

Menace of the New Normal and Social Health Status of Civil Servants in Akure South Local Government Area Ondo State Nigeria

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic brought with it many disruptions to life and livelihood, in a way unprecedented. The pandemic generally, affected health status of people. Hence, the ensuing paper investigated the menace of the new normal and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area of Ondo state. A descriptive research design was adopted and the research data was collected using a well-structured, self-developed and validated questionnaire tagged (MNNSHSCS). Two hundred (200) participants were used for the study. Simple frequency count, percentages and mean was used to describe the demographic characteristics of the population while the hypotheses were tested using chi square analysis to test the significant relationship of each of the 5 hypotheses stated in the study at 0.05 level of significance. In conclusion, the study clearly showed that being nonchalant in public places about COVID-19, COVID-19 test, self-medication, use of nose mask, washing of hands and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria are statistically significant. Recommendations that could put more measures in place in ensuring that another pandemic of COVID-19 does not arise were suggested in the study.

Keywords: Social health, new normal, COVID-19 pandemic, hand-washing, nose-covering.

Introduction

Humans are social creatures and every human contributes to the world in some way through positive or negative actions. Civil servants can contribute goodness and light, helping people see hope rather than despair. In turn, there could be hope for positive outcomes in life. World Health Organization, (2010) defines health as not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, but a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing. Social health according to Ariyo (2020) could mean having the ability to interact and form meaningful relationships with others comfortably and equally adapt to social situations that could have impact on mental and physical health. Okoye and Mabuchi (2021) explained that during the COVID-19 pandemic, measures such as quarantine and social isolation, which prevented individuals from participating in society and social activities and having close contact with others, have had negative effects on mental health of people, including anxiety, and depression. Although social distancing policies have historically helped protect physical health worldwide, these policies have also greatly limited the range

of social interactions. Peters (2018) opined that social health is one of the concepts without a precise definition. However, there are various definitions which have led to different perspective trying to define the concept; it is not possible to accurately identify the correctness of such definitions. On the other hand, social health is a concept that emerges in the context of society and interpersonal relationships in social networks. In a related research work, Alphonso (2022) highlighted the signs of being socially healthy as having assertive skills rather than passive or aggressive ones, balancing social and personal time, being engaged with other people in the community, adapting in social situations, being stable in all situations, treating others with respect, being able to develop and maintain friendships and networks. Others are creating boundaries in friendships to encourage communication and conflict management, having a supportive network of family and friends and having fun in life.

The COVID-19 pandemic came with merits and demerits a large part of the world and many nations of the world are yet to fully recover from the negatives which affects all aspects of the economy including the public service sector. It brought with it many disruptions to life and livelihood, in a way unprecedented. Some of these threats have affected physical, mental and social wellbeing, while other threats have gone deep on raising many questions inside about way of life and the reason for continuous existence. The unprecedented chaos that COVID-19 pandemic created, brought with its hybrid opportunities that can be seen in healthcare, social development, and untapped economic ideas. There are also hidden opportunities that are coming with the rising of both challenging times and risks. For example, there are opportunities rising more and more the lengths of the lockdown when people started to suffer anxiety or stress due to worries about the future prospects, as a result of the turbulence and instability that affected social life, careers, educational plans and life journey in general. The post-COVID-19 pandemic era, started to be called the new normal. It is an era full of challenges and instability. In this era agility, curiosity, risk mitigation, learning by exploring, learning by doing, working from home and focus, are highly expected. During the new normal many types of challenges are noticed in almost every sector. This brought the possibility of inspiration that come as a result of opportunities that come with the challenges, and resilience, as it is a needed spirit for survival during the era new normal. The new normal needs efficient solutions that leverage and develop on multiple fronts. Therefore, it is a time for inspiration and resilience that enhance trust in people and brings the opportunity to create the change Buheji and Buheji (2020), Buheji and Ahmed (2020), Buheji and Sisk (2020). Therefore, in order to achieve a better understanding of the conceptual framework of this crucial dimension of health, a qualitative research approach is a priority.

The civil service is a collective term for a sector of government composed mainly of career civil servants hired or employed on professional merit rather than appointed or elected, whose institutional tenure typically survives transitions of political leadership. A civil servant, also known as a public servant, is a person employed in the public sector by a government department or agency for public sector undertakings. Civil servants work for

central and state governments, and answer to the government, not a political party. The extent of civil servants of a state as part of the civil service varies from country to country. Akure South is a Local Government Area in Ondo State, Nigeria. Its headquarters are in the town of Akure. It has an area of 331 km² and a population of 353,211 at the 2006 census.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to examine the menace of the new normal and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria.

Research objectives

The specific objective is to:

1. To find out the level of belief of the new normal and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria.
2. To find out the level of observance of COVID-19 protocols in the new normal.

Research questions

1. Will there be any significant difference between being nonchalant in public places about COVID-19 and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria?
2. Will there be any significant difference between COVID-19 test and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria?
3. Will there be any significant difference between self-medication and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria?
4. Will there be any significant difference between use of nose mask and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria?
5. Will there be any significant difference between washing of hands and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria?

Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant difference between being nonchalant in public places about COVID-19 and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria.
2. There will be no significant difference between COVID-19 test and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria.
3. There will be no significant difference between self-medication and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria.
4. There will be no significant difference between use of nose mask and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria.
5. There will be no significant difference between washing of hands and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria.

Conceptual framework

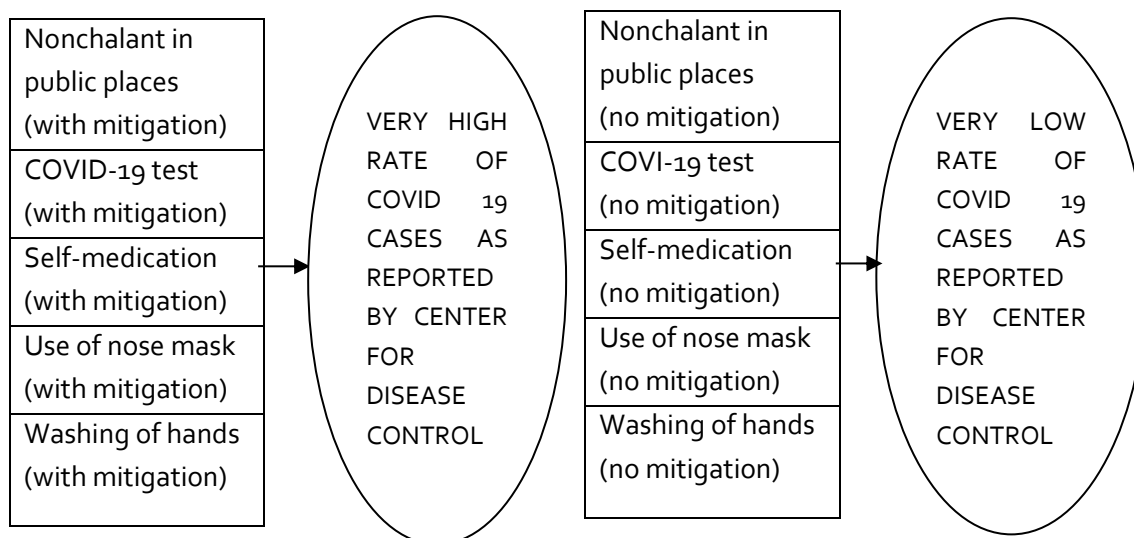


Diagram A: During COVID-19 Pandemic 2020. **Diagram B:** Post COVID-19 Pandemic (New-normal) 2022.

Source: Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP) 2022

The conceptual framework presents results of during and post COVID-19 pandemic as reported by Centre for Disease Control and Prevention. The report reveals that during the pandemic in 2020, nonchalant attitude about protocols of COVID-19, COVID-19 test, self-medication, use of nose mask and washing of hands all with mitigations resulted in reporting very high cases of COVID-19. The frame work as well revealed that with the same variables, without mitigation in the new normal the reported cases were very low. Hence, though the rate of reported case may be low, adherence to COVID-19 protocol must be obeyed to prevent another pandemic.

Methodology

The study adopted a descriptive research design because it examined the menace of the era of new normal and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area Ondo state Nigeria in which self-reported data were collected from sampled participants in describing the population on the relevant variables of interest without manipulating any of the variables. The population for the study consisted of a total of 200 civil servants in Ondo state, Nigeria. Participants were selected from the 13 ministries in Ondo state Nigeria using the multistage sampling technique. Simple random sampling technique with replacement was used to select 8 out of the 13 ministries. Stratified random sampling technique was used to stratify gender into male 200 and female 160. Simple random sampling technique was used to select 45 participants from each of the 8 selected ministries making a total of 360 participants that took part in the study out of the over 5000 civil servants in Ondo state. A self-designed questionnaire tagged menace of the new

normal and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state, Nigeria. (MNNSHSCS) was used to elicit information from the participants. The instrument consisted of two sections identified as sections A and B. Section A contained demographic characteristics of the respondents. In section B, the items were designed to ask specific questions directed towards menace of the new normal on social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state, Nigeria. The 15 item questionnaire in this section was assessed on a four-point rating scale ranging from 4 strongly agreed, 3 agreed, 2 disagree and 1 strongly disagree as indicated below.

Items	SA	A	D	SD
Positive items	4	3	2	1
Negative items	1	2	3	4

A reliable coefficient of 0.84 was obtained through the use of Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis. Therefore, the instrument was considered adequate and appropriate enough to be used for data collection for the study.

Administration of research instrument

Copies of the questionnaire were administered to the participants through the help of the permanent secretaries. The participants independently spent a minimum of 5 minutes on the average to carefully and accurately complete the questionnaire as it decreased the possibilities of sharing opinion and discussing the questionnaire items. Submission was done individually and a hundred percent return rate was achieved.

Data analysis

Completed copies of the questionnaire were collected, coded and analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics of frequency count and percentage were used to analyze the demographic information, while inferential statistics of T-test was used to test hypotheses 1 to 4 all at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

Demographic information

Table 1: Demographic information of respondents

Variable	Level	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative Frequency	Cumulative Percentage
Gender	Male	120	60%	100	50%
	Female	80	40%	100	50%
				200	100%
Years of working experience	1-7	10	5%	10	5%
	8-14	20	10%	20	10%
	15-22	40	20%	40	20%

	23-30	50	25%	50	25%
	31-35	40	20%	40	20%
	26-30	20	10%	20	10%
	31 and above	20	10%	20	10%
		200	100%	200	100%
Academic qualification	Primary 6	10	5%	10	5%
	JSS 3	0	0%	0	0%
	SSCE/WAEC	60	30%	60	30%
	OND	10	5%	10	5%
	HND/BSc	80	40%	80	40%
	MSc/Med	30	15%	30	15%
	Ph.D	10	5%	10	5%
	Total	200	100%	200	100%

The analysis of the demographic variables is presented in table 1

Table 1 showed the demographic characteristics of participants. The result showed that male participants are 120 (60%), female participants are 80 (40%). Participants between 23-30 years of working experience are 50 (25%), while participants within 1-7 are 10 (5%) respectively. Majority of the participants are holders of HND/BSc academic qualification 80 (40%), while there are 10 (5%) participants with primary 6 leaving certificate and PhD respectively.

Hypotheses testing

Hypothesis 1

There will be no significant difference between being nonchalant in public places about COVID-19 and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria.

Table 2: Chi-square analysis showing difference between being nonchalant in public places about COVID-19 and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria.

Variables	SA	A	D	SD	Total	o.05	Df	X ²
Being nonchalant in public places about COVID-19 and social health	80 (40%)	60 (30%)	30 (15%)	30 (15%)	200 (100%)	17.829	7	44.25

P > 0.05

Table 2 showed that (80) 40% of the total respondents strongly affirmed that being nonchalant in public places about COVID-19 is significant on social health status. On the contrary, 30 (15%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that being nonchalant in public places about COVID-19 is significant on social health status. The chi-square obtained

(44.25) was greater than the critical value of 17.829 at 0.05 alpha level of significance; hence the result is statistically significant. Thus, the hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 2

There will be no significant difference between COVID-19 test and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria.

Table 3: Chi-square analysis showing COVID-19 test and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria.

Variables	SA	A	D	SD	Total	0.05	Df	X ²
COVID-19 test and social health status	100 (50%)	50 (25%)	25 (12.5%)	25 (12.5%)	200 (100%)	17.829	7	19.77

$P > 0.05$

Table 3 revealed that 100 (50%) strongly agreed that COVID-19 test is significant on social health status. On the contrary, 25 (12.5%) of the respondents strongly disagreed. The chi-square obtained (19.77) was greater than the critical value of 17.829 at 0.05 alpha level of significance; hence the result is statistically significant. Thus, the hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 3

There will be no significant difference between self-medication and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria.

Table 4: Chi-square analysis showing self-medication and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria.

Variables	SA	S	D	SD	Total	0.05	Df	X ²
Self-medication and social health status	80 (40%)	80 (40%)	20 (10%)	20 (10%)	200 (100%)	17.829	7	30.05

$P > 0.05$

Table 4 revealed that (80) 40% of the total respondents strongly affirmed that self-medication is significant on social health status. On the contrary, 20 (10%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that self-medication is significant on social health status. The chi-square obtained (30.05) was greater than the critical value of 17.829 at 0.05 alpha level of significance; hence the result is statistically significant. Thus, the hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 4

There will be no significant difference between use of nose mask and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria.

Table 5: Chi-square analysis showing use of nose mask and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria.

Variables	SA	A	D	SD	Total	0.05	Df	X ²
Use of nose mask and social health status	90 (45%)	50 (25%)	30 (15%)	30 (15%)	200 (100%)	17.829	7	44.55

P > 0.05

Table 5 revealed that (90) 45% of the total respondents strongly affirmed that use of nose mask is significant on social health status. On the contrary, 30 (15%) of the respondents strongly disagreed. The chi-square obtained (44.55) was greater than the critical value of 17.829 at 0.05 alpha level of significance; hence the result is statistically significant. Thus, the hypothesis was rejected.

Hypothesis 5

There will be no significant difference between washing of hands and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria.

Table 6: Chi-square analysis showing washing of hands and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria.

Variables	SA	A	D	SD	Total	0.05	Df	X ²
Washing of hands and social health status	120 (60%)	50 (25%)	15 (7.5%)	15 (7.5%)	200 (100%)	17.829	7	42.45

P > 0.05

Table 6 revealed that (120) 60% of the total respondents strongly affirmed washing of hands is significant on social health status. On the contrary, 15 (7.5%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that washing of hands is significant on social health status. The chi-square obtained (42.45) was greater than the critical value of 17.829 at 0.05 alpha level of significance; hence the result is statistically significant. Thus, the hypothesis was rejected.

Discussion

The study focused on the menace of the new normal and social health status of civil servants in Akure south Local Government Area Ondo state Nigeria. The findings of this study corroborated other findings of previous studies. The demographic characteristics of the respondents revealed that male participants are 120 (60%), female participants are 80 (40%). Participants between 23-30 years of working experience are 50 (25%), while participants within 1-7 are 10 (5%) respectively. Majority of the participants are holders of HND/BSc academic qualification 80 (40%), while there are 10 (5%) participants with primary 6 leaving certificate and PhD respectively. Hypothesis one which states that there will be no significant difference between being nonchalant in public places about COVID-19 and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state

Nigeria showed that the chi-square obtained (44.25) was greater than the critical value of 17.829 at 0.05 alpha level of significance, the result is statistically significant. Hence, the hypothesis was rejected. To corroborate this finding World Health Organisation (2020) announced safety protocols to curtail the spread or a fresh outbreak of COVID-19. Some of the safety measures are compulsory wearing of nose masks in public places, maintaining physical distance, washing of hands and or using hand sanitizers. Hypothesis two stated that there will be no significant difference between COVID-19 test and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria. The chi-square obtained (19.77) was greater than the critical value of 17.829 at 0.05 alpha level of significance; hence the result is statistically significant. Thus, the hypothesis was rejected. In line with the finding of this result, Tartari, Tomczyk, Pires, Zayed, Coutinho-Rehse Kariyo, Stempliuk, Zingg, Pittet & Allegranzi (2021) confirmed that COVID-19 became a pandemic in March 2020 and the World Health Organization (WHO) worked with other global stakeholders and country health systems to make available COVID-19 treatment guidelines, protocols, standard operating procedures and best practices globally. The effectiveness of the guidelines and protocols is lies within the mandate of the government to ensure adherence. The guidelines take care of cover a range of topics, including management of cases, testing procedures and sensitization. However, implementation of these guidelines at country level differs, and is affected by several factors that are related to care-seeking behaviour of citizens. However, in order to ensure the successful management of COVID-19, the compliance of individuals to stipulated guidelines for prevention and control is greatly determined by knowledge, attitudes and practices. Nigeria has increased its testing capacity to facilitate extensive testing.

Hypothesis three stated that there will be no significant difference between self-medication and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria revealed that (80) 40% of the total respondents strongly affirmed that self-medication is significant on social health status, on the contrary 20 (10%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that self-medication is significant on social health status. Since the chi-square obtained (30.05) was greater than the critical value of 17.829 at 0.05 alpha level of significance, the result is statistically significant. Thus, the hypothesis was rejected. Chalbarah and Briggs (2022) reiterated that intake of drugs without prescription from a doctor can be called self-medication and is hazardous. These types of medicines are often referred to as over-the-counter or non-prescription, and are found in pharmacies, supermarkets and other outlets. It has been confirmed that people take these drugs without the prescription of a doctor for a number of reasons. While some aim for a reduction in the time and cost of clinical consultation, others simply trivialize illnesses and resort to self-medication and this may lead to drug addiction, allergy, habituation, worsening of ailment, incorrect diagnosis and dosage, or even disability and pre-mature death. This is the reason why self-medication must be avoided at all cost.

Hypothesis four which stated that there will be no significant difference between use of nose mask and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area,

Ondo state Nigeria revealed that (90) 45% of the total respondents strongly affirmed that use of nose mask is significant on social health status, while 30 (15%) of the respondents strongly disagreed. The chi-square obtained (44.55) was greater than the critical value of 17.829 at 0.05 alpha level of significance; hence the result is statistically significant. Thus, the hypothesis was rejected. From the submission of Drummond, Gashlinkss, Scott and Wittlopps (2021), respiratory masks are protective devices covering a part of the face designed to protect both the person who wears them and the immediate environment from breathable pollutants such as respiratory poisons or bacterial or viral pathogenic organisms. The mask traps the moisture or ingredient in the skin and creates film that helps to hydrate, moisturize, dry or exfoliate the skin depending on the ingredients used and its purpose. Therefore, face masks allow ingredients to penetrate better into the skin in a short amount of time. Wearing a mask in areas where sufficient distance is not feasible, such as public transportation, most likely reduces the spread of virus-loaded droplets and therefore the risk of transferring the virus that causes a respiratory disease called corona virus disease (SARS-CoV-2). However, Marvin and Quinox (2020) argued that it is indisputable that infected patients can transfer SARS-CoV-2 to other people, starting few days before manifesting clinical symptoms or during the incubation period. However, there is no reliable data concerning the amount of virus particles that can be spread by an asymptomatic person, when keeping a minimum safe distance.

Hypothesis five which stated that there will be no significant difference between washing of hands and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria revealed that (120) 60% of the total respondents strongly affirmed washing of hands is significant on social health status. On the contrary, 15 (7.5%) of the respondents strongly disagreed that washing of hands is significant on social health status. The chi-square obtained (42.45) was greater than the critical value of 17.829 at 0.05 alpha level of significance; hence the result is statistically significant. Thus, the hypothesis was rejected. The records of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2021) explained that washing of hands with soap under running water for 20 seconds or more is a critical intervention recommended for preventing the spread of COVID-19, and seemingly an easy undertaking. But like many sub-Saharan countries in Africa, where only 15% of the population has access to the most basic hand washing facilities. Washing hands in Nigeria can be a challenge, and is therefore easier said than done. When the pandemic hit, there was a big push from the government, development partners and the private sector on making hand washing facilities available, along with creating awareness through various outlets. COVID-19 posed a heightened risk for people living in highly dense communities and who struggle with limited access to water, soap, and other compounding challenges such as respiratory challenges. Crowded living spaces often lack sanitation facilities and populations living in these areas risked quickly becoming hotspots for the spread of the virus throughout other areas. It was important to mount interventions that needed to identify and provide targeted wash solutions for these hotspots early on so as to ensure reduced risk of mortality and morbidity linked to COVID-19.

Conclusion

The findings of this study clearly showed that being nonchalant in public places about COVID-19, COVID-19 test, self-medication, use of nose mask, washing of hands and social health status of civil servants in Akure South Local Government Area, Ondo state Nigeria are statistically significant.

Recommendations

On the basis of these findings, it is therefore recommended that:

1. Health education be included in the curriculum at all levels of education and taught efficiently.
2. Qualified health education teachers are employed to teach the subject matter in schools.
3. More measures should be put in place by the government in ensuring that another pandemic of COVID-19 does not arise.

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