

Impact of Covid-19 on Cooperative Societies in Ibadan City, Nigeria

***Ezekiel Adeyemi ODEDOKUN¹ & Olawale James GBADEYAN²**

Department of Sociology, Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria.

Department of Peace and Conflict Studies, Federal University Oye-Ekiti, Nigeria

Olawale.gbadeyan@fuoye.edu.ng

Corresponding Author: adeyemi.odedokun@fuoye.edu.ng

Abstract

This paper explains the effects of COVID-19 locked down, which affected the whole world in the year 2020, on cooperative societies in the city of Ibadan, Nigeria. Qualitative data was collected through in-depth interviews from stakeholders within the metropolis. The result revealed that despite the fact that the pandemic has become a thing of the past. Cooperative Societies are still battling with its negative effects. Many of them are yet to operate optimally, just as they are financial issues which have rippled their activities, even three years after the pandemic. The implication is that members in most cases felt disturbed, discouraged and frustrated as the period of the lockdown was harrowing devoid of business activities through which cooperatives societies are functioning. The paper concluded that cooperatives societies need to adopt technology in their dealings while governments should always be ready and willing to confront such pandemic frontally in the future most especially the whistle of diphtheria outbreak which the World Health Organization (WHO) has confirmed to have entered the second wave in Nigeria.

Keywords: COVID-19, Cooperatives Societies, Stakeholders, business activities, diphtheria.

1. Introduction

The importance of cooperatives societies cannot be overlooked in the world economy. In the global village, most especially and importantly in the third world economies, cooperatives society is one of the platforms through which people common business dreams and financial needs are crystalized (Dogarawa, 2010). Cooperative societies are voluntary associations or groups of individuals who have decided to come together to pursue their economic goals. In Nigeria, they are controlled by the Nigeria Cooperative Society Act of 2004. According to the United Nations (UN) there are no fewer than three million cooperative in the world. The global body states that, while the largest three hundred cooperatives across the globe report a turnover of over two billion dollars annually, cooperatives employ two hundred and eighty million people globally, translating into ten percent of the world's employed population (Monitor Coop, 2017, 2020).

Cooperatives societies are seen as the lenders of last resort for the common man in developing countries like Nigeria. This made the UN to set aside the first Saturday in July of every year as the world International Day of Cooperation (IDC) in commemoration of the cooperative movement which took place on the first Saturday of July 1923. The UN initially organised the celebration in 2005. The major aim of the commemoration is to enhance awareness and promote the values and principles that ensure the sustainability of the cooperative model for furthering sustainable development. It also aims at strengthening and expand partnerships between international cooperation movements and other actions including international organizations and government and social partners at local, national

and global levels.

Each year, the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperative (COPAC), which includes the International Labor Organization (ILO), determines a theme. The Director General of the ILO issued remarks for the international day of cooperatives in the years 2010-2017, 2019-2020, and 2022-2023. In addition, senior ILO management personnel have actively engaged and delivered presentations during events commemorating the International Day of Cooperative. Some examples of the yearly themes include "Cooperative Partners for Accelerated Sustainable Development" for 2023, "Cooperative Build a better World" for 2022, "Cooperative for Building a People-Centered and Environmentally Just Recovery" for 2021, and "Cooperative for Climate Action" for 2020.

The United Nations' theme for 2020, "Cooperative for Climate Action," emphasized the role of cooperatives in addressing climate change and promoting sustainable development Goals (SDG) 13, which pertains to climate action. The theme of the expedition focused on the significant impact of climate change on the livelihoods of people worldwide, particularly those who are most disadvantaged, such as small-scale farmers, women, youth, indigenous people, and ethnic minorities. These groups face the challenges of coping with extreme natural disasters and the degradation of natural resources (www.ilo.org). However, unlike the previous year since 2005 the 2020 celebration was low keyed throughout the world.

This was due to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic which really made it difficult for the cooperatives to operate because of its attendant lockdown that percolated the whole world. This to a very large extent, did not allow the cooperative societies to survive talk less the realization of the economic dreams and vision of their members for the year and the subsequent years. Plans were thwarted, policy disrupted, actions stampeded and the whole world was shocked.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Emergence of Covid-19 in Nigeria

The World Health Organization (WHO) on the 30th of January, 2020 made a declaration that Coronavirus (COVID-19) had reached the status of a global public health emergency. Thus, the health body charged all the nations of the world to be prepared for its containment, which included active surveillance, early detection, isolation and case management contact tracing and prevention of its onward spread, and sharing of full data with WHO (Gallagos, 2020). Hence, the WHO made this declaration after a critical consideration of the increasing number of the cases in China, its rising outside China, the unclear and questionable measures by some nations (Odedokun, 2020). Coronaviruses are a wide range of a large family of viruses that usually infect animals which can as well spread to human beings (Berkeley and Fever, 2020). These viruses are similar to the flu and can cause coughing, fever, difficulty in breathing and pneumonia. Covid-19 broke out in Wuhan, China, around December 2019 and became a world pandemic as declared by WHO. It's emergent put the whole world on the alert for series of events. The entire world was affected and the virus was with humanity till a set of caricature and controversial vaccine for its cure was discovered.

Meanwhile, the WHO gave directives on how to handle the pandemic as it manifested due to its novel characteristics. The manifestation of COVID-19 really made behavioral science a reference point as it helped the entire world to really understand how people made decisions, so they can be supported to make the best decisions for their health. It was a period when the whole world had to embark on learning to unlearn what had been taught (WHO, Director General, 2020). In the advent of COVID-19 pandemic all the

countries of the world were engaged as none was left untouched. It was a busy period when everything were at standstill. Countries were using a range of tools such as information, campaigns, laws, regulations, sanctions and guidelines amongst others, to influence the behavior of their citizens (Odedokun, 2020). The common symptoms of the virus, according to WHO (2020) are fever, dry cough and tiredness. Other important, but less common, symptoms which are unique with individuals include aches and pains, nasal congestion, headache, conjunctivitis, sore throat, diarrhea, loss of taste or smell or a rash on skin or discoloration of fingers or toes. The signs are usually mild and begins gradually. Some people became infected with very mild symptoms (www.who.int). Those with underlying medical problems such as lungs and heart diseases, high blood pressure, cancer or diabetes and older people are at higher risk or developing serious illnesses. Nevertheless, anybody can be infected but not a death sentence if and when properly handled.

Covid-19 spreads primarily from one person to another person through small droplets from the mouth or nose which are released when an infected person sneezes, coughs or talks. When and if others or anyone breathe in such droplets from an infected person, they easily contract Covid-19. The droplets can, according to WHO, land on objects and surfaces around, the person such as tables, doorknobs and handrails. Moreover, individuals can contract the infection by coming into contact with these things or surfaces and subsequently touching their eyes, nose, or mouth. People were advised to wash their hands with soap and water on a regular basis, under a running water or clean water with 70% alcohol -based sanitizer (www.who.int).

The attendant lockdown associated with COVID-19 grounded the economic activities globally, slashing government revenue and crashing the economy of most nations of the world. This situation, in particular, affected those countries relying on petroleum as major source of revenue. Daily earnings of most Nigerians were negatively affected therefore driven more people into abject penury (Odedokun, 2020). According to Oyediji (2020) the stringent nature of the lockdown arising from the epidemic gave rise to several antisocial mechanisms, one of which was social distancing and closure of schools and public places such as religious centers, relaxation centers and their likes where people normally converged for different reasons. The situation really dealt a big blow to many cooperative societies not only in Nigeria but worldwide. Social distancing, mainly impacted on the usual periodic meetings of cooperative societies, thus grounded their activities

The first official case of COVID-19 in Nigeria was recorded on the 27th of February 2020. An Italian in Lagos was tested positive for the virus. This was quickly followed by another experience on the 9th of March, 2020 when a Nigerian in Ewekoro who had contact with the Italian was confirmed to have contacted the disease (Odedokun, 2020). After the duo cases were officially reported and recorded Nigeria started recording different figures on a daily basis, collating figures from the thirty-six states of the federation and the federal capital territory, Abuja (FCT). Also, the figures of active cases, those who have recovered so far and the number of deaths were reported on a daily basis. The task was the responsibility of the Presidential Task Force (PTF) setup by the then President Muhammadu Buhari, on the 9th of March 2020 under the leadership of the then Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF), Boss Mustapha.

Meanwhile, Nigeria, through the country's Center for Disease Control (NCDC) had announced the setting up of coronavirus group and was ready to activate its incident system if any case emerge (Ifijeh, 2020). Additionally, the government, through the NCDC in line with WHO gave directives to halt the spread of COVID-19 pandemic. They are, frequent washing of hands with soap, water and sanitizer, avoidance of crowded places, healthy living and covering of mouth and nose with nose mask amongst others. To this need,

gatherings of all types, be it political, social or religious were suspended and legislated against. This was to curb the spread of the pandemic while the entire world was desperately busy looking for the vaccine. Meanwhile, when the discovery vaccine was proclaimed, only 30.50% of the Nigerian population have full COVID-19 vaccination as of February 2022.

Nigeria as a country has its fair share of the pandemic. Despite its abatement worldwide the country as at the 11th of October 2023 has recorded 5,708,974 samples tested 266,675 confirmed cases while 3,155 deaths were recorded, all in the 36 states and the FCT (COVID-19.ncdc.gov.ng). The rate is considered low relative to Nigeria's 2011 million population which indicates that the country missed the WHO's 70% vaccination coverage target by the end of June 2022.

3. Methodology

The study took place in Ibadan metropolis, the capital of the present Oyo State and headquarters of the old western region of Nigeria. It is the third largest city by population in Nigeria after Lagos and Kano. There are eleven (11) local Government in Ibadan metropolitan area consisting of five urban local Governments in the city and six semi urban local government in the less city. The city accommodates many educational and research institutes as well as a branch of the Central Bank of Nigeria. There is no bank without a branch or more in the city of Ibadan. There are many markets of different size; small, medium and big. The major markets are Gbagi (Bola Ige), Dugbe, Bodija, Oje amongst others. The city is also the administrative headquarters of Oyo State with 33 local governments, out of which, eleven are domiciled in Ibadan metropolis.

Among the educational institutions in Ibadan is a Federal Cooperative College which offers a number of selected courses at both full time and part-time basis. The various programmes lead to the award of National Diploma (ND) and Higher National Diploma (HND) of the institution. The institution trains personnel who are employed by cooperative societies and other affiliated institutions within and outside the financial sector. It should be noted that the metropolitan nature of Ibadan city is an advantage which encourages the creation of many cooperative societies to the extent that the regulatory body has lost count, as not all of them were registered as at the time of this study. Almost all the artisans within the metropolis have cooperative societies. Civil servants and Nigeria Union of Teachers (NUT) are two of the many existing societies.

Adopting a snowballing sampling technique, the study interviewed 35 participants using a semi-structured interview guide, who include senior officials from the Federal Cooperative College, leaders of some of the Cooperatives Societies as well as the Director of the Department of Cooperative Services under the Ministry of Finance, which is the coordinating department for all Cooperative Societies in Oyo State.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion of Findings

This part of the study is primarily meant to appraise the effects of the lockdown, caused by the rampaging Covid-19 which dealt a big blow to the whole world, on the activities of the poor man's bank which cooperative society represents. It was observed that, it wasn't business as usual for cooperatives as the cloud of Covid-19 really affected the operations of cooperative societies negatively, most especially the orthodox ones. When asked about the effect of Covid-19 lockdown on cooperative society and government response or assistance, the participants have these to say:

"The inability of members to attend their regularly scheduled meetings was the most significant of the various impacts that were brought about. There is the departmental cooperative society, as well as the orthodox cooperative society. Meetings are required to be

attended by members of orthodox cooperative societies because it is their means of exerting influence. This is due to the fact that members are able to pay their thrift savings and share capitals, as well as collect loans if they are due for them, when they attend meetings.

(IDI/Male, Dean of Students Affairs, Federal Government).

Another respondent argued that, majority of the cooperative societies recorded a great loss during the Lockdown hold that as members are not allowed to participate in any economic activities or even in the banking sector. The nation-wide lockdown brought about total economic stoppage. He had this to say

"The society incurred significant losses due to its inability to conduct meetings." Upon the issuance of the lockdown, our populace was impeded from engaging in work activities. Consequently, they were unable to procure funds to settle their outstanding loans and other financial obligations. Several individuals lacked the financial means to afford basic sustenance, let alone allocate funds towards investments. An unfortunate aspect of the situation is that individuals, including the executive members, have been prohibited from gathering due to the closure of the schools where our meetings were previously held. The economic scarcity had a significant impact on us" (IDI/ Senior Female Official of a Cooperative Society in Ijokodo, 2023). "

Further findings indicated that the members of the Cooperative societies had a distressing experience. Prior to the relaxation of the lockdown measures, those seeking to make cash payments encountered significant challenges at banking institutions. Many individuals were frequently denied access as a result of the widespread closure of banks during that time. Only a select few individuals with access to online banking were able to transfer the small amount of money they had saved in order to meet their family's necessities. This was because the government did not provide any financial help or relief measures to alleviate the impact of the lockdown. A respondent narrated below:

"The covid-19 lockdown proved to be a disheartening and exasperating experience. During the period prior to the economic downturn caused by the virus, individuals swiftly fulfilled their debt obligations. The fees were deposited into the banks and members approached us with their receipts for verification and proof. at addition to providing loans, we used to allocate funds to fixed deposits at banks, which yielded favorable interest rates. We also allocate funds to invest in Treasury Bills issued by the Federal government. The negative impact was experienced by all of these entities, mostly due to the prevalence of orthodox members who primarily engage in cash transactions. " (IDI/Senior Male Official in one of the Cooperative Societies, 2023).

Other respondents narrated below:

"Hmmm..... Covid-19 lockdown! It wasn't a laughing matter at all It was a period I will never forget in my life. These was no business and the cooperative society was unable to function as members were unable to go out to fend for themselves and their family members. How would they have been able to make their periodic contributions, paid their outstanding and other commitments? It was a real tragedy but we thank God, It is over though we are still feeling the effects till date" (IDI/Male member of a Cooperative Society Bodija-Ibadan, 2023).

It should be noted that before the pandemic, COVID-19, reared its ugly head which crippled almost everything; socio-economic and political activities, cooperatives societies usually deal in house-hold equipment and gadgets. Many times, the house-holds are bought in bulk and large quantities and distributed to members who are to pay back into the account of the within 5 to 6 months with an additional minimal five percent interests. In some other cases, during festivities like Christmas, Easter, Ramadan, Ileya and others, cooperatives societies often provide loans starting from N20,000 naira to members, who are to payback

with an additional 5 percent interests. This, at the end of the year during the Annual General Meeting (AGM), all the interests on all investments are aggregated and they become the general dividends for the society. It is unfortunate that the wounds of the pandemic can't be forget in a hurry, as it renders the year almost useless for majority of the society.

The covid-19 lockdown also affected the traditional operation of the cooperative societies, in the sense that traditional operations that are critical to the sustainability of the cooperative societies were not possible. Some of the respondents narrated below:

"The nature of our society, cooperative, has been the backbone of cooperative societies in Nigeria. It is called departmental cooperative. Most members are salary earners, civil servants in the majority. The beauty of it is that every thrift savings and share capital payment is deducted from source into the association's account. What's great about it is that each thrift savings and share capital contribution is automatically taken from the source and deposited into the association's account. This diverges from the Orthodox society in that regular physical gatherings are not necessary unless there is an urgent situation. Therefore, apart from our inability to meet even during emergency and inability to visit the banks for some critical transactions we enjoy a bit of leverages on like the orthodox Cooperative Societies (IDI/Female/senior. staff in one of the cooperative societies Mokola- Ibadan, 2023)

"The lockdown inevitably impacted cooperative societies. Despite the unpleasant nature of the process, individuals continued to acquire loans. This was due to the fact that many teachers had their loan repayments collected directly from their salary, along with regular contributions. Meetings were suspended as a result of the pandemic. However, if it becomes necessary for us to visit the office, we adhere to the regulations provided by the NCDC, which include wearing face masks, practicing hand hygiene by washing hands, and using hand sanitizers" (IDI/Female/the book-keeper of a branch of Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) cooperative societies, 2023).

"As cooperatives' member, we were unable to transact as we used to do because of the inhibitions caused by the Covid-19 lockdown. It collapsed the economy and affected our cooperative society but the leadership showed understanding and was able to help those who were in need during the period" (IDI/ Male member of a Cooperative Society at Apata Ibadan, 2023).

Contrarily, some respondents claimed that their operations were not really affected by the lockdown, this is attributed to majority of the departmental cooperatives' society. act another respondent had this to say:

"Despite the lockdown and its attendant consequences caused by COVID-19, financial transactions continued as individuals diligently make their daily contributions, although in-person meetings were not possible, but people (members) ensured that they dropped their payment cards along with their payments. In addition, some individuals pay back their loans either on weekly basis or monthly basis, and people were still able to access money for loans. However, we showed understanding with those who were unable to meet up with their commitments" (IDI/ Female, leader of one of the prominent Cooperative Societies, Moniya-Ibadan, 2023).

Essentially, our society's primary means of generating cash is through salaries, which proved to be highly beneficial throughout the lockdown period. Despite facing obstacles, salaries continue to be disbursed, even though some individuals both remit their dues and request more funds, which are granted. The lockdown had minimal impact on the functioning of our societies, nevertheless, we had certain difficulties, particularly in loan repayments through financial institutions. In our culture, we refrain from collecting physical currency from individuals. Instead, transactions are conducted via electronic payment methods, and individuals receive and repay their loans through banking institutions. (IDI/Male, a former

President of one of the branches of Nigerian Union of Teachers (NUT) (ICS Limited, 2023). Undoubtedly, the Covid-19 lockdown was a transformative event that profoundly impacted every facet of global existence.

The lack of physical cash also ensure that individuals shift to the use of electronic transactions. Hence, members of the cooperative continue to conduct their transactions in the internet which was mostly done on the mobile applications or internet. However, those who were already familiar with such transaction did not find it difficult in the actual sense of it.

The above findings are the views of the respondents in this study. They were not unaware of the effects of the lockdown on the activities of cooperative society and its members. The common denominator was that members were unable to hold regular meetings which is an important feature of the society. While the lockdown really affected those whose transactions were based mainly on cash those who are conversant with e-transactions or bank transfer, most especially salary earners whose cooperative contributions are deducted from source, had little or no problem, aside from their inability to move around and do other businesses to make ends meet.

Nevertheless, everybody was touched one way or the other. Those interviewed confirmed their knowledge about how to curtail the spread of the pandemic as directed by the government. Also, they were able to situate its effects within the operations of their cooperative societies. The interviewees were not happy about the attitude of government in the distribution of palliatives. Most of them were of the opinion that the fact that these societies, cooperatives, are registered and recognized by the government each of these societies should have been the basis of distribution of palliatives nationwide. This might not be far from the truth, in view of the shady and shoddy manner the palliative distributed by the government were handled (Odedokun, 2020). When asked of the relationship between the cooperative societies and the government during the lock down occasioned by the epidemic, the responses of the respondents were in the same direction, showing that Government at all phases, including local, state and federal did not consider them worthy of attention despite the important and significant role they are playing in the economy. Narratives of the respondents shows below:

"It was surprising that government did not deem it fit to consider cooperative societies in all of its acclaimed palliatives. Nobody can whisk the significance of cooperative society away in the economy of any nation, most especially in a poverty-stricken nation like Nigeria". (IDI/ Male, a member of cooperative society, 2023)

Another of the respondents said,

"Honesty I was not surprised because of the leadership deficiency associated with Nigeria. Cooperative society should have been one of the means toward reaching the down-trodden during the lockdown because there is no house hold where members are not associated with one or more cooperative society. But, the fact that the leadership is far from the people it was a blind eyes towards cooperative society during the lock down" (IDI/ Female member of a cooperative society, 2023).

In addition, the response of another respondent shows how disenchanted the citizens could be about government; *"I wasn't surprised because as far as I am concerned, there is nothing I am expecting from the government. Therefore, when during the Covid-19 lockdown people were complaining that government did not do anything for them, I wasn't disappointed"*.

(IDI/Male, Senior Officer in one of the Cooperatives, 2023)

Also, other interviewees said;

"Nobody thought cooperative societies could be so treated during the lock down of Covid-19. Government absolutely turned blind eyes to us and the plight of our members."

Meanwhile, there are no community, nationwide, without cooperative societies. What stopped government from reaching out to the people through these cooperatives, but the usual non-challant attitude of government really manifested. It was too bad" (IDI/Female

Officer in one of the Cooperative Societies, 2023)

Since everything in Nigeria are all about political affiliation, those who received attention from government during Covid-19 was through their political party which was the government in power then but not their cooperative societies because no mention was made nor attention paid to the plight and welfare of cooperative societies during the lockdown.

4.2 Discussion of Findings

The basic aim of cooperative society is to assist members in time of emergency and the unexpected expenses. This they do though the aggregate of funds by members for the benefits of members at different times. The society also deals in house-hold equipment and gadgets, food items and other items for personal use. These are bought in bulk and distributed to members who are expected to pay back with interests. The aggregate of the interests on all these investments are all harvested and declared as dividends during the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the society at the end of the financial year

The emergence of COVID-19 changed all of that though those whose income are based on monthly salaries kept on their operations as they don't collect cash from members. Transactions, were done through e-payments and people paid and collected their loans through the banks. Members still accessed loans, normal contributions were still being done, deductions of loans and normal contributions. were also still being done from salaries of members, most especially those cooperative societies whose members are civil or public servants whose salaries were being paid thought out the period of the lockdown. However, the story was not the same for those cooperatives whose members are from the informal sector of the economy who Morka (2020) claimed were devastatingly hit by the lockdown.

According to Odedokun (2020) any disruption to the daily livelihood of this set of people has a serious effect on their ability to meet their most basic needs. The lockdown foreclosed most people from traveling or moving to work or conducting their businesses. Meanwhile, the informal sector engages more than eighty percent of Nigerians. This includes a wide range of occupations and professions; street hawkers, Okada riders, food vendors, tradesmen, artisans, drivers and their likes. The inability of this set of people to move around to do their businesses had a great toil on the cooperative societies each of them belonged to. Some of them even found it difficult to feed themselves and their family members let alone invest in anything cooperative. Their basic aim was how to survive the period of the pandemic.

Ogunreku (2020) differentiates between Departmental and Orthodox Cooperative Societies. According to Ogunreku, Departmental societies are crucial for sustaining Cooperative businesses in Nigeria, especially during the economic challenges brought about by the coronavirus pandemic. Ogunreku explains that Departmental cooperatives face fewer difficulties due to a standing order that mandates loan repayments to be deducted directly from the source. This contradicts the orthodox practice, which relies on receiving repayments solely during in-person meetings. However, the COVID-19 pandemic posed a significant threat to their survival as it forced people to stay confined in their houses. They were unable to move around in search of incomes with which they could service their memberships and commitments. It was a serious experience. It was critical because those who were due for loans and had been hoping to collect them for one business or the other could not be given. Members were unable to pay up their commitments because of cash crunch. Even those that had little to pay were entertaining fear of what might happened to

their family members when and if they drop the money often gripped them.

Globally, the cooperative societies felt the pangs of the lockdown occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic. It was not an exclusive calamity of any region or continent. According to Exim, the Head of Cooperative Unit of ILO (2020) people around the world, throughout history, in time of crises, respond spontaneously with collective actions based on values of solidarity and cooperation. She goes further to say that in such moments the best in human being comes to do for mutual aid care for others, for family, friends, neighbors and the international community. In new of the unfolding COVID-19 crises which affected the world of work in unprecedented ways, Cooperative and Social Solidarity Economic (SSE) institutions were responding decisively in the face of the pandemic and its aftermath. She said that financial cooperatives and credits unions were providing liquidity supports to affected micro, small and medium enterprises.

Solidarity fund and crowd-funding initiatives to affected local business and vulnerable people were set up. Also, ILO (2020) of the Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing in Brazil said that cooperatives in Brazil were the front-liners of the fight against COVID-19. In her own the group have a national movement of waste speaker who launched solidarity campaign and were able to raise funds to issue cash grant for more than fifteen thousand (15,000) members across Brazil. Producers and consumers cooperatives were innovating quickly to keep supplies of essential food and good moving. Many were transforming their products and services to meet urgent local need for protective equipment and social care with the mandatory lockdown of informal economy workers we among the first to lose their livelihoods. To that end cooperatives and other SSC institutions whose members are informal economy workers advocated on their behalf and provided essential assistance (ILO, 2020).

Not only these, Chatterjee (2020) espoused the activities of Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India where artisan cooperative during COVID-19 lockdown sold more than five hundred thousand (500,000) face masks. They are women who do exquisite embroidery normally but they used their sewing skills both to have livelihoods for themselves and of course to provide the life-saving service of masks. These cooperatives also used their infrastructure and networks acting as catalysts for cooperation and communities, connecting people in need of support with local governments and volunteers.

In Korea, Lee (2020) of ICOOP said since cooperatives have always served members and communities it was easy and fast for their needs to be identified and they were quickly supported. In view of the fact that in Italy the show business workers are not so well recognized by the state Fondazione Centro Studi Doc in Italy wrote a petition and, in a few days, more than 47000 signatures were received. In addition, an indemnity was received from government after three months for show business workers (Martinelli, 2020). ILO (2020) observed that the pandemic crisis sharpened social divisions and deepened inequalities in many places. This assertion is in tandem with what Odedokun 2020) observed in Nigeria during the pandemic. The organization noted that at such historic moment, it was crucial and critical to deepen their commitments to social justice, democracy and solidarity across the societies.

Such commitments, inherently, is the very foundation of cooperatives and wider SSE institutions. (Martinelli, 2020). She goes further to say that from their day-to-day operations to their economic model, because they are not only spread the impact and benefits of cooperative among their members, workers and users they are also effective partners in building more just and resilient communities and economies around the world. The international organization also noted that it is essential that cooperative along with other

SSE institutions are involved in development of social and economic policies, not just during the responses and recovery around the COVID-19 crisis but the longer term in rebuilding a more sustainable future. It concluded that a better world is possible but we need government, social partner, cooperatives and the wider social and solidarity economy (SSE) to work together. In such dimension the opportunity to build back better is always guaranteed (ILO, 2020)

In essence cooperative society was equally affected by the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its concomitants. In Nigeria there was no evidence that cooperative societies were considered as a group in the scheme of things during the pandemic in the area of palliatives and government intervention strategies. However, it should be noted that cooperative societies did not show any creative evidence to exhibit ingenuity towards helping their helpless and vulnerable members during this precarious period of uncertainty. This alone was against the essence and meaning of existence of cooperative societies. In such a time like that the society should have fashioned out ways and means to help and assist members by thinking outside and beyond the box. In essence, cooperative should be creative and device means to cushion the effect of the lockdown and alleviate the sufferings of members, most especially the active and committed ones.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The rampaging COVID-19 pandemic dealt a fatal blow on human race and its damaging effects are monumental but not within bringing out the best of creativity and innovations of how to deal with emergency situation. Cooperative Society in Ibadan as in other parts of the world was not immune from the negative impacts of the pandemic. All the cooperative societies, especially those in the orthodox category, whose members are in the majority, were unable to hold their period meetings, due to government directives. People were barred from moving from one location to another. Everybody was on compulsory public holiday which is one of the attributes of such emergency period (Adefolaju and Odedokun, 2017). They experienced significant losses as their meeting venues were secured with locks and keys. Nevertheless, members still believe in their societies and the leadership despite the set-back caused by COVID-19.

The study's findings lead to the following suggestions: there is the need for government to involve Cooperatives Society stakeholders whenever key decisions are made at the national level during such emergency period as Covid-19 pandemic; national Assembly should enact new laws or review the existing laws concerning Cooperative Society, to meet the current realities in the country; Nigeria's Center for Disease Control (CDC) shouldn't be a fire brigade outfit. It should be maintained and sustained to frontally confront any eventuality, including Ebola and Covid-19; the establishment of the Cooperative Commission of Nigeria (CCN) is necessary to rectify the longstanding negligence and lack of focus on this crucial sector of the economy; and Cooperative Society in Nigeria should rise above the orthodox level of operations, thinking ahead and having what could be tagged 'Special Emergency Unit' to deal with such issue as Covid-19 crises.

References

- Adefolaju, T., & Odedokun, E.A. (2017) Reflections on Public Holidays and Productivity in Nigeria. East Asian Journal of Business Economics. Vol.5 issue 2 (48-54)
- Berkeley, L., & Feuer, W. (2020, January 30) WHO Declares China Coronavirus that's killed more than 2009, global health emergency. CNBC. <https://www.cnbc.com/2020/01/30/who-declares-china-coronavirus-a-global-health-emergency.html>

- Chatterjee, M. (2020). A Film on "The COVID-19 Response: Cooperatives and Other Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) Organizations" (ilo.org) International Day of Cooperatives. Covid19.ncdc.gov.ng
- James, G. O., Augustine, I. O., Funmilola, O. T., Oluwayemisi, A. M. B., & Stephen, O. A. (2022). Socio-Political Environment and Corruption in Nigeria: An Empirical Analysis. *Журнал исследований социальной политики*, 20(3), 445-456.
- Dogarawa, AB(2010), The Role of Cooperative Societies in Economic Development ne 8, 2010). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=1622149> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1622149>
- ILO (2020, June 20) The COVID-19 response: Cooperatives and other social and solidarity economy (SSE) organizations. ILO.
https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/cooperatives/multimedia/WCMS_746687/lang--en/index.htm
- Ifijeh, M. (2020). FG Sets up Coronavirus Preparedness Group. This Day Newspaper. Retrieved 10 March 2020.
- Lee, N. (2020). A Film on the COVID-19 Response: Cooperatives and other Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) Organizations. ILO.
https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/cooperatives/multimedia/WCMS_746687/lang--en/index.htm
- Martinelli, F. (2020) A Film on "The COVID-19 Response: Cooperatives and other Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) Organizations". ILO. ILO.
https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/cooperatives/multimedia/WCMS_746687/lang--en/index.htm
- Nzor, E. (2021. November 2) 'Cooperatives Contribute #1.2 Trillion to GDP Yearly'. *The Guardian*.
<https://guardian.ng/news/cooperatives-contribute-n1-2-trillion-to-gdp-yearly/>
- Odedokun, E. A. (2020) Compliance and Enforcement of COVID-19 Prevention Guidelines Among Residents of Alimosho Local Government, Lagos State. *Social Science Review* 1 (1), 272-279.
- Odedokun, E. A. (2020). An Assessment of Government Intervention during COVID-19 Lockdown in Nigeria. *Nigerian Journal of African Studies* (NJAS) 2 (2)
- Odedokun, E.A. (2020). 'An Assessment of the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic Lockdown on Pubs Owners Business in Lagos'. *International Journal of Educational Issues* 6(1),104-114.
- Monitor Coop (2017)*The World Co-operative Monitor*". *monitor.coop*. *Archived from the original on 22 October 2017*. Retrieved 20 June 2015.