

Internalizing and Externalizing Factors as Predictive Impact of Covid-19 on Private Schools in the Dormaa Ahenkro District, Ghana

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Abstract

The study explored some internalizing and externalizing factors as predictive impact of covid-19 on private schools in the Dormaa Ahenkro district, Ghana. The study used the descriptive method with seven private schools comprising twenty-eight heads and proprietors. The purposive sampling method was used. The items in this study were tested using the Cronbach alpha value. The study tested a hypothesis to determine the homogeneity of impact of Covid-19 among the schools. Analysis of the study was done using descriptive and inferential statistics respectively; with the help of SPSS version 25. Analysis of the collected data revealed that there was an impact of Covid-19 pandemic on private schools in the study area and that the impact was homogeneous among the 14 schools. Analysis further revealed some key outlining factors that greatly impacted the schools. It has been therefore recommended that the leadership of the association of private schools along with the school heads and proprietors should try and provide the necessary incentives for their teachers and workers in times of crisis. The leadership of the association of private schools should secure government support for their members. The private schools should implement virtual learning in order to send learning to the door steps of their students in their homes. The school heads and the proprietors periodically should organize workshops for their teachers and workers.

Keywords: Covid-19, Low-Fee Private Schools (LFPS), Virtual, Impact.

Introduction

The population of Dormaa Ahenkro according to the 2010 Population and Housing Census is 112,111 representing 4.9 percent of the region's total population. The youth (population less than 15 years) in the municipality account for 37.5 percent of the population (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014).

Ghana detected its first two confirmed cases of the COVID-19 on 12th March, 2020 with two people believed to have returned from Turkey and Norway. As at 15th of May, 2020, total confirmed cases stood at 5,530, with 4,832 active cases, total recoveries stood at 674, and 24 deaths. Thirteen out of the sixteen regions have recorded cases of the disease. This was according to Badu-Sarkodie, in a press briefing on 15th May, 2020 (Ghana Health Service, 2020). As of 6th

May 2020, UNESCO estimated that 177 countries have closed schools nationwide, impacting over 1.2 billion learners globally, who are mainly children and youth. School closures in the context of COVID 19 have been necessary across the globe to slow the spread of the disease and mitigate the effects on health systems (UNESCO, 2020).

According to the UNESCO (2020), on the 15th of March, President Nana Akufo-Addo ordered the closure of all educational institutions in Ghana, effecting some 9.2 million basic school students (kindergarten, primary and junior high schools) and 0.5 million tertiary education students. By 10th May, Ghana had recorded 4,700 confirmed cases of COVID-19. Health experts predicted that there was going to be an upsurge in the number of confirmed cases in the weeks ahead due to the rise in the number of testing. This implied that the closure of the schools was going to be extended to a longer period than expected.

The closure was broadcast at the time when final year junior high and senior school students were preparing for their final examinations. The Ministry of Education did not seem to have any solution to the problem at hand at the initial stages. Parents were confused and teachers were depending on the Ghana Education Service for the way-forward. Clearly the pandemic had come to expose the lack of planning and preparedness towards such emergency educational situations. The entire system did not seem to have any alternative solution to a problem that is likely to draw the entire educational system back and further deepen the woes of vulnerable children and youth in the country (UNESCO, 2020)

According to Upoalkpajor (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic has significant impact on education in Ghana; schools want resources to reconstruct the loss in education through the epidemic. In this study, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis that there was no impact of COVID19 on education as the calculated value of 28.211 was greater than the critical value of 5.99. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis which stated that there was an impact of COVID19 on education was accepted.

The 2019 coronavirus epidemic has affected educational arrangements globally, leading to the near-total shut down of schools, colleges and universities. As of 27 April 2020, nearly 1.725 billion learners were presently affected owing to school closings in response to the epidemic (Upoalkpajor, 2020). It is widely recognised that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about the largest disruption of education systems in history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries across all continents. Closures of schools and other learning spaces have impacted 94% of the world's student population, up to 99% in low and lower-middle income countries (United Nations, 2020). These closures have lasted several months and the first widespread school openings have only recently begun. In August, as many as 100 countries were yet to announce a date for schools to reopen and education stakeholders including governments, unions, parents and children are still planning their approach to the next phase (United Nations, 2020).

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic had had unprecedented impacts on education systems all over the world with 1.6 billion learners affected by school closures at its peak (UN, 2020). In some contexts, governments have taken steps to support the non-state education sector. In Nigeria, for example, the Minister of State for Education announced that private school teachers were eligible to access the Federal Government's N100 billion (USD 260 million) COVID-19 intervention fund - a loan with low interest rates (The Heute, 2020). In Kenya, the Government also announced a USD 64.5 million loan at 2.5 to 3.5% interest for private schools and was requesting this money to be spent primarily on infrastructure development to get schools ready for re-opening, including installing ICT systems (Oduor, 2020; Citizen TV, 2020). It is thought that approximately 3000 private schools were set to benefit from the loan. In Ghana, after successful advocacy from the Ghana National Association of Private Schools (GNAPS), private schools were categorized as SMEs and eligible for the government's Coronavirus Alleviation Programme Business Support Scheme for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (Opuni, 2020). To date, GHS 50 million (USD 8.6 million) has been made available for over 1,000 private schools (Ghana Web, 2020).

Beyond successfully advocating for the inclusion of private schools in government support to SMEs, the Ghana National Association of Private Schools (GNAPS) has appealed for specific financial support for non-state schools to assist its members who have not been paid due to the closure of schools, including extension of interest free loans to private schools so they can pay their staff and keep their institutions running until schools reopen (Modern Ghana, 2020b). Most of its 3,500 members will see enrolment drop by up to 30% during the current school year. Some private schools anticipate a decline of up to 60%. Almost 2 million students (two fifths of private school share) at all levels are expected to quit private schools and join the overcrowded public system (NBC News, 2020). In Delhi, small private schools – the majority catering to low- and middle-income families - reported lower enrolments in entry-level classes and large proportions of withdrawn students due to the financial stress households are facing. In some schools, parents have withdrawn 20-30% of students (Hindustan Times, 2020). Similarly, there are reports that Affordable Private Schools in Tamil Nadu and Delhi have recorded their lowest ever new enrolments this year (Chettri, 2020). In Pakistan, the all Pakistan Private School Association were demanding the government to financially support non-state schools on payments for rent, utility bills and teachers' salaries as part of their COVID-19 relief measures. They were requesting that the government pay school fees for children whose parents were unable to effect payments as a result of financial constraints caused by the pandemic. They have also requested that the government announce special grants for private schools, pointing out that "educating every citizen is the foremost responsibility of the government under Article 25 [of the Constitution]". The government has not responded to these demands and it looks unlikely that this type of support will be available to schools in the medium term (Jeffery, 2020).

The closing down of schools put Low-Fee Private Schools (LFPS) under great financial strain given their already small revenue streams. Reduced fee collection, existing financial obligations on schools (loan payments, rent and bills), and the costs of preparing for reopening have left many

schools struggling to remain financially viable. Interviews and evidence analyzed across several countries revealed that schools have lost significant income due to reduced fee collection over lockdown, with families no longer able to afford, or unwilling to pay school fees. For example, in India, of 1,678 schools surveyed, 85% reported facing large financial stress on account of their inability to collect fees (ISFC, 2020). Across contexts, losses have been compounded by other financial burdens, such as loan repayments – 10% of total monthly expenditure for schools surveyed in Kenya (Ed Partners Africa, 2020) – and the additional costs of meeting new government Standard Operating Procedures to reopen. With heavily reduced enrolments anticipated in the coming months, indications of which are already emerging, our stakeholders reported that many schools will not be able to recoup these losses and will have to permanently close. In the immediate term, COVID-19 has resulted in widespread loss of income over many months for millions of teachers and staff of LFPS, with little access to financial support. In Sub-Saharan Africa 50% of private school teachers (around 15% of total teachers) have suffered a drop of 50% in salaries on average (Teachout and Zipfel, 2020).

Statement of the Problem

The necessity for this study came on the back of insufficient scientific research on the covid-19 pandemic among private schools in the Dormaa Ahenkro municipality in Ghana. Most of the literature available on the impact of the covid-19 pandemic in Ghana have focused greatly on the tertiary level of education.

Objectives of the study

The general objective of the study is to find out the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on private schools in the Dormaa Ahenkro municipality. The underlying specific objectives of this work are:

1. To determine whether covid-19 had an effect on private schools in the Dormaa municipal.
2. To identify the major effects private schools encountered and or are encountering during the outbreak of the covid-19 pandemic in the study area.

Research questions

The following questions formed the basis for the research:

1. What is the evidence that the Covid-19 pandemic has an impact on private schools in the Dormaa municipal?
2. What are the major effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on private schools?

Hypothesis

This study tested the following hypothesis:

Ho: There is no difference in the average impact of covid-19 on private schools.

Ha: There is a difference in the average impact of covid-19 on private schools.

Significance

This study will help to uncover the critical areas of the impact of Covid-19 on private schools that many researchers were unable to explore. The study has been carefully designed to contribute to literature on the impact of Covid-19 on private schools. There is the need to therefore collect data from the private schools in the study area. Therefore, the findings of this study are beneficial to all stakeholders of education.

The findings of this study should also result in policy development by stakeholders of education in Ghana especially when it comes to policy development pertaining to various districts of the country. The Ghana Education Service (GES) and other stakeholders of education in the country may rely on the findings to come out with much informed policies seeking to the development of private school education in the country.

Research methodology

This research used the descriptive survey with quantitative approach. According to Kuranchie (2016), it is generally agreed that there are three research methodologies: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed-methods. The study was carried out at the time when schools resumed in Ghana after the Covid-19 lockdown. The population involved in the study were all private basic school heads and proprietors in the Dormaa municipality. The private schools which have been already grouped into 9 circuits by the municipal education directorate have their greater numbers residing in two circuits; A and B respectively. In order to get a good turnout, schools in these two outstanding circuits were picked using the purposive sampling technique. Thus, 14 headmasters and 14 proprietors amounting to 28 respondents were used in this study. The schools from Circuit “A” were: House of hope international, Divine Preparatory, Yesu Mo international, Classic International, St. Cecilia International and Pentecost Preparatory schools. Schools from Circuit B comprised: Fiema Dwaben International, Israel Preparatory, Ansu Ababio Preparatory, Pael Preparatory, Ebenezer Preparatory, St. Johns International and Lincoln Academy schools.

Questionnaires were used to collect biographical and statistical data from the respondents. A 5-point Likert Scale on a scale of very high, high, moderate, low and very low were developed for the two research questions with the first part containing the biographical data of the respondents. According to Kuranchie (2016), a questionnaire is used in quantitative research as it is good for collecting statistically quantifiable data.

The Cronbach Alpha was used to test reliability of the items. Four of the questionnaires were administered among four headmasters from four private schools in the next district (Nkrankwanta district). The reliability Cronbach’s alpha values are shown in the Table below.

Table 1: Reliability of test items

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach’s alpha (α)
Circuit A	10	0.7842

Circuit B	10	0.7245
Grand Average		0.754

Source: Field Survey (2021)

The values indicated for the two circuits from Table 1 indicate that the items used were reliable. According to Murali, Abdul-Basit and Hassan (2017), a value of 0.6 is accepted at certain cases in the Cronbach Alpha. A study done by Murali et al also approved 0.758 value as being reliable.

This study used both descriptive and inferential statistics with SPSS version 25 in analysing the data collected.

Results and discussions

Research Question 1

1. What is the evidence that the covid-19 pandemic has an impact on private schools in the Dormaa municipal?

Data collected in respect to this research question were analyzed and the results are presented in

Table 2: Impact of stress on private schools

Variables	Mean	Std dev.
The Covid-19 pandemic has negatively affected the operation of my school	4.25	0.94
The Covid-19 pandemic has affected private schools more than public schools	3.94	0.93
The covid-19 pandemic did not affect some aspect of my school	2.56	1.17
I least expected the effect of the Covid-19 pandemic in schools	3.95	0.91
I foresee the negative impact of the pandemic to last beyond this term	3.07	0.88
The pandemic came with some benefits as far as my school is concerned	2.46	1.04
The effects of the pandemic are still seen in my school after reopening	3.85	0.86
The pandemic is the worst experience I have encountered in my school	2.27	1.10
It will take a short time for my school to recover from the effects of the pandemic	3.26	1.02
The pandemic negatively affected everything in my school	3.35	1.31
Grand mean	3.29	0.01

Source: Field Survey (2021)

The results shown in Table 2 show that the grand mean for all the items measured is 3.29 indicating that there is an impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the private schools in the study area. A value of 3.0 measures moderate, neutral or no impact. A value beyond 3.0 indicates that respondents

agree or highly agreed that they are affected by the pandemic. A value below 3.0 means that the pandemic did not cause any impact on the schools as this value measure disagree or highly disagree.

Hypothesis

Ho: There is no difference in the average impact of covid-19 on private schools.

Ha: There is a difference in the average impact of covid-19 on private schools.

Table 3: Analysis of Variance

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Prob> z
Between group	0.062	3	0.020	0.07	0.96
Within group	41.486	136	0.305		

Source: Field Survey (2021)

The results in Tables 3 show the impact of Covid-19 on the proprietors and the headmasters. The results indicate F-statistic value = 0.07 with probability (p-value) = 0.9768. The p-value 0.96 > 0.05 suggests a strong evidence to retain the null hypothesis that there is no difference in the average impact of Covid-19 among the schools. The impact of Covid-19 among the schools are similar/the same.

Research Question 2

2. What are the major effects of the covid-19 pandemic on private schools?

Table 4: Major effects of Covid-19 on private schools

Variables	Mean	Std dev.
I have lost a lot of students from my school because of the Covid-19 pandemic.	3.79	0.94
Some of my teachers/workers left to look for other work during the school closure.	3.14	1.03
I was unable to pay all my utilities during the outbreak and the closure of schools.	3.09	0.98
I was unable to pay all my taxes during the outbreak and the closure of schools.	3.29	1.01
I have observed some level of hostility among some of my staff after resumption.	3.60	1.06
I have seen some level of hostility in some of my students after school resumption.	3.28	1.06
I still need government Covid-19 relief fund to support the running of my school.	3.44	1.23
Guardians in my school are finding it somewhat difficult in paying fees on time.	3.71	1.10
I have challenges purchasing all the necessary equipment needed to run my school.	1.99	1.21
I have reduced the total number of my workers after resumption of schools.	3.44	1.23
I have noticed a decrease in the level of enthusiasm of my students during lessons.	3.60	1.06

Grand mean

Source: Field Survey (2021)

Data from Table 4 shows that the items that affected the private schools in their order were; students exiting the schools, parents and guardians finding it difficult to pay the tuition of their wards, hostility among some staff, decrease in academic enthusiasm of students, the schools in need of government relief funds, schools reducing the total number of their employees/workers, schools unable to pay their taxes during the outbreak, hostility among some students and teachers exiting the schools for other jobs. The results from Table 3 further indicated that all the items measured affected the private schools with the exception of the item “I have challenges purchasing all the necessary equipment needed to run my school” which measured a mean of 1.99 and a standard deviation of 1.21.

Discussion of Results

The results from analysis of the first research question indicated that the grand mean for all the items measured was 3.29 implying that there was negative impact of Covid-19 on the private schools in the study area. This finding is corroborating to Upoalkpajor (2020) which stated that the 2019 coronavirus epidemic has affected educational arrangements globally, leading to the near-total closing of schools, colleges and universities. As of 27 April 2020, nearly 1.725 billion learners were presently affected owing to school closings in response to the epidemic. Also, in line is the United Nations (2020), It is widely recognised that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in the largest disruption of education systems in history, affecting nearly 1.6 billion learners in more than 190 countries across all continents. Closures of schools and other learning spaces have impacted 94% of the world’s student population, up to 99% in low and lower-middle income countries (United Nations, 2020). These closures have lasted several months and the first widespread school openings have only recently begun. In August, as many as 100 countries were yet to announce a date for schools to reopen and education stakeholders including governments, unions, parents and children are still planning their approach to the next phase. In line is UN (2020), that the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic has had unprecedented impacts on education systems all over the world with 1.6 billion learners affected by school closures at its peak.

Analysis from research question two indicated that the items that affected the private schools in their order were; students exiting the schools, parents and guardians finding it difficult to pay the tuition of their wards, hostility among some staff, decrease in academic enthusiasm of students, the schools in need of government relief funds, schools reducing the total number of their employees/workers, schools unable to pay their taxes during the outbreak, hostility among some students and teachers exiting the schools for other jobs. Analysis from the hypotheses further revealed that the impact of Covid-19 among the schools were similar/the same. This finding is in line with Teachout and Zipfel (2020), which stated that in the immediate term, COVID-19 has resulted in widespread loss of income over many months for millions of teachers and staff of Low-Fee Private Schools (LFPS), with little access to financial support. In Sub-Saharan Africa 50% of private school teachers (around 15% of total teachers) have suffered a drop of 50% in salaries on average. This finding is again in line with Upoalkpajor (2020), the COVID-19 pandemic has significant impact on education in Ghana; schools want resources to reconstruct the loss in education through the epidemic. In this study, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis that there

was no impact of COVID19 on education as the calculated value of 28.211 was greater than the critical value of 5.99. Therefore, the alternate hypothesis which stated that there was an impact of COVID19 on education was accepted.

Conclusion

The study focused on the internalizing and externalizing factors as predictive impact of covid-19 on private schools in the Dormaa Ahenkro district, Ghana. Analysis from collected data revealed a grand mean of 3.29 indicating that schools experienced negative impact of Covid-19. The p-value $0.96 > 0.05$ suggests that the impact of Covid-19 on the schools were similar. The respondents pointed the following factors as being the dominants effects among all the ten variables measured; students exiting the schools, parents and guardians finding it difficult to pay the tuition of their wards, hostility among some staff, decrease in academic enthusiasm of students, the schools in need of government relief funds, schools reducing the total number of their employees, schools unable to pay their taxes during the outbreak, hostility among some students and teachers exiting the schools for other jobs.

Recommendations

1. The leadership of the association of private schools should put in the necessary measures to educate their member schools on the need to stay positive in times of crisis. The schools should try and provide the necessary incentives for their teachers and workers during crisis times.
2. The association of private schools should try and secure government support for their members as a group. The leadership should be proactive in negotiating with government on the need to assist member schools especially in crisis times.
3. Private schools, best known to be well resourced in Ghana, should implement online learning in order to make their students active all the time, especially if they had to stay home for too long.
4. The school heads and the proprietors should periodically try and organize workshops for their teachers especially in situations which will require human adjustments as seen in the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak.

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