

COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD: THE FUTURE OF AFRICA

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Abstract

The Covid-19 pandemic is affecting global economies. Some key sectors of the world's economy are already experiencing a slowdown because of it. Tourism, air transport, education and the oil sectors are visibly impacted. Globalization, on the other hand, has become an integral of human existence. No nation of the world no matter how economically buoyant can live and grow in isolation. Covid-19 Pandemic and Globalization remains challenges that will preoccupy emerging nations of the world that aspire to attain the status of a developed nation. Drawing from the African experience and taking advantage of the rich scholarship on globalization in Africa, this research examines the threats posed by Covid-19 Pandemic and globalization on the continent's socio-economic development. More specifically, this paper gives an overview of how to resolve the crisis of Covid-19 Pandemic and globalization among African nations. The paper suggests that political stability, constant power supply, laws to fight corruption, human capital development, bilateral relation etc, are major factors that will catapult African nations to developed nations in this inevitable globalized world. It concludes that if necessary, measures are not put in place, Africa may be excluded in this era, and globalization of poverty rather than prosperity will occur. In the light of the researcher's findings, Covid-19 Pandemic is an additional "invention"

for socio-economic enslavement of the African people. To achieve these objectives, this study adopts the method of content analysis of relevant existing literature; materials, tables, and news reports to draw up conclusion based on the researcher's area of interest. Among other suggestions, this paper calls for international cooperation and collaboration in constructive responses to Covid-19 and to save Africa's economies from imminent collapse.

Keywords: *Covid-19, globalization, interdependency, pandemic, Africa.*

Introduction

The world is grappling with unprecedented levels of crises encompassing all sectors of life: health, economy, social life, religion, politics, and international relations. At the root of these complex challenges facing the world, Covid-19 spread across the globe infecting more than a million and killing thousands of people around the globe. The novel Corona virus (Covid-19) is a pandemic that was first reported by the officials in Wuhan City, China, in December, 2019. Since the outbreak, the pandemic has torched and ravaged almost all the countries of the world, including those of the African continent. The World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11, declared the outbreak as pandemic. The countries being worst hit by the pandemic, at least for now, are China, Italy, Iran, Spain, United States of America and the UK. China and South Korea are reported to have curbed the spread of the virus and reduced its impact on society and economy significantly. This trend has impelled series of cumulative and conjectural crisis in the international division of labour and global distribution of economic and political power; thereby qualifying basic African feature to be poverty, diseases, squalor, and unemployment among other crisis of under development.

The Covid-19 pandemic is affecting the entire world economy and that of Africa. Some key sectors of the African economy are already experiencing a slowdown because of the pandemic. Tourism, education, air transport, and the oil sectors are visibly impacted. As of October 17, 2020, the confirmed cases of Covid-19 from 55 African countries have reached 1,623,827. Reported deaths in Africa have

reached 39,296, and recoveries 1,336,069. South Africa has the most reported cases - 700,203, with deaths numbering 18,370. Other most-affected countries include Morocco (167,148), Egypt (105,159) Ethiopia (87,834), Nigeria (61,194) and Algeria (53,998). The numbers are compiled by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University using statistics from the World Health Organization and other international institutions as well national and regional public health departments.

Globalization means different things to different people. However, simply put, globalization is the movement of people, language, capital, goods, services, ideas etc around the world. Globalization is the process of international integration that is possible and achievable due to the increasing connectivity especially through modern technology, telecommunication and interdependence of the world's markets and businesses. In addition, globalization is said to be a process (or set of processes) that embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions, generating transcontinental or interregional flow and networks of activity, interaction, and power (Heild, et al., 2001) cited in (Egbule, 2017). Waters cited in Oloya and Egbule (2016) sees globalization as a social process in which the constraints of geography or social and cultural management recede and in which people become increasingly aware that they are receding. This definition suggests that the world has become almost without borders (borderless). Simply put, globalization is the transformation of the world into a global village.

African Socio-Economic Development and The Challenges of Covid-19 Pandemic

The impact of Covid-19 pandemic on the future of Africa is the thrust of this section. Hence, the following factors are examined briefly below:

Increased Rate of Unemployment: So many workers, business operators, and travelers in many African countries have been told to stay at home. The involuntarily staying at home has actually led to lost of jobs among many Africans. Furthermore, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has projected that, in a worst case scenario, economic activity for Africa as a whole would contract by

2.6 per cent, with negative impacts on the employment rate, and that estimated that four out of five businesses in Africa would be significantly affected by the Covid-19 pandemic (Economic Commission for Africa, 2020). In fact, the lockdown and social distancing rules had led to the increase unemployment among Africans, especially the private sector. Hence, this paper suggests income support policies for employees, both in the public and private sectors.

Loss of income: Millions of people around the world, particularly in Africa and developing countries, earn their daily bread from casual (informal) employment. This hand-to-mouth means of subsistence is the greatest victim of sudden closures of workplaces including streets where the majority of African labour force earns their living. This has also affected commodity exporters, especially those that are involved in key global value-chains such as fuel and horticulture exporters. Using estimates of Covid-19 related falls in global GDP and fuel prices, a decline of -1.4% in Africa's income with the worst declines observed in the economies.

Increase in the Rate of Violence against Women and Children: The novel Corona Virus pandemic (hereafter Covid-19) has unprecedented impacts on the incidence of sexual abuse and violence globally. During COVID-19 social distancing and stay-at-home orders expanded a current perpetrator's coercive control and power over their victim. With victims and perpetrators in close proximity, batterers will be able to increase their ability to be in control of decision-making, determine day-to-day outcomes, and monitor and socially isolate. In addition, because of poverty, many parents are unable to meet up with their financial obligations. Many of such impoverished parents encourage their children into labour, forgetting that they are jeopardizing their children's future. According to Owolabi (2012), poverty is the highest cause of child abuse in Africa. It has become a tradition for some poor families to send their children to rich men, especially those children they cannot cater for. Most often, these children are turned into sex machines, commercial sex workers and slaves.

Increase in Conflict and Crime: The saying that an idle mind is the Devil's workshop is an indisputable fact. In exploring the role of Covid-19 and the risk of Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), social distancing and stay-at-home orders will likely lead to increased conflict, disagreements, and arguments due to increased daily proximity of couples. This in turn could lead to an increased prevalence of common couple violence between both couple (Kaukinen, 2020). At the same time, drinking may increase the frequency or severity of male perpetrated violence against women. Clay and Parker (2020) note the importance of public health approaches that explore the public health effects of long-term social isolation related to Covid-19 on alcohol use and misuse noting the need to protect the most vulnerable individuals from excessive alcohol consumption during the pandemic. In addressing the connection between substance use and the stressors associated with Covid-19, Da, Im, and Schiano (2020) note the need to put in place awareness and telehealth strategies to curb what is likely to become a serious consequence of the corona virus pandemic. Additionally, a situation whereby able men and women are not gainfully employed (no suitable job to earn a living) has made parents to push their children into the streets to hawk – most children are raped in the process of hawking.

Hunger and Death: The lockdown in many countries had definitely consigned millions of families to starvation and vicious cycle of poverty, diseases and even death. Covid-19 has spread across the world since its presence was first reported in Wuhan, China in December 2019. By 12 June 2020, 418,294 Covid-19-related deaths and 7,420,520 laboratory-confirmed Covid-19 cases had been registered globally, reflecting not only the alarming pace of the spread of the virus, but also its severity. The World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a global pandemic on 11 March 2020. With its far-reaching geographical spread, the pandemic is projected to have devastating effects on the global economy, as attested by the projection of the International Monetary Fund in April 2020 that the world economy would contract sharply by 3 percent, and that the economy of sub-Saharan Africa would contract by 1.6 percent in 2020 (World Health Organization, 2020).

Covid-19 pandemic disrupted academic calendar: Prolonged school closures at all levels, combined with wide-spread economic hardship, risk undermining aspirations and potentials and widening inequalities. In sub-Saharan Africa, close to 90 per cent of students do not have access to household computers and 82 per cent are not able to get online. School closures have left over 330 million learners of all levels and over 8.5 million teachers, unable to learn or teach from home. While mobile phones can support young learners, around 56 million live in areas that are not served by mobile networks, and access numbers are consistently worse for girls and women. Even where computers are provided, unreliable power supply and poor internet connection, coupled with financial costs, undermine the impact of such investments. Increased internet reach can lessen the gap in education access through continued learning and provide a vital source of information and awareness about the pandemic.

Negative Impact of Globalization on African Continent

Although the positive impacts of globalization are numerous, we must note that not all that glitters is gold. It is not every trend in globalization that is favourable, especially in relation to developing countries. Today all manners of persons come into Africa with alien life-styles; all manners of pictures and films are beamed into Africa through the multi-cable channels. This ideology gave birth to anti-globalization campaign and agencies or institutions. The impact globalization cannot be entirely rosy. Hence, some African and non-African scholars see globalization as a tool for socio-economic enslavement of the continent. In this regard, it is important to outline the shortcoming associated with the process. Some of the “pains” of globalization are briefly discussed below:

Globalization has the capacity to boost global criminality. Among the woes of globalization is its role in spreading such unsavory phenomena as illicit sex trade, cyber or internet crimes, internet cultism, global terrorism, regional insurgency, illicit drugs, child labour, spread of violent movies, illegal migration (especially through the Mediterranean Sea) etc. The advancement in technology have aided international crime rate like 419, internet fraud (Yahoo fraud, Yahoo Yahoo or Yahoo plus). In fact, the internet provides the

opportunity for the proliferation of cyber crime, which is a global phenomenon, and Africa is not immune from it.

Globalization can also lead to closure of some home-grown industries when imported goods are allowed into a country. It can discourage local manufacturers who may not be able to compete with foreign manufacturers. While growing trade has generally created more jobs, the parallel growth in competition has forced many companies to fire their workers in order to cut costs, boost efficiency and increase profit. In addition, the use of robot in production – robotic technology, has increased the rate of unemployment. Besides, today, large-scale production has become knowledge -intensive rather than labour – intensive; hence, the services of unskilled workers are in low demand.

The worldwide movement of people occasioned by the process of globalization encourages worldwide epidemics (Nwanne & Afigwe, 2015). According to Aimumu (2003), HIV first publicized predominantly as an American problem, has turned full circle, and has not only been dubbed “of African origin” but an African problem, already claiming a casualty figure exceeding the total number of deaths from all wars in Africa put together. Also, Africa now accounts for 95% of all AIDS orphans. International travel has helped to spread some of the deadliest infectious diseases. A good example of these is HIV/AIDS. The rate of tuberculosis (TB) among foreign-born persons in the United States was 9.5 times that of U.S.-born persons in 2006. Starting in Asia, the Black Death killed at least one-third of Europe's population in the 14th century (Los Angeles Times, 2007). The Covid-19 pandemic is a recent example.

Over dependence on foreign goods at the expense of locally produced (domestic) goods slows down economic development. Globalization is accused of entrenching poverty in poor countries, and ruthlessly grinding the poor everywhere. It does not only widen the gap between countries, but also, actually like “Dracula” thrive on the blood of the poor. A system of dependency, unequal exchange and underdevelopment had been fostered by globalization. The third world countries are therefore relegated to the lowest level in the world economy. The result is that these countries are marginalized and dominated both economically as well as politically.

Trafficking in persons, which the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2001) describes as “the underside of globalization” is one of the greatest human rights challenges of our time. The affected persons, especially women and girls, are placed in brothels, private homes, tourist establishments and street corners, where they are forced to offer sexual services for money. The destination countries of African women who are transported to Europe for sex work, have usually been Italy, Belgium, Holland, Spain, France and Germany, with Italy being the most significant (Olubukola, 2012). Human trafficking for commercial sex purposes increases the spread of diseases in developing countries, especially African countries.

Sexual deviances that were alien to our culture have been learnt on the internet and are now being practiced by our people. Example are indecent dressing, nudity, pre-marital sexual relationship, gang raping, homosexual, bi-sexual acts, etc. In fact, globalization has encouraged illicit trade in drugs, prostitution, pornography, human smuggling, dumping of dangerous waste and depletion of the environment by unscrupulous entrepreneurs. According to Mezieobi (2018) under aged children can easily access pornographic movies and improper/indecent pictures and photographs on the internet though YouTube and so on.

Brain drain is another big problem for many developing continents like Africa in this era of globalization. Many African students have opportunities to pursue their studies abroad. However, at the end of their programmes, many of them do not return home. Consequently, the country in general, and the institutions in particular have lost those talented citizens (Bonga and Dafiaghor, 2014).

Saving Africa’s Economy from Imminent Collapse amidst Covid-19 Pandemic

A strong growing, sustainable economy is the desire of every nation of the world. To mitigate and have a robust recover from the ill effects of the Covid-19, the following measures are indispensable:

Strengthen Bilateral Relationship: Africa, for instance, despite her riches (material and human resources) has not been very successful in wooing investors to the continent. A significant

bottleneck for economic development in many countries of the region is the poor physical infrastructure. The most important things to reiterate about the region's economy is that it remains undeveloped and is becoming increasingly marginalized in a competitive global economy where other developing regions are making the fastest headway. Most developing countries, including the African continent, cannot generate enough investment capital from within and are largely failing to attract foreign investments.

Diversification of the Economy: The over dependence of a particular sector of the economy among the developing countries is a major threat to their economic growth and national development. For example, before the discovery of oil in Nigeria in 1956, she was famous in her agrarian economy through which cash crops like palm produce, cocoa, rubber, timber, groundnuts, were exported, thus making Nigeria a major exporter in that respect. In addition, Nigeria had nineteen million head of cattle: the largest in Africa. Nigeria is no longer a major producer of either of the cash crops mentioned above. Another huge blow to crude oil exporters was America's reduction in the number of barrels she imports from other nations. To curb this menace, the author expresses optimism that economic diversification which demands active participation in wide range of sectors, and firmly integrated are better able to generate robust growth and great potential to increase Africa's resilience and contribute to achieving and sustaining long economic growth and development in the affected countries.

Mechanization of Agriculture: Today, agriculture in Africa has suffered from long years of neglect, mismanagement, inconsistent and poorly conceived government policies, lack of government meaningful incentive to farmers, lack of basic infrastructure and many bureaucratic bottlenecks in executing policies and agricultural programmes among government agencies. As a major sector of the economy, the indispensability of the agricultural sector can never be over-stressed. Mechanized agriculture is the process of using agricultural machinery to mechanize the work of agriculture, greatly increasing farmers' productivity. In modern times, powered machinery has replaced many jobs formerly carried out by manual labour or by working animals such as oxen, horses and mules.

Mechanization of agriculture was one of the factors responsible for urbanization and industrial economies. Besides improving production efficiency for economic growth and development, mechanization encourages large scale production and improves the quality of farm produce (Egbule & Ogudo, 2015).

Provision of Employment: Employment is a situation in which remuneration in cash or in kind is received in exchange for active and direct personal participation in the production process. According to Uduh (2010) employment is an engagement or involvement in activities to overcome idleness upon which remuneration is received to enable the recipient afford a decent living. Employment is known as the most powerful instrument of meeting human needs and addressing the incidence of social vices like, child abuse, kidnapping, prostitution, bribery and corruption, political thuggery, rape, cultism, assassination and many others. The benefits of the employee will bring about improved living conditions, such as housing, insurance, retirement benefits, sick leave, social security, profit sharing, funding education and specialized benefits.

Industrialization: When we talk of industrialized nations, we are usually referring to countries such as the U.S.A., UK, Japan, West Germany, China, Canada, Russia and few others. However, one thing these countries have in common is that their economies are characterized by a relatively large manufacturing sector and highly developed technology, both of which are applied to the development of other sectors of the economy, namely, agriculture, mining, commerce and services (Agu & Udu, 2008). According to Anyanwuocha (2011), industrialization is a phenomenon in the development of nations, characterized by the growth of machine and power tools production, the growth of mechanical and technical skills (technology) required for industrial production with attendant large – scale production, all of which lead to changes in the social and economic organization of society. The major gain of industrialization is the provision of modern sector employment. This will help to quashing the effects of unemployment in emerging countries.

Improvement in Power Generation, Transmission and Distribution: Most industrialized nations of the world boast of adequate, regular and efficient power supply. Adequate power supply

is a key factor to industrial growth and functional economic activities. Developing nations should therefore make proper investment in the power sector. Not only that it will help boost economic activities in the formal and informal sector of the economy, it will act as a motivating factor to attracting foreign investors into the country. Adequate and uninterrupted power supply is very fundamental to key in into the global world (Ikem & Ebegha, 2013).

Political Stability and Good Governance: Political stability is a sine qua non to meaningful development, as a peaceful climate in a polity is an essential prerequisite for national development. This has implications for burying our unproductive differences, eschewing parochialism and selfishness, and coming together for national development via mass mobilization, hard work and good governance. Nations like the United States, Japan, China, Germany and Russia which have hard work and patriotism as aspects of their national ethos, have their names engraved in world history as developed nations.

Provision of Adequate Legislation to Fight Corruption: Corruption is a cancer that has eaten deep into the fabric of most nations of the world. Hence, the need to fight this menace through the parliament and adequate legislation cannot be underrated. A number of scholars have advanced a number of ways of curbing corruption in the developing countries of the world. Among these are strengthening mechanisms for monitoring and punishment, increase accountability and adequate legislation.

In Nigeria, for instance, the established institutions and agencies like the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC), National Agency for Prevention of Traffic in Human Persons (NAPTHP) and many others are good steps toward fighting corruption. According to Akasiri (2015), modern legislatures perform over-sight functions and provide institutional mechanism for ensuring accountability, transparency, equity, fair play, inclusiveness and thus good governance. The role of the legislature in curbing corruption is fundamental in emerging economies for socio-political and economic development.

Conclusion

Since its emergence in Wuhan, China in December 2019, Covid-19 has affected almost all the continents of the world including Africa. The pandemic have affected African economies in various ways and have disrupted air travel, tourism, trade, business operations and global supply chains. If developed countries with “advanced” health care systems and well-trained health workers are unable to cope with the carnage of Covid-19; Africa, with a very poor health systems, fragile economies and abject poverty may find it exceedingly difficult to tackle the pandemic. The intertwined phenomena of globalization and Covid-19 are still posing serious threat to Africa’s development. The low level of literacy and lack of awareness, among the majority of the population regarding the mode of transmission of the virus, methods of prevention and limited understanding of the magnitude of the immanent destruction is another major issue to be addressed. However, if the recommendations in this paper and those by other scholars will be implemented, I strongly believe that Africans will overcome the challenges posed by the pandemic and globalization.

Suggestions

To resolve the crisis of Covid-19 Pandemic and globalization among African nations, the following recommendations are given below:

- Active Labour Market Policies (ALMPs) should be revisited and implemented in Africa to cushion the effects of unemployment resulting from the lockdown and social distancing.
- There is need for wage subsidies or Employment Support Protection Fund (ESPF) to enhance the wages of the private sector employees. Provision of social security and keeping workers on payrolls for a given period is also imperative.
- International cooperation and collaboration were among the most common emergency response mechanisms in the past. This paper is equally recommending the same.
- Exploring African medicine is indispensable; the Madagascar experience as a case study.
- The various ministries of health and relevant agencies should improve on the investment of health infrastructures, health centres, modern equipment, as well as creating strong public

health awareness through mass media, traditional palaces, market places, transport stations and religious institutions.

- The fear of globalization is beginning of economic woes. Hence, African governments should adopt a proactive approach to globalization so that the challenges it poses and the benefits it offers can be foreseen and planned for.
- The paper also strongly recommends the indispensability of respect for human dignity. This will address the high of violence against women and child because of the stay at home policy.
- Additionally, man's interaction with animals (especially pets) should be minimized.
- Africans should develop a stronger relationship with God by concentrating on personal religious activities, and the need for people of all professions and religious faiths to spread God's love and hope to family members, neighbors, friends, and anyone else in need,

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