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Footprint of Covid-19 Pandemic and the Managerial Approach to Enhancing Nigerian Workers' Productivity

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ABSTRACT

One of the remarkable events of recent past is outbreak of coronal virus pandemic (COVID-19) that shook the global economy. Multiplier effect of the pandemic spurs this study to investigate footprint of COVID-19 pandemic and the managerial approach to enhancing Nigerian workers' productivity. This study is a quantitative research design that x-rays role of labour motivation through compensatory approach on Nigerian workers' productive contributions. It is a study built on three (3) management theories: Pandemic Management Theory; Event System Theory; and Scientific Management Theory, which were tested to assist ascertain their propositions. Population examined in this study is a mixture of management and staff of public and private Nigerian manufacturing and service providing corporate institutions. The population size is of Two thousand, one hundred and forty-five (2,145) respondents, while adopted sample size, to avoid spurious results, is of a total of Three hundred and thirty-seven (337) purposively and randomly collected samples. Data used in this study were mixture of primary and secondary data, which was collected through well-structured questionnaire and corporate information of the sampled Institutions. Data were analysed, using inferential statistics, Granger's causality and relationship mechanism, panel data regression approach, and the t-test results' reliability tools, so as to ascertain the validity and the reliability of the study' outcomes. And in all of it, the study therefore revealed that significant but negative uni-directional causal relationship exists between COVID-19 and Nigerian workers' productivity. Also, the study revealed that strategic motivation through compensatory managerial means has positive and significant impact on Nigerian workers' productivity; as evident in the βcoefficient value of 0.534. And it was therefore on this premise, that the study concluded so, and then recommended that the managers of human resource in all the sectors of the Nigerian economy, should always be guided in their institutional planning and labour policy management, going by the revelations of this study, by setting out risk management mechanisms that will protect their work-forces from geographical unforeseen and health uncertainties (pandemic). Also, corporate managers should adopt motivation techniques through compensatory means as a clue and mechanism to job performance enhancement. This approach will gravely assist the nation in building quality productive and sustainable output system.

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Introduction

Institutionalizing efficient and sustainable national productive system is a tedious task that requires quality and highly motivated labour force. The workers willingness to offer their unreserved physical and intellectual contributions gravely matters. Alan (2019) posits that the productive level deteriorates in a situation where workers struggle with the necessities of life, especially those related to living standard (survival and health). In the year of the unexpected COVID-19 pandemic, many works of life across the globe, suffers a lot (Bawcom, 2021). This incident, therefore, forces a lot of abnormalities in the working conditions of many corporate organizations and nations at large, due to the fear for lives and economic losses. Dhanya and Prashath (2021) reported how several institutional employees went through health challenges and somehow resulted to untimely death of significant numbers of capable hands, and thereby forcing those left behind, feeling highly disoriented and de-motivated to work. This could be why scholars like: Yu and Wu (2021); Wilson (2021); and Rotich (2020) to just name but few, enquires what corporate reward systems could be efficient on job-related variables.

Empirical evidence as seen in Al-Rfou, (2021) and Brodeur et al., (2021) depicts that productivity and job motivation are not equal like before and this is a function of corona virus pandemic. Statistical evidence shows how COVID-19 pandemic create employment problems across the globe hence, the worldwide internment calls for corporate and private organisations efforts to curtail the unfolding of this deadly virus and its impact on global economy. And in response to these clarion calls, managerial' health and economic approaches were so generated, and researchers embark on studies to unravel the mysteries surrounding the emancipation of this deadly virus and ways to curb its impact on lives and investments. However, and, to the best of this study's knowledge, none of extant previous studies had focused on compensation strategies (motivational approaches) to labour productivity (which this study is doing).

The aftermaths of this deadly pandemic amongst other things, have revealed that the global community, undergone significant undesired transformation, which calls for adequate understanding and management of its indices in order to provide planning and management guide against such occurrence for the future. And looking at it from a financial and economic perspective, extant statistics in the year 2020 showed how the COVID-19 pandemic caused a sharp, abrupt and widespread economic slowdown in the Nigerian economy. Alpert (2020) in his study posits that the first three months of 2020 evident the largest quarterly declines in the Stock market indexes: Nigeria 35.8%, United Kingdom 35.8%, United States 19.6%, and the Japan's Nikkei 5.4% losses amongst other documented national crises.

It is therefore against these backdrops that this study observed the need to re-address pandemic issue and measures to ameliorate its effect (even though it is some years gone now) because since the first epidemic began around January 2020, an average of 60 million people and nations were forced into severe poverty, which most have not recovered till date (2025). And since virtually all economy of the world have suffered in the hand of COVID-19 despite diverse measures in terms of timing, severity and government's reactions to manage it, there comes the need for futuristic planning and safety measures if the global economic community and, in particular, Nigeria will survive the multiplier effects of that pandemic in their quest to build a much-improved productivity level, and return to glorious days (Opaleke, 2021).

Statement of the Problem

In the last decade of study, global scholars had attempted to unravel several mysteries surrounding the role of labour in modern production activities, especially, after the COVID-19 epidemic. The belief of many scholars is that building productivity capacity, starts with labour and, if labourers are not well motivated to work (un-like other production factors), it impacts their commitment to such work and in turns, declines productivity (Hutt, 2020). Going by the fact that Nigeria saw greatest recession since the global financial crisis of 2007-2009, with her GDP falls by 4.9% in the first quarter of 2020 and 9.8% in the second quarter (Hutt, 2020). Zoakah et al. (2021) argued how motivational

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strategies could influence corporate turnover. Stating the fact that most employees are more likely to consider leaving a job if their take home cannot or no longer take them home (i.e., if their wages/salaries can no longer settle their pressing needs). Weldeyohannes (2016) negates this position by citing how unsatisfactory wages and other motivational approaches have no effect on productivity. And since productivity challenges persist in Nigeria and inform its national income and economic standing, this present study aimed at filling this gap in quest to add to the growing body of existing knowledge in Human Resource Management and Finance. This will without a doubt, provide clue to Governments and Institutional policy makers on measures to managing every form of low productivity and workers de-motivation in times of crisis.

Research Objectives

This study aimed at:

- 1. Appraising the relationship between COVID-19 pandemic and Nigerian labour outputs.
- 2. Ascertain the role of motivation (through effort compensation) on workers' productivity.

Research Questions

In accordance to the problems/gaps discussed above, the questions arising are:

- 1. Is there any causal relationship between COVID-19 and Nigerian labour outputs?
- 2. Does motivation (by compensatory means), impacts Nigerian workers' productivity?

Research Hypotheses

Following the research questions and objectives, the underlisted null Hypotheses are raised:

H01: There is no causal relationship between COVID-19 and Nigerian labour outputs.

H02: Motivation (by compensatory means) has no impact on Nigerian workers' productivity.

Literature Review

This section presents and discusses conceptual clarifications of terms used in this study and of management theories that were adopted as the theoretical framework for this study and verified. Scholars' intellectual positions on some of the issues raised in this study are also reviewed in this section in order to make a theoretical-to-empirical balance to this work, and thus, provide unbiased submissions in the quest to contribute to knowledge.

Conceptual Clarifications

This study adopts the following definitions and interpretations of its keywords, based on their alignment with the researcher's intentions, simplicity, clarity and comprehensivity to best describe the terms as meant.

COVID-19 Pandemic was re-defined by Stueck (2021), as a widespread occurrence of an infectious disease called, the Corona Virus Disease-2019, which is caused by corona-virus SARS-CoV-2, that adversely impacts lives through its symptoms of fever, fatigue, coughs, breathing difficulties, loss of smell, loss of appetite, loss of weight among other health related disorder it causes humans and animals, and with resulting effect of untimely death. This virus broke in the year 2019 and then spread over the world, which eventually impacted the global lives and economy negatively, and with the multiplying effect of operational lock/meltdown.

Labour is defined by Zoakah et al. (2021) from an economic perspective as the workforce that encompasses every able and capable human being that are skilled or not but has physical and/or intellectual capacity to offer someone, who is/are willing to engage him/them in the production processes. Labour in this term could be employed or those actively seeking employment within specific national or international region or economy. Zoakah et al. (2021)

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summarizes labour to simply mean the total supply of human efforts, available for use in the line of production of a nation.

Productivity is defined by Hutt (2020) as the efficiency with which inputs such like: labour, financial resources and land resources are efficiently transformed into desired outputs (i.e. goods and services in such an impressive quality and quantity). Hutt, (2020) stresses why productivity may imply more than what he presented because such a concept, largely depends on the context of use. In this work, productivity means, measurement of how well, improved and how much, a nation or productive institutions performs over run of a period, especially as it concerns labour-to-output ratio or percentile.

Motivation according to Opaleke (2021) is defined as one of the managerial tools that takes the form of either or mix of financial incentives, moral support, career growth support, to name but few; that organizational managers uses as technique to influence their workers to perform at their best, which is a tactical effort to ensure achievement of their organizational goals. This requires more of intellectual and physical capabilities, which if added to self-drive can make employees to as well fulfil self-potentials.

Compensation in this study as put forward by Weldeyohannes (2016) implies all form of financial and non-financial rewards, that employers provided to employees, outside their basic employment' contractual monetary agreement, in exchange for improved contributions to their organization. Weldeyohannes (2016) classified compensation as a managerial tool of motivation, which if strategically applied, can attract, retain and motivate workers, thereby boosting corporate/institutional productivity.

Theoretical Frameworks

This section discusses managerial and human resource theories that the study adopted as its theoretical bases.

Pandemic Management Theory (PMT)

The Pandemic Management Theory is a psychological and health management theory that was propounded by Stueck in year 2021. The theory was postulated to guide managers, using Bio-centric health management model to address workers' fear to works. It provides six managerial phases to cater for workers' health challenges during and after pandemic period in the quest to ensure that their productive level doesn't drop. The theory states that: the identity of people (i.e. workers) is gravely threatened by more fears than only the fears of death. This theory stresses the fear of getting infected and ill or the fear of losing their autonomy, which has an impact on their self-esteem, cultural values, physical strengths and their willingness to offer their productive ability to their employers. This study adopts this theory amongst other adopted theories, because it holistically addresses the basis and foundation of this study.

Event System Theory (EST)

Event System Theory was co-propounded by Fred Morgeson; Timothy Mitchell; and Dong Liu in the year 2015. It is a managerial theory of unforeseen and risk management. The theory was postulated to guide managers on eventualities around workplaces. They posit that discrete events are characterized by their strengths (novelty, disruption, and magnitude), location, and timing, which significantly impacts productivity, organizational behaviour, and managerial dynamics. The theory suggests that variables attached to events, could originate at any time and at any organizational level, which propagates change in productive behaviour and create new organizational behaviour that could subsequently be affecting corporate entire system. Morgeson, et al. (2015) introduces this framework as eventualities-oriented approach to managing individual, team, organizational, and broader economic and environmental risks that may ensue at any time. This theory was also adopted amongst others, because it clearly explains the need to prepare

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for eventualities like the COVID-19 pandemic that this study is examining. Empirical approach of this study will in the long run, clarify the relevance of this postulation and acceptance or rejection.

Scientific Management Theory (SMT)

Scientific Management Theory, also known as Taylorism theory, is labour productivity managerial postulation that was put forward in the United States in the early 1880s and 1890s by Frederick Winslow Taylor. It is a production managerial theory that analyses labour and its productivity flows, which is aimed at improving economic efficiency, especially of labour output and of overall organizational productivity. This theory addresses the need to focus on improving organizational efficiencies through institutional workforce, by applying scientific methods to analyse and optimize work procedures, challenges and productivity. This theory emphasizes breaking down of jobs into smallest components, timing each of the associated elements, and then re-arranging them into most efficient method of working that would bring about significant improved productivity and makes workers actualize job satisfaction. Also, it partly addresses motivation to work by providing bases for setting goals through finding the 'one-best method' to enhance labour motivation through personal determination to outclass other workers at workplaces. In general, it is the strength and relevance of this proposition that makes this study adopts it as one of its frameworks.

Empirical Review

It is worthy to note that Scholars' attention has not been much on the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic. However, this study reviewed and reports the notable available ones to assist this study, fill notable gaps and to compare their positions with this study outcome.

Akinnigbagbe, Ilugbami, Akintan, and Bakare, (2022) investigated the impact of COVID-19 Protocols and compensation strategies on job satisfaction, using the Academic staff of two notable Polytechnics in Ondo state, Nigeria. Variables examined include: workloads, income, prospects for promotion, supervision, and relationships with coworkers, which were tested on dependent variable; job' satisfaction. Straightforward selection method was used to select the 120 samples. Simple percentage analytical approach was used. Overall, the results show that improving workplace amenities and fostering cordial health cautious working relationships with management and coworkers during and after covid-19 outbreak is an effective method to encourage job performance improvement. Zoakah, Bulus, and Iliya (2021) examined the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on employees' job satisfaction. It was a qualitative study that was conducted to determine how COVID-19 impacts employees' attitudes to work during and after the outbreak. The study was premised on multiple case study design, and the primary method for gathering data was an interview. A purposive selection strategy was adopted to enable the researcher reached sample selection of 20 individuals (i.e. n = 2). The Thematic analysis and the descriptive analysis were combined to assist analyse the study data. In all of these, the study concluded that COVID-19 pandemic, greatly and negatively impacts how happy and willing, the SMEs' employees are, at work. Also, it was posited that decline wages, employment prospects, and job security due to COVID-19 pandemic, impacts negatively on both workers and employers.

Method

This study is a quantitative research design. It examines the role of labour motivation through compensatory approach on Nigerian workers' productive contributions. And giving the scope of this study and the need to expand boundaries in effort to fill some of the noted lacuna in some previous related studies, the study examined population size of Two thousand, one hundred and forty-five (2,145) manufacturing and service providing corporate institutes of private and public nature, in Nigeria. And to avoid spurious outcomes, the adopted sample size is Three hundred and thirty-seven (337) purposively and randomly selected management and operating staffs of these sampled organizations. Data employed in this study is a mixture of primary and secondary data that were collected through well-structured questionnaire and published and/or unpublished operational financial and non-financial statutory information of the

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selected organizations. A sample is therefore selected if it can provide information on work nature, employees' and organizational size, mode of operations, employees attitude to work, motivation packages in place, adopted hazard management procedures, turnovers data in the last Ten (10) years (to ensure that these data covers the before, during and after the pandemic period), purposively to reveal the emerging events after the pandemic period, such as:, death rate recorded during and after the pandemic, the motivation management techniques adopted by the organizations before, during and after the outbreak amongst other information needed and used for the study.

The period covers in this study are Ten years (2014 and 2025). The logic is to ensure that the operating events before, during, and after are purposively covered, in order to assist the study in testing the predictions of its three (3) adopted theoretical frameworks. Note that, the data gathered and used for this study are statistically and systematically estimated, using inferential statistical approach, Granger's causality and relationship mechanism, econometric' equation panel-data regression approach, using the e-view apparatus, and the t-test validity and results' reliability tool, to assist ascertain the study results' reliability. We are to note that Granger's Causality and relationship test in this study will provide answers to the research question number one and its corresponding hypothesis, by testing for the causal relationship between the study's endogenous variable and its exogenous (labour output and COVID-19). The econometric' equation panel data regression analysis will provide empirical answers to the study's second research question and its corresponding hypothesis. Note that the decision rule for both approaches as laid down by Dumitrescu and Hurlin (2012) will be to reject the test null hypothesis that a variable does not Granger-cause/relates the other, if its p-values are lesser than 0.05 critical values. But, if otherwise, it simply implies that it does granger-cause and that relationship exists in particular directional between them, thus, the null hypothesis is therefore rejected.

Results of Data Analysis

Table-1 below presents and discusses the outcomes of the data analysis, regarding the research question number one and its corresponding formulated hypothesis number one that states that: Is there any causal relationship between COVID-19 and Nigerian labour outputs? And that: **H01:** There is no causal relationship between COVID-19 and the Nigerian labour outputs. As stated in the above methodology section, the decision rule for both approaches as laid by Dumitrescu and Hurlin (2012) will be to reject the test null hypothesis that COVID-19 pandemic does not Granger-cause or relate with labour outputs, if a variable's chi-square (x²) test statistics and its corresponding p-value is lesser than 0.05 critical value. But if otherwise, it simply implies that causal relationship exists and in a particular direction between variables tested, thereby indicating that the test null hypothesis should therefore be rejected.

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Table 1: Granger's Causality and Relationship Test

Results of Causal Relationship Test between COVID-19 and Nigerian Labour Outputs

S/	Null Hypotheses	Test	p-values	Existence or	Conclusion
N.		Statistics		otherwise of	
		(χ^2)		Uni-	
				directional	
				Causality	
1.	(a) COVID-19 Pandemic does not Granger-				
	cause (does not inform) Nigerian Labour)	Significant but
	Outputs.	-15.04	0.000	Exists	Negative
				<u> </u>	Uni-directional
					Causality
	(b) Nigerian Labour Outputs Granger-cause	-5.20	0.000	Exists	Relationship
	COVID-19 Pandemic.				Exists

Note that: The p-value of 0.05 or below indicates the significance of each test statistics and thus determine the level of significance of the causal relationship between the tested variables.

Source: Author's Computation, 2025.

Going by the results of the panel Granger's causality/relationship examination as presented in Table-1 above, it can be deduced that the test rejects the two examined null hypotheses that COVID-19 pandemic does not Granger-cause (i.e. does not inform) Nigerian Labour Outputs; and that Nigerian Labour' Outputs does Granger-causes COVID-19 Pandemic. The statistical evidence of -15.04 is indicating decreasing effect tendency as time passes, if the pandemic is well managed and, tendency of incremental negative effect, if it last longer. The p-value of 0.000 for the first and second test shows that the possibilities of the tested hypotheses are zero. And for the second test (b), the test statistical value of -5.20 is also indicating a reducing tendency of causality relationship with little or no impact whatsoever, on COVID-1 pandemic. And based on this revelation, the study rejects these null hypotheses in acceptance of the fact that COVID-19 pandemic does Granger-cause and informs Nigerian Labour Outputs; and that Nigerian Labour' Outputs does not Granger-cause and/or informs COVID-19 pandemic by any means possible. The study arrived at this, going by the chi-squared test statistical value of -15.04 and -5.20 that are termed to be statistically significant. And since their p-values are 0.000 (which is lesser than the 0.05 (i.e., 5%, the critical value), the study therefore submit that significant but negative uni-directional causal relationship, exists between COVID-19 and Nigerian Labour Outputs, which answers our first research question and hypothesis.

Panel Data Regression Analysis

Table-2 below presents and discusses the outcomes of the econometric equations' panel data regression analysis, which answers the research question number 2 and its corresponding formulated hypothesis 2, which states: Does motivation (by compensatory means), impacts Nigerian workers' productivity? And that: **H0**₂: Motivation (by compensatory means), has no impact on Nigerian workers' productivity. To actualize this intention, multiple-variable panel data Econometric equation (Model) was adopted as previously applied by Luke (2021) in his study of corporate relationship. The model is therefore stated thus:

NWP = f(FS, MS, ADS)

If we specify it in Econometric format; it will then be:

NWP = ao + a1FS + a2MS + a3ADS + ut

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Where: NWP, a0, a1, a2, a3, ut represents Nigerian Workers' Productivity; Intercept terms 1, 2, and 3; impact tests of Motivation on Nigerian Workers' Productivity, using Compensatory indicators: FS (Food Support); Medical Support (MS); and After Death Support (ADS), then the error term respectively. The decision rule here as stated in the methodology is to reject the null hypothesis if the f-calculated is greater than the f-critical (i.e., the test table value) at 5% (0.05) level of significance.

Table 2: Econometric Equation Analysis Regression Analysis Results on Impact of Motivation on Nigerian Workers Productivity

Variables		Coefficient	Std. Error	Std. Error		t-Statistics		
Constant (ao) -		53247	3.368612	3.368612		-1.381354		
FS 5.02		1953	0.019774		10.11018		0.2808	
MS 6.56l		E-08 5.83E-09		11.25369		0.0000		
ADS 5.013		3386	0.012564	0.012564		10.06539		
AR(1)	1.65	9286	0.130175	0.130175		12.74662		
R-squared		0.940729		Mean dependent var		14.21177		
Adjusted R-squared		0.928251		S.D. dependent var		35.49828		
S.E. of regression		9.508569		Akaike info criterion		7.525316		
Sum squared resid		1717.845		Schwarz criterion		7.770743		
Log likelihood		-85.30379		F-statistic		75.3	75.39051	
Durbin-Watson stat		1.983739		β-coefficient		0.53	0.534000	

Source: Author's e-view software computation (2025).

From the results presented in Table 2 above, we can depict that autonomous NWP is Constant and negative when all other variables are held constant. Consequently, a unit change in NWP is a result of a positive change of about 5.021953 units in FS and vice-versa: less autonomous component when all other variables are held constant. Also, a positive unit change in MS also makes a positive change of about 6.56 units on NWP: less the autonomous component as all other variables held constant. Same applied to the last variable (ADS) tested on NWP, which indicates positive change of 5.013386 impacts on NWP. These results, indicates high level of significance and impacts of motivation, using the compensatory approach, via: Food supply in times of economic crisis, medical support for all staff and, most importantly, the affected, and after death support for the lost personnel on Nigerian Workers' Productivity (NWP). We are to also note that a unit change in NWP, resulted in a positive change of 5.013386 units in ADS, less the autonomous component, as all other variables in the mix, are held constant.

And if they are specified in econometric format, we therefore have the resulting equation as:

NWP = -4.653247 + 5.021953FS + 6.56MS + 5.013386ADS

T-Ratio = (-1.381354) (10.11018) (11.25369) (10.06539)

R-Squared = 0.940729, R - Squared Adjusted = 0.928251

D.W Stat =1.983739, f-stat = 75.39051, and β -coefficient value of 0.534.

In general, what the above statistical evidence are implying is that all variables tested on the endogenous variable of this study: NWP (Nigerian workers' productivity), and with each of them being an indicator of Motivation (a managerial technique to enhance workers' productivity), which this study tested, using its sub-set: Compensatory Approaches, therefore revealed that all of them (FS, MS, and ADS), tested significant and positive on endogenous variable: NWP (Nigerian Workers' Productivity) to answer our research question number 2 and its corresponding hypothesis 2. The study therefore rejects the second hypothesis and the logic for arriving at this resolution is based on

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the fact that the 3 tested exogenous variables' observed T-values are all positive and greater than the decision rule of thumb, which is 2.

Discussion of Findings

This study was set out to address the COVID-19 aftermath, and to suggest managerial approaches to ameliorate its multiplier effect on the Nigerian economy. The first of the test conducted, provides us with the answer to our research question number 1, which sought to investigate if causality relationship exists between COVID-19 and Nigerian labour' outputs. The result of Panel Granger's causality and relationship test ran, indicate significant evidence of the existence of a uni-directional negative, causality relationship between COVID-19 and Nigerian labour' outputs. This therefore implies that COVID-19 Pandemic is a strong factor with adverse impact on Nigerian workers outputs and even the Nigerian economy at large. This is because everyone values his/her lives and would prefer to stay alive and hope for a better day rather than being infected with COVID and die untimely, which de-motivate them to work and be pushed to offer more of their services to their organizations and their country.

The second test was set out to investigate impact of Motivation, using compensatory approaches to ascertain if food support (FS), medical support (MS), and after death support (ADS), can influence workers' job performance after the COVID-19 pandemic period. Tests were conducted to this effect, using econometric and regression approaches. Results indicate that significant and positive impact is what workers' motivation, through the compensatory means, have on workers' productivity. This simply means that effort compensation induces workers to offer more of their intellectual and kinetic services to their employers, towards an improved productivity after COVID-19 periods. This result therefore implies that if workers are well catered for before, during and after periods of eventualities, such group of workers will never hesitate to replicate such kind gesture given to them by their employers. And in broader sense, this could also assist the organization in retaining them for their quality services and could serve as a point of reference to other industrial competitors. In general, the revelations of this study, clearly upheld the suppositions of the three (3) adopted theoretical frameworks of this study (Pandemic Management; Event System; and Scientific Management theories).

Conclusion

Going by the accomplished mission of this study and their revelations, the study therefore concludes that:

- Uni-directional negative causal relationship exists between COVID-19 pandemic and Nigerian labour outputs.
- 2. Labour motivation, (using, compensatory managerial techniques), has significant and positive impacts on Nigerian workers' productivity.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study and its conclusions thereof, the study recommends that:

- 1. Institutional managers in all sectors of the Nigerian economy, should always be guided in their institutional planning and labour policy management, going by the revelations of this study, by setting out risk management mechanisms that will protect their work-forces from natural events' development (geographical and health unforeseen) at least to a logical and controllable extent.
- Institutional managers are enjoined to adopt motivation through compensatory means, as a clue and mechanism to job performance enhancement. This approach will gravely assist the nation in building quality productive and sustainable output system.

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