

# **Covid-19 pandemic and social exclusion in Kano Metropolis: challenges and the prospects**

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## ABSTRACT

The paper focuses on the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic on socially excluded individuals in Kano metropolis, Nigeria. People that face the risk of social exclusion comprises of women and girls; people with disabilities; ethnic and religious minorities; migrants and internally displaced people; children and older people; sexual minorities and people living with HIV/AIDS. These categories of individuals are undergoing unparalleled challenges due to COVID-19 pandemic. They are all affected by the coronavirus, regardless of their social level, gender, or color. The epidemic triggered social and economic crises, exacerbating these people's already significant unemployment, poverty, and criminal activities. The study looks at the pandemic's issues as well as long-term solutions for dealing with the virus. The data was collected using a mixed technique approach. Questionnaires and in-depth interviews were used in this process. As a result, the study was guided by two hypotheses and three research questions. The study included 384 individuals, who were chosen for the questionnaire using a simple random sample technique. In a similar vein, 12 people took part in an interview. Purposive sampling was used by the researcher to identify participants for the study. According to the study's findings, there is a link between the challenges of COVID-19 epidemic and the danger of social exclusion. Family problems, anxiety, peer-group violence, and child abuse, disruption of social and religious life, unemployment, poverty, inflation, and travel limitations are among the pandemic's challenges for socially excluded persons, according to the findings.

Keywords:  
Covid-19, social isolation,  
pandemic challenges, social  
exclusion, Kano metropolis

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## **1. Introduction**

Social isolation is a multi-faceted and difficult process (Mehrabi & Béland, 2020; Osborn et al., 2021). It entails the denial of resources, rights, products, and services (Leary & Ridinger, 2020), as well as the inability to engage in the usual interactions and activities that the majority of individuals in a society can engage in, whether in the economic, social, or political arenas (Attah, 2013).

The term "social exclusion" refers to a scenario in which not everyone has equal access to the opportunities and services that enable them to live a decent and happy life (Kumar & Kaushal, 2021; Sinha & Lu, 2019). Social exclusion can manifest itself in a variety of ways and at various levels (Liu et al., 2022). In comparison to the rest of society, social exclusion occurs when particular groups are denied access to education (Tsolou et al., 2021), health (Jose & Cherayi, 2017), work opportunities, basic social amenities (Paine et al., 2022), freedom of movement, freedom of expression, and association. The socially excluded individuals comprise of women and girls; people with disabilities; ethnic and religious minorities; migrants and internally displaced people; children and older people; sexual minorities and people living with HIV/AIDS. The denial of social services to these categories of people, particularly during COVID-19 pandemic affect their living conditions in a greater proportion. In addition to that, Staying at home, social isolation, night and morning curfews, and inter-state travel restrictions were imposed to prevent the spread of the pandemic, forcing these people into poverty, loss of income, mental imbalance, crime, and various forms of domestic abuse such as rape and burglary (Clouston et al., 2021; A. J. He et al., 2020; J. He et al., 2020).

The new Coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, is a worldwide pandemic that is characterized by severe acute respiratory syndrome. It is a contagious disease that affects a wide range of people, regardless of their socioeconomic status, gender, or race (Null and Smith, 2020). The COVID-19 pandemic continues to ravage the globe, leaving a trail of tears, grief, disillusionment, and death in its wake. Nigeria has not been spared the horrors that have engulfed the world when the first index case broke. The present problem underlines the country's ongoing COVID-19 pandemic challenges. The COVID-19 pandemic is wreaking havoc on people's lives in every way. The epidemic has created social and economic difficulties, further complicating the high rates of poverty, unemployment, and deviance, particularly among the socially excluded. The government's lockdown policy, which lasted from 2019 to 2020, effectively shut down the key social and economic sectors that rely on the energy of these socially excluded people and provide them with a source of income. For example, the COVID-19 pandemic's aftermath affects society by claiming the lives of its members, shutting down many businesses, lowering the value of the Naira (Nigerian Currency) to its lowest level, increasing people's poverty as a result of inflation, raising the cost of living to the highest level, such as food and other commodities, and closing down business premises and small scale industries that rely on the energy of these socially excluded individuals. Because of the enormity of these issues, an empirical investigation is required.

### **COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria**

Nigerians are among the world's population who are affected by the COVID-19 problems' social and economic implications (Ozili, 2021; Teachout & Zipfel, 2020). Millions of Nigerians, particularly socially marginalized ones, are the most affected as the world grapples with unprecedented challenges brought by the COVID-19 epidemic. For example, missed learning opportunities as a result of the pandemic result in considerable and long-term earnings losses for people (Inegbedion, 2021). Despite their potential and aptitude for constructive transformation, socially excluded individuals are ostracized, disregarded, and underutilized throughout the lockdown policy measures. Nigerians struggle to meet their basic socioeconomic demands. There are numerous signs that the COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria will have long-term social, economic, and political consequences for the entire country (Alanana, 2003; Ekoh et al., 2020).

However, many people working in the informal sector, which is the largest employer of labor, are affected by the policy initiatives. As a result, the vast majority of socially excluded people who do not work in the formal sector are the most vulnerable (Alanana, 2020). The adoption of social-distancing measures and stay-at-home directives to combat the new coronavirus, according to Wertheim-Heck (2020), has left many people frustrated and robbed of highly anticipated possibilities. Because they are unable to engage in constructive activities, social inclusion causes psychological distress and boredom, which leads to dangerous behaviors. During the lockdown, there is a spike in deviance and rule-breaking, such as rape, illegal drug use, domestic violence, and other crimes in which the majority of the victims are socially excluded people.

According to current findings, disruptions in access to education and work possibilities as a result of the economic crisis are likely to place socially excluded people on a far more unpredictable path in terms of finding and keeping good jobs and income. However, school closures may increase dropout rates, particularly among adolescents, further entrenching educational inequalities. Restaurants, hotels, bakeries, gas stations, business centers, carpentry, tailoring, mechanics, welding, automotive workshops, and other small-scale industries are the hardest hit by the COVID-19 crisis. Because the bulk of these sectors are run by socially excluded people, they are now at greater danger of losing their jobs and income.

### ***The impact of COVID-19 on Social Exclusion***

According to the International Labour Organization (2021), global efforts are being made to halt the spread of coronavirus and ameliorate the pandemic's consequences. However, it is crucial to understand the COVID-19 pandemic's various and varied effects on socially excluded people and their human rights (J. He et al., 2020; Kim & Bostwick, 2020).

These include, for example; during the COVID-19 pandemic, health insurance coverage was limited (Obinna, 2021). This limits their ability to obtain proper and timely health care treatments if they become ill. Furthermore, due to the documented interruption of health services, socially excluded individuals who require critical, time-sensitive, life-saving medication and treatments may be unable to obtain them, increasing the chance of developing problems if infected (Choudhari, 2020; Zheng et al., 2021). People with disabilities may face even greater difficulties. Furthermore, the crisis, particularly the imprisonment and physical separation measures, poses a number of mental health concerns for socially excluded people, and may exacerbate their mental health problems.

During the COVID-19 epidemic, confinement measures raise the risk of violence leading to social exclusion, including physical and sexual abuse against girls, boys, adolescent girls, and young women (Đapić et al., 2020). Measures may also make it more difficult for them to get supportive resources, such as mental health services. Furthermore, governments' disproportionate limitations may leave young peacebuilders, human rights and environmental advocates among them vulnerable to attacks. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many countries, including Nigeria, closed schools and other educational and training institutions. This has resulted in a large number of socially excluded individuals experiencing substantial disruptions in their schooling, which may delay or prevent them from graduating at all.

The COVID-19 situation is projected to strike developing nations like Nigeria hard, especially those with less diversified and resilient economies, posing a high danger of regional food shortages. Indeed, the significant job losses and income limits to which these people are particularly vulnerable may have an influence on their capacity to get food; farm labor constraints may have an impact on the production and availability of fresh food in markets. Small-scale farmers, food vendors, slum residents, and notably women and youths would be disproportionately impacted. During the COVID-19 pandemic, containment and physical separation measures may limit the ability of socially excluded people to exercise their rights, resulting in discrimination and exclusion from decision-making processes, as well as restrictions on their right to peaceful assembly and association. Sandford (Sandford, 2020).

In view of the foregoing, the study will examine the challenge of COVID-19 pandemic on social exclusion in Kano metropolis. The fundamental questions that require investigation are:

1. What are the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic on social exclusion in Kano Metropolis?
2. How does lockdown policy measures effect socially excluded individuals in Kano Metropolis?
3. What are the role of the government in addressing the challenges of the pandemic on social exclusion in Kano Metropolis?

The study aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To identify the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic on social exclusion in Kano Metropolis
2. To analyse the effect of lockdown policy measures on socially excluded individuals in Kano Metropolis
3. To access the role of the government in addressing the challenges of the pandemic on social exclusion in Kano Metropolis

The two null hypotheses will be formulated to guide the study as follows:

**H01:** There is no significant difference between socially excluded individuals and other members of the society on the menace of COVID-19 pandemic

**H02:** There is no significant relationship between the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic and the risk of social exclusion.

## **2. Methods**

A mixed-method was used as a research design,. As a result, the information was gathered through a questionnaire and an interview. A mixed methods study combines quantitative (experiments) and qualitative (interviews) research to create a greater grasp of the research problem than either technique alone. As a result, the explanatory sequential design technique was used for this study, which entails using qualitative data to investigate quantitative conclusions. In this approach, the qualitative data helps to explain the quantitative results in greater depth (Creswell, 1998).

Two types of populations are acknowledged in scientific research: the target population (theoretical population) and the study population (accessible population). The target population is the total set of people or things about whom the researcher is interested in drawing broad conclusions, and it has a wide range of characteristics (Sekaran 2010). As a result, the study's target group consists of socially excluded people living in Kano State's six metropolitan local governments: Kano Municipal, Gwale, Dala, Fagge, Nassarawa, and Tarauni Local Government Areas. The sample size was calculated using the 0.05 margin error supplied by Kreychie and Morgan (1970) to get the appropriate sample size from the study population. As a result, 384 samples were employed in the research. In order to obtain the requisite sample, the study used a basic random sampling procedure. A semi-structured face-to-face in-depth interview was also done with 12 participants from Kano State's metropolitan local governments. Purposive sampling is a technique used by the researcher to select interview participants.

The study used a combination of questionnaire tools and an interview methodology to reach a potentially large number of participants and conduct statistical and thematic analysis. However, it was presented as a guide to a conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee for the interview protocol. The parties involved (i.e. the interviewer and interviewee) engaged in verbal engagement during the interview session, and the interviewer gathered data. The participants' socioeconomic and demographic backgrounds are the initial component of the interview protocol. Second, there are concerns about the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on social marginalization. To ensure content validity, the instruments were evaluated by professionals in the field of measurement and evaluation. Meanwhile, Cronbach Alpha scale reliability metrics were used to assess the instrument's reliability.

### Data Collection and Data Analysis Procedure

With the help of a research assistant, the researchers administered the tools (questionnaire and interview protocol) personally. They were both actively involved in the data collection process. In the same vein, the interview lasted approximately 20 to 25 minutes. To satisfy the demands of the research objectives, the data received from the participants' questionnaire was handled, processed, and analyzed using applicable statistical tools (SPSS 24 program). Inferential statistics like the t-test were employed to analyze the data. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data acquired during the interview. Thematic analysis, according to Braun and Clarke (2006), is "a technique for detecting, evaluating, and recording patterns within data." The following stages of the data thematic analysis were used. Transcription, coding, the creation of themes, and data interpretation are just a few examples.

### 3. Results

The study's findings are based on information gathered from the two instruments employed in the investigation (i.e. questionnaire and interview guide). The following t-test analysis was used to assess the two null hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1 (H01):** There is no significant difference between socially excluded individuals and other members of the society on the menace of COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1: Showing the t-test analysis between socially excluded individuals and other members of the society on the menace of COVID-19 pandemic

Variables	N	X	SD	DF	t.cal.	t.crit.	Decision
Socially excluded individuals	205	2.78	1.22	276	0.148	0.843	Not Significant
Other members of the society	179	2.66	1.18				

The estimated t-test value of 0.148 is less than the crucial t-test value of 0.843 at the 0.05 level of confidence, as shown in table 1. This implies that the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant difference between socially excluded individuals and other members of the society on the menace of COVID-19 pandemic, is accepted.

**Hypothesis 2 (H02):** There is no significant relationship between the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic and the risk of social exclusion.

Table 2: Showing the t-test analysis between the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic and the risk of social exclusion

Variables	N	X	SD	DF	t.cal.	t.crit.	Decision
Challenges of COVID-19 pandemic	277	2.63	1.17	276	6.034	0.136	Significant
Risk of social exclusion	107	1.80	0.72				

The calculated t-test value of 6.034 is more than the crucial t-test value of 0.136 at the 0.05 level of confidence, according to the data in table 2. This implies that the null hypothesis which stated that there is no significant relationship between the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic and the risk of social exclusion, is rejected.

Furthermore, the results of the gathered interview were presented and analyzed. The following subheadings were used to investigate the participants' perspectives:

## Challenges of COVID-19 pandemic on social exclusion

The panelists discussed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on social exclusion. Family problems, anxiety, peer-group violence, child abuse, disruption of social and religious life, unemployment, poverty, inflation, travel restrictions, and inadequate and inaccessible palliatives provided by the government to cushion the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic are among the themes that emerged from the participants' clarifications.

One of the attendees said that one of the issues of the COVID-19 epidemic on social exclusion is family problems, particularly among members. The family's stability has been severely harmed as a result of the lockdown measures. He also remarked that:

*Many socially excluded people were unable to withstand the hardships of the lockdown, such as a lack of money, food, and other social amenities needed to care for their families. They developed any way possible to survive, even if it meant ruining the family's image. The family members were also torn apart by disagreements within the family.*

While, another participant explained that anxiety is one of the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic on social exclusion. He argued that:

*Fear and distress have been expressed by socially isolated people as a result of the pandemic. They are constantly avoided for fear of contracting the coronavirus, particularly visitors and travelers. Fear has made these groups of individuals more cautious and watchful, which is a beneficial element of the fear. It can, however, be traumatic for some of them.*

Similarly, one of the participants narrated that peer-group violence is another challenge of COVID-19 pandemic on social exclusion. She explained that:

*During the lockdown, socially marginalized individuals, particularly juveniles, were involved in crime and violence, for example, attacking people with knives to collect their money or cellphones, and some youths battled with each other and were injured as a result of trifling matters or minor provocations.*

Another participant clarified that child abuse is also one of the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic on social exclusion. She narrated that:

*The government's lockdown policy had a disproportionately negative impact on youngsters. Some of them had been raped, abused, and maltreated. Women and children make up the majority of the victims. They have nowhere to go and are idling their time away. They must be safeguarded as future mothers and leaders, respectively.*

In the same direction, one of the participants confirmed that disruption of religious life, is one of the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic on social exclusion.

*The religious institutions were weakened by the lockdown. For a few weeks, mosques and churches were closed, and no one could be held accountable. As a result, neither Muslims nor Christians visited their places of worship.*

One of the participants narrated that absolute poverty is one of the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic on social exclusion. He emphasized that due to lack of basic necessities of life, majority of socially excluded individuals cannot eat three square meals a day and the emergence of COVID-19 pandemic compounded the problem. The participant provided his own opinion as follows:

*Since not everyone is a civil servant or public servant who will receive his or her wage at the end of the month, remaining at home during the lockdown is a mistake made by the government. Some people make a life on the streets. While others rely on hawking to make ends meet.*

Similarly, one of the participants confirmed that unemployment, is another challenge of COVID-19 pandemic on social exclusion. He clarified that:

*The coronavirus outbreak caused the country's unemployment rate to skyrocket. Some people have employment, but they have lost them as a result of the closure.*

Finally, another participant stated that unavailable palliatives are a COVID-19 pandemic challenge in terms of social exclusion. He claimed that the government had provided palliatives in the form of food and other vital commodities in vast quantities to mitigate the virus's effects, but that they were insufficient and unavailable to socially disadvantaged people. According to the participants, government officials redirected the palliatives to another location or held them in enormous storage and silos. This spurred members of the general public, particularly youngsters, to storm silos in remote parts of the country and steal food.

#### **Effect of lockdown policy measures on socially excluded individuals:**

The participants gave their opinions on the effect of lockdown policy measures on socially excluded individuals. The themes that emerged from the participant's explanations includes: enforcement of social distancing, interstate travel restrictions and night curfews, closure of all educational and religious institutions as well as social gatherings.

One of the participants mentioned that enforcement of social distancing to control the spread of the deadly virus is one of the effects of lockdown policy measures on socially excluded individuals. He further stated that:

*The government enforcing social separation is an excellent concept for containing the pandemic threat. If people can use social distancing to keep the deadly virus from spreading from person to person, it will assist greatly.*

Similarly, another participant narrated that interstate travel restrictions is one of the effects of lockdown policy measures on socially excluded individuals. He added that:

*The imposition of a travel ban from one state to another restricts the inflow of people from one metropolis to another. This action effectively stopped the pathogen from spreading.*

In the same direction, one of the participants confirmed that night curfew imposed by the government is one of the effect of lockdown policy measures on socially excluded individuals. He revealed that night curfew imposed from 6:00 pm to 6:00 am or from midnight to 6:00 am for some weeks prevent the risk of getting the virus and in other places control the spread of the virus.

Similarly, according to some participants; temporary closure of all educational institutions and social gatherings for several months is one of the effect of lockdown policy measures on socially excluded individuals. One of the participants clarified that:

*The Covid-19 epidemic has disproportionately afflicted socially marginalized people. From basic school through tertiary schools, academic activity were halted for several months. Similarly, the social lives of those who are socially excluded have been affected. Weddings and other social gatherings are no longer permitted since they would violate the social distancing guidelines.*

#### **Role of the government in addressing the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic on social exclusion:**

The participants gave their opinions on the role of the government in addressing the challenges of the pandemic on social exclusion. The themes that emerged from the participants' explanations include provision of adequate security, enhancement of social and religious life, provision of employment opportunities, control of inflation rate, delivery of adequate palliatives to cushion the effects of COVID-19 pandemic, practice of good respiratory etiquette and administer of COVID-19 vaccines.

One of the participants mentioned that provision of adequate security is one of the role of the government in addressing the challenges of the pandemic on social exclusion. He further stated that:

*It's worth noting that the lockdown did not extend to every section of the country. Individuals and governments, on the other hand, were concerned about security. Despite a few incidents of stealing, snatching, pickpocketing, and violence, police and other security agencies are actively involved in implementing lockdown measures to improve security and lessen the vulnerability of socially excluded individuals.*

In the same direction, one of the participants confirmed that enhancement of social and religious life, is one of the role of the government in addressing the challenges of the pandemic on social exclusion.

*Religious activities were suppressed as a result of the lockdown. For a few weeks, mosques and churches were closed, and social gatherings were halted. To improve people's social and religious lives, the government should enable unrestricted religious worship and free travel.*

Similarly, one of the participants confirmed that provision of unemployment opportunities, is another role of the government in addressing the challenges of the pandemic on social exclusion. He clarified that:

*The government should work to reduce the country's high unemployment rate. Some people have employment, but they have lost them as a result of the closure.*

In the same direction, another participant clarified that practice of good respiratory etiquette is also another role of the government in addressing the challenges of the pandemic on social exclusion. She narrated that:

*Coughs and sneezes should be covered with our elbow or upper sleeve of our jacket or gown, not our hands, according to respiratory etiquette. This functioned as a barrier against the COVID-19 pandemic.*

Finally, majority of the participants revealed that COVID-19 vaccines (first and second doses) administered to the general public is an effective sustainable measure in dealing with the virus. It also help the government in addressing the challenges of the pandemic on social exclusion.

#### **4. Discussion**

Socially excluded individuals in Kano Metropolis are confronted with the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic such as anxiety, peer-group violence, child abuse, disruption of education, interruption of religious life, shortage of basic necessities of life and unemployment. The social exclusion is family problems, particularly among members. The family's stability has been severely harmed as a result of the lockdown measures. During the lockdown, socially marginalized individuals, particularly juveniles, were involved in crime and violence, for example, attacking people with knives to collect their money or cellphones. Limitation to work possibilities as a result of the economic crisis are likely to place socially excluded people on a far more unpredictable path in terms of finding and keeping good jobs and income.

Lockdown policy had a disproportionately negative impact on youngsters. Some of them had been raped, abused, and maltreated. Women and children make up the majority of the victims. Governments' disproportionate limitations may leave young peacebuilders, human rights and environmental advocates among them vulnerable to attacks. The lockdown policy measures employed by the government addresses the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic on Nigerian citizens, particularly socially excluded individuals. These policy measures involve enforcement of social distancing, interstate travel restrictions, night curfews and banning of social gatherings.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Nigeria's integration as a nation, the development of a single united country that seeks to improve all Nigerians' freedoms and quality of life, has been a remarkable success in the last sixty years (from independence to date). Despite a shared vision for a better Nigeria, social marginalization remains a significant, if not worsening, issue. And, in order to achieve the country we desire, we must intensify our efforts to combat social isolation. Even if we are not victims of social exclusion, doing so is in everyone's best interests since it will allow us to build the free, fair, and successful society that we all desire.

The advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, on the other hand, has posed major issues to socially marginalized people in Kano and Nigeria in general. Individuals who are socially excluded are disproportionately affected by the pandemic; they work in low-paying, less secure, and less protected positions, leaving them vulnerable to unemployment and labor market vulnerabilities. The COVID-19 problem also put their education, mental health, and disposable income at danger.

Nonetheless, their circumstances caused them to achieve an unfavorable status, which influenced them to commit illegal crimes.

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