

The Lifestyle Patterns after COVID-19 Pandemic: The Nigerian Experience

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced unprecedented disruptions globally, reshaping personal and social lifestyle patterns across various societies. In Nigeria, the pandemic highlighted significant health, economic, and social vulnerabilities, resulting in lasting changes to daily routines, social behaviours, and health practices. This study explores the post-pandemic lifestyle adaptations among Nigerians, focusing on shifts in social interactions, healthcare-seeking behaviour, work habits, and consumption practices. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach, this study gathered quantitative data through surveys and qualitative insights via in-depth interviews to provide a nuanced understanding of the Nigerian experience post-COVID-19. Findings reveal increased health consciousness, a shift towards remote work in certain sectors, changes in social gatherings, and a growing reliance on digital platforms for various activities. These transformations suggest a lasting impact of the pandemic on Nigerian society and highlight areas for policy intervention to support emerging needs.

Keywords: Lifestyle Patterns, COVID-19, Pandemic and Nigerian Experience

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic led to a global crisis, unprecedentedly disrupting everyday life. The pandemic, which emerged in late 2019, reshaped social, economic, and health landscapes worldwide, forcing individuals and societies to adapt to unprecedented circumstances [1]. [2], stated that the virus, 2019-nCoV pneumonia, emerged from a Chinese fish market in Wuhan at the beginning of December 2019. Subsequently, the outbreak became a Public Health Emergency of International Concern, and later as a pandemic. The pandemic has soon become a global health issue affecting all aspects of human life. The COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped lifestyles across the globe, with varying impacts on different regions and communities. The sudden and extensive changes brought on by lockdowns, travel restrictions, and other preventative measures have affected health, economic, and social behaviours [3]. In the African context, socio-economic challenges and limited healthcare infrastructure shaped the region's response to COVID-19, influencing post-pandemic lifestyle adaptations [4]. For Nigeria, a country with a diverse socio-economic landscape and unique cultural context, the pandemic's effects on lifestyle patterns have been particularly distinct. The COVID-19 pandemic led to a re-evaluation of lifestyle choices worldwide. Studies have indicated a shift towards healthier living, increased digitalization, and flexible work environments as global trends [5]. Lifestyle patterns refer to the habitual practices, behaviours, and routines that individuals adopt daily. Numerous factors, including socioeconomic status, cultural background, education, and personal preferences shape these patterns. In recent years, researchers have highlighted the profound impact of lifestyle patterns on physical health, mental well-being, and social interactions [6]. A lifestyle pattern is composed of several interconnected aspects. These include dietary habits, physical activity, sleep routines, social interactions, and recreational activities. Each of these elements contributes to an individual's overall well-being. In the words of [7], regular physical activity and balanced nutrition are associated with reduced risks of chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension, and obesity.

Lifestyle Patterns in Nigeria before COVID-19

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation, is characterized by its diverse cultures, economic activities, and social structures. Before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Nigerians' lifestyle patterns were shaped by a combination of traditional values, rapid urbanization, technological advancements, and economic dynamics. A variety of factors influence lifestyle patterns. Socioeconomic conditions often play a pivotal role in shaping an individual's lifestyle. People in higher-income brackets may have better access to nutritious food, fitness

facilities, and healthcare, whereas those in lower-income groups might face barriers to adopting healthier practices [8]. Additionally, cultural norms and values dictate certain lifestyle choices. For example, dietary practices in some cultures emphasize plant-based diets, which are linked to numerous health benefits [9]. Another critical determinant is education. Educated individuals are more likely to understand the importance of healthy habits and adopt them. Conversely, individuals with limited access to information may lack awareness of the consequences of unhealthy behaviours, such as smoking or excessive alcohol consumption [1]. Understanding these pre-pandemic lifestyle patterns provides insight into the societal transformations that global health challenges have since influenced.

Demographics and Population Distribution

Nigeria's population was experiencing significant growth before COVID-19, with an estimated population exceeding 200 million people [10]. According to [11], the population was predominantly young, with a median age of around 18 years, reflecting high birth rates and a relatively low median age compared to global standards. This youthful demographic influenced various aspects of Nigerian society, including education, employment, and consumer behaviour. Urban areas, particularly Lagos, Abuja, and Port Harcourt were witnessing rapid population growth due to rural-to-urban migration driven by the search for better economic opportunities [12].

Economic Activities and Employment

Before the pandemic, Nigeria's economy relied heavily on oil and gas exports, accounting for a significant portion of the nation's GDP and government revenues [13]. However, there was a growing emphasis on diversifying the economy, with sectors such as agriculture, telecommunications, and services expanding rapidly [14]. Employment patterns were characterized by a high rate of informal employment, with many Nigerians engaged in small-scale trading, agriculture, and informal services. Going forward, [15] opined that the rise of the gig economy and digital entrepreneurship was also notable, particularly among the younger population.

Education and Healthcare Systems

Nigeria's education sector was undergoing reforms to improve access and quality. Primary education enrolment rates were relatively high, but challenges remained in terms of infrastructure, teacher quality, and educational resources [16]. Higher education institutions were expanding, yet they faced issues related to funding, strikes, and curriculum relevance. Nigeria has made strides in increasing access to healthcare services in the healthcare sector, but the system has struggled with inadequate funding, limited infrastructure, and a shortage of healthcare professionals [17]. Public health initiatives focused on combating infectious diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS.

Social and Cultural Practices

Nigeria's social fabric was deeply rooted in its diverse cultural heritage, with over 250 ethnic groups coexisting within the nation. Traditional practices and festivals played a significant role in community life, fostering social cohesion and cultural identity [18]. Family structures were predominantly extended, with a strong emphasis on familial responsibilities and support systems. Religion also played a central role, with Christianity and Islam being the major faiths influencing daily life, moral values, and social norms [19].

Technology and Media Usage

The proliferation of technology and media was transforming Nigerian lifestyles. Mobile phone penetration was high, and internet usage was on the rise, facilitating access to information, social networking, and e-commerce [20]. Social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram were widely used for communication, business, and entertainment. [21], in her words stated that the entertainment industry, particularly Nollywood, was flourishing, contributing significantly to the cultural and economic landscape.

Urbanization and Infrastructure

Urbanization was a prominent trend, with cities expanding rapidly to accommodate the growing population. This led to the development of infrastructure such as roads, housing, and commercial centers, albeit with challenges related to traffic congestion, inadequate public transportation, and insufficient urban planning [22]. Access to utilities like electricity and clean water was improving in urban areas, yet rural regions continued to face significant infrastructural deficits. The construction and real estate sectors were buoyant, reflecting the demand for modern housing and commercial spaces. From the foregoing, it can be said that before the advent of COVID-19, Nigeria was experiencing dynamic lifestyle patterns influenced by demographic trends, economic diversification, technological advancements, and cultural richness. Rapid urbanization, a youthful population, and expanding economic sectors were shaping the nation's trajectory. However, challenges in education, healthcare, and infrastructure persisted, highlighting areas for continued development.

Statement of the Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced profound changes in global lifestyle patterns, which affected daily routines, social interactions, and health behaviours [1]. The pandemic disrupted many processes in the

countries of the world. Observing this in their study, [23], opined that in Nigeria, like in many other countries, these shifts were particularly evident as individuals adapted to prolonged lockdowns, movement restrictions, and health protocols that disrupted traditional ways of living. While many countries have started adjusting back to pre-pandemic norms, emerging evidence suggests that new lifestyle habits formed during the pandemic, such as remote working, reduced physical activity, and increased reliance on digital platforms, may persist [24]. In Nigeria, where socio-economic challenges were already significant before the pandemic, these lifestyle adaptations have had diverse effects across different regions and demographics [25]. With growing concerns about the long-term health and social implications of these new habits, understanding how the Nigerian population's lifestyle has changed post-pandemic is crucial. There is limited empirical research that focuses specifically on the Nigerian context to determine the lasting impact of COVID-19 on lifestyle patterns, including health, social interactions, and work-life balance. This study, therefore, seeks to address this gap by investigating the lifestyle patterns adopted by Nigerians after the COVID-19 pandemic, examining how these changes might affect their well-being, productivity, and overall quality of life.

Research Question

The following research questions were employed to guide this study.

1. What are the wellness and health life patterns of Nigerians after the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What are the work and economic patterns of Nigerians after the COVID-19 pandemic?
3. What are the Social and Recreational Activity patterns of Nigerians after the COVID-19 pandemic?

Theoretical Orientation

The COVID-19 pandemic profoundly altered lifestyle patterns worldwide, including in Nigeria, creating a need to examine these changes through relevant theoretical lenses. This study adopts the Health Belief Model (HBM) and the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) to explore the Nigerian experience post-pandemic. These frameworks provide insight into how individuals perceive and adapt to health risks and societal disruptions, shaping their behaviors and lifestyle patterns.

Health Belief Model (HBM)

The Health Belief Model (HBM), developed by [26], is a psychological theory that explains health-related behaviours based on individuals' perceptions of disease risk and the benefits of preventive action. The model posits that behaviour is influenced by six constructs: perceived susceptibility, perceived severity, perceived benefits, perceived barriers, cues to action, and self-efficacy. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, Nigerians experienced heightened perceived susceptibility and severity due to widespread disease outbreaks, hospitalizations, and fatalities. Consequently, lifestyle changes, such as wearing face masks, practicing social distancing, and adopting remote work, became widespread. The HBM further explains post-pandemic behaviours such as vaccine uptake, continued use of hygiene practices, and adherence to health guidelines. It is on this note that [27], in their work posit that perceived susceptibility to future pandemics and the severity of potential illness have influenced ongoing preventive behaviours like increased hand hygiene and mask usage in crowded areas. Similarly, perceived barriers, such as misinformation or vaccine hesitancy, continue to shape behavioural patterns. By applying the HBM, this study explores how individual perceptions and external cues impacted lifestyle adaptations in the Nigerian population.

Social Cognitive Theory (SCT)

The SCT, developed by [28], emphasizes the interplay of personal, environmental, and behavioural factors in shaping human actions. This theory highlights the role of observational learning, self-regulation, and self-efficacy in behaviour change. During the pandemic, the media, government campaigns, and community leaders played crucial roles in modelling behaviours such as mask-wearing and vaccination. These behaviours were adopted through observational learning and reinforced by community norms. Post-pandemic, Nigerians have embraced certain lifestyle shifts, such as increased reliance on digital technology, remote learning, and telemedicine, driven by environmental factors and enhanced self-regulation. Additionally, the SCT accounts for regional disparities in lifestyle changes, where rural communities may exhibit slower adoption due to limited access to resources and technology [29]. The theory underscores how environmental constraints and social influences shaped behaviour during and after the pandemic.

Integrative Framework

Combining the HBM and SCT provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing lifestyle patterns post-COVID-19 in Nigeria. The HBM elucidates individual health-related decision-making processes, while the SCT captures the broader social and environmental influences on behaviour. This dual-theoretical approach offers valuable insights into how Nigerians adjusted their lifestyles in response to the pandemic and how these changes may persist or evolve. By applying these theories, the study investigates the dynamics of health behaviours, digital adaptation, social interactions, and mental health among Nigerians post-pandemic. These insights can inform policy recommendations aimed at promoting sustainable health practices and improving public health resilience in Nigeria.

METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out among residents of the Enugu metropolitan area clustered into Abakpa Nike, Ogui Nike, Uwani, New Haven, Coal Coal Camp, Awkunanaw, and Independence Layout axis. Enugu metropolis is considered a large and geographically dispersedly populated area. The study adopted the ex post

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facto research design approach using survey questionnaires to gather quantitative data. This approach was chosen considering that the Enugu metropolitan area boasts of good number of learned individuals as this will help to provide a comprehensive understanding of the lifestyle patterns of Nigerians post-COVID-19. The target population comprised adults across different age groups, occupations, and socioeconomic backgrounds within the Enugu metropolis. A Multistage Cluster Sampling Technique was deployed to reduce the metropolitan area into clusters while a convenient sampling technique was used to get a sample size of 230 respondents. The researcher designed a structured questionnaire titled “Lifestyle Pattern of Nigerians Post COVID-19 Pandemic (LSPNPCP)” to collect the quantitative data needed for the study. The questionnaire is divided into four sections: Demographic Information, lifestyle changes observed among Nigerians after the COVID-19 pandemic, interpersonal relationships and social networks in Nigeria, and health behaviour changes observed in Nigerians post-COVID-19. Data collected were analysed using simple percentages and in a tabular representation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 below shows the results of the question “What are the wellness and health life patterns of Nigerians after the COVID-19 pandemic?” The question is modelled into five different questions that concern wellness and health life patterns, including the Exercise Routine, Dietary Habits, Preventive Healthcare, Hygiene Practices, and Health Information-Seeking life patterns of Nigerians post-COVID-19.

Table 1: Wellness and Health Lifestyle Pattern

S/n	Item	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	Since the pandemic, have you increased the frequency or duration of your physical exercise?	Yes	170	73.91
		No	60	26.09
2	Have you made changes to your diet (such as incorporating more fruits and vegetables) after the COVID-19 pandemic?	Yes	180	78.26
		No	50	11.74
3	Do you now regularly participate in preventive healthcare activities (e.g., routine check-ups or health screenings) post-pandemic?	Yes	190	82.61
		No	40	17.39
4	Have you maintained enhanced hygiene practices (such as frequent handwashing or using sanitizers) after the peak of the pandemic?	Yes	140	60.87
		No	90	39.13
5	Are you more proactive in seeking health and wellness information (online or through other media) after the COVID-19 pandemic?	Yes	160	69.57
		No	70	30.43

From the information in table above, the result shows that the overall response of the participants points to the fact that the health and wellness patterns of Nigerians changed after the COVID-19 pandemic. Many Families and individuals have increased the frequency of their physical exercise, changed their diet by incorporating more fruits and vegetables, and now participate in preventive healthcare activities regularly post-COVID-19. The Nigerian people have also maintained enhanced hygiene practices such as frequent handwashing or using sanitizers while being more proactive in seeking health and wellness information (online or through other media). This fact is explained by the frequency and percentage of the respondents with a YES or NO response to the questions respectively. These results imply that the Life pattern of Nigerians post-COVID-19 has changed significantly from what it used to be. Their attitude towards health and wellness has changed. Table 2 below shows the results of the research question “What are the work and economic life patterns of Nigerians after the COVID-19 pandemic?” The economic and work-life pattern question was broken into five questions: Remote Work Adoption, Entrepreneurship and Side Jobs, Savings and Financial Planning, Digital Economy Participation, and Work-life Balance.

Table 2: Work and Economic Life Patterns of Nigerians

S/n	Item	Response	Frequency	Percentage
1	Since COVID-19, have you become more conscious about saving money or financial planning?	Yes	195	84.78
		No	35	15.22
2	Do you now prioritize work-life balance more than before the pandemic?	Yes	150	65.22
		No	80	34.78
3	Have your use of digital platforms for work, business transactions, or investments since the pandemic increased?	Yes	190	82.61
		No	40	17.39
4	Do you think there is an increased reliance on digital platforms (such as online shopping, digital payments, or virtual communication) after the pandemic?	Yes	170	73.91
		No	60	26.09
5	Are you currently working remotely or in a hybrid work arrangement more frequently than before the pandemic?	Yes	125	54.35
		No	105	45.65

The results from the table2 above show that the work and economic life pattern of Nigerians changed after the pandemic with most Nigerians adopting an alternative and improved way to balance work and economy. Results show that many have become more conscious about saving money or financial planning, prioritised work-life balance more than before the pandemic, have become more conscious about saving money or financial planning, while there has been an increased reliance on digital platforms (such as online shopping, digital payments, or virtual communication) after the pandemic. Most people have also embraced working remotely or a hybrid work arrangement since after the pandemic. The results imply that the work and economic life patterns of Most Nigerians have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. In table 3 below, the results for the question “What are the Social and Recreational Activity patterns of Nigerians after the COVID-19 pandemic?” was presented. The research question was answered using five different questions that covers social interactions, travel habits, and entertainment.

Table 3: Social and recreational activities life patterns of Nigerians after the Pandemic

S/n	Item	Response	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1	After the COVID-19 pandemic, have you experienced a significant reduction in face-to-face interactions with family and friends?	Yes	120	52.17
		No	110	47.83
2	Have you started participating more frequently in outdoor recreational activities (e.g., sports, picnics, park visits) after the pandemic?	Yes	210	91.30
		No	20	8.70
3	Do you feel that your overall social life has improved after the COVID-19 pandemic compared to during the pandemic?	Yes	180	78.26
		No	50	21.74
4	Have you resumed or increased your attendance at cultural or community events (e.g., festivals, and art shows) after COVID-19?	Yes	170	73.91
		No	60	22.09
5	Have you observed changes in the level of emotional support or trust within your existing social networks after the COVID-19 pandemic?	Yes	150	65.22
		No	80	34.78

From table 3 above, results show that the Social and Recreational Activity patterns of Nigerians after the COVID-19 pandemic were impacted. Greater percentage of the respondents are of the opinion that they have experienced a significant reduction in face-to-face interactions with family and friends, they have started participating more frequently in outdoor recreational activities (e.g., sports, picnics, park visits), and they also feel that social life has improved compared to during COVID-19. A majority also affirms that their attendance at cultural or community events (e.g., festivals, and art shows) has increased while they also observed changes in the level of emotional support or trust within their existing social networks after the COVID-19 pandemic. These results imply that the social and recreational life patterns of Nigerians are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

DISCUSSION

The post-COVID-19 pandemic lifestyle pattern of Nigerians has been reported to be different in most cases from what it was before and during the pandemic. Results from this study confirm the assertion. From the result of research question 1 of this study, the health and wellness patterns of Nigerians were impacted after the COVID-19 pandemic. Many Families and individuals have increased the frequency of their physical exercise, changed their diet by incorporating more fruits and vegetables, and now participate in preventive healthcare activities regularly post-COVID-19. The Nigerian people have also maintained enhanced hygiene practices such as frequent handwashing or using sanitizers while being more proactive in seeking health and wellness information (online or through other media). This result corroborates the assertion by [30], that health behaviour has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, with increased emphasis on hygiene, sanitation, and preventive measures becoming integral to daily routines. Also, [31], noted that the normalization of these habits is indicative of a heightened public health consciousness. Similarly, regular health check-ups and a focus on boosting immunity through diet have gained prominence, contributing to a more health-conscious population. From the result of research question 2, the work and economic life pattern of Nigerians changed after the pandemic with most Nigerians adopting an alternative and improved way to balance work and economy. Results show that many have become more conscious about saving money or financial planning. Many have prioritised work-life balance more than before the pandemic, and others have become more conscious about saving money or financial planning. While there has been an increased reliance on digital platforms (such as online shopping, digital payments, or virtual communication) after the pandemic, most people have also embraced working remotely or in a hybrid work arrangement since the pandemic. The result agrees with [32], who opined that in the post-pandemic era, a hybrid work model combining in-person and remote work has gained traction, particularly in sectors such as finance, IT, and media. It further agrees with [33], who postulates in his study that the digital shift has also pushed many companies to invest in infrastructure to support remote work, thus transforming work dynamics across the country. The results of question 3, show that the social and recreational activity lifestyle pattern of Nigerians after the COVID-19 pandemic were impacted. From the result, many have experienced a significant reduction in face-to-face interactions with family and friends, many have started participating more frequently in outdoor recreational activities (e.g., sports, picnics, park visits), and many also feel that social life has improved compared to during COVID-19. A majority also affirms that their attendance at cultural or community events (e.g., festivals, and art shows) has increased while they also observed changes in the level of emotional support or trust within their existing social networks after the COVID-19 pandemic. This result agrees with the results of [34], where they opined that the use of social media and digital platforms for maintaining personal and professional relationships increased significantly. Also, in the work of [35], he stated that virtual gatherings, which became common during the pandemic, continue to play a role in maintaining social connections.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The COVID-19 pandemic undeniably reshaped the lives of Nigerians, influencing health practices, work-culture, education, social interactions, and economic behaviour. While some of these changes may eventually fade, many have become permanent features of Nigerian society, reflecting the resilience and adaptability of the population in the face of unprecedented challenges. The lifestyle patterns that emerged post-pandemic demonstrate Nigeria's capacity to evolve and thrive in a rapidly changing world. Therefore, the study recommends that since the lifestyle pattern of Nigerians were impacted, policies and interventions should be geared towards promoting and sustaining the new found life pattern that positively, impacts the economy, wellness and social behaviours of Nigerians. Future research should focus on the long-term effects of these lifestyle changes and examine how different demographic groups have adapted in response to evolving socio-economic conditions.

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