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Trend of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Instructional Supervision in Public Higher Learning Institutions: A Case of Arusha Region, Tanzania

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Abstract: The emergence of the COVID -19 pandemic as a new phenomenon on the globe has raised the eyebrows of educators to find ways of improving supervision as normally as it used to be before the pandemic. However, disruption of instruction has, by and large, caused a lot of inconveniences from both students and educators alike. The purpose of this study was to determine the trend of the COVID-19 pandemic on instructional supervision in public higher learning institutions in Arusha, Tanzania. The study applied a descriptive-correlation design using a quantitative approach. The sample size employed in the study was 151 respondents chosen randomly from the population of 450 instructors. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics applied mean scores and standard deviation (SD). We employed the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (rho) to determine the relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and instructional supervision in public higher learning institutions. Findings for the first research question showed COVID-19 pandemic has affected instructional supervision in public higher learning institutions. Findings for the second research question revealed that instructors have had a hard time meeting instructional obligations as they normally did before the emergence of the COVID 19 pandemic. Findings for the third research question showed that there was a strong positive correlation between the COVID-19 situation and the instructional supervision in public higher learning institutions in Arusha Region. Based on the study findings, this research concludes that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected immensely on instructional supervision in public higher learning institutions in the Arusha Region. Based on the same findings, this study recommends that the government should increase grants for education to institutions to empower them with an adequate supply of Personal Protective Equipments (PPE) such as hand sanitizers, and face masks and also be able to furnish their labs with computer gadgets to ensure off-classroom learning possible.

Keywords: Covid-19 Pandemic, Instructional supervision, higher learning institutions.

INTRODUCTION

The global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has spread worldwide, affecting almost all countries and territories. The outbreak was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. The world got besieged by a COVID-19 pandemic that disrupted human lives globally, leaving a trail of destruction with massive loss of human lives Cennimo (2020). As noted by Cennimo (2020), coronavirus disease or COVID-19 is defined as the illness caused by a novel coronavirus called Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) which was first identified amid an outbreak of respiratory illness cases in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. The virus has so far claimed many lives worldwide. However, educational systems globally have been affected following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic that lead to total closures of schools, colleges, and universities. As of mid-January 2021, about 825 million learners worldwide were affected as a result of school closures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (UNESCO, 2021).

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, teaching and learning activities in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have been significantly affected (Mukherjee, 2020). Given this challenging environment, the education sector across the globe has chosen to move from the traditional face-to-face classroom to online teaching and learning (Cuaton, 2020). In this context, facilitating better access to information and communications technology (ICT) or digital technologies in HEIs has become increasingly important. There are direct benefits of having easier and faster access to information through ICT adoption (Adam, 2003). Online teaching and learning is a teaching method that adopts digital technologies. Such learning is often referred to as 'e-learning'. Conventionally, online teaching and learning are seen as a type of 'distance learning'—the umbrella term which is used to describe any learning that takes place across distance and not in a traditional classroom (Ya, 2020).

The lockdown and prolonged institutional closures have long-term ramifications, particularly for the marginalized and most vulnerable children who already experience barriers accessing education, or who are at higher risk of being excluded for several reasons. These include learners with disabilities, those in urban slums, informal settlements; remote locations, asylum seekers and refugees, and those whose families have lost livelihoods as a result of job cuts or businesses closures and casual jobs among other difficult situations (Yan, 2020).

The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic in Spain, about 11 million students were affected by school closures for mitigation of the spread of

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Coronavirus (El Pais,2020). Regional governments in the country closed down schools in response to the increased cases of Coronavirus in the country. The closure of schools in Spain particularly in Madrid led to the suspension of job contracts for people who work at school cafeterias and in special education (El Pais, 2020). The closure of schools in Spain was very necessary considering that the country lost 849 people in a day due to Coronavirus.

The government of India on March 24, 2020, a complete lockdown was enforced to control the spread of the virus (BBC News, 2021). The schools were shut down indefinitely and instructors had no clue about the future. The first challenge for the instructors to overcome was being restrained within the four walls. This led to the building of vicarious fear, as instructors are not really on the frontline to fight the pandemic. This symptom was largely seen in many professions across the world (Montemurro, 2020). Work from home was a novel concept and teachers had to adjust to it (Gautam and Sharma, 2020). Teachers had to adjust to new technology and the help needed to upgrade their knowledge and technical know-how was absent or at best limited (Joshi, Vinay, and Bhaskar, 2020). The lack of adequate support in the entire ecosystem did not help in getting the instructors motivated to learn and adapt to the new challenges. There was a paucity of funds and infrastructure for an immediate upgrading of technology to support teaching from home. Online teaching needed good laptops and internet connectivity, which in many cases had to be shared by the entire family (ibid). All this created a sense of demotivation and frustration among the instructors.

Moreover, these socio-economical and infrastructural factors further widened the division between the privileged and the underprivileged. Instructors did not have the experience of gauging the understanding and grasp of the students on an online platform and some were not well versed in communication on the online mode (ibid). Where individuals had the hand-holding of institutions under good leadership, the outcomes were positive with the successful transition towards online classes. Students learned better and instructors had a healthy mind-frame to take up the challenges of the pandemic (ibid). Evidence suggests that although teachers were inexperienced and unprepared for this drastic change, they were moderately keen to use various digital tools and willing to make online learning work (Gudmundsdottir and Hathaway, 2020).

Michael (2020) reported that dozens of independent schools were shut down in New South Wales while some moved to online classes. Students learn from home, while some schools were opened but implemented strong measures to ensure social distancing strategy. The opening of schools amidst the coronavirus pandemic was backed by the Australian government. The Prime Minister openly announced that schools remained open because the government believes that "children are at very low risk from coronavirus, and the closing of schools could have crippling effects on their health sector and the economy". The government cited solid health cases for keeping schools open, but teachers and parents were worried (ABC News, 2020). The country also banned outdoor gatherings of more than 2 people, while 18 billion dollars was also approved to mitigate the spread and effects of the Coronavirus.

Following the World Health Organization's announcement of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, President Cyril Ramaphosa declared a national disaster in South Africa on 15 March 2020. The declaration saw all tertiary institutions in South Africa implement measures designed to ensure the social isolation mandate while continuing with their core business. From a week before the formal declaration of the national disaster, various mechanisms were put in place to manage the anticipated lockdown (which took effect at midnight on 26 March 2020), many hurriedly. At the University of Johannesburg (UJ), an urgent review of all business continuity plans (BCPs) in domains across the university was conducted to make provision for the national lockdown measures. The overarching objective remained the completion of the academic year and the safety of students and staff.

The effect of COVID-19 pandemic in Cambodia, for example, teachers and students, particularly in rural areas, do not have reliable internet access and are not capable of using emerging technology, making online learning a difficult, if not frustrating, experience for many (Flynn & Himel, 2020). Despite the efforts by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS) to provide online learning opportunities by disseminating video lessons through television and other online platforms such as MoEYS Facebook page, YouTube channel, and e-learning website, the

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number of students who have had access to online learning is still low (UNESCO, 2020).

In Tanzania, on 16th March 2020, the first person was announced to have been affected by COVID-19. Tanzania Broad Casting-1 (2020). On 17th March 2020, the government announced a national wide closure of all colleges and schools for an unknown period. These containments and mitigations measures were necessary despite their indirect impact which is also far-reaching. The last detailed COVID cases report was published on 29th April 2020, the report shows 480 cases and 21 deaths; since then, the government has not released any data. This delay has been reported by the Minister of Health Community development, Gender, Elderly and Children to have been caused by the ongoing renovation work in the national laboratory. On 18th May 2020, there was a report of 509 COVID cases with 183 recovered and 21 deaths (WHO 2020; World meter).
Statistics indicate that in Tanzania, more than 14,580,315 children and youth who are enrolled in schools and colleges were affected. Out of this number, 10,111,671 are in Primary schools; 1,991,021 are in lower secondary Schools; 155,445 in High Schools and 173,712 in various tertiary institutions (The national bureau of statistics, 2018). This number does not include several children who are currently enrolled in pre-primary and nursery schools.

To catch up with current educational needs several alternatives to rescue the educational programs ought to be put in place at all costs. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided us with an opportunity to pave the way for introducing digital learning (Dhawan, 2020). E-learning tools have played a crucial role during this pandemic to some other parts of the world, helping schools and universities to facilitate student learning during the closure of universities and schools (Subedi. *et al*., 2020). While adapting to new changes, staff and student readiness needs to be gauged and supported accordingly. Therefore, this study aimed at determining the trend of the COVID-19 pandemic on instructional supervision and how to mitigate the risk of closure of educational institutions in the future.

Statement of the Problem

Lockdown and social distancing measures due to the COVID-19 pandemic have led to closures of schools, training institutes, and higher education facilities in most countries. There is a paradigm shift in the way educators deliver quality education through various online platforms. According to (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020) online learning also allows physically challenged students with more freedom to participate in learning in the virtual environment, requiring limited movement, proposes that online learning, distance, and continuing education have become a panacea for this unprecedented global pandemic despite the challenges posed to both educators and learners. Transitioning from traditional face-to-face learning to online learning can be an entirely different experience for the learners and the educators, which they must adapt to with little or no other alternatives available. In the case of Tanzania where online learning ability is limited to a few individuals within institutions, there are many challenges in meeting this emergent demand. Many universities lack the human and material resources needed in tackling online learning requirements. Many higher learning institutions do not have the required infrastructure to fully run online lessons making it impossible to continue with lessons during the lockdown period. It was against this background that this study sought to determine the trend of the covid 19 pandemic on instructional supervision, particularly in higher learning institutions in the Arusha region.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What is the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic in public higher learning institutions?
2. What is the instruction supervision like during the COVID-19 pandemics?
3. Is there a significant relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and instructional supervision in higher learning institutions?

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a survey research design. In this design, descriptive and inferential statistics were applied to respond to different research questions accordingly. The research was conducted in the Arusha region, Tanzania. The target population of the study was 450 instructors from three public higher learning institutions. Out of the 450 instructors, a sample of 151 respondents was randomly selected to respond to the study. Out of 151 sampled respondents, males were 101 and females were 50. A self-constructed questionnaire was used as a tool for data collection. Descriptive statistics involved the calculation of means and standard deviation which was used to address

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research questions one and two. While question three, Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (rho) was used to determine the relationship between variables. The correlation was determined at r = 0.05 level of significance.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The study used a 4 point scale interpreted as follows: 1 = Strongly Disagree (1.00-1.49); 2 = Disagree (1.50-2.49); 3 = Agree (2.50-3.49); and 4 = strongly Agree (3.50-4.00) which was used to respond to research question one and two.

Research Question 1: What is the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic in public higher learning institutions?

Table 1: Descriptive statistics for the situation of COVID-19 pandemic

	N	M	SD	Interpretation
My institution schedules were intact even during the COVID-19 pandemic	151	2.48	.80	Disagree
My institution was open during the COVID-19 pandemic	151	2.37	.83	Disagree
My institution has had cases of COVID-19 among instructors	151	3.42	1.00	Agree
My institution has had cases of COVID-19 among students	151	3.26	1.33	Agree
I felt depressed during the COVID-19 pandemic in my institution	151	3.62	1.28	Agree
The institution community was surrounded by fear during the pandemic	151	3.63	.81	Agree
Instruction supervisions were conducted normally	151	2.48	.92	disagree
My job was safely secured anyway	151	2.47	.79	disagree
Valid N (listwise)	151			
Overall Mean		**2.96**	**.97**	

Key: N = Number of respondents; M = Mean score, SD = Standard Deviation

As observed in Table 1 above, the mean score of responses to the eight items ranged between 2.50 and 3.49 denoting agreement that COVID 19 pandemic had a serious effect on instructional supervision in higher learning institutions. Respondents agreed that school calendars and schedules were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic (M = 2.48; SD = .80); also agreed that institutions were closed during the COVID-19 pandemic (M = 2.37; SD = .83); They further agreed that institutions had cases of covid 19 pandemic on both instructors and students (M =3.42; SD = 1.00 and M = 3.26; SD = 1.33 respectively). They were also in suspense whether their jobs could be spared in such a situation (M = 2.47; SD = .79). Finally, they agreed that the general atmosphere of the institutions was full of fear (M = 3.63; SD = .81). Events such as these have not happened for a long time and hence people tend to forget when and how to prepare for eventualities such as the Covid 19 pandemic and other calamities. On the question of instructional supervision, it appears that both instructors and learners were not well prepared for the predicament which led to the disruption of teaching and learning schedules everywhere. It is, therefore, imperative to seek alternative platforms that will help ease the situation should pandemics strike: approaches such as virtual learning, google classroom, zoom conferences, must be opted and instituted to rescue the situation.

These findings are supported by the discoveries of Ade (2020) who found out that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the academic program of Senior Secondary Schools in Nigeria because major external examinations would be postponed. The global lockdown of education institutions was going to cause a major (and likely unequal) interruption in students' learning; disruptions in internal assessments; and the cancellation of public assessments for qualifications or their replacement by an inferior alternative (Simon & Hans, 2020). Similar to the findings of the current study, another study by Msigwa (2020) also found that the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted school timetables. Schools were required to operate for five months without taking a break. Moreover, the study by Msigwa (2020) also revealed that two more hours were added for teaching and learning activities. Simon & Hans, (2020) also observed that the closure of schools, colleges, and universities not only interrupts the teaching for students around the world; the closure also coincides with a key

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assessment period and many exams have been postponed or canceled. Furthermore, Wikipedia (2020) submitted that the 2019–20 coronavirus pandemic has affected educational systems worldwide, leading to the widespread closures of schools and universities and has altered the lives of 1,576,021,818 learners in 188 countries (UNESCO, 2020).

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures (2020), "governors and legislatures called for the statewide closure of at least 124,000 public schools in 48 states and every U.S. territory". These findings imply that instructions were badly affected during the COVID 19 pandemics and no stone was left unturned.

Research question 2: What is instructional supervision like during the COVID 19 pandemics?

Table 2: Descriptive statistics for Instructional Supervision

	N	M	SD	Interpretation
I managed to meet students for instructions regularly	151	2.43	1.01	Disagree
I managed to give feedback to students on time	151	2.33	.91	Disagree
I managed to meet students for assignment presentation	151	1.86	.96	Disagree
I could easily access library resources	151	2.19	1.09	Disagree
I could communicate easily with my students	151	2.39	1.36	Disagree
Take-home assignments were always submitted on time	151	1.81	1.33	Disagree
My instructions were well managed regardless of COVID-19	151	1.59	1.53	Disagree
Valid N (listwise)	150			
Overall mean		**2.09**	**1.17**	

Key: N = Number of respondents; M = Mean score, SD = Standard Deviation

Table 2 reveals how instructional supervision during the COVID-19 pandemic was highly affected. The mean score of 2.09 falls between 1.50 and 2.49 denoting disagreement that all the seven items mentioned could meet the deserved attention. Particularly, take-home assignments (M = 1.81; SD = 1.33) and management of instruction (M = 1.59; SD = 1.53) were seriously affected by the COVID-19 pandemic as they appear to lag below the average mean score of 2.09. On the whole, these results tend to suggest that instructional supervision was not any better during COVID-19 pandemics and that resources, investment, and time were completely wasted. This is because instructors and students had not prepared for alternative learning. Again, the questions may be: do our institutions ready enough to go online instruction? Are our instructors and students savvy enough with the technological exposure? The reality demands something to be done the soonest possible. It is going to be an even more tragedy on instructions if the educational systems are not putting effort into dealing with the unforeseeable future.

These findings are in harmony with the observations of Williamson. *et al*., (2020) and Sintema (2020) who observe that the lockdown in many countries occasioned by the pandemic requires us to hold the mirror up to what happens when classroom space-time travels in the other direction, into the home environment, introducing the polysynchronous world of learning in the digital age into the rhythms of family life. They further report this transformation affecting instructional supervision, and take-home assignments are always submitted late. In alignment with the discussed fact, they stated that the level of academic performance of the students was likely to drop for the classes held for both year-end examination and internal examination due to reduced contact hours for learners and lack of consultation with teachers when facing difficulties in learning.

Another observation is noted by (Daniel, 2020; Gillett-Swan, 2017) who comply with the fact that the emergency of coronavirus has generally affected the economies of both developed and developing countries. The impact is far-reaching and has seriously affected learning in almost every academic year. Several schools, colleges, and universities have discontinued face-to-face teaching. For instance, online or distance learning amid the pandemic has created more stress, frustration, and isolation for students who have lost the opportunity for peer interactions.

Research Question 3: Is there a significant relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and instructional supervision in public higher learning institutions?

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This research question sought to determine the relationship between the independent and dependent variables and therefore, called for testing of the following hypothesis using Pearson Product Moment Correlational Coefficient (rho) that there is no significant relationship between the COVID-19 pandemics and the instructional supervision in public higher learning institutions. The nature of the existing correlation would be either positive or negative and was interpreted under Cohen's formula as follows: ≥ .70= strong relationship; ≥ .50 = moderate relationship and ≤.50= weak relationship.

This research question sought to determine whether COVID-19 pandemics had any effect on instructional supervision in public higher learning institutions.

Table 4.7: Correlation between the prevalence/situation of the COVID19 pandemics and instruction supervision in selected higher learning institutions

		Covid19	**Instruction**
Situation of Covid-19 pandemics	Pearson Correlation	1	.680*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	151	151
Instructional supervision	Pearson Correlation	.680*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	151	151

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 shows a correlation between the independent and the dependent variables under investigation and therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected, meaning that there is a significant relationship between the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and that of instructional supervision.

The findings have indicated a strong and positive correlation that exists between the effect of COVID-19 and how it affected instructional supervision in higher learning institutions (Sig=.000, r=.680). This suggests that the COVID-19 pandemics impose a great threat on instructional supervision in higher learning institutions. To break the chain of relationships, alternative learning must be improved to suppress the ruthlessness of pandemics during instructional supervision.

The foregoing findings are in line with previous studies as that of Msigwa (2021) who showed that COVID-19 affected education delivery in Tanzanian schools in terms of delays in implementation of school timetable and disruption of final examinations. Moreover, findings by the Human Rights Watch (2020) also revealed that COVID-19 has affected the provision of education in African countries. According to Human Rights Watch (2020) measures such as school closures caused by the pandemic worsened the earlier existing inequalities in the provision of education, and that children who were already at risk of being barred from quality education have been mostly affected. To break the relationship ties between the two variables, alternative learning approaches such as the application of zoom, google classroom and other virtual platforms are encouraged to take effect should pandemics of this nature dictate our new ways of teaching and learning activities.

CONCLUSION

Based on the study findings, this research draws three conclusions:

Firstly, the public higher learning institutions acknowledged that the COVID-19 pandemic was real and that it affected the teaching and learning transaction heavily. This was depicted with an average mean of response to the rest of the items in table 1 which meant that COVID 19 was rampant and could not spare any of the institutions under this study. All public higher learning institutions were equally affected by the pandemic.

Secondly, effective instructional supervision during the COVID-19 pandemic in public higher learning institutions was seriously affected. Respondents denoted that the only option to continue education during pandemics is to engage in online learning by employing various virtual education platforms.

Thirdly, with regards to the relationship between the COVID-19 pandemic and the instructional supervision in public higher learning institutions the following were concluded: The correlation was statistically significant 0.680 <0.05 p-value showing a strong positive correlation between the effect of COVID-19 situation on the instructional supervision in public higher learning institutions. These suggest that the COVID-19 pandemic has

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had a serious effect on instructional supervision in higher learning institutions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study findings and conclusion of the study, the following are the recommendations:
Instructors should regularly monitor students to ensure that students observe COVID-19 pandemic preventive behaviors such as avoiding overcrowded spaces, regularly washing hands, and wearing face masks to avoid unnecessary life losses. Alternatively, instructors should find ways such as using online platforms to continue mitigating the risk by instructing students even during hard times such as that of COVID 19 pandemics. The government should also see to it that internet connectivity is well provided to help ease the burden of school closures in the future.

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