

Full Length Research

Effects and Impacts of Archival Documents in Solving the Nigerian Contemporary Covid'19 Problems

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Archival Documents have invaluable effects and impacts in solving contemporary problems in view of the Covid'19 Pandemic. An extra-ordinary outbreak of coronavirus which started in China in December, 2019 rapidly spread to other parts of the world of which Nigeria is not an exception. The virus made its way into the shoreline of Nigeria on the 27th February by an ill Italian to Lagos. This article looked at the effects and impacts of archival documents in solving contemporary problems in Nigerian society: an overview of covid'19 pandemic. It went further to explore the concept of archives, archival mandates & responsibilities, and brief history of the coronavirus was given. It also examined the history of COVID'19 in Nigeria; some of the characteristics of the coronavirus, and in addition examined the effects and impacts of archival documents in solving Nigerian contemporary problems. The study concluded that while Nigeria was able to successfully curtail the outbreak by leveraging on existing archival materials available based on local capacity, critical improvements are still needed to strengthen early warning systems and rapid response capabilities within our health sector in preparation for any future re-introduction of any viruses to the country. The researchers recommended that the health sector in Nigeria should be more cognizant of proper preservation of the archival records in their disposal for the good of all because 'health is wealth' as they say

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INTRODUCTION

Nigeria is located on the Atlantic coast in West Africa; it is the most populous country of Africa with an artistic and cultural heritage unsurpassed in Sub-Saharan Africa (Onuoha, 2013). Nigeria is a land of rich and diverse cultural heritage with more than 250 ethnic groups and a wide array of religious and sophisticated visual arts and there is need to preserve them. History had shown that there is nothing new on this planet earth. No problem is new to human race, except lack of proper documentation of the past. According to literature, archival documents serve as memory cues because going through the document of yesterday, the past is returned back to life to solve the present problems (Onuoha, 2013). That is, to solve the contemporary problems at hands. That is why archival documents are brought back to life. In recent times *coronavirus* has become a nightmare to the whole world including Nigeria. Several authors

(Mnjama 2003; Ngulube & Tafor 2006; Ngoepe 2008; Nengomasha 2009) have written about problems that are faced by many countries regarding records and archives management to solve problems that human beings may be encountered with. According to Mazikana (1996), these problems include malfunctioning or outdated registry systems; antique or inappropriate file classification; no training for staff; problems of missing files; inadequate records centre facilities; non-existent record appraisal and transfers; backlogs in archives processing; poor physical well-being of collections and equipment breakdowns. In the opinion of Mazikana (2009) he stated that most archival institutions in many countries with the mandate to provide records and archival management services to solve the imminent public problem are not being harnessed owing to the neglect of the opportunity archival documents represent. In Nigeria today, top of the problems is poor funding, a problem that is as old as the institution itself. According to Abioye, (2007) he asserted that the manner in which archival matters are handled, particularly in health circles portrays little appreciation of the importance of archives and this portends grave danger for the health sector in combating the covid'19 problem in Nigeria. Thus, the institution has received little or no budgetary support to cater for its professional activities and to upgrade its equipment and facilities. Hence, archives administration and records management are no trivial or inconsequential activities requiring minimal budgetary support, a notion that has affected the funding of the activities of the National Archives of Nigeria (Abioye, 2007).

Archives are collections of documents or 'records' which have been selected for permanent preservation because of their value as evidence or as a source for historical or another research. Records are created by the activities of organisations and people; they serve an active purpose whilst in current use and some of them are later selected and preserved as part of an archival document.

Coronavirus infection disease is representing a substantial public risk. This is why the National archives are committed to the health and safety of the nation as they provide necessary historical materials concerning the viruses in order to combat it spread. Hence, it was observed that the archival documents have not been harnessed properly by our contemporary world to solve the problem of coronavirus pandemic due to a lot of critical factors that are being overlooked. This is owing to the fact that, during Ebola diseases in Nigeria, a lot of researches were carried out to solve the problems; however, they were not properly archived to fall back on at the advent of COVID'19. A lot of these documents have deteriorated so badly that a good number have been lost to inadequate facilities for their preservation and to pilfering by its users. The workers in the various archives have suffered substantial frustration and disillusionment as a result of the utter neglect from government. Today, the failings of National Archives of Nigeria are very apparent from the state of its infrastructures, the dwindling paucity of available documents, the non-updating of their records, the lack of major historical documents in their custody and the almost non-existent training programmes for members of staff to funding. Hence this paper seeks to systematically examine the effects and impacts of archival documents in solving our contemporary problems in our society taking into consideration the recent COVID'19 pandemic and to find appropriate solutions to it.

Concept of Archives

The concept of the archive is multifaceted and can incorporate a variety of meanings. The holistic concept of the archive, implies that rather than seen as going through different phases ('active', 'semi active' and 'archival'), records are viewed as existing in a continuous flow, which may 'begin' with the archives creation at the public agency and 'continue' to the long term preservation at an archival authority (Jörwall et al 2012), yet may also 'start' at the archival authority and 'continue' on to administrative, cultural or personal uses (McKemmish, 2005). Archives are collections of documents or 'records' which have been selected for permanent preservation because of their value as evidence or as a source for historical or other research. Records are created by the activities of organisations and people; they serve an active purpose whilst in current use and some of them are later selected and preserved as part of an archival collection. Hence, archive collections are usually unique, which is why it is so important to take proper care of them. They need to be carefully stored and managed to protect and preserve them for current and future use for they provide evidence of activities which occurred in the past, they tell stories, document people and identity and are valuable sources of information for research.

Archives in Nigeria according to Abioye (2007) took off in 1954 in temporary accommodation of two rooms granted by the then University College, Ibadan under the supervision of the Federal Ministry of Works. In 1958, a purpose-built permanent building of the institution was commissioned on the same University College Campus, Ibadan. Subsequently, the offices at Kaduna and Enugu were opened in 1962 and 1963 respectively. In addition, most of the centres keep government official publications and newspapers, the most prominent being *IweIrohin*, reputed to be the first newspaper in Nigeria published in 1859. The oldest archives in Nigeria, however, are the Arabic manuscripts dating back to 12th century A.D. whose acquisition has been credited to S. S. Waniko, one of the early archivists (Shyllon, 2000).

Archival Mandates & Responsibilities

In the mid 1950's American archivist and archival theorist Theodore Schellenberg wrote that it was important to allocate sufficient mandates to the archival administration, which should be given a place in the governmental hierarchy that will enable it to deal effectively with all other agencies of the government" (Schellenberg, 1956, reprinted 1998, 121). In the early 1980's Swedish archivist Nils Nilsson emphasized that making archival institutions responsible for supervision and development would be particularly important in a society where information is seen as a vital resource: "in information dependent society archival services cannot in the long run limit their activities to the care and provision of records" (Nilsson, 1983,). In the late 1990's Australian archival theorist Frank Upward argued that "to be effective monitors of action, archival institutions will need to be recognized by others as the institutions most capable of providing guidance and control in relation to the integration of the archiving processes involved in document management, records capture, the organization of corporate memory and the networking of archival systems" (Upward, 1997:21). Sue McKemmish has argued that the mandates of archival institutions include "building and managing frameworks and systems which assure the preservation and accessibility of accurate, complete, reliable, and authentic records and archives" (McKemmish, 2005b, 19). Archival institutions have different roles in different countries.

A discussion about how archival mandates and responsibilities ought to be organized is neither new nor finished, or limited to any particular time or country. Though there seems to be a consensus within the field of archival science that archival institutions should be given clear responsibilities and sufficient mandates in relation to official archives management it is unclear what this means in practice and, for example, which other agencies that might be involved. Canadian archivist Bernadine Dodge has described the responsibilities of archivists as contested territory: "the technical procedures that we employ; the parameters of our location as knowledge workers within the larger context of the humanities and social sciences; our commitment, if any, to some notion of collective memory and communal heritage; and the direction in which our profession is moving vis-à-vis the allied but thus far separate professions of historian, information specialist, and records manager" (Dodge, 2002).

Archival materials started in Nigeria through the pre-independent period by the effort of Professor Kenneth Onwuka Dike who was regarded as the founding father and a major catalyst in the emergence of modern African historiography (Ogbogbo & Enibokun, 2015). In his view archive is an important element in this quest for making available to scholars the requisite primary documents for the study of the African past. Kenneth Dike was the first Supervisor of the National Archives of Nigeria from 1954 to 1963. In December 1953, the appointment was renewed for another period of five years (Abioye, 2007).

Brief History of the coronavirus

According to literature, the first case of corona virus was notified as cold in 1960. According to the Canadian study 2001, approximately 500 patients were identified as Flu-like system. 17-18 cases of them were confirmed as infected with coronavirus strain by polymerase chain reaction. Corona was treated as simple non fatal virus till 2002 (Kumar, Malviya, & Kumar 2020). According to them in 2003, various reports published with the proofs of spreading the corona to many countries such as United States America, Hong Kong, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam and in Taiwan. Several cases of severe acute respiratory syndrome caused by corona and their mortally more than 1000 patients were reported in 2003. This was the black year for microbiologist, they started focusing on how to understand these deadly viruses. After a deep exercise they conclude and understand the pathogenesis of disease and discover it as coronavirus. However, a total of 8096 patients were confirmed as infected with coronavirus. So, in 2004, World Health Organization (WHO) and centres for disease control and prevention declared it as a "state emergency". Another study report of Hong Kong confirmed 50 patients of severe acute respiratory syndrome while 30 of them were confirmed as coronavirus infected. In 2012, Saudi Arabian reports were presented several infected patient and deaths (Peiris et al, 2003). COVID-19 was first identified and isolated from pneumonia patient belongs to Wuhan, china in December 2019 (Zhu, Zhang, Wang, Li, Yang & Song 2020). Since 31th of December 2019 and as of 18th of November 2020 the status of COVID'19 stood at 55,743,951 cases of covid'19 (in accordance with the applied case definitions and testing strategies in the affected countries) have been reported, including 1,339,436 deaths.

History of COVID'19 in Nigeria

The first COVID-19 case was announced on 27th February, 2019 in Lagos and since then, over 33,000 samples have been tested. Most cases (around 60%) have been registered in Lagos and Kano states, followed by the Federal Capital Territory (FCT), where the capital city Abuja is located. 35 of 37 states have reported COVID-19 cases (Thematic report

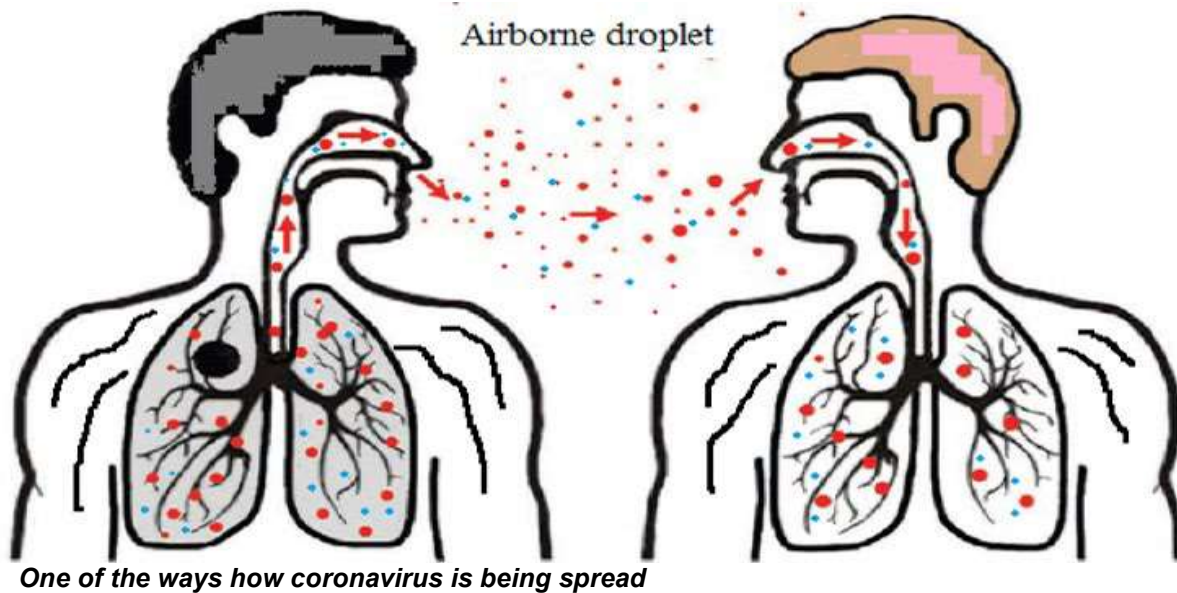
2020). Conflict affected states including Borno, Adamawa, and Yobe have also reported COVID-19 cases. On 18th May 2020, 215 confirmed cases were reported in Borno, with 23 related deaths, 21 cases were reported in Adamawa State and 32 in Yobe State.

At the end of March, Nigeria had only five testing laboratories for the entire country, three of these in Lagos. Testing was available only for people who had internationally or been in contact with confirmed or suspected cases. WHO stated on 18th March that the number of cases in Africa was likely higher than reported, due to limited testing and deficiencies in emergency preparedness (HRW 25/03/2020). As announced by the WHO and OCHA, testing capacity in Nigeria is now increasing. Testing capacity has expanded also thanks to the Nigerian private-sector-led Coalition Against COVID-19 (CACOVID), which provided support to the government with testing kits and extraction kits for fast-track molecular testing.

The Nigerian Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) is the government agency in charge of COVID-19 preparedness and response activities. A Coronavirus Preparedness Group was established at the end of January by the Nigerian government following the development of the epidemic in China. National NGOs, civil society organisations, international NGOs and UN agencies are also engaged in responding to the pandemic and the effects of COVID-19 containment measures.

Characteristics coronavirus

According to a report published on 24th Jan 2020, corona virus infected patients have many common characteristics such as fever, cough, and fatigue while diarrhea and dyspnea were found to be uncommon characteristics. Many of the patients reported bilateral abnormalities. Corona virus was isolated from bronchoalveolar lavage fluid in china in 2020. It is also detected in blood samples. Till now, corona virus was not confirmed in faeces and urine samples of patients. (Chan, Yuan, Kok, To, Chu, & Yang 2020).



Effects and Impacts of Archival Documents in Solving our Contemporary Problems

There are a lot of effects and impacts that archival documents have in solving our contemporary problems, especially that the archives play in the national development such as: the use of archives for coronavirus. History has shown that nothing new on this planet earth if we can look back to what had happened before. Coronavirus is just be likened to the Ebola virus outbreak which started in Guinea in December 2013 rapidly spread to Liberia and Sierra Leone in 2014 affecting at least eight countries with 28,646 cases and over 11,323 deaths (Ogoina, 2016). According to records, the disease was introduced into Nigeria on the 20th July 2014 by a 40-year-old man who arrived Lagos by air from Liberia, just like the case of coronavirus (COVID-19) which also started in Lagos and spread to the city of Port Harcourt. This was rapidly responded to by the (NCDC) of the Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH) in collaboration with the State

Ministries of Health in Lagos and Rivers States utilized existing local capacities and the Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR) system to rapidly diagnose and control the EVD, while also repurposing existing public health resources to address the new challenges posed. The effects and impacts of this on the contemporary problems such as coronavirus is that there is no area of human activity not shaped in the most fundamental ways by the archival storage of information and no continuing form of culture or community is possible without it (McKemmish, 2005). The archival documents that our health professionals visited concerning our Ebola virus make Nigeria to have a low account of cases and death records.

This is why Australian archival theorist Sue McKemmish asserted that archives are vital components of society: "Governing bodies and archives are closely linked; a modern state could not function without records. Because they stand the test of time to help us solve problems that we presently face. Furthermore, the method used during the time of Ebola virus also played out in this pandemic called COVID'19in Nigeria which was led by the NCDC of the federal ministry of health in collaboration with the Lagos and Rivers States Ministry of Health, research and academic institutions, private sector organizations and international technical partners. The approach used was a coordinated and integrated rapid implementation of EVD control measures using multidisciplinary teams. Though the spread of COVID'19 was much more than that of Ebola virus that led to the Government of Nigeria has put in place several measures to prevent, mitigate, and respond to the spread of COVID-19 across the country. These include lock-downs, movement restrictions, social and physical distancing measures, as well as public health measures (Ketelaar, 2005). The distribution of cases is uneven and has resulted in a diversified response from the federal government. According to records, lessons were learned based on the archival documents that were available to the health sector and this helped to limit the death rate of the corona virus in Nigeria. This is in collaboration with French philosopher Jacques Derrida who discussed the tension between archives and politics, public and private, truth and authority, and argued that control of archives is a prerequisite for power;"There is no political power without control of the archive, if not of memory" (Derrida, 1996.).Swedish archival scholar Anneli Sundqvist (2011) has argued that archives have the power to extend the influence of actions beyond one's immediate vicinity. He went further to assert that records are tools, which extend the human capacity to act, to cause change to exceed the limits of time and space" (Sundqvist, 2011).Official archives affect society and single individuals in many different ways. Records are, for example, used to constitute ownership, establish financial transactions, and confirm historical facts. According to Ngoepe (1998), he contended that without the records, the government will not be able to address issues such as poverty, crime, social grants, AIDS, land rights and even the provision of basic services (water and electricity). Perhaps, the Presidential Commission established in Botswana in 2004 to investigate the allocation of land in the Segoditshane village is a very good example of the importance of proper archival records in relation to our hospitals. In Nigeria, medical practices such as Health Records Officers Registration Board of Nigeria; Nigeria Medical Council, Nurses and Midwifery Council of Nigeria, etc regulate the practice of health records management and other medical practices in Nigeria (Osundina et al, 2016). These are the accrediting agencies that are given power by the federal statutes to make rules concerning good standard of health care training/practices in Nigeria. In the same way, State legislatures such as State Hospitals Management Board makes rules regulating health care practices including health records management in the areas of disclosure of information, and confidentiality of patients records (Maduwesi, 2005). These agencies are in existence because they know the importance of archival records to health sector. Medical records may be requested based on the medical research, and continuity of care or as evidence in case of litigation which may have great effect on the future treatment of the potential patients. But, failure of the records management of the health professionals to observe the legal rules and principles record management that ensure right conduct based on the medical oaths and rules that prescribe medical professionals' character, motives and duties which should guide the health professionals in their dealings may result to unethical practices by not having proper record for the future(Benjamin, 2010). All the same, the Nigeria government might have used archival information materials that were available from Ebola to some extent but lack of archival proper records keeping or inaccurate record keeping and maintenance of most by Nigerian hospital personnel do not yield desirable results.

Summary of the Study

This study judiciously examined the effects and impacts of archival documents in solving our contemporary problems in view of the Covid'19 Pandemic. The introduction presented the overture of archival documents as a basis for unravelling coronavirus based on the past experience in the relevant cases. It went further to lay little emphasis on the concept of archive, its mandate and responsibility which is not limited to any country or time. Brief history of coronavirus was taken into consideration and its history in Nigeria was provided also. In addition, the characteristics of coronavirus were brought to light under this investigation coupled with effects and impacts of archival documents in solving our contemporary problems which is the hallmark of the investigation at large.

CONCLUSION

The effects and the impacts of archival records are felt through research undertaken to the memories of the past archival documents on account of an environment of appreciation and understanding of the value and relevance of past records. The coronavirus outbreak in Nigeria was rapidly contained with major lessons learned from the Ebola virus in 2014 that was leveraged to improve epidemic preparedness and future response efforts. While Nigeria was able to successfully curtail the outbreak by leveraging on existing archival materials available based on local capacity, critical improvements are still needed to strengthen early warning systems and rapid response capabilities within our health sector in preparation for any future re-introduction of any viruses to the country. Although the pandemic has gone down rapidly since August 2020, owing to community-based and health facility surveillance, public health measures at Points of Entry have been strengthened and a National EOC set up at the NCDC. Rapid response teams have been inaugurated at the sub-national levels (States). Hence, the case of Nigeria in the instance of COVID'19, is as a result of reflection of the record keeping culture in both the public and private sector in the country, especially in health sector (the case of Ebola virus in 2014) which result in solving the contemporary problem we are facing in Nigeria which result to the assurance of population health security.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ The significance of archive should be well entrenched in our curriculum which will go a long way in instilling the values associated with our natural part in everyone across all strata of educational system
- ✓ State and Local governments, public spirited individuals, non-governmental organizations and companies should all come together to offer the requisite support for the National Archives.
- ✓ The awareness and importance of archival documents should be at all times made known to the public in order to be well harnessed and utilized for solving contemporary problems such as COVID'19.
- ✓ Health sector in Nigeria should be more cognizant of proper preservation of the archival records in their disposal for the good of all because 'health is wealth' as they say.
- ✓ There should be free access to the health records in order to learn, revisit and reuse of them when the needs arise.

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