NAVIGATING DAILY ACTIVITIES DURING A HEALTH CRISIS: A QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF NIGERIAN WOMEN DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

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ABSTRACT

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This dissertation looks at the coping strategies used by Nigerian women amid a health crisis. The study assesses women's lived experiences in Nigeria during the first wave of the COVID-19 outbreak and the imposition of lockdown. In times of crisis, whether political, religious, or health-related, Nigerian women, like other African women, are invariably depicted as victims. The current study describes suffrage ideology and the difficulties that Nigerian women face because of patriarchy and marginalization. The study explored complicated identities to critically appraise women in Nigeria based on their lived experiences. This study demonstrates how recognizing oppressive policies during the lockdown assisted women in developing coping skills and navigating a crisis. During the lockdown, when movement was severely restricted, the government failed to address women's health concerns, gender-based violence, and economic growth. Even though the interviews were centered on African feminism and intersectionality, the data collected and evaluated provided little support for these two theories. The study conducted interviews and examined social media postings and comments using Grounded Theory, Thematic Analysis, and Social Media Analysis as methods. Inductive interviews were done, and emergent themes were found. The inductive in-depth interviews were conducted with a variety of women who lived in Nigeria during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic (late 2019 to mid-2020) and the implementation of the lockdown to prevent the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. ATLAS.TI, a qualitative computational analysis tool, was used to code and arrange the data from the interviews into themes. The second batch of data was gathered using keywords influenced by the previous set of data analysis's emergent topics. The

data were structured to include female social media postings and comments on YouTube and Twitter. The study discovered that two underlying principles impact the behavior, attitude, expectation, and responsibility demonstrated by the women questioned and the remarks examined to successfully cope with the risks of the COVID-19 epidemic. Resilience and adaptation are two of these notions. The data suggest that Nigerian women negotiate crises by leveraging support for other women, obtaining knowledge for self-orientation, successfully controlling their emotions, and exploring methods to lessen tension while they traverse repressive governmental policies and systems.

Keywords: Nigerian women, coping strategies, COVID-19 pandemic, resiliency, adaptability

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

African women have been stereotyped for their physical bodies (Edwards & Esposito, 2018; hooks, 2015), their abilities (Collins, 2000), and their gendered roles (Ahmed & Dumanski, 2020; Anunobi, 2002). Biases about African woman's health have also affected how she navigates through a period of crisis (Abate et al., 2020). This study takes these biases and stereotypes into consideration in understanding how Nigerian women navigate through crises caused by a pandemic or an epidemic. Through investigating the perils that women underwent during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic that led to a lockdown, this study provides a perspective on survival, resiliency, and adaptability among Nigerian women. There are existing stereotypes about West African women as highlighted by previous research. These stereotypes have led to undermining the efforts women put forward when face with a crisis. However, studying and analyzing their lived experiences would provide a better understanding of their abilities. Also, this study will examine emerging themes by investigating different issues raised during conducted interviews.

From the 20th century to date African communities have been plagued by under-resourced and fragile health systems and policies (Acquaah et al., 2021; Gilbert et al., 2020). The African health system has been touted by pandemics and epidemics like HIV and Ebola (Elston et al., 2016; Kieny et al., 2014). Therefore, when the first case of coronavirus infection was recorded in Africa, the World Health Organization along with certain Western countries' prediction was that Africa would suffer a catastrophic human loss to the virus (Berhan, 2020; 2020; Sun et al., 2020). However, during the first wave of the pandemic, it was noticeable that the African continent had fewer human fatalities compared to Europe and North America

(Lawal, 2021). While the rest of the world grappled with why Africa was 'spared' human causalities, their concerns later made no sense. Historically, Africa has been affected by different epidemics and pandemics. One notable epidemic that gripped the continent was the Ebola epidemic (this occurred in 2013 -2015 in most West African states) which led to the high fatality. In West Africa, the Ebola virus was present in countries like Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria. Due to the cultural context of gender in Africa, women were situated as caregivers and therefore the likelihood of getting infected by a raging virus like the Ebola virus was high, and this caused disproportionality in the number of those affected (Fawole et al., 2016). Some studies on the effect of the Ebola outbreaks noted women were disproportionately affected because of their gendered role in caregiving (Fawole et al., 2016; Garikipati & Kambhampati, 2021; Harman, 2016; Minor, 2017). For example, a study on the Ebola outbreak in the Congo and Gabon discovered that men used the social custom of women caring for the sick to avoid physical contact with Ebola patients thereby reducing the risk of being infected. (Fawole et al., 2016). The notion of women being the "homemaker" has hurt the feminization of domestic chores and caregiving in Africa traditional societies. According to Anyanwu & Salami (2021, p.1),

> Except for a few, most governments around the world initially downplayed the pandemic until it became a sustained transmission at the community level. When governments realized the cases were spiraling out of control, the first reaction was to mask mandates, closing international borders with stricter social distancing measures, and the resulting physical restrictions (bans and closings) on socio-economic activities to restrict human movement, except for those of basic services such as medical staff and security staff. Testing, tracking, and therapeutic management of the infected, as well as quarantine and isolation. positive cases became the norm.

The case fatality rate (CFR) or death from confirmed cases in Africa was 2.7% on March 7, 2021, above the global CFR rate of 2.2%. From a regional perspective, West Africa had the lowest CFR with 1.3%, followed by Central Africa at 1.7%, East Africa at 1.9%, North Africa at 2.8%, and Southern Africa at 3.1%, which is above the African average (Anyanwu & Salami, 2021). However, African communities are not only struggling with a fragile health system, but also, with fragmented socio-economic, political, educational, and diplomatic systems. The continent has seen so many wars, unrest, and outflux of citizens to other parts of the world because of economic, political, and social reasons. Therefore, the presence of the COVID-19 pandemic is an additional burden that has created more pressure on a symbolic camel's back. During the last 20 months into the pandemic, Africa has witnessed several unrests and protests ranging from the #ENDSARS protest in Nigeria against bad governance and police brutality to the civil unrest in South Africa sparked by the imprisonment of her former president Joseph Zuma for corruption charges (Ojedokun et al., 2021; "Social and Political Protests, Exacerbated by the COVID-19 Pandemic, on the Increase in Africa," n.d.).

Many African nations saw a negative effect in the socio-economic and political spheres during the first and second waves of the COVID-19 pandemic. The issuance of the lockdown that was implemented in many African countries received both negative and positive connotations. Government restrictions on travel, strict implementation of social distancing, required compliance with certain rules like handwashing, and a limited number of persons in certain public domains had socio-economic and political effects on the populace. Previous research studies (for example, Ecke et al., n.d.) have tried to understand the factors that led to fewer number human fatalities. However, most of these earlier studies derive their

methodology from different Western perspectives to analyze the phenomena, therefore, resulting in more perplexing questions than resolving answers.

Purpose/Significance of Study

The purpose of this dissertation is not only to add to the existing literature on situating gender in modern-day sub-Saharan African societies but to critique established stereotypes that undermine the study of African women. Using the theoretical frameworks of African feminism, and intersectionality methodology, I will highlight the power structures, class, and patriarchal traditions that have influenced gender inequality, gender discrimination, and social injustices, especially during a major health crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic.

This research builds on previous work I have conducted as part of a research team. The original idea to study the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Nigerian women partly emerged from Dr. Lara Martin Lengel's research team on risk perceptions, marginalization, and injustices during the COVID-19 pandemic (IRB approval ID# 1583241, April 1, 2020. See, Lengel, Montenegro, Newsom, & Tolofari, 2021; 2023).

The dissertation focuses on not just identifying power structures, class, and patriarchal traditions that have influenced gender inequality, gender discrimination, and social injustices during a major health crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, but proffering ways to resolve these issues. The important significance of this study lies in the fact that it will be centering on gaining different African perspectives from individuals who identify as Africans and have lived on the continent. As a native of Africa, and a US-trained researcher, my goal is not to be heroic and detached by only investigating with the idea of "seeing only the victim" but by projecting who the African woman is.

Research Questions

Based on the purpose of this study examining how gender issues are situated in West Africa during a health crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic, the following research questions are formulated. These questions will theoretically guide the investigation of gender issues and factors that contribute to the existence of these issues.

RQ1: How have the intersections of gender, power inequality, and heteropatriarchal structures in Nigeria been highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic?

RQ2: How does understanding government involvement in resolving the problems arising from the pandemic deepen the gender divide?

RQ3: How is the epistemological discourse of power and class highlighted in the daily activities of women during the pandemic?

RQ4: How have reports of media and conversations about gender-based violence been handled during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Rationale of Study

This research aims to study women in Nigeria and their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. I aim to investigate how classism and African traditional customs, policies, and other issues have affected women, especially during the pandemic. This study looks at the lived experiences of everyday African women (women who, by birth or naturalization, reside or have lived in Africa and are recognized as Africans). The study focuses on women from Nigeria, the most populous black nation, from various economic, social, and educational backgrounds, to understand why and how women's problems were positioned during the COVID-19 epidemic. The study investigated how different socio-cultural frameworks and gender roles influenced how women navigated tough situations.

The study also focuses on using exploratory research methods and contributing to the scholarship of African and black feminism. Using the frameworks of intersectionality and African feminism, the study provides a deep dive into what factors contribute to the actions, perceptions, and ideologies of African women. Even though most African women consciously reject feminism, there is the existence of differences in feminist thoughts based on economic, political, and social struggles. Therefore, to adequately situate how women in Nigeria and Africa, in general, are in the existing scholarship, this study conducted inductive interviews to identify emerging themes.

Statement of Problem

Widespread violence against women and girls was widely reported in local media during the first wave of the pandemic (Ahinkorah et al., 2021; Alon et al, 2020). During the lockdown period, many young girls were forced to give up their education. Some of these girls were reported to have been married off to unsolicited suitors; others became susceptible to rape and domestic violence (Onyango et al., 2019; *US Moves against Gender-Based Violence in Nigeria*, 2014). The issuance of the lockdown also led to the loss of employment or closure of small, indigenous businesses (Anyanwu & Salami, 2021; "Nigerian Businesses amid Covid-19-Induced Storms," 2020). There was a disproportionate number of women losing their financial independency during the pandemic ("Nigerian Businesses amid Covid-19-Induced Storms," 2020). Government policies were put in place to alleviate the economic and financial burden, but these were plagued by corruption or insufficient resources (Acquaah et al., 2021; Anyanwu & Salami, 2021). Also, non-government agencies and organizations tried to provide resources for some affected groups and communities, and there were disparities in the distribution of these resources (Acquaah et al., 2021).

Another problem that needs investigating is the existing power structure and power dynamics. During the pandemic, some areas were exposed the unequal power structures in different African communities. The outside perceptions of African societies could affect how different African governments express power. These could lead to the pervasiveness of protests and demands for silenced voices to be heard. This uneven and unequal power structure can be seen in how feminism is perceived in African communities (Biwa, 2021; Mekgwe, 2007; Mikell, 1995). The proposed study will investigate how the definition of and situating feminism in different African contexts has contributed to the shaping of feminist movements. The research would focus on establishing real class and gender issues and how these inform the power structure found in Africa (especially West African communities).

To preview what this project entails, Chapter 1 discussed the rationale and importance of examining the lived experiences of African women during the COVID-19 pandemic. Providing research questions that guide the interviews conducted. The chapter also highlights the significance and problem that the dissertation project tackles. In Chapter 2 an in-depth review of findings of previous research on African women's experiences during a crisis is presented. The chapter conceptualizes various issues that plague African women as a minority and marginalized group. Chapter 3 details the theoretical frameworks that provide foundational structure and guidance to conduct the research. The chapter entails the theoretical frameworks of African Feminism and Black Feminism as noted by pioneering scholars (Collins, hooks, and others). The use of Intersectionality as a methodological framework provides a structure for understanding the complexities of investigating gender issues in the African community is discussed in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 discusses in length the methods that drive the research. To conduct an inductive and constructive interview, I employed the use of Grounded Theory. To properly investigate emerging themes from the interviews, the process of Thematic analysis was

employed. The chapter also deals with the analysis of data from both the interviews and comments from social media sites. Computational data analysis was done using Atlas. ti, Excel, and other computational apps. In Chapters 6 and 7 findings of the interviews and the analysis of social media platforms respectively. Emerging themes were discussed using a model derived from patterns identified during the analysis. Chapter 8 discusses the limitations of the study, the implications of theory and praxis, and future research projects.

Theoretical Contribution

This dissertation project will address the gap in examining women's experiences from an African context. The project aim is to investigate women in Nigeria (and by extension sub-Saharan Africa) and their lived experiences that are void of mention in Western research articles. The study aims to provide a different presentation of West African women who are seen as always, as a victim or survivors but more as innovative, strong-willed women who are willing to adapt to change. The rationale for doing this study is to contribute to existing scholarship. How the victim narrative is being used by the existing oppressive systems to further delineate women from overcoming oppressive policies during a crisis period. How women understanding of the intersections of class, and power dominance has provided a different perspective on African feminism and the application of intersectionality to African studies.

Using the intersectionality approach at different levels of the study is to examine the multi-dimensional lived experiences of black, Nigerian women shaped by existing patriarchal structures under different circumstances. This will enable future research in examining Nigerian women to investigate different connections and multi-marginalized intersections of their lived realities.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In Chapter 2, I conceptualize the problems of women in Africa and the issues they face during a crisis. It is imperative to provide an understanding of the pervasiveness of stereotypes and biases of women in Africa and their experiences.

Gender and COVID-19 Pandemic

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the globe, it was quickly termed the "great equalizer," However, as time slowly passed, it has become anything but that when it involves gender issues (Alon et al., 2020). When the pandemic hit Africa, it became apparent that more women became vulnerable to being infected by the virus because of their role as caregivers in the household. The division of roles based on gender created an unequal chance of being exposed to the virus. During the Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa from 2014-2016, gender norms meant that women were more likely to be infected with the virus, given their predominant roles as caregivers within families and as health workers at the forefront (Ahmed & Dumanski, 2020; Davies & Bennett, 2016; Wenham et al., 2020). The different impacts of the disease on women and men, the gender role of women as caregivers, and the role of women in health systems in West Africa have been largely invisible (Harman, 2016). Aside from a handful of prominent women who run global institutions, women are invisible in global health governance: those working in global health know and see women in care roles that underpin health systems strategy, policy, or practice (Wenham et al., 2020). Women are only made visible through motherhood (Harman, 2016). Award-winning writer Chimamanda Adichie, from Nigeria, stated that the act of chivalry amplifies and identifies the weaknesses of women as they are seen as needing protection and not being the protector (The Daily Show, 2018). She noted further that the use of gender identifiers proves the imbalance in the development of the different genders

(The Daily Show, 2018). The problem here is not just the blatant invisibility of women, but gender, as global health policy and practice ignores and subsequently enforces the norms of gendered care and social reproduction (Abate et al., 2020; Harman, 2016; Wenham et al., 2020). The burden of caregiving is heavily feminized at multiple levels, both public and private.

According to studies, women bear most of the burden of care across a wide range of income, education, and welfare systems (Harman, 2016).   The gender norms and expectations of women as a gender regarding social reproduction in the family and larger communities in which they live can explain the feminized burden of care (Harman, 2016). This burden is impressed upon the feminine gender by traditional customs and traditions that are held by many as sacred. Some traditional communities in Africa that are hegemonic ostracize anyone who challenges or questions the defined gender roles even when these are creating huge disparities in the communities. The push for fluidity in gender roles is frowned upon even though this will provide avenues to increase the developmental process of marginalized gender groups. Feminism should include all gender and be promoted by all gender in providing opportunities to the excluded and marginalized gender groups (The Daily Show, 2018).

In the global economic sector, women only account for 39% of the workforce but about 54% are likely to lose their jobs during a crisis – like the COVID-19 health crisis (Madgavkar et al., 2020). Women are more likely to lose their jobs in sectors negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic because they are disproportionately represented in these sectors (Madgavkar et al., 2020). Sectors like wholesale and retail, and hospitality were negatively impacted by the pandemic and women make up a high amount of people working in these sectors. Note that this statistical report was based on developed economies and may be higher in countries in Africa where the GDP or gross domestic product – an economic indicator of the economic performance of a country – is lower. In Nigeria, for example, women were

disproportionately represented in sectors affected by the pandemic and suffered more job losses than their male counterparts (Madgavkar et al., 2020).

In the political sector, gender inequality is pervasive among African countries. Though women have contributed to the political growth in African nations (as well as elsewhere in the world), they continue to face barriers in the political, and socio-economic developmental processes in their country. Some of the so-called developmental programs and policies aimed at alleviating the plights of women are negatively impacting their contributory power (Anunobi, 2002). It is important to note that gender inequality is not a homogenous issue among women but that there is a disparity between women born into wealth and privilege and those of lower socioeconomic status. Anunobi (2002) noted that women live in countries with different historical experiences and levels of development, and the problems affecting women vary according to race, ethnicity, class, religion, tribe, place of residence, and level of education. The different levels of female imperial power and female-to-female unkindness can be seen even in the choice of dressing and grooming, this point was noted by Chimamanda Adichie when she explains the politics of hair braiding salons in Nigeria in an interview (LuiSpot, 2021). Despite these differences, the subordinate status of women is a common denominator in all societies, including industrialized ones. Women and non-cis people are the poorest and least powerful group in the world's population.

However, there are some exceptions where there has been significant growth in women's participation in policymaking and politics. In 2018 Rwanda (51.9 percent), South Africa (48.6 percent), Ethiopia (47.6 percent), Seychelles (45.5 percent), Uganda (36.7 percent), and Mali are among the top African countries with a high percentage of women in ministerial positions (34.4 percent) (Musau, 2019). Morocco (5.6 percent) had the lowest percentage in Africa, with only one female minister in a cabinet of 18. Nigeria (8 percent), Mauritius (8.7

percent), and Sudan are among the other countries with fewer than ten percent female ministers (9.5 percent) (Musau, 2019). Most of these high political positions are marred by the fact that most of these women are appointed to "soft issues" portfolios and only a few are given highly sought political positions (Musau, 2019). Women's participation in politics is intrinsic to the survival of governance and democratic processes. But more participation of women in African politics is still needed to provide a significant shift in oppressive laws and practices that creates marginalization.

The patriarchal systems adopted in most African countries still give women in politics a 'nurturing' role as opposed to their male counterparts. Politics is about more than just institutions of power and who holds them (*Women's Political Participation*, 2021). It is also about how that power is wielded and the results. Women's non-participation in decision-making makes them non-citizens (*Women's Political Participation*, 2021). Policy outcomes reinforce their inferior status. The feminization of poverty, development programs that do not change women's status, and abuse and violence against women and girls are all signs of this (*Women's Political Participation*, 2021). Poverty cannot be discussed without understanding intersectionality and intersectional frameworks such as age (Onyango et al., 2019), class (Collins, 2019), gender (Bali et al., 2020), social-economic status, and traditional roles (Ifemeje, 2012). Even though the patriarchal system is still persistent, there is an increase in feminine voices that led to being heard. The use of social media networking platforms helped women in different communities within Nigeria to speak for or against social, economic, and political issues exacerbated by the pandemic.

Linguistic Challenges During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Africa is a multilinguistic continent – the ability to speak two or more languages with native-like proficiency (Okal, 2014). During the pandemic, much information from international bodies like WHO, and UNESCO was mostly written in languages than more official languages (due to colonialism) in Africa. Linguistic rights are universal human rights and because Africa is a multilinguistic continent, most of the languages that her populations are familiar with are deemed unofficial languages (Kaschula, & Maseko, 2021). This becomes challenging in disseminating information directly to many of the African populace. Linguistic equality is defined as the right of every person's instrument of conscience (language) to be treated equally (Kaschula, & Maseko, 2021). This tool of conscience must have the same inherent rights as the individual due to his or her humanity, such as the right to life (Kaschula, & Maseko, 2021). The scope of this right demonstrates that it makes no difference whether language determines thinking or whether thinking is influenced in some way, such as its contribution to a person's life.
Your consciousness's experience negates your contribution to thinking in general.

The right to information in one's language is then a vital human right. One inherent challenge is that many languages in Africa are spoken by fewer than a million persons and these languages do not have a structured linguistic pattern to help with translation from another language to theirs. During the Ebola crisis in Nigeria, many public service announcements were also made in Nigeria Pidgin English – an unofficial language generally spoken and understood in various geo-political regions in Nigeria. This helped people to understand the gravity of the pandemic and quickly gravitated towards taking all precautionary measures that were outlined to avoid contracting the Ebola virus. This was one of the tactics the Nigerian government

employed to reduce the spread of Ebola. Nigerian Pidgin English (NPE) may be spoken by more people than any other language in Nigeria, despite being frequently ignored and only partially documented (Mann, 1996). Now, Nigerian Pidgin is widely used in the media for newscasting, drama sketches, discussion, record request programs, and, more popularly, advertising (Mann, 1996). Furthermore, in terms of public appeal, radio and television drama presentations and advertisements in Nigerian Pidgin are frequently the most popular (Mann, 1996).

Despite their popularity languages like Nigerian Pidgin English are not recognized to communicate officially pertinent information to the populace. Even though many African countries gained independence from foreign colonizers over fifty years ago and have numerous indigenous languages, some of which serve as lingua franca, they still ended up adopting the colonizers' foreign languages as official, namely English, Portuguese, and French. Thus, foreign languages contribute to official multilingualism in Africa, with South Africa possibly being an exception (Mann, 1996). Linguistic participatory democracy is defined as a situation in which all citizens can conduct a socio-political dialogue on an equal footing in their mother tongue, which naturally develops in every context as part of the language policy framework (Kaschula, & Maseko, 2021). This would prevent the alienation of certain language groups from political and socioeconomic engagements.

Classism During the Pandemic

In economic terms, the family is based on heteronormative and patriarchal institutions, which restricts the female gender to have equal economic power as the male. Fewer women are seen in decision-making positions in the corporate world, and this has resulted in gender inequality. More women have lesser education than the males in their communities – as most African traditions or religions forbade formal education for women or girls. Some traditions

forbade the right for women or girls to be vocally expressive and this has led to having little or no representation in decision-making arenas. Gender studies have revealed social exclusions in developmental processes, particularly against the minority gender. The disproportionality of value placed on the male sex has also led to an imbalance of social issues faced by one gender over the other. These issues include the increase in rape cases, gender-based violence, unemployment, and low education level among women and girls than among the male gender.

Not much research has examined the issue of classism in sub-Saharan Africa. While gender inequality and patriarchal institutions have been investigated, classism has taken a back seat. However, some have noted that when examining inequality and gender-based domestic violence, social-economic status plays a role (for example, (Igbolekwu et al., 2021; Okoi & Bwawa, 2020). Classism does exist—from the well-educated to the political rulers to the financial controllers—in many African societies (cite). There is the existence of the haves and the have-nots; there is the constant identification of the poor and the subjection to harassment or the generation of shame (hooks, 2000). Class hierarchies are firmly established in societies, even for those who frown at capitalism (hooks, 2000).

The presence of classism was evident in my recruitment of participants for my research. When flyers and call for participants were sent using convenient sampling, very few responded. From further investigation, some women in the rural areas and who were classed as part of the lower economic and social levels did not feel an interview with a US-based researcher will provide a forum for the world to hear their actual voice. There was the predetermined notion that the researcher would not understand what they underwent or are undergoing. However, those in the upper social and economic class felt it was too tasking to discuss their pain and the changes they experienced during the pandemic. Some women who initially wanted to

participate in the study withdrew because they felt uncomfortable talking about their struggles during the pandemic. It meant revealing their vulnerabilities and weaknesses as part of the upper class – though it felt more about their identifying as a woman.

Cultural Attribution and Identity

In intercultural and international relations with former colonial powers, Africa has had an unequal relational dynamic. Postcolonial relationships have informed interactions between different African cultural groups and identities (Nakayama & Halualani, 2011). It is important to recognize the links between cultural power and the broader geopolitical relationships and international stories as they affect the unequal balance of power between different cultural groups and identities and their practices and beliefs (Nakayama & Halualani, 2011). In another way, Studies on post-colonial communication are not only interested in examining power relations and inequalities between dominant and marginal cultures; At one level, it always tries to connect and locate these injustices and the intimacies that shape them within the depths of the international and geopolitical history of as they affect the interactions between cultural groups and identities (Nakayama & Halualani, 2011). The majority groups that emerged during and after colonial reign display the same dominancy that the colonial powers exhibited over minority groups. Across West Africa, most cultural groups have attributed economic, and political power – this has been done by presenting their cultural norms and traditions as the general norms and traditions of every cultural group found within the geographical boundary of the respective countries. These generalizations have created identity inequality among the different cultural groups. As with the issue of language, most times information when disseminated is done in the official language and the languages of the majority cultural groups.

The culture of power can also be seen in interpersonal interactions between physicians and patients, where there is the exhibition of power by physicians and other health practitioners leading to poor communication efficacy, lack of empathy, and unwillingness to disclose in-depth health information to patients (Adebayo, 2021). Medical practitioners are revered and given a godlike status which does harm the development of interpersonal interactions. There is also a disconnect between public officeholders and their constituents because of the culture of power. Those with less political power find it difficult to interact with their representatives in government which amplifies the silence of these marginalized voices.

Socio-Economic Impact

As previously mentioned, Africa did not suffer much in human fatalities, but the COVID-19 pandemic hit hard economically and socially. African governments have been commended by some other nations for the drastic measures they have taken to combat the public health impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Health measures like staying at home, avoiding the customary handshakes and hugs, advocating for frequent hand washing, wearing masks, and introducing social distancing were enforced using security measures, and religious and traditional leaders to mandate their congregation and community respectively (Acquaah et al., 2021; Anyanwu & Salami, 2021). Other factors alluded to the slow spread of the virus include her young population, tropical climate, and geographically scattered rural areas, and the adoption of rural community health systems and local medicines have been praised as factors in managing the pandemic (Anyanwu & Salami, 2021).

During the start of the pandemic, it was reported that the most vulnerable demographic were persons 60 years old and above, also there was the belief that the virus would be less likely to survive in a warmer climate. There were also the assumptions in different parts of

Africa (and in some other parts of the world) that Africans had immunity to the coronavirus due to their long exposure to malaria and frequent use of hydroxychloroquine – a drug used in combating malaria symptoms. With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an unprecedented use of herbal remedies in Africa, a situation exacerbated by a lack of approved chemically developed medicines that are effective, affordable, and accessible to populations, and combined with a relatively weak African health sector (Attah et al., 2021). Over 80% of the African population has fully or partially used traditionally grown herbs to treat the symptoms caused by the coronavirus (UNESCO, 2020). These herbs are organically and locally grown and their use as a medicine has been passed on as generational knowledge.

However, to minimize the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, there is a devastating impact on businesses and the economy due to the preventive measures being taken by governments (Acquaah et al., 2021). The lockdown issuance affected small businesses that had to close and let go of their employees. The increase in basic food items led to dissatisfaction among the populace. During the early stages of the pandemic social protest, the police in Nigeria attracted international attention and led to the trending #endsars protest both online and offline. There were reports of an increase in gender-based violence during the lockdown. The lockdown had its positive sides as it helped in preventing the spread of the virus. In West Africa, security agents were used to enforcing the lockdown. This policy later met some form of resistance from different parts of Sub-Saharan Africa. One reason for the resistance is the inability to access basic amenities due to poor governance, and mismanagement of aid provided by international bodies and local governments. In Nigeria, there was alleged unequal distribution of relief aid during the COVID-19 pandemic among the different geopolitical areas – it would be of note that the mismanagement of distribution of the COVID-19 pandemic relief

aid (referred to as palliatives) was based more on political than cultural reason (Olawoyin, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken by governments and private sector institutions to contain its spread (closings, quarantines, social distancing, travel bans and restrictions, masking obligations, and closures of non-essential activities) did create serious socioeconomic disruptions in African economies (Anyanwu & Salami, 2021). Though some African governments responded with programs to alleviate personal hardships and economic disruptions. These relief programs did not address most of the needs of the population during the lockdown. It is therefore not surprising that the pandemic and the measures taken to contain it have caused significant costs to African economies, including a deep economic plunge (Anyanwu & Salami, 2021).

Most African countries' preventive measures, such as the closure of national borders and partial or complete economic blockades (which, among other things, resulted in the temporary closure of businesses, schools, and social activities), harmed their economies (Acquaah et al., 2021). Productivity losses, disruptions in the value chain, declining consumer demand, and intra- and inter-regional trade. They also disproportionately impacted the poor, who lacked the resources to deal with the restrictive measures. In the face of strict closures, which are frequently enforced violently, civil liberties and human rights are suppressed, the pandemic is politicized, resources are diverted, and people refuse to cooperate with health authorities (Acquaah et al., 2021).

Religious influence also had a socio-economic and psychological impact in West Africa (Agbo & Nche, 2022). During the first and second waves of the pandemic, many religious organizations and leaders refuted the government mandate to restrict large gatherings (Chimuanya & Igwebuike, 2021). Some leaders expressed their dismay on social media

platforms and still urged followers to congregate as in pre-pandemic times (Chimuanya & Igwebuike, 2021). Some individuals believed strongly that their faith was strong to help them fight the effects of the pandemic (Chimuanya & Igwebuike, 2021; Ossai, 2021).

Social Disruptions

Throughout history, pandemics have had significant social and political consequences, including nation-state clashes, population displacement, and increased social tension and discrimination (Shang et al., 2021). Many pre-modern pandemics resulted in significant demographic shifts, moral shocks, and social and political upheaval (Shang et al., 2021). For example, violent protests erupted in Dakar which included clashes with security forces, was against the national dusk-to-dawn curfew imposed to prevent the spread of the disease ("Social and Political Protests, Exacerbated by the COVID-19 Pandemic, on the Increase in Africa," n.d.). Following a spike in coronavirus cases in Nigeria, medical doctors at public hospitals had a weeklong strike over insufficient welfare and protective equipment ("Social and Political Protests, Exacerbated by the COVID-19 Pandemic, on the Increase in Africa," n.d.). Nurses from various hospitals in South African provinces had also engaged in protests, largely for better protection against contamination by the virus. Also, Schuur Hospital in Cape Town has engaged in a nonviolent protest to raise attention to their safety concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Also, during the pandemic Nigerian youths protested about the exacerbated police brutality that has led to killings of unsuspecting youths in the country. A special unit of the Nigerian police force created to curb the increase in armed robbery was reportedly noted for abuse of power. In 2017 calls for the scrapping of the unit were made but the unit continued to operate (Ochi & Mark, 2021). In late 2020, a video surfaced showing members of the alleged notorious police unit shooting a young man in one of the southern states of Nigeria and leaving

the scene in his car (Ochi & Mark, 2021; Ojedokun et al., 2021). This sparked a series of

protests around the country and in some parts of the world (for example, protests were held in

the United Kingdom and Canada) (Ojedokun et al., 2021). The protests disrupt economic

activities in the country and garnered international attention. Curfews were enforced, which

added more burden to the economic sector suffering under the COVID-19 pandemic. The END

SARS protests brought to light the mistreatment and rape allegations of young women by the

police force which were never reported (Ochi & Mark, 2021). The protests also saw the

emergence of young female activists, who took center stage during the protests. Nigerian

female celebrities in Nollywood – a moniker for the Nigerian film industry – led some of these

protests in Lagos State (the economic capital of Nigeria).

Resiliency

There is not much research on African women's ability to be resilient during a health

crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. The importance understanding how resilient African

women are will provide a good insight into how these women navigate through crises. To

examine the concept of resiliency, I used the theory of resiliency (Buzzanell, 2017) to provide

an understanding of how the concept relates to the way women in Africa are adaptable to their

new normal after a crisis occurs. The communication theory of resilience provides a theoretical

understanding of how people adapt to their new normal after experiencing trauma, loss, or/and

disaster by utilizing discursive and material resources (Braithwaite & Schrodt, 2015). The

theory focuses on the continuous communicative processes of adaptation and transformation,

reactivity and proactivity, stability and change, disruption and integration, destabilization and

restabilization, and places resistance in integration and relationships, integrating science from

the fields of interpersonal, family, organization, health, and conveyed. communicative contexts

(Braithwaite & Schrodt, 2015). The theory focuses on the ability to "bounce back" and

recognizes that the way resilience is built has both benefits and costs (Braithwaite & Schrodt, 2015). The theory would provide a framework to understand how people adapt to their new normal after the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study aims at knowing what steps or processes people utilize to care for their physical, emotional, spiritual, and mental well-being after experiencing the traumatic events associated with the pandemic (this would be including understanding how people navigated the lockdown and restrictions imposed during the first wave of the pandemic). The theory would provide a guideline for measuring how resilient people were during the lockdown by for example craving normalcy and foregrounding positive and productive actions while negating negative feelings and thoughts in the background (Braithwaite & Schrodt, 2015).

Individuals' identities are formed in social interaction when symbolic meanings are communicatively exchanged and taken on by them and then confirmed or validated through communication (Thompson, 2014). As a result, identity is both internalized and externalized because of social interaction. Therefore, the tenets of the Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) posit that identity (which is categorized into four different layers) is created, maintained, and modified through communication (Thompson, 2014). A person's sense of self is defined and redefined by social behaviors (Braithwaite & Schrodt, 2015). Our identities and social interaction foster in us the drive for motivation and self-efficacy. When faced with the uncertainties of a pandemic how do people present themselves? What processes do individuals undergo to redefine their identity after being in mandatory isolation and social distancing?

In examining African women, some studies have noted how they take the role of a primary caregiver because it is deemed a feminine-gendered role. Some research on the COVID-19 pandemic has shown how this is true (Ahinkorah et al., 2021; Dey et al., 2020; Grigoryan & Green, 2020). Women were expected and required to, for example, take over the

tutoring of their children after the lockdown closed schools. According to my interviews, women subconsciously take over certain tasks because they are considered feminine. The participants demonstrated the need to rise above the challenges they faced and found innovative and creative ways to stay safe. They continued to seek out ways of surviving as individuals and as a group.

Health Concerns

When the COVID-19 pandemic started, everyone regardless of gender was concerned about their health. The people were more concerned about contacting the virus or members of their immediate families. There was an immediate need for people to prevent themselves and their family members from getting the virus. For those who eventually did, there was the struggle not to spread the virus. People were informed about precautionary steps to prevent the spread of the virus and to follow the instructions given by the authorities which include wearing face masks, social distancing, and testing if they showed any symptoms or were exposed to the virus.

The concern for health for women was beyond getting infected by the virus but also dealing with women-related illnesses during the pandemic. there was also the issue of physical assaults or gender-based violence that was notably prevalent during the lockdown period (Chime et al., 2022; Closson et al., 2020; Dekel & Abrahams, 2021). Also, previous research noted how women were unable to access healthcare facilities during a crisis (either health or war) (Abate et al., 2020; Ahinkorah et al., 2021).

CHAPTER THREE: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Comparison of African and Black Feminist Theories

My theoretical framework is drawn from a comparison and contrast of African feminist ideologies and Black Feminist theories. To provide a historical background of black women's struggles in Africa and the diaspora, I examine key texts from pioneering scholars like Patricia H. Collins and Bell hooks. Also, African feminist scholars and authors (for example, Gwendolyn Mikell's article on African Feminism: Towards a New Politics of Representation, Efuru by Flora Nwapa, The Bride Price by Buchi Emecheta, and the Girl Can and other stories by Ama Ata Aidoo and others). However, since my research focus is on Nigerian women living in the African country, my main theoretical framework is African feminism. Examining black feminism is to provide me with a comparative tool for understanding the development and application of African feminism in the 21st century.

Black Feminism as described by Collins is providing tools for African American and black women to resist intersecting oppressive powers. Social and economic injustices that emanate from the slavery of black people have caused the classification of black women as low and unimportant. Black feminist thought was written as a tool to engage black women in activism in response to the intersections of oppressive race, class, gender, and sexuality that have shaped and defined their lives (Feminisms, 2021). Collins (2000, p.5) stated about African American feminism and its evolution,

> The oppression of African American women has three interconnected dimensions. First, the economic dimension of oppression is represented by the exploitation of black women's labor, which is essential to American capitalism: the "iron pots and cauldrons" that symbolized black women's long ghettoization. Second, the political dimension of

oppression deprived African American women of the rights and privileges that white

male citizens regularly enjoyed. Black women's political subordination is exacerbated

by their inability to vote, the exclusion of African Americans and women from public

office, and the denial of equal treatment in the criminal justice system. Finally, an

examination of slave-era images of black women demonstrates the ideological

dimension of black women's oppression in the United States.

Reiterating the importance of black feminism, hooks (2015) discussed how black women

pioneers like Mary Church Terrell, Sojourner Truth, Anna Cooper, Amanda Berry Smith, and

others broke the long years of silence and began to articulate and record their experiences. She

stated, "aspect of their being which made their fate different from that of the black man, a fact

which was brought into sharp relief when white men claimed to give black men the right to

vote, leaving all women deprived of civil rights. Horace Greeley and Wendell Phillips called

him "the nigger now" but what black suffrage was being talked about was black male suffrage"

(p.16) She goes further to note that white men exposed the depths of their sexism by supporting

black male suffrage and denouncing white women's rights advocates, a sexism that was at that

moment in American history bigger than their racism (hooks, 2015). However, when it looked

like black men could get the vote while remaining disenfranchised, political solidarity with

blacks was forgotten, and they urged white men to allow racial solidarity to eclipse their plans

to support black male suffrage (hooks, 2015).

Black feminism and Afrocentric epistemology have become notable and important in

critical social research. Collins, (2000) noted Maria Stewart's (1809 -1879) push for black

feminism to elevate black womanhood from mere domestics to feminists. Collins stated that

Maria Stewart challenged African American women to reject the negative images of Black

womanhood that were prevalent at the time, pointing out that oppression based on race, gender,

and class were the root causes of Black women's poverty (Collins, 2000.p.1). Maria Stewart was not satisfied with identifying the source of Black women's oppression. She urged Black women to define themselves as self-sufficient and independent. "It is no longer necessary for us to sit with our hands folded, rebuking the whites; for this will never elevate us," she exhorted. "Have an independent spirit. Have a manly spirit, bold and enterprising, fearless and unafraid" (Collins, 2000.p.1). Classism has plagued African women for centuries and in recent decades the LGBTQ+ communities in areas of education, health, politics, and the economy. The shadow that obscures this complex intellectual tradition of black women is neither accidental nor benign (Collins, 2000). Repression of the knowledge produced by each oppressed group makes it easier for dominant groups to rule because the apparent lack of dissent suggests that subordinate groups are willingly working together on their victimization (Collins, 2000). Maintaining the invisibility of black women and our ideas not only in the United States but also in Africa, the Caribbean, South America, Europe, and other places black women live today has been critical to maintaining social inequalities (Collins, 2000). The knowledge construction of black women often points to the repressive politics affecting their projects. For example, in Heidi Mirza's (1997) volume on British black feminism, several authors identify their invisibility and silence in Britain today (Collins, 2000).

As an African woman born into a then-existing middle class that provided me the privilege of attaining higher education, one of my goals is to situate the issues of integrity and accountability as an African researcher in a US research institution investigating Africa's experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. This places me in an elitist but concerned position, according to Ojedokun et al., 2021, as researchers we constantly talk from a certain position inside the power systems. Nobody is immune to the modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world class, system's sexual, gender, spiritual, linguistic, geographical, and racial hierarchies. Our

knowledge whether epistemological or ontological knowledge is always situated within the structures of class, gender, and race (Mignolo & Escobar, 2013). In situating my research in the theoretical framework of African Feminism, I acknowledge that African feminism is not a "one-size-fits-all" type. As a continent with different histories that makes each community or society in Africa distinct, feminism in the African context is multiple and diverse (Mekgwe, 2008).

Unlike the feminism identified by African Americans that is founded on slavery, oppression, marginalization, patriarchy, and sexuality, the multi complexities of the African communities and traditions dictate the complexity of African feminism. One of the differences is the noticeable historical and political differences. These political and historical differences are based on the historical developments from colonialism. The African woman (especially West African women that the research focuses on) had a different historical progression than her African American counterpart. The West African women like other parts of Africa, had to deal with colonial and imperial masters. While African American women were confronted with the forceful removal from their ancestral homes in Africa and brought to a strange place to become slaves.

African feminism did not evolve from trans-Atlantic slavery which resulted in the dehumanizing of the black female body by slave owners. However, there exists a form of slavery that is not tied to the trans-Atlantic slave trade, however, during the late 20th century the lure from poverty by sex traffickers arose (Eze, 2014). This form of slavery that emanates from poverty, and economic and political instability in some West African societies have influenced how modern-day feminism is situated in the African context (Mikell, 1995). Feminism to an African woman also constitutes accepting patriarchal institutions. The earlier "feminists" in Africa, did not see the liberating effects of the word and tried to disassociate themselves from

identifying as one. However, their works showed how they viewed liberation for women, and their opposition to existing oppressive systems – be it from imperialists or African patriarchy.

African feminism did not evolve from colonial oppression and the adaptation of Western patriarchy, but rather it has been in existence void of any European or Western influence (Mekgwe, 2008; Mikell, 1995). African indigenous societies have records - written or oral traditions - of the rise of powerful political women who fought against established systems (Mekgwe, 2008). I decided to situate my research on African feminism as I will be examining societies across the West Africa region. Acknowledging that these African communities may have similar, yet different historical backgrounds requires examining different thoughts on feminism across the West African region.

In understanding African feminism, Mikell noted some reasons that differentiated the Western conceptual definition of feminism from African women's conception. In discussing these reasons, she pointed out hegemony as a recurring issue. Many African women have been outraged by what they perceive to be Western academics and activists' attempts to co-opt them into a movement defined by extreme individualism, militant opposition to patriarchy, and, ultimately, hostility to males (Mikell, 1995). African writers such as Buchi Emecheta depict both traditional and modern African women seeking fulfillment while attempting to overcome oppression by familial and patriarchal elements within their own cultures in their writings (Mikell, 1995). They do not believe that all men are brutal and oppressive and that we must reject them. Some of these men are brothers, fathers, and sons, and the filial love is palpable (Mikell, 1995). Mikell also noted the existence of a continuum of African women's movement and this continuum appears to be grounded in African communal, historical, symbolic, and experiential constructs rather than Western individualism and competition-based cultural

constructs (Mikell, 1995). With educated and elite women perceived to be ideologically far more advanced (and thus feminist) and rural/ordinary African women perceived to be parochial and pre-feminist (Mikell, 1995). There are class differences in the positions taken by African women, as well as in their degrees of radicalism and types of activism, but collaboration between classes still occurs (Mikell, 1995).

Pioneer women West African writers like Flora Nwapa and Buchi Emecheta did not associate themselves with the word feminism but in their writings depicted a kind of feminism that is defined differently from the Western perceptions of feminism. One of her novels "Efuru" – which is set in the village of Oguta in Eastern Nigeria, where Nwapa (1966) grew up – tells the story of an independent-minded woman named Efuru. She is described as a beautiful, and intelligent woman who challenges expectations of her by marrying a poor and lazy man but whose defiance of tradition is confined by the gatekeepers. She is a woman who serves as a role model and a change agent in her society. Despite her success, brilliance, and wealth, she is unable to have a long-term marriage or have children like the other women in her village. She marries twice, but both marriages end in divorce. She has one daughter who dies at birth. Despite this, Efuru remains firm, running a prosperous business and serving as a model of generosity, intelligence, and care to her peers. In Efuru fundamental feminist concepts such as women's agency, empowerment, sisterhood, and gender equality are central to the novel (Ghashmari, 2011). Unlike Western feminist works or fictional characters, they depict women's rebellion against their own cultures and traditions, refusing to succumb to patriarchal practices and seeking to overthrow the entire hierarchy (Ghashmari, 2011). Efuru, the heroine, is a different woman. different in the sense that it is characterized by being very generous, supportive, loving, courageous, and successful at the same time. She fights for change and prosperity in her community, but she doesn't rebel against her culture. On the contrary, she

shows reverence for the traditions of her people and never wishes to overlook or discredit them. Although they believe in romantic love and rejection of the arranged marriage, it is on the other hand that their marriage will not be complete with Adizua, her first husband, until she pays the dowry and the customs of marriages fulfilled by his people. She also never resists going through the painful circumcision, and she acknowledges a man's right to polygamy, saying, "Only a bad woman would like to be married alone by her husband (Nwapa, 1966)." In Efuru, feminism is portrayed differently from the Western denotation of the term.

Mikell (1997) further stated a model of African feminism or womanhood that "The range of high-level female positions in sub-Saharan African societies from Egypt to the southern tip of the continent, including royal queens and queen mothers and religious chiefs and advisers, sets African politics apart from politics in many other areas of the world" (Mikell, 1997, p.12-13). Myths of both patrilineal and matrilineal groups relate to the first female chiefs, who as priestesses in charge of shrines and deities, led and protected their people while establishing or expanding politics (Mikell, 1997). These female leaders were not examples of the mythical "matriarchy" because females shared these stratified positions with males as a function of elite kinship group membership (Mikell, 1995, 1997). When necessary, royal women protected their prerogatives of political rule by emphasizing ascribed kinship criteria for leadership that excluded commoners, male or female. Therefore, female leadership cannot be characterized as "feminist", although female leaders are often responsible for representing women. Most ordinary women had a power that complies with only their fertile years or by accepting leadership positions in their family groups or function-specific women's associations (Mikell, 1997). A second traditional model or alliance for social, political, and gender relations is dual-sex organization: in addition to participation based on lineage or clan, women may participate as members of professional and ritual organizations, or as members of age groups

and sex-specific secret societies and associations, gender groups and clubs and secret societies. This dual-sex or the "gender complementarity" model of political organization was found in many societies that also used the earlier corporate model, and is widespread in the West, East, Central, and South. Africa.

However, traditional women's organizations are more common in centralized West African societies and in larger societies that had more exposure to interregional networks than in southern Africa, where population migration and social flow continued well into the 18th century (Mikell, 1997). Once an organization was found, the women in those organizations were supported and constrained by pre-established principles of acting based on consensus. Male dominance existed on many levels including the domestic/domestic level and the popular cultural level. However, the corporate and dual-sex structures created a facade of egalitarianism by allowing women a voice in public decision-making, even if indirectly. Frequently, women spoke as female or kinship representatives of a group rather than as individuals. Therefore, women were often unwilling to separate capriciously from the female corporate whole in responding to political decisions. On the other hand, women were sensitive to whether their interests as a group (as sisters, as wives, as market women, and as crafts persons) were assisted or harmed by political decisions. The Ibo example of women's ability to organize protests demonstrates that when group decisions clashed with women's other interests, and this could not be corrected easily through public discussion, women used their dual sex structures to demonstrate their disapproval and voice their demands for a new policy. In addition, women's group influence in the ritual realm could be the best sanction to prevent unjust decisions" (Mikell, 1997. p.11, 12).

African feminism can be said to have taken a modern turn where writers like Chimamanda Adichie, Chika Unigwe, Seffi Atta, and others openly explore feminism and

identify as feminists. Their critically acclaimed works have highlighted the marginalized status of African women despite their class, tribe, educational level, and socio-economic status. However, like the pioneers before them, these later feminist writers still acknowledge and celebrate their traditions and cultures despite being steeped in patriarchy. They take on certain issues like sex trafficking, domestic violence, immigration, and more.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK

Intersectionality as a Methodological Lens

Intersectionality provides a methodological lens to understanding Sub-Sahara African women's (Nigerian women in particular) lived experiences about understanding the intersections of systems of dominance (Collins, 2019b), social hierarchy (Haynes et al., 2020), and gender inequality (Crenshaw, 1990). It is imperative in examining systems of oppression to overturn such an axis from the perspective of intersectionality. Intersectionality addresses the marginalization of black women within anti-discrimination laws and feminist and antiracist theory (Harris & Patton, 2019). It highlights how social movements and advocacy around violence against women relinquish the vulnerabilities of women of color, particularly those from immigrant and socially disadvantaged communities (Carastathis, 2014; Harris & Patton, 2019). The international movement of intersectionality draws attention to how contextual differences generate alternative engagements with theory (Carbado et al., 2013; Collins & Bilge, 2016). Caribbean feminists, for example, have used intersectionality to explore historical relationships and nation-building outside of the metropole (Carbado et al., 2013). In doing so, they draw attention to alternative ways of conceptualizing intersectional subjects, highlighting some of the more limited conceptions of intersectional work. Also, the hierarchies to which intersectionality attends are far more robust than the formal regimes of race, gender, and class power embodied by legally imposed classifications of certain subjects (Carbado et al., 2013).

This study aims to use intersectionality to examine how established structures are used oppressively to create a dichotomy between gender by highlighting social hierarchy, classism, and inequality during a crisis. The use of intersectionality in understanding the lived experiences of black women during a crisis is iterative and emergent because of the continuous

changes experienced. Changing times like a health crisis can bring about changing complexities of identities, and oppression for black women. Changes in policies, economy, and social activities during the COVID-19 pandemic can have a deep influence on the diverse voices that arise due to systemic oppression. It should be noted that the term oppression is conceptually understood in this study to not only be obvious but subtle in nature, directly or indirectly observed. Haynes et al., (2020) noted that using intersectionality as a methodology is a nuanced approach. As this approach is multi-dimensional (as stated by Crenshaw, 1989) it has roots in black feminism (hence why in this study black feminism was addressed in the theoretical section) which provides a methodological framework to illuminate black women's experiences with oppression, classism, and other forms of dominance through study design, methods, and analysis.

The development of democratic and participatory communities of interpretation through different experiences, knowledge, and resources becomes the indicator for intersectional research (Collins et al., 2021). Dialogues between subordinate groups who no longer see the path to knowledge generation as an exclusive passage from old centers of race, class, and gender have ignited considerable intellectual energy and innovation (Collins et al., 2021). In situating intersectionality, individuals and groups involved in a variety of social justice studies realized their similarities between race, gender, class, sexuality, age, nation, ability, and ethnicity, which is increasingly stressed and strained in spaces where there exist overlaps (Collins et al., 2021). As noted by Gouma & Dorer (2019) the application of intersectionality in cultures different from the US brings certain nuances not directly addressed by the conceptual understanding of intersectionality as a methodological frame. For example, the European (specifically German culture) gender, race, and class do have a simple translation given the

Germanic history (Gouma & Dorer, 2019). In the same vein, applying intersectionality to an

African context should not be directly applied but an epistemological understanding of

oppression and struggle concerning gender, ethnicity, and social hierarchy. The existing African

communities evolve from the struggles of colonialization and power dominance. Major ethnic

or tribal groups became the juggernaut of political, social, and economic culture. In Nigeria, for

example, 3 major tribes came into existence during imperial rule – the Yorubas, Ibos, and

Hausas tribes – that eventually controlled the political, social, and economic environment. Their

traditions and customs reflect heteropatriarchy which affects policies and decisions made in the

country. This in turn has created a system of dominance as marginalized groups begin to

emerge. One of these marginalized groups is women and girls. Therefore, applying

intersectionality as an approach means understanding the complexities of the historical

evolution of the African community concerning dominance and marginalization.

      Patricia Collins (2000) noted that "Intersectionality refers to forms of intersecting

oppressions, for example, intersections of race and gender, or sexuality and nation.

Intersectional paradigms remind us that oppression cannot be reduced to one fundamental type

and that oppressions work together in producing injustice" (Collins, 2000, p.). It is a hinge, a

point of convergence that enables and disables, allows, and hinders, makes, and breaks (K. Lee,

2012). In its "apparently" formal and neutral workings, intersection also "presses" on, forward

and inward (K. Lee, 2012). "Intersectionality," a materially anchored and layered concept in

critical social theory highlighting the interconnected mechanism of oppression in the United

States, draws for theoretical development on collective experiences and embodied histories of

American injustices such as slavery and segregation, among others (K. Lee, 2012). This

provides a framework for examining the intersections of gender, sexuality, classism, and political patriarchy that exist in certain communities within the African continent.

As intersectionality has emerged in different discursive spaces, the projects and debates that have accompanied its journey have coalesced into a thriving field of intersectional study (Cho et al., 2013). This field can be usefully framed as representing three loosely defined sets of engagements: the first consisting of applications of an intersectional framework or investigations of intersectional dynamics, the second consisting of discursive debates about the scope and content of intersectionality as a theoretical and methodological paradigm, and the third consisting of political interventions employing an intersectional lens (Cho et al., 2013). Additionally, ignoring differences within groups contributes to intergroup tensions, another identity politics issue that informs efforts to politicize violence against women (Crenshaw, 1990). Feminist efforts to politicize women's experiences and anti-racist efforts to politicize people of color's experiences have often acted as if the issues and experiences that emerge are mutually exclusive. they rarely do so in feminist and anti-racist practices (Crenshaw, 1990). Thus, when practices exhibit female or person of color identity as one or the other, they relegate the identity of women of color to a place that refuses to articulate (Crenshaw, 1990). Crenshaw (1990) construes intersectionality as the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the various dimensions of black women's work experiences. She expands on these observations by investigating the various ways race and gender intersect to shape the structural, political, and representational aspects of violence against women of color. It is also not intended to imply that violence against women of color can be explained solely within the racial and gender frameworks examined here. Her emphasis on the intersections of race and gender only

emphasizes the importance of considering multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed.

   As further noted by Crenshaw (1990), many women of color, for example, are burdened by poverty, childcare responsibilities, and a lack of professional skills. These pressures, which are primarily the result of gender and class oppression, are exacerbated by racially discriminatory employment and housing practices that women of color face regularly, as well as disproportionately high unemployment among people of color, leaving battered women of color less able to rely on the support of friends and family for temporary shelter. Such was the case in 1990, when Congress amended the marriage fraud provisions of the Immigration and Nationality Act to protect immigrant women who had been abused or subjected to extreme crimes from the liability of U.S. citizens or permanent residents who brought those women to the United States to marry (p. 1246 -1248). Women of color face unique challenges in the economic, social, and political spheres (Crenshaw, 1990). Women of color are less likely to meet their needs than racially privileged women when pro-women reform efforts ignore this fact. Counselors who assist women of color in rape crises, for example, report that a significant portion of their allocated resources must be directed to issues other than the rape itself (Crenshaw, 1990). Standard of needs that are primarily derived from white and middle-class people. These uniform standards of need ignore the fact that different needs frequently necessitate different priorities in resource allocation, and as a result, these standards limit counselors' ability to respond to the needs of non-whites and the poor (Crenshaw, 1990). These uniform standards of need ignore the fact that different needs frequently necessitate different priorities in resource allocation, and as a result, these standards limit counselors' ability to respond to the needs of non-whites and the poor. As an example, women of color are both physically and culturally marginalized within mainstream society, so information must go

directly to them for it to reach them (Crenshaw, 1990). The fact that minority women are subjected to a variety of forms of subordination, combined with institutional expectations based on inappropriate, non-intersectional contexts, ultimately shapes and limits the opportunities for meaningful interventions on their behalf (Crenshaw, 1990). Admitting the lack of consideration for intersectional dynamics may help explain the high levels of failure, frustration, and burnout experienced by counselors attempting to meet the needs of minority women victims (Crenshaw, 1990). Imploring intersectionality into Examining African women and their experiences during the Covid-19 pandemic, will provide a bridge between the different perspectives of how these women are affected by different issues. While African women do not deal with race issues (as Africans are regarded as one race), they deal with tribal and ethnic issues, classism, patriarchy, and socioeconomic and political issues. The intersectionality approach will help provide explanations on how African feminism is viewed through an in-depth examination of different experiences by different African women.

CHAPTER FIVE: METHODS

This study sought to describe the phenomenon of African women and their daily struggles to better understand the intersections of complex and intertwined concepts like gender, dominance, and hierarchical structures. The study looked at how women as a marginalized gender group coped during a health crisis as they navigate heteropatriarchy, social dominance, and oppressive policies.

Previous studies have pointed out the disparities suffered by African women in general, especially during times of crisis or war. Some have highlighted the influence of patriarchal systems in placing women as victims. Others have reviewed primary gendered roles and how these have created a marginalized group in society. The study utilized two methods the use of interviews and social media analysis.

Interviews

According to Hesse-Biber, (2013), a feminist interviewer is interested in gaining an understanding of the range of women's experiences, which frequently go silent and unspoken. Therefore, I am asking questions and looking into problems that are especially important to women's lives. I am interested in social transformation and social justice problems affecting women and other marginalized groups. Hesse-Biber (2013) also noted that as a feminist interviewer, I should be conscious of the nature of my connection with individuals I interview, taking care to understand my own personal and research perspectives, as well as the role I play in the interview process in terms of my power and control over the interview scenario. Throughout my interviews, I am aware that I am both an "insider" and an "outsider." I posed interview questions to reflect my positionality as a researcher and an emerging black feminist researcher.

To investigate the posed research questions, I used an interview design to foster inductive research. According to Lindlof & Taylor, (2011), the interview process would produce results that neither the interviewer nor interviewees can independently produce. To contact potential participants, a flyer with a QR code was created and distributed using social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter). The QR code was to give access to a short Qualtrics survey and informed consent to be signed before participating in the interview. Participants were asked to fill out the Qualtrics survey to choose dates and times that would be convenient for them.

Also, the snowball sample, which is described as a nonprobability sample that involves recruiting participants through recommendations from other participants, was used (Babbie, 2010; Zhou & Sloan, 2015). Individuals who were not qualified to participate in the interview (for example African women in the diaspora who did not live in Africa during the pandemic) recommended friends and relatives who met the criteria.

Participants

The participants included 12 women (all Nigerians) who were from different economic, social, and educational backgrounds. These women were present in Nigeria during the first wave of the pandemic and the following lockdown. However, three (3) of these participants eventually relocated to the US (where they were when the interview was conducted). These participants resided or still reside in different parts of the country, providing a broader glimpse of how women navigated through the pandemic and lockdown. None of the participants were paid for their time during the interview and none of them requested payment. All the participants had a college degree and lived either in the capital of their state or close to the capital city. Four (4) of the participants were single working-class women, while two (2) were full-time housewives. Six (6) of these women were professionals – doctors, journalists, and

teachers. Seven (7) of these women were mothers (one of the participants is a single mother who also adopted her child). All the participants were bilingual or multi-lingual (they spoke two or more languages including British English and a local Nigerian language). All the participants were willing to interview in the English language.

Interview Procedure

The interviews were aimed at understanding how women in a patriarchal and economically developing society demonstrate resilience, optimism, and the willingness to grow. The participants are aware of the intersections of poverty, power, and gender identity. Each of the participants was asked similar questions to better understand their views and convictions about coping. The interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes to allow the participants to discuss their lived experiences. The interviews were curated in a flexible structural manner to respectfully provoke participants to bring their perspectives to light. Before the interview, each participant received a unique Zoom link via email or text message (using the WhatsApp text messaging app). Each participant was informed of their agreement to participate by signing the consent forms and was verbally asked for their consent to be interviewed. The participants were also informed that they were free to refuse to answer any questions and could end the interview anytime if they were no longer comfortable being interviewed. They were also informed that during the analysis of the data, any direct quote will be done anonymously to protect their identities. Questions were made to guide the conversation by allowing for follow-up questions to be asked during the interviews. This allowed the participants to fully engage in conversation. The aim is not to have a friendly, casual conversation but to provide knowledge to be analyzed for the study. The interviews would undergo careful interpretation using codes and pattern formation. All the participants answered all the questions posed during the interviews.

Qualitative Inductive Methods

I used a qualitative inductive approach in conducting my study, as I hoped to provide more detailed results by interviewing women to learn about their experiences during the pandemic. What women do constitute their concrete experience? These are the numerous and various activities that women participate in daily (Brooks, 2007). The plethora of daily nourishing chores that many women accomplish is only one element of women's life that feminist scholars continue to shed light on (Brooks, 2007). Each of these instances, which involve everyday caring, requires women to have specific knowledge and distinct abilities. These in-depth and semi-structured qualitative interviews will be individual (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). These interviews are based on the grounded theory propounded by Charmaz (2016). The interviews are a major part of the research data collection. The interviews will be conducted virtually (due to COVID-19 restrictions and the financial burden of traveling across West African states). Using grounded theory would allow the interviewees to be more expressive as I would ask more follow-up questions to draw out salient points. This will mean making the interview more conversational and coordinating the interviews so each interviewee can be expressive of their views and opinions based on their experiences and knowledge.

Grounded Theory

I decided to use Kathy Charmaz's (2014) principles of grounded theory to create a structured understanding of the lived experiences of my participants. In her book, Constructing Grounded Theory (2nd ed., 2014), Charmaz discusses constructivist grounded theory when conducting interviews. She highlighted the importance of learning the participant's words and meanings. Taking a cognitive view of their nonverbal and verbal connotations to understand as a researcher the "emerging theoretical interest" (p.186). To achieve this the researcher is

expected to engage in "intense interviewing" a form of inquiry to provide a foundation for theoretical analyses (p.186). Intense interviewing allows the researcher to use open-ended but directed questions that allow the interviewee to provide more information that answers the questions and provides emerging themes for the analysis. The idea is the interviewee is the "expert" in the experience being shared. Charmaz continued that intense interviews provide an interactive space for emerging views and insights. When asking participants to discuss their daily life activities during a health crisis, allowing space for interaction of views and insights is important. This will also mean asking secondary questions as the conversation continues and allowing the participant enough time to speak about the issues. The use of intense interviews allows the participants to be reflective and provide justification for actions and decisions taken during the period under discussion. It gives the researcher a visual insight into the flow of social identities and connections of the interviewee. As earlier mentioned, the research carefully observes the nonverbal cues presented by the interviewee while discussing these connections.

The grounded theory provides a groundwork to shape and reshape one's data collections, which refines and increases one's knowledge (Charmaz, 2016). Charmaz (2016) stated that "interviews are complex situations. Intensive interviews open a space for interaction, allowing participants to share their experiences. However, the purpose of your interview, the people you talk to, their understanding and interest in the interview are all indicated in the quality and usefulness of its content". A researcher has arguments to pursue and actions to take; she argues hypotheses, forms ideas, and has feelings about all these concerns (Charmaz, 2016). The interviewer and interviewee bring their priorities, knowledge, and concerns to the interview situation that may not be entirely compatible. Whether or not interview participants' questions

about your study affect their participation. If they decide to participate, their reservations may affect the scope and quality of the statement (Charmaz, 2016).

Interviews conducted based on grounded theory frameworks will be exploratory, and in-depth, and questions would be semi-structured to allow for follow-up questions. The rhetoric of understanding the why, and how questions are based on analytic and explanatory data collection. Based on Charmaz, (2016) the interviews will be conducted using constructivist grounded theory. Constructivist Grounded Theory examines how and why participants construct meanings and actions in specific situations (Charmaz, 2016). A constructivist approach means more than just paying attention to how individuals see their situation (Charmaz, 2016). It not only theorizes the interpretive work of the research participants but also recognizes that the result is an interpretation. The logical extension of the constructivist approach means learning how, when, and to what extent the experience under study is integrated into larger experiences and often hidden structures, networks, situations, and relationships (Charmaz, 2016). Subsequently, the differences between people become visible, as well as the hierarchies of power, communication, and opportunity that sustain and perpetuate such differences and distinctions (Charmaz, 2016). Constructivist Grounded Theory offers a reflective attitude toward inquiry. processes and products (Charmaz, 2016). The idea is to look at how theories develop, which involves reflecting on how researchers and research participants interpret meanings and actions. Intensive interviews focus on research participants' statements about their experience, how they describe it, and what it means to them, as indicated during the interview (Charmaz, 2016).

Grounded theory methods are most effective when the grounded theorist is dedicated to data collection and analysis. This allows you to investigate the nuances of meaning and process that hired workers may overlook (Charmaz, 2016). Intensive interviewing is an effective

method for conducting interpretive research. Down-to-earth theorists may also use investigative interview strategies with specific research participants, such as politicians, in certain types of social activities from time to time. In some ethnographic studies, the researcher's long-standing field reports allow for timely questions (Charmaz, 2016). The in-depth nature of intense maintenance encourages each participant's interpretation of his or her experience at the time of the interview.

This iterative and interactive method encourages researchers to analyze their data at the start of their projects, breaking it down, sorting, comparing, and synthesizing it systematically (Charmaz, 2006; M. Lee, 2015). Data is segmented through cycles and coded until a theory emerges from this inductive and deductive process of analysis. The interaction between induction and deduction, or between data collection and interpretation, is referred to as abduction (M. Lee, 2015). Interpreting the observed data and matching it with the best explanation contributes to the formation of a tentative theory, which must then be confirmed or rejected using additional data collection and analysis (Charmaz, 2006; M. Lee, 2015). This process is repeated until the data's best and most plausible interpretation is discovered. Because the background theory generated by this method is derived directly from the data, it provides a practical explanation of the specific issues and concerns faced by a target audience, which is the first step to understanding that audience and, therefore, addressing their concerns and improving their relationships with other stakeholders (M. Lee, 2015).

In creating a conducive and conversational environment, the researcher can allow the participants to discuss in detail the issues that the questions brought up. The interviewees do not only invoke their views and actions but explain how it affects their worldview and how it may affect other viewpoints. This provides a foundational ground for the researcher to understand "the analytical incisiveness of the resultant analysis". This means understanding what is

happening to notice emerging themes, and this can guide the researcher when studying the data. The grounded theory provides a framework for a researcher to use emerging themes to create a theory.

To build on previous theories and provide further explanation, I employed the use of interviews to provide insight into coping mechanisms of different sorts during a period of uncertainty, pain, fear of the unknown, and change in the social, economic, political, religious, and mental and physical status of women in Nigeria. The interviews were conducted individually to ascertain the lived experiences of different women living in Nigeria during the COVID-19 pandemic. A special note was made on the first wave of the pandemic when the lockdown was issued. Interviewing aimed to elicit first-hand information and expressions of opinions from one person to another. The interviews were designed to be conversational, as humans are conversational beings (Lindlof & Taylor, 2019). Adapting a conversational manner during the interviews allowed for a rich and indispensable source of knowledge. The participants were all willing and comfortable answering questions during each interview. They were also willing to provide additional information during the interview. The interviews were designed to help curate the intricacies of knowledge production. The interviews were not meant to simply provide answers to questions but an analytical focus to understand phenomena.

Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis is regarded as a foundational qualitative method. It is a process that can be used along with other qualitative method approaches like Grounded Theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It has also been offered as a qualitative descriptive approach that teaches researchers the fundamentals of doing many different types of qualitative analysis (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Thematic analysis is the search for and identification of common threads that run

across an entire interview or group of interviews (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Thematic analysis

approaches typically acknowledge the possibility of inductive (data-driven) and deductive

(theory-driven) coding orientations, capturing semantic (explicit or overt) and latent (implicit,

underlying; not necessarily unconscious) meanings, coding and theme development processes,

and the possibility of some flexibility around the theory that frames the research views (Braun

& Clarke, 2021). A theme indicates some level of structured response or meaning within the

data set and captures something relevant about the data concerning the research topic field

(Braun & Clarke, 2006). A theme is not always determined by measurable metrics, but rather by

whether it captures anything relevant to the broader research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In this regard, qualitative researchers should get more acquainted with theme analysis as

a credible and impartial qualitative technique to analyze (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). The thematic

analysis provides flexibility and is compatible with both the essentialist and constructiveness

paradigms. The thematic analysis identifies and reports patterns or themes with the data. It is

better viewed as a family of approaches with some similarities but major differences in

underlying research values, the conceptualization of fundamental notions, and analytic

procedures (Braun & Clarke, 2021).

In doing qualitative analysis using different methods is important as there is no such

thing as an ideal method. Thematic analysis is not rigidly connected to any pre-existing

theoretical framework and can therefore work with different theoretical frameworks (Braun &

Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis in this study is used in the "contextualist" context – noting

how individuals make sense of their experiences and how the larger social environment

influences those meanings while remaining focused on the material (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The themes selected, coded and analyzed must appropriately represent the essence of the whole

data collected. Some depth and complexity are necessarily lost in such an analysis, in projects

that have strict word limits, but a rich overall description must be preserved. This strategy may be especially beneficial when examining an under-researched field or dealing with people whose perspectives on the topic are unknown (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Another use of thematic analysis is to give a more complete and nuanced explanation of one or more themes within the data. This might be about a specific query or area of interest within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Braun & Clarke, (2006) provided six phases in conducting thematic analysis, and Nowell et al., (2017) noted that these phases are not necessarily linear, but it is an "iterative and reflective" process that develops through time and entails a continual back and forth between phases. These phases are 1) familiarizing yourself with the data; 2) generating initial codes; 3) searching for themes; 4) reviewing themes; 5) defining and naming themes; and 6) producing the report (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017).

The first phase involves the triangulation of various data collection modalities while keeping track of one's theoretical and introspective ideas. Making a list of ideas for prospective codes/themes. Making sure raw data is archived in well-organized folders. It is important to maintain a record of all data field notes, transcripts, and reflective diaries. Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and re-reading the data, and jotting down early ideas through Increase data engagement (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). The second phase methodically includes coding noteworthy data characteristics over the full data collection, compiling data pertinent to each code. Making use of a code framework and code-generating audit trace (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017). The third phase provides the researcher with the task of coding into prospective topics and collecting all data pertinent to each potential theme. Making sense of topic connections through diagramming or visualizations. Keeping meticulous records on the evolution and hierarchy of thoughts and topics (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al.,

2017). In the fourth phase, the researcher checks to see if the themes work with the coded extracts and the complete data set and creates a thematic 'map' of the analysis. Also reference the raw data to test for referential adequacy (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the fifth phase, ongoing analysis to fine-tune the specifics of each theme as well as the overall story told by the analysis, resulting in unambiguous definitions and titles for each subject is carried out (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The sixth phase occurs after developing a complete collection of themes and comprises the final analysis and report writing (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The objective is to explain the complex tale of the data in a way that provides a strong conviction of the worth and validity of the analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis (including data extracts) must give a clear, cohesive, logical, non-repetitive, and fascinating description of the story told by the data within and between themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The following chapters will be guided by the phases of thematic analysis and grounded theory methods to discuss the analytic process of the data, the results, limitations, significance to research, and theoretical development.

Social Network Analysis

The second method I utilized is qualitative analysis (content and sentiment) of comments of women and women organizations made on social media platforms. The platforms that are derived comments from were YouTube and Twitter. Social network analysis or SNA has been used to comprehend and predict human behavior. The initial theory of social interaction was created by social scientists based on what is now known as the centrality measure, which is total reciprocity and support in a relationship. It helps one to comprehend the networks of interactions that exist between people in society and to assess the many cultural and relational trajectories that societies pursue using graph technology.

In doing computation data analysis, there were policy changes in some of the apps that affected the use of these apps. One is the policy change for the use of Twitter API which led to choosing of other analysis applications that provided similar results. Using analytic applications like ATLAS. TI provided a basis to conduct computational data analysis which included coding, sentiment analysis, content analysis, computation of comments from social media sites, and network analysis (building of nodes and edges for visualization purposes).

Codes Formation and Analysis. Data collection activities (such as interviews, observations, and artifact reviews) need the researcher's presence and awareness of the data's dynamic character, its thematic connections, intersectionality, and emergence toward the theory formulation (Williams & Moser, 2019). Data collection, analysis, and theory formulation are inextricably linked, necessitating ongoing interaction between the researcher and the data. Recognizing the interdependence of data arrangement, classification, and theory formation in the production of meaning, coding plays a critical role in helping the researcher's capacity to progress the research process successfully (Basit, 2003). The core notion of coding is [trying] to portray the interaction of subjects' and researchers' views of the nature and aspects of events under study. Inductive reasoning, thinking, and theorizing are dynamic, intuitive, and creative processes. Most qualitative researchers conduct their data analysis. In contrast to certain quantitative research, qualitative research frequently lacks a division of labor between data collectors and analysts. Researchers seek to get a greater grasp of what they have researched and to constantly refine their interpretations throughout the investigation. To understand their findings, researchers rely on firsthand familiarity with places, informants, or records.

Codes or categories are tags or labels used to assign units of meaning to descriptive or inferential data gathered during research. Codes are typically associated with chunks of varied sizes of words, phrases, sentences, or entire paragraphs that are either related or unconnected to

a given environment (Basit, 2003). They can be as simple as a category label or as sophisticated as a metaphor, which sees the job of coding as detecting relevant things, collecting instances of those phenomena, and analyzing those phenomena to uncover commonalities, differences, patterns, and structures.

Given that they are humans, researchers with their senses, perceptions, and understandings have an extraordinary and unequaled potential to comprehend people's lived experiences to a higher extent than a digital logic-based computer program. The scope of qualitative data analysis includes more than data coding, sorting, and filtering, as it demonstrates genuine sensitivity to how a social event or process is perceived from a certain background and established values, rather than solely depending on the scenario itself. These points of view provide significant momentum to demonstrate that qualitative data analysis is more than coding, sorting, and sifting qualitative data and involves human rationality to go behind the scenes and especially "behind the numbers," representing the research setting 'emit focused' in terms of the participants and their viewpoints.

Several coding issues may arise for individuals doing a grounded theory study (Holton, 2007). Among the most common difficulties are those associated with preconceiving the study through the incorporation of some standard qualitative research requirements, shifting the focus of coding and analysis from the descriptive to the conceptual level, and trusting one's intuitive sense of the conceptualization process to allow a core category to emerge, then being comfortable delimiting data collection and coding to just the core concept and those concepts that relate to the core. A conceptual code is a fundamental link between facts and theory. By fracturing the data, the researcher can conceptualize the underlying pattern of a collection of empirical indicators inside the data as a hypothesis that explains what is happening in the data. Coding provides the researcher with a condensed, abstract vision that has scope and dimension

and covers otherwise unrelated events. Using the constant comparative technique, incidents defined in the data are analyzed and classified to establish substantive, and subsequently theoretical, categories.

The initial codes amounted to about 162 codes. These codes, as mentioned before, were inductively created. They were based on the conversations with each participant. There were repetitive codes, which was expected. Based on the questions, the codes reflected the coping mechanisms devised by the participants. I asked each participant similar questions, though I was aware of their different backgrounds. In reframing the questions, I was able to get the participant to speak freely on the subject. I aimed to be able to identify patterns that could be translated into codes and later themes. I was also focused on the language style used by my participants to help me form and enact meanings. Asking questions in a way that allowed my participants to reflect on their answers was a way to foster discourse that would advance the construction of themes.

As my interview was based on constructive interviewing, I elicited the participants' definitions of terms and concepts. When I asked about their views on the level of government participation in resolving the crisis, for example, I allowed them to define what participation meant to them as an individual. As noted in Charmaz (2016), the task of the interviewer is to ensure thought-provoking questions are asked without any sign of cohesion or force. Allowing the participants to think and answer within their level of comfort allowed for deep and meaningful answers. Follow-up questions helped to gain more insight into the issues being discussed. Charmaz (2016) further reiterated the importance of creating space to allow the participants to share and transcend their experiences. These shared experiences became the foundation for building the codes.

During the interviews, I stayed alert to interesting leads, which helped me in the way I structured subsequent questions and follow-up questions. Being alert also meant recognizing the need to ask follow-up questions to understand terms from the lexicon of my participants' experiences. This tactic becomes helpful in delving into the implicit world of my participants. I was able to make a connection between their perspective and society's expectations. The participants were very articulate and felt at ease, noting their willingness to contribute to the overall understanding of women in their society and beyond. As a result, coding these implicit experiences and connecting the apparent human bond became critical. There was a need to constructively give meaning to words that may mean something to someone and have a different meaning to another but relate to their common bond in experiencing a major change due to a crisis. These codes became a way to express how individuals build connections due to going through something major, despite different socioeconomic, physical, and mental backgrounds. One way the codes were constructed was to also capture the thought processes of the individual participants. Some of these women spoke from a religious perspective, while some allowed other factors to determine how they process the issues that arose due to the outbreak of the coronavirus. In this sense, some sounded very optimistic in their tone and expressions even when discussing pessimistic situations that became present because of the pandemic. Some of these women were often showing in their discussion the hope of situations would turn out for the better. They felt it was imperative to undergo the pains of the crisis to become well-grounded. These nonverbal expressions were also captured in the codes that were formed. While some of the codes were similar, there was still a minute difference that indicated the peculiarities of the individual participants' perspectives.

Computational Data Analysis

These interviews were transcribed to identify emerging themes. The transcription was done using transcription software applications. A computationally grounded theory analytic tool was used for coding and visualization. This is also known as "computationally grounded theory." Computational grounded theory is a theory that combines expert human knowledge and interpretation skills with the processing power and pattern recognition provided by computers (Nelson, 2020). Computational grounded theory means using computer-assisted analytic tools like ATLAS.TI transcribes the interviews and identifies emerging themes (Nelson, 2020). ATLAS.TI is a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software designed to code transcribed interviews. As a result, a more methodologically rigorous, reliable, and fully reproducible grounded theory approach is produced. Using ATLAS.TI, each transcript was uploaded individually, and each transcript was coded inductively. The coding was completed without the use of a previously established theory framework. These initial codes reflected my understanding of how I translated the meaning of what each participant was discussing. Using ATLAS.TI helps me quickly get an overview of the forming codes and how often they are reused.

The interviews were done electronically through Zoom, an online video conferencing platform. The advantage of using Zoom is that the interviews are recorded, and transcripts are automatically generated. However, I also used Otter.io, a transcription software, to transcribe videos with no automatically generated transcripts. These transcripts had to be manually edited, as some of the cations were incorrectly transcribed. This meant listening to the audio recordings and writing the correct statements or words.

Based on the tenets of thematic analysis first phase, I used ATLAS.TI to store all the transcripts from the interviews. The interview transcripts were automatically generated by

Zoom and I also used Otter.io – a transcribing website - to transcribe a couple of interviews that had no Zoom transcription. Each transcript was read to help me familiarize myself with the content and understand the data as presented. The transcripts became part of my raw data which I stored in a folder along with the actual videos downloaded from Zoom. Uploading the transcripts on ATLAS.TI enabled me to move seamlessly to the next phase of thematic analysis. Also, based on grounded theory, the transcribed documents were read multiple times, one for familiarization purposes, then to identify initial codes and identifying potential themes. The second phase comes after reviewing and becoming familiar with the data, having thoughts about what is in it and what is intriguing about it (Nowell et al., 2017). This step entails the initial generation of codes from the data, a theoretical activity that necessitates examining the data regularly. Qualitative coding is a method of interacting with and thinking about data that involves reflection. Coding enables simplification and focuses on certain data properties. Using ATLAS.TI the initial codes were generated on all the uploaded documents. I coded sections of each transcript and some sections generated more than one code. This was to provide more clarity on the discussion with the participants. The software provides the help to work more effectively with complicated coding systems and enormous volumes of text, allowing for more depth and sophistication in the analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). It is crucial to highlight that, while computer programs can assist organize and analyze enormous volumes of data, none of them can perform the intellectual and cognitive processes necessary to change data, nor can they make any type of judgment. The cognitive process of creating codes in this study was not done by the software app. It was only used to store and organized the codes.

Use of ATLAS.TI

To engage in SNA in this study I employed the use of ATLAS.TI (Version 22) is not only for coding but for the analysis of codes and themes. Codes are identified as the naming and

organizing of data. It involves assigning symbolic and evocative attributes to the data (Locke et al., 2022). Themes are emerging patterns identified during the process of coding the data. ATLAS.TI is an analytic computational tool. To assist in developing the codes, I first uploaded already transcribed interviews – the transcriptions were retrieved directly from the Zoom videoconferencing platform and by transcribing the videos directly on Otter.io (a transcribing online tool). There was a total of 13 transcribed documents. On ATLAS.TI each transcribed document was individually coded. As I analyzed each of the answers provided during the interviews, I started to assign codes. These codes were repeatedly assigned as I noted similar ideas across the different transcribed documents. Also, some parts of the data are assigned more than one code. When a particular segment of the transcribed document is highlighted, on ATLAS.TI a "code window" will appear. This window allows me to either create a new code or select an existing code. This process produced about 162 codes. On the left side of the window is the navigator section that shows a) the number of codes with their frequency (number of times each code appears in all documents). Figure 1 below is a cross-section of the navigator bar with some of the codes and their frequency.
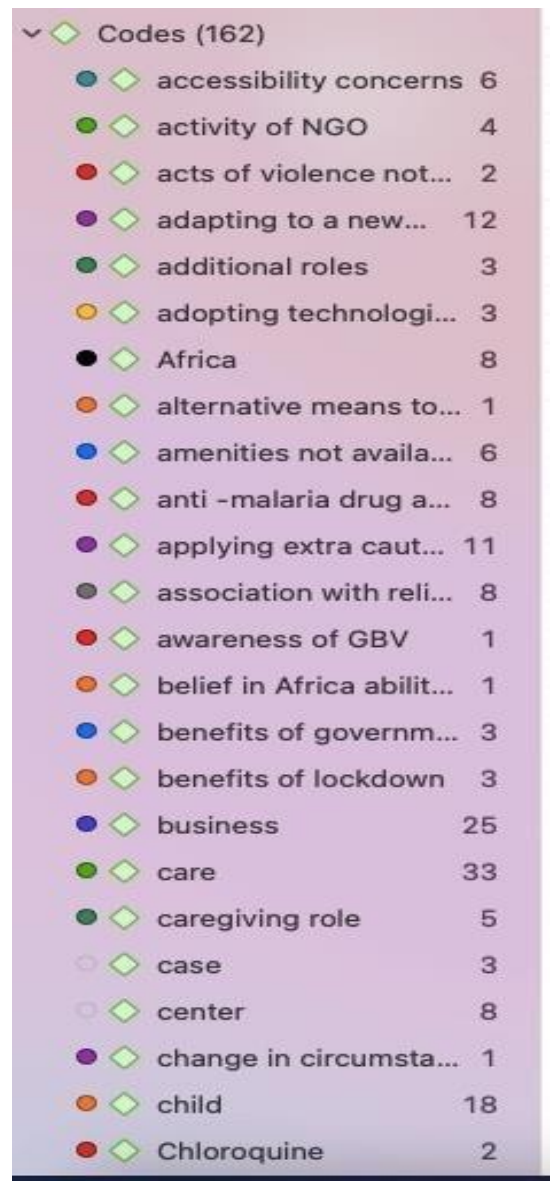
Figure 1: An Example of Codes From ATLAST.TI and the Number of Times They Appeared in the Transcribed Documents.

The codes were formulated from an inductive and constructivist approach situated in the tenets of constructivist grounded theory as prescribed by Charmaz, 2006. These meant codes were formulated by directly engaging the data without a preconceived idea of what is to be expected but, in a sense, to let the "data speak". As the codes are formed, similar codes were identified and noted. In the analysis chapter, the emergence of these similar codes is further discussed as to how these were linked to create networks and identify emerging themes. Color coding was used to identify similar codes, this helped link codes that were identified as contradicting with, part of, is associated with, and/or is a cause of other codes. To help me identify emerging themes,

I grouped the codes into different groups (8 in total), the groups were formed with codes that were similar or convened the same idea. The average number of codes per group was n=39.2. One rationale for grouping the codes was to identify duplication and the sequence of iterativity. For example, one group I created was named "restrictive movement", this group had codes that indicated the restriction of movement, and reaction to the restriction. Table 1 below is an example of a code group and some of the codes assigned.

Table 1: A Group of Codes and Some Assigned Codes.

Code Group	Codes assigned
Restrictive movement	Accessibility concerns
	Disruption of lifestyles
	Inaccessibility of necessities
	Separation of families
	Panic buying
	Scarcity of necessities
	Indiscriminate arrests

Another rationale for grouping the codes was to be able to identify emerging themes. To achieve this, I created a network visualization of these groups. I formed 8 network graphs connecting each group with another that shared similar codes (this was a way of identifying the sequence of repetition or iterativity). To create the networks on ATLAS.TI, I opened the network dropdown box and selected a new network and then I uploaded the groups and codes (these were previously linked codes, not randomly selected codes) which creates a network. The average number of codes per network is n=36.1. I want to note here that these codes are from the transcribed documents originating from the interviews (however, I later used some of these codes for my social media analysis).

One reason for creating link codes was to assist in creating a visual network. Before networks were established, codes were linked to show different associations between them, therefore, trying to identify patterns that exist. Table 2 below shows the following codes from the interviews that were linked. To understand the links the following phrases were used "associated with", "contradicts", "is the cause of", "is part of", and "is a". Examples of some codes and associated links are shown below. These phases are in italics.

Table 2: Codes and Links

Codes	Links (→)	Codes
Accessibility Concerns	*is cause of*	Disruption of Lifestyles.
Activity of NGO	*is associated with*	Awareness of GBV.
Acts of Violence, not Gender Driven	*is associated with.*	Activity of NGO.
Additional Roles	*is associated with.*	Engage in Philanthropy.
Adopting Technological Tools for Everyday Use	*is associated with.*	Engage in Philanthropy.
Applying Extra Caution.	*is associated with.*	Acts of Violence, not Gender Driven
Applying Extra Caution	*is associated with*	Change in Circumstance
Association with Religious Belief	*is associated with*	Dependency on Social Media and Technology
Awareness of GBV	*is part of.*	Acts of Violence, not Gender Driven.
Belief in Africa's Ability to Survive.	*is associated*	Covid Lockdown Effect in the Rural Areas
Belief in Africa's Ability to Survive.	*is a*	Africa
Belief in Africa's Ability to Survive.	*Contradicts*	Applying Extra Caution

Benefits of Government Assistance	*is associated with*	Amenities not Available.
Care	*is a*	Benefits of Government Assistance.
Care	*is a*	Activity of NGO.
Caregiving Role	*is associated with*	Additional Roles.
Caregiving Role	*is associated with.*	Care.
Change in Circumstance	*is the cause*	Alternative Means to Continue Small Scale Businesses.
Chloroquine	*is a*	Anti-Malaria Drug and COVID.
Civic Responsibility	*is cause of*	Change in Circumstance.
Civic Responsibility	*is a.*	citizens cooperating.
Contracting the Virus	*contradicts*	Belief in Africa's Ability to Survive.
Corruption	*Contradicts*	Benefits of Government Assistance.
Dependency Social Media and Technology	*is associated with*	Consumption of News via Social Media.
Development of Coping Strategies	*is a*	Benefits of Lockdown.
Development of Coping Strategies	*is associated with*	Belief in Africa's Ability to Survive

Difficulty Accepting the New Normal.	*contradicts*	Change in Circumstance
Difficulty Accepting the New Normal.	*is associated with*	Association with Religious Belief
Disproportion of Sick People	*is part of*	Health Concerns.
Disproportion of Sick People	*is associated with*	Covid Lockdown Effect in the Rural Areas.
Disruption of Lifestyles	*is a*	Difficulty Accepting the New Normal
Economic Effect Affected Every Gender	*is associated with*	Disproportion Among Certain Types of Work.
Empowerment and Education for Women and Children	*is associated with*	Covid.
Empowerment and Education for Women and Children	*is associated with*	Dependency on Social Media and Technology.
Empowerment and Education for Women and Children	*is the cause of*	Did not Feel Neglected as a Woman
Engage in Philanthropy	*is a*	Activity of NGO.
Food	*is part of.*	Economic Effect Affected Every Gender.
Gender Driven Hashtags.	*is associated with*	Health Concerns.
having immunity from virus	*is associated with*	Health Concerns.
Health Concerns.	*is associated with*	Difficulty Accepting the New Normal
Health Concerns.	*is a cause of*	consumption of news via social media.
Pandemic was a Shock	*is associated with*	No Government Support.

Panic and Anxiety Prevailed	*is a*	Health Concerns.
Scared Of Being Infected	*is associated with*	Use of Protective Gears.
Shutdown of Public Places	*is associated with*	Spread of the Virus in Large Cities.
Spread of the Virus in Large Cities	*is part of*	Struggling to Adjust
Use of Protective Gears	*is associated with*	Health Concerns.
Weather Effect on the Spread of Virus	*is associated with*	Having Immunity From the Virus
Economic Effect Affected Every Gender	*is associated with*	Did not Feel Neglected as a Woman
government support	contradicts	No Preparation for the Lockdown

Network Identification and Analysis

The third stage of thematic analysis describes the sorting of codes into initial themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Using research questions and the findings of previous research discussed in the literature review the codes to group them into networks in ATLAS.TI. These groups of codes are made to see the connections each code has with another. The visual representations of these groups and the connections with codes are made. As noted above the codes were sectioned into groups and these groups were used to form networks.

On ATLAS.TI network analysis provides a visualization between different networks and codes that are grouped under these networks – note that some codes are grouped under more than one group. These connections are reviewed by considering the research questions which examine the social, political, and economic class structures that can highlight gender inequality.

Also, the decisions women (referred to as the minority gender) had to make during the covid health crisis. Next, the questions examined the discourse of gender-based violence – described as the shadow pandemic. Lastly, discussions highlight the epistemological discourse of gender and power. Codes that reflect these discourses were grouped to form groups and visualized as networks. Figure 4 shows a visualization of the network of codes formed. Each network is made of code groups that have connective codes. These visual networks are shown below in Figures 2A and 2B. This visualization helps to show relationships between codes that can is used to produce an overarching theme. At this stage, all codes are somewhat linked to others before being added to a group.

Figure 2A: Examples of Networks of Codes Formed on ATLAS.TI.
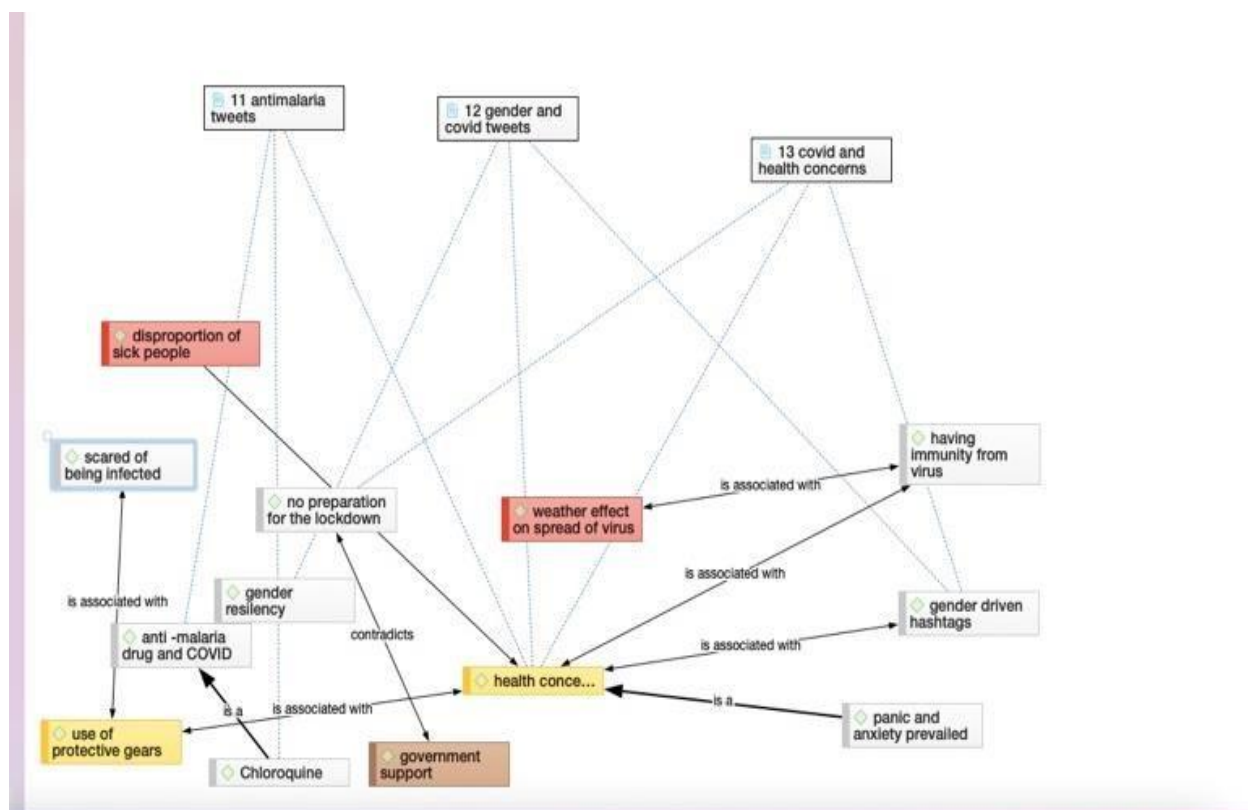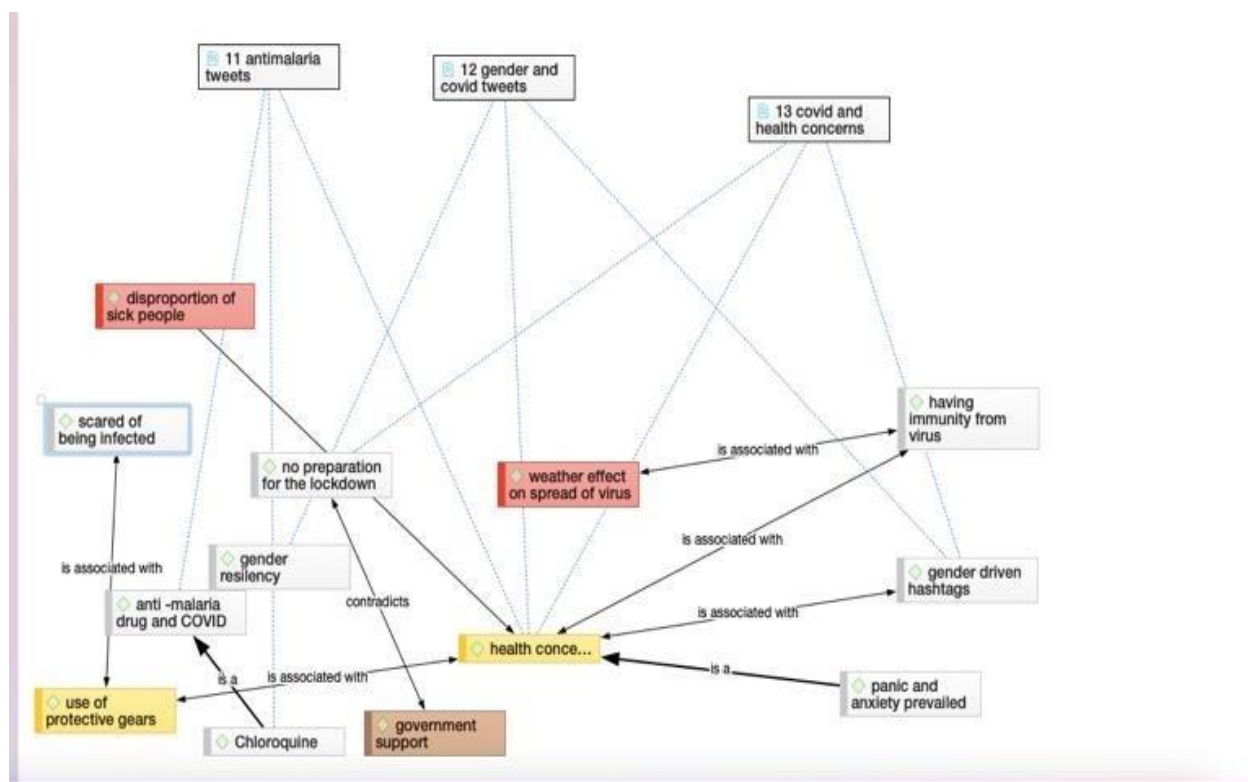
Figure 2B: Examples of Networks of Codes Formed on ATLAS.TI.

The analysis of the data forming these into codes, and networks resulted in identifying patterns which are also themes. These themes also have subthemes to provide more discussions on the themes. Also, during the analysis, I identified a pattern in the reaction and actions of participants and social media comments. I noted that there were situated in the efforts to navigate through a crisis the concepts of resiliency and adaptability. These concepts intersect with the roles these women played as primary caregivers, professional women, and custodians of traditions and customs. These themes and model derived are fully discussed in the findings chapters.

Use of Octoparse and Export Comments

Due to the limited number of interviews conducted, I engaged in doing social network analysis to provide more evidence of the oppressive structure intersecting with the complex identities of Nigerian women. Also, social network analysis was used to provide more information and connections to the patterns identified from analyzing the data from the interviews. To retrieve information from social networking sites like Twitter and YouTube, I did data scrapping, also known as web harvesting. Data scraping is the act of collecting information from a website and pasting it into a spreadsheet or a local file kept on your computer (*What Is Data Scraping And How Can You Use It?* n.d.). It is one of the most effective methods of obtaining data from the web and, in certain situations, channeling that data to another website. Data scrapping allows access to tweets (historical and trending) without the use of researcher API provided by Twitter developers. It was also used to harvest comments on YouTube videos that were related to the study.

To assist me in data scrapping I categorized the data collection into two categories – posts and comments, and tweets. To help me collect data along these categories, I used two data scrapping tools – Octoparse and export comments – which respectively were used according to

the categories. Octoparse is a paid data scraping tool that extracts data from a variety of websites, social media apps, and online search tools among others but in this study, I only used it to scrape data from Twitter and YouTube. The app provides different templates of websites you can download from. The app also provides an advanced mode which was not used during this research. The task template shows you different websites where you can access data. After I chose the template, I want to work with, I went to the actual website to find the information I need. My criteria were to use both keywords and videos about COVID-19 uploaded by female Nigerian female YouTubers. I went to the website and type in keywords in the search box (for example I used the keywords "covid19 and Nigerian women"). I review the results and select relevant videos (videos from news media or uploaded by individual female YouTubers) and upload the URLs (individually) into the template on Octoparse. I then run the extraction or workflow which is saved in an Excel sheet. In scrapping data from Twitter, Octoparse provides on an Excel sheet the keyword(s) used, the URL of the webpage, the tweet website, the author who posted the tweets, and other information. The following summation table (Table 3) shows how the data was collected using data-scraping apps.

Table 3: Data Scrapping Apps and Information Retrieved

Web Scrapping App	Keywords/ Hashtags	Social Media App	URLs	Number of Scrapped Data	Number of Relevant Data
Octoparse	Gender and Nigeria and COVID-19 Lockdown	Twitter	https://twitter.com/search?q=gender%20and%20nigeria%20and%20covid%20lockdown&src=typed_query&f=top	30	28
Octoparse	Palliative, Food Scarcity	YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FaQYqT6mQJA&ab_channel=ChannelsTelevision	161	95
Octoparse	#CovidSheros	Twitter	https://twitter.com/search?l=&q=#covidSheros	25	25
Octoparse	#EndGBV	Twitter	https://twitter.com/search?l=&q=#ENDSGBV	95	93
Octoparse	#VAWG (Violence Against Women and Girls)	Twitter	https://twitter.com/search?l=&q=#VAWG	321	45
Exportcomments.com	COVID -19 Experience	YouTube	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SqYpCDo9HK0&ab	71	50
Octoparse	Vaccine and Nigeria and COVID-19	Twitter	https://twitter.com/search?q=vaccine%20and%20nigeria%20and%20covid&src=typed_query&f=live	84	40

Exportcomments.com	Vaccine and Nigeria and COVID-19	Twitter	Missing	100	20
Exportcomments.com	COVID-19 and Health Concerns	Twitter	Missing	61	11
Exportcomments.com	COVID-19 and Nigerian Women	Twitter	https://twitter.com/search?q=covid-19%20and%20nigerian%20women&src=typedquery	106	65

From the table, the last column tagged "the number of relevant data" is the number of tweets or comments made by women or NGOs specialized in women's issues. This is not a perfect analysis as some of the names were traditional Nigerian names that are unisex. One way to identify the owners of the tweet was to check their Twitter accounts and those with feminine names were easily identified manually. Another way was through exportcomments.com, bios, and identifiers were downloaded which helped to identify women commenters. On Excel to identify duplicate rows, I used the command home > conditional formatting > highlight cells rules > duplicate values to remove identified duplicates. The data gotten from exportcomments.com were downloaded into Excel files. These spreadsheets contain the names of the authors of the tweets and comments. The comments were directly uploaded to ATLAS. TI and coded while the data from Octoparse, the comments were extracted, uploaded to a Word document, and then uploaded to ATLAS.TI for coding.

CHAPTER SIX: FINDING I – INTERVIEWS

From my interviews, most of the participants held the idea that everyone regardless of their gender identity was affected by the pandemic. However, when coding these conversations there were significant links to gender roles, the existence of power dominance, social hierarchy, sexism, classism, and the plight of the pandemic. Women's duties altered throughout time, but they remained consistent with social expectations as primary caregivers and caretakers. According to the interviews, some participants were willing to extend their responsibilities as moms and professional women to adjust to the pandemic's impacts. For example, all the participants who identified as mothers (biologically or through adoption) were willing to take extra precautionary measures to ensure the safety of their children and families. For some of these mothers, the pandemic made them rely on technological tools and innovative ways to survive with their families. Some were not very familiar with these tools like video conferencing apps. Therefore, they had to learn quickly how viable these tools would be for example, in providing education for their children. Some participants noted that unlike in Western or advanced countries, the Nigerian government both in the federal, state, or local government tiers did not provide adequate resources for schools to transition to online learning. Some of the participants opted to change their children's schools to those which had online learning available, while a few relied on private tutoring during the lockdown period. During the lockdown, markets and schools did not operate as they did in pre-pandemic times. As with failing to provide adequate resources in the education sector, the government also did not do much to assist in the accessibility of basic food items.

Markets were abruptly closed without any alternative provision made for citizens to access food. While there was a public announcement before the closedown the time allotted was insufficient. The participants all noted that there was a flux of panic buying which led to a

scarcity of certain goods. However, these women saw the need to improve their skills with technology to help them in navigating through these perilous times. One participant discussed how WhatsApp (a social network application) was used to obtain daily necessities. WhatsApp groups were created with suppliers and other women in her communities to help get access to different items, including food, medicine, and others. This helped to avoid being confronted by security agents who were enforcing the lockdown instructions from the government. Another noted how she and her extended family used Zoom and WhatsApp to provide information as to where to get supplies for the home. While some of the participants tried to get involved in the community to assist one another in getting food and other necessities. Some engaged in small-scale farming, participating in the local production of items that were most times sourced internationally. One participant talked about how the women in her community came together to produce soda, soaps, sanitary pads, and more with locally sourced materials. This experience dispels the idea that women in the West African region were generally helpless and constrained but it shows a high level of resiliency. These women though faced with a perplexing crisis, they found ways to sustain both their lives and others. This in a sense reflects feminism - as noted by Bell hooks, and Collins - they did not allow themselves to be overwhelmed by the situation they found themselves in.

There was an increase in gender-based violence (GBV) and as rightly identified the shadow pandemic. The participants did acknowledge reports of gender-based violence either from news reports or from eyewitnesses within their communities. Even though most of the participants did not directly experience any form of gender violence, they were aware of it occurring in their communities. This led some to serve as advocates in their communities because of their positions as religious or business leaders. One participant was already working with a non-governmental agency that aids victims of gender-based violence. Some participants

noted that one of the reasons that led to the increase in GBV was the issuance of the lockdown that restricted movements. These restrictive measures meant most women were locked in with their perpetrators without a way out. Also, with the closure of schools some young women and men were exposed to assaults, rape, and harassment. Some of the participants acknowledged the increase in early marriages of young girls due to the closure of schools. One of the participants recalled creating a workshop for teenagers in her religious community to engage them creatively. She noted that the workshop which lasted for a considerable number of weeks helped these young ones to 1) find a safe place, 2) become busy mentally and physically, and 3) interact with others. Others spoke of providing online classes to help engage the young ones within her community.

One thing that I noted is the role religion played in providing different forums for people to find succor. It was noted that the women who took up leadership roles in their community were those who already had leadership roles in their religious centers. They transitioned from being religious leaders to community leaders. They also gained the support of their male acquittances, partners, and community leaders to provide help to the young ones within the communities. This role played by religion was not highlighted in previous research that investigated the role of religion in navigating the pandemic. There was indeed a negative influence of religion on the acceptance of the existence of the pandemic. Some of the participants who were medical professionals recalled how some of their patients refused to accept the presence of the coronavirus in Nigeria. Some believed that it was part of a conspiracy theory to dissuade religious people from their beliefs. This led to some patients losing their lives to the virus. These women also noted how misinformation perpetuated by religious leaders led to the refusal to accept the presence of the coronavirus. These women took up leadership roles in educating those who are part of their religious communities. They discussed the

importance of wearing masks, washing hands, and social distancing. They urged other community leaders to provide masks, soaps, and water in strategic places where people would gather. One of these participants also urged the religious leaders in her community to adhere to the governmental instruction to close buildings for worship and use video conferencing as an alternative.

Most of the participants identified as being part of the working or middle class of society. This classification came about from their viewpoints on the effects of the pandemic. While a few of these participants were single young women, the majority were married women whose husbands had well-paying jobs. The economic effects of the pandemic were not very devastating on these individuals as women, as previous research had indicated. Though they did have to undergo some difficulties economically, they were more privileged than their counterparts in poorer circumstances. They were particularly concerned about contacting the virus than the economic effects of the pandemic.

People's identities are established at the intersection of race, class, and gender, and it is the mix of these constructs that frequently influences people's experiences, which has influenced the use of interviews in this study. The notion of constructing intersectionality was introduced in critical feminist literature by scholars such as Bell hooks (1981). Bell hooks' work inspired researchers from a variety of fields to dismantle racial, class, and gender stereotypes (Trahan, 2011). At all points throughout their life, all persons are members of a racial group, a gender, and a class, and it is at the intersection of these characteristics that identity is established. People's experiences and opinions of themselves and others are influenced by the mix of their race, class, and gender. Most people, whether in established or developing cultures, experience discrimination, and privilege at various points in their life. As a result, several dimensions of social adversity and privilege are interconnected and interdependent.

This realization has far-reaching ramifications for how we think about prejudice and inequality, as well as their link to potential occurrences. It argues for a qualitative approach to researching intersectionality and crises, which are so interconnected and dynamic. This realization has far-reaching ramifications for how we think about prejudice and inequality, as well as their link to various types of crises. It advocates for a qualitative approach to understanding intersectionality and managing a health crisis, among other things. To understand the lived experiences of women living in the West African region during the COVID-19 pandemic, this study examined the constructs of class, privilege, and discrimination, especially among women of African descent.

The study employed the use of interviews with individuals to examine these constructs. Asking appropriate questions is important in identifying these constructs, although doing so properly may be difficult. The difficulty is how to pose questions regarding overlapping, interconnected, and mutually constitutive experiences without turning, even unwittingly, to an additive approach. Critics of the additive method include Collins (1995), Cuadraz and Uttal (1999), and Weber and Parra-Medina (2003), who argue that it conceptualizes people's experiences as different, autonomous, and summative. They also reject the additive approach's assumption that one's identities and/or discrimination based on those identities may be ranked. There is also the reality that interviewers have a limited number of various identities about which they can inquire. An interviewer simply cannot ask an entire set of questions on crossing identities (e.g., class, disability status, etc.). However, if the researcher frames the question correctly (e.g., by allowing participants to mention any additional dimensions that are significant to them), the interviewee might include, class, and other factors that the researcher might otherwise ignore.

Following the principles of constructivist grounded theory and interviewing, the questions were made to guide the conversation with the participants. The interview questions are attached as Appendix A. The process of getting an interview involved creating a survey link attached to a flyer that was shared on social media networking sites Facebook and Instagram requesting women between the ages of 18 and above to participate in a 60 to 90 minutes interview. The survey was used to provide options for days and times participants would be available to do the interviews. The interviews were prepared to take place over Zoom, so each participant who signed up was sent individual Zoom links. This also enabled the researcher to easily access each interview. A total of 12 interviews were conducted, 4 persons did the interview together because they were either colleagues or chose the same timeframe for the interview. Each participant is either living in the specified geographical location or did live in the region between 2019 and the first quarter of 2022. All the interviewees identified as females who were either married or single, with or without children. The interviews were conducted at a time picked by the participants and were all done via the videoconferencing application Zoom. Each participant was asked the same questions, except for some interviews where the researcher avoided asking those questions due to the participant's foreknowledge. Also, a couple of interviews lasted for about 60 mins to accommodate the participants' schedules. All participants were very willing to provide information based on their understanding of the questions posed; no question was seen as sensitive and therefore rejected. The participants were very willing to participate in follow-up interviews except for one.

The purpose of this study was to provide an understanding of the lived experiences of women in Nigeria during a health crisis through the lens of intersectionality and African feminism. The rationale of the study was to examine how power dominance, social hierarchy, and the presence of heteropatriarchy affected the lived experiences of women in Nigeria and to

bring to the fore their perspectives of the world. To achieve these objectives, interviews, and social media analysis were conducted. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed based on thematic analysis. Comments from women and about women's experiences were also analyzed. The research questions provided a guide in formulating the questions used during the interviews. The study found different intersections between gender, class, health, and others. Based on the answers from the interviews the following themes and sub-themes were identified. Health concerns, restrictive movements, technology, government, economic effects, accessibility, and socio-political issues.

These themes were identified based on the coping strategies or patterns that were reoccurring. During each interview and in analyzing social media interactions, I noted that there was an underlying framework of resiliency and adaptation that intersects with gender and gender roles. This framework can be linked to these women's response to the oppressive and dominant hetero-patriarchal system that expanded the gender divide during the COVID-19 health crisis. To understand how these women navigated through the perils of the pandemic, I situate their ability and desire to be resilient and adapt to the changes that were occurring in their personal lives and society at large.

I thereby classify these coping strategies as leveraging support, self-orientation, emotional management, and tension-reducing strategies. These strategies I derived from identifying in the conversations with the participants and through social media analysis. For example, when speaking of African feminism Mikell, (1995) noted that African women while speaking against oppressive powers and traditions still believed in the dominance of the male gender as normal. They however believe in speaking out against the system instead of gender in general. Mikell (1995) continued to note that this idea was based on filial relations. These women spoke about the failings of the system (which I want to reiterate is controlled by men).

They believe in working to overcome the perils caused by the oppressive political, economic, and social structures that are in existence. However, in creating a model to explain the presence of resilience and adaptability in the lived realities of the participants, there was found no strong evidence that the interviews alluded to the tenets of African feminism and intersectionality.

Developing a Model

A qualitative model (also known as a conceptual model) is a non-mathematical explanation of variables and their relationships that encourages further investigation of phenomena (Van Ittersum et al., 2006). My approach is based on a thorough and methodical examination of the literature and data. I was able to discover and characterize the links between the essential factors in the research data from the use of grounded theory and thematic analysis. These methodical processes provided a basis to understand the Individual codes interact with one another as well as with technological features to build a network of themes. these themes or patterns produce another pattern that informs the development of a model. All the codes and identified networks and emerging models are shown to have an influence. As noted earlier there were linked codes due to the relational components (behaviors, attitudes, and responses).

In conducting inductive qualitative analysis, the essential features are seen in the general inductive approach and present a set of processes that may be employed for the analysis of qualitative data (Thomas, 2006). The inductive approach's major goal is to allow research findings to arise from the frequent, dominating, or noteworthy themes inherent in raw data, free of the constraints imposed by structured approaches (Thomas, 2006). As I analyze the data, I noted that certain patterns were emerging that provided a relationship between ideas and feelings expressed during the interviews and from the comments analyzed from social media platforms. Though these women were subjected to different forms of pain, struggle, and anxiety,

there was the underline need to survive and thrive. Demographics such as age, educational background, professionalism, economic status, and prior experience with a crisis can influence the ability to navigate through a critical situation. Other factors such as risk, privacy, and responsibilities also influence the decisions of these women during the crisis. From the review of previous studies and the analysis of the raw data, I identified a difference in the perception of women in Africa to the self-perceptions of African women. The evolutionary trends of globalization, the presence of social media, and the intellectual development of women have led to African women deviating from the perceived norms assigned to them.

In this study, as was done in other previous studies, I will be using diagrams, and tables to represent the model development processes. The goal is to provide definitions and explorations of emerging themes and capture the overall knowledge. To do so I identified the following codes through a loop diagram. The following linked codes provide a foundation for developing the model. These codes are a demonstration of the different linked codes found in the previous chapter. The following themes emerged from analyzing earlier emerging themes – environment, coping strategy, and resultant effects. The term environment used in the context does not necessarily refer to the physical environment but to the structures and conditions existing during the crisis in which the codes were extracted. Therefore, I identified four of these contexts as the issuance of the lockdown, restriction of movement, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the resultant crisis. To cope with these perilous environments, the following coping strategies were identified leveraging support, self-orientation emotional management, and tension reduction. These coping strategies in turn led to the development of resiliency and adaptability.

To arrive at this, I examine the different codes and the code groups formed. Figure 3 is an example of some codes that were linked together based on the idea they transmit which

helped identify the presence of a coping technique or strategy. The first image with the bubble and arrow is a visualization of how codes were linked, and then the last bubble shows the possible coping technique identified with the linked codes. This led to the formation of the model shown in Figure 4.
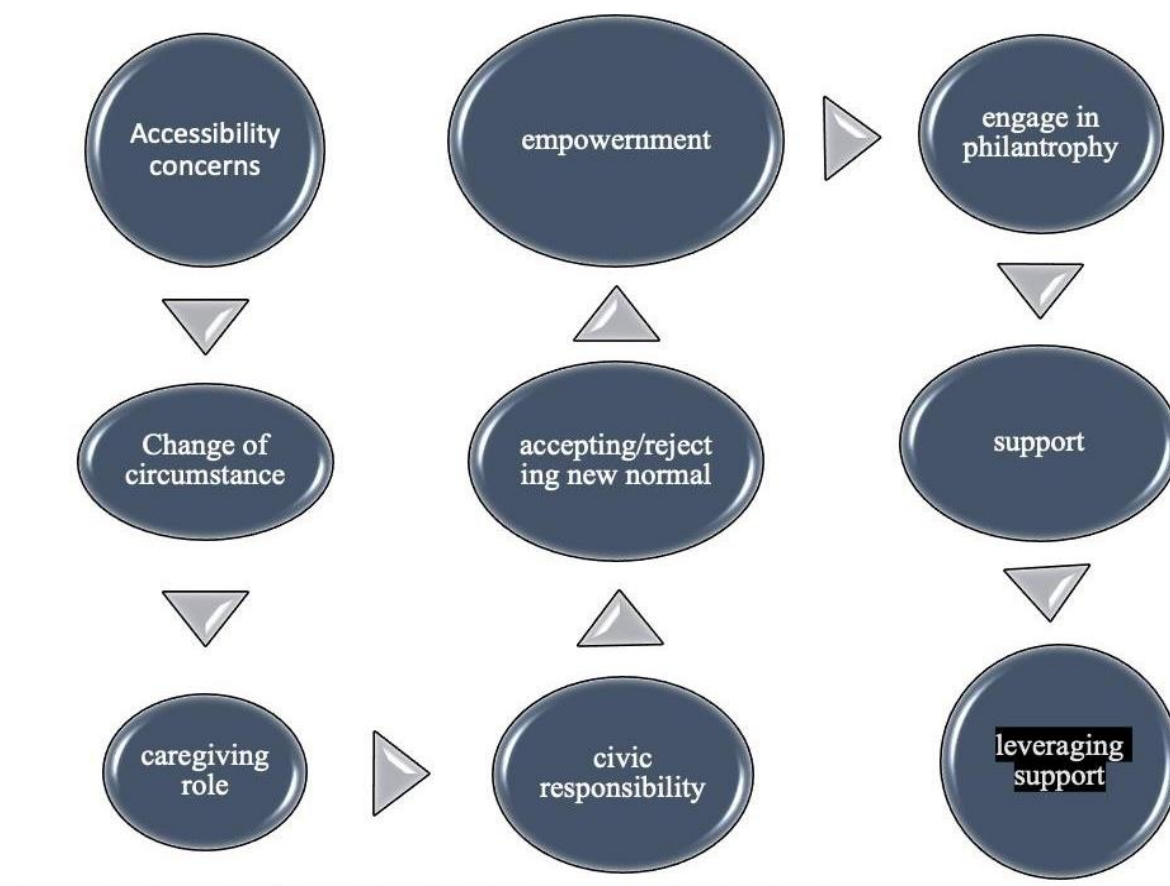
Figure 3: An Example of How Linked Codes Connect to Model Creation.
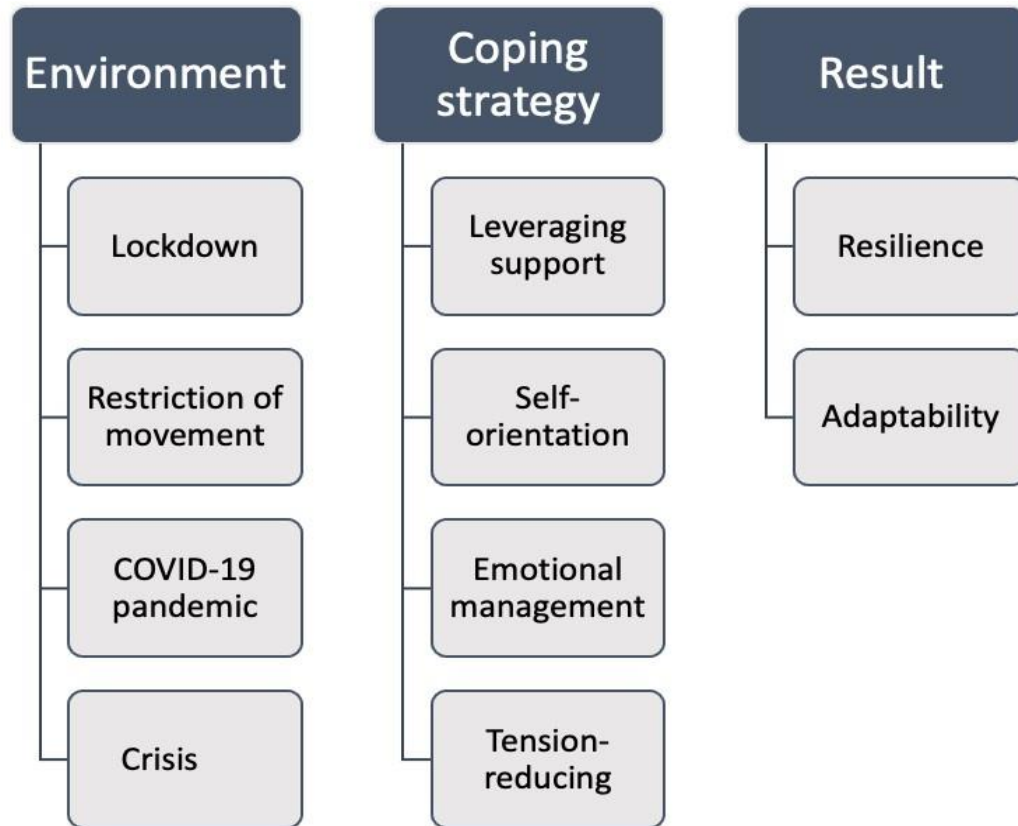
Figure 4: A Model of Resilience and Adaptability.

Themes Identified

Using the model visually described in Figure 4 shown above I developed the following emerging themes that are discussed below. In each of the themes the four areas of coping strategy were used to describe the resultant effects which are the ability of these women to be resilient and adapt to the changing circumstances.

Navigating Health Issues During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Health concerns were one of the recurring patterns when analyzing the interviews. The participants had different stories to relate to about their fight to stay healthy and those around them. Some had health issues that were not related to the virus while others did contact with the virus at some point. There were also concerns about others especially family members as these women identified as the primary caregivers. Below is a quote from one of the participants. When there is no good flow of food in the house become so worried because of the children they must eat. When there's no access to good water, it becomes so heartbreaking and worrisome for me because. Our health depends on these and then health care. We were so cautious was so mindful of what to do so that we don't fall sick because we don't want a situation whereby, we will not be taken care of. After all, no hospital was attended to people.

 The issue of health created the intersection between class and gender. Most of the participants were women from a middle-class economic class. They had access to health facilities and received health care more easily than those in rural areas.

Most of the participants lived in urban cities, though it was noted that the spread of the virus was more in populated areas than in less populated areas. As noted by one of the interviewees below but in terms of the test centers, yes, as you drift to the outskirts to the rural areas. We didn't have all the test centers like you had in the cities. But of course, this disease was largely in the cities because it was about people who move a lot. It was about people who traveled out

of the country. very few test centers, especially within the vicinity, were in Nigeria. Some of these test centers were not even functioning at full capacity, which was making people now must pay for them to get access to testing.

However, during the lockdown, there were restrictions on movement that did not allow people to access healthcare services as they normally would. Also, due to the surge of the pandemic hospitals were ill-equipped with specialized staff and equipment. Though test centers were established not everyone could access these or agree to make use of them. The medical professionals interviewed complained about fewer doctors in the COVID section of their hospital. All the participants were at one point concerned about contracting the virus or someone close to them.

They also discussed how information about the pandemic increased their anxiety especially due to misinformation. Some discussed how they held on to their religious beliefs to navigate through the anxieties they were experiencing and help others in their communities to do the same. Some of the participants had underlying ailments that they worry would be exacerbated if they got infected by the virus. One of them had a health issue that required surgery but was delayed during the lockdown. This led to anxiety and fear of the unknown. Also, the participants who were medical practitioners and the ones married to medical personnel, all had high anxieties about being infected by the virus because of the fear they could infect their families.

Leveraging Support. People took preventive measures by adhering to mask-wearing and social distancing, especially during the lockdown. The participants recollected how they were willing to wear masks and observe social distancing, but some found that it was not easy to implement on others due to some social and cultural factors.

Emotional Management. Some of the participants like the general populace felt the pandemic will not last for a long time and were cautiously optimistic that they will return to their normal way of life soon. One of the participants voiced her belief in the short period the pandemic will last in the following.

> When the lockdown started, I'm like, Okay, let's give this some few ones, you know. Hopefully by drawing it over and everything. And that was, I think, that was like the popular touch that you know. It's just a few months, and then, you know we are done so. People even try. It will be like a week, and then, you know we'll be done. We'll go back to normal. There'll be a vaccine, and everybody will be good, but unfortunately, it wasn't so because we are still living in a pandemic.

This, therefore, led to panic and uncertainty when the pandemic raged on with no hope of a drug or vaccine to alleviate the worries of the people. One of the reasons people feared the pandemic continuing for a long time was not only their health being affected but because the Nigerian government was ill-equipped to handle an outbreak that could lead to the deaths of many Nigerians. While the lockdown had families together, others were separated from their families, and this increased their anxiety as they tried to navigate through the perils of the pandemic. Some participants who worked in a different city from where their families reside were very worried for the safety of their family members, especially older family members who were categorized as being at high risk of contracting the virus. This worry was not alleviated by the lockdown as it was difficult to move to other parts of the country.

Self-Orientation. In general, most of the participants tried to find ways to keep themselves safe and healthy. They were able to avail themselves of information about the pandemic to remain healthy and safe. They did not allow their fears to paralyze them, but they put in efforts to understand actions that they could take to alleviate their fears.

Tension-Reducing. The lockdown provided families with the opportunity to spend time with families. A participant recalled that after her husband lost his job, he decided to spend more time with their children and her. She recalled that they had several game nights and explored new hobbies together. Another participant also pointed out that spending more time with her family help in easing her anxiety about the pandemic. Some discussed using video conferencing applications like Zoom and Webex to communicate with families living outside their homes. Some said they received emotional and financial assistance from extended families during the lockdown which helped them tremendously.

Fear of the Unknown and Others

While the lockdown had families together, others were separated from their families, and this increased their anxiety as they tried to navigate through the perils of the pandemic. Some participants who worked in a different city from where their families reside were very worried for the safety of their family members, especially older family members who were categorized as being at high risk of contracting the virus. This statement below expresses the sentiment of some of the participants.

> "I panicked cause um. I was staying in Lagos. That was where I was working, and then my family was back in Jos (a city in Northern Nigeria)".
>
> "I was having panic attacks. I was having you know. at every point. When I listen to the news. I was having anxiety. I'd say at a point It was as if I was losing it. And I have my mom who is asthmatic and aged".

This worry was not alleviated by the lockdown as it was difficult to move to other parts of the country. The rise in the number of cases gave people a cause for concern. Some of the participants acknowledged the fear of not knowing what issues will arise from the pandemic. They were not even aware of the possibility of different variants of the virus developing during

the first wave of the pandemic. There were so many uncertainties that were coupled with the lack of adequate health facilities.

Women-Related Illnesses and the COVID-19 Pandemic

During the lockdown due to the pandemic, some of the participants expressed their concerns about receiving medical attention due to suffering from illnesses that were not connected to the virus. Some comments on social media also reflected the fear and anxieties suffered by some of these participants. Because the country as well as the world was consumed with dealing with the surge of the pandemic, some had to delay treatments including surgeries. Some reflected on how they have turned away from hospitals or medical centers because of the prevalence of the coronavirus. This did not alleviate the concerns of these women who in a way were deprived of receiving prompt and adequate treatments. Also, some hospitals closed because of their inability to care for COVID-19 patients. As reported below.

> "The lockdown affected healthcare because I remember vividly that most hospitals were shut down because even doctors were afraid for their lives".
> "Clinical or health services are strictly on emergency bases and perceived importance. Women may not be able to access some services while the Covid 19 pandemic is on. There is a national lockdown to prevent the spread of the virus and service provision is limited for women".
> "lockdown doesn't stop period, pregnancy from occurring women and girls needs all the support during this COVID pandemic".

These statements align with previous research on concerns about women during the pandemic. The issue of difficulty in receiving medical attention was not only affecting just women and children, but it was also disproportionately difficult because of the medical issues that women face especially because of their genetic makeup. One of the participants related how she needed surgery (hysterectomy) but could not get it because of the lockdown and the fear of contracting the virus while being admitted to the hospital. She had to rely on medication to temporarily

relieve the pain and build her immune system. Her story relates to other women who also had non-COVID-related illnesses and could not receive immediate medical attention.

Wellness and Adapting to Change

The interviews helped to understand how each participant felt about the effect of the pandemic, the lockdown, and policies on their personal lives. They all agreed that their lives were deeply affected by the changes due to the pandemic and the lockdown. The disruption of lives was very significant as each participant related their worries, especially during the first wave of the pandemic (that led to the lockdown of countries). One issue that was seen as a major disruption was the incessant wearing of face masks. While the participants all welcomed the reason for wearing face masks, and social distancing, some of them expressed the level of uncomfortableness felt when wearing these masks. External factors also played a role in their uneasiness. Many Nigerians refused to adhere strictly to the usage of face masks, and some will wear these incorrectly. Some of the participants noted how their efforts to assist some persons around them to adhere to the instructions on wearing the face mask goes awry. Some participants noted how they did not see the need of wearing masks at home if they felt safe inside. Some participants also noted that in some instances they did not wear face masks outside for fear of being seen differently.

Another issue was the idea of how long the pandemic and lockdown would last. Some of the participants noted that people including them had unrealistic expectations of when the pandemic and the lockdown will end. Some recalled how they felt in a couple of weeks the developed countries and the World Health Organization (WHO) and pharmaceutical companies would provide remedies to help curb the spread of the virus. Having this unrealistic expectation made some of these participants (along with family members and friends) to be lax and unperturbed about taking extra precautionary health steps. This belief that there was going to be

quick relief made it hard to accept reality. These views were also noted among social media users who expressed their frustration with the long-lasting pandemic.

Therefore, it was stressful when there was no hope of a vaccine or medication being available as soon as possible. Some participants expressed how the lack of solutions was disruptive because Nigerian society is not as developed as the Western world and the lockdown exacerbated a lot of social, political, and economic issues. A participant recalled her husband lost his job during the lockdown, and it was a perilous time for them because she was a full-time housewife. This instance is common among many Nigerian families where the existence of patriarchy still defines gender roles as definitive and exclusive within the different genders. Therefore, it is commonplace to find women being housewives even though they may hold a collegiate degree. This was the case with some of the participants, who identified themselves as housewives because it is the societal expectation to take care of the home and be primary caregivers. As many heads of households lost their source of income, it became difficult for families to access necessities as they would normally do. The above-mentioned participant recalled that her family had to depend on savings and assistance from extended family to survive economically. These kinds of circumstances were experienced not only by the participants but by many women in the country. A social media commenter noted how he felt frustrated losing his job because that was the only source of income his family depended on. This will lead one to imagine the situations that would arise in his home.

The participants all hoped that life would return to what it was before the pandemic. They expressed how hopeful they were especially based on their religious faith. A participant recalled feeling that the pandemic will last for a week, and everything will return to normal. She noted that she had high optimism about the pandemic and the lockdown so she could continue with her life plans. Her sentiment was shared not only by most of the participants but also by

others. The economic situation in Nigeria was erratic and the socio-political scene was worse. Therefore, the pandemic became a burden too difficult to bear, which led to frustrations among the citizens. It was difficult to accept the new normal.

A participant expressed her fears about the new lifestyle that was emerging. She recalled feeling anxious about losing loved ones not to the virus but socially. She said she lost friends because of the limited movement of people. She identifies as an extroverted and sociable person who struggled with isolation during the lockdown. As a single woman and mother, she was living alone because her grown-up child had moved out before the lockdown. Her sentiment is relatable to others as people did express their frustration of not being able to meet with friends and families during the lockdown. Some of the participants recalled feelings of worthlessness creeping in as they tried to navigate the pandemic. They recalled being expected to remain strong and innovative during this period. Some expressed their desire to receive help either professionally or informally but did not receive much help. The idea of being lonely or being left alone was expressed by some of the participants. A participant stated, "There was a point when you felt you just want to go out maybe to a fast-food place with friends and eat out while catching up", said one of the participants.

However, not everything was gloomy or was negatively perceived during the pandemic. One pattern I noted during the interviews was how resilient the participants were. While they openly admitted having fears and feelings of uneasiness, they were willing to adapt to their new normal. They did not wallow in their pain, or fears but started to look for ways to adapt and even enjoy their lives. When I asked participants what coping strategies they employed, a participant recalled organizing different activities for her and her family to keep them happy and occupied. another participant started learning new hobbies and crafts along with some women in her community. Another recalled starting philanthropic projects to keep her and

others busy, while some started making new plans as they navigate the perils of the pandemic. Most of the participants noted turning to improving their spirituality and focusing on spiritual exercises like meditation to improve their emotional and spiritual selves. A participant noted that women in Nigerians were notably resilient and therefore, many find ways to cope with the difficulties they were facing during the pandemic. Using the earlier model of resiliency and adaptability, I discuss below how these strategies provided an understanding of these women's overall wellness and ability to change.

Leveraging Support. From the interviews, I identified the participants' willingness to find ways to improve their lives and the others around them. They saw the importance of providing support for others as a way of coping with their disruptive lives. They were cognizant of the value of lifting others from despair caused by the effects of the pandemic. The notion of influencing others to be able to have control over an uncontrollable situation was paramount among the participants. Participants strive to find avenues to aid either their family members or those in their community. Three ways to show support included creating or joining virtual groups to provide encouragement, resources, and assistance, using technology to communicate frequently, and organizing social activities for families. Leveraging support also involved helping themselves and others to accept the new normal and adapt to the situation they were living in.

Self-Orientation. Finding ways to improve one's overall health was a theme that was identified during the interviews. Each participant arrived at a point where they felt the need to identify ways to cope with what was happening around them. As mentioned earlier, some of the participants turn to spirituality as a coping mechanism. They did not allow themselves to be engulfed by the present situation caused by the pandemic and the lockdown. They focused on

identifying actions or sources that aggravated their anxiety, fear, or uneasiness. Then they took steps to proffer solutions that will help them either remove the cause or cope with it.

Emotional Management. Emotional stress can affect the mental well-being of a human. This was reiterated during the interviews by each participant. Ways that the interview reported emotional management included participants' ability to identify and understand their emotions. It also includes their ability to regulate their emotional reactions to situations. In highly stressful situations like the pandemic and the lockdown, having the ability to regulate one's emotions could lead to more rational and effective decisions. The participants acknowledge that they were highly stressed and anxious about the pandemic and lockdown. "for me, the anxiety level was very high, because as an asthmatic patient and knowing that it has a lot to do with the respiratory system and I have a mother, too, who is asthmatic and aged". noted one of the participants.

Understanding how stressed and anxious the situation was helped the participants to implore ways to manage their emotions. Having self-awareness helps in improving how one responds to a dire situation like the pandemic. It helps to develop resiliency as one begins to take steps in ensuring changes in one's retrospect about their present circumstances. The participants showed resilience to changes and obstacles. One way they did this was by relying on technology to source alternative ways to do daily activities. A participant observed that getting food products from the markets was extremely difficult during the lockdown phase but by using phones,
(either making calls or texting), and chat apps she and other women in her community were able to locate sellers and buy what they needed with little risk of being apprehended by security agents.

Tension-Reducing. The interviews reported that participants devise means to reduce tensions as a way of coping during the crisis. Tension-reducing strategies were not only for self-

care but for others around them. Communicating frequently with family and friends (especially for those who lived in different geographical locations from their families) was a way to reduce tension. A participant recalled traveling to the area her family resides when the lockdown policies were eased to alleviate the worries of her family about her. She knew her family was worried about her safety as a single woman residing alone in a big city and she wanted to calm their fears. Tension-reducing coping strategies were also employed during the protests against police brutality. Some participants used social media to update their status and contacted those who were not physically close to them. Another tension-reducing strategy was engaging in self-development projects to help alleviate anxiety. Some of the participants as earlier mentioned undertook hobbies and crafts to ease their anxiety. Others constantly updated their knowledge of the pandemic, especially in areas such as the availability of vaccines and the spread of the virus. They became aware of differentiating the myths from the fact which helped reduce their anxiety as the days went by. The presence of camaraderie also played a positive role in tension reduction during the pandemic.

Navigating Classism and Gender Inequality

The first and second research questions asked about the different social structures that impose inequality on gender in Nigerian society. In this part, I discuss gender viewpoints and the gender discrepancy discovered throughout my interviews. Using these accounts, I develop a model in which four external contexts (social, class, economy, and political) impact the intersectionality of genders and the strategies employed to manage existing and perceived discrepancies. Through the framework of intersectionality, the interviews help me identify the positionality of my participants. As earlier noted in the study my positionality placed me in an "elitist but concerned position". Each of my participants occupied a position that locates them in the power structures. All my participants were well educated (the least academic degree held

at the time of the interview was a bachelor's degree). Also, all my participants currently reside in large or mid-size cities that are much more developing infrastructurally than the rural areas. We always talk from a specific position in the power hierarchies. Nobody is immune to the modern/colonial capitalist/patriarchal world-class system. Neither do sexual, gender, spiritual, linguistic, geographical, and racial hierarchies. Our knowledge is always positioned within the frameworks of class, gender, and race. Understanding the positionality of my participants and how they are situated in the power hierarchies, I develop findings in the following subthemes, identifying the role class and gender played in accessibility concerns, and in the use of technology.

Accessibility Concerns During the Lockdown

Social contexts do have an impact on work contexts, as society places a certain level of values and importance on certain professions – which provides a certain degree of power to these professions. Some of my participants were in a position of power due to their profession – two of my participants were medical practitioners and two were journalists. Because of their profession, they had more freedom of movement than the others during the lockdown. Therefore, their lived experiences were slightly different in discussing the implication of the lockdown. While most of these participants were empathetic and concerned about the implication of the lockdown on the general population, they did not feel privileged to have some level of power. They were concerned about their safety and health and that of their immediate families.

The lockdown meant restrictive movement which in turn meant the inability to have access to even daily amenities. Some participants expressed how the lockdown meant drastic changes in their businesses and jobs. While some had the opportunity to continue working, others had to close their businesses – especially those who operated small, scaled businesses.

This was painful as some of these women were the "breadwinners" in their households. They lamented about not receiving any help from the government to ease the burden. Some were worried about adapting to the new format of using video conferencing for work, especially with the persistent problem of erratic power supply and the internet.

> The little we have, we have to manage and monitor and manage and money, so the, especially the first few weeks of the lockdown that's on my period, it was something terrible. I lost friends, let me put it that way, naturally, as Africans, we love the family ties we want to receive and spend on time, but during the lockdown, which was not easy, and now you are locked down, you have put in place in lockdown loss, there are no adequate health facilities to go to get attended to.

Class Context. Classism plays a pivotal role in how people reacted to the issuance of the lockdown. Though it was an uncomfortable situation for all the citizens, some underwent great pain because they were of lower-class status. One of the participants noted how her colleagues were able to allegedly bribe security agents to provide them with passes meant for essential workers. However, she noted how persons of lower social and educational backgrounds who tried to move without a pass were arrested and made to pay fines or were confined in government-designated areas. The class distinction had little to do with gender though. However, women who were part of professions deemed essential during the lockdown received preferential treatment, but it was not based on their gender. However, since most of the participants did not fall into this category, they felt the burden of the lockdown more.

Political Context. In the political arena, women's representation is minimal which has led to the overlooking of vital issues affecting women. As the pandemic surged, it became clear that issues – health, economic, and social justice – that were affecting many women in the country were ignored or given minimal attention. There was no infrastructure in place to assist

women who were dealing with women-related illnesses during the lockdown. Some of the participants noted how the government not providing support for women was detrimental to their physical and mental health during the period of the pandemic. Though a few believed the government have been doing its best to accommodate the different problems the country was facing, most saw the government as unperturbed about the plight of the citizen and especially women.

Social Context. The lockdown and the pandemic altered the social environment in Nigerian society. When the pandemic hit, and the government issued a lockdown policy, schools, markets, social gatherings, and religious activities were put on hold. From the interview, I noted that the participants were directly affected as others regardless of their social class. However, those in the middle and upper classes were able to navigate through the lockdown because of their ability to connect with people using technology. But this was not the case with women in the rural areas, especially in education. Since most of these women were not economically powerful, they could not afford or sustain the alternative use of technology for classes for their children. Also, some social media comments reported that some girls were asked to withdraw from schools because their parents could not afford the high cost of education during the pandemic.

Economic Context. in terms of the economic situation, some of the participants were either small business owners or housewives and they recalled having difficulties financially when either they closed their businesses, or the primary source of income (from their partners) was cut off due to retrenchment. In this context, there was an implication of inequality within the genders. More women suffered economically as noted also by previous research studies. Even those who were employed, at some point, suffered financial difficulty. One participant recalled that after the lockdown persisted more than it was anticipated, she was let go of her job

(though she mentioned it was not because of gender because the company was at a loss and let go of some staff including her). Another participant noted that some low-level employees suffered a loss of jobs during the lockdown and the first wave of the pandemic, and these were mostly women. Most janitorial jobs in companies in the country were performed by women from low social status or poor educational backgrounds.

Therefore, this finding aligns with previous research that pinpointed women suffering economically during the pandemic. This reiteration of the economic effect on women highlights the intersectionality of gender and power – economic power. Even though the participants were identified based on their educational and professional backgrounds as part of the middle class, they illustrated through their discussions how much women especially those of lower economic status suffered during the pandemic. There was also no structural support from the different tiers of government to help alleviate the problem some of these women faced.

Use of Technology During the Lockdown

The evolution of technology in Nigeria has been a slow one. Mobile phones were not introduced into the country until the early 2000s. However, the country became one of the fastest-growing markets for mobile phones and other electronic gadgets. Therefore, during the lockdown when businesses and schools were closed, people needed an alternative to help continue with school and office work. They turned to technology to provide alternative means. From my findings from the interview and social media analysis, I noted that the participants and other women heavily depended on their mobile phones, tablets, or laptops. Some of the participants related how they started working from home using video conferencing apps. This was also true of those with children who had to stay at home because of the restricted movement policy. A participant recalled being worried about children's education especially when the school they attended did not provide adequate alternatives to engage the students

academically. One participant tried to be creative with her students so they can have access to some form of learning while isolated from their families. She recalled sending group text messages using the WhatsApp group feature. This was welcomed by her students as some of them owned phones but did not own a laptop or PC at home to use video conferencing apps. The participant noted that it was a tough time for students to adapt to online classes because of network issues, especially for those who moved to rural areas to stay with families during the lockdown. She commented that how television stations were also used to provide classes to students. However, she noted that some teachers and students especially at the collegiate level devised means to adopt some technological tools like Google Classroom to engage their students online.

As noted earlier, some of the participants noted that they used video conferencing apps for their work. They also relied on social media sites to get information on the ongoing pandemic and lockdown. A participant noted that social media sites were frequently used to even engage with others during the pandemic. She noted her usage of social media networks increased dramatically during the lockdown period. Another noted that technology helped her and some other women to be innovative. For example, during the lockdown markets and grocery stores were closed, but using WhatsApp groups they could arrange with some sellers to meet at certain points to transact business. They were able to keep track of where these sellers would be (the sellers would choose areas where security agents will not discover and arrest them for violating the lockdown laws). Another recalled forming groups with local women to encourage subsistence farming and producing certain products locally. She recalled using Google and YouTube to learn new crafts that were beneficial in producing some products that they normally would depend on the markets or stores to sell. She recalled how proud she was

that she and the women in her community had to learn these new crafts and hoped that they continued using these new ideas to sustain their families beyond the pandemic.

Political Context. the government and other agencies used technology to disseminate information to the people about the pandemic and the lockdown. Government agencies used social media platforms that were readily accessible to inform people about policies and changes due to the pandemic. One participant noted that the federal government frequently updated its social media pages so people can receive information directly from them. It also helped people to respond or contact government officials. However, some participants recalled that the information they were receiving from the government was not regular and sometimes vague. One social media tweet commented that the government did not provide adequate information and ways to access this information for every class of people.

Social Context. from the interviews, social media usage increased tremendously during the lockdown. The interviews revealed that information about the pandemic and the lockdown were sourced more from frequent social media sites. One participant noted that she spends double the time she would spend on social media before the pandemic. This high usage of social media meant spending more money on my internet data. This was not possible for those who were economically affected by the pandemic and the lockdown. Many cultural, social, and religious activities took place virtually. This meant spending more money to gain internet access. One participant noted that the telecommunications company did not reduce their prices rather these kept soaring.

Economic Context. One finding that I identified in the interviews was the economic power that my participants had. As mentioned earlier in the study, my participants were part of the emerging middle class in Nigerian society. However, some of these women were housewives who depended on the income of their partners. This also affected their use of

technology during the pandemic. They had to use technology less for personal interest, especially with the soaring prices in affording internet services. The findings showed how the patriarchal system which assigns gender roles creates a chasm that deepens during times of crisis.

Navigating the Increase in Gender-Based Violence During the Lockdown

One concern that was raised not just locally but internationally was the issue of an increase in domestic violence, rape, and assaults on women during the lockdown. News reports did show that there was an increase in gender-based violence during the pandemic where more women and girls were forced to live with their perpetrators. Some due to the poor living conditions they stay in experience sexual crimes and could not even report these. A participant noted that some men became frustrated with the restriction and pour their frustrations onto their families. Some became emotional and physical abusers because they felt constrained, while others also sexually abused female family members or neighbors. Some comments on social media indicated how some women and girls suffered from sexual harassment during the lockdown and beyond.

Shadow Pandemic. In 2021 the UN referred to the increase in domestic violence against women during the COVID-19 pandemic as a "shadow pandemic (Lengel et al., 2023). The shadow pandemic was recorded following the issuance of the lockdown in countries in Asia, Africa, South America, Eastern Europe, and others (Writer, 2022). Rape and sexual assault were prevalent in different parts of the country (Chime et al., 2022). During the interviews, none of the participants revealed that they were victims of domestic violence or sexual harassment either by marriage partners or close family members and friends. However, some of them did recall knowing of some women (either religious comembers, or neighbors) who suffered physical, sexual, or emotional assaults from partners and family or friends. A

participant recalled a horrifying situation of a father sexually abusing his young daughter during the lockdown and when caught blamed the lockdown for his nefarious acts. Another participant discussed how she and some women in their community organized activities for young people to help them from perpetuating any hideous crimes or becoming victims of such. From the interviews, I identified the following context that fueled the increase in domestic violence against women during the lockdown and the first wave of the pandemic.

Socioeconomic Context. The lockdown meant restrictive movement and loss of jobs for many. Many heads of households who worked in private companies or held part-time jobs, lost their employment when the lockdown was issued. Others who operated small, scaled businesses had to close also. This meant families were spending time more together than they did pre-pandemic era. Some persons live in unconducive homes (some homes were occupied by more persons than the homes were intended for). There were reports of men who transferred their frustrations to their wives and children. Some participants recalled news reports of experiences of women being beaten and/or raped by their spouses.

Non-Governmental Organizations. Domestic violence increased leading to governments in the different tiers and non-governmental organizations raising concerns. This led some non-government organizations (NGOs) to intensify their efforts to prevent assaults of all forms and assist those who have been victimized. Some NGOs took to social media platforms to decry the horrific assaults some women were undergoing. Some appealed to governments to take immediate actions to help alleviate the pain of these women. Some of the participants took it upon themselves to start initiatives to help young girls (and boys too) by organizing practical workshops and learning groups in safe environments. Some through religious outreach provided avenues for women and young girls to receive treatments and help.

The interviews and social media comments identified the importance of providing resources for survivors of domestic violence. This led me to identify the intersectionality of gender and supportive care in navigating the imbalance of power. This helps me to identify activities by NGOs and individual philanthropic efforts to expose the crimes committed against women and the efforts to assist these women wherever they are in the nation. These agencies and individuals tried to speak for women who have experienced or witnessed the cases of the shadow pandemic.

Navigating Government Involvement and Support During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The second research question was based on the involvement of and support from the government. This informed certain questions that were asked during the interviews on what kind of governmental support and how did the policies make by the government affected the participants. From the interviews, most of the participants noted that they did not receive any special treatment as women from the government and most of them did not receive any supplementary assistance from the government. To discuss these findings, I have identified three subthemes that demonstrate the extent of government involvement and support. These subthemes are the issuance of the lockdown, distribution of food and medicine, and the use of security agents.

Imposition of Restriction of Movement. In March 2020, the President of Nigeria announced a lockdown policy to restrict movement as a measure to help in curbing the spread of the virus. This news while it was commendable as it follows the directives of the World Health Organization, had some negative implications for the citizens. Nigeria is a fragile growing economy with so many issues plaguing her society. One of these issues is the absence of functioning infrastructures in the different areas. There is a high demand for well-equipped hospitals and more medical practitioners. The country suffers from an erratic power supply

which destabilizes different sections of the economy. These concerning issues were the sentiments of both the participants and the comments on social media convened. The consensus was the Nigerian government was not well prepared for the lockdown. Some of the participants noted how confused they were with the issuance of the lockdown because there was no infrastructure in place to help alleviate any problem that would arise. For example, many people were concerned about their employment especially since they were working for private companies or small businesses. Others were concerned about security and access to basic amenities. There were complaints as the lockdown went into effect on how it was enforced without alternative measures put in place. One participant made the following comment about the growing skepticism about the pandemic.

> So, because in Nigeria, we have an open market, we don't have a market like Walmart, a market like Target. So, with the open market, it was a challenge. How would you go to the open market to buy things? So, when even the government declared that there should not be an open market or market should be just free on Mondays and Wednesdays after alternate days, they also had this fear that the government just wants to make them poorer. The government wants it's a gimmick by the government for them not to sell their goods.

The lockdown issuance was necessary to curb the spread of the virus which at that point had no vaccine or medication to combat it. The Nigerian government like other world governments saw the need to curtail movement and social interactions. This was a daunting task for the Nigerian government as they had to deal with cultural norms, religious activities, and economic effects. Some of the participants noted that people were weary of observing social distancing for example because it did not allow them to have large gatherings at funerals or weddings which were customs that are highly valued in Nigerian society in general. The

wearing of face masks was not readily accepted, and some participants recalled how people refused to wear face masks or jeered at those who did. The participants who are mothers did enforce to wear masks by their family members but still felt pressured by society. While at first wearing a face mask was seen as odd, some participants mentioned that people gradually accepted wearing of face mask, but it was still seen as odd in some areas. The participants who were medical practitioners also recalled the lackadaisical attitudes of their patients in wearing face masks even when they come to the hospitals.

There were complaints about poor support from the government, and while a few participants indicated that they received some measure of support, most of these women did not. This majority was supported by comments online about how the government failed to provide adequate provisions for its citizens. The issue of corruption especially among government officials also led to poor distribution of necessities among the populace. Some of the participants talked about their experience with how provisions made by the government for the people were either siphoned or looted. Also, some mentioned how the government was not ready to ensure that people were catered for. In one state, the government closed the open markets and did not provide an alternative for small businesses to continue, this led to some women protesting and demanding assistance from the government.

Mobilization and Sensitization. Security measures were put in place to help monitor compliance with the lockdown. Essential offices and workers were allowed to operate but they had to receive permits from government officials to help identify offenders. While their policies were in place to ensure that the issuance of the lockdown was effective, some women decried the lack of consideration for issues affecting women specifically. One of the participants recalled how military personnel was indiscriminately arresting people. She noted:

"If you come out of your house and you want to go to the shop or somewhere, you will

be arrested by military personnel…"

People were genuinely worried about how to navigate the lockdown with very restrictive laws.

Some of the participants were afraid of being arrested but at the same time needed to leave their

homes to get food and household supplies. The problem was also exacerbated by some areas

relaxing the law while other parts of the country were rigid with the lockdown policy.

Food Distribution (Palliatives) During the Pandemic

During the conversations with the different participants, the issue of government

support was raised. One way the government decided to assist its citizens, especially during the

lockdown was to provide food and household items as supplementary measures. However, these

items that Nigerians dubbed "palliatives" were not evenly distributed. Some of the participants

noted that they did not receive any of these shared items. One reason why are corrupt officials

hoarding or refusing to distribute these items. From the interviews, I identified a couple of

contexts relating to the intersectionality of gender. Those who are part of higher socio-economic

and political classes regardless of gender benefitted more from government support than those

who are from lower socio-economic and political classes. Some of the participants who

benefitted from the food distributions were either spouses of medical professionals or were

within a particular political caucus.

Navigating Misinformation During the COVID-19 Pandemic

There was misinformation about the virus, the availability of treatments, and the

vaccine. Many of the participants recalled how they were at one point exposed to

misinformation about the virus, treatments, and vaccines. At the beginning of the lockdown,

some religious bodies informed their followers that the pandemic was a hoax and a way to

monitor religious organizations. Some participants recalled how they were informed by their

religious leaders to ignore the directive to stay away from religious activities because the virus was a political gimmick. Some participants noted how they as religious leaders tried to help their congregation adapt to the changes. These religious issues were also seen in social media comments during the pandemic.

Misinformation About the Virus. During the interviews and the analysis of social media comments I identified that in counteracting the misinformation on the virus, the model of resilience and adaptability still applies. The spread of false information about the virus intersects with the vulnerability of the female gender. From the interviews, more women were susceptible to accepting misinformation about the virus. One way was willingly accepting information from higher authorities (religious or secular) without verifying the source. Others increase their dependency on search sites, social media, online news sites, and others for information. These were ways to cope with the uncertainties of the situation.

Leveraging Support. Coping strategies are employed to reduce anxieties or unpleasant emotions that are directly related to a crisis. Gathering information about the virus and the pandemic was a way to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic. As noted in the interviews, individuals felt a sense of empowerment when they have a level of knowledge. Therefore, understanding what the pandemic is and how it would affect lives was imperative. It provided a level of support for women, especially those who were disproportionately caregivers in the family. Some of the participants disclosed how they relied heavily on information found online (from different websites) to understand how to navigate the pandemic. Some related that their aversion toward the Nigerian government led to seeking information elsewhere than from Nigerian media. Some did rely on the information the government provided and government agencies.

Emotional Management. Misinformation about the virus and the pandemic created much anxiety among the participants. This was heightened during the pandemic. Because of miscommunication from the government in involving the scope of the lockdown, most of the participants had emotional stress. The issue of accessibility of necessities not discussed caused these women much anxiety. One participant noted that though she was an essential worker who had less restriction to move, she was weary of how to cater to her home since other members of her family were in lockdown. To build resiliency and adaptability, some of the participants started adopting new ways to adjust to the present circumstance. Some noted that they tried to limit their intake of information to help prevent the increase of fear due to the various unverified stories about the virus circulated online and through word of mouth. Some expressed seeking medical help and engaging in exercises to help alleviate their emotional pain.

Self-Orientation. The amount of misinformation on the virus meant people were making certain unhealthy decisions. Some of the participants recalled their patients refusing to accept the diagnosis of contracting the virus because of the issue of stigmatization. These women recalled patients asking for a different diagnosis. This led these women to provide more information about the virus to help eliminate false information about the virus. Some women commented on social media about their desire to cater to themselves during the pandemic by learning how the virus could impact their well-being. There was information about underlying illnesses and age and demography that were more susceptible to getting infected and this helped most of the participants do make informed decisions.

Tension-Reducing. From the interviews, I noted that the participants sought ways to refute misinformation about the virus. While some were quick to identify certain information about the virus to be false, others needed more verification of that information. However, they were all willing to get access to the right information about the virus. A participant who is

asthmatic took her time to gather information on how the virus could affect her physical health in case she was contacted. She took several precautions as stated on government websites regarding the virus. She recalled that she refused to accept telltales about the virus spread through gossip and unverified online sources. Like some other participants, she also questioned certain claims about the virus purported by religious leaders.

Misinformation About Treatments

Different types of treatment were perpetuated as a cure for the virus. When the then President of the United States recommended hydroxychloroquine as a possible treatment for coronavirus, many Nigerians welcomed the idea. Some participants discussed how they believed that Chloroquine which was used in treating malaria (a flu-like ailment) would treat the coronavirus also. They argued that both the coronavirus and malaria have the same symptoms and so they could be treated the same way. Others discussed the use of traditional herbs that have been effectively used in treating malaria as a cure for the virus. One participant also recalled starting a petition for the government to import an herbal treatment from another African country because it was marketed as effective. She later discussed how the treatment was a hoax and people who invested money buying it lost their investments.

Leveraging Support. For most of the participants seeking treatment for the virus was very essential. Therefore, they were willing to seek out possible treatments for the virus. As noted above, participants were willing to try alternative treatments or promote these treatments. Those in the medical field also noted that some of their colleagues were willing to try alternative treatments during the first wave of the pandemic. Some of the participants talked about how they prepared herbal concoctions during the first wave of the pandemic as preventive measures. They believed that these concoctions had a positive effect on helping them not contact the virus.

Emotional Management. The participants were anxious about the virus and were wanting to know how effective treatments would be if they or anyone around them were contacted with the virus. This sentiment about the available treatment of the virus was seen in some of the comments made on social media sites. While some persons were open to the idea of certain medications or procedures would provide a cure for the virus, others were skeptical. The delay in providing an elixir for the virus did lead to anxiety and fear. Another issue about the treatment was the conflicting information about those who were more prone to contact with the virus. Some of the participants were aware that certain underlying illnesses and of a certain age were deemed more at risk. However, some of the participants noted that people took it as not being vulnerable to the virus (because they did not have any of the listed underlined illnesses or fell among the age group) and this increase their irritability and anxiety to stay indoors and isolated. A participant noted that she was very skeptical and paranoid, and she was not the only one having such emotions. Another participant recalled having panic attacks because she and her aged mother had illnesses listed as underlying illnesses that make them more vulnerable to getting the virus. Therefore, the delay in providing treatment was a stressor for them.

Self-Orientation. From the interviews, it can be noted that people were genuinely concerned about their health and safety. They were willing to build their knowledge regarding the virus and possible treatments. This desire to protect themselves and those around them did lead some to be exposed to misinformation about the possible and available treatments. Also, the desire to return to pre-pandemic times led to people accepting information about discoveries of possible treatments no matter how bogus these may sound. Some participants were worried about their social and economic lives and were eager to accept any news that meant reverting to days before the pandemic.

Tension-Reducing. During the interviews, the narrative of Africans and immunity was discussed. Some of the participants believed that most Africans were immune to the virus because of having developed antimalarial resistance. The misinformation about the virus being like malaria, made some of the participants and close relatives accept the idea that they had immunity. This was also reiterated on online news and social media sites. The idea that they had immunity, made some of the participants not have high levels of fear and anxiety. A participant noted that she was indeed sure that the antibodies her body produced due to decades of suffering malaria were enough to protect her from getting the virus. Others noted how dismissive people were about the virus because of assuming they had immunity from dousing antimalaria medication over time. Some noted that the presence of this immunity in Africans was one of the reasons the death rate in Africa was low. Religious belief again played a role in diffusing tensions among participants. The narrative of divine intervention was well received among the participants as most of these women were very religious. They were confident that Africans were spared a horrible disaster because God stepped in. Some of the participants recalled how prayer sessions and other religious activities helped them overcome the stress of being infected or even dying from the virus.

Misinformation About Vaccines

The vaccines were not readily available as it was in Western countries. Some problems arose with acquiring and distributing the vaccines. One of these problems was the report of expired vaccines shipped into the country that led to the destruction of millions of vaccines. Also, a participant recalled that the number of available vaccines was minimal and insufficient. She recalled that as a medical practitioner, the hospital she worked for received a few vaccines that would not be available to all in the community. Especially since people were required to take a double dose of the vaccine. There was though misinformation about the vaccines that

made some persons (including some participants) skeptical about these. There are reports that the vaccines contained microchips that would be used to control people's lives eventually. There was also information about the rise of the "Antichrist" – a belief perpetuated by certain Christian groups about the identification of enemies of God. From the interviews, I noted that misinformation about vaccines can be situated in the model of resiliency and adaptability. One important note is that though there was misinformation about the vaccines, there were other issues for example corrupt practices that also fueled misinformation.

Leveraging Support. One pattern that I noted during the interviews was the willingness of participants to get tested or receive the vaccines. However, some were more cautionary than others due to information about the vaccines they have received especially from Western countries. But overall, the participants were willing and eager to receive the vaccine. Some of the participants recalled providing accurate information about the vaccines to people around them. A participant recalled that her immediate family was skeptical about taking the vaccine, but she took the time to gather more information and was the first in her household to receive dosages of the vaccine.

Emotional Management. Not having the vaccines readily available created stress among the participants. As noted earlier, even medical personnel were worried about the unavailability of vaccines for people. This created some level of false information as people scouted for places that had available doses of the vaccines. Some also worried about the validity of the vaccines especially after the Nigerian government discovered that Europe had sent expired vaccines to the country. One participant noted the following:

> "my husband had all the ideas; you know about all the information behind the vaccine…I was among the first to take it and he was waiting for me to die from the vaccine."

Self-Orientation. One misinformation about the vaccine was misleading information, though the vaccines and the test centers were to operate free, many were charged for testing and administering of vaccine doses. A participant recalled that she was charged exorbitant prices for testing and vaccine doses. She recalled how appalled she was because she knew that the vaccines and testing were supposed to be free. Another noted that because of the number of people who were willing to take the vaccine, many corrupt government officials would hoard the vaccines and lie that it was unavailable but would extort money from some persons. One participant recalled how furious she was with the misleading information that was preventing many from getting tested or receiving the vaccines.

Tension-Reducing. Misleading information about accessing the vaccines did lead to tense situations as recalled by the participants. There were so many incidents of extortion and false information regarding the vaccine that made some apprehensive. A participant recalled that she was to travel outside the country (after the travel ban was lifted) and could not get the vaccines even though she was willing to pay for them. She had already spent money on getting tested as required for traveling. As also noted earlier, there were fewer available vaccines which meant people waited longer times to get a full dose of the vaccine – the waiting period was 14 days after the first dose to administer the second dose. However, people were promised to have the second dose ready at the appointed time but were disappointed because they were not available. There was poor communication about when this vaccine would be available and that created tension among participants and others. Overall, the perception of the participants towards the vaccine was positive and they were all willing to take it when it was made available.

Navigating Socio-Political Issues During the COVID-19 Pandemic

As much as the pandemic had strenuous health and economic effects on individuals, there were also social and political issues that created tension and uncertainty. From the interviews and social network analysis, I identified a model situating resiliency and adaptability in the process of navigating through the crisis. The model identified four coping strategies that women employed during the lockdown and the rest of the pandemic. These four strategies which include, leveraging support, self-orientation, emotional management, and tension-reducing are also used to situate how these participants navigated socio-political issues. One issue that escalated during the first wave of the pandemic is the issue of police brutality. Another was the issue of palliative distribution by government agencies. A third was the increase in rape cases and domestic violence. Also, were the grievances of religious groups about the inability of their members to meet in the traditional way they have been used to. These and more socio-political issues further exacerbated the struggles of living during a health crisis. Both the second and the third issues have already been discussed extensively in this study. This section will focus on the other issues. The pain of navigating through these issues created so much concern for the citizens and this was reflected by the statements of some of the participants. While some did not feel directly affected by some of these issues, they felt the anguish that these issues led to.

Protest during the Pandemic

As reported by some research, during the first wave of the pandemic, Nigerian youths took to the streets to protest the incessant brutality they suffer at the hands of security agents. This protest was not only carried out on the streets of major cities in Nigeria but was also trending online. Hashtags like #EndSars, #endsarsnow, #endpolicebrutality, #sorosoke, and

more were used to spread awareness of the protest and inform those outside the country. The interviews provided me with information on identifying different coping strategies that were employed to enable resiliency and adaptability.

Leveraging Support. Some of the participants recalled being part of the protest in the city of Lagos (Nigeria's biggest metropolitan city) during the protest. One of the participants who actively was involved in the protest noted how women played prominent roles during the protest. She said:

> "the number of women that were at the forefront of the protest was wild. It was alarming. There were social influencers, and public personalities engaging actively in the protest."

She also noted that there was a non-governmental organization operated by some female activists who solicited funds to help keep the protest going. There was a sense of camaraderie among the protesters as they worked together to achieve their goal of getting the government's attention to their plight. Other participants who did not directly take part in the protest also showed their solidarity with The cause of the protest. Some participants discussed how they took to Twitter and other social media platforms to express their support for the protest and displeasure against the government's response to the protesters. Some also noted that there did exist instances when women who took part in the protest were discredited to silence their voices. However, most of the participants were pleased that the rest of the world gave credence to their plight and those in the diaspora also participated in the protest in one form or the other.

Self-Orientation. Though the general sentiment is that there may not be any feasible reforms within the police force, participants were happy about the gregariousness exhibited by fellow Nigerians. Some participants noted how they took to social media to show their support

for the protesters and the protest. They noted how they were tired of the government's lackadaisical attitude towards the plight of the people. They were encouraged by the people's willingness to solidarity by not only protesting but taking care of the venues the protests were held and their willingness to assist others during the protest.

Emotional Management. Women were encouraged by both their female and male counterparts to participate in the protest. It was also noted that people showed a willingness to push for change through their acts of kindness, and civic duties during the protest. There was a high condemnation of the brutal killings of peaceful protesters. Some of the participants were visibly upset about the killings during the interview as they felt as mothers it was a slap on their face. They acknowledged the high emotions they felt during the killings of certain young Nigerians during the protests. They were disgusted with the government denying the shooting and then later labeling these dead protesters as hoodlums. They expressed their pain and anger in tweets they posted about the incident and supported others in tweets.

Tension-Reducing. The events leading to the protest were high tension-induced moments. The incidents that were reported and the reaction from the government made the citizen to be agitated and demanding for a change and overhauling of the security agencies in the country. To help alleviate tensions caused by the protest, some of the participants turned to religious organizations for succor. Others developed an optimistic view of the situation alluding to the protest as a step in the right direction to ensure the needed changes would be implemented. Also, in the interviews, I identified that having global support during the protest helped to reduce the growing tension among participants and others (based on social media comments). The solidarity from Nigerians in the diaspora and other nationalities to the cause was an enigma that was needed.

Socio-Religious Influence

From the interviews, I induced that the participants all were religious in different ways and valued the traditions of their communities. All those who participated in the interviews professed some religious belief or another. Religious activities were seen as coping mechanisms during times of distress. They held the belief in a supernatural being high and constantly looked for divine intervention in resolving the pandemic and the crisis that resulted. Following the pattern of resiliency and adaptability, I identified in the four contextual areas how leveraging support, emotional management, self-orientation, and tension-reducing coping strategies were affected by socio-religious influence.

Leveraging Support. There was the existence of surrealness among the participants as they recalled the benefits of partaking in religious rituals. Some of the participants discussed the effect the lockdown had on religious activities. Some were willing to adapt to the change required to adhere to the lockdown rules. They though expressed their frustration with the change from face-to-face religious ceremonies to virtual ones, they understood that it was for safeguarding the lives of all. A participant recalled organizing workshops for youth in her religious organization to help keep these young people busy and creative. She discussed how she and some other leaders were worried about the effect the lockdown would have on these young people and felt it was imperative to provide them with avenues to be busy. Another participant recalled reaching out to fellow believers and providing them counsel during the lockdown to help them not to become overly anxious about the existing situation. Religious rituals were constantly held by most of the participants with close family and friends to cope with the uncertainties the lockdown and the pandemic had brought about.

Self-Orientation. One of the participants who is a professed religious leader noted the challenges she faced when she moved her service virtually. She felt a high level of disconnect

among the members and she was weary that she could not connect with the congregation as did before the pandemic. Other participants were weary of congregators not adhering to the mask mandate and social distancing. During the height of the pandemic and the lockdown, some participants recalled handing out masks to those who attended religious activities but did not have a mask on. They blamed some of the religious leaders for the laxity displayed by most of the people. They noted that they were very aware of the need to stay alive and keep their families alive and so they did not mind taking extra precautionary steps. Some blamed the Western countries for the source of misinformation that was perpetuated by religious leaders without regard for individuals' lives.

Tension-Reducing. Some of the participants disclosed that some religious leaders or groups did disseminate false information about the coronavirus and the pandemic. These leaders were not willing to close their doors and move services virtually. They continued to require their members to attend religious services in person even in some cases without observing social distancing or wearing face masks. However, with death cases rising, some religious groups saw the need to observe social distancing and required their congregation to meet virtually. As reported by previous research on how some religious groups promoted the virus as a gimmick by the "worldly" government to disrupt religious activities, some of the participants commented on the misinformation circulating among religious groups. A couple of the participants were frustrated with the response of the religious leaders to the pandemic. While they acknowledged their belief in a superior being and their belief in supernatural powers, they did not believe in disregarding science. They hoped that the religious groups had shown a better reaction to the pandemic.

There was indeed the presence of tension from the religious sector, the participants showed a different level of anxiety resulting from the way religious leaders and organizations

reacted to the pandemic. However, most of the participants found solace in keeping up with their spiritual routines. A participant noted that her religious organization was among the first to move religious activities virtually and that gave her and her family a level of peace. The participants though did not approve of certain measures taken by religious bodies, they were confident with reliance on their beliefs.

Emotional Management. Apart from the negative reaction from religious groups, there was also a positive effect of having religious beliefs. Some of the participants noted that their belief in the existence of God did help them in navigating through the horrific times of the first wave of the pandemic. They noted that they believe in getting protection from a supernatural being that helped them through perilous times. They noted that their faith (most of the participants identified as Christians) made them resilient and willing to navigate through the problems. Some of the participants discussed how they were able to provide help to others through their religious platforms.

Summary of Chapter

In this chapter, I discussed in detail the findings from my analysis and how these findings provided an understanding of the frameworks used in conducting the analysis. The emerging themes produce a thread of concepts that I modeled as resiliency and adaptability. From the interviews, I noted that all my participants did not wallow in pain and despair but found innovative ways to survive the effects of the pandemic and the lockdown. Each code, theme, and network identified helped me to construct this pattern of resiliency and adaptability. I noted that all the intersectionality with gender identified through this study led to the willingness to adapt to change and strive. The underlining factors that affect women as a group did not prevent these women from wanting to find solutions to help them navigate through the crisis. Factors like poor healthcare facilities, poor representation in government, and limited

finances among others. Identifying the different coping strategies used by participants (and others analyzed from social media comments) provided a framework for applying resilience and adaptability.

CHAPTER SEVEN: FINDINGS II – SOCIAL MEDIA

This research study was intended to be based on the findings from inductive interviews, however, due to not having enough interviews, I embarked on examining social media platforms to provide more information. As discussed in the methods chapter, I conducted social network analysis by scraping data from social networking sites. These data were informed by the codes developed from analyzing the interviews.

Themes Identified

The analysis of social networking apps like Twitter and YouTube was done deductively as keywords culled from emerging codes were used in data collection. These keywords were discussed and presented in a tabular form in the methods chapter. To discuss these findings, I will also be examining the following identified themes based on the model of resiliency and adaptability used in discussing the themes that emerged during the analysis of the interviews.

Socio-Political Issues During the COVID-19 Pandemic

One of the frequent conversations on social media sites was the socio-political issues that were present during the pandemic. Though these issues were not peculiar to the pandemic, they became hot topics during the pandemic. Oppressive policies tend to widen the gender gap and some participants expressed how disappointed they were with what they underwent because there were no definite alternative plans from the government either from the local, state, or federal level.

A mother of five commented online

> "I was expecting the government to give us a few days to sort out our domestic needs before the announcement. I feel the sudden restriction will cause the price of commodities to increase."

One female activist on Twitter noted.

> . "It was important for the government to carefully consider the gender dimensions of security, availability of food, labor, and health as women played pivotal roles as traders, local producers, and healthcare workers".

Online female users identified the convergence of dominating forces by calling out systemic oppression hiding under policies. This fact could be seen in that the government did not take into cognizance the effect the immediate lockdown issuance would have on women. As also noted during the analysis of the interviews, most women who were self-employed owned small-scaled businesses with marginalized capital and profit.

Leveraging Support. Though not specifically identified, women tweeting and retweeting or commenting on social media posts about the plight of fellow Nigerian women could be seen as a way of leveraging support for other women. The conversations on socio-political topics provided a lens into the oppressive and domineering political system that made policies to further marginalize women. Examining the responses to certain tweets or online videos provided the exposure of structural intersectionality as noted by Crenshaw (1990).

Emotional Management. Social media platforms were used to vent disappointments and disapproval of government policies or actions during the pandemic. Though the choice of words on these online platforms was not explicit, they expressed the deep feelings of users. Female users on analyzed online platforms decried the unjust and inconsiderate policies or execution of these policies during the pandemic that affected them as women. For example, the

closure of schools without a definite alternative from the government led to an increase in female dropouts from schools.

Self-Orientation. From analyzing the comments made by female online users, they shared more of their personal experiences and expressed their feelings toward the oppressive system. The conversations led to people acknowledging other people's views whether they agreed with them or not.

Tension-Reducing. Commentaries on social media platforms made by women were to identify the presence of social inequalities with gender, class, and political affiliations. Some of these comments or posts incited others to verge their frustrations and echo the oppressive systems. This can be seen in the comment made by a female online user.

> "policymakers need to incorporate a gender analysis into the development of COVID-19 policies and as the pandemic unfolds there is an urgent need for sex-disaggregated data to fully understand how women and men are affected by the virus".

Expressing one's view on social networking platforms and receiving replies or comments from others, helped to show that many felt the same way and that could provide a form of alleviation. Therefore, posting on social networking platforms could lead to a reduction in building tension as people identify others who have similar experiences as theirs.

Use of Hashtags to Spread Information

During the pandemic, most Nigerians like people around the world spent more time on social media apps. This led to the spread of information about issues and events that were taking place in the country. Some NGOs in Nigeria that were dedicated to alleviating the plights of women in Nigeria also used their social media presence to inform people of their activities, challenges, and accomplishments. The use of hashtags helped in making certain information go viral in online spaces. For example, #CovidSheroes which was trending worldwide was used by

Nigerian NGOs to shed light on Nigerian women's efforts to assist other women during the pandemic. As women joined their voices to condemn the mistreatment of people and mismanagement of resources by the government during the pandemic, hashtags helped in reaching out to a wider audience.

Leveraging Support. The use of hashtags by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) geared towards women's issues of social injustice and gender-based violence leans towards providing support. Some posts by NGOs received positive comments as they highlighted the plights of women during the pandemic. Their active presence on social media platforms made socio-economic, health, and political issues affecting women adversely made known. The attention given to resolving the pandemic meant other "less important" matters were relegated to obscurity. Issues concerning women were found to receive less attention.

Emotional Management. Social media platforms were used to express emotions (positive or negative). Some hashtags were generated to provide a sense of camaraderie among fellow distrusted women. For example, #HerVoice was used to spread support and encourage women to speak about their experiences.

Self-Orientation. Social media platforms were used to share information and lived realities. Some NGOs used the platforms to provide reliable information for women, so they do not easily believe false information or propaganda that was spreading rapidly on social networking sites. Some individuals relating their stories used that to debunk false assumptions and stories.

Tension-Reducing. Social media platforms played a pivotal role in expressing marginalized voices. After the lockdown directives were eased people still expressed their dismay towards the government's poor response to alleviating the plights of women. Women

activists were active on social media platforms condemning the complicities of the Nigerian government towards women. Some of these women activists were subjected to verbal assaults and threats. However, their voices provided succor to many who were experiencing the harsh realities of oppressive governance and did not have the privilege to speak to many about it. These activities had many followers on their social media pages, and this was an advantage to helping other women know their stories mattered.

Health Concerns

Navigating health issues as a marginalized gender with low economic and political power is one of the intersecting discourses about Nigerian women. Though previous research studies have shown that Nigerian women (especially those from the Western, Eastern & Southern parts of the country) are moderately educated, they do not have the political and economic power as the male gender. In 2021 for example the literacy rate among Nigerian women is 71.35% (*Female Literacy Rate in Nigeria (2010 - 2021, %)*, n.d.). Nigerian women make up about 49% of the Nigerian population but only about 4% have been elected into political offices (*Nigeria Election: Women Denounce Poor Political Representation | Gender Equity | Al Jazeera*, n.d.). applying the tenets of intersectionality, oppressive policies, and patriarchal traditions continue to subject women to non-leadership roles though they have proven their ability to lead in different situations. The poor representation of women in politics and economic forums has led to oppressive laws and policies. Women's health issues were not fully considered during the issuance of the lockdown.

Women-Health Related Issues. One pertinent issue that has been identified during the analysis of data in this study is the issue arising from how women-related health issues were situated during the crisis. From the analysis of comments, it was seen that women felt way more marginalized as there were no policies to help alleviate any problem that will arise for women

during the lockdown especially. Comments of women and women organizations highlighted the

appalling situations many women faced health-wise. As some women on social media tweet.

> "the pandemic did not stop periods, and pregnancies from occurring, why are we not
> allowed to access health care facilities?"

> "Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Sexual and Reproductive health of Women &
> Girls have always been of great concern due to how it has been undermined through
> the lens of Cultural and religious misconceptions in Nigeria and developing countries
> around the world".

> "The risk of domestic violence, falling household incomes, menstrual health or fear
> and stress related to COVID-19 are all a concern. Gendered response plans are
> necessary to respond to women and girls' unique needs during this time".

Hospitals were very concerned about the spread of the virus that was reported on online

conversation spaces some persons were turned away from receiving treatments for some non-

covid related illnesses. Also, some pharmacies not located inside hospitals were shut down

during the lockdown which made it difficult to access over-the-counter medication. Some

privately owned hospitals did not operate at full capacity during the lockdown as part of

precautionary measures. Women felt neglected especially those in urban areas around the

country. It is imperative to note that the demography of women expressing their emotions and

thoughts on social media was mostly young women. Women in perimenopausal and

menopausal age did not post much about their health struggles. Most of the health issues

discussed online revolved around menstruation, pregnancy, and fibroids health issues.

Distribution of Amenities

One topic that was trending in Nigeria during the first wave of the pandemic was the

corrupt practices employed in the distribution of relief packages to Nigerians. Nigerians took to

social media to express their disgust and disapproval of the corrupt measures that prevented the

average Nigerian to receive any government-assisted relief. The conversations exposed corrupt

government officials who hoarded relief materials from the public. Some female online users posted about not getting any public service announcements about the relief but knew about it when some youths stormed warehouses in some parts of Nigeria. The information was spread on social media sites by individuals and news agencies. From the comments extracted, no one openly admitted receiving any of these relief packages.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSION

Discussion

From the interviews, I identified concepts that provide more understanding of how Nigerian women navigate through a perilous time. Just like women all around the world especially women who are living in developing economies, women in Nigeria strive to navigate through a crisis by breaking down biases and stereotypes. From the interviews and commentaries on social media platforms, Nigerian women understand the perceptions about them and are willing to change the narrative. Though these women were willing to continue to carry out their traditional roles as homemakers, and caregivers among others, they were willing to take up other roles not prescribed to them as women. They challenged the status quo, when necessary, especially when it came to the issue of survival. From the analysis, women are willing to establish their identities and speak out even if they may feel unheard or unsupported. One pattern that I noticed especially during the interviews is the philanthropic nature exhibited by most of the interviewees. Their desire to help in different capacities and forms showed their willingness to change the narrative of women always being identified as the "lowly victim". I also noted that while all the participants were in despair at some point during the beginning of the pandemic, they sought ways to alleviate their fears and anxieties.

As most of the participants strive to work ways to alleviate their worries due to the uncertainties of the pandemic, they sought ways to assist others, especially other women. Their concern for the welfare of other women-led some of these participants to actively donate their time and resources in different capacities. Some worked with established non-governmental organizations to distribute food, sanitary pads, medications, and more to women in dire situations. Others worked individually or organized small groups to assist those in need. In the interviews, it was noted that before the introduction of the vaccines, people were directed to

wear face masks. These masks were sometimes hard to purchase, so some of these women along with others made local face masks or bought some and distributed them to women and their families within their communities. some recalled handing out masks to churchgoers at the entrance of their churches to ensure that they had face masks on.

Another way these women adapted philanthropy as a coping mechanism is to organize activities to engage both women and young people during the lockdown. Craft and educational workshops were frequently organized. Virtual meetings were adopted when it became impossible to meet in person. some of the participants turned to YouTube videos, for example, to provide how information on learning crafts, baking, and other activities. They shared these videos with others and created forums where women could seek relief. These showed their desire to adapt to the new normal and find ways to improve their lives.

The study was to understand the intersectionality of classism, gender discrimination, and the battle with a health crisis by examining the experiences of marginalized or minoritized groups (black women in an African country). Using the frameworks of African feminism that were birthed from colonial struggles and patriarchal traditions, I wanted to investigate how gender, class, economic status, and socio-political backgrounds overlap with gender identity when navigating through a pandemic. However, the data which was based on inductive interviews presented a different conversation. The interviews did not provide strong evidence of African feminist ideologies, nor did they address intersectionality in its full capacity. Therefore, to understand how the research questions were answered, I developed a model for analyzing resilience and adaptability. I examined during the crisis four concepts that either had a positive or negative effect on the participant's ability to be resilient or adapt. These concepts – leveraging support, self-orientation, tension-reducing, and emotional management – were identified by analyzing the codes and emerging themes.

Leveraging support helped to identify the desire to provide support and be supportive during times of need. In analyzing the interviews, I noted that all the participants were in one way or another seeking ways to assist others – including family members and other women – who were in more dire situations. This also was present when examining conversation trends about the pandemic on social media. More women in higher social, economic, and political status were aiding women who were, for example, victims of domestic violence, and sexual harassment and those who had to stop schooling due to the pandemic. While NGOs created by women to intervene in women's affairs rose in their numbers and activities during the pandemic, individual women (as exhibited by my participants) rose to the occasion. In a sense, class did not have a negative effect when it intersects with gender, as the crisis affected not only those of lower social, educational, political, and economic class. The pandemic was even dubbed the" rich man disease" because it affected people of higher status and class. supportive communication was evident in the actions taken by these participants as highlighted in discussing the emerging themes. the ability to be mindful and emotionally aware of others' difficulties and the willingness to assist during such a difficult period identify the power of resilience in my participants. Their ability to look for ways to navigate through the perilous effects of the pandemic and help others showed their high level of adaptability.

Self-orientation could be seen as a negative concept at first glance; however, it had some positive connotations that I highlighted when analyzing the emerging themes. Self-orientation in this context meant self-reflection – analyzing one's self-esteem, willingness to accept change, and understanding the internal and external loci. The intersectionality of self-orientation and gender in situating the experiences of the participants helped to identify how these women navigate through the pandemic. The lockdown and the spread of the virus had different effects on these women (both those interviewed and those whose social media comments were

analyzed). Trust was the issue that was affected during the lockdown and the different waves of the pandemic. Fear of the unknown made people lose trust in people in authority. Both religious and governmental authorities did not adequately and properly handle the lockdown policies. There was mistrust of persons in authority, health officials, political and traditional leaders, and religious leaders rampant among the people. One of the causes of mistrust was the inability to disseminate information about the pandemic and the lockdown. People did not get adequate information on time and regularly from the government. They relied on social media platforms, blogs, and news agencies' websites for news. This hurt people's esteem and behaviors. However, even with these negative factors, my participants showed that reevaluating their selves, especially during the lockdown helped them to accept and adapt to the new normal. This in turn meant assisting others to do the same. This was so important in surviving the pandemic, especially for those who lived alone during the lockdown period. Rediscovering oneself and redirecting one's fear and anxieties to do something positive was identified among the participants and in the comments by other women on social media.

Tension-reducing developed the ability to seek ways to adapt to the effects of the pandemic. The lockdown exacerbated many economic, social, health, and political issues already existing in the communities. The pandemic meant many women health related issues were ignored by the government and society. The participants recalled the uncertainty they faced in receiving treatments during the pandemic (especially during the lockdown). There were stories of being refused medical assistance for illnesses that were not COVID related. The unstable political environment also created tension during the height of the pandemic. Police brutality heightened during this period leading to protests and unrest. The loss of jobs and closure of businesses directly affected the increase in anxiety and fear. Some of my participants depended on their partners' finances, while others were heads of their households. They felt the

direct blow of losing a job or closing their small, scaled businesses. These factors and more did

increase their anxieties. However, to survive these perilous times, I noted that my participants

and others via social media comments developed ways to reduce the growing tensions. They

found that adopting alternate ways to communicate with family and friends was a great resource

in dealing with their anxieties. Gathering information about the pandemic and learning what

others are doing to stay sane and safe during the lockdown helped to reduce tensions. Learning

new crafts, spending time discovering new talents and developing new habits provided these

women with means of reducing tension during the lockdown and the first wave of the

pandemic.

Emotional management was one coping strategy that highlighted the feelings and

desires of the participants during the interviews. All the participants wanted to deal with the

emotions they were exuding during the pandemic and the lockdown. During the interviews,

they all had different levels of fear, anxiety, and despair. They were unsure and uncertain about

the turn of events and needed assurance and confirmation in any form. They also had to deal

with the emotions of their families (especially those with young children and aged parents) and

friends. To adapt and navigate through the crisis, they saw the need to find ways to manage and

control their emotions. The political and economic instability during the pandemic also made

these women to have heightened fear and uncertainty. Gathering information from the internet

did not only provide them some sense of relief in understanding what was going on, but it also

increases their fears especially when the information is false and misleading. Below, I outline

theoretical and practical implications as well as limitations and suggestions for future research.

Limitations and Challenges

The project had some limitations which are outlined below. The limitation of this study includes the challenges of conducting the interviews, logistics, and novel experience as a feminist researcher.

Getting the interviews set up was a challenging process. The initial number of interviews I proposed was 20 but due to some factors, I could only get 12 persons to interview. The interview was targeted at a specific demographic and geographic location, making it difficult to find willing participants. Another challenge was the time difference, as the researcher and most of those would-be participants lived in different time zones. The time difference also made some participants spend less time during the interview than they had anticipated. Some participants dropped out of the interviews because they missed the scheduled date and couldn't find a convenient time to reschedule the interview. Also, because the interviews were fully voluntary and no monetary compensation was offered, some initial participants dropped out of being interviewed.

As a critical feminist researcher, I also had to deal with the difficulty of creating a neutral setting for the interviews because some of the participants were hostile to feminism. I made sure that the questions implied aspects of feminism and intersectionality without being obvious in the wording of the questions. Most of the participants were professed Christians and did not want to publicly identify as feminists. However, from the conversations, they implied feminist ideas, as some of the participants questioned the status quo of patriarchy. These women, while partaking in duties that were gender-assigned, did not allow themselves to be restricted by these roles.

Some of the participants expressed their views of how power, poverty, and class did play prominent roles in accessing necessities, getting medical assistance, and government involvement in navigating through the perils of the pandemic.

Another challenge that was seen was the unwillingness of many individuals approached to be part of the interviews. Some outrightly demanded huge sums of money because they recognize my position as a US-based researcher. They assumed they were being lured into selling their experiences without being paid. While some gave excuses even though they expressed their willingness to participate in the study. Others have fears of revealing information that may be detrimental to their positions in society and even though assurances were given to hide their identity and they were offered to turn off their videos, they were apprehensive.

Research Questions

In this current chapter, I will discuss the findings of the analysis and results chapters of this dissertation by discussing the research questions and examining how these were answered.

Research Question 1

How have the intersections of gender, power inequality, and heteropatriarchal structures in Nigeria been highlighted during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Intersectionality is the understanding of race, gender, class, ethnicity, age, and other empirically relevant categories as mutually constitutive of identities and social inequalities, as defined by Crenshaw (1989) and later by Hill Collins (2015), and it helps to clarify how we must work against multiple oppressions at the same time (Peers et al., 2023). One reason I asked this question was to identify marginalization even in its slight presence. Intersectionality provides a methodological framework to access how marginalized women (a minority group)

felt during the COVID-19 pandemic. By identifying the different intersections not individually but as multiple contexts. though a marginalized group, I wanted to understand if there were women who benefitted from the structural environment present in Nigeria as well as those who were oppressed. Even though these frameworks were used as a basis for understanding the different identities and structures, they were not seen in the examination of data.

From the interviews, most of the participants argued that women suffered more politically and economically during the pandemic. However, I noted that some of my participants were full housewives who depended fully on their partners' income. They were distressed when there was a disruption in the flow of finances during the pandemic. But I agree with these women that both male and female genders suffered tremendously during the pandemic. Businesses and job losses were not because of gender but because of the devastating effect of the pandemic on the economy. My participants who had high-paying professional jobs did not lose their jobs but were accommodated by their organizations to help them execute their duties. The Nigerian government's mishandling of the pandemic affected the different genders. Men who were of lower economic status and educational background suffered more than women from higher status and background. The study identified class inequality, as well as gender inequality, was prevalent during the COVID-19 pandemic. Though there was a disproportionate report on gender inequality than class inequality during the pandemic, however, the interviews' showed classism was prevalent as gender inequality. The analysis of social media comments also highlighted the marginalization of women by the government. The issuance of a lockdown did not take into cognizance the needs of women.

In conclusion, the data showed that during the pandemic, social and gender inequality was accentuated more by the oppressive and dominant policies by the government that did not

recognize the specific needs of women and those of lower socio-economic status. Resources provided to alleviate suffering among the citizen were misappropriated. Women's health issues were not given due cognizance when deciding on the policies issued during the pandemic.

Research Question 2

How does understanding government involvement in resolving the problems arising from the pandemic deepen the gender divide?

From the findings, the Nigerian government did not provide much assistance to alleviate gender issues. The assistance that the government provided was not specific for any gender but for the citizens. However, from the findings, women had difficulties accessing, for example, healthcare services for women-related illnesses during the pandemic. Women could not receive assistance for their monthly menstruation periods during the pandemic. The government did not pay special attention to the needs of women in society. During the protest to end police brutality, some women (as individuals or part of women's organizations were targeted by the government as disrupters of peace.

Research Question 3

How is the epistemological discourse of power and class highlighted in the daily activities of women during the pandemic?

Class, political, and economic power, and information access all were identified as having an implicit effect on women's daily activities during the pandemic. Those who had less restriction of movement during the pandemic were those who were either high-rank professionals (or essential workers and those who commanded political or economic power. Most of these were men, not women. From the findings, some women who had access to move due to their profession sought to stay at home because of their dependents. They were willing to

opt for the available alternative. As identified in previous research, the class has a strong impact on gender.

One other factor that was identified in this study is the intersection of tribalism and its influence on class and gender. Tribal distinction plays a pivotal role in classism. Most of those with economic and political powers are from the major tribes and these had a negative and positive influence.

The study identified the complex identities of the women interviewed and how the system of dominance and power inequality hurt them. While most of the participants were of the struggling middle class, they were exposed to systemic oppression as women. They were either made to fend for their needs because there was no infrastructure to help provide needed resources. The identification of coping strategies in this study meant the presence of inequality, oppressive patriarchal structures, and social dominance.

Research Question 4

How have reports from media and conversations within the community about gender-based violence been handled during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Gender-based violence (GBV) has been reported long before the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, what happened during the pandemic, especially during the lockdown, was the increase in gender-based violence. The findings showed that there was indeed an increase in reports of gender-based violence (including sexual harassment, domestic violence, rape, and physical assaults) against women and girls. Though none of my participants claim to be victims of gender-based violence, they confirmed that it did occur in higher numbers. These women noted that there were incidences of GBV (that were not reported to the police or made to the news). From the findings, NGOs and individuals on social media platforms continued to

raise awareness about the plight of women and girls. News reports were tweeted and retweeted, made the topic of vlogs (video blogging) to inform people both inside and outside the country of the demeaning and horrendous acts against women and girls.

As noted in previous research studies (for example, Lengel, et al., 2023) media reporting of GBV in Nigeria was not as substantial as would be expected. There were horrid stories that did not get covered by media agencies but were known to have occurred through conversations within the community. One reason that may include the non-coverage is not reporting such incidences to security agents or media outlets. During the interviews, I noted that the conversations geared toward GBV were the least discussed by participants. Some of the participants showed a notable level of discomfort when asked questions about GBV. While not insinuating the factors that may have led to this level of discomfort in discussing GBV, there are existing factors that may have contributed. This could be examined more in a different study.

Theoretical Implication

The findings of this dissertation project address the gap in examining women's experiences during a crisis from an African woman's context. This study investigated women in Nigeria and their lived experiences that are void of mention in Western research articles. The study provided a different presentation of West African women not as victims or survivors of oppressive patriarchal systems, but more as innovative, strong-willed women who are willing to adapt to change. The study contributes to existing scholarship through analysis of coping strategies employed by women who felt marginalized, especially during a crisis. The analysis of both the interviews and social media conversations delineated the role of religion in emphasizing the existing oppressive systems. The two dominant religions in Nigeria uphold patriarchy and submission. Women's willingness to adhere to their religious edicts showed the need to situate religion in studying the lived experiences of Nigerian women. The study shows

how women were willing to accept religious decrees while protesting social, economic, and political injustices.

Even though the data is not strongly addressing African feminism, it does indicate that women in African communities are not as fragile and helpless as may be indicated in Western research. Studying feminism in an African context should include understanding how women navigate through crises and maintain their identities. The study of lived experiences of African women should deal with not only colonial struggles but tribal and patriarchal struggles that overshadow their ability to survive. This study tends to highlight African women's willingness to find ways to survive. It provides a glimpse of how future studies can be constructed to objectively review the perceptions and realities of different women in Africa. The study is not implying that women in different communities in Africa (especially Nigeria) do not experience inequality, oppression, assault, and injustices. Rather, it sparks a conversation of delving deeper into the discourse of marginalization in an African community.

Practical Implication

This study project highlights the different representations of women in a sub-Saharan African country. Women who have similar experiences to their counterparts in Asia and the Western world. This study adds to the praxis of gender and minority groups in intracultural communication and other aspects of communication studies. The study will provide an understanding of ways having coping techniques would assist marginalized groups to navigate oppressive policies and structures.

Future Research

The next step is to write a paper to examine feminist considerations of transnational experiences during the crisis in the Global South. By conducting a comparative study of India and Nigeria by intersecting pre-existing inequities that have given birth to explicit dangers

associated with vulnerability. It will look at the social and health concerns that women face as primary caregivers, as well as the rapid rise in gender-based violence. In addition to drastically limiting access to resources and health services in the region, each has a particularly negative impact on minoritized groups (especially women) in the Global South. Also, other future studies (including a proposed book) will conduct a comparative analysis of cases of coping strategies among women in economically poor communities in the US and West Africa.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research study provides the following understanding of the different perspectives in examining the lived experiences of women as a minority and marginalized group. It shows how the ability to be resilient and adaptable helps women to rise above any stereotypes or biases. This project helped me to understand first, that Nigerian women's health, social, economic, and political lives were directly affected by the lockdown during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic, Second, women found ways to alleviate their fears and anxieties. I believe that the findings provide a critique of previous research's stereotypical representations of the experiences of African women.

The marginalization of women in most African communities is rooted in struggle and dominance due to colonizing powers, and patriarchal ideologies. In Nigeria, women have struggled to maintain their relevance in a male-dominated society. Religion and cultural norms have negatively affected the increase of political, and economic powers of Nigerian women. The developed model of resilience and adaptability stems from the feminist desire to be liberated. Even in their daily activities, there was the underlying need to acquire liberation from oppressive patriarchal systems that were present in the lockdown policies. The formation of online groups, for example, to provide access to resources is a form of resisting those oppressive policies that did not take into cognizance the ill-effect the total shutdown would

have on this marginalized gender. The government did not consider how heavy the burden of restricting movement would have on women. Examination of the interviews saw the presence of camaraderie among the participants and women in their community.

Hegemony is a reoccurring issue that is part of the discourse of survival involving Nigerian women. The dominating powers of central, religious, and tribal authorities have led to the pursuit of resiliency and survival. During critical periods marred either by wars or pandemics/epidemics or economic woes, women in Nigeria (at the center of the study) are always at the receiving end. Socio-cultural constructs like women's agency, empowerment, and sisterhood provide a background for survival during times of crisis. The willingness to support, manage emotions and reduce tension demonstrates the tenacity or willingness to increase the volume of their silent voices. While the Nigerian woman shows reverence for tradition and culture, she refuses to be held hostage to oppressive structures but strives to fight for recognition. Therefore, when some of the participants recalled carrying out philanthropic duties to assist fellow women and girls in their respective communities, they in turn were demonstrating their resiliency. Their protest was embodied in their willingness to survive. They showed interest in emboldening the weak voices that were being oppressed either because of low socio-economic status. The struggles during the pandemic by women despite their class, tribe, educational, and socio-economic status highlighted the issue of marginalization of Nigerian women. While the conversations during the interviews showed a willingness to accept the status quo concerning traditional structures and infrastructures, voices still spoke out against the system and its domineering influences.

Though I used intersectionality as a methodological framework or approach. Especially concerning understanding marginalization in an African context. The findings from the interviews did not provide strong evidence for applying Intersectionality. Especially since the

study design was based on Grounded Theory and Thematic Analysis, the findings presented more on coping and survival. As a theory that is presented as an approach, it provided some methodological challenges. The study did not examine the concept of racism because of dealing with one race (the African race). Intersectionality examines racism as it intertwines with different complexities of identities. Therefore, the study aimed at looking at the intersections of gender, class, patriarchy, and in an inferential form, tribalism. However, the analysis of the two different sets of data through highlighting factors of oppressive and dominant structures did not go in the direction of intersectionality. The analysis of online comments also provided the investigation of social justice regarding gender. The conversations ignited considerable intellectual energy and knowledge of increasingly existing overlaps.

In future studies, the goal is to apply intersectionality to help broaden the application of the model used in this study's analysis. This is because it provides a framework to look at the intersections via the existing environment, the coping techniques, and the abilities demonstrated by Nigerian women during a crisis. A more in-depth examination of Intersectionality could provide a framework for conducting a quantitative or a qualitative study. The study has helped to inform the scholarship to examine the lived reality and perception of a typical Nigerian woman as she navigates through critical and oppressive systems. It helps to understand how defining her role in society as a woman involves disregarding the "victim narrative". By calling out unjust policies that alienate her ability to independently survive, there is a strong push for changing the narrative.

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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Introductory Question

1. Thank you for agreeing to have this conversation with me, if you do not mind, I will like you to introduce yourself and provide a background knowledge of who you are.

Questions Based on Research Questions

RQ1: As African countries grapple with the political and economic effects of covid 19 pandemic, how have social, political, and economic class structures highlighted gender inequality?

1. Have you been living in any part of Africa for the last 3 years?

2. During the past 3 years the world has experienced tremendous change due to the covid19 pandemic, could you please tell me how you were personally affected by the pandemic? Please take your time to discuss these effects.

3. Let's go back to when the lockdown was issued, what were your initial thoughts of how long and the effects the pandemic was going to have on you, on your family, and on the general society you lived in?

4. There must have been times when you felt high anxiety or stress, what were those factors that made you feel anxious or stressed out during the first wave of the pandemic?

5. Did you or your family or community receive any sort of help, support, or resources from the government that alleviated any challenges you faced during the lockdown?

6. As a woman did you feel neglected or protected more during the lockdown? Please could state what was done that made you feel either way.

7.   During the lockdown movement were restricted, did you at any point feel that the restriction affected women more than men? Were women more pressured to leave their homes than men during the lockdown?

8.   Tell me about your experience when the lockdown was issued. What part of your life was more affected?

RQ2: During the lockdown issuance for the first wave of the covid19 pandemic many women were forced to give up their jobs or business, what provisions by the governments helped to alleviate women's economic status? If none was provided how does the lack of governmental support deepen the gender divide?

1.   Let us talk a bit about the economy during the pandemic and how it has affected women in general and you as a woman specifically.

2.   Did you feel sometimes more burdened financially during the lockdown? were you more likely to lose your job or business than your male counterparts or male relatives? If yes, why?

3.   Did you feel any threat to your job when the pandemic hit? Or did you feel privileged as a professional or urban woman during the pandemic when compared to women who are in rural areas or not working professionally?

RQ3: How has the participation of women in protest during the covid19 pandemic highlighted the epistemological discourse of power and class?

1.   There were also reports of protests during the pandemic in certain countries, were there any protests in the country or community that you live in?

2.   What did you make of the protests and how did that affect your ability to go about your daily activities during the pandemic?

3.   Did you participate in any form of protest?

RQ4: How have reports of gender-based violence been handled during the covid19 pandemic?

1.   During the lockdown there were reports in the media about reports of an increase in violence among women and girls, if you did hear or read these reports how did it affect you personally and how worried were you about these reports?

2.   Did you at any point during the pandemic read or hear reports of violence against women? Where are these reports frequently reported on the news? On social media?

3.   What was your reaction to news of violence targeting women that made you feel personal? Did you shrug off any emotions or were there steps you took to protect yourself or other women around you?

4.   At any time during the pandemic were you or someone you know affected by any form of violence?

General Interview Questions

1.   If you do not mind, can you relate how that made you feel and where they're readily available help that you or others could access?

2.   As a woman were you able to access healthcare services for women-related health issues easily during the lockdown and afterward?

3.   If not, how did that make you feel? What did you feel should have been done to allow you more access to health care services during that period?

4.   Testing & vaccine

5.   How did you view the vaccination?

6.   Did you receive any help from other women either in the family, community, or government? Were you able to aid other women too?

7.   How did misinformation affect caring for yourself during the pandemic?

8.   What support system emerged for you during the pandemic?

APPENDIX B: CONSENT LETTER

BGSU
Bowling Green State University

Consent Form

Informed Consent for "Everyday Life During Global Pandemic" Interview Participants

Data Collection Mode: Zoom Interviews

Introduction: We are a team of researchers at Bowling Green State University, Ohio, USA led by faculty member, Dr. Radhika Gajjala. We are currently researching how everyday life is affected by a global pandemic, especially with the growing number of telemedicine practices.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore and understand how everyday life is affected by the global pandemic and how telemedicine is practiced during such a global pandemic. Our team is interested in knowing your experience and everyday life during a pandemic and how you incorporate telemedicine during the global pandemic. The lead researcher has researched cultures of the global issue since the mid-1990s, and the purpose of the present study is to continue this research to examine contemporary and emerging uses of telemedicine due to global pandemics. Thus, we as a team are interested in your experience during the global pandemic and how you respond to such growing offers of telemedicine as the services will provide more safety during the pandemic to have health service.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you self-identify as a person impacted by such a global pandemic. Your stories and experiences will help me, and my research team to understand the impact of global pandemics on everyday life and the role of telemedicine practices. There are no financial/monetary benefits for participation in this study.

Procedure: Your participation in this study will primarily answer the interview questions during a Zoom interview, followed by an in-depth discussion centered around your experience during the pandemic and the use of telemedicine. The initial interview will take about 40-60 minutes and if you choose to converse further, we can do follow-up conversations. There is a possibility for *one* individual follow-up interview (if required), about 30-45 minutes, that will be conducted in-person, via Zoom, phone, email, or electronic messaging, and so on. Our team will determine whether additional information is needed to accurately tell your stories in the final project based on this study and contact you again to see if you are willing to continue our conversations. The follow-up will be based on the participants' consent. The necessary follow-up interview will be conducted in a location that meets your level of comfort and access. Please note that you must be age 18 or over to participate in this study.

Voluntary Nature: All participation in this interview is entirely voluntary, and you may decline to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. You may also choose to discontinue your participation at any time and for any reason. You may also choose not to take part in the follow-up interview. It is entirely up to you whether to participate. You are not required to participate. Whether or not you participate has no bearing on your current or future relationship with Bowling Green State University.

Confidentiality Protection: We request your permission to use your actual age, country of origin, current city of residence, gender identity, caste, regional, linguistic, race, and religious identities in future research reports as relevant to the research write-ups to provide the highest level of credibility to this study. These research reports will not include your name. We will use alias names when referring to you in publications and presentations unless you ask that we name you. If you indicate that you wish for your name to be used, only your first name will be used in reporting. Any publication taken from what you said will need your consent.

Please keep in mind that we will make every reasonable effort to protect your privacy. If you are uncomfortable in any way, you may stop participating in the activity at any time. The project's lead investigator, Dr. Radhika Gajjala, will keep all records that identify you by name in a secure location. Data from electronic surveys, notes from focus groups and interviews, or video files (focus group events and interviews will be recorded), and all hard/physical copies of informed consent will be stored on a password-protected university device, external storage drives, and/or in a locked filing cabinet in her university office. Only she will have access to the university office's devices, drives, and/or filing cabinets. All team members will have access to these files for the duration of their involvement in this project.

Confidentiality Protection: We request your permission to use your actual age, country of origin, current city of residence, gender identity, caste, regional, linguistic, race, and religious identities in future research reports as relevant to the research write-ups to provide the highest level of credibility to this study. These research reports will not include your name. We will use alias names when referring to you in publications and presentations unless you ask that we name you. If you indicate that you wish for your name to be used, only your first name will be used in reporting. Any publication taken from what you said will need your consent.

Please keep in mind that we will make every reasonable effort to protect your privacy. If you are uncomfortable in any way, you may stop participating in the activity at any time. The project's lead investigator, Dr. Radhika Gajjala, will keep all records that identify you by name in a secure location. Data from electronic surveys, notes from focus groups and interviews, or video files (focus group events and interviews will be recorded), and all hard/physical copies of informed consent will be stored on a password-protected university device, external storage drives, and/or in a locked filing cabinet in her university office. Only she will have access to the university office's devices, drives, and/or filing cabinets. All team members will have access to these files for the duration of their involvement in this project.

APPENDIX C: CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS FLYER

SEEKING WEST AFRICAN WOMEN PARTICIPANTS

STUDY ON WEST AFRICAN WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?
West African women who are:
- 18 years or older.
- currently living in the West African region.
- resided in the West African region during the past 2 years (2020–2022).

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN THE STUDY?
- A 45-minute solo interview
- An optional post-interview to be conducted via Zoom, phone call, or email
- There is no compensation. Interviews are entirely voluntary.

WHO SHOULD I CONTACT?

- Amonia Tolofari at atolofa@bgsu.edu
- Or use the link or QR code to complete the interest survey.

https://bgsu.az1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3Ctn3WWWCeZ5aLQ