that this paper sought to determine the strategies for the improvement of the socio-economic wellbeing of families in Awka South Local Government of Area of Anambra State.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of the study is to determine the strategies for the improvement of the socio-economic wellbeing of families in Awka South LGA of Anambra State. The specific objectives are;

1. To ascertain the use of entrepreneurship as a strategy to improve the socio-economic wellbeing of families in Awka South LGA of Anambra State amidst COVID-19
2. To find out the use of marketing as a strategy to improve the socio-economic wellbeing of families in Awka South LGA of Anambra State amidst COVID-19

3. To determine the use of agriculture as a strategy to improve the socio-economic wellbeing of families in Awka South LGA of Anambra State amidst COVID-19

Hypotheses

This paper tested the following null hypotheses at a 0.05 significant level.

1. The use of entrepreneurship as a strategy significantly does not improve the social wellbeing of families in Awka South LGA of Anambra State amidst COVID-19.
2. The use of marketing as a strategy significantly does not improve the social wellbeing of families in Awka South LGA Anambra State amidst COVID-19.
3. The use of agriculture as a strategy significantly does not improve the social wellbeing of families in Awka South LGA Anambra State amidst COVID-19.

Research Method

This paper adopted a cross-sectional descriptive survey design. The population is comprised of families in Awka Metropolis in Awka South Local Government Area of Anambra State. Awka South Local Government Area (LGA) is made up of nine towns, namely, Amawbia, Awka, Ezinato, Isiagu, Mbaukwu, Nibo, Nise, Okpuno, and Umuawulu. Simple random sampling was used to select one town from the nine towns that make up Awka South LGA. The total population of Awka South LGA is 189,049. Using Taro Yamane's formula for sample size determination, 400 respondents we selected. The convenience sampling technique was used to select 400 respondents from each household in Awka Metropolis. Nigerians aged 18 years and above were studied through an online questionnaire survey which was distributed through social media platforms, emails, and professional networks between 10th and 30th, May 2021. A 4-Likert structured questionnaire that contained 28 items was used to collect data for the study. The questionnaire was titled, "Strategies for Promoting the Socioeconomic Wellbeing of families Questionnaire (SPSWFQ)." The questionnaire was structured on Strongly Agree (SA) to Strongly Disagree (SD). Three academic experts validated the research questionnaire. The questionnaire has a reliability score of 0.89, which indicated that it is reliable in carrying out this research paper. After the administration of the research instrument 231, which is 75.24% of the respondents were used for the study. Descriptive statistics, which comprised mean scores and standard deviations, were used to analyze data gotten from the questionnaire. Simple linear regression was used to test the hypotheses at the 0.05 significance level.

Results

The results of the study are presented below.

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents

The study shows that a majority (67%) are females while (33%) are males. On the marital status of the respondents, the study showed that a majority of (46.3%) of them were married compared to (42.5%) of them who were single. Only (8.4%) of them were widowed. The age disaggregation of the respondents shows that a majority (26.4%) of the respondents were between the ages of 29 years to 34 years old. This is closely followed by (26.2%) of those aged between 41 years and 46 years old. Meanwhile, the mean age of the respondents was 32.8. On educational qualification of the respondents, a majority (64%) had BSC and above while 36% of them had WAEC and below. A majority of the sampled respondents (32.6%) were public/civil servants. Another significant occupational role was business/trading, in which (22.7%) of the respondents were engaged in. Also, (21.5%) of the respondents were however unemployed at the time of this study. On monthly income, the results showed that a majority of (36.0%) of the respondents earned between N31,000.00 – N50,000.00. Similarly, (26.4%) of them earned between N11, 000.00 – N30,000.00 monthly. Only a very lower proportion, 49 (6.2%) of them earned higher incomes (i.e., >N91,000.00). Cumulatively, 944 (92.5%) of the sampled respondents were Christians. This data is understandable because the study area is a Christian-dominated area in Nigeria.

Table 2: Similar Linear Regression Analysis on use of entrepreneurship as a strategy to improve the social wellbeing of families in Awka South LGA of Anambra State amidst COVID-19

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-1.979	.200		-9.906	.000
	Entrepreneurship	.844	.016	.963	53.981	.012
Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. An error of the Estimate		
1	.963 ^a	.927	.927	.827		

The test of hypothesis one as shown above revealed that the p(.012)-value is greater than the 0.05 significant level. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is retained. This signifies that the use of entrepreneurship as a strategy to improve the social wellbeing of families in Anambra State amidst COVID-19. Also, 92.7% of the use of entrepreneurship improves the socioeconomic wellbeing of families in Anambra State.

Objective 2: To find out the use of marketing as a strategy to improve the social wellbeing of families in Awka South LGA of Anambra State amidst COVID-19

Table 3: The use of marketing as a strategy improves the socioeconomic wellbeing of families in Anambra State amidst COVID-19

S/N	Marketing as a strategy:	SA	A	D	SD	(X)	STD	Decision
1	Helps people develop persuasive online skills in selling goods and services	80(320)	81(243)	39(78)	31(31)	2.91	0.99	Agree
2	Helps people develop a sales promotion strategy	83(324)	83(249)	33(66)	32(32)	2.91	1.04	Agree
3	Helps marketers understand other people's needs and selling them to them	80(320)	80(240)	41(82)	30(30)	2.91	1.02	Agree
4	Encourages the ability to determine demand and supply situation	91(364)	79(237)	32(64)	29(29)	3	1.02	Agree
5	ability to acquire good sales habit	79(316)	85(255)	32(64)	28(28)	2.96	0.99	Agree
6	Encourages the ability to identify new trends in the marketing environment	89(356)	83(249)	36(72)	23(23)	3.03	0.97	Agree
7	Encourages the ability to carry out an effective marketing and information research	79(316)	73(219)	46(92)	33(33)	2.86	1.05	Agree
Average Mean Score						2.94	1.01	Agree

Field Survey, 2021.

The results in table 3 revealed that the average mean score is 2.94, which is above the decision mean score of 2.50. Thus, the use of marketing as a strategy improves the

socioeconomic wellbeing of families in Anambra State amidst COVID-19. This implies that developing innovative online marketing skills and environment are facilitators to improve the socio-economic wellbeing of families in a COVID 19 infested world where visual stores are becoming more popular. Furthermore, a simple linear regression analysis was performed to determine the relationship between marketing strategy and improvement in the socio-economic well-being of families

Table 4: Similar Linear Regression analysis on marketing strategy and improvement in the socio-economic wellbeing of families in Awka South LGA of Anambra State amidst COVID-19

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.071	.079		.905	.366
	Marketing	.744	.006	.992	117.108	.028
Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. An error of the Estimate		
1	.892 ^a	.894	.984	.386		

The test of hypotheses one-two showed above revealed that the p(.028)-value is greater than the 0.05 significant level. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is retained. This signifies that the use of marketing as a strategy improves the socioeconomic wellbeing of families in Anambra State amidst COVID-19. In addition, 89.4% of the use of marketing strategies improves the socioeconomic wellbeing of families in Anambra State.

Objective 3: To determine the use of agriculture as a strategy to improve the social wellbeing of families in Awka South LGA of Anambra State amidst COVID-19

Table 5: The use of agriculture as a strategy improve the social wellbeing of families in Anambra State amidst COVID-19

S/N	Agriculture as a strategy:	SA	A	D	SD	(X)	STD	Decision
1	Encourage processing of local raw materials into finished and semi-finished food products	80(320)	81(243)	39(78)	31(31)	2.91	0.99	Agree
2	Encourage food production	83(324)	83(249)	33(66)	32(34)	2.94	1.04	Agree
3	Encourage selling agricultural products	80(320)	80(240)	41(82)	30(30)	2.91	1.02	Agree
4	Encourage individuals to form farmers' networks to sell at the best price	91(364)	79(237)	32(64)	29(29)	3	1.02	Agree
5	Motivate individuals partner with farmers to buy agricultural products at cheaper rates	79(316)	85(255)	32(64)	28(28)	2.96	0.99	Agree
6	Encourage investment in the agriculture food chain	72(288)	75(225)	46(92)	38(38)	2.78	1.06	Agree
7	Focus on agriculture that is sustainable and builds strong communities	79(316)	73(219)	46(92)	33(33)	2.86	1.05	Agree
Average Mean Score						2.91	1.02	Agree

Field Survey, 2021.

The results in table 5 revealed that the average mean score is 2.91, which is above the decision mean score of 2.50. Thus, the use of agriculture as a strategy improves the socioeconomic wellbeing of families in Anambra State amidst COVID-19. The implication of this finding is that majority of the respondents agreed that the use of agricultural activities could contribute to the improvement of the socio-economic wellbeing of families in the study area. A higher statistic was used to test the significant relationship between the use of agriculture strategy and improvement of the socio-economic wellbeing of families in Awka South LGA Anambra State amidst COVID-19.

Table 6: Simple linear regression between the use of agriculture as a strategy to improve the socio-economic wellbeing of families in Awka South LGA Anambra State amidst COVID-19.

Coefficients						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.325	.122		-2.667	.008
	Agriculture	.754	.010	.981	76.926	.009
Model Summary						
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. An error of the Estimate		
1	.981 ^a	.963	.963	.602		

The test of hypotheses one-two showed above revealed that the p(.009)-value is greater than the 0.05 significant level. Thus, the null hypothesis is rejected while the alternative hypothesis is retained. This signifies that the use of agriculture as a strategy improves the socioeconomic wellbeing of families in Anambra State amidst COVID-19. More so, 96.3% of the use of agriculture improves the socioeconomic wellbeing of families in Anambra State.

Discussion

Firstly, this study investigated the use of entrepreneurship as a strategy to improve the social wellbeing of families in Awka South LGA of Anambra State amidst COVID-19. The study revealed that the use of entrepreneurship strategies can improve the socio-economic wellbeing of families in Awka South LGA. These findings are in line with Ali and Ali (2013) and Hussain, Bhuiyan, and Bakar (2014) which showed that entrepreneurship development helps to alleviate poverty by creating jobs through the start-up of new businesses or the expansion of existing ones, as well as increasing social wealth by creating new markets, industries, technology, institutional forms, jobs, and net increases in real productivity, all of which lead to higher living standards for people.

Secondly, the study sought to prove that the use of marketing as a strategy can improve the socio-economic wellbeing of families in Awka South LGA of Anambra State amidst COVID-19. The study found that marketing expertise could be used to improve a family's socio-economic wellbeing in this COVID 19 era. In affirmation, Wey and Wolugbom (2018) findings revealed that marketing promotes the capacity to determine customer needs, as well as the ability to grab, maintain, and retain customer attention, which aids in the assessment of

demand and supply, and the development of effective negotiation skills, all of which contribute to an individual's self-reliance. Marketing, according to Ezeani (2012), encourages the identification of consumer needs, the planning and development of a product or service that meets those needs, and the determination of the best possible price to promote and distribute that product or service, thus identifying, anticipating, and satisfying customer requirements. The era of COVID 19 has forcefully made social and economic activities especially marketing to migrate online, hence making it difficult for persons who lack the capacity for visual business to be left behind. Thus, providing knowledge and facilities for online marketing space for family's business is a viable strategic platform that can help families cope with the new challenges that COVID 19 has created.

Finally, the third objective of this study was to determine the use of agriculture as a strategy to improve the socio-economic wellbeing of families in Awka South LGA of Anambra State amidst COVID-19. The result showed that agricultural activities are a viable strategy that may improve the socio-economic wellbeing of families in Awka South LGA. Abubakar, et al (2018) findings confirmed that involvement in enhanced agriculture will assist in the creation of jobs, which will contribute to a reduction in poverty. A change in agricultural output will result in a change in GDP. Nigeria's agricultural capital expenditure has been declining, reducing the efficiency of increased agricultural output in reducing poverty. Hence creating an enabling environment and capacity for families to explore the agricultural potentials in Nigeria can significantly contribute to improving their socio-economic wellbeing in the current economic hardship created by COVID 19.

Conclusion

Entrepreneurship as a strategy for promoting the socio-economic wellbeing of the families in Anambra State promotes ICT skills for doing business, inculcates learners the traits of risk-taking in generating business innovation. It ensures that people develop the creative knowledge in seeing business opportunities in every situation, developing a risk-taking attitude in becoming self-employed, and develops the creativity of managing scarce and available resources starting up a business. Also, marketing helps in the promotion of socio-economic well-being of families by helping people develop persuasive skills in selling goods and services, helps people develop sales promotion strategies, helps marketers understand other people's needs and selling them to them, encourages the ability to determine demand

and supply situation, ability to acquire good sales habit, and Encourages the ability to identify new trends in the marketing environment. Further, agriculture encourage processing of local raw materials into finished and semi-finished food products, encourage food production, encourage selling agricultural products, and encourage individuals to form farmers' network to sell at best price

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following were recommended;

1. Families should develop the creative knowledge in seeing business opportunities in every situation
2. Families should help other members develop persuasive online skills in selling goods and services
3. Families should encourage the processing of local raw materials into finished and semi-finished food products
4. Government should use one of its agencies such as the National Directorate of Employment and in collaboration with Non-Government Organizations to create skill acquisition centers to help people develop employability skills or self-employment skills to become employable in the labour market.
5. Families should also attend skill acquisition centers to acquire and develop skills like entrepreneurial skills, marketing skills, and agricultural skills to generate employment and income in improving their socio-economic wellbeing.

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