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# The Economic Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic in Lagos, Nigeria. The Case of Female Alcohol Sellers.

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ADEJUWON Iretiayo

# THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID- 19 PANDEMIC IN LAGOS NIGERIA:

THE CASE OF FEMALE ALCOHOL SELLERS



IFRA-Nigeria

WORKING PAPERS SERIES

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# IFRA-NIGERIA WORKING PAPERS SERIES

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## **THE ECONOMIC IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN LAGOS, NIGERIA. THE CASE OF FEMALE ALCOHOL SELLERS.**

### **Biography**

Iretiayo Adejuwon holds a Master's degree in Cultural Anthropology from University of Ibadan and Bachelor of Arts in Mass Communication from Adekunle Ajasin University. Her main research interest centers in the area of Culture and Humanities. Iretiayo research uses ethnography as a research method to investigate culture and society. She is also concerned about ethics, human communication and behavior. She investigated the socio-cultural factors that surround alcohol commercialization among Yoruba women in Ibadan North West for her M.A. Thesis.

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### **Abstract**

The increase in number of infected persons and increase in death records in cities like Lagos, Abuja and Ogun resulted to Government imposed movement restriction of people, a

pause on economic activities, closure of businesses, offices and marketplaces. Speculation<sup>1</sup> had it that alcohol consumption was a natural precautionary measure for Covid-19 and thus triggered an increased in alcohol sales during the COVID-19 pandemic in Lagos. This paper analyses the economic impact of COVID-19 pandemic in Lagos State and the economic consequential impact of the pandemic among the female alcohol sellers and also assesses the economic contribution of women during the pandemic period. The research method used for this study involved the use of qualitative research method through the anthropological data collection methods which rely on first-hand information collected on the field which includes in-depth interview and focus group discussion and on secondary data as academic journals, newspapers and online sources.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, Alcohol, Speculation, Lockdown, Pandemic

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<sup>1</sup>Alcohol-and-COVID-19-what-you-need-to-know.retrievedfrom[https://www.euro.who.int/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/437608/](https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/437608/) on 16 May, 2021

## Introduction

Ever since the influenza pandemic of 1918 and the Second World War (1939-1945), the world has not been faced with a common problem in recent memory like the COVID-19 pandemic. Unprecedented in nature, over 10.4 million diagnosed cases and over 510,000 deaths have occurred as a result of COVID-19 globally<sup>2</sup>. Apparently, the global world has witnessed many occurring health catastrophes, ranging from cholera, malaria, typhoid, Lassa Fever, Ebola, tuberculosis (TB), hepatitis, and Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) which develops to Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) among others. However, Covid-19 does not only threaten human health but also has had huge economic consequences across the globe.

## Methodology

The scope of this study is restricted to alcohol sellers in Eti Osa and Ibeju Lekki Local Government in Lagos State. The study adopts the use of qualitative research method which includes both primary and secondary sources of data collection. The primary sources, which relies on first-hand information collected on the field includes in-depth interview and focus group discussion. The interviews were semi-structured because it is flexible, allowing both the interviewer and the subject to follow leads that may come up in the course of the interview and for the subject to express personal views. The Focus Group Discussion was used to generate information on collective views, and the meanings that lie behind those views. They are useful in generating a rich understanding of participants' experiences and beliefs. The secondary sources were historical analysis, academic journals, newspapers and online sources. In the process of information gathering, the researcher met with motorists who gave useful information about the sellers shop and point of sale, as well as the best time to meet with them<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Johns Hopkins University. 2020. COVID-19 dashboard by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University (JHU). Accessed on: on 04 May, 2021. Available at: <https://gisanddata.maps.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>

<sup>3</sup> This approach was adopted because it was helpful during a previous fieldwork carried out by the researcher on Socio-Cultural Factors That Surrounds Alcohol Commercialization among Yoruba Women in Ibadan North West.



**Plate 1: The Researcher and Union Leader and Secretary at the first meeting with the alcohol seller Union Members at Ibeju-Lekki**

Approval for this study was given by the alcohol seller's Union Leaders after the objectives and significant of this study was discussed. The researcher later visited the Participants for this study in their shops, cabins and roadside kiosks at Eti Osa and Ibeju Lekki Local government, Lagos and also attended their weekly meetings where they had most of the focus group discussion. Interviews were conducted in Yoruba and English language at different locations within the study areas. At the initial stage of this study, the respondents were reluctant to admit alcohol sales during lock down, there were fearful because they mistook the researcher for a detective or government spy. The fieldwork last from 22 October to 19 December, 2020<sup>4</sup>. The total numbers of participants were forty four (44), thirty three (33) women<sup>5</sup> and eleven (11) men but the researcher only documented thirty two (32) participants because some participants refused to give their details<sup>6</sup>. While some participants bluntly rejected voice recording and image capturing, few agreed to image capturing only from behind<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> However, the researcher went back to the feild on January 14, 2021 for updated facts that lasted only for three days.

<sup>5</sup> Of these women, twenty one (21) identified as married, eight (8) identified as single, two (2) identified as widow and two (2) identified as divorced.

<sup>6</sup> These participants were mostly men who joined the focus group discussion at the seller's point of sale and few women, especially hawkers.

<sup>7</sup> This was a major limitation to the study as many participants especially the hawkers refused to be captured or recorded.



**Plate 2: The Researcher and a seller turning her back at the camera**

## **Covid-19 in Nigeria**

Nigeria as a country in West Africa is estimated to a population of about Two Hundred Million people. It is the most populous African country with a diverse demographic background. It has about two hundred and fifty ethnic groups and about five hundred dialects. The Federal system of government is practiced where there is devolution of powers between the Federal and the other Federating units as States and Local Governments. Nigeria has thirty-six States including the Federal Capital Territory (FCT) Abuja. The corona virus outbreak initially spread through Nigeria and many other African countries with no recorded case as of January 2020. This luck, however, did not last and by late February, Nigeria reported its first case<sup>8</sup>. There was panic and unrest when the individual was found to be sick. The index case was promptly isolated, and medication given for mild symptoms of the disease. His case was confirmed by the Virology Laboratory of the Lagos University Teaching Hospital. The Italian man came into the country through Murtala Muhammad International Airport in Lagos State at 10:00 p.m. on 24<sup>th</sup> February, 2020 on-board Turkish airline from Milan, Italy. He headed to his company's site at Ogun state from Lagos where he was suspected to have had the virus. Consequently, all the people who had

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<sup>8</sup> Otekunrin O.A, Fasina FO, Omotayo AO, Otekunrin OA, Akram M. COVID-19 in Nigeria: Why continuous spike in cases? Asian Pac J Trop Med 2021; 14(1): 1-4. Accessed on 16 May, 2021.

contact with him in Ogun were all quarantined by the Ogun State Government. Lagos State

Government and the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) afterwards swift into the contact tracing method to locate all persons on the manifesto of the flight that brought the Italian to Nigeria and that spark the beginning of Covid-19 in Nigeria as the second case was confirmed on the 9th March 2020. To tackle the virus after other cases were confirmed in the Country, the Nigerian government swift into different measures to contain the disease and its impact on society. The Federal Government, through the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA), restricted International commercial flights into the country, effective from 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2020. Unfortunately, according to Nigeria Centre for Disease and Control, 2020, Nigeria recorded her first Covid-19 death, a 67-year-old male who had returned from United Kingdom and had underlying health conditions that were been managed before his death at Abuja. As of 7 April, 2020, a total of 238 cases were recorded, with five deaths and 35 recovered but the number has significantly increased with 456 deaths and 61.122 confirmed cases in Lagos<sup>9</sup>.

## **Covid-19 in Lagos State**

Surprisingly, at a point, the whole of Europe and beyond, especially, the Republic of China could not initially render help to any Nation<sup>10</sup>. Every country was struggling to contain the spread of COVID-19. All stakeholders in terms of containment were at war situation. Every nation was trying to protect its citizens. Even among the victims of the virus, one's immune system determines his or her survival. The speculation that people may drop dead on the streets of African countries<sup>11</sup>, a myth stirred up from the fact all developed Nations are focusing on their citizens and unable to render assistance and lack of well equipped medical facilities and personnel in African countries, combine with WHO naming Nigeria as one of the probable hotspots for the transmission of Covid-19 in the Africa continent being the most populous West African nation, in addition to the

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<sup>9</sup> Covid-19 in Nigeria retrieved from <https://covid19.ncdc.gov.ng/> Accessed on 06 May, 2021

<sup>10</sup>Ennuac, F. (2000). Physical Anthropology, Deskwu. McGraw- Hill London. The Socio-Economic Effects of Covid-19 Global Pandemic on Nigeria's Development Abraham

<sup>11</sup>Melinda Gates's statement about Covid-19 in Africa retrieved:<https://africacheck.org/fact-checks/fbchecks/melinda-gates-said-she-feared-coronavirus-africa-would-lead-dead-being-put-out> Accessed on 28 June, 2021



truckload of misinformation and fake news of the Covid-19 induced fear in Nigeria, especially in Lagos because of its large population.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> of April, Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) has recorded over 1,300<sup>12</sup> cases, with 40 deaths and the spread was concentrated in Abuja, Ogun state, with Lagos at the lead. Thus, Nigeria federal government announced that grants would be given to fight COVID-19, with NGN10 billion given to Lagos State, as it had the country's highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases. 35 out of 36 States have 5797 total confirmed cases of COVID-19 with Lagos leading with 2373<sup>13</sup> cases, this may be due to the population of the state in part of country.

Despite the scientifically proven preventive measures put in place to contain the spread of the novel Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) by the government, the virus continued to spread to other states in the country as some public holders in the Country tested positive to the virus. Among the public holders who tested positive to the virus in Nigeria are the Chief of Staff to the President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, Abba Kyari; Governor of Bauchi State, Bala Mohammed; Governor of Oyo State, Seyi Makinde among others<sup>14</sup>. In response, the Government authorized a 2-week lockdown on March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020 in Lagos, Ogun, and Abuja, and on April 13, extended it with other 2-weeks<sup>15</sup>. These seven days partial lockdown in the state was announced by the Lagos State Governor, Babajide Sanwo Olu on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> of March. And on 29<sup>th</sup> of March, President Muhammadu Buhari gave the authorization.

Based on the advice of the Federal Ministry of Health and the NCDC, I am directing the cessation of all movements in Lagos and the FCT for an initial period of 14 days with effect from 11 pm on Monday, 30th March 2020. This restriction will also apply to Ogun State due to its close proximity to Lagos and the high traffic between the two States. All citizens in these areas are to stay in their homes. Travel to or from other states should be postponed.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://covid19.ncdc.gov.ng/> Accessed on 02 May, 2021.

<sup>13</sup> [www.covid19.ncdc.gov.ng](http://www.covid19.ncdc.gov.ng) 17th, May 2020 Accessed on 02 May, 2021

<sup>14</sup> Worldometer (2020). *Total Corona virus cases in Nigeria*. <https://www.worldometers.info/Corona-virus/country/nigeria/>.

<sup>15</sup> Kalu, B. (2020). COVID-19 in Nigeria: a disease of hunger. *The Lancet*.8(6): 556-557

All businesses and offices within these locations should be fully closed during this period<sup>16</sup>.

President Muhammadu Buhari also announced that federal government grants would be given to fight COVID-19, with NGN10 billion given to Lagos State, as it had the country's highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases, and a five billion naira special intervention fund to the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC).

## **The Economic Impact of COVID-19 in Lagos State, Nigeria**

Coronavirus disease has negatively affected both financial and non-financial performance of business in Nigeria<sup>17</sup>. The lockdown caused a negative impact which led to crisis on businesses in Lagos State and the nation at large. All sectors in the State were affected, all tertiary, secondary and primary schools were under lock, banks, insurance and commerce companies, market places, transportation and religious centers. Reports<sup>18</sup> has it that the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak has forced many businesses to close, leading to an unprecedented disruption of commerce in most industry sectors. Retailers and brands face many short-term challenges, such as those related to health and safety, the supply chain, the workforce, cash flow, consumer demand, sales, and marketing. The pandemic led to restricted social contact and all offices and manufacturing industries were shut down. Consequently, it resulted to reduction in economic and commercial activities. As a result, organizations who were unable to sustain themselves were forced to lay off staff and workers while others slashed salaries.

Economic crisis has been part of every country and Nigeria had like other countries has witnessed two major economic crises in the past, 2009 and 2016. While the 2009 economic crisis recession was caused by a combination of the after-effect of the 2007-2008 global financial crisis, poor loan underwriting process, bad risk management practices and poor corporate governance of

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<sup>16</sup> Presidential Speech on Covid-19 lockdown retrieved from <https://guardian.ng/features/for-the-record/buharis-national-broadcast-speech-on-coronavirus/> Accessed on 19 June, 2021

<sup>17</sup> Aifuwa, H.O., Saidu, M and Aifuwa S.A. (2020). Coronavirus pandemic outbreak and firms performance in disguise. Retrieved from <http://www.researchgate.net/publication/341152>

<sup>18</sup> Donthu, N., & Gustafsson, A. (2020). Effects of COVID-19 on business and research. *Journal of Business Research*, 117(2020), 284-289. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2020.06.008>.

Nigerian banks<sup>19</sup>, 2016 economic crisis was caused by unexpected decline in oil price which led to a sharp drop in oil revenue which severely affected Nigeria's foreign reserve<sup>20</sup>.

Nigeria like every other countries introduced various precautionary measures in the country on the 30<sup>th</sup> of March 2020. One of these was the closures of offices and commercial outlet authorization in Lagos State. The people were forced to stay in their homes, marketplaces, businesses, religious Centers, Schools and offices were closed, except for

- Hospitals and all related medical establishments as well as organizations in healthcare-related manufacturing and distribution.
- Food processing, distribution, and retail companies;
- Petroleum distribution and retail entities Power generation, transmission and distribution companies
- Media Outlets
- Private security companies.

This however worked against the means of livelihood of many whose businesses involve face-to-face contact. Covid-19 cause major inconveniences to citizens and deeply interrupted commercial activities and the income inflow of citizens in Lagos State. Commercial activities have always been very strong in the city and are carried out at both the formal and informal levels. Agriculture and fishing and distributive trade which include small traders and businessmen are the largest employers of people without formal education. Alcohol sellers, the case study of the research falls in the category of Lagos citizens who rely solely on proceeds from their sales. The restriction was eased after four weeks and businesses were allowed to resume operations. Supermarkets, grocery stores and food markets were allowed to operate from 10:00 to 16:00 every Mondays and Tuesdays while other business owners operate on Wednesdays and Fridays from 10:00 to 16:00. To this, guidelines for the partial lockdown was issued by the PTF and state governments<sup>21</sup>

The guidelines for phase two, which were in place from June 02, 2020 – June 29, 2020, include:

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<sup>19</sup> Sanusi L. S. (2010). "Growth prospects in Africa after the crisis". A Paper presented during a Central Bank of Nigeria workshop at Abuja, Nigeria.

<sup>20</sup> Adeniran, A. O., & Sidiq, B. O. (2018). Economic recession and the way-out: Nigeria as case study. *Global Journal of Human Social Science*, 18(1), 181-192.

<sup>21</sup> <https://covid19.ncdc.gov.ng/advisory/> Accessed on 19 June, 2021.

- The nationwide curfew remains in place but the time has been changed to 10:00 P.M. – 4:00 A.M. daily. Healthcare workers and journalists are exempted from his curfew.
- Banks may resume normal working hours.
- Government offices will be open between 9:00 A.M. and 2:00 P.M. Monday – Friday.
- The ban on interstate movement remains in effect except for agricultural produce, petroleum products, manufactured goods, and essential services.
- All airports remain closed to domestic and international travel, except for emergency flights. The PTF is considering plans to reopen airports for domestic flights by June 21, 2020 if proper protocols are put in place by the aviation industry.
- Face masks or coverings are mandatory in public settings and hand washing/sanitizing practices must continue to be followed.
- Ban on gatherings of more than 20 people outside of a workplace.
- Relaxation of restrictions on places of worship based on guidelines issued by the PTF and State governments

## Key Economic Impact of Covid-19 in Lagos City

Development of small and medium scale enterprises has been a focal point of the various governments of the world, because SMEs have flexible configurations and immensely contributed to nation building respectively.<sup>22</sup> The retail business has been considered as the most important player in the supply chain as it fulfils the customer demand and shares the actual demand data with suppliers.<sup>23</sup> Reports have revealed that many medium and large firms reduced their employees by retrenching some workers while few others reduced their employee's basic salary<sup>24</sup> and there is a risk of over 20 million job losses in the

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<sup>22</sup> Aderemi, T.A.; Tolulope, A.C.; Adedayo, A. & Arinola, B.L. (2019). Entrepreneurship Financing and Nation Building in Nigeria: Evidence from Agricultural Small and Medium Scale Enterprises. *Management Studies and Economic Systems*, Vol. 4, No.4, pp. 315-330

<sup>23</sup>Wilson, M.C. (2007). The impact of transportation disruptions on supply chain performance. *Transport Res E Logist Transport Rev.*, 43 (4), 295-320

<sup>24</sup> Aladejebi, O. (2020). Managing small businesses in Nigeria during Covid-19 crisis: Impact and survival strategies. *IOSR Journal of Business and Management* perceived that the one of effects of COVID-19 pandemic was a decline in revenue as well as reduction in salaries.

Africa continent<sup>25</sup> because COVID-19 pandemic will result to global economy melt-down that will pick up at a slow pace due to the incessant closure of business.<sup>26</sup> Following the restriction that accompanied the Covid-19 crisis, many business activities in the medium and large firms were forced to stand still and this rendered most people redundant<sup>27</sup>. Therefore, most petty traders in Lagos took up the responsibilities for their family needs. Among these petty traders are the alcohol sellers in Ibeju Lekki and Eti Osa Local Government. These sellers are divided into two: the alcohol herbal mixture sellers and the spirit alcoholic sellers. However, based on the responses from participants, it appears that the restriction guidelines were not totally adhered to as some citizens carried on their businesses activities and this was common and obvious among people who live in close quarters of the selected areas. The response of the participants indicates that many marketers violated the restriction guidelines because they lack the resources to survive the lockdown as their trade was their only means of livelihood.

What do you expect me to do? My husband is Brick Layer and he cannot go to work. I have to look for a means to feed my family especially my kids. It was stressful and risky but I did it with full consciousness and alertness<sup>28</sup>

Violators of lock down guidelines justified their actions with the conviction that the people do not have the household resources and food supplies needed for a long-term lockdown as the government refused to make essential provisions for the citizens. According to some of the respondents, the government promised palliatives did not get to their areas. From the findings, eighty five percent (85%) of the participant dealt with anxiety and tensions during the lockdown period. According to them, the knowledge of the unavailability of Covid-19 vaccines

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<sup>25</sup>BBC. 2020. Coronavirus: India's pandemic lockdown turns into a human tragedy. Accessed on: 06:07 2021. Available at: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-indi-52086274>

<sup>26</sup>Aribisala Oluwadamilare Olufolarin Economic impact of COVID-19 lock down on small medium enterprise (smes) in lagos state.

<sup>27</sup> In March 2020, the International Labour Organization (ILO) estimated that the impact of COVID-19 would result in a rise in global unemployment of between 5.3m (low scenario) and 24.7m (high scenario).ILO (2020). COVID-19 and the world of work: Impact and policy responses. International Labour Organization Note. Retrieved from [www.ilo.org](http://www.ilo.org). on 05 July, 2021

<sup>28</sup>Interview with Alarire, a seller at sangotedo Market, Ibeju-Lekki local Government on 19 December, 2020

triggered the use of alcohol by so many people, which is the major factor that justifies the significant increase in alcohol demand during the lockdown period.

## Alcohol as a Coping Mechanism

The findings of this study concur with an earlier study<sup>29</sup> that ascertains that alcohol business is perhaps among the most profitable businesses among women. To set up an alcohol business is lucrative, combine with the high level of demand for alcohol, these are primary factors that encouraged many sellers to establish the business. Since the aim of all business is profit making, alcohol business is regarded as a major profit-making machine among the women. Similarly, this study also observed that alcohol business in Lagos State was one of the most lucrative and easy to establish business among women before the lockdown.



**Plate 3: The researcher and a seller inside Sangotedo market**

According to the participants, the sales of alcoholic beverages increased during the lockdown because people were indoor and restricted from productive

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<sup>29</sup>Adejuwon Iretiayo (2020) Socio-Cultural Factors That Surrounds Alcohol Commercialization Among Yoruba Women In Ibadan North West. A thesis submitted to the Institute of African Studies, University of Ibadan.

activities. Aside alcohol sellers, other small business owners also practiced ghost operation. Alcohol sellers mostly would go to their point of sales without displaying their wares and sell to their customers secretly and unnoticed. 55% of the participants revealed that there were more than double sales a day before the lockdown, while 75% participants recorded the increase in sales during the lockdown. Thus, response from the participants implies that Covid-19 lockdown was moneymaking for alcohol business as most of the sellers benefited from the lock down.

There were sales, I personally made sales because people who normally buys one or two before the lockdown changed from buying just one to buying five, six or more. This is because, we sell in secrecy, so when they come, they buy at once and in bulk<sup>30</sup>

For example, some sellers recorded massive sales during lock down because their houses were closer to their shops, point of sale and some devoted consumers located their prospective seller houses. However this massive turnaround was instigated by unverified information about alcohol being used as vaccine against Covid-19. During the focus group discussion, a respondent established that.

I am not surprised because alcohol has always being a life saver. I have not come across any illness alcohol mixture cannot cure. I don't do white medicine, I have never taken it. Am close to 45 and alcohol herbal mixture has been my medication<sup>31</sup>

While alcoholic herbal mixture was prescribed for intake, spirit alcohol was used as sanitizer. Taking advantage of the increase in alcohol demand, the sellers inflated the prices of alcoholic products. However, the increment did not hamper the sales and usage. The union secretary explains that

At the initial stage, People were scared of coming out so we barely make sales but after the news that alcohol prevents corona virus, things changed. We made double of our usual sales<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup>Interview with Modupe, an alcohol hawker at Badore Junction, Eti Osa on October 22, 2020

<sup>31</sup> An interaction during the focus group discussion with a customer at the seller's shop at Sangotedo Market on December 19, 2020.

<sup>32</sup>Interview with a seller at Ibeju Lekki on November 20, 2020.



**Plate 4: The researcher at Ibeju Lekki with a seller**

According to her, she bought more of sachet spirit alcohol which at that time has doubled in price. Customers preferred the sachet pack than sitting on her wooden benches for security reasons. The sachet popularly known as “pelebe”<sup>33</sup> (Flat) was sold for thirty naira (N30) per one and hundred naira (N100) for three sachets before the pandemic but increased to fifty naira (N50) per one sachet during the pandemic.

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<sup>33</sup><https://1stnews.com/pelebe-challenge-sachet-public-alcohol-adeola-oladipupo/> on July 19, 2021





**Plate 5: Image of Pelebe (sachet spirit)**

High number of respondents approved and certified the usage of alcohol as one of the most effective measures against Covid-19.

They said the virus cannot survive hot temperature, pelebe (sachet spirit) is very hot. So I drink two sachets and wash my hands with it. Some people even mixed it with atare (alligator Pepper). And I think it has been effective, we have majorly poor people here who cannot afford the vaccine or any expensive covid drugs, yet I have not seen or heard about any confirmed case in this area.<sup>34</sup>

On the contrary, World Health Organization (WHO) released a newsletter disclaiming the rumour that drinking alcohol can help protect people from Covid-19.

Consuming alcohol will not destroy the virus, and its consumption is likely to increase the health risks if a person becomes infected with the virus. Alcohol (at a concentration of at least 60% by volume) works as a disinfectant on your skin, but it has no such effect within your system when ingested. Consumption of alcohol will not kill the virus in the inhaled air; it will not disinfect your

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<sup>34</sup> Interaction with an alcohol user who works beside the alcohol seller at Abijo, Ibeju Lekki on November 8, 2020

mouth and throat; and it will not give you any kind of protection against COVID-19.<sup>35</sup>

Humans are social animal and like to socialize but the Covid-19 lockdown restrictions on their free movement constrain people to their homes. Aside the speculation of alcohol usage as vaccine against Covid-19, there were other reasons why alcohol activities before the lockdown was totally different from what emerge during the lockdown. Some members of the public, the poor, wealthy and those who are considered as learned and distinguished shifted their consumption spots from bars to their homes to deal with boredom and idleness. A respondent revealed that, most of the expensive drinks with high profit were bought by the well-to-do people, while the low-income earners settled for sachet spirit.

My customers increased because big boys in this area who prefers to drink in bars and clubs started patronizing me. They even buy more, especially the bottle spirit.<sup>36</sup>



**Plate 6: The researcher with the seller at Ogidan junction**

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<sup>35</sup> [https://www.euro.who.int/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0010/437608/](https://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0010/437608/) Accessed on 15 July, 2021

<sup>36</sup> Interview with an Alcohol seller at Ogidan Junction Ibeju Lekki on November 13, 2020

Few respondents revealed also that, in order to keep themselves busy and escape boredom, important items which include food, fuel, sachet water and alcohol were purchased before the lockdown. This confirms the seller's statement that sales of alcohol increased significantly a day to the lockdown and moderately during the lockdown.

## **Inflation**

Although movement restriction was placed on both inter-states and intra-state in Lagos State, especially commercial drivers, it however did not stop some daring commercial drivers to manipulate the means of transportation and still carried out their profession covertly in odd hours. Consequently, this contributed to the inflation in price of commodities. The two sides of every coin, responses from the participants indicate that the positive and profitable impact of lockdown was not generally experienced by all sellers. Some sellers recorded lost and consumption of their profit as well as their capital. These sellers recorded low sales due to decrease in the number of costumers as they could not go to their specific point of sales.

Things became very expensive especially food stuffs. The only way to manage that was to inflate the prices of my drinks especially the sachet drinks.<sup>37</sup>

Alhaja, an elderly woman who chose the business after the death of her husband lamented that the restriction forced her to close her shop and still spends heavily on household and food items. The study reveals that although profit was made from alcohol commercialization during lock down but much more was disbursed due to increment in prices of food stuffs, beverages, and other household provisions. Aside from inflation of commodities price, some participants noted that there was also high percentage of alcohol sales on credit.

Some of my customers buy in credit while some pay half of their money. I have to keep my customers, I cannot refuse them because Covid-19 will come and go.<sup>38</sup>

About seventy five (75%) of these sellers were able to manage their way around making sales during the lockdown, while twenty five percent (25%) recorded

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<sup>37</sup> Interview with Tiawo, a hawker at Abraham Adesanya on October 31, 2020

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Desire at Ogidan Bus Stop on November 14, 2020

high sales on credit. Only twenty percent (20%) did not record profit lost on household provisions or credit sales. On the other hand, another participant who just got established in the business late last year, expressed that she hardly made sales. According to her, aside from the fact that that most of her customers do not know her place of resident, she could not cope with the market change in price.

During that period, I got tired of the business because nobody comes to my house. I am new to the business, I only make sale at my point of sales but most of my customers do not know my house and the few who knows here would rather buy from the sellers closer to them who have their favorite brands. The change in price was so high, coupled with the change in prices of other home necessities, I could not buy beyond my capital.<sup>39</sup>

Findings from the study reveals that even after government partially lifted the lockdown and markets and commercial venues were re-opened for business resumption, sales have bounced back but the increase in prices of commodities remained the same.

## Responsibility Interchange

Female breadwinner trend in south west Nigeria is the shift in responsibilities and domestic roles due to change from traditional pattern to a more modern one as the result of internal and external factors.<sup>40</sup> Culturally men are the head of families and societies, they are expected to act as breadwinner for their families which includes providing for wives, children and even extended families when necessary. Findings from this study have indicated the unstable state of economic as the major player of responsibility change in the family cultural and domestic roles. Since the emergence of the pandemic, some women took up the responsibility of catering for their family which includes their children and husband.

My husband was told his pay would be cut into two-thirds because the staffs he drives were working from home. So I have to support the home by selling alcohol from home. Although it was

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with Iya bolu, a seller at Awoyaya local Government. December 10, 2020.

<sup>40</sup> Akanle.O.Adesina, JO, Nwaobiala UR (2018) Turbulent but I must endure in silence: Female breadwinners and survival in Southwestern Nigeria. *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 53 (1)

risky, my husband was very supportive because that was our only means of living at that time.<sup>41</sup>

The study further reveals that despite the anxiety, regulations and penalties connected with alcohol sales during the lockdown, many of these women sellers against all odds took up the responsibility to cater for their family as they depend solely on the profit of their business. Indeed, it was obvious from the responses of the participants that, economic situation in the country propel them into alcohol commercialisation despite its complications during the lockdown.

I was aware of the state of things and how risky it was then but I cannot possibly feed my kids with alcohol. I did all I could to turn that alcohol to money to cater for my family.<sup>42</sup>

Another participant who sells alcohol at Sangotedo Market describes the period as a tough time.

It was a hard time for the family, I had to take the risk because my husband could not go work and his company had not paid his last salary. The only thing that helped me then was that, I had more sales. The sales were high and I was making profit. I had to cover up for my husband because it was tough on him.<sup>43</sup>

These responses justifies the claim that Yoruba women in particular have been able to achieve some measure of economic independence and have the ability to act as breadwinners in the relatively urbanized Yoruba systems but they do not take over family care and breadwinning out-rightly from the men.<sup>44</sup> Established on the findings of this study, it becomes noticeable that alcohol business was perhaps among the most profitable businesses during the lockdown. It was discovered that the high demand of alcohol during the lockdown propelled other alcohol sellers who initially closed down to resume trading.

I already agreed with my husband that I will not go to my point of sale for the weeks but after five days, it was my husband himself who suggested that I should resume back.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Interview with lolode, a road side seller at Eti Osa local Government on December 5, 2020

<sup>42</sup> Interview with Latifat, an alcohol hawker at Ibeju Lekki local Government November 13, 2020

<sup>43</sup> Interview with lolode, a road side seller at Ibeju Lekkilocal Government December 5, 2020

<sup>44</sup> Akanle.O.Adesina, JO, Nwaobiala UR (2018) Turbulent but I must endure in silence: Female breadwinners and survival in Southwestern Nigeria. *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 53 (1)

<sup>45</sup> Interview with lolode, a road side seller at Eti Osa local Government December 5, 2020.

This study further reveals the economic factors that persuaded alcohol business during the lockdown. The lockdown guidelines interrupted the livelihoods of the people, but alcohol sellers among other petty traders disregarded the lockdown regulations and complications. It will be noteworthy to mention the difference in gender operation and strategy among the sellers. While majority of shops and points of sale in Eti Osa and Ibeju Lekki are owned and controlled by the women, herbal mixture and traditional alcohol medicine production was controlled and dominated by the men.

The below findings reveal some of the key economic impact of Covid-19 in Lagos:

- Business activities in the medium and large firms were paused and this rendered most people unwaged. Many medium and large firms reduced their employees by retrenching some workers while few others reduced their employee's basic salary.
- Market secrecy: Some sellers go out of their way to practice ghost operation. This method was noticed by mostly all traders during the pandemic.
- Inflation: some commercial drivers violated movement restriction placed on both inter-states and intra-state. They manipulated means of transportation and this consequently led to inflation in price of commodities.
- The increment in prices of alcohol did not hamper the sales and usage. It was one of the most lucrative business during the pandemic.
- The two sides of alcohol business: While some sellers recorded lost and consumption of their profit as well as their capital due high percentage of alcohol sales on credit and high purchase of household needs. Some recorded high profit as some of them live close to their customers while others they risk their way to make sales by leaving their homes to practice ghost trading.
- Alcohol sellers among other petty traders disregarded the lockdown regulations and complications to make livelihood.

## Conclusion

This study was carried out specifically on *the female alcohol sellers* with a view to establish the economic impact of Covid-19 pandemic in Lagos. The participant of this study are seventy five percent (75%) females who have being in alcohol

business for more than two years and twenty five percent (25%) males who are regular alcohol users. Sixty five (65%) of the alcohol sellers reported high sales and profit, and more than eighty percent (80%) reported high expenses on household necessities, twenty five percent (25%) of the sellers considered their businesses as a state of bedridden during the lockdown, while ten percent (10%) sellers reported zero proceeds during the lockdown period as it was difficult to deliver or contact their consumers. Nonetheless, it was obvious that most of the sellers survived the lockdown using various combinations of strategies. The price inflation of their commodities was also used as a mechanism to cope with the high inflation of food and other household needs. The sellers strategize new methods and developed new tactics to cope and overcome the pandemic challenges and impacts on their businesses. Paradoxically, the challenges and problems encountered during the Covid-19 crisis in Lagos Nigeria is equivalent to the profit prospect.

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## Appendix 1: list of respondents interviewed during the data collection

S/No.	Name of Participant	Data Type	Date	Location
1	Modupe	Primary	October 22, 2020	Badore Junction
2	Biyi Adams	Primary	October 22, 2020	Badore Junction
3	Taofeek oyin	Primary	October 22, 2020	Badore Inside
4	Bunmi Odeniyi	Primary	October 22, 2020	Badore Inside
5	Mrs Adefirelele	Primary	October 31, 2020	Abraham Adesanya
6	Tiawo	Primary	October 31, 2020	Abraham Adesanya
7	Mama Tee	Primary	October 31, 2020	Abraham Adesanya
8	Iya Ayi	Primary	November 13, 2020	Ogidan Bus stop
9	LAtifat	Primary	November 13, 2020	Ibeju Lekki
10	Paulo	Primary	November 14, 2020	Sangotedo Market
11	Mudashiru Desire	Primary	November 14, 2020	Ogidan
12	Bolanle	Primary	November 14, 2020	Sangotedo
13	Surveyor	Primary	November 14, 2020	Sangotedo
14	Oga Oga	Primary	November 14, 2020	Sangotedo Market
15	Bambo	Primary	November 14, 2020	Sangotedo Market
16	Matti	Primary	November 14, 2020	Sangotedo Market
17	Ola	Primary	November 14, 2020	Sangotedo
18	Adisa Nofisat	Primary	November 17, 2020	Ibeju lekki
19	Adisa Nofisat	Primary	November 17, 2020	Ibeju lekki

20	Seliat	Primary	November 17, 2020	Eti Osa
21	Mr Saliu Adegoke	Primary	November 20, 2020	Ibeju Lekki
22	Sekinat	Primary	November 20, 2020	Ajah
23	Sodiq Adeleke	Primary	November 20, 2020	Ajah
24	Apata Ore	Primary	November 20, 2020	Ajah
25	Lolade	Primary	December 5, 2020	Eti Osa
26	Iya Bolu	Primary	December 10, 2020	Awoyaya
27	Mojisola	Primary	December 10, 2020	Awoyaya
28	Rabiah	Primary	December 10, 2020	Awoyaya
29	Alhaji Usman	Primary	December 19, 2020	Sangotedo Market
30	Alarire	Primary	December 19, 2020	Sangotedo Market
31	Mummy Gold	Primary	January 14, 2021	Ibeju Lekki
32	Mohdinat	Primary	January 14, 2021	Ibeju Lekki
33	Bolanle	Primary	January 14, 2021	Ibeju lekki