



## **Influence of Covid 19 on Food Security in Imo State, Nigeria**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The Corona virus (Covid-19) pandemic is a global health crisis caused by a newly discovered corona virus . Covid-19 is far more than an infectious disease; it is affecting the socioeconomic and food security (FS) worldwide.. This work therefore focuses on how Covid 19 policy influences food security. Three(3) objectives and research questions were raised for the work. The research design used is descriptive survey and random sampling was used. A total of 1400 questionnaire were administered at 350 for each selected area. Findings from this work reveals that policies like Social distancing, Lockdown and curfew have be constantly observed all over the world including the study area. This research has found out that food availability has been influenced negatively by the Covid 19 policies. Findings from the work show that online markets and internet buying can help in solving the problems associated with Covid 19 policies. This research strongly recommends that online markets should be encouraged through provision of strong internet services. This will help citizen to have easy and safe access to food and in turn enhance food security.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The Corona virus (Covid-19) pandemic is a global health crisis caused by a newly discovered corona virus . Covid-19 is far more than an infectious disease; it is affecting the socioeconomic and food security (FS) worldwide. The impact of the virus on FS is not clear. The United Nation's Framework for the Immediate Socio-economic response reported that the virus would most likely in-crease poverty, food insecurity (FINS), and inequalities on a global scale. Therefore, achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is perceived as a top priority.

Food security is a condition related to the ongoing availability of food. Concerns over food security have existed throughout history. There is evidence of granaries being in use over 10,000 years ago, with central authorities in Civilizations including Ancient China and Ancient Egypt being known to release food from storage in times of famine. Yet it was only at the 1974 World Food Conference that the term 'food security' was established as a formal concept. Originally, food security was understood to apply at the national level, with a state being food secure when there was sufficient food to "sustain a steady expansion of food consumption and to offset fluctuations in production and prices". A new definition emerged at 1996 World Food Summit; this time with the emphasis being on individuals enjoying food security, rather than the nation. According to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), food security "exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life". (Raj Patel ,2013)

Household food security exists when all members, at all times, have access to enough food for an active, healthy life. Individuals who are food secure do not live in hunger or fear of starvation. Food insecurity, on the other hand, is a situation of "limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways", according to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Food security incorporates a measure of resilience to future disruption or unavailability of critical food supply due to various risk factors including droughts, shipping disruptions, fuel shortages, economic instability, and wars. In the years 2011-2013, an estimated 842 million people were suffering from chronic hunger. The FAO identified the four pillars of food



security as availability, access, utilization, and stability. The United Nations (UN) recognized the Right to food in the Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, and has since noted that it is vital for the enjoyment of all other rights.

The 1996 World Summit on Food Security noted that "food should not be used as an instrument for political and economic pressure". According to the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development, failed agriculture market regulation and the lack of anti-dumping mechanisms engenders much of the world's food scarcity and malnutrition. As of late 2007, export restrictions and panic buying, US Dollar Depreciation, increased farming for use in biofuels, world oil prices at more than \$100 a barrel, global population growth, climate change, loss of agricultural land to residential and industrial development, and growing consumer demand in China and India are claimed to have pushed up the price of grain. However, the role of some of these factors is under debate. Some argue the role of biofuel has been overplayed as grain prices have come down to the levels of 2006. Nonetheless, food riots have recently taken place in many countries across the world. Food security is a complex topic, standing at the intersection of many disciplines.

Famine and hunger are both rooted in food insecurity. Chronic food insecurity translates into a high degree of vulnerability to famine and hunger; ensuring food security presupposes elimination of that vulnerability."(Ayalew, 2011) Many countries experience ongoing food shortages and distribution problems. These result in chronic and often widespread hunger amongst significant numbers of people. Human populations can respond to chronic hunger and malnutrition by decreasing body size, known in medical terms as stunting or stunted growth. This process starts *in utero* if the mother is malnourished and continues

through approximately the third year of life. It leads to higher infant and child mortality, but at rates far lower than during famines. Once stunting has occurred, improved nutritional intake after the age of about two years is unable to reverse the damage. Stunting itself can be viewed as a coping mechanism, bringing body size into alignment with the calories available during adulthood in the location where the child is born. Limiting body size as a way of adapting to low levels of energy (calories) adversely affects health in three ways:

- Premature failure of vital organs during adulthood. For example, a 50-year-old individual might die of heart failure because his/her heart suffered structural defects during early development;

Stunted individuals suffer a higher rate of disease and illness than those who have not undergone stunting

### **Statement of the Problem**

Covid 19 pandemic has become a world problem that has ravaged major countries in the world. Its effect on food security has been observed in some parts of the world. There have been several lockdown, curfew and movement restriction of all kinds which is believed to have affected the in or out flow of food. Food being one of the essential needs of man plays a vital role in the survival of man in his environment. In as much as man tries to fight diseases he must take food to help boost immunity and reduce mortality rate. The importance of food security therefore cannot be over-emphasised. It is believed that Covid 19 has affected the supply of food. It is also believed that due to social distancing, lockdown and curfew the market that makes food available does not function at utmost capacity which has lead to scarcity of food. This research therefore seeks to find out to what extent the assertions are true.



## **Aim and Objectives**

This work aims at examining the influence of Covid 19 on food security. In order to achieve this aim the following specific objectives were posed:

1. To identify the major Covid 19 policy in the study area.
2. To determine the effect of Covid 19 policy on availability of food.
3. To identify the solution to possible problems of food scarcity in the study area.

## **RESEARCH QUESTION**

The following research questions are put forward to guide this work.

1. What are the major Covid 19 policy in the study area.
2. How does Covid 19 policy Influence availability of food
3. What is the solution to possible problems of food scarcity in the study area.

## **Area of Study**

Owerri area comprises of the present Owerri North and West Local Government Areas as well as Owerri Municipal Council Area. It is located between  $0^{\circ}58'1''E$  -  $1^{\circ}4'1''E$  latitude and longitude  $5^{\circ}23'1''N$  -  $5^{\circ}31'1''N$ . It is bounded by Mbaitoli on the North, Ohaji-Egbema on the West, Mbaise on the East and Ngor Okpala on the South. The study area has an estimated population of about 750,000 as of 2006 and is approximately 100 square kilometres (40 sq miles) in area. Owerri falls within the South Eastern part of the Niger Delta, Nigeria. The Niger Delta Basin of Nigeria is situated on the continental margin of the Gulf of Guinea in equatorial West Africa between latitude  $4^{\circ}00'$  to  $7^{\circ}00'N$  and longitude  $5^{\circ}00'E$  to  $8^{\circ}00'E$  covering an area of about 108,900 km<sup>2</sup>. The Niger Delta is a pro-grading depositional complex within the Cenozoic Formation of Southern Nigeria. It extends from the

Calabar Flank and the Abakaliki Trough in Eastern Nigeria to the Benin Flank in the West and it opens to the Atlantic Ocean in the South (Ofoegbu, 1998). The rainy season begins in March and lasts until October with annual rainfall varying from 1,500mm to 2,200mm (60 to 80 inches). An average temperature used to be 27 °C but is now 29°C due to climate change. This creates an annual relative humidity of 75 percent with humidity reaching 90 percent in the rainy season. The dry season experiences two months of Harmattan from mid December to mid February. The hottest months are between March and April. (Imo State fact, 2010).

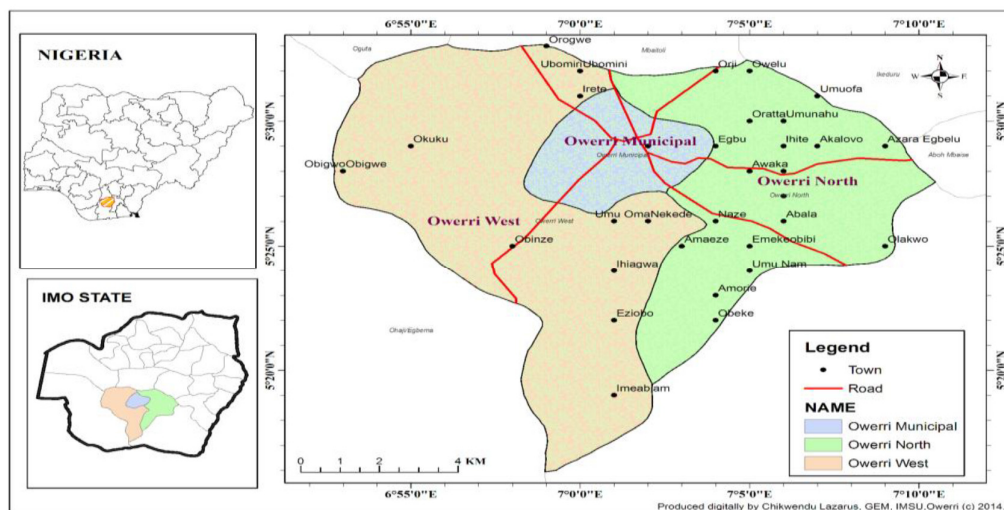


Fig 1: Nigeria and Imo State showing Owerri.

Source: GIS Unit, Department of Geog. & Eenvt Mgt. 2018

## SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Imo state has experiences several lockdown, Curfew and movement restriction of all kinds especially in urban areas. This work therefore focuses on the urban areas which includes Owerri Area.





## METHODOLOGY

Information was sought from primary as well as secondary Sources through field work. The data for this study are of two kinds, the primary and secondary data. The primary data were obtained through field measurements, observation and questionnaire administered in the affected communities. Published and unpublished works dealing on related issues, journals and internet browsing provided the secondary source. Mean rating was used to analyse the data. The means were calculated by assigning normal values to response categories.

- Strongly Agreed - (SA) = 4
- Agreed - (A) = 3
- Disagreed - (D) = 2
- Strongly Disagreed - (SD) = 1

Any item that received a mean of 2.50 and above is regarded as agreed while any item that received a mean of less than 2.50 is regarded as disagreed.

The population of the study includes the inhabitants of Owerri urban which include Amakohia, Ikenegbu, Akwakuma, Egbu and Works Layout. This involved about 140,000 people who live in this selected areas. The sample population is 1400 (ten percent of 140,000). A total of 1400 questionnaire were administered at 350 for each area only 1380 questionnaire were retrieved. Random sampling method was used in selecting the respondents

## Findings

### Research Question 1

**Table 1: the major Covid 19 policy in the study area**

S/N	Item: what is the major Covid 19 policy in the study area?	Mean
1	Lockdown is the major Covid 19 policy in imo state	3.92
2	Use of nose mask is not the major covid 19 policy in the study area	3.79
3	Social distancing is also emphasised in the state as a covid 19 policy	3.70
	<b>Cluster mean</b>	<b>3.80</b>

Results in table 1 revealed that Lockdown and social distancing are the main Covid 19 policies in the study area haven mean score of 3.92 and 3.70 respectively also the use of nose mask seem not to be the popular covid 19 policy as seen from the table.

### Research Question 2

**Table 2: Influence of Covid 19 policy on the availability of food**

S/N	How does Covid 19 policy influence availability of food	Mean
1	Lockdown has prevented the movement of food into the state thereby causing scarcity	3.0
2	Social distancing has prevented the smooth functioning of traditional markets	3.2
3	Scarcity of food produce and inflation has become the order of the day due to Covid 19 policies	3.8
	<b>Cluster mean</b>	<b>3.3</b>

Table 2 reveals that Covid 19 contributes to food insecurity as a result of scarcity of food and inflation. All items in the cluster had mean score above 2.5 criteria mean thereby indicating that Covid 19 policies like lockdown social distancing and curfew has negative influence on food availability.





### Research Question 3

**Table 3: The solution to possible problems of food scarcity in the study area.**

S/N	What is the solution to possible problems of food scarcity in the study area	Mean
1	Covid 19 palliatives has solved the problem of food scarcity	1.8
2	Online market like jumia, Owerri market place and Jiji has been of great help during the pandemic period	3.6
3	Online buying and selling with compliant delivery can solve the problem of food scarcity in the pandemic period.	3.8
	<b>Cluster mean</b>	<b>3.1</b>

Table 3 indicates that online buying and selling of food produce through platforms like Owerri market place, Jumia, Jiji can help in solving the problem of food scarcity associated with Covid 19 policies since all items in the cluster ranked above 2.5 criteria mean.

### CONCLUSION

Covid 19 is one of the problems facing the world in contemporary time. Its effects on the man in his day to day activities cannot be over emphasised. Findings from this work reveals that policies like Social distancing, Lockdown and curfew have be constantly observed all over the world including the study area. This research has found out that food availability has been influenced negatively by the Covid 19 policies. The work has it that online markets and internet buying can help in solving the problems associated with Covid 19 policies.

### RECOMMENDATION

This research strongly recommends that the following:

1. Online markets should be encouraged through provision of strong internet services. This will help citizen to have easy and safe access to food and in turn enhance food security.

2. The Government should get involved in the procedures of online markets in order to reduce potential hazard like theft and kidnapping of delivery agents.
3. That guide lines be given to the online market operators as to compel them to work with the arm bits of the law.

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