COVID-19 PANDEMIC: THE ROLE OF THE HOMEMAKER IN CURBING THE MENACE

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Abstract
The coronavirus disease (Covid-19) pandemic is a highly deadly disease that sent many people to early grave. It brought the whole world to a halt when it was announced as a result of its effects on humans. The pandemic shocked the world, overwhelmed the health sector and brought the economy of the world to a stand still. The cause of the deadly scourge is an organism too minute to be seen with the eyes. This paper Covid-19 pandemic: The role of the homemaker in curbing the menace looked at the origin of the deadly organism which many people especially Nigerians still believe till date is a scam. The origin of the organism is Wuhan a city in China where aquatic animals are sold. Coronavirus is a communicable respiratory disease with symptoms of cough, sneezing, nasal congestion and a wide range of other disorder. Preventive measures to guard against the deadly virus, and the homemaker’s role in curbing the menace of the deadly disease were discussed. As nutrition plays a vital role in the wellbeing of families, the homemaker’s role in providing adequate nourishing diet especially the immune system boosters were enumerated. In keeping with hygiene practices which help to curb diseases, hand washing, the use of alcohol based sanitizer, social distancing and the use of face masks were looked at. Conclusions and recommendations were made emphasizing on the need to get shots of covid vaccine, the use of media and jingles to create awareness and inform the general public that covid disease is real not a scam were enumerated among others.

Keywords: Covid-19, Pandemic, Homemaker, Curbing Menace, Nutrition, Immune System, Preventive Measures.

Introduction
Coronavirus is a scourge that placed the whole world in a very difficult and worrisome condition. Worrisome because its effect was full of anxiety, sorrow and depression. It overwhelmed the globe as it took all the continents of the world by surprise and sent many people to early grave. Its solution was not found and many people had so many tales about it and scientist could not explain immediately about the disease. The coronavirus disease of 2019 was given the abbreviated name of Covid-19 by the World Health Organization (WHO) in a press release on February 11, 2020.

Covid-19 pandemic also known as the corona virus pandemic, is a global pandemic of Coronavirus disease of 2019 caused by Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, corona virus 2 (SARS-Cov-2). It is a strain of corona virus. The virus was first identified on 31st December, 2019 in Wuhan city in China and has since spread worldwide. Covid-19 is an acronym that stands for “corona virus disease” of 2019.

The origin and spread of the pandemic dates from December 2019 and it is believed to have come and linked to the visit of people who visited the seafood and wildlife market city of Wuhan in China where aquatic animals are sold. The World Health Organization declared the outbreak of Covid-19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 30th January, 2020 and a Pandemic on 11th March, 2020. In Nigeria, Alaba and Emmanuel (2020) opined that covid-19 was first reported by the Federal Ministry of Health on 27th February, 2020 citing the case of an Italian citizen who returned to Nigeria from Milan after his holiday.

Before the covid-19 pandemic hit the globe in the year 2020, Nigeria was dealing with fake tales, stories, news and misinformation problems. Covid-19 was life-threatening and the spread at which the
false information spread was unprecedented. According to Adeolu (2021), disinformation and misinformation and fake news were among the greatest dangers in the time of covid-19. He maintained that many people used social media, messaging apps and other media to spread false information and disrupt lives. Temitope (2021) stated that while the volume of information being shared about the virus is indeed overwhelming, it culminated into a mix of viral posts, rumours, information distortion and fake news. He added that several widely shared posts on social media claimed that covid-19 does not exist in the country as well as misleading posts on the vaccines and claims about the state of covid-19 survivor. Covid-19 pandemic which has led to a lot of death in the world is still being doubted as many people in Nigeria believed that its existence is a lie and scam. During the period of lockdown many people lost their jobs and some are still trying to keep their jobs with difficulty especially in the urban centres. This paper is aimed at examining the deadly virus with the symptoms and prevention and the role of the homemaker in curbing the menace and scourge. The homemaker in this context and paper will be addressed as the caregiver, home nurse, housekeeper, Home Economists, house wife and a woman who carryout multiple roles that are traditionally assigned to women in African. The homemakers roles in providing adequate nutrition and immune diet booster will be examined.

Covid-19 Pandemic, symptoms and preventions
A pandemic is a disease prevalent over a whole country or the world. Robinson (2022) stated that a pandemic is a disease outbreak that spreads across countries or continents that affects more people and takes more lives than an epidemic. The World Health Organisation (WHO) declared Covid-19 to be a pandemic when it became clear that the illness was severe and that it was spreading quickly over a wide area. Covid-19 pandemic is a disease caused by the outbreak of corona virus. Ogbene (2006) described a virus as a small germ which cannot be seen under an ordinary microscope and can multiply only inside a cell whereas other germs can grow outside. Burton and May (2011) stated that viruses are not made up of individual cells but rather are very tiny parasites that live within the cells of the host and can only be seen with an electron microscope because they are too small to be visualized with a standard microscope and all viruses potentially cause illness. Corona virus disease is air-borne affecting the respiratory tract and very contagious. It is an air-borne droplet infection that primarily spread between people through close contact and via aerosol respiratory droplets that are exhaled when talking, breathing as well as those produced from coughs or sneezes.

Centre for Disease Control (2022) opined that covid-19 is a communicable respiratory disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus that causes illness in humans. Covid-19 disease spreads from person to person when humans have contact with hands or surfaces that contain the virus.

Covid-19 is a deadly disease which damages vital organs of the body when there is an infection. Apart from coronavirus disease there are other diseases caused by viruses that are deadly such as HIV/AIDS, Ebola, Chicken Pox, Measles etc. The disease is an acute severe respiratory syndrome that affect the lungs and present a lot of symptoms such as cough, sneezing, headache, fever, shortness of breath and the severity of the symptom within a victim depends on the viral load. Some can be mild and some very severe and deadly. The symptoms of Covid-19 according to Akwanga, Musa, Garba and Anjugu (2022) range from fever, cough, difficulty in breathing, shortness of breath and other respiratory flu-like symptoms. Severe manifestations include lower tract infections such as pneumonia, bronchitis, acute respiratory distress and in some cases death will occur if the patient is not properly managed.

Sikandar, Fatima and Shah (2021) noted that the features of coronavirus diseases go with pneumonia, shortness of breath, asthma, nasal congestion, sore throat, fever, fatigue, myalgia and also encompasses a wide variety of other systemic symptoms. It is important to watch and be at a lookout for possible signs of the deadly virus especially when we are in a gathering. The mode of transmission of Covid-19 through contact with infected persons who present the signs of the disease but these signs may be associated with other diseases other than covid. In any case, one has to be guided and avoid contact with people who show signs of the symptoms of the disease. Respiratory droplet transmission can occur when a person is in close contact (within 1metre) with an infected person who has respiratory symptoms like coughing, sneezing or who is talking or singing in these circumstances, respiratory droplets that include virus can reach the mouth, nose or eye of a susceptible person and can result in
infection. As the hands are always in contact with the nose and the mouth, they are often a means of carrying germs from one person to another.

“Prevention is better than cure” has been a saying that we are all familiar with. It is a safe way to remain away from problems. Here, this saying has to do with health and status of the family. Taking appropriate preventive measures to guide and guard against the deadly covid-19 pandemic is of utmost importance and a welcomed necessity. If we adopt avert measures to prevent getting sick from covid-19, we would not have to deal with the consequences of contracting it in the first place. Guner, Hasanogla and Aktas (2020) stated that preventive measures are current strategy to limit the spread of cases and emphasize hand hygiene, social distancing and quarantine. Early screening, diagnosis, isolation and treatment are necessary to prevent further spread of covid if one has been affected. Preventive strategies are focused on the isolation of patients and careful infection control including appropriate measures to be adopted during the diagnosis and the provision of clinical care to an infected patient.

To curb the covid-19 pandemic menace for now and the future, preventive measures to be observed should include physical or social distancing, quarantining, ventilation of indoor spaces, covering the mouth when coughing and sneezing, washing and keeping unwashed hands away from the face. The use of face masks or nose coverings will help in public places to minimize the risk of transmission. Hygiene practices should be employed in our homes and public places like the school, church, market, hotels, hospitals to reduce the spread of the disease. Ishaya (2021) opined that the outbreak of covid-19 has improved the hygienic habits of many Nigerians. He maintained that Dr. Femi Funso-Adebayo a Virologist with Arigo Health Care said hygiene should become part of people’s lives.

The Role of The Home Maker in Curbing Covid-19 Menace

The covid-19 disease is a dangerous and harmful scourge that should be curbed.

To fight the scourge, all hands must be on deck to bring the disease under control. To curb means to restrain, check, holdback from, control and prevent. According to Ihezuo (2014) curbing means to lessen the intensity of, temper, hold in restraints, hold or keep within limits. It is to put down by force or authority. In curbing the global covid-19 pandemic, every member of the family has a role to play. The home maker has a prominent role and responsibility in curbing the menace. According to Okeke (2008), the homemaker is any individual who administers all the activities in the home for proper upkeep of the family. Uzoka (2013) said that the homemaker is any person regardless of age, sex, status or position who assumes the task of homemaking. Traditionally, women have been playing the role of homemakers saddled with numerous tasks of family living which stem from feeding, cleaning, supervising, giving health care services and playing other multiple roles of homemaking. In this context, words like homemaker, home nurse, caregiver, housewife, housekeeper, Home Economist will be used interchangeably to refer to the woman whose traditional role in the home has helped to keep the family growing. The woman/homemaker is strong, courageous and backbone of the family. Although the woman plays multiple roles of caregiving in the home, the tasks should not be left for her alone but to involve family members, too, especially caring for the sick in feeding cleaning, keeping company in times of need.

Ogbene (2006) opined that a home nurse is any member of the family that has attribute of motherhood in him or her. She further explained that the home nurse can be anyone who has the knowledge and desire to give healthcare to the sick at home. A home nurse must possess some qualities such as rendering healthcare services to the sick with the desire to alleviate pain, to bring comfort to the mind and body and to make the sick regain health. The home nurse must be able to guard against the spread of diseases, protect herself and her family from infectious or communicable diseases. Family members must cooperate to make sure that the sick is adequately taken care of. Burton and May (2011) maintained that research findings over the past several decades consistently point to the key role that family relationships play in helping other members maintain their independence and health. Biegel, Sales and Schulz (1991) pointed out that caring for a family member who has a chronic illness involves a significant expenditure of time and energy over potentially long period of time, involving tasks that may be unpleasant and uncomfortable, and is likely to be nonsymmetrical and often a role that had not been anticipated. For this reason family member must be involved in the skills there in. Hamson, Duff
and Kaakin (2005) stated that women have always been the traditional caregivers and they continue to provide nearly two-thirds (66%) of the family care given to older members. In addition, women provide more hours of care and are more likely to give assistance with personal hygiene, household tasks and meal preparation.

Corona virus disease can affect any member of the family but we should know that it is worse among the elderly and those who have underlying health challenges like respiratory tracts infection, heart problems, diabetics and other old age related health issues. As the immune system of the elderly and sick members of the family are down, it is the duty of the homemaker/home nurse/caregiver to provide nourishing meals that will boost their immune system. With her knowledge as a homemaker and a home economics nutritionist, balanced diet should be provided for every member of the family. The homemaker must employ the following measures to curb the menace of coronavirus pandemic in her family by observing the following:

1. Social distancing and self isolation: This measures slows down the spread of the virus and when appropriately practiced, can slow the rate of infection within the family, community or even the entire country. This can be achieved by discouraging close contact, avoiding visitors and staying at least six (6) feet away from one another.

2. Get a covid-19 vaccine at hospitals, clinics and health centres

3. Washing of your hands often with soap and water as often as possible

4. Covering your mouth and nose with a mask whenever you are with others and make sure that the mask is properly worn.

5. Avoid crowded areas and poorly ventilated rooms and spaces in the home. Make sure that the windows are opened for cross ventilations.

6. Use alcohol based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% ethanol.

7. Avoid being exposed to family members who have the virus by keeping and staying at least 6 feet apart from the patient.

8. Clean surfaces regularly, such surfaces like tables, doorknobs, light switches, toilets, sinks with household disinfectants.

9. Monitor your health daily and be at alert for symptoms of the disease

These practice and measures must be employed now and the future to check the occurrence of covid-19 and other infectious diseases for safety of family members. During the period of lockdown as a result of covid-19 outbreak many hospitals didn’t have the facilities for admission of patient into the hospitals and as such patients were managed at home under the care of the family.

The Homemaker and Nutrition at the core of the covid-19 pandemic

The impact of nutrition on recovery from various illness is well recognized and the woman plays a key role in the preparation and serving of meals for the family. As a family health officer she should make sure that the family is in good condition of health not minding her numerous tasks of home living activities. Apart from the fact that she is the food procurer and preparer, she ensures that her family members are healthy by providing appropriate nutrition, diagnosing and treating illness, teaching and monitoring hygienic practices, too.

More than 2,500 years ago, Hippocrates said “let food be thy medicine and medicine be thy food”. A proper diet can ensure that the body is in proper state to defeat the virus. However, along with the dietary management guidelines, the food safety management and good food practices is compulsory. Covid-19 pandemic is a challenge across the globe and this scourge should be curbed. Aman and Masood (2020) stated that it is mandatory to attain and maintain good nutritional status to fight against virus. Optimal nutrition and dietary nutrient intake impact the immune system, therefore the only sustainable way to survive in current context is to strengthen the immune system.

Balance diet is a meal that is comprised of all the six basic food nutrients such as carbohydrate, proteins, fats and oil, vitamins, mineral elements and water and these should be eaten in the right and proper condition for good health and wellbeing. A proper diet can ensure that the body is in proper state to defeat the virus. It is the duty of the homemaker/home nurse to prepare and serve adequate and balanced diet from all the basic food
groups for the family members to stay healthy. Covid-19 is a respiratory virus disease and not a food-borne disease, however, it is good to eat well to boost the immune system which may have been affected during covid-19 infection. Patients recovering from severe illness are likely to have muscle wasting or feel weak and it is good to increase protein foods in the diet to build worn out tissues. The home nutritionist (homemaker) not only is saddled with the responsibility of preparing and serving meals, but a nourishing diet that will keep every member of the family in good condition of health. According to Ngwu and Njoku (2007), diet is the food and drink normally taken by individuals. They maintained that nutrition knowledge is imperative for healthy eating and healthy eating means eating nutritious diet.

Malnutrition can make family members more susceptible to infection, and infection can lead or contribute to malnutrition. People who suffer from malnutrition develop more infections than well-nourished people. Therefore the home nurse must possess adequate knowledge of food and nutrition for the well-being of those living with her in the home. Olurankinse (2009) stated that nutrition knowledge reveals that the immune system must have nutrients available for their best function as body’s natural system of defense against invaders. The immune system components are the skin, gastrointestinal tract, mucous membranes, lymph tissue, phagocytosis, cell-mediated immunity and humoral immunity. Coronavirus disease (covid-19) has inflicted a heavy toll on people all over the world. Maintaining a healthy diet which provide essential nutrients and proper hydration is vital during the period which must include macro and micronutrients as they help to curb diseases. The homemaker as a matter of fact should make sure that the following immune system boosters are adhered to strictly by family members.

1. Eating a balanced diet and avoid deficiency: The home maker’s duty is to provide well balanced diet that is nourishing to the body. Junk food and refined sugar should be avoided in daily meals. As caffeine aggravates stress and anxiety, its consumption will be dangerous to the body. Fruits and vegetables should be provided in daily diets.

2. Getting enough sleep: The home maker should ensure that family members get enough sleep as ample sleep supports the immune system which reduces the risk of infection and can improve outcomes for people fighting the virus. Sleep deprivation brings down immune system and family members will be vulnerable to corona virus.

3. Exercising regularly: Regular physical exercise is beneficial to the body and mind. This, can be done every other day if the patient is recovering. A mild/moderate exercise such as walking, squatting, moving the hands and legs even on the bed or while sitting down should be encouraged by the home maker.

4. Washing of hands: The provision of running water, soap and alcohol-based hand rubs should be a necessity in every home for the frequent washing of hands. The hygiene practice should be observed in the home under the supervision of the home maker.

5. Keeping up with vaccines: Corona virus vaccines is recommended for everyone. The home maker should make sure that all the members of the family take all the boost and doses at the right time. A visit to health facilities and centres for vaccination will provide accurate information on doses, and get members vaccinated at no cost. The rules must also be adhered to strictly as instructed at the clinic from the medical personnel.

6. Maintaining a healthy weight: It is the duty of the home maker to help family members to maintain a healthy weight through healthy life style and nutrition. Excess, weight or being obese increases the risk of illness. Exercise, nourishing diet and healthy lifestyle help to maintain a healthy weight. Junk foods should be avoided and weight loss encouraged.

7. Avoiding smoking and alcohol as they weaken the immune system: As covid affects the lungs, it is the duty of the home maker to dissuade the members of the family to avoid smoking and the use of alcohol. Cigarette smoking affects patients who have breathing problems and the home maker’s role in counselling family members who smoke is very welcomed.

8. Minimizing stress: Stress management is very essential for good health and as such the home maker must make sure that family members minimize stress and if possible to do away with the stressors. To minimize stress all the members of the must take up duties to be performed and not leaving it for one
person in the home. Every member of the family should take light exercise, sleep and rest and listen to music to calm the nerves. Relaxation is of utmost importance during covid.

Conclusion
This paper on covid-19 pandemic, the role of the home maker in curbing the menace evidently proved that the home maker roles in curbing covid-19 is second to none. Covid-19 a deadly respiratory viral disease which spread rapidly across the globe, damages the lungs and present many symptoms such as sneezing, coughing, headache, shortness of breath and further subdue the immune system. The home maker whose roles is saddled with numerous home chores plays the role of a home nurse too by providing nourishing diets, and making sure that the family get enough rest, sleep, wash their hands, avoid smoking, alcohol, observe other healthy practices such as isolation and social distancing. The Covid-19 pandemic affected all the continents of the world and brought hunger and poverty as many people lost their jobs and means of livelihood. The economic recession all over the world led to depression worsening the condition of the Covid-19 pandemic in different families. With increased testing capacity for Covid-19 virus, the home maker will be able to reduce the positive cases by employing stricter quarantine rules to curb the menace in the home.

Recommendations
The following recommendations are made on the deadly covid-19 pandemic.

1. The homemaker should ensure that the family adhere strictly to the safety rules of the covid disease by observing hygiene practices and measures.
2. Every family members should visit health care facilities to get the shots of the covid vaccine.
3. Observe social distancing by avoiding contact with infected persons.
4. Balanced diet should be eaten to make sure that immune boost diets are taken to keeps family member in good condition of health.
5. Family members should help the homemaker take up chores of the house to reduce the burden of working alone since she plays so many roles as wage earner, home nurse, cook and supervisor.
6. Jingles through the mass media, posters and hand bills should be made available to continually inform the public creating awareness about the disease so as to take precautions and stay safe.

References
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