

COVID-19'S INFLUENCE ON AFRICA'S UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE DOMAIN: DEBRIEFING SOUTH AFRICA-NIGERIA SETTINGS

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ABSTRACT

Studies acknowledge that COVID-19 is a game-changer resulting in an operational “new normal” across organizational endeavours including university governance. One effect of COVID-19 on social change organizations like universities in Africa is that it intensified operational disruptions. The study utilizes narrative analysis to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 on university governance using South Africa-Nigeria settings as a template to generalize for Africa. Its data stems from a methodological qualitative orientation, implying that the narrations derive from unstructured interviews with key players within the university system. It is anchored on a conceptual framework founded on the ontology of African administrative and organizational culture that dialectically prompts epistemological analysis. The ontology facet deals with the status quo of university governance before COVID-19, denoting universities as mini societies reflecting the continent's general operational culture. The epistemology aspect dealt with knowledge generation, indicating innovation African universities need to adopt to operate effectually during and aftermath of COVID-19. It finds that e-university governance application in Nigeria is underdeveloped compared to South Africa's model which is basic. However, it concludes that improved investment in digitalizing operations of universities is imperative for their successful governance in a post-COVID-19 pandemic epoch in Africa.

Keywords: University governance; e-university governance; ontology of administrative and organizational culture; narrative analysis; South Africa-Nigeria settings

INTRODUCTION

The Higher School-Coronavirus Virus Nexus

Not only educational institutions but every other social organization of the modern state were absorbed in disarray with the outbreak of COVID-19 (DeFilippis, Impink, Singell, Polzer & Sadun, 2020). For instance, the virulence of coronavirus on healthcare - as in all social change organizations - is pronounced in behavioral and operational adjustments necessary to survive the times than the pandemic's ferocious harmfulness (Okudolo & Ojatorotu, 2021). Coronavirus exposed the inadequacies of standard human methods, operations and approaches to getting things done before its outbreak. Complexities of the novelty and trajectory to a “new normal” brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic constitute the major threat today to every organization's success. This point underscores the global outcries, demonstrations, struggles and clamors to return to the pre-pandemic normal ways of life of doing things.

Daniel (2020) posits that the scale of COVID-19 on educational institutions exposed the lack of preparedness of these social organizations to speedily adjust to drastic times with hitherto in-built administrative and organizational mechanisms. University governance, defined as the formal administrative and organizational structure and arrangements whereupon the university system is organized, structured, managed and ultimately controlled by which it operates (Middlehurst, 2004), did experience unprecedented disruptions and crises of varying impact *state qua state* with the sudden outbreak of coronavirus. Although, Rashid and Yadav (2020) seem to suggest that the dramatic behavioral, attitudinal and methodical composition of the “new normal” in response to the pandemic represents transformative opportunities for university governance.

An indisputable fact to mitigate COVID-19-induced crises within the African university education province is the imperative to garner estimations of key stakeholders in the system such as students, lecturers, non-academic personnel, and including campus-based unions and every other social group. We hold such an approach to best proffer schemes that adequately address the coronavirus-manufactured operational cum productivity inadequacies the African continent’s universities are experiencing under the pandemic. That is, broad-based stakeholders’ narrations conceivably produce a holistic understanding of how to abate consequences of social dislocations like the coronavirus-prompted crises on social organizations. After all, narrow-minded consideration of the consequences of COVID-19 cannot generate viable medium and long-term sustainable solutions to make university governance more efficacious especially in its post-pandemic essence.

From observation, intellectual works on the impact of coronavirus on higher education loom large (Toquero, 2020; Pokhrell & Chhetri, 2021; Pham & Ho, 2020; *et al*). However, much of these treatises dwell mostly on pedagogy in higher schools, ignoring the ever-important role of administration of the university system. Consequently, the present study focuses on COVID-19’s impact on university education to understand its instigated “new normal” from broader stakeholders’ point of view beyond pedagogical essences. This implies the research looks beyond the teaching and learning aspect to the overall management, organization, administration and governance of a university system. The plunging spiral effect on operations of universities globally during coronavirus can best be understood and mitigated by aggregating holistic assessments of wide-ranging actors in the university organism (Yan, 2020).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Features of Covid-19 Pandemic

It is important to stress from the outset that the word “purported” is required to describe the origin of COVID-19. Therefore, works of literature that simply report that the pandemic originated from Wuhan, China, are somewhat guilty of indulging in armchair theorizing. Consequently, these studies indulge in over-simplification of the contested narratives and evolving scientific skepticism following the origin-tracing of the virus (Hartman *et al*, 2021; Lipsy, 2020). Given the tragedy of conspiratorial theorizing about the origin of COVID-19, attention is given in the study to problematizing the relationship between the pandemic and university governance in an apolitical and scientific manner. What difficulties and challenges does COVID-19 pose for African

universities cum higher schools in terms of delivering their mandates as anticipated? Problematizing the study in this way helps to link the direction of the ontology of administrative and organizational culture and the interplay of its epistemology to the desirable functioning of African universities during and in a post-coronavirus epoch.

COVID-19 is the shorthand code name for severe respiratory disease. It is also referred to as coronavirus disease or simply covid or coronavirus in commentaries. In technical parlance, COVID-19 is encrypted as 2019-nCov or Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2SARS-Cov-2 (Meng, Hua, & Bian, 2020). The 2019 year indication is when it was first declared a potential pandemic disease by its purported origination in Wuhan in China where the first carrier of the disease was reported. The disease's severity and rapid-spreading nature caused the World Health Organization (WHO) to declare it a pandemic on March 11 2020 (WHO, 2020 cited in Rashid & Yadav, 2020: 340). Coronavirus is transmitted through droplets of a carrier in the air or by touching the surface of an object accommodating the virus. By the necessity of human social contact and interaction which prevailed before the coronavirus discovery and declaration as a pandemic, not one person is immune from contracting the virus. Everybody is susceptible to easily catching the disease.

COVID-19 is a deadly viral disease that infects the respiratory system of humans, with some studies reporting the possibility of animal(s) as vectors or hosts to the virus (Tiwari *et al*, 2020). Epidemiological findings indicate that persistent human-to-human transmission is a reality, with yet no confirmation of the theoretical decisiveness of mother-to-newborn and animal (i.e. pets)-to-human transmission established (Qiao, 2020). Clinical findings show that positive-affected carriers of 2SARS-Cov-2 generally manifest these symptoms: severe fever, arid coughing, shortness of breath/difficulty in breathing and tiredness. According to a Zoe Covid Study Report of March 18, 2021, some uncommon symptoms of COVID-19 include sore throat, headache, diarrhea, muscular pains, vomiting and poor psychological coordination/confusion. According to a WHO report dated November 2021, the 2SARS-CoV-2 known variants are the Delta and Omicron variations, with the Omicron variant being of immense concern to the world's health body (WHO, 2021).

A World meters February 2020 Report shows a 395,107,096 coronavirus positive cases record with 5,755,217 documented deaths globally. The November 22, 2021 online Statista Report shows that overall coronavirus-induced deaths in Africa is 222, 276 with South Africa recording 89, 584 representing 40.3 percent of Africa's total death from the virus. The demographics as per COVID-19 of the understudied countries are: South Africa has recorded over a 3.65million positive cases and 97,307 deaths, while Nigeria reports 292 thousand positive cases and 3,141 deaths. Both statistics are as of 13 February 2022.

The initial epidemiological measures globally recognized to control the spread of the virus include shunning touching one's nose, mouth or eyes with dirty hands, wearing of face-covering publicized as a face mask and regular washing of hands with soap or approved sanitizer. Others are maintaining decent respirational etiquette such as ensuring cough droplets do not escape into the atmosphere, sneezing and coughing into one's elbow or sleeve or clothing cover and maintaining clean surroundings. The very important measure to this context is social or physical distancing understood as avoiding close contact with people, particularly in public by maintaining at least six feet distance. Hence, critiquing the impact of COVID-19-induced virtual pedagogy that

implies jettisoning of in-person or physical lectures; online tests and examinations conduct that implies transition to e-grading models; and emphasis on virtual meetings and not physical ones is a basic purview of this study.

Outlook of University Governance under Covid-19

A university system is a form of social organization entailing an array of shared interactions and inter-relationships between individuals and among social groups, and oftentimes amongst institutions aimed at creating set public good. This explains concerns over the bearing of COVID-19 on the rationale for university education for social change generally (Marinoni, van't Land & Jensen, 2020). Given the abovementioned significance of universities, Marinoni and van't Land (2020) stress that 3.4 billion people (representing 43 percent of the world population) in over 80 nations have experienced lockdown restrictions under COVID-19. The virus no doubt has had a downward negative effect on the operations of universities globally. The detrimental resoluteness of the pandemic on universities' normalcy fosters studies in the bid to confirm campuses to the "new normal" (Weeden & Cornwell, 2020; Dhawan, 2020; Pham & Ho, 2020; *et al*).

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the vulnerability of universities worldwide in terms of capacity, ability and capability of in-built administrative and organizational policies to cope with pandemic situations. However, the historiography of human survival has taught us that crises circumstance like the outbreak of coronavirus may portend risk but equally represents an opportunity to resolve disruptive tendencies. For instance, Fox (2007) reported how administrative innovations were brought to bear to mitigate the 2003 Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome or SARS outbreak in China which spread to neighboring countries like Hong Kong where about 1,302 learning institutions closed.

For reasons of susceptibility of universities under COVID-19 to operational ineffectualness, the generation of a "new normal" became a given. Features of the "new normal" *a la* university governance include lockdowns leading to the closure of campuses, confinements to ensure social distancing is maintained and transition to e-learning. Another is an emphasis on virtual meetings. Not holding physical or in-person meetings, seminar presentations, conferences, and also viva became the "new norm". The de-emphasis on paper administration to emphasis on e-administration or paperless administration in university governance is a pronounced part of the "new normal" today, as well prominence of e-assessment and electronic marking of tests cum examination scripts. These measures are a stark contrast to the pre-coronavirus pandemic routines in university governance whereby social contact, face-to-face learning, paper administration and manual marking/grading/assessment of student's academic tests and examinations were the standard.

An overwhelming effect of the coronavirus pandemic on university education is that it compelled the shut down of campuses in a bid to maintain social distancing. The closures directly truncated in-person teaching and learning, as well as, the usual face-to-face campus interactions between actors within the university system. A UNESCO report of April 2020 noted that 85 countries have experienced the closure of universities during the pandemic, affecting 89.4% of learners in these higher schools. The study of Marinoni et al (2020) posits that as of 7 May 2020, universities were still shut in 177 nations affecting an estimated 12681640881, i.e. 72.4% learners.

A profound effect of the university lockdowns and sometimes confinements of learners allowed to remain on campus' hostel accommodations is the truncation of interpersonal and social relations which is a natural ingredient of campus life. The curtailment of interpersonal interactions cut across vertical, horizontal and lateral layers across all the stratum of actors in the university system. With a communitarian mindset, the diminishment of interpersonal and social relations from campus life very likely heightened psychological, physiological, mental and emotional misery amongst participants within the African universities setting (Lee, Jeong & Kim, 2021).

The epoch of coronavirus underscores the inevitability of Information Communication Technology (ICT) and other forms of technological application to mitigate its effect on university governance. In this context, Richey (2008) defines educational technology as a conscious ethical practice of application of every form of technology to enhance learning, research, administration and general governance of academic institutions. With the worldwide sanctioned closure of universities during COVID-19 comes the imperative of digitalizing teaching, learning and research in university education. The "new normal" occasioned during COVID-19 also stresses the application of electronic marking/grading and assessment technologies (Pokhrell & Chhetri, 2021). Online teaching and learning became the order of the day under the "new normal" as every university fashioned different forms of e-assessment models that was suited it. Aside that that the application of technology to survive the "new normal" was commanding to maintain social or physical distancing, it was also imperative to guarantee that products and administration of universities did not fall below the expected standard.

Stringent embrace of modern educational ICT technology under coronavirus, therefore, underscores because university administrators hold meetings virtually. Processing of student registration, hostel allocation, and library services, including cafeteria services, and union affairs were confined to electronic or digital format as a "new normal". Even conferences, seminar presentations and lately viva had to take virtual formats during the pandemic. Webinars and virtual meetings became the order of the time. Also, two areas gravely affected by the outbreak of coronavirus with regards to university governance are the internationalization of universities and town-gown relationships. According to Mok and Montgomery (2021), the internationalization of universities was badly impacted by COVID-19. Reports of the pandemic-redirected experiences of international students *a la* visa issuance, quarantines, enrollment, etc in China, Australia, United States, United Kingdom, etc, following the ensuing warfare-like international political economy diplomacies portray a global system of university education in disarray. To Febus (2021), the coronavirus pandemic inadvertently obstructed gains host communities of universities usually enjoy such as ease to access campus sports, exercise, and hospitality cum relaxation amenities, including healthcare facilities. Febus' (2021) study concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic caused grave ruin to town-gown social networking and university development that town-gown engagements contributed to in large part.

Theoretical Framework

The study's conceptual framework is ontology of African administrative and organizational culture. According to Grant and Osanloo (2014), conceptual frameworks help to simplify understanding and explanation of the relationship between constructed variables/concepts to a real-

life situation. In the main, the adopted conceptual framework illustrates the cause-and-effect linkage between the African administrative and organizational culture and characteristic modus operandi of the continent's universities which are social organizations geared towards producing specific common good. Espousal of this conceptual framework enabled an understanding of the causal relationship between our independent variable (i.e. the cause, which is COVID-19 pandemic) and the dependent variable (i.e. the effect, which is university governance in the "new normal"). The proposed strategies to empower African universities to operate and cope favourably under COVID-19 and in its aftermath are captured in the epistemological analysis in the subsequent sections.

Ontology is broadly interpreted as what constitutes reality or fact or nature of something as perceived. In other words, the ontology of African administrative and organizational culture relates to the nature and realism of the character of Africa's culture of administration and organization. Broadly defined, an African administrative and organizational culture will speak to common and general practices of administrators in carrying out the operations within their organizations. The notion is linked to the prevailing values, principles, practices, norms and ways of getting things done especially in public organizations, of which these norms, values and ways generate outcomes that permeate the whole of society (Jamil, Askvik & Hossain, 2013). From a narrower application, an African administrative and organizational culture will refer to how institutional capacity of social organizations impacts on administrators and their operational performance to produce outcomes that have implications for society (Salama, 2018).

That is, what constitutes the major challenge of Africa's administrative and organizational culture? In Mohiddin's (2007) submission, capacity is the missing link in the African administrative and organizational culture. Borrowing Mkandawire's (1998) response to the challenge of Africa's administrative and organizational culture, he notes "...the African state [i.e Africa's administrative and organizational culture] is today the most demonized social institution..., vilified for its weaknesses, its overextension, its interference with the smooth functioning of the markets, its repressive character, its dependence on foreign powers, its ubiquity and its absence...". Mkandawire further averred that the dominant African culture of administering and organizing social outcomes is ideologically and structurally bereft. Concerning ideology, the prevailing African administrative and organizational culture hinders economic development, implying an operational process designed not to optimally advance high-value cost-effective accumulation and industrialization capacity. The structural aspect refers to the operational incapacity in Africa not to execute statutory mandates effectually, of which such incapacity is defined by absent functional institutional, administrative, technical and policy dimensions in place.

Mohiddin (2007) adds that the capacity deficit of Africa's administrative and organizational culture is linked to dysfunctional political and administrative manifestations that degrade the operational efficiency of her public agencies, viz administrators. According to Saasa (2007: 91), capacity is the ability of individuals, institutions and societies, including universities to perform functions, solve problems and set objectives that are achievable and sustainable. Therefore, to relate the definition to this context, capacity is the process by which the abilities of African universities are so acquired, reinforced, improved, reformed and maintained over time to survive any conditions such as the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak and in its aftermath.

The causative elements of the capacity deficit of African administrative and organizational culture in our view result from:

- i. Poor quality governance compounded by poorly enunciated laws that aid non-adherence to rule of law and constitutionalism.
- ii. Operation of inappropriate regulatory frameworks for conducting organizational business.
- iii. Systemic incapacity in the utilization of scarce/allocated/available resources optimally; inability to absorb additional resources especially aid/loan/external financial assistance.
- iv. Ineffective mechanism externally and internally to fight corruption of all dimensions.
- v. Persistence of improperly defined functions. That is duplication of functions and overlapping jurisdictions.
- vi. Problem-prone and outdated procedures that lead to operational faultiness in executing mandates.
- vii. Massive loopholes in administrative procedures that sustain difficulty to innovate, reform and strategize to survive differing times.
- viii. Absence of clear accountability measurement/standards and politicization of decision-making.
- ix. Denial of devolutionary and decentralization powers to individual organizations to adapt to changing times.
- x. Overbearingness of politics and politicization of laid down administrative and organizational operational rules; and
- xi. Absence of credible assessment cum measurement standards of outcomes of implemented procedures of sanctioned policies/mandates.

It is ever more becoming manifest that the capacity of Africa's administrative and organizational culture is weak (Hyden, 2013). This explains why African universities are operationally finding it difficult to cope and satisfactorily deliver their mandates as in under COVID-19. Examples abound of the failings of African universities to overcome the effect of coronavirus on their operations. The transition to online teaching and learning, as well as, transition to e-assessment applications in the African continent battling electricity cum internet connectivity deficit are demonstrating to be problematic. Studies that examined the above operational arenas conclude a further widening of the knowledge gap in the real sense because these failings reinforce the propensity of African university learners and researchers to indulge more in plagiarism and not engage in critical thinking (Fouche & Andrews, 2021).

Another fallout of Africa's administrative and organizational culture *a la* university governance under COVID-19 is as regards how to assess performance of non-academic staff known as administrators under the "new normal" policy of work-from-home. Established nations in e-governance application such as in Asia, Europe and North America have conventional e-administration standard assessment basis in place for promoting administrators with regards to show of commitment, initiative and competence in official dealings. Whereas, absence of modern e-administrative software in Africa for the "work-from-home" rule under the "new normal" has convoluted assessment criteria of skill and competency of administrators in the continent, thereby worsening the problem of unmerited promotions and prebendalism in university governance

(Saasa, 2007). The above-said reality is not disconnected from the abysmal e-governance infrastructure African nations foreshadow and portray (Dell, 2020).

In all, the demands of the "new normal" under coronavirus have exposed the capacity and efficacy deficit of African universities as tools for social change. In this regard, in intellectualizing our conceptual framework *a la* the study, the necessity to address the factors hindering the capacity of African universities during COVID-19 anchored on the concept of African administrative and organizational culture and its application in future pandemic situations is imperative.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The foregoing analysis constitutes the epistemological analysis that enabled the suggestion of the most critical innovation needed by African universities to advance their administrative and organizational culture during COVID-19. Hence, the study was designed around one overwhelming objective: To determine the best possible means of e-university governance models African universities need to establish to ensure optimal operational effectiveness during and in the aftermath of coronavirus pandemic. The study relied on narrations acquired from unstructured interviews with key actors purposively sampled from South African and Nigerian universities. The sampled units of analysis that provided the data were undergraduate/postgraduate students, lecturers, administrative staff, and universities' shop/cafeteria operators. Narrations of officials of social groups such as student/staff union members, sports/body-building/exercise-workout groups and contracted private security personnel also constituted data sources for analysis.

Being qualitative-inclined research, the narrative data analysis technique was deployed as the instrument for data analysis. Experiential knowledge too, or what McCurdy and Uldam (2014) conceive as a covert participant observation method was also brought to bear in the discussion of the narrations. The authors of the present study were academics from Nigeria who doubled as postdocs at the North-West University, South Africa, as at the period of gathering the data for the present study. The results below (i.e. quotes from the transcribed narrations) are based on the narrations gathered. The aforesaid objective conditioned the analysis of the narrations and thus informed the thematic codes that were deduced from the interviewees'/participants' narrations.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This study found that application of e-university governance module in the understudied countries was generally meagre. However, the South African e-gov application in university administration, management and control is better-off and more advanced compared to Nigeria's standard which is highly undeveloped. The research has shown that the imperative for increased governmental investment in digitalizing university operations in South Africa-Nigeria settings, viz African continent, during and in the aftermath of covid-19 is imperative. Emphasis should be to learn, imbibe, incorporate and apply best e-university governance practices of technologically highly advanced societies in Europe, North America and Asia in the African university governance domain.

DISCUSSION

Coherence was observed in the narrations that COVID-19 disrupted the normal and formal activities that were well ingrained across African universities before the virus' outbreak. The narrations attested to the imperativeness of modern-day ICT and software applications to run universities during the COVID-induced lockdowns. One participant from South Africa who is an administrator noted: *"COVID accelerated the deployment of virtual modes which had been in the works before the pandemic but with much grounds yet to cover to establish this process. Management, Council, Senate and Committees met via Zoom"*. A Nigerian university administrator, however, noted: *"The lockdown of universities due to coronavirus caused key important university activities to be grounded. Matriculation, convocation and other ceremonies were carried out in virtual modes"*. However, virtual arrangements for known rituals such as matriculation and convocation blindsided the fanfare and gratifications linked with these events, while also heightening disillusionment in actors within the university system including parents that look forward to these routines (Lanier, 2021). One of such actors, a cafeteria operator in a South African university said: *"I do know that our universities here are not taking seriously the establishment of electronic formats for services like cafeteria and other important private business services on campus."* The Nigerian counterpart said: *"My internet business was practically 'locked-down' during the school closure due to coronavirus. Whereas, the university could have fashioned out how I can remain in business to facilitate internet connectivity service."*

Concerning the adoption of e-pedagogy and e-test/assessment format, the narrations of students and academics which generally outlined its unpleasant experience in the trajectory align with the findings of Fouche. & Andrews (2021). A professor participant from Nigeria noted: *"Academic activities were paralyzed initially into the lockdown until it subsided after four months, it was then Management decided to introduce online lectures. But an initial problem with that strategy is that many of the students don't have android phones and another issue is that some lecturers don't even know how to use the online device coupled with network problems."* Regarding this issue, a lecturer in South Africa said: *"Financing the online lectures proved to be difficult for my university. Lectures, tests and examinations had to be staggered at the detriment of us academic staff because it was exhausting to us and no form of compensation was discussed."* In truth, adjustment from in-person lectures and physical taking of test/examination to virtual pedagogy and taking e-test/examination in a university system steep-deep in the "old normal" was far from progressive (Rashid & Yadav, 2020; Pokhrell & Chhetri, 2021).

Mudhai (2009) study found that the major goal of e-governance application is to enhance the effectiveness of administration and organizational rules. The author notes that such an outcome is only possible in societies that have advanced modern ICT infrastructure in place. Although Mudhai's (2009) research, quoting a UN finding that "singled out SA as an e-gov exemplar in SSA, Nigeria only managed a second-best place in the worst-ranked West Africa region". This study generally found both countries are still low on e-university governance standards compared to advanced economies. For instance, a South African university student said: *"Our laboratory exercises and lectures gravely suffered because there was no ICT equivalent way of getting this done in place. The online laboratory lessons were so unproductive, hence many failed the laboratory tests and examinations"*. This view is corroborated by a Nigerian-student participant:

“We are used to discussions, debates and even arguments in our lectures of which the rudimentary virtual learning my university introduced meant loss of those cherished lecturing values to us”.

Overall, the narrations concur that universities in the understudied countries did not have established functional Electronic Records Management Systems (ERMS). Absence of ERMS during the COVID-19 inadvertently is due to the lack of seriousness invested in that project before the pandemic. Mukred, Yusofl, Mokhtar, Sadiq, Hawash and Ahmed’s (2021) research noted that well-entrenched ERMS in university governance would enable sound decision-making on skill performance and competency improvements, as well as, determine staff effectiveness and efficiency, including measuring staff output/outcome expectations viz promotions. A university administrator in South Africa noted: *“It is difficult during this COVID-19 to recruit able academic and administrative staff because of the problem of getting knowledgeable persons in the use of modern ICT applications”.* A non-academic staff in a Nigerian university concurred: *“Poor knowledge of many a worker in the use of modern electronic appliances within the Nigerian university system and possibly the absence of these modern ICT technologies in our universities is the reason our lockdowns here were not so rigid like in other climes”.* The authors observed that the difficulty in transiting to the coronavirus-prompted e-university governance model practically halted advances in administrative or academic staff evaluation towards promotion.

Most of the narrations also dwell on the impact of COVID-19 on the wellbeing of the actors within the university system. A Nigerian participant narrates: *“Many of us had to go get proficiency training in ICT usage else we lose our jobs”.* Another participant in South Africa said: *“The coronavirus pandemics has instigated unions to take up topics like job insecurity, mental health, staff and students’ wellbeing more with the university management”.* The authors of the present study observed that recruitment into universities in Nigeria and South Africa was relegated since the outbreak of coronavirus. Aside from the problem of competency in e-gov applications, the major reason for effectual university governance in the studied settings is that top university administrators were still grappling to cope and favorably deliver their duties and mandates. COVID-19 pandemic has proven to be dynamic and in a way frustrating administrative and organizational stability in university governance. Many interviewees conceded that coronavirus has amplified questioning the competency and capacity of university managers in Nigeria and South Africa to adequately curtail the negative outcomes of coronavirus on university governance.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing analysis can be surmised thus: No university in Africa can withstand the ferocity of Covid-19 and feasibly deliver on its mandates without mindful adoption and application of e-governance cum modern ICT applications. The study concurs that the coronavirus outbreak portends an opportunity for advancing digitalization of the activities covered by university governance in Africa rather than a scourge to the continent. This view derives from the reality of e-university governance in the understudied settings as being generally rudimentary, hence prompting advocacy towards full digitalization of African universities’ administrative and organizational processes, procedures and actions. Such will require strong governmental commitments and investments towards entrenching e-gov applications on the part of proprietors of universities in Africa. This also entails that managers of African universities imbibe the

consciousness that modern operations of these social organizations cannot but be digitalized. In a synopsis, the study emphasises purposeful deployment of human, material, financial and governmental resources in South Africa and Nigeria, and in other African national contexts to promote fully-inclined e-gov adoption services and applications in university governance.

This research concurs that wholesome e-governance adoption in African university settings may compound the crisis of unemployment that persists in the continent. However, governmental investment in ICT skill acquisition to citizens massively will enable retrenched university staff due to digitalization application to be able to provide electronic inclined services to the universities as hired/consultant service providers to earn a living. Hence, the present study opens a new horizon for further research cum business enterprise to advance Africa's university governance sphere with emphasis on ICT technological innovation application in the areas of digitalizing university tests cum examination assessment and hosting virtual meetings. It also encourages scholarships cum cyber café proprietors towards entrepreneurship to improving seminar/conference presentations and the manner of holding postgraduate degree thesis defense or examination or viva in a pandemic situation in Africa deploying modern ICT technology. The study also aims to instigate research targeted at advancing online assessment of library materials and generally conducting dissertation research as well as to encourage software scientists to be inventing functional library indexing software in a lockdown situation in all African nation-states. This study also advances studies on online registration of university learners, staff/student accommodation allocation cum related matters, and general refinement of electronic recruitment of university staff in Africa. Importantly too, the study aims to boost comparative studies to promote the resilience of African universities to operate optimally under Covid-19 so as to garnered capacity to survive future pandemic conditions.

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