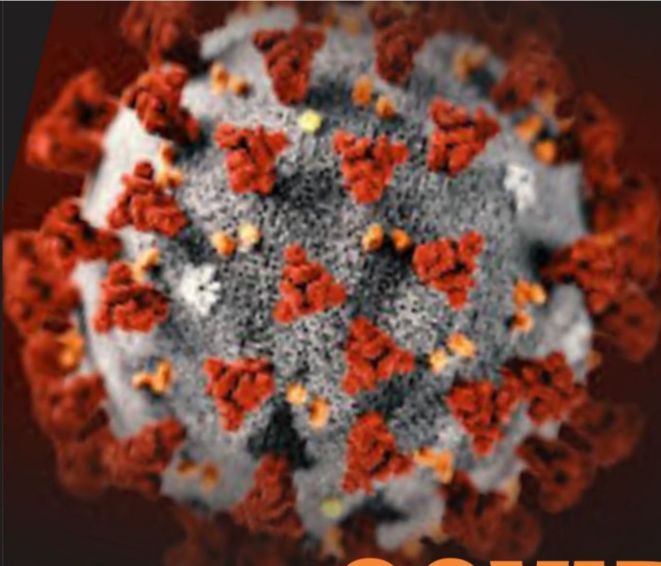


COVID-19 AND AFROCENTRIC PERSPECTIVES: HEALTH AND ECONOMIC IMPLICATIONS



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Proceedings of the International
Conference of the Association
for the Promotion of African Studies
on the Impact of Covid-19 on Africa
and the Quest for Afrocentric Perspectives
17th September, 2020

Editors:

Ikechukwu Anthony Kanu
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20904, Maryland,
United States of America

DEDICATION

To all Frontline workers-living and dead.

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INTRODUCTION

It can be said that for some decades now, the human ingenuity has never been seriously put to question except for the year 2020. The year, 2020, is a year that can never be forgotten in hurry. It is a year the continued existence of humanity was seriously interrogated. It is a year of COVID-19!

Towards the later part of 2019, precisely in November, a very deadly virus struck the city of Wuhan in China. Just like a wild fire, the virus spread to other parts of the world. Many lives were lost in a twinkling of an eye. Fear, panic and sorrow gripped everybody on the face of the earth. Both the scientists and the religious believers, the rich and poor, the educated and the uneducated – all felt the excruciating impacts of COVID-19. Every passing day, we received the news of thousands and millions of people that died as a result of COVID-19 across the globe. At present, COVID-19 seemed to have no cure. Its adverse effects appeared to have overpowered, at the time, the ingenuity and expertise of our medical and health practitioners and researchers. The world appeared to be helpless in the face of the rising number of COVID-19 deaths. Some people felt the world was coming to end.

In the midst of the tensions and confusions created by the dreaded Corona Virus Disease 2019, the Association for the Promotion of African Studies (APAS), in collaboration with FEEDBACKHALL, gathered scholars across the African nations to brainstorm on the theme: The Impact of COVID-19 on Africa: Opportunities, Challenges and Solutions. The conference was held virtually on 17th September, 2020.

The book in your hands is one of the proceeds of the said APAS conference. As Africans, APAS scholars believe that there are Afrocentric perspectives to the health and economic challenges posed by the dreaded COVID-19. Arguably, from varied points of view, individual authors outlined some health and economic implications of COVID-19 on African nations. Some solutions and recommendations are also made in this regard. It is strongly believed that this book will

bring a turnaround in African health and economic sectors especially in a period of pandemic such as COVID-19.

COVID-19 AND AFRICAN TRADITIONAL MEDICINES

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Abstract

Any pandemic outbreak is a global health emergency that requires efficient and viable approaches to manage and contain. The usual scientific response to the health crisis is to search for scientific vaccines to combat a novel pandemic. The World Health Organization (WHO) has been in the front line of championing scientific solutions to the COVID-19 pandemic. Claims by some African countries to have discovered herbal remedies for COVID-19 have been met with scathing remarks by the WHO that is demanding scientific publications for causal explanations of alleged curative COVID-19 herbal drugs. But a developer/discoverer of a COVID-19 herbal remedy that has been clinically tested and certified to be effective in treating and managing COVID-19 may be unable to offer through publications scientific explanations of its causal efficacy at the time of its discovery. The aim of this paper is to argue for approval of COVID-19 herbal medicines by health authorities in African countries on pragmatic grounds. The method of analysis is employed to argue that some African traditional medicines have immune boosting capability. Research shows that though herbal drugs are no substitute for synthetic drugs/vaccines that are yet to be

developed, they are effective in boosting the body's innate immune system which is necessary for combating the novel coronavirus at its early stage in the human system. This paper recommends that health authorities in African countries should develop and legitimize their own efficient validation systems for evaluating the safety and efficacy of African traditional medicines for management and treatment of COVID-19 and other virulent diseases in Africa, while waiting for the development of COVID-19 synthetic vaccines.

Keywords: *Africa, African Traditional Medicines, COVID-19, Immune System*

Introduction

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is caused by the novel coronavirus known as severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) – one of the strains of coronavirus which comprises a large family of viruses that are prevalent in animals and human beings. It is a zoonotic disease and thus can be transmitted from animal-to-human and from human-to-human. It is primarily spread through droplets, close contact from person-to-person, and contact with fomites. COVID-19, whose outbreak first happened in Wuhan city China in December 2019, has killed off 38, 830 people in Africa and decimated 1, 093, 140 people globally as of 15 October 2020 (ECDC, 2020).

Presently, there is no officially approved drug or vaccine for the treatment of COVID-19. Any novel pandemic requires the development of scientifically proven drugs or vaccines for its treatment. The scientific process of verification and validation of new vaccines for the pandemic is usually rigorous and lengthy. It is standard practice that vaccines have to undergo animal tests which take at least two years before extensive clinical trials in healthy human volunteers to determine their safety and efficacy. Besides, scientific publications of clinically tested and certified efficacious herbal drugs

as well as the validation of the results of the study by further research are required to gain global acceptability of the drugs. The COVID-19 pandemic is a global health emergency. The surging scourge and death toll of the virulent disease make it expedient to adopt a viable and efficient approach to managing and treating the pandemic at the early stage of the viral infection.

Innate (or natural) immune system with which every human person is born must be balanced and active to respond effectively to harmful alien antigens (substances) of the novel coronavirus at the initial encounter with the virus to ensure a quick recovery from the infection. Besides, a healthy immune response to the virus can trigger antibodies in the blood to enter the respiratory system where the virus resides and prevent the virus from using its spike protein to attach to human cells, thus making the virus unable to propagate and replicate (Sharif & Bridle, 2020). Traditional herbalists or health practitioners have advocated for centuries the value of using a combination of herbal medicines and single extracts and medicinal plants to boost innate immune system (Busia, 2005).

Clinical studies have shown that African herbal tonics and other traditional medicines have the capability to regulate immunity and boost immune response to viral infections and other diseases (Ngcobo, Gqaleni, Viny & Cele, 2017). African traditional medicines (ATMs) refer to African indigenous health knowledge, beliefs and practices which involve the use of herbs shrubs, fruits, vegetables, minerals, stems, roots, animals, and spiritual techniques for the treatment and prevention of diseases and illnesses, and for the maintenance of wellness (WHO, 2019). It is estimated that 60-80 percent of people living in African countries use ATMs as their primary source of health services (Mwambo et al., 2007; Payyappallimana, 2011; Kabyemela, 2020). For instance, a study conducted by Ateba, Kaya, Pitso and Ferim (2012) on Batswana (a major African indigenous ethnic group in the North-West Province of South Africa) indigenous plant species showed that Batswana people use plant species medicines, among other things, for the treatment of kinds of diseases and illnesses.

Traditional and alternative/complementary medicines often serve as the primary treatment and management of prevalent diseases in Africa

such as malaria, typhoid, HIV/AIDS, diabetes, syphilis, gonorrhea, high blood pressure, cancer, tuberculosis, arthritis, rheumatism, skin diseases, body weaknesses, insomnia, and so forth. According to Adodo (2020), for example, herbal medicines developed and produced by Pax Herbal Clinic and Research Laboratory at EWU in Edo State of Nigeria have been effectively used for years for the management and treatment of HIV, hepatitis B, Tuberculosis, hypertension, diabetes, malaria, asthma, male and female infertility, prostrate problems, and so forth. Reasons adduced to account for their use and preference are, inter alia, their efficacy or effectiveness, affordability, availability, accessibility, and the fact that they are natural remedies with little or no harmful side effects, compared to synthetic orthodox medicines (Romero-Daza, 2002; Mbwambo et al., 2007; Orisatoki & Oguntibeju, 2010; Payyappallimana, 2011; Gyasi et al., 2011; Kuuribe & Domanbau, 2012).

The aim of this paper is to argue that some African herbal tonics and other remedies are effective in balancing innate immune system needed to combat strange pathogens like the novel coronavirus. The rest of this paper will first explore pragmatism as framework for recommending the approval of ATMs for use in treating and managing COVID-19 and other prevalent diseases in Africa. Second, it will argue that some ATMs have immune boosting capability. Third, it will thereafter acknowledge that ATMs are no substitute for synthetic vaccines to show that COVID-19 vaccines are still needed to achieve herd immunity and prevent the spread of the virulent disease. Finally, the paper will conclude that ATMs that can improve innate immune system to fight the novel coronavirus should be subjected for safety, toxicological and efficacy tests for approval and regulation for the treatment and management of COVID-19 at the early stage of the viral infection.

Theoretical Framework

Pragmatism serves as a framework in this paper for proposing the approval of African traditional medicines for use in treating and managing COVID-19 in Africa. Pragmatism, otherwise known as functionalism or instrumentalism, is a philosophical theory

propounded by Charles Sanders Pierce but later developed and popularized by William James. Pragmatism holds that an idea, knowledge or belief is true only if it is functional, that is, if it yields a satisfactory result. Put differently, it is the practical consequences or usefulness (utility) of an idea or knowledge that makes it true and meaningful. Applying pragmatism to knowledge inquiry, Pierce (1988) states that our pragmatic approach to scientific philosophical or theological question should be: "Consider what effects, which might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of those effects is the whole of our conception of the object" (p. 266).

James (1975) insists that only knowledge or ideas that practically useful are true and meaningful. In other words, true knowledge or concept finds expression in its practical consequences. He explicates thus:

The pragmatic method in such cases is to try to interpret each notion by tracing its respective practical consequences. What difference would it practically make to anyone if this notion rather than that notion were true? If no practical difference whatever can be traced, then the alternatives mean practically the same thing, and all dispute is idle. Whenever a dispute is serious, we ought to be able to show some practical differences that follow from one side or to the other's being right (p. 90).

James (1975) argues further that the truth of an idea is not a static quality that is intrinsic to the idea. What makes an idea or knowledge true is its ability to produce a satisfactory result or successfully meet our expectations. As he puts it:

True ideas are those that we can assimilate, validate, corroborate, verify. False ideas are those we cannot. That is the practical difference it makes to us to have true ideas; that, therefore, is the meaning of truth, for it is all that truth is known as. This thesis is what I have to defend. The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth happens to an idea. It becomes true, is made true by events, its verity is in fact an event, a process: the process namely of its verifying itself, its verification. Its validity is the process of its validation (p. 97).

Therefore, pragmatism accepts as true any proposition (scientific, philosophical or theological) that is practically successful or works satisfactorily. John Dewey, an influential pragmatist thinker, maintains that effective thinking and ideas are instrumental in solving practical human problems, for “our minds are fundamentally problem-solving instruments” (Stumpf & Fieser, 2003, p. 406). He insists that inquiry into any knowledge claim should be empirical in method and practically motivated (Ome & Amam, 2004). Another influential pragmatist thinker, Richard Rorty, holds that the function of the human mind is to produce practical ways of living and so truth is simply “what passes for good belief” (Misak, 2002, p. 13).

Pragmatism rejects fixed formula or principles, static knowledge and closed systems, and insists that there are many concrete successful actions in the truth process. Hence, James makes a distinction between what he calls tough-minded and tender-minded approaches to truth. A tough-minded approach would consider more scientific behaviour in the truth process, while a tender-minded approach would consider less scientific behaviour in the truth process (Stumpf & Fieser, 2003). Pragmatism adopts scientific attitude in seeking true knowledge in terms of verification. It differs from science in that it insists that our approach to knowledge should be multi-faceted, rather than being limited to rigid scientific verification and validation procedures. What determines true knowledge is its practical success or utility which can be obtained through different approaches. Utility, workability or successful result is therefore the test of truth, for the pragmatist (Eboh, 1990). The truth of an idea or knowledge is based on its experiential or practical usefulness. In the final analysis, truth is what works.

African Traditional Medicines and Immune System

The immune system (IS) is a complex network of interacting cells and proteins that defends the body against disease-causing viruses, bacteria and other organisms by identifying alien antigens (live or inactivated) and develop a defense (immune response) against them. It is therefore the body’s defensive system against antigens and infections. It prevents or limits infections from potentially harmful

pathogens like viruses and bacteria. The IS uses white blood cells, which consist primarily of macrophages, B-lymphocytes and T-lymphocytes to fight infections.

The IS recognizes and destroys or tries to destroy substances that contain antigens. It recognizes HLA antigens in the human body's cells as normal and does not usually react against them. But it reacts against strange antigens on the surface of viruses by identifying them as dangerous and stimulating antibodies to attack them. In responding to a novel pathogen like coronavirus, the innate immune system needs to be balanced and active to trigger symptoms like fever and mucus or a runny nose needed for body recovery, symptoms are a sign that the innate immune system is effectively working – that it is fighting back against the virus. For example, to have a fever means to have a very high temperature which makes one's body too hot and uncomfortable for the virus to replicate. A runny nose helps to flush out the pathogen, thus ensuring quick recovery from the viral infection.

Some ATMs have beneficial effects on the innate immune system in that they help to maintain healthy immune function or response to novel pathogens like SARS-CoV-2. Research has established that some African traditional or herbal medicines boost the body's immune and hormonal systems. Research carried out by Ngcobo, Gqaleni and Cele (2017) to evaluate the immune effects of African traditional energy tonics using peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs), THP-1 monocytes, and bacteria infected rat found that the tonics stimulate secretion of cytokines without any significant toxicity. Cytokines (proteins produced by cells) interact with cells of the IS to regulate immunity or the body's response to diseases and infections as well as various inflammatory responses.

Again, the result of a clinical study by Ngcobo and Gqaleni (2015) using *Phela*, a traditional South Africa immune booster formulated by traditional healers, which was conducted on 500 HIV positive and AIDS patients through controlled observation showed an increase in the overall quality of life of the patients, some from as low 30% to 100%, indicative of immune boosting properties. The study demonstrated that “the potential uses of immune boosters in clinical medicine does not only apply in treating immunodeficiency caused by HIV and AIDS but also can be useful in managing tuberculosis (TB),

various forms of cancer and various other diseases that can be managed by modulating the immune response” (Ngcobo & Gqaleni 2015, p. 2).

Symbolismic Pharmaceutical Laboratories (SPL) founded by Rev. Fr. Professor Bona Uchenna Umeogu has been producing traditional drugs known as “Metaphysico-Communion Living Drugs” for the treatment of various diseases and illnesses. The SPL has herbal drugs known as Hirta Mentizoid and Clopizogyil syrup that are effective in managing and treating symptoms associated with COVID-19 such as catarrh, cough and sore throat (Umeogu, 2019). Hirta Mentizoid is made from plants: Mistletoe (*Viscum cruciatum*), lemon grass (*Cymbopogon citratus*), *odaa opue* (*Bryophyllum pinnatum*), and sand paper tree (*Ficus exasperata*).

Clopizogyil syrup is produced from plants: lemon grass (*Cymbopogon citratus*), bitter kola (*Garcinia kola*), *eucalyptus* leaf/southern blue gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*), burdock plant (*Arctium lappa*), and shoe flower/shoeblackplant (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*). Besides, the SPL produces a herbal drug known as immune efficiency vaccine that is used for the management and treatment of HIV/AIDS and other kinds of infections (Umeogu, 2019). The vaccine is made from plants: *Ede oku* garlic wonderful kola nut (*Celocasia esculenta*), garlic (*Allium sativum* L.), *ogbono*/bush mango/African mango (*Irvingia gabonensis*), *moringa*/drumstick tree (*Moringa oleifera*), lemon grass (*Cymbopogon citratus*), and bitter kola (*Garcinia kola*).

A study by Institute of Africa and Diaspora Studies (IADS) and Nigeria Institute of Medical Research (NIMR) shows that Nigerians use ATMs as a preliminary to prevention of COVID-19. Common natural supplements used by Nigerians are lemon (*Citrus lemon*), ginger (*Zingiber officinale*), garlic (*Allium sativum* L.), and turmeric (*Curcuma longa*) (IADS, 2020). They are taken by either boiling or extracting active ingredients through blending and sieving of sediments. The active ingredients are usually warmed daily or refrigerated to prolong the use of them. Other herbs used by Nigerians are neem leaf (*Azadirachia indica*), paw paw leaf (*Carica papaya*), guava leaf (*Psidium guajava*), lemon grass (*Cymbopogon citratus*), scent leaf (*Ocimum gratissimum*), bitter leaf (*Vernonia amygdalina*),

dextox-tea, anisea (*Pimpinella anisum*), and wormwood leaf (*Artemisia absinthium*) (AIDS, 2020).

Some of these ATMs have strong antiseptic qualities. For instance, lemon juice contains carboxylic acid (R-COOH) that can regulate blood circulation and high blood pressure, reduce blood clotting, and protect narrow arteries. Drinking plenty of lemon tea helps to stimulate human body to produce IS cells – antibodies. A sliced lemon taken with warm water can effectively kill malignant or cancerous cells without affecting healthy cells. This can eliminate the coronavirus at its early stage before it reaches lungs. A COVID-19 patient/victim can therefore recover from the viral infection, especially when its symptoms are mild, when treated with this lemon extract at the early stage of the infection in the human system.

Pax Herbal Clinic and Research Laboratories at EWU in Edo State of Nigeria has developed a COVID-19 herbal drug known as PAX HERBAL CUGZIN for the management and treatment of symptoms associated with COVID-19 (Anetor, 2020). The herbal drug contains rich African plants and herbs such as *Garcinia kola* (bitter kola), *Curcuma longa* (turmeric), and *Zingiber officianale* (ginger). These herbs and plants have antiviral and immunodulatory agents that help to stimulate antibodies. The director of the clinic and laboratories, Rev. Fr. Anselm Adodo, recently claims that the herbal remedy has been approved by the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC) as immune booster against COVID-19 (Anetor, 2020).

What is more, the Malagasy Institutes of Applied Research has developed and produced a herbal drink called COVID-Organics (CVO) from a medicinal plant known as sweet wormwood (*Artemisia annua*) for the treatment and management of COVID-19. The herbal remedy, which has been clinically tested and certified to be effective in treating and managing COVID-19 by the Madagascan health authority using its own efficient knowledge and validation system, has been ordered by presidents of some other African countries like Equatorial Guinea, Uganda, Tanzania, Senegal, and Guinea Bissau for the treatment and management of COVID-19 cases in their respective countries. The development of a COVID-19 herbal remedy by tiny Madagascar is a shining example of African ingenuity and rich natural

endowments which need an enabling environment and support of the African governments to thrive.

What each African country needs to do is to develop its own system of validating and legitimizing the use of herbal medicines for the treatment and management of COVID-19 and other common diseases in Africa without compromising standards of clinical trials to determine the efficacy and safety of herbal remedies. The problem with the scientific validation procedures is that scientific publications of clinically tested herbal tonics as well as the validation of the results of the study by further research are required before the World Health Organization (WHO) can endorse them for global use. For instance, the WHO demanded a scientific publication of Madagascar's curative herbal tonics even after the herbal remedy had been tested and certified by the Madagascar government to be efficacious against COVID-19.

The necessity of scientific publications of COVID-19 herbal remedies is to show their causal efficacy and offer causal explanations for their efficacy. However, herbal medicines may prove to be effective in treating and managing diseases, while discovers/developers may not be able to offer scientific explanations (the whys and the wherefores) of their effectiveness. For instance, Africans' progenitors used neem (*Azadirachta indica*) leaves to treat malaria, but did not know the causal agent responsible for curing malaria and thus could not offer any scientific explanations for the efficacy of neem leaves. But, today, we know that the neem plant contains quinine that cures malaria caused by malaria parasites that are carried by female anopheles mosquitoes.

So, scientific explanations of immune-boosting herbal medicines that have been clinically tested and certified to be effective against COVID-19 may not be provided at the time of discovery and development of them. Such herbal remedies that have successfully undergone clinical trials should be endorsed for use on pragmatic grounds – the fact that it has shown to be practically effective in balancing or improving innate immune system for the treatment and management of COVID-19. It therefore behoves national health authority in each African country to subject any alleged COVID-19

curative herbal drugs or tonics to clinical examinations to determine and confirm their efficacy and safety for the treatment and management of COVID-19 in Africa.

Synthetic Vaccines and Immune Boosting of ATMs

ATMs that have immune boosting capability against COVID-19 are no substitute for COVID-19 synthetic vaccines. Unlike immune boosting herbal remedies for COVID-19, development of COVID-19 vaccines will help to achieve herd immunity – the point at which a population is sufficiently immune to a disease to prevent its circulation (Krisch, 2020). Humans need synthetic COVID-19 vaccines to be vaccinated or immunized against the pandemic to attain herd immunity to the pandemic. A population achieves herd immunity to COVID-19 when it develops adaptive immunity through immunization or vaccination against the novel coronavirus or the viral infection (COVID-19) itself. COVID-19 vaccines that are immunogenic (produce a robust immune response), protective and safe are required for Africans to be immune to the viral infection to forestall further spread of the novel coronavirus across African countries.

Development of highly effective vaccines for a novel pandemic requires characterization on the antigenicity and immunogenicity of the causal agent of the pandemic. Coronaviruses contain large polyproteins that may serve as antigens that trigger immune responses in infected humans. Accordingly, structural proteins of a virus which are capable of inducing antibody responses in virus-infected humans as well as neutralizing antibodies against a virus in the infected humans serve as antigens and immunogens for developing vaccines for the treatment and prevention of a viral infection. For instance, a coronavirus (SARS-CoV) identified as the causal agent of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) contains four structural proteins which include spike (S), nucleocapsid (N), membrane (M), and envelope (E) proteins encoded in RNA genome (He & Jiang, 2005) for virus replication.

These proteins cause virus replication by modifying cell processes of the host and “may induce humoral and cellular immune responses during viral infections” (He & Jiang, p. 21). Coronavirus

spike protein is generally “the major antigen for a subunit vaccine design, as it can induce neutralizing antibodies and protective immunity.” Vaccines help human IS to develop immunity by imitating an infection which, rather than causes an illness, prompts the IS to produce protein molecules (antibodies or immunoglobins) through B-lymphocytes, and T-lymphocytes (cell-mediated immunity that facilitates the elimination of foreign substances – antigens. Vaccines (live or killed) for viral infections are basically made by attenuating disease-causing viruses in a laboratory, or inactivating the viruses (whole or fragment) during the process of producing the vaccines.

Live viral vaccines produced from attenuated virus strains are capable of replicating in the human host and inducing a protective immune response or producing immunity, but do not usually cause illnesses. Inactivated (killed) vaccines are non-replicating vaccines. They do not contain live components of pathogens and thus the vaccines’ antigens cannot replicate in the host humans. Replicating vaccines can be made by purifying and identifying viral antigens after identifying the peptide sites encompassing the major antiseptic sites of viral antigens. Non-replicating vaccines produced in this way are called subunit vaccines. What we are driving at is that a vaccine is specifically designed to fight off a particular pathogen. It does not only boost humans’ immune response, but also protect humans from a specific strain of virus. This is because weakening (or reducing) mutations of or the virulence of pathogens, or inactivating viral antigens capable of producing an immune response ensures the suppression of excessive immune reactions and the treatment of viral infections. In the final analysis, immune boosting herbal remedies for COVID-19 are not alternatives to COVID-19 vaccines.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have argued that the innate immune system needs to be improved or balanced to maintain a healthy immune response to novel pathogens like the new coronavirus. We have shown some ATMs that are capable of stimulating and boosting innate body’s defence force against disease-causing viruses, bacteria and other organisms. Though immune boosting herbal medicines are no

substitute for COVID-19 synthetic vaccines that are yet to be developed, they are effective in managing and treating COVID-19 symptoms at the early stage of the viral infection. Research has shown that African herbal tonics and drugs are effective in boosting the innate immune system to combat viral infections like COVID-19 at their early stage in the human system. It is on pragmatic grounds that this paper recommends that African traditional medicines that are claimed to be potent in boosting innate immune system should be subjected to clinical examinations by the national health authority in each African country for possible validation, approval and regulation for use in Africa for the treatment and management of COVID-19 and other viral infections.

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COVID-19 AND THE IMPERATIVE OF PRIORITIZING HEALTH AND EDUCATION SECTORS IN AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

Against the backdrop that the basic human needs, food, shelter and clothing, invariably correlate with human health and educational concerns, serious improvement in human health and the development of human intellectual or cognitive capacities remain fundamental. Regrettably, there is an observable negligence of these aspects of life in many African societies. Prior to the COVID-19 experience, the need to give attention to these fundamental aspects of life received very minimal consideration in many African countries, since many African leaders are considerably comfortable and consider the provision of basic amenities neither a legal obligation on their part nor the rights of the citizens, but a mere demonstration of benevolence. The COVID-19 experience dramatically shuffled the hitherto stereotyped idea of definite opportunities for definite people in the world order. It demonstrates the possibility of precluding all and sundry from any safe haven, underscoring the need for a more objective evaluation of man's living conditions and intersubjectivity. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, therefore, a critical review of its implications for Africa is imperative. Considering the imports of the pandemic as important lessons, this paper examines them and highlights the urgency of declaring a state of emergency in the health and education sectors, with a view to achieving

sustainable development and putting measures in place for containing the unpleasant effects of a possible worse scenario.

Key words: *COVID-19, Pandemic, Health sector, Education sector, Sustainable development*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the concluding part of the year 2019 and greater part of the year 2020, the world witnessed an unprecedented wave of a new, highly infectious, and very deadly strain of the coronavirus, technically referred to as the COVID-19. The disease, which originated from Wuhan China, was first reported to the World Health Organization in December 2019, which recognized it as a global pandemic following its spread like wide wild fire to virtually all parts of the world. In fact, the better part of the year 2020 was predominantly a narrative of the ravaging effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, while this pandemic dealt a heavy blow to the world with its disastrous effects, it also taught a wide range of very remarkable lessons.

The COVID-19 pandemic has considerable effects on all aspects of human life in the 21st century. It exposed the interlocking nature of all human affairs and social institutions. While it is a typical health concern, the pandemic has implications for world health, education, politics, economy, religion, as well as the psycho-social domain of human existence. The basic concern of this discourse, however, is the assessment of its impact on health and education. It is the contention of this paper that the COVID-19 crisis unmasked the deplorable states of these sectors on account of their negligence by many African countries exemplified by the Nigerian government.

In this discourse, the Nigerian experience serves as a case-study and the contact point for the general experience in many countries in Africa. Against the backdrop of the assertion that “experience is the best teacher,” this paper, from the point of view of health and education, assesses the various experiences of this pandemic with a view to highlighting its significant lessons for

Nigeria in particular and Africa in general. The assumption here, therefore, is that one finds parallels of the Nigerian experience of this pandemic in virtually all parts of Africa. This assessment is done with a view to highlighting the derivable lessons from the experience of the COVID-19 crisis and making projections on possible strategies for containing the effects of such pandemic in future.

2. COVID-19: A TYPICAL PANDEMIC AND A MELTING POT OF THE NEW AND THE OLD

The COVID-19 is a new strain of the hitherto known coronavirus. According to the World Health Organization (2020) coronavirus designates a large family of viruses that are known to cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe disease such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) that originated in Wuhan, China in 2019 has not been previously identified in humans. Its causative agent has been technically described as the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) and the disease it causes called coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). In the context of this discourse, therefore, the concept COVID-19 or the novel coronavirus, except where explicitly stated, would designate the new strain of the hitherto known coronavirus under review.

While scientific investigations into its actual source is still ongoing, the findings so far indicate that the novel coronavirus has its origin in animals, but can be transmitted from one human person to another. The current research reports by N. Zhu et al (2020) link it to some patients with pneumonia of unknown cause in China Seafood Market in Wuhan, Hubei Province. The African Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2020) observes that the disease spreads from person to person through infected air droplets that are projected during sneezing or coughing. It can also be contacted when people touch surfaces infected with the virus and touch their eyes, nose, or mouth with their contaminated hands.

Against the backdrop that the concept ‘pandemic’ qualifies a disease that has far-reaching effects or occurring over a whole country or even the whole world, the World Health Organization in March

2020 declared the COVID-19 a global pandemic. The COVID-19 pandemic has undeniably punctuated human history given its global implications and decisive effects on all sectors of human life in the 21st century. It has made worldwide impacts on socio-economic and living conditions of people worldwide. In fact, historical records would henceforth make reference to this period as a defining and re-defining moment, since it occasioned an all-embracing revolution in virtually all aspects of human life, introducing what has been technically termed “the new normal.”

The COVID-19 pandemic reminds us that we share a common humanity with a number of intrinsic ontological features. In other words, as far as human beings are concerned, it underscores the existence of a basic substance of which other characteristics are accidents. Some events in life, including death, ill health, nutritional needs, call of nature and related acts of man or reflex actions, as contrasted with human acts, often bring this reality to our consciousness. The COVID-19 pandemic seems to mirror and amplify the levelling effects of these acts of man. Confronted by this pandemic, the primary concern of all and sundry was the desperate quest for survival. Evidently, it was no longer a case of the crave for wealth and material possessions. The COVID-19 defied all known solutions and the immediate prowess of renowned scientists and powerful religious leaders, as no one could provide reliable solution to its outrageous and rapid decimation of the world’s population.

As control measures, many nations of the world embarked on lockdown and placed a ban on public gatherings, including social, political, religious, sports, and even some economic activities. The World Health Organization (2020) also made a number of recommendations on how to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus. Some of the non-pharmaceutical safety measures and prevention protocols include:

- Regularly and thoroughly wash the hands with soap and running water or clean the hands with alcohol-based sanitizer.
- Maintain at least 1meter (3 feet) distance between yourself and others.
- Avoid crowded places.

- Refrain from touching the eyes, nose, and mouth
- Maintain good respiratory hygiene; cover the mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze, and dispose the tissue properly.
- Stay at home and self-isolate even with minor symptoms such as cough, headache, mild fever, until you recover. If you have need to leave your house, wear a face mask to avoid infecting others.
- Seek medical attention if you have such symptoms as fever, cough, and difficulty breathing.
- Keep up to date on the latest information from trusted sources such as WHO or your local national health authorities.
- Stay physically active, especially through regular exercise.
- Maintain healthy diet.
- Quit tobacco and reduce alcohol intake.
- Maintain good mental health.

Articulating the imports of the COVID-19 on human development, especially with reference to health and education, Pedro Conceicao, et al (2020:3) aver that it is unleashing a human development crisis similar to those of the mid-1980s with unpalatable consequences. According to them, the crisis is hitting hard on all of human developments constitutive elements: income (with the largest contraction in economic activity since the Great Depression), health (directly causing a death toll over 300,000 and indirectly leading potentially to an additional 6,000 child deaths every day from preventable causes over the next 6 months) and education (with effective out-of-school rates in primary education expected to drop to the levels of actual rates of the mid-1980s levels).

The COVID-19 features a mixture of the old and the new so long as it is new strain of the pre-existing coronavirus. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, a number of pandemics had dealt heavy blows to the world. Pedro Conceicao et al (2020:5-6) strongly corroborate this view. Making reference to the Black Death in medieval Europe, the global outbreaks of cholera in the early 19th century, the influenza virus after the World War I or the 1918 Flu pandemic, and the H1N1

pandemic, they demonstrate that this is not the first time that humanity is facing a pandemic. According to them, recent outbreaks of new zoonotic (meaning, that jump from non-human animals to humans) diseases (SARS, MERS) had major impact in many parts of the world, as did outbreaks of already known zoonotic diseases (Ebola). On this stress, too, they observe that AIDS has caused more than 32 million deaths since the early 1980s.

The meaning of the popular aphorism, “necessity is the mother of invention” became clearer with the experience of the COVID-19 crisis. Following the closure of schools and workplaces with its attendant challenges of hunger, impoverishment, and boredom, many people were driven to find alternative lifestyles and embark on introspection that yielded very positive results. Thinking outside the box at the instance of the lockdown resulted in the discovery of new talents, more rewarding lifestyles, as well as alternative or additional sources of income. With proper management and effective sustenance of these discoveries and great lessons, they would hopefully outlive the period of the pandemic and add positive values to human life.

3. COVID-19 AND THE HEALTH CARE SYSTEM IN NIGERIA

The COVID-19 pandemic put the Nigerian health sector on the spotlight. Obviously, sufficient attention has not been paid to the health sector in Nigeria. The COVID-19 practically unmasked the gravely deplorable and decadent state of this all-important sector. The Nigerian healthcare system is bedeviled by limited funding, limited infrastructure, poor health facilities, poor remuneration and negligence of the general welfare of health workers, who receive attention only through protests and strike actions. ACAPS Thematic report (May 2020:7) provides useful insight on the impoverished state of the Nigerian health system vis-à-vis the COVID-19 pandemic thus:

The health system in Nigeria is fragile due to underfunding and limited infrastructure. Even before the pandemic, yearly health spending in Nigeria was low, at only USD 27.84 per capita, far below other ECOWAS economies such as Ghana or Cote d’ Ivoire. Low spending often means that demand for health services will exceed

capacity during a health emergency. A Reuters survey found that African countries with COVID-19 cases, including Nigeria, have less than one hospital bed and one volunteer per 100,000 people. In 2007, Nigeria had only 120 intensive care-unit beds for the whole country, almost 0.07 ICU beds for 100,000 people. The most critical COVID-19 patients need intensive care and a ventilator. According to less recent data, in 2004 Nigeria had 0.5 hospital bed per 1,000 people, placing it among the countries with the lowest rate of bed per capita (less than 1.7 per 1,000 people).

This negligence takes its toll on the citizens and especially on the healthcare givers. Articulating the critical import of the psychological stress experienced by health workers in Complex Emergencies (CE) and the urgency of responding to their psychological needs and motivating them during a pandemic, Cherepanov (2020:5) observes that during CEs, most stresses come from the long work hours and not having enough time to recuperate. They also come from uncertainty about the future, sense of helplessness, and questioning the effectiveness of the work. He corroborates the views of Imai et al (2010) that such factors as the fear of contagion, concern for family health, interpersonal isolation, quarantine, lack of trust in and support from their organization, information about risks and what is expected of them, stigmatization, lack of support from family and community as well as reduction in salary can also influence the health worker's behavior.

It is a commonplace in Nigeria, as in many African countries, for the government officials and the well-to-do to seek medical attention abroad given the decadent state of the Nigerian healthcare system. In the face of the COVID-19 crisis with the consequent lockdown and closure of international borders around the world, everyone was compelled to assess the available healthcare options. The poorly equipped local hospitals in Nigeria became the only available medical facilities for all and sundry, the rich and the poor, the haves and the have-nots, the leaders and the led. The ill-equipped isolation centers, where they existed at all, constituted a great challenge in the containment of this pandemic. Obviously, nations with more reliable healthcare systems were significantly less disadvantaged in this regard. There is no gainsaying the fact that a

number of lives were lost in Nigeria consequent upon this critical limitation. Notably, too, the frequent resort to medical attention abroad has some obvious economic implications as it hikes the budget for the government officials' healthcare and widens the social gap between the leaders and the ordinary citizens, with the implicit assumption that the former's health concerns are more important than those of the latter.

The immediate lesson from this experience is obvious. Efficient healthcare system remains a fundamental human need; it is a necessity and not luxury. The COVID-19 crisis, therefore, underscores the urgency of improving the healthcare sector. It is said that a "healthy nation is a wealthy nation." Proper management and efficient healthcare system could go a long way in curtailing the negative effects of diseases in normal times and in the times of pandemic. The government must not wait for emergency situations to act. Government at all levels must take proactive steps in the improvement of the healthcare system. Effective strategies must be employed to detect, prevent and control any possible outbreak of diseases before it becomes a grave threat to human health. Long-term plan is the key to sustainable development in the health sector.

One other important lesson from the COVID-19 experience, vis-à-vis the promotion of quality healthcare, is the need for habitual maintenance of personal hygiene. Such protocols and preventive measures as regular hand washing, the use of hand-sanitizers, frequent decontamination and fumigation of the environment must become necessary features of the "new normal" henceforth.

4. COVID-19 AND THE EDUCATION SECTOR IN NIGERIA

Closely allied to the urgency of prioritizing the health sector in Nigeria is the need to give more attention to the education sector. Improvement on the quality of health largely squares with improvement on the quality of education. A healthy mind and a healthy body make for a more balanced human person. The necessity of the cognitive or intellectual wherewithal in the containment of health challenges cannot be overemphasized. In addition to the

provision of infrastructure and health facilities, the efficiency of the health system is significantly enhanced through proper education of the workforce and acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills. Proper education is therefore a necessary driver of the health sector. On this stress, the funding and the proper equipment and management of such health institutions as University Teaching Hospitals must be considered a basic necessity.

Regrettably, the COVID-19 crisis revealed that the Nigerian government does not regard education as a very important aspect of the national life and values. The leaders are indifferent because their children usually school abroad where they have access to quality education. Following NCDC's (2020) first confirmed case of the novel coronavirus in Nigeria on 27 February 2020, an Italian who works in Lagos and returned from Milan on 25 February 2020, and the consequent moves by the Nigerian government to curtail the spread of the virus, the Federal Ministry of Education, on the 19th of March, announced the shutdown of all institutions of learning effective from 23 March 2020. While this abrupt stop to academic activities, as experienced in many other countries, was a necessary response to an emergency situation, the subsequent events and government's response left much to be desired, as little or no practical step was taken to avoid a total collapse of the education sector. Little wonder, for almost eight months of lockdown the resumption of formal academic activities in Nigeria, even in phases, remained contested.

Meanwhile, as though to demonstrate their deliberate indifference to the education sector, government officials continued with most of their political activities even while the pandemic lasted. The Nigerian government could only bow to last-minute pressure to allow final year secondary school students to sit for their final examination. With the gradual ease of the lockdown, markets were opened with the attendant characteristic business hobnobbing and unrestrained social intercourse. In fact, the ban on many other activities including religious gatherings were at some point lifted. Surely, this was not to be for the education sector, which always played a second fiddle in Nigeria. Also, in view of the already scheduled elections in Ondo and Edo states, political rallies and campaigns were still held notwithstanding the possible dangers posed

by such events. Of course, these political activities associated with elections were going on without government interference. Burial ceremonies of highly-placed government officials were also held in grand styles irrespective of the social distancing protocols. Worse of all, some parents and even some schools organized holiday lessons for pupils and students, while schools were still formally closed. These activities surely were possible avenues for the spread of the novel coronavirus. What a show of hypocrisy!

The lockdown seriously disrupted the academic programme at virtually all levels especially given that it took place at a time most students were set to sit for their final year and promotional examinations. Unfortunately, the closure of schools was not matched with definite policy measures to ensure that learning was not disrupted or totally discontinued. Save for a few private institutions, the poorly funded government schools were obviously handicapped in the face of COVID-19 challenge as they lacked the facilities required for remote or online learning. Government's insensitivity to the education sector constitutes a great disservice to the students and ultimately portends a great danger to the future of the education sector in Nigeria. Hence, the COVID-19 pandemic not only exposed the negligence of the education sector and underscored its highly decadent state but revealed that government's low regard for the sector positions it to take a very dangerous nose-dive.

5. AFRICA'S RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGES OF COVID-19: A CRITIQUE

As already seen above, the major recommendations of the World Health Organization for the prevention of the dreaded COVID-19 include the maintenance of social distancing of at least three meters, regular hand washing with running water, wearing of face mask, and the use of alcohol-based sanitizers. For many Africans, these measures have peculiar challenges on account of their being alien to the African cultural orientation and their cost implications. Social distancing, for instance, runs contrary to the African socio-cultural orientation that is driven by communalism and deep sense of brotherhood. For the African, keeping a distance from a relative, even

when he or she is sick, is uncharitable. The prohibition of social and religious gatherings on account of the COVID-19 pandemic was simply a bitter pill for most Africans to swallow. Similarly, the lockdown or stay-at-home protocol came with more challenging dangers of hunger and starvation for some people who could only feed from each day's labour. Staying at home without any means of sustenance, for them, was more disastrous than any virus. One can also imagine the challenge posed by the protocol of frequent hand washing with running water for people who do not have access to clean drinking-water. The cost implications of face masks and sanitizers for poor African families also poses a considerable challenge.

In addition to the challenge posed by the poorly-funded, ill-equipped, and highly neglected healthcare system, the efforts of the health workers in Nigeria to contain the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic was largely frustrated by arbitrary breach of the COVID-19 prevention protocols that held sway in many communities. The challenges range from the unavailability of resources for its management to the inappropriate use of the available ones like the face masks and breach of the social distancing rules, especially in rural areas where a considerable number of people considered the pandemic a hoax and refused to acknowledge its existence. Of course, in most rural areas, social gatherings and businesses went on as though nothing was at stake.

Perhaps it is of importance to highlight, as part of the observable responses to the COVID-19 experience in Africa, the diverse attitudes in interpersonal relationship that were made manifest during the period of the pandemic. While the African communal spirit, that emphasizes common interest, brotherhood, and the need to share one another's burden, was widely demonstrated, the selfish and egocentric dispositions of some individuals were also made manifest within the period. Many patriotic and good-spirited citizens distributed cash and such relief materials as food, drugs, face masks, sanitizers, as palliative measures to cushion the effects of the coronavirus on the less privileged. Regrettably, some selfish individuals, including some government officials, saw this period as an opportunity for self-enrichment. Thus, there was an outrageous

increment in the prices of goods and services, diversion of some relief materials, and embezzlement of public funds by public servants, even as they claimed to provide succor for those infected with the virus.

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were much pronounced in the areas of human interactions, relationships and social practices. Despite its natural tendency to sever relationship ties due to its social and physical distancing protocols, the COVID-19 experience still played very decisive roles in promoting social bonding and cementing relationships. In fact, the enhancement of the bonds of friendship and affection was a very notable merit of the COVID-19 experience. The COVID-19 lockdown afforded parents an opportunity to spend more time with their children, as families shared their common joys and sorrows. This significantly improved social bonding and occasioned stronger family ties.

More still, the African experience of the COVID-19 pandemic is particularly remarkable given that the death rate was comparatively minimal. According to the records collated by the Nigeria Center for Disease Control (2020) within the first five months of the COVID-19 pandemic, its fatality ratio (2.8% in June) was less than most countries within and outside Africa. The disease was mainly critical for those who had underlining sicknesses. The lower impact of the COVID-19 in terms of death-rate strongly suggests that there is a possibility that the Africans possess stronger and tougher immune system in relation to their western counterparts. The veracity of this assumption becomes more obvious when one recalls that such common sicknesses as malaria and typhoid dealt a heavy blow to early white missionaries and colonial masters who came to Africa. Indeed, Africans unarguably had and still have more lethal diseases to contend with including measles, tuberculosis, meningitis, hepatitis, cholera, lassa fever, diarrhea, ebola, and HIV/AIDS among others. Africans till date regularly go through these diseases and sicknesses and come out unscathed. There is a possibility that these may have toughened their immune system, thereby mitigating the effects of such disease as the coronavirus. Of course, most of the public health groups like the Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research (2020) observe that those who have existing chronic medical conditions have higher

risk of serious illness as a result of the novel coronavirus. Similarly, allusion could be justifiably made to the African weather condition as a possible contributing factor to the comparatively lesser impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Perhaps the climate in Africa is not altogether conducive for the effective survival of the novel coronavirus. If these situations were otherwise, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic would have been more disastrous in Africa given the obvious handicaps of most African countries as far as the strict maintenance of the prevention protocols is concerned.

In the light of the foregoing assumptions, one can argue that the possibility of peculiar African solutions to the COVID-19, such as having a vaccine specially cultured for Africans, may not be rightly ruled out. On this stress, Madagascar's recourse to alternative medicine could be considered a step in the right direction as far as the quest for an Afro-centric response to the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic is concerned. African leaders could champion this noble course collectively. While the scientific justification of these insinuations is not necessarily a basic concern of this discourse, it nevertheless aims at evoking thoughts and inspiring scientific investigations into these possibilities.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS: TOWARDS CONTAINING THE EFFECTS OF POSSIBLE FUTURE PANDEMICS

While the COVID-19 lockdown lasted, a few states and institutions adopted some learning alternatives like online lessons and the use of such local media as radio and television. These yielded very minimal results in Nigeria, since it inadvertently excluded students living in rural areas, who either lacked access to such media or could hardly meet their financial demands. As a lesson that must go beyond the pandemic, government must provide alternative learning processes and strategies with a view to cushioning the negative effects of future emergencies capable endangering the traditional learning procedures.

A possible strategy to constrain the leaders to attend to the urgent need of revamping the health sector at all levels, would be to reduce the rate at which government officials seek medical attention abroad. While an outright ban on medical trips may amount to infringement on the human rights of the citizens who could afford it

and insensitivity to critical cases in genuine need of such attention, it may still be necessary to apply some stringent measures and controlled restrictions on such medical trips. The experience of Boris Johnson, the British Prime Minister, who tested positive to the COVID-19 on 27 March 2020 and in April 2020 was admitted and treated in St. Thomas' Hospital in London, was a great lesson for African leaders and the whole world as far as the need for a functional and reliable healthcare system is concerned.

A lot of wasteful spending and investment in white elephant projects go on at the different levels of government in Nigeria. These resources, if properly utilized, could go a long way in revamping the decadent health sector and the fast-degenerating education sector. The recurrent expenditure on the procurement of very expensive vehicles for the members of the national assembly and government officials virtually at all levels, humongous wardrobe and furniture allowances, in the face of the excruciating hardship experienced by the ordinary people, is simply indicative of an inconsiderate and selfish leadership. Whereas the leaders bask in unmerited ostentatious life, the poor masses languish in abject poverty. This is obviously against the authentic African spirit. The practical demonstration of the typical African communal spirit, that was rife within the period of the COVID-19 pandemic, is not only commendable but should be upheld as a positive human value that ought to outlast the period of the pandemic.

While the African communalistic value of interpersonal relationship remains laudable, the fact remains that the COVID-19 crisis has occasioned a landmark revolution that prescribes new ways of life. There is therefore an urgent need for re-orientation in Africa with regard to the social distancing protocol. It requires a review of traditional relationship patterns and appreciation of a new approach to social relationship. Perhaps this would require a change of the nomenclature given by the World Health Organization, that is, from "social distancing" to "physical distancing". While maintaining the required physical distance, one can still socially connect with family and friends. In this regard, the social networks, virtual learning and interactive platforms provide considerable alternatives.

The establishment of functional and properly equipped quarantine centers, the provision of ventilators, coronavirus disease testing gadgets, and the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) for health workers should be considered matters of necessity and urgency. Regular recruitment and special training of staff in handling emergency situations of this sort, and concern for their safety would be right steps in the right direction. In fact, proper motivation and significant improvement in the welfare package of health workers, especially their hazard allowance, would boost their dedication to duty even as they risk their lives to save the lives of others. These proactive measures would not only foster the containment of such pandemic as the novel coronavirus, but ensure readiness for possible health emergencies in future, as well as make for sustainable development in the health sector.

Although the cost implication of healthcare in the private hospitals in Nigeria is often higher, they are often more efficient than the government hospitals given that the latter are often poorly funded and ill-equipped. There is, therefore, an urgent need to build more government-owned hospitals and health centers as well as improve on the available ones. In addition to the World Health Organization's recommendation on the percentage of national budget that ought to be spent on health, there is the Abuja declaration of April 2001, in which the leaders of African Union resolved that 15 per cent of their annual budget will be allocated to the health sector. These have not been faithfully implemented in Nigeria. The budgetary allocation to health in Nigeria has always been below 10 per cent. Unfortunately, even the meagre allocation to health is often not judiciously utilized. To ensure proper management of health resources, therefore, measures for proper monitoring must also be put in place.

The management of the COVID-19 crisis in Nigeria vis-à-vis education leaves much to be desired. Granted that it was a wise decision to close down schools in a bid to save lives at the onset of the pandemic, the continued closure of all academic institutions even with the ease of the lockdown in Nigeria and many parts of the world was a sure mark of insensitivity on the part of government. If social, political, religious and even sports activities could go on, educational activities could also go on, at least with some serious management

measures in place. Instead of putting a complete halt to formal learning in academic institutions, resumption of schools could be done in phases, that is, allowing a manageable number of students in the schools at a time. While it could be argued that the schools could constitute a seedbed for the spread of the COVID-19, one could also argue that the schools could constitute centers for proper education on the Covid-19 prevention and management protocols.

Government and education policy makers in Nigeria must review their strategies on the teaching and learning processes. The educational system must be upgraded to meet the twenty-first century standards, especially by the provision of virtual and distant learning facilities. This would imply a review of the budgetary allocation to education with a view to providing an internet-compliant educational system. The provision of computers and improved access to the internet facilities would enhance learning and foster a more modern approach to education in Nigeria.

One of the outstanding lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic is the realization of the imperative of mutual cooperation among the nations of the world. Affirming the urgency of sharing and collaboration in the war against the novel coronavirus, Tingbo Liang (2020) in his introductory notes and foreword in the *Handbook of COVID-19 Prevention and Treatment* writes:

This is an unprecedented global war, and mankind is facing the same enemy, the novel coronavirus. And the first battlefield is the hospital where our soldiers are the medical workers. To ensure this war can be won, we must first make sure that our medical staff is guaranteed sufficient resources, including experience and technologies. Also, we need to make sure that the hospital is the battleground where we eliminate the virus, not where the virus defeats us.... This pandemic is a common challenge faced by mankind in the age of globalization. At this moment, sharing resources, experiences and lessons, regardless of who you are, is our only chance to win. The real remedy for this pandemic is not isolation, but cooperation.

In addition to the need for global cooperation, the COVID-19 crisis also calls for public-private partnership in the project of assisting gravely distressed humanity in desperate need. Indeed, such

challenges as the COVID-19 pandemic naturally elicit empathy in well-meaning and patriotic individuals to respond to the plight of humanity. Concerned and capable individuals must partner with the government in the task of repositioning the health and education sectors to meet the challenges of the post-pandemic world. The provision of functional and reliable healthcare centers and institutions of learning, especially in rural areas, would substantially cushion the negative effects of the pandemic and guarantee better handling of such predicaments in future.

7. CONCLUSION

The import of the popular saying that “health is wealth” became very obvious in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the great lessons from the COVID-19 crisis is that it highlights the sensitive nature of the health sector and urgent need for government at all levels to pay more attention to it. Closely allied to this is the need to give more attention to the education sector with a view to promoting health-related research and achieving sustainable development in the healthcare system. Thus, an effectively coordinated health and academic response in the face of the COVID-19 is an imperative.

The COVID-19 experience underscores the urgent need to revolutionize every sector of human life. Its glaring effects on health and education sectors drive this point home. It also serves as a reminder of the fact that we share a common humanity that transcends all accidental variations of race and culture. Hence, it reduces the inequality in human development and bridges the gap in human interpersonal relationships. In the global search for COVID-19 vaccines, the whole world engages in a collective action as they became united in the fight against a common enemy. If properly understood and utilized the invaluable lessons from the COVID-19 experience would hopefully add value to human life and equip nations of the world to manage future health emergencies. Indeed, countries that fail to rise up to the challenges of the covid-19-driven revolution and the “new normal” may eventually trail behind not just in their health and education concerns but in virtually all sectors.

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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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IMPACT OF MIGRATION ON THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 IN AFRICA

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Abstract.

The novel corona virus, also known as covid-19, is a pandemic that in a very short time, has totally transformed the world to an emergency health response since its outbreak in the Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. Within five months of the virus appearance, it spread quickly to the seven continents of the world, claiming hundreds of thousands of lives, leaving millions in the hospitals and crippling nations' economy. The African continent is not spared by this destructive and highly contagious virus. The virus has not only taken several lives in Africa and stagnated the continent's economy, it has also brought untold hardship on the people and disrupted their social lives. Migration which is prevalent in Africa has been found to be one of the major reasons

the virus has spread and is still spreading in Africa. This paper therefore investigated how migration is impacting on the wide spread of covid-19 in African countries. We relied on the Infectious Disease Transmission Model as the framework of this study. The purpose of the infectious disease transmission modeling is often to understand the factors that are responsible for the persistence of transmission, the dynamics of the infection process and how to control transmission. We anchored on the documentary method of data collection for data gathering. In the findings, migration which is an inevitable aspect of socio-economic activities because of the mobility of labour involved, makes the spread of the novel virus imminent. Therefore, among other recommendations of the paper include migrants' access to proper healthcare facilities and adequate contact tracing of migrants should be enhanced by the respective African governments and authorities.

Keywords: *Africa, Corona virus, Migration, Pandemic, Wuhan Province of China, Africa.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Coronavirus, otherwise known as covid-19 has negatively changed the world since its emergence in China in late 2019 and eventual speedy wide spread all over the world from early 2020 (Holguin et al, 2020). Covid-19 is a global catastrophe with detrimental and adverse effects on all socio-economic fundamental pillars (Banulescu-Bogdan et al., 2020; Holguin et al., 2020). The virus was first reported from Wuhan city in China in December, 2019, which in less than three months spread throughout the globe and was declared a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11th of March, 2020 (Shabir and Aijaz, 2020). The global number of COVID-19 cases reported by the World Health Organization reached 23,125,472 cases and 803,253 deaths as of 22nd August 2020 (WHO, 2020a). As of 18th April, 2020, the novel SARS-CoV-2 has

emerged in all seven continents and affects 213 countries and territories with 2,121,675 confirmed cases, and a mortality rate of 6.7% (WHO, 2020).

The United Nations has called the COVID-19 pandemic “the greatest test that we have faced since the formation of the United Nations” (UNDP, 2020a), making it clear that it is more than a health emergency, it is a systemic crisis that is already affecting economies and societies in unprecedented ways (IMF,2020a; IMF,2020e). While the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have yet to be fully understood, it is already clear that, as of mid-May 2020, the number of daily deaths due to COVID-19 is greater than that due to common causes such as malaria, suicide, road traffic accidents and HIV/AIDS (SEOM, 2020). In countries at the peak of the current wave of COVID-19, the virus can become the main cause of death, surpassing cancer and coronary disease (SEOM, 2020). These numbers show the immediate pressure the pandemic is putting on emergency services and health workers and the wider burdens imposed on virtually everyone around the world. During April 2020 alone, COVID-19 caused almost 200 thousand deaths. In addition, the crisis is having also indirect health impacts. It could potentially lead to an additional 6,000 child deaths per day from preventable causes over the next 6 months across 118 low-income and middle-income countries (Roberton, Timothy, Emily, Carter, Chou 2020; Santoli et al, 2020a). Though this is not the first time that humanity is facing a pandemic, this pandemic has been unprecedented because of its evolution from a health shock to an economic and social crisis. Social distancing and the pause in nonessential business have slowed human activities. The International Labour Organization projected that in the second quarter of 2020, working hours will fall by the equivalent of 195 million full-time workers (ILO, 2020).

African countries have not been spared by the mayhem the corona virus pandemic is causing throughout the world. The continent has been severely affected by the present pandemic. The effects have been wholistic, ravaging the continent’s economy, health, livelihoods, politics, culture, social activities and other ramifications of the people’s lives. According to the Infectious Disease Vulnerability Index (IDVI) 2016, out of 25 countries most vulnerable to infectious

diseases, 22 are in the African region (WHO, 2020). Corona Virus was first seen in Egypt, but has now been detected in all the countries of Africa (CDC,2020). By 13 May 2020, cases had been reported in all 54 countries (WHO, 2020). The continent confirmed its first case of COVID-19 in Egypt on 14th of February, 2020, (WHO, 2020) and from sub-Saharan Africa the first case was reported in Nigeria on 27th of February, in an Italian patient who flew to Nigeria from Italy on 25th of February, 2020 (NCDC, 2020). Most of the identified cases of COVID-19 in Africa have been imported from Europe and the United States (Ruth, 2020). Chronologically, Egypt was followed by Algeria, with its first case reported on 25th February (WHO, 2020). Apart from these three countries, the first cases in other African countries were only detected in March (CDC, 2020).

Migration has been the major drive of the spread of the deadly virus not only in Africa, but the entire continents of the world. COVID-19 has emerged in a world tightly connected by local and international population movements, with more people moving for work, education and family reasons, tourism and survival than ever in the past. Intense population movements, in particular of tourists and business workers, have been a key driver of the global spread of the outbreak (Hodcroft et al., 2020 and 2018; Skeldon, 2018; Banulescu-Bogdan et al., 2020). At the same time, the presence and movements of migrants are fundamental demographic, social, cultural and economic dynamics shaping the local contexts that the pandemic is affecting. For societies and communities all around the world, accounting (or not) for migrants in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts will affect the crisis' trajectories (Ng, 2020; Beech, 2020). The earliest date for spotting the first COVID-19 case appears as being 17 November 2019, although it was not recognized as such at that time (Ma, 2020) and inadvertently, it was carried to other countries (Lipsitch et al., 2020). This means all countries were exposed to the unchecked spread of the virus between up until mid-January in the case of China, whilst laggard countries failed to take any action until the middle March (e.g. Turkey). Hence, millions of more interactions took place, including trips to and from China and other connected

destinations until social distancing and other stricter measures were put in place (Sirkeci and Murat, 2020).

Following the movement of people along busy commercial and touristic routes, COVID-19 has initially affected China's neighboring countries, the United States and Europe (Ng, 2020). While the outbreak has since spread from these areas into other regions and back into East Asia, these patterns have resulted in many of the world's wealthiest and best-connected countries bearing the brunt of the early health impacts of the pandemic. The high proportion of migrants in these countries underscores the specific need for inclusion of migrants in COVID-19 response and recovery efforts (Ng, 2020; Beech, 2020).

According to the International Organization for Migration, the COVID-19 outbreak is the largest mobility crisis the world has ever seen, with 209 countries affected to date – 52 in Africa. What started in the global north has rapidly moved into and across the continent. South Africa has the most COVID-19 cases in Africa. This is not surprising, South Africa is also a regional migration hub, with an estimated 4.2 million migrants primarily from neighbouring countries (Mbiyozo, 2020). The Africa Centre for Disease Control (ACDC) continues to conduct daily surveillance and produces real time reports on COVID-19. The data shows a deteriorating situation in Africa as countries are reporting increase on infection and mortality rates. Chief among the domains severely impacted is Migration and Mobility (Africa CDC, 2020). As at August 22, 2020, there are 1,178,770 confirmed covid-19 cases and 27,592 deaths across Africa (Africa CDC, 2020).

When people travel the continent by land, sea and air, they pose a significant risk of carrying the coronavirus with them, undetected, into neighboring countries. South Africa, Kenya, and Ethiopia are travel hubs for the rest of the continent, creating a situation where people may move from higher prevalence areas to lower prevalence areas, driving the spread of infection. When South Africa declared its lockdown in late March, for example, it sent 14,000 Mozambican workers back across the border (Africa News, 2020). West Africa is particularly vulnerable, having both the most migrants and the most reported cases of COVID-19 as of this writing (ACDCP, 2020). In most African countries, migrants live in

overcrowded environments without adequate access to water and hygiene products, where respecting social distancing and other basic prevention practices, such as self-isolating in case of illness, is difficult (Kluge et al., 2020, 2020).

On the contrary, African leaders at various points through various actions or inactions, failed to tackle the issues stemming from migration in relation to its great impact on the spread of corona virus in the continent. This has contributed and is still contributing to the consequences the continent is facing as a result of the daily increase in the spread and mortality rate of the virus.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Though a contemporary issue of discourse, there are numerous studies on the impact of COVID-19 around the world. This is because, the emergence of Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic is currently wrecking an unprecedented havoc across the globe. In Africa, the effect of this pandemic is severe and catastrophic and the continent is expected to still be heavily affected for many years. Movement of people in and out of various African countries at various stages of this pandemic has shown to have contributed to the spread of COVID 19 in the continent. African leaders through their late actions or inactions failed to put pragmatic measures in place to ensure that migration doesn't impact on the spread of the virus in the continent.

This study therefore investigates how the issues stemming from migration has aided and is aiding in the spread of the novel covid-19 pandemic around the continent. Irrespective of governments' declaration of 'lockdown' and 'ban on international flights', porous and unguarded borders make migration a contributing factor to the spread of corona virus.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

This paper anchors on the Infectious Disease Transmission Model. The purpose of the infectious disease transmission modeling is often to understand the factors that are responsible for the persistence of transmission, the dynamics of the infection process and how to control transmission (Seto and Carlton, 2009). Infectious diseases

have substantial impact on public health, health care, macroeconomics and society (Willem et al, 2015). The Infectious Disease Transmission Model is apt for our study because it explains why corona virus is persistently spreading across the Africa continent as a result of people migrating from one part to another. The number of spreads has shown to be on the increase across African countries as a result of the contagious nature of the virus and the factors associated with movement of persons within the continent. The virus has proven to be mobile and moving as people move.

This paper made use of the documentary method of data collection, relying on data collected from secondary sources like internet sources, journals and official documents.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Meaning, Origin and Spread of Covid-19 Pandemic

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The most recently discovered coronavirus causes coronavirus disease COVID-19 (WHO, 2020). The coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a communicable respiratory disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus that causes illness in humans (Africa CDC, 2020).

This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. COVID-19 is now a pandemic affecting many countries globally (WHO, 2020). COVID-19 pandemic is considered the one among the biggest pandemics to humans (Du Toit, 2020). Starting from Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China (Original epicenter of COVID-19) and spreading around the globe in less than 3 months (Anadolu Agency 2020).

The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is a highly transmittable and pathogenic viral infection caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which emerged in Wuhan, China and spread around the world (Shereen, Khan, Siddique and Kazmi, 2020). Coronaviruses belong to the Coronaviridae family in the Nidovirales order. Corona represents crown-like spikes on the

outer surface of the virus; thus, it was named as a coronavirus. Coronaviruses are minute in size (65–125 nm in diameter) and contain a single-stranded RNA as a nucleic material, size ranging from 26 to 32kbs in length (Shereen et al, 2020).

By the end of 2019, WHO was informed by the Chinese government about several cases of pneumonia with unfamiliar etiology (Li, Guan, Wu, 2020). The outbreak was initiated from the Hunan seafood market in Wuhan city of China and rapidly infected more than 50 peoples. The live animals are frequently sold at the Hunan sea-food market such as bats, frogs, snakes, birds, marmots and rabbits (Wang, Horby, Hayden, Goa, 2020). On 12 January 2020, the National Health Commission of China released further details about the epidemic, suggested viral pneumonia (Wang, et al 2020). From the sequence-based analysis of isolates from the patients, the virus was identified as a novel coronavirus. Moreover, the genetic sequence was also provided for the diagnosis of viral infection (Phan et al, 2020). Initially, it was suggested that the patients infected with Wuhan coronavirus induced pneumonia in China may have visited the seafood market where live animals were sold or may have used infected animals or birds as a source of food (Parry, 2020). However, further investigations revealed that some individuals contracted the infection even with no record of visiting the seafood market. These observations indicated a human to the human spreading capability of this virus, which was subsequently reported in more than 100 countries in the world (Riou et al, 2020). The human to the human spreading of the virus occurs due to close contact with an infected person, exposed to coughing, sneezing, respiratory droplets or aerosols. These aerosols can penetrate the human body (lungs) via inhaling through the nose or mouth (Lu et al, 2020).

The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, dry cough, and tiredness. Other symptoms that are less common and may affect some patients include aches and pains, nasal congestion, headache, conjunctivitis, sore throat, diarrhea, loss of taste or smell or a rash on skin or discoloration of fingers or toes. These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some people become infected but only have very mild symptoms (WHO, 2020).

People can catch COVID-19 from others who have the virus. The disease spreads primarily from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth, which are expelled when a person with COVID-19 coughs, sneezes, or speaks (WHO, 2020). These droplets are relatively heavy, do not travel far and quickly sink to the ground. People can catch COVID-19 if they breathe in these droplets from a person infected with the virus (WHO, 2020). These droplets can land on objects and surfaces around the person such as tables, doorknobs and handrails. People can become infected by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth (WHO, 2020). The disease spreads from person to person through infected air droplets that are projected during sneezing or coughing. It can also be transmitted when humans have contact with hands or surfaces that contain the virus and touch their eyes, nose, or mouth with the contaminated hands (Africa CDC, 2020).

Africa, Covid-19 Experience and The Migration Factor

The continent confirmed its first case of COVID-19 in Egypt on 14th of February, 2020 (WHO, 2020). From the Sub-Saharan Africa the first case was reported in Nigeria on 27th of February, brought in by an Italian patient who flew to Nigeria from Italy on 25th of February, 2020 (NCDC, 2020). The same day, Ministry of Health, Population and Hospital Reform of Algeria reported the country's first case of COVID-19. Health authorities reported that tests indicate that an Italian adult, who arrived in the country on 25th of February 2020 has tested positive for coronavirus disease (WHO Africa, 2020).

As of 18th April 2020, 10:00 am CEST; Africa CDC reported, 19,895 confirmed cases, including 1,017 deaths and 4,642 recoveries, from 52 African countries, while two countries (Comoros and Lesotho) were still virus-free (CDC, 2020). By 13 May, cases had been reported in all 54 countries (WHO, 2020). On April 30, the first case was recorded in Comoros while on May 9th, Lesotho confirmed its index case of COVID-19. Most of the identified cases of COVID-19 in Africa were imported from Europe and the United States as a result of immigration (Ruth, 2020). According to Isiugo-Abanihe, (2014), immigrants to African countries consists of those who migrated for labour, business or social visits, internally displaced

persons (IDPs), refugees and asylum-seekers and trafficked persons. Irrespective of controlled Migration and Mobility by Africa Union as a strategy to subdue COVID-19, many borders in Africa are porous and migrants cross illegally (Mbiyozo, 2020).

In most African countries, migrants may live in overcrowded environments without adequate access to water and hygiene products, where respecting social distancing and other basic prevention practices, such as self-isolating in case of illness, is difficult (Kluge et al.2020). In addition, the UNECA report on the vulnerability of Africans to the adverse effect and spread of Covid-19 pandemic shows that population and migration are among the factors that aid the spread of coronavirus as estimated in the tabulated below;

Exposure	Susceptibility	Vulnerability	Lives
874,036 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Africa as of 29 th July • Cases rapidly increasing with steep infection trajectory risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High population concentration in urban slums • Low access to handwashing facilities • High prevalence of certain susceptible ‘underlying conditions’ especially HIV/AIDS, malnutrition and tuberculosis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low rates of hospital beds, ICUs and health professionals • Dependency on imported medicinal and pharmaceutical products • Weaker economies unable to sustain health and lockdown costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0.3 million to 3.3 million lives lost depending on policy interventions taken • 2.3 million to 22.5 million requiring hospitalization • 0.5 million to 4.4 million requiring critical care

Source: covid-19 in Africa; protecting lives and economy. UNECA April 2020

To conclude this section, Africans within Africa migrate from one country to the other in search of employment, food, shelter, better medical services (for those suffering from Covid-19 and other diseases), etc, and this has contributed to the quick spread of the virus

around the continent with the attending socio economic consequences on the entire people of the continent.

The Impacts of the Virus on the continent

Covid-19, which chiefly spread in Africa through migration has several impacts on the continent ranging from social, economic, to political and food security. Africa will be hard hit by the projected medium to long-term social and economic impacts of the pandemic (UN, 2020). Some of these effects will still be felt in the long run:

The drop in GDP could lead to stalled economies and exacerbate historical structural inequities in most African economies. In many African countries the majority of people earn their livelihoods through the informal economy with little insurance against unexpected disruptions. At the same time many formal businesses, especially small businesses, are running out of reserves to sustain themselves. Over time, we could see a recession and a full-blown financial crisis (UN, 2020). Unemployment, job losses and wealth depletion (asset stripping) have started to happen very early on, even before the health impacts (UN, 2020).

The pandemic has further exacerbated existing gender inequalities resulting in women having even more limited access to critical health services, systems and information (WHO Africa, 2020).

Africa, which has 16 per cent of the global population and 26 per cent of the global disease burden, are likely to be overwhelmed by a rapid spread of the disease. Some, African countries may face an extremely high risk of COVID-19 mortality due to a lack of hospital beds (less than 2 per 1,000 persons) and high rates of deaths from infectious and respiratory diseases (3-8 deaths per 1,000 people) (ECA, 2020).

Disruptions in global supply chains and import tariffs threatens most African countries that are dependent on the outside world for the majority (94 per cent) of the continent's pharmaceutical needs (ECA, 2020). For example, 80 nations had imposed restrictions on the export of essential COVID-medical equipment and supplies (ventilators, PPE) (WHO, 2020). This will have drastic effect on the African continent.

The July 2020 start date of trade under the AFCFTA has been postponed due to the pandemic, delaying the promise of opportunities for new exports, jobs, investments in infrastructure and financing for Africa's development (UN, 2020).

The effect of the crisis has led to exchange rate depreciations and a projected decline in Africa's GDP. The UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) projects a 1.1 per cent growth rate in 2020 in the best-case scenario and a contraction of -2.6 per cent in the worst case, depriving 19 million people of their livelihoods and, in the context of weak social protection programmes in Africa, pushing up to 29 million more people into poverty (UN, 2020). It is becoming clear that one near-term impact of this pandemic will be a dramatic rise in food insecurity and potentially devastating disruptions to the global food supply chain (WHO, 2020). Africa is likely to be deeply impacted. Despite its agricultural resources, Africa is a net importer of agricultural and food products, with ten basic foods making up 66 per cent (US\$46 billion) of total African food imports (UN, 2020).

4.0 The role of African governments on Migration and the Spread of COVID-19

4.1 Late Ban on international flights/travels and impact

Though several African countries enforced travel restrictions on various dates at the onset of the spread of the corona virus in the continent (as can be seen in the table below), 97% of them delayed the enforcement of flight/travel restrictions until after cases were reported in their countries. The delays by many African leaders in taking proactive measures in time to stop the virus from getting into the continent greatly led to the gradual and eventual wide spread of the virus around the continent. Africa has close connections to China (the first epicenter of the virus) which is a primary trade partner and host to more than 80,000 African students (Guan et al, 2020). Though the virus started in December 2019 and was rapidly spreading from the first two months of 2020, travel bans were only initiated across African countries from second week of March and upwards. Others delayed these restrictions until late March and even April. Even as

most African countries banned flights to/from Europe, Asia and other continents as a result of the pandemic, travels across African countries were still taking place. This greatly impacted on the spread of the virus around the continent. The table below shows twenty African countries with the highest number of covid-19 cases in the continent (as of July 29, 2020), dates first cases were recorded and the dates travel bans were initiated.

Table 1: African Countries with the highest number of cases and dates Travel Restrictions were initiated.

S/N	COUNTRY	NUMBER OF CASES	ARRIVAL DATE	DATES WHEN TRAVEL BANS WERE INITIATED
1.	South Africa	459, 761	1 st March	March 26
2.	Egypt	92,947	14 th February	March 16
3.	Nigeria	41, 804	28 th February	March 18
4.	Ghana	34, 406	12 th March	March 17
5.	Algeria	28, 615	17 th February	March 19
6.	Morocco	21, 387	2 nd March	April 14
7.	Kenya	18, 581	13 th March	March 25
8.	Cameroon	17, 179	6 th March	March 17
9.	Ivory Coast	15, 713	11 th March	March 25
10.	Ethiopia	15, 200	13 th March	March 20
11.	Sudan	11, 496	13 th March	March 16
12.	Madagascar	10, 104	20 th March	April 20
13.	Senegal	9, 805	2 nd March	March 19
14.	DR Congo	8, 873	10 th March	March 20
15.	Gabon	7, 189	12 th March	March 9
16.	Guinea	7, 126	13 th March	March 17
17.	Mauritania	6, 249	13 th March	March 18
18.	Djibouti	5, 068	18 th March	March 15
19.	Zambia	5, 002	18 th March	March 20
20.	Malawi	3, 709	2 nd April	April 1

Source: Compiled by the authors from: (CDC Africa, 2020; NCDC, 2020; *WorldAware*, 2020; Guan et al, 2020).

From the table above, only Gabon, Djibouti and Malawi initiated travel restrictions/bans before cases were first reported in the countries. Even in those three countries, migrants' activities (legal and illegal) continued to take place between the countries and other African countries with already existing cases. This obviously accounted for the recorded cases and eventual spread in the countries. In the other countries that delayed enforcement of travel restrictions like South Africa, Egypt and Nigeria, the spread of the infection remained on the increase on daily basis.

4.2 Porous Land Borders

Africa is characterized by a high degree of population movement across exceptionally porous borders. Mobility is part of everyday life for most Africans. According the World Health Organization, in West Africa, recent studies estimate that population mobility is seven times higher than elsewhere in the world. To a large extent, poverty drives this mobility as people travel daily looking for work or food (WHO, 2015). It is also common to find many extended African families with relatives living in different African countries and this drives migration through legal borders, but when use of legal borders are difficult or impossible, illegal porous borders become the alternative. In Africa, it's common to find several communities that ordinarily should be located in one country being situated in two different countries, like the Badagry community in Nigeria that stretched to Cotonou, the Moor community of Senegal and Mauritania and the Ewe community of Ghana and Togo, amongst others. In this situation, cross border movements are difficult to control.

Not minding the closure of official border entry points and increased securitization of borders across Africa because of the coronavirus pandemic — (43 of the 54 states in Africa closed their borders), [Reitano and Bird, 2018] , the continent is still bedecked with the problem of numerous porous borders and this has shown to enhance the spread of corona virus across the continent through

migration. It's important to note that borders are artificial and thus difficult to manage.

Though the African Union recognizes that Migration and Mobility is central in the strategy to subdue COVID-19, many borders in Africa are notoriously porous and migrants cross illegally (Mbiyozo, 2020). There is no denial of the fact that African Governments have since the inception of this epidemic put in place various commendable measures to stop movements of people across borders, yet several illegal borders are still open and movements take place across these borders, thereby hampering the fight against the spread of the virus around the continent. Migrants who have no access to testing or who might have tested positive to the virus prefer using illegal borders either to dodge the authorities or to seek better medical attention elsewhere. Africa's porous land borders remain a cause for concern among policymakers and health professionals, who fear that unchecked migration and transport between countries could spread the virus quickly. For instance, Chad and Central African Republic are poor landlocked nations and have largely uncontrolled illegal borders even in the peak of the covid-19 epidemic, (Vesper, 2020).

4.3 REASONS FOR CROSS BORDER MOVEMENTS AROUND AFRICA IN THE MIDST OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

1. Search of food: The corona virus pandemic came with many consequences upon the African citizens and chief among them is blockage of means of getting daily food as a result of the strict lockdowns put in place by various governments in the World and Africa, in order to reduce the spread of the virus. As a result of hunger and shortage of food in various households which stemmed from the lockdowns and halt in economic activities, migrants move in search of food for survival.
2. Loss of Means of Livelihood: Because of job losses as a consequence of the pandemic, there are tendencies of migrants to go from one African country to other African countries whose borders are open or where lockdowns have already been lifted.
3. To receive adequate health care/ Access to health care services: In many countries especially in Africa, migrants, especially when in an irregular situation or on short-term visas, do not

enjoy equal access to health care as citizens, and might not be covered for COVID-19 treatment (Collins, 2020; KFF, 2020; Vearey et al., 2019). Even where they are entitled to relevant services, language barriers, limited knowledge of the host context or prioritization of citizens may result in insufficient access to health care. Migrants are less likely to have access to general practitioners, and therefore tend to have limited access to preventive care (D'Ignoti, 2020; Jordan, 2020). Quest to receive adequate health service, especially when mild symptoms are already manifesting drive migrants across Africa to move around African countries, thereby contributing to the spread of corona virus in the continent.

4. To avoid infection: Migrants move from African countries with high cases of Covid-19 to other African countries they deem safe. They also move to countries where they feel they are less exposed to contacting the virus either due to the presence of existing healthcare facilities or wide testing, especially where adequate testing is made available to migrant communities. Migrants move from higher prevalence African countries to lower prevalence African countries to keep themselves from being infected by covid-19.
5. Fear of stigmatization and/or arrest and deportation: Irregular migrants may fear being reported to the immigration authorities and deported if they seek assistance, which may reduce their willingness to come forward for screening, testing, contact tracing or treatment (D'Ignoti, 2020; Jordan, 2020).
6. For trade: Many Africans rely on trade with neighbours and they migrate with the continent for trade of goods and services. Other reasons why cross-border movements take place around Africa countries even with the ongoing covid-19 pandemic are: to cope with the economic, social and psychological impacts of the pandemic; severe shortage of health care workers/officials; and for fear of exclusion from welfare services.

4.4 SMUGGLERS: PROPELLER FOR MIGRANTS AMIDST THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 IN AFRICA

At the early stage of the corona virus, when widespread fear of the virus and the risks of contagion was stigmatizing migration in most African countries (Reitano and Bird, 2018), smugglers rose to give a helping hand to migrants. Smugglers have greatly aided in the spread of covid-19 through migration in Africa. As African nations imposed strict securitization of borders, smugglers transport migrants in sealed lorry containers or even smaller boats across irregular and illegal borders in order to evade arrests and detention from law enforcement agents and border officials (Abbott, 2020). In addition, smugglers transporting migrants have been forced to take more dangerous routes by sea (Global Incentive, 2020).

For smugglers, particularly those for whom smuggling is the only available livelihood, there are significant financial incentives to continue operating, even with the covid-19 pandemic (Global Initiative, 2020). For instance, the long-standing weekly convoy between Agadez and Dirkou in northern Niger, used by migrant smugglers to protect themselves from bandits who operate around Agadez, was cancelled as a response to COVID-19. This prompted smugglers to use the convoy to transport migrants towards Libya, vowing to find new routes (Global Initiative, 2020).

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Because migration is majorly affairs of government regulation, this study therefore recommends;

- Provisions should be made by African governments to ensure that migrants are adequately tested for corona virus. Obstacles hindering migrants' access to Covid-19 testing should be removed by appropriate authorities. Again, adequate checks/test should be conducted for nationals repatriated from other countries as a result of the pandemic.
- That Migrants should be provided with adequate healthcare facilities and discrimination should be eliminated in their use of these health facilities. More so, adequate contact tracing for

migrants should be enhanced by the respective authorities in Africa.

- That all groups of migrants, regardless of their status, have access to health care as a necessary condition for effective responses to the COVID-19 outbreak (WHO Europe, 2020).
- Setting up screening and isolation facilities at strategic points within the continent for migrants.

6.0 CONCLUSION

COVID-19 pandemic is considered the one among the biggest pandemics to humans (Du Toit, 2020; Starting from Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China (Original epicenter of COVID-19) and spreading around the globe in less than 3 months. The virus has wrought untold catastrophic twists on the globe since its emergence and the Africa continent is not left out in the pandemic's nefarious consequences. The economy and life of Africa has not remained the same ever since. Migration prevalent in Africa during the time of this pandemic greatly contributed to the spread of the virus in the continent. This paper therefore investigated the impacts of migration on the spread of covid-19 in the countries of Africa and we provided recommendations which when followed, will mitigate against the impact of migration on the spread of covid-19 in the continent

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LACK OF ADEQUATE CITIZENS' INFORMATION AND THE CHALLENGE OF RESPONDING TO COVID 19 PANDEMIC IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

A country's ability to respond adequately to any unexpected circumstance depends to a large extent on its preparedness. These can be seen in the policies, programs and plans put in place by such a nation. As such, a good planning remains the bedrock of every success. Covid-19, a novel disease which started in China took the world by surprise. The nature of its transmission coupled with the fact that it had not any known cure puts pressure on countries to devise means of curbing its spread. One of such measures was a total or partial lockdown which resulted in various forms of economic hardships. Apart from the lockdown, another most effective means of curtailing the spread of Covid 19 was tracing those who may have had contact with the infected persons. Therefore, whether to ameliorate the negative impacts of Covid 19 on the citizens through adequate social services or curtail the spread of Covid 19 by tracing those who may have had contact with the infected persons, adequate citizens' information remains a sine qua non. This paper examines the negative consequences lack of adequate citizens' information has had on Nigeria's response to Covid 19 pandemic and suggests possible remedies. Basing arguments on information mostly from already published articles and print media, the paper's position is that due to lack of adequate information of her citizens, the management of Covid 19 in Nigeria resulted in a

situation where the search for a solution became worse than the problem itself. This conclusion is informed by the fact that Covid 19 lockdown was poorly managed resulting in hunger, loss of job, a drastic decline in non-covid-19 ailment consultation in hospitals and many dead of patients with treatable sicknesses since they could not have access to medical facilities due to lockdown. Palliatives said to be distributed by the Nigerian government to alleviate the pains occasioned by the pandemic ended up enriching a few in the corridors of power and their cronies since there was and still is no information on who got what. Contact tracing of persons who may have come in contact with the infected was a herculean task due to lack of information and documentations of Nigerians.

Keywords: COVID-19, Citizens' information, Nigeria

Introduction

COVID-19, an infectious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) broke out in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. Within few months, COVID-19 spread to many countries of the globe. On 11 March 2020, the world Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19, a pandemic. Considering the infectious nature of the disease and its mortality rate, the need to reduce further transmission became pertinent. To achieve this, measures were recommended by health experts. These included regular hand cleaning with running water and soap, use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, maintaining a safe distance and wearing of face mask when physical distancing is not possible. In addition to all the preventive measures recommended by health experts, each country of the world took other precautionary measures to contain the spread of Covid 19.

In Nigeria, the first confirmed case was announced on 27 February 2020 of an Italian citizen in Lagos who tested positive for the virus. With the second case reported of a person in who had been in contact with the index case and more cases reported as the day went by, the federal government took more proactive measures towards containing the spread of Covid 19. Both air and land borders were shut. Lockdown was imposed in some states by the federal government starting from March 30, 2020. Subsequently, several states in Nigeria also imposed either full or partial lockdown depending on the severity of the cases in their states. Though these actions seemed as the only way out of the woods as far as curtailing the spread of Covid 19 was concerned, it was not without some negative impacts on Nigerians. Being one of the countries of the world with more than half of its citizens living in abject poverty and on daily income with no savings to fall back on during the lockdown, many citizens were at the mercy of the government and charity organizations. With anticipated help from government and other organizations not sufficient to take care of the needs of Nigerians, the Covid 19 lockdown resulted in myriad of problem such as hunger, theft, diseases, increase in prices of food stuff and avoidable deaths. Faced with the above-mentioned challenges, the Nigerian government needed to combine precautionary health measures with efforts to prevent the pandemic from destroying the lives of her vulnerable citizens.

To cushion the negative impacts of the lockdown on Nigerians, the Nigerian President promised to put in place some measures to sustain the livelihoods of workers and business owners. These measures were aimed at ensuring that citizens get through the trying times in dignified ways. As part of the palliative, vulnerable citizens were to receive conditional cash transfers for two months. Food stuff was also to be distributed to poor citizens. To this noble cause initiated by the federal government, the private sector, individuals, churches, cooperate bodies contributed both financially and through donation of food stuff.

These promises though lofty, welcomed and applauded by many were not without a big challenge. On April 1, it was reported that the Humanitarian Affairs Ministry began paying 20,000 Naira to families registered in the National Social Register of Poor and Vulnerable Households set up by the Buhari administration in 2016 to combat poverty. It was reported that each family on the register will receive monthly cash payments for four months. Unfortunately, upon the huge contributions from both the private sector, individuals, churches, cooperate bodies, the federal and state governments as palliative to help cushion the impacts of the hardships caused by the lockdown, the reality on the ground was a far cry from the promises made. As it is always the case, these payments reached only a fraction of the Nigerians out of many who may have needed the expected assistance. According to Human Rights Watch, “These payments are likely to reach only a fraction of the Nigerians who will need economic assistance” (Nigeria: Protect Most Vulnerable in COVID-19 Response). According the Human Right Watch, the National Social Register included 11,045,537 people from 2,644,493 households, far fewer than the over 90 million Nigerians estimated to live in extreme poverty, on less than \$1.90 a day. Judging from the outcry from Nigerians, one wonders why, upon all that was claimed to have been spent by both the state and federal governments, many citizens who could have benefited as intended from the palliative never had a taste of it.

Again, due to negative biting effects of Covid 19 lockdown, a large number of citizens disobeyed the lockdown order in their attempt to make ends meet. Unfortunately, some who disobeyed the lockdown rules were apprehended by the law enforcement agents. In some cases, the attempt at arresting citizens who disobeyed the lockdown rules resulted in violent confrontation causing the dead of many Nigerians. The lockdown and its enforcement at its initial stage led to some avoidable deaths that could be blamed on government negligence. Irrespective of the positive aspects of Covid 9 palliative and lockdown, fears remained that the number of deaths as a result of lockdown measures could have superseded those killed by the Covid 19 infection. Many patients with already known ailments and

managed in various hospitals could not access medicare either due to their inability to scale through security checks mounted by security agents or the fear of their safety in the already bad and substandard medical facilities dotted all over the country.

When one considers the inability of poor Nigerians to access the various palliative offered by various groups to ameliorate the pains and hardship occasioned by the Covid 19 lockdown, the avoidable deaths caused by lack of access to medical facilities and mismanagement of the lockdown which affected health services, the difficulty in tracing persons who would have had contacts with infected persons due to lack of citizens' information base and other adverse effects of Covid 19 lockdown, one may not avoid the temptation of concluding that the management of Covid 19 in Nigeria ended up being a deal with the devil as the search for prevention and a cure turned out to be worse than the disease itself.

Unlike modalities adopted in developed countries of the world in reaching out to its citizens through proper information of citizens, Nigeria since 2006 has based her population figures on estimation which keeps on bettering the lots of few who are politically connected. If a country's ability to response adequately to unforeseen circumstance depends to a large extent on its preparedness seen in the policies, programs and plans put in place by such a nation, lack of proper information about her citizens impacted negatively on Nigerian's response to the challenge posed by Covid 19 pandemic.

Covid-19 Pandemic: A General Overview

The Covid -19 pandemic, also known as the coronavirus pandemic, is currently a pandemic ravaging the world. According to World Health Organization (*WHO*), Covid-19 is caused by "severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The disease was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. World Health Organization *declared* the outbreak a public health emergency of international concern in January 2020, and a pandemic in March 2020. As of 16 October 2020, as reported by Covid-19 Dashboard by the Center for Systems Science and Engineering (CSSE) at Johns Hopkins University "more than 39.1 million cases have been confirmed, with more than 1.1 million deaths attributed to Covid-19".

Mode of Transmission

Covid-19 is a respiratory illness. Its primary medium of transmission is person-to-person contact. This is affirmed by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control who stated that “Covid 19 spreads very easily and sustainably through the air, primarily through small droplets and sometimes in aerosols, as an infected person breathes, coughs, sneezes, talks, or sings”. It is also proven to be transmitted through “contact with contaminated surfaces, although this has not been conclusively demonstrated (*“Transmission of SARS-CoV-2: implications for infection prevention precautions” (PDF)*). Also, Covid 19 can “spread from an infected person for up to two days prior to symptom onset and from people who are asymptomatic”(*European Centre for Diseases Prevention and Control*). In addition to being infected, people remain infectious for seven to twelve days in moderate cases and up to two weeks in severe cases (*“Q & A on COVID-19: Basic facts*).

Symptoms

Common symptoms of Covid 19 include fever, cough, fatigue, breathing difficulties, and loss of smell. Complications may include pneumonia and acute respiratory distress syndrome. The incubation period is typically around five days but may range from one to 14 days.

Prevention

Recommended preventive measures include hand washing, covering of mouth or wearing face mask when sneezing or coughing, social distancing, disinfecting surfaces, ventilation and air-filtering, monitoring and self-isolation if exposed or symptomatic.

Treatment

To date, there are no specific vaccines or medicines for Covid-19 treatments. Treatments are under investigation. As such all Covid 19 patients are managed with drugs that have the potency of treating the symptoms associated with it and those that can boost human immune system to prevent complications.

COVID-19 in Nigeria

The first confirmed case in Nigeria was announced on 27 February 2020, when an Italian citizen in Lagos tested positive for the virus. On 9 March 2020, a second case of the virus was reported of a man in Ewekoro, Ogun State, who had contact with the Italian citizen. As at October 16, 2020, according to the Nigerian government official website “ Nigeria has 61, 194 confirmed cases, 7771 active cases, 52,304 recovery, 1,119 deaths, and 1.83% fatality rate (covid19.ncdc.gov.ng).

The Nigerian Government’s Response to Covid 19 Pandemic

On January 23, 2020, the World Health Organization’s International Health Regulations (IHR) Emergency Committee advised that “all countries should be prepared for containment, including active surveillance, early detection, isolation and case management, contact tracing and prevention of onward spread of 2019-nCoV infection, and to share full data with WHO” (<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/future-development>). With this instruction from WHO coupled with concern for the wellbeing of its citizens, to control the spread of the Covid 19 pandemic, both the federal and states government in Nigeria imposed total or partial lockdowns on human activities from March 25. The nature and intensity of these lockdowns varied by state and over the first three months. Many states had lockdowns for three to four days a week. In some others, the lockdowns restricted some movements at night. Most states also complied with federal government directives which included:

- Imposition of curfew within specific hours in the night;
- Closure of all schools;
- Suspension of all religious and social gatherings of all sorts;
- Closure of all airports both international and domestic;
- Limitation of any form of gathering including burials, birthday parties and weddings to a specific numbers that could be controlled;
- Reduction of market days to very few days in a week;
- Reduction in public transportation carrying capacity;

- Restriction on inter-state travel;
 - Reduction in working hours for only few cadres of public service.
- As would have been expected, the above measures, though aimed at reducing the spread of Covid 19 among the Nigerian citizens was not without its negative effects. The restrictions on movement of people reduced availability of hired labour as many peasants in Nigeria live on a day to day income. Shortage of hired labour adversely affected agricultural activities as the outbreak occurred during farming. Labour shortage further reduced the availability of farm produce leading to a spike in the price of food stuff.

Furthermore, a reduction in the working hours resulted in only a few and selected number of customers being attended to per day. Selective branch closures by banks and other credit facilities negatively impacted credit accessibility. Exceptionally long queues were noticed at bank ATMs, bank entrances, shops, markets (on days they were opened).

As reported by *Thisday Newspaper* of 15th May 2020, there was a serious decline in non-covid-19 ailment consultation in hospitals. The federal government according to *Thisday Newspaper* “expressed concern about the disruption unleashed on the nation’s healthcare system since the onset of COVID-19, which has resulted in a significant drop in the number of outpatient population of non-COVID-19 ailments in hospitals nationwide”. According to Chuks Okocha, Olawale Ajimotokan, Onyebuchi Ezigbo, Eromosele Abiodun, Martins Ifijeh, Nume Ekeghe and Peter Uzoho of *Thisday Newspaper* “data showed a 50 per cent reduction in the number of outpatient cases from four million people to two million while antenatal patients slumped to 655,000 from 1.3m and immunisation figures halved”. The Minister of Health, Dr. Osagie Ehanire as quoted in the same Newspaper corroborated this when he stated that

Latest statistics from the National Health Management Information System (NHMIS) indicates that outpatient visit has dropped from four million to about two million; antenatal visits from 1.3 million to 655,000, skilled birth attendance from 158,374 to less than 99,000 while immunisation services reduced to about half.

This implies that many Nigerians with known health challenges could not have access to medicare because of the lockdown and restriction of movement. This surely must have resulted in lots of avoidable deaths. Recognizing the danger this decline could pose to the health and wellbeing of Nigerians, the minister for health assured Nigerians that these failings in healthcare services with yet-to-be-determined consequences will considerably be addressed by the easing of the lockdown.

To further cushion the negative impacts of the lockdown, the federal government of Nigeria rolled out some palliative measures targeted at some vulnerable groups. To petty traders and artisans across Nigeria who were involved in Government Enterprise and Empowerment Program (GEEP) scheme of the Federal Government and had gotten loan from the Bank of Industry, Bank of Agriculture, and the Nigeria Export and Import Bank, the federal government granted three months interest holidays. To those involved in MarketMoni, Government Enterprise and Empowerment Program (GEEP), social intervention programs of the federal government for market women and traders, artisans, youth and farmers, the federal government through the Bank of Industry has given beneficiaries loans ranging from N10,000 to N100,000 per applicant for as long as 6 months. So far, according to online information obtained from <http://www.marketmoni.com.ng/>, over 24,000 beneficiaries have accessed *MarketMoni*. There were other initiatives from the federal government such as FarmerMoni a “Government Enterprise and Empowerment Programme (GEEP) Initiative created to boost the Nigerian economy through leverage and access to finance for farmers through the provision of collateral free loans” (Isaac Omo-Ehiabhi Eranga, 220) which assisted farmer in acquiring loans ranging from N300,000 to N2,000,000 repayable within six months.

In addition to the above financial relieve, President Mohammad Buhari announced an expansion of the initial number of households that would benefit from the direct distribution of food and cash from 2.6 million households to 3.6 million households, who were considered the most vulnerable in the society. The ministries of Industry, Trade and Investment; Communication and Digital Economy; Science and Technology; Transportation; Interior; Health;

Works and Housing; Labor and Employment; and Education, were to “jointly develop a comprehensive policy for a Nigerian economy functioning with Covid 19 pandemic” (Isaac 221).

The Challenge to Effective Government’s Response to Covid 19 Pandemic

Ordinarily, with all the efforts both by the states and federal governments at cushioning the negative impacts of Covid 19 on its citizens, one would not have expected much lamentations from Nigerians. But, unfortunately, the reverse has been the case. While much lamentation trailed the distribution of government palliatives to the masses, many who would have benefited from the grants offered through the banks could not, for other reasons. Bringing to the fore the complaint of the masses regarding the pains Nigerians are going through due to Covid 19 lockdown, *Business Day* on April 19, 2020, reported thus:

It is lamentation and bitter wailing in Lagos and parts of the country as Nigerians complain that the stimulus packages announced by the Federal and Lagos State governments to cushion the effects of the lockdown imposed on some States and the Federal Capital Territory to contain the further spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic have not been sincerely deployed.

According to the newspaper, the citizens alleged that the process of distribution of whatever that may have been made available for that purpose had been politicized and hijacked by a few.

It could be recalled that the federal government of Nigeria had earlier said the palliatives were for the most vulnerable in the society. But in a country like Nigeria without any comprehensive information about her citizens, what could have been the parameters for determining who was most qualified to be classed among the most vulnerable? For example, according to Isaac, in Edo State, “most of the residents claimed they were not aware if there was any distribution of palliatives in their localities” (“COVID-19 Pandemic in Nigeria: Palliative Measures and the Politics of Vulnerability” 221). The same was common in almost all the states in the country. It was generally alleged that the palliatives were hijacked by politicians. Till today,

neither the state nor the federal government has been able to for records purposes to provide any adequate information on who got what. The questions that federal and state governments have not been able to answer is: who are the vulnerable in Nigeria? What criteria must be met into to be classified as a vulnerable person? Is it that the federal government has been unable to evolve a transparent process towards ensuring fair distribution of the palliatives? Or, is the idea of undefined vulnerability a ploy by the governments to hijack the palliatives for their cronies?

Apart from the fraud which characterized palliative distribution by the various levels of governments, Covid 19 wrong management has had its health impacts. Tracing effectively those who would have had contact with infected person has been a herculean task. In an article titled “COVID-19: PTF Decries Nigerians Refusal To Help With Contact Tracing” the *Punch Newspaper* of June 5, 2020, reported Mr. Boss Mustapha, Chairman, PTF on COVID-19 and Secretary to the Government of the Federation expressing displeasure and worry over the refusal of some Nigerians to help with contact tracing and going into isolation after testing positive. But, what is the possibility of tracing citizens in a country such as Nigeria who conducted her last census in 2006 and who over the years has based her information and planning on projections? The difficulty in rendering social services without adequate information is better buttressed by Yomi Kazeem, who querying the inability of the federal government to have comprehensive information of her citizens opined Sure, there are estimates (180 million or 200 million, depending on who you ask) but the country’s last census happened in 2006 and plans for another have, so far, stalled due to lack of funding. The 2006 exercise arrived at a population count of 140 million but alleged malpractice suggest those results cannot be fully trusted. As such, Nigeria’s problematic relationship with data is best captured by its decades-long politicization of census numbers. (<https://qz.com/africa/1725537/africa-has-a-data-problem-says-mo-ibrahim-governance-report/>).

The Nigerian president, Muhammadu Buhari in his official twitter handle on Oct 9, 2019 commenting on lack of exact reliable figure about Nigeria’s population asserted “today, most of the

statistics quoted about Nigeria are developed abroad by the World Bank, IMF and other foreign bodies. Some of these statistics are wild estimates that bear little relation to the facts on the ground”. Mr Aliyu Aziz, the Director-General, National Identity Management Commission (NIMC), on 16 September 2020 speaking during an interactive session with members of the media to commemorate the 2020 National Identity Day as reported by *The Guardian Newspaper* affirmed the lack of adequate information of her citizens when he said that the commission has at September 16, 2020 so far registered only 42 million Nigerians on the national identity database. When one remembers that Nigerians are estimated to be 200million out of which only 42 million have so far been registered, one can only imagine how impossible it is to plan adequately. Aziz in line with the theme of the 2020 celebration “Identity for Health, Sustainable Development and Growth” reiterated the importance of citizens’ information when he noted “that the idea behind the introduction of digital Identity Ecosystem was to enable the government to have easy access to accurate data of citizens for the provision of social services”. Thus, without information, planning remains elusive. Quoting Yannick Lefang, founder of Kasi Insight, a consumer data-focused research firm on why most countries in African may not be readily interested in taking the pains to have an accurate census, Yomi Kazeem says

The problem with government statistics is that you need to have the breadth and depth. It takes time and resources and, as we know, statistics agencies in Africa have been underfunded over time,” he says. “What’s been happening is that because it’s so cumbersome and costly, basically we’ve done nothing.” A more cynical view is that the lack of availability of data locally enables a culture which lacks transparency and allows political leaders paint their preferred versions of reality

Data, says Michael Famoroti, partner at Stears Data, a Lagos-based research firm “helps uncover truth and, in Nigeria, it has been better for the people that run the country for data to not be available,” to the surprise of many Nigerians, citizens keep registering the same information all over the place such as registration of sim card, biometric capturing at the place of work, voter’s card, bank BVN etc,

meanwhile one data set could have been sufficient for all these agencies.

The Way Forward for Nigeria

One great lesson life has taught all is the need to be ever ready for the unexpected. The best way to achieve success in this regard is to be ever prepared. As noted above, the management of Covid 19 lockdown in Nigeria brought some unintended consequences. Nigerians were hungry. Jobs were lost. Many avoidable deaths were recorded. To many low income Nigerians who were caught unexpected and with no saving for situations like such, the intensity and duration of the lockdown was unnecessary and had brought about severe hardship. Though erroneously, many have believed that Covid 19 is a disease of the wealthy and privileged class, and that most of the actions by government agencies are efforts by politicians to dubiously acquire personal wealth. These may have partly accounted for why regulations such as social distancing, wearing a mask, and hand sanitising are not taken very seriously by many people. No wonder while government sources attribute the low Covid 19 infection and death rates in Nigeria to its proactive lockdown actions, many Nigerians praise their own resilience in terms of natural immunity and God's protection as the key to overcoming Covid 19.

Furthermore, though the CBN is said to have provided N50 billion to firms affected by the virus, increased credit to the health sector, the Bankers Committee pledged to provide N3.5 trillion in support to pharmaceutical companies, assist essential health companies in purchasing raw materials, and encouraging local production of drugs, while the federal, states and local governments gave out cash and other items as palliatives to the most vulnerable, the persistent outcry from Nigerians show that all is not well. The inability of any of the tiers of government to provide adequate information on the modalities with which these palliatives was distributed or the list of those who benefited creates more doubt in any thinking mind about how genuine the process was. As was done in many civilized and better organized countries of the world, the US which is currently the epicenter of the virus, approved a coronavirus relief bill of \$2 trillion. It was designed to bolster unemployment

benefits for individuals, increase money for states, deliver a huge bailout fund for businesses and pay up to \$1,200 to every American with an annual income of \$75,000 or less. Unlike what was obtainable in Nigeria, a clue on who was qualified to benefit from this US stimulus package as reported by *news18.com/news* says

All Americans who filed tax returns for the years 2018 or 2019 and meet the income requirements below, as well as Social Security beneficiaries who typically don't file a tax return, will qualify for an economic impact relief payment. The money will arrive automatically, either through direct deposit or physical check.

On how to check and confirm reception of the stimulus, *news18.com/news* further reports "most Americans do not need to take action to receive their stimulus check at this time. The IRS (Internal Revenue Service of the U.S, responsible for the collection of taxes and enforcement of tax laws) will automatically calculate your payment based on your 2018 or 2019 tax returns and send a payment". All American citizens were to periodically check the IRS website for additional information. Below is the a breakdown of who got was to get what from stimulus package of the US government as obtained from <https://www.news18.com/news/world/> website on october 10th, 2020.

1. Individuals:

- Income < \$75,000 will receive the full \$1,200.
- Income > \$75,000 will have \$5 taken from that \$1,200 for every \$100 they earn above \$75,000.
- Income > \$99,000 will not be eligible for payment.

2. Married Couples:

- Income < \$150,000 will receive a total of \$2,400.
- Income > \$150,000 will have \$5 taken from that \$2,400 for every \$100 they earn above \$150,000.
- No children and income > \$198,000 will not be eligible for payment.

3. Other Beneficiaries:

- Social Security beneficiaries will receive \$1,200 through direct deposit.

- Parents with children ages 16 and under will receive an additional \$500.
- Parents with children ages 17 or 18 will not receive an additional \$500.
- College students ages 19 to 23 whose parents pay for more than half of their expenses and claim them on their tax returns will not receive a payment.

While the above analysis shows that the American stimulus package was not only well-tailored to citizens but had immediate and positive impact on the standard of living of its citizenry, and may have reduced the knock-on effects on incomes, that of Nigeria was shielded in secrecy. Nigeria could not and is still very far from achieving such feat because the basis for such an achievement which is proper information of her citizen is lacking in Nigeria.

The herculean task of contact tracing which also impaired government response to Covid 19 could have been reduced should there have been proper citizen's information. From whichever angle one wish to look at it, effective decisions about how to allocate resources is only achievable when there is proper planning and comprehensive information. When a country has a planning process and a plan to follow, such a country is better equipped to prepare for the future. When a country has a plan in place, it is better-equipped to handle uncertainty. Lack of adequate citizens' information is a serious threat to Nigeria's proper response not only to Covid 19 pandemic in Nigeria but to proper planning. Though a lot of harm has already been done, the truth remains that if better steps are not taken on time to have a reliable information base and correct population, Nigeria's the future remains very bleak as far as our response to unprepared situations is concerned.

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CORONAVIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID 19) AND THE RESILIENT NATURE OF IGBO TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

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Abstract

Things nearly fall apart with the coronavirus disease 2019 pandemic all over the world. It affected and influenced the daily activities of the world. Economy melt steadily like wax on fire, coupled with rising death toll of human beings from different continents of the world. This shocked the whole world. Practically, there was emergency halt and closure of man's activities in most continents of the world. Igbo traditional religious practices were not left out in the outburst of the fire on the mountain. The write-up examines the strength of the Igbo traditional traits or qualities that sustained its resilience in the face of coronavirus disease.

Introduction

With the emergence of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) globally, which was first seen in China, a communicable respiratory disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus that causes illness in humans. The scientists all over the world are still learning about the disease, hence its cure is not yet in sight, though speculatively, some countries or health organizations are showing that they have manufactured the vaccine that can cure or check its spread. Before the speculation of its cure, the World Health Organization

(WHO) confirmed that the outbreak of coronavirus disease epidemic was first reported in the Wuhan South China seafood marketplace, but no specific animal association was identified. Given its wildfire spread through droplets from infected human beings, and its impact on human health, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared it a public health of International concern. Due to this high level of transmissibility and pandemic risk and eventual death of human beings, there was a kind of total change with regards to the activities of people on the face of the world.

Many countries of the world began to shut down all aspects of their lives, from economic, social, and political to religious life. Infact, it went beyond the above named aspects of people's lives. The death toll kept rising in different countries of the world. The international bodies shut down its activities for safety of life of the people. The different governments of the world introduced lock down in their countries to checkmate the spread. By this lock down, all activities within and outside the government sector, religious sector, economic sector, social sector were closed down completely.

In the light of the above mentioned conditions created by the COVID-19 pandemic, this paper is trying to investigate the situation or condition of the Igbo traditional religious practices in the face of this pandemic. It is well known that Igbo traditional religious practices are very much resilient to some strange or foreign situations introduced either by one factor or the other. It is not that Igbo traditional religious practices do not change, but how far and how fast did the condition of corona virus disease affect most of the religious practices of the Igbo people. And if it did not change as expected, what was its underlying factor, and if it changed, to what extent? And this change, is it permanent or a change that will reverse back to its original state? Does the condition of the coronavirus disease 2019 change the entire understanding and practices of religious practices of Igbo people, having known that Africans and Igbo people carry their religion and culture to whatever they are doing or where they are.

In this write up, multidimensional approach will be used because African or Igbo religion permeates every fabric of man's life (Madu 2002). This will help us to understand the situation of Igbo

religious practices in the face of coronavirus disease whether it improves the lives of the Igbo people or diminish it.

Igbo People and Cosmological Balance

The Igbo religious practices are many and they vary from place to place. In Africa generally, religion and its practices permeates every facet or fabric of peoples life. According to Mbiti (1969) Africans carry their religion with them into various aspects of their lives, be it political, economic, social and otherwise. Madu (2002) explains further that:

In Africa, religion permeates every fabric of man's life for Africans have a unified view of reality. Against this background we cannot isolate the social man from the political man as well as the spiritual man from the physical man. All convalesce into one unity and that reality is fluid-like. Movement from any of the spheres of the cosmic order, the heaven, the earth and the underworld is very easy for all the inhabitants therein. (p. 33).

From the above, man is at the center in relation to his religion and its practices. Hence, whatever affects Igbo man as a person affects all about him including his surroundings, for no part of his being is separated or isolated from him. His god is always carried with him virtually in everything he is doing, hence there is “*nso*” in everything he is doing. According to Uchendu (1965), “the Igbo world in all its aspects-material, spiritual and socio-cultural is made intelligible to Igbo by their cosmology, which explains how everything came into being” (p. 11). Through this way, the Igbo man knows what functions the heavenly and earthly bodies have and how to behave with reference to the Gods, spirits, the ancestors and natural occurrences like sickness, massive death, thin harvest and so on. Again, cosmology is an explanatory device and a guide to conduct, it is also an action system. According to Uchendu (1965) Igbo cosmology as an explanatory device, theorizes about the origin and character of the universe. Igbo cosmology as a system of perspective ethics, defines what the Igbo ought to do and what they ought to avoid. Igbo cosmology as an action system reveals what the Igbo actually do as manifested in their overt and covert behavior. This third part of Igbo cosmology deals or relates directly with the religious practices of Igbo

man more than the two other cosmologies. This aspect of Igbo cosmology will help us to show and understand the dynamic traits in Igbo culture, which explains its resilient nature in the face of corona virus disease (COVID 19). But these three aspects of Igbo cosmology are not isolated from each other, they are interrelated.

The action system cosmology of Igbo man, deals more as we explained earlier with their dynamic traits, where equilibrium must be maintained. This cosmic equilibrium must be maintained by man, when it is threatened or actually disturbed by natural and social calamities of unknown origin. These calamities include any disorders or calamities like epidemic diseases, constant death in a community, long continuous drought, long period of famine or thin harvest, or social calamities which Igbo people refer to as taboo (*nso*). The case in point here, as one of the natural disorder is corona virus disease pandemic which is causing or caused a lot of deaths in the world. The occurrence of this disease is not just ordinary or natural for African or Igbo man, though its causes may have been found through scientific means and some measures applied to curtail or check its spread. From the perspective of Igbo cosmic balance experience, it has spiritual undertone, this coronavirus disease may have come out of disturbed equilibrium balance in the spiritual world caused by individuals or groups of individuals in a community. In essence, the corona virus disease pandemic is a pointer or a sign that cosmological balance in the spiritual world has been disturbed. Hence, sometimes the Igbo people believe or will say that the Gods are angry and the mother earth is wailing.

In the Igbo worldview, it is believed that whatever threatens the life of the individual or people in the community or their security is interpreted as a sign of warning, that something is wrong in the society or community. It is a sign of warning that things must be set right before they get out of hand. Sometimes, if it is not warning, it may be that someone in the community has committed a hidden abomination(s), especially against *ala* (mother earth). It is the work of the diviners to ascertain from Gods what has gone wrong. Ifesieh (1989) argued that:

The earth is taken as the controller of morality in Igbo worldview. She is regarded as the greatest of all spirits in the spirit world. She has the noblest position and the dearest name: “*nne*”, mother in most part of Igbo land. She is good and bad. She is bad to all who commit abomination and swear falsely by her... to run out of favour with her invariably means that somebody must have desecrated the land, earth, and must of necessity have to appease the mother earth through expiatory sacrifices as may be directed by a diviner and be performed by a *dibia*- a traditional priest. (p. 36).

From the above, it shows that *ala* is feared in Igbo communities because it is the chief administrator of human society and spiritual enforcement officer. Igbo people keep the law of the *ala*, because she does not spare those who commit atrocities against her. People also see how those people usually die, and the social anathema that normally follows when there is any breach of the law of the land and consequent punishment by the mother earth. So when there are natural and social calamities in the community, it is a pointer, amongst other things that *ala* may have been desecrated, which may lead to massive death until the culprit(s) has been discovered or seen. According to Kanu (2015) it is also the function of the earth goddess to expose those who secretly commit evil and the evils they commit. Hence the moral order of the mother earth has helped in building up societies or nation building.

Igbo people and Africans in general, according to Talbot (1967) are firm believers in omens. Omens generally, from Igbo worldview, are regarded as those signs and wonders that point beyond themselves. It is one of the ways through which Gods reveal their intentions or anger to man. Hence, Cavendish and Innes (1995) defines omen as some phenomenon or an unusual event taken as a prognostication either of good or evil. Most times, omens carry deep meaning coming from spirits. Onuigbo (2009) avers that any meaning attached to each omen is based on the belief of the people on the manifested phenomenon with particular reference to human life. So the belief that the prospective event that revealed itself either through natural phenomenon like death, sickness or in a dream indicates that something greatly bad could happen to an individual or the community. Hence, the natural reaction is to discern what the omen

connotes, to be able to resolve the upcoming danger. Though not all omen points to something bad, some omens indicate good-luck coming someone's way.

Following from the above, and judging from the Igbo cosmology, the coronavirus disease pandemic is a bad omen indicating of danger to be avoided or warning of more impending danger or still some undiscovered abominations. For any sickness or death coming to community massively is a sign of Gods being angry at either injustice done by the people against the poor or against the *ala*, or there is heavy bloodbath or immorality among the people. For massive death is a sure sign of bad omen among the Igbo people.

From all we have been saying concerning Igbo worldview on natural or social calamity found in any community, a diviner is always consulted to ascertain from the ancestors and the spirits where the problem lies and what should be done, in terms of sacrifice, to avert the pending loom. Uchendu (1965) pointed out that:

The Igbo believe that these social calamities and cosmic forces which disturb their world are controllable and should be manipulated by them for their own purpose. The maintenance of social and cosmological balance in the world becomes, therefore, a dominant and pervasive theme in Igbo life. They achieve this balance, for instance, through divination, sacrifice, appeal to the countervailing powers of their ancestors (who are their invisible father figures) against the powers of the malignant and non-ancestral spirits, and socially through constant realignment in their social groupings. (p. 13).

This is why divination and sacrifice will always be part and parcel of religious practice in Igbo traditional religion. For divination and sacrifices of all kind settle uncertain causes of calamities and omens in Igbo traditional religion. This also denounces the view that the Igbo traditional religion or religious practices are going into extinction, or African pagandom has failed or collapsed like the walls of Jericho as depicted by Ayandele (1979) and things have fallen apart by Achebe (1958).

THE ERA OF CORONA VIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)

Just like other deadly diseases that occurred in the last centuries, the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) seems to be the deadliest, except for the Spanish flu which is also known as 1918 flu pandemic. According to Wikipedia (2020), it was an unusually deadly influenza pandemic caused by the H1N1 influenza A virus. This Spanish flu lasted from February 1918 to April 1920. It allegedly affected 500 million people on earth and estimate of 20 to 50 million deaths occurred at that time, making it one of the deadliest pandemics in human history.

Of all other pandemics like Black death (1346 - 1353), 1957 – 1958 influenza, Hong Kong flu (1968-1969), Swine flu pandemic (2009- 2010), 1889 – 1892 pandemic, West African Ebola (2013-2016), SARS Outbreak (2002-2004), that is Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome caused by severe respiratory syndrome corona virus. The outbreak was first identified in Foshan, Guangdong, China 2002 (Wikipedia 2002). We remember also that in our own time or century is epidemiology of HIV/AIDS or Human Immunodeficiency virus, which is considered as a global pandemic but the World Health Organization (WHO) currently uses the term global pandemic to describe it. It started in 1981 and over 37.9 million people are infected with HIV globally. For now there are about 770,000 deaths from Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome in 2018, according to WHO (Wikipedia 2020).

But the 2019 coronavirus disease pandemic is an ongoing pandemic (Covid-19) caused by severe respiratory syndrome corona virus 2 (SARS-COV-2). It was believed to have been identified first in Wuhan, China in December 2019. The World Health Organization (WHO) as of September 2020 reported that more than 32.2 million cases have been reported in 188 countries and territories of the world, 983,000 deaths have been recorded (Wikipedia 2020). This is why the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak a public health emergency of International concern on 30th January 2020 and a pandemic on 11th March 2020.

The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) believed that the coronavirus disease or Covid-19 spread very easily and sustainably through the air, primarily via small

droplets or particles such as aerosols produced after an infected person breathes, coughs, sneezes, talks or sings. But the people must have stayed physically close to each other. The ECDPC (2020) gave the signs or symptoms of the disease as fever, cough, fatigue, shortness of breath or breathing difficulties, and loss of smell. The incubation period is estimated to be around five days but may range from one to fourteen days. Many countries, private firms, organizations and individuals are claiming to have come up with the antiviral medication, though none have completed clinical trials to prove its safety and efficacy.

Only preventive measures are known for now, which include hand washing, social distancing, wearing of a face mask in public, disinfecting surfaces, self isolation for those who have it already. Government and authorities in different countries of the world implemented travel restrictions and lock downs. Testing of people was increased and also tracing of infected people. This corona virus disease almost brought the whole world to a standstill. It caused social, political, economic, disruptions among other things globally. The largest global economic recession took place, poverty and global famines set in, in different countries of the world. This also led to the postponement and cancellation of some cultural events, sporting events, religious and political gatherings. Some lock downs in different countries of the world which were total, took months to end or ease off. Everything about education was closed down for a long period of time. This necessitated many educational institutions to switch to online teaching and schooling.

The effects of coronavirus disease pandemic were not much in the continent of Africa. Even most people doubted the existence of the pandemic in Nigeria because the patients or infected people were not treated well. It led bare the inefficiency in the health care system in Nigeria. It also ignited more corrupt practices among Nigerians leaders because misinformation about the virus circulated through the social media and mass media (Clamp 2020).

The Core Qualities of Igbo Traditional Person and the Nature of Igbo Traditional Cultural Character.

In the face of globalization which is taking place all over the world daily and gradually, there is a gradual change, erosion, and in the other hand, a building up of the Igbo traditional culture and traditions, its characteristics, languages, identities and other religious and social practices. But in the face of the coronavirus disease (Covid-19), there seems to be a sudden, uneven change, erosion and on the other hand, fast building up of some Igbo traditional cultures, social and religious practices. In fact with the coronavirus disease pandemic, the powerful cultures and traditions of Igbo people were subjected systematically and non-systematically to the influence of the coronavirus disease. This influence as we pointed out above brought sudden change or erosion of Igbo cultures and traditions, at the same time brought in a reinforcement of building up of weak or dying traditions.

Despite the sudden change or erosion of Igbo cultural traditions in the face of the coronavirus disease pandemic, it has a resilient nature which helped it to retain its various specificity in the face of coronavirus disease conditions. This is against the view previously known or held that the Gods are on retreat and yet to return, as stated by Ayandele (1973) thus:

The Christianization of the Igbo was nothing short of an epic. Not even in Ijebuland, similarly physically conquered by the British invaders and where the gospel achieved an amazing success, were the walls of “pagandom” to collapse Jerichowise as in Igbo land. This picture of the defeat of gods in Igbo land remains substantially authentic, notwithstanding the nostalgic desire of the Mbonu Ojikes for the traditional religion in the forties and the continued prevalence of jujuism and instincts for the supernatural or belief in ancestral spirits portrayed in the works of Igbo novelists like Chinua Achebe and John Muonye. (p. 126).

The same above view was echoed also by Metuh (1986). But Ejizu (2002) replied the above view by saying that:

The fact is that the indigenous religion, particularly the overarching cosmology that underpins its wide variety of beliefs, practices, values and norms, remains still a potent force on the present day Igbo religious scene. Igbo indigenous religion may be down, but by no means out. (p. 183).

Rather there are variations in emphasis and in significance of certain elements found in the localities of Igbo traditional world. This is seen more in the difference of ecological and socio-historical experience of Igbo people. Then with the influence of globalization that has been ongoing, it seemed as if that the Igbo traditional religion is down and out or that the Gods are on retreat and they are yet to come back.

In the words of Ejizu (2002), the Igbo traditional religion is a typical religion of structure. For him, it is locally-rooted and it forms part and parcel of people's total life experience. Now there are certain elements found in the structure of Igbo traditional religion which form its basis for resilience in the face of the onslaught of the coronavirus disease. Oguejiofor (1996) and Uwalaka (2002) listed some of the cultural and metaphysical traits respectively of Igbo traditional religion. There are many qualities found in Igbo people which intimately relate ontologically with their beings in their world view. And these beings, according to Uwalaka (2002), are understood as a force, vital force. And this is seen in action in man through various religious practices offered to higher beings. And these qualities or attitudinal inclinations helps one to ascertain the underlying sentiments that inform their beliefs, customs and practices (Oguejiofor, 1996).

Describing the Igbo spirit or character, Nwabueze (cited by Oguejiofor, 1996) says:

The best in the Igbo character excites fear in others while the worst in him excites resentment and hatred. And he is endowed by nature with a rather liberal measure of both. His best is singularly good, his worst is singularly bad. (p. 14).

There is an impression that Igbo people are difficult and stubborn people. Also, for the fact that it was difficult for colonialists or invaders to establish effective control over Igbo land. Isichie (1976) in an agreement with the above stated that as late as 1906, there were parts of Igbo land which no white man had seen, and British control over the subdued areas was anything but secure and complete. It is also known and shown that the whole Igbo land was a problem to the Europeans while Islamic states were easy for them. This is why

Echeruo (cited by Oguejiofor, 1996) described the Igbo character in the following terms: ... “headstrong and ambitious. No two words can better define the quality in Igbo character which has been its primary source of strength and disaster. We are a headstrong people-sensible but headstrong” (p. 15).

Even many missionaries and non missionaries saw the same character in the Igbo people. But all agreed that with kindness towards the Igbo people rather than over powering them, they could be made to do anything, even to deny themselves of their comforts. The stubborn character or spirit of Igbo man made Igbo people to be hated by other ethnic groups in Nigeria. In the face of coronavirus disease, this quality helped the Igbo to take the measures of survival serious more than any other ethnic group. They were among the first that researched into the herbs that can cure the disease because ways of survival is in their nature especially in times of adversity. Hence their stubborn character is always used in a positive way than in anti-social way.

Achebe (1983) also painted the picture of Igbo people as seen by other ethnic groups in Nigeria thus: “Nigerians of all the other ethnic groups will probably achieve consensus on no other matter than their common resentment of the Igbo. They would all describe them as aggressive, arrogant and clannish” (p. 45). Again, the ontological qualities of harmony and balance that underlie the traditional Igbo religious world view and its religious practices are one, in which the many forces are held in perfect harmony and equilibrium. Many scholars have attested to that and Dogbe (1980) clearly pointed out that:

An individual is set to be a nucleus of the entire ontological structure of the universe not because of any over-riding power that he has or is able to demonstrate within the structure, but rather because of the centrality of his position as co-coordinator of all equilibril and harmonious efforts within the structure. (p. 784).

Hence man does everything to maintain the equilibrium to avoid disorder. In case of disorder in the realm of spirits, he proffers divination and sacrifice to find out what went wrong and to appease the Gods respectively. For his happiness and survival depends on the degree of harmony with the spirit forces and fellow human . For

certain moral order must be maintained to ensure peace, prosperity and long life. According to Uwalaka (2002) the above is needed for socio-cultural controls because sin or offence carries a disruptive force and carries disequilibrium in the ontological and social order.

With coronavirus pandemic, most Igbo people strongly attributed it to Gods being angry with the people for the laws of the land has been contravened. Hence there is a taboo in the land which needs expiation from people. Too many deaths were of course either a serious warning or a great sign of rapture, hence there was lock down around the world. The rise in the number of human deaths around the world raised too much fear among the people during this pandemic.

Going further, the quality of social humanistic dimension also pervades in the character of Igbo people. This accounts for struggle for social change and the spirit of communion (communalism) which is religiously inspired. Thus, man living in a society means that society is not an entity existing outside man but a web of relations and interactions between man and spirits, man and man, man and nature or his environments. So man by nature of his ontological existence and connectedness manifests the spirit of communion in the society. So there is strong attachment of Igbo man to his community. Hence Onwubiko (1991) will talk of sense of community among the Igbo people, Kanu (2015) describe the community in one sense as *igwebuike* and Nnoruka (2009) community among the Igbo people as people coming together to achieve common purpose. The community remains the last refuge of Igbo man because everyone in Igbo land is linked and attached to his community through the family, clan, village and town. There are many other qualities found in man, Oguejiofor (1996) listed some as thus; Egalitarian individualism, competitiveness, desire for achievement, hard work, ultra democracy, receptivity to change among others. While Uwalaka (2002) listed some as thus; ontology of participation, ontology of the interconnectedness of being, pragmatic and existential, accommodative and ecumenical qualities. These great and core qualities played an important role in the resilience of Igbo traditional practices during the corona virus disease pandemic.

THE RESILIENT NATURE OF IGBO TRADITIONAL RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

In the face of coronavirus disease, the combination of the above listed traits or qualities of Igbo people made their religious practices receptive to change. These qualities show that the Igbo people possess' unbelievable ability to endure hard situation. Again the resilient nature of Igbo traditional religious practices got its foundation from the strong nature of Igbo traditional cultural traits. Hence Oguiejiolor (2010) argues strongly that:

The strong culture is not the one that is unable to accept influences from external culture but the one that is able to integrate it and perhaps create a new, better, more useful and more adaptable reality. It is to the extent the Igbo culture is able to do this that its paradigm remains resilient. (p. 25).

From the above, one can deduce that the openness or receptivity to change has certainly ensured variations to change in all aspects of their religious practices. One notes that much change has taken place in the area of Igbo religious practices with corona virus disease pandemic. The coronavirus disease pandemic has enormous influence in the practice of traditional religion in Igbo land and this again introduced the Igbo land into a wider area of entire cosmos. This supports Horton's theory of religious change in Igbo land and Africa in general. Horton (1971) argued that the features of traditional cosmology would keep crumbling in the face of religious and non religious factors.

The enormous influence of corona virus disease in Igbo land led to certain new way of life. This pandemic settles the issue of how many days the funeral or burial ceremony will take last. Earlier than now, in many places the burial ceremony takes to about three to four days depending on the status of the person involved or wealth of the family involved. But with this situation, the burial or funeral ceremony comes to one day at most two days. Though effort was being made by governments and nongovernmental organizations like churches, advocating for two day or one day burial ceremony. Now most people or towns in Igbo land have complied with the rule without hesitation. Again the choice of burial days is shifting to

Saturday in most places instead of doing the burial in the middle of the week and the epic will be on Saturday.

Igbo people are known for celebration of life in different ways, and each has its time of celebration within the same period. This is pointed out by Onuigbo (2009) thus:

Igbo celebrates several festival and feast but there is no feast or festival that is commonly celebrated throughout Igbo land in the same day. Even the feasts that are common in Igbo land like Ani and Ahajioku, none of them is celebrated throughout Igbo land in the same day. Rather each of them is celebrated on a different day in each town but it has to fall within the same period. (p.142).

With the onslaught of corona virus disease, almost all the feasts and festivals were prohibited or postponed by each town through the government agencies. This led to more of family feasts and celebrations. This was done to ensure that the guidelines and measures put in place to curb the spread of the coronavirus disease were kept. Where they were celebrated, it was not in a pomp way in which the Igbo festival celebration is known. Some shifted the celebration in a later days or months, but in all, much drumming and dancing, gun salutes, display of acts of bravery, and wealth did not take place. This is what Ejiofor (2002) referred to as festival or funeral pomp as the case may be.

Some measures taken to forestall the spread of coronavirus disease are social distancing and using of face mask among others. This social distancing threatens greatly the communal life known in Igbo land. Most Igbo people felt the impact because everybody relates to each other as a stranger from another land or one with strange or infectious diseases. Igbo people are known for their communal life which is seen in all the things they do. The Igbo people showcased their high level of communal life with the contribution and sharing of palliative resources being donated by the Igbo people to their different communities and towns for the survival of the poor ones among them.

Sequel to this pandemic all the religious houses and shrines were closed to avoid overcrowding and community celebration. This

necessitated family prayers and family traditional religious worships in many houses. Hence the sense of community as depicted in many Igbo land started taking the style of western life but many protested against this within a short time because it is not the life of the Igbo people.

At this point, African medicine became a potent drug in the world, many African and Igbo herbalists came up with their herbs in a fight against coronavirus disease. African medicine was first known to have the ability to allegedly cure or curb the disease. This help to raise the status of African traditional medicine in the world stage of health care by World Health Organisation (WHO), for according to Nadel (1970) African traditional medicine is known truly to contain efficacious substance which according to Magesa (1997) has the power to strengthen life and diminish all powers contrary to life. Again, this is why Ityavyar (1990) explained that African traditional medicine targets holistic healing. Earlier than now, Chepkwony (2006) explained that it is unfashionable and even criminal to drink African traditional medicine due to introduction of western medicine. But with the coronavirus disease pandemic, the African traditional medicine was raised to world standard, going through various tests for safe consumption. Coronavirus diseases boosted farming and selling of farm products in different ways. Through this way people recognized again the need to go back to farming. As already known, Igbo people are known for farming. They cultivate several crops for the upkeep of the family. Due to lock down many farmers who have different farm produce made a huge profit from their sale because there was high demand of agricultural products. The ban on inter-state movements necessitated in a way the need to go back to farming again because nothing comes in nor goes out. Before now, Onuigbo,(2009) noted that:

The rate of farming is vastly reduced in Igbo land due to cultural inter-mingling that brought about serious changes in the life style of the Igbo, especially the youth. The cultural changes made their land mark in this area through western system of education and mentality which affected the youth greatly and their standard of living. (p.161).

So farmers, during the pandemic sold their farm produce with a lot of profits because importation and inter-state movements were banned without people being prepared for it. This now led to a lot of people to invest in agricultural sector heavily.

Generally, the corona virus disease pandemic influenced everything done in the world not only in Igbo land. The world was held hostage because the economic activities stopped, many countries went into economic recession again. The sporting event around the world stopped temporally, all stadia were empty and many big clubs in the world reduced the salary of their players. Sport activities taking as recreational events for everyone was banned completely, the institutions of learning, from tertiary institutions down to nursery schools stopped all learning activities. The influence of corona virus disease was much, especially as it killed many people in the world and raised fear of wiping half of human race.

CONCLUSION.

Any existing thing or trend has its weakness, like globalization, according to Oguejiofor (2010) its weakness is anchored on the fact that the globalization is over-whelmingly economic. It is more of the movement of capital, investment and the availability of the information that is at stake here. On the other hand, coronavirus disease pandemic had its deadly influence on a section of the world, though it is air borne but it seemed not to thrive or survive well in African and some continents of the world because of weather conditions. It is heavily hampered by weather conditions. However, its influence or effects remained with us and it eroded most features of Igbo traditional religious practices. But at the root of all these effects, the continuity of belief and practice of Igbo traditional religion still continued. All these have led to a new way of life as we have seen from the above. The effect or influence of Christianity and globalization were slow and steady but coronavirus disease pandemic influence happened fast. But the innate characters or combination of Igbo peoples' openness and the receptivity to change and their adaptability are some of the traits that helped them to survive and remain resilience in the face of coronavirus diseases pandemic.

The main contention or thrust of this paper as we seen above is to show that the resilience of Igbo traditional religious practices are rooted on strong core qualities or cultural traits of Igbo man. These traditional cultural practices have persisted among the Igbo in spite of the changing circumstances or onslaught of coronavirus disease pandemic. From the above analysis Igbo culture is one that is dynamic and with the power of integration to accept and to create a new, better and enhanced way of living. And this is why they are seen in every part of the world and they keep surviving conveniently.

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THE IMPLICATIONS AND IMPACT OF COVID -19 PREVENTIVE MEASURES IN NIGERIA: A CASE OF PORT-HARCOURT CITY AND OBIO/AKPOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN RIVERS STATE (MARCH 2020 – AUGUST 2020)

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ABSTRACT

The paper x-rayed the historic origin of COVID -19 and the circumstances that surrounded its spread to almost all nations in the world. The devastating effect of the virus cannot be overemphasized; it has grounded global economy to the extent that it will take some nations centuries to recover from the effect, with an unimaginable number of deaths. The corona virus was first noticed and recorded on 31st December, 2019 in Wuhu, a city in China. On 11th March, 2020. As a result of its speedy spread and devastating effect to humanity, World Health Organization (WHO) declared the corona virus a global pandemic. The world Health Organization quickly swung into action on how the deadly disease can be controlled with precautionary measures that was adopted worldwide to combat the spread of the virus. Nigeria followed

WHO's preventive measures with total adherence and added other stringent measures without recourse to the Nigerian peculiarities and uniqueness thereby leading to excruciating, pathetic condition of the masses that are not only vulnerable to hunger and insecurity but also susceptible to death by installment and other adverse impact on the economy. The federal government declared lockdown in Lagos, Ogun states and Abuja. State governments through their governors declared other precautionary measures in their respective states. The paper made use of structural functionalist theory and collected data through primary and secondary sources. The implication of the preventive measures to the people of Rivers state in Port Harcourt and its environs formed the thesis of this paper. The perception of the people about the pandemic and the impact of the COVID-19 to the people were analyzed. It discovered that government lacked good policy formulation and implementation to fight and control the pandemic, it showed that Nigerian health sector is fragile and plagued with inadequacies. Government palliative measures were not commensurate to cushion the effect of pandemic to the people. Stakeholders and actors used corona virus as a conduit to appropriate wealth for themselves. There was no uniformity of actions and data from agencies and ministries. Conclusively the paper made recommendations on way forward, which includes the use of our natural and medical clinical research and personnel in finding a cure for it just as Madagascar did. Furthermore, there is need to upgrade our health sector, policy experts and technocrats on policy formulation be consulted to come up with good policies among others.

INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 is a global pandemic plaguing the world, its effect unquantifiable in all areas of human endeavors. This deadly pandemic

originated from Wuhan, Hubei, Province in China in December 31st, 2019, and from there got to almost all parts of the world. In African it was first noticed in Egypt on 14th February, 2020. In Nigeria the first case was reported and recorded, and announced on 27th February, 2020 through an Italian citizen who tested positive in Lagos on March 9th, while another case was reported in Ewekoro, a city in Ogun state. (NCDC 2020)

The disease spreading like wild fire in dry hammattan season, found its way to other parts of the county. Federal Government in accordance with World Health Organization's directives set in motion federal and state ministries of health, National Center for Disease Control and other agencies to come up with policies and preventive measures to curb the pandemic. The first was federal government's declaration of lockdown in Lagos, Ogun states and Abuja. There were other preventive precautionary measures adopted by the federal government, like the closure of land, sea borders while intra and international flights were restricted. Governors of the various states in Nigeria adopted preventive measures and palliatives to cushion the adverse effect of the COVID-19 on the people. The people of Port Harcourt and its environs inclusive and that is where this study is centered on. This paper will find out how the people of Port Harcourt city and Obio/ Akpor were able to cope and manage themselves during the total and partial lock down in the city. The implication of the preventive measures to the people of Port Harcourt and proffer solution to the negative impact of the preventive measures.

This study will find out the perception of the people of Port Harcourt city and Obio/Akpor about COVID -19 and government policies in ameliorating there plights and proffer probable solution on how to stay with the virus without been infected and do their normal business.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM.

Covid 19 has quarantined all sectors of human endeavor globally, its adverse effect to humanity is unimaginable. The number of deaths is alarming as recorded across the globe. There is no known approved cure for the pandemic and people are dying and getting infected on daily bases despite the preventive and palliative measures. The preventive measures as advocated by WHO and other agencies to

combat the scourge is working but has so many disadvantages to developing and poor nations like Nigeria. Rationales behind these are problems this study addressed. The preventive measures, which include lockdown, brought untold hardship and hunger to the people leading to another virus, "hunger virus". Why have people refused to stay at home during the lockdown period? Were people consulted before decision was taken? What are the implications of the lockdown to the people of Port Harcourt metropolitan city? Are there solutions to the adverse effect of preventive and palliative measures to the people? Did Government palliatives help to cushion people suffering are research questions for the survey.

CONCEPTUALISATION

COVID-19

World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) posited that COVID-19 is an infectious disease caused by corona virus. It can be transmitted through droplets generated when an infected person coughs, sneezes or exhales. It is a large number of viruses that are known to cause illness ranging from common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). On 30th January, 2020, WHO posited that corona virus constituted a Public Health Emergency of International concern; In March 11, 2020 World Health Organization declared Corona virus a pandemic. President of America Trump (2020) describe corona virus as a national disaster.

Medicine.com (2020) defined COVID -19 as illness caused by a novel corona virus. NCDC (2020) averred that corona viruses are zoonotic, that they are normally transmitted between animals and people. That corona viruses disease is caused by a new strain of corona viruses SARS-Cov-2 that has not been previously identified until reported and identified in Wuhan, China. The name COVID-19 was given to the disease by World Health Organization, which etymologically was coined as an acronym from the following words. CO stand for corona, VI represent virus, D for disease and 19 for 2019 when it was discovered.

Corona virus comes with the following symptoms, fever, dry cough, shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing, chills and repeated shaking, muscle pains, headache, sore throat, and loss of senses of taste or smell, fatigue, diarrhea, runny nose (catarrh) dyspnea and that symptoms appear within 14 days. There is no facial appearance that shows a person is infected with the virus. Corona virus can be transmitted by infected person through droplets from their nose and throats to objects and surfaces when they sneeze, cough on or touch surfaces such as table, doorknobs and hand rails, any person that touches those things and thereafter touches his eyes, mouth or nose without proper washing of hands get infected (WHO 2020). World Health Organization (2020) came up with the following precautionary measures on how to stay safe from COVID 19 considering its rapid spread and devastating impact globally.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Yourdictionary.com (2019) defined preventive measures as intended or used to prevent or hinder, acting as obstacle, carried out to deter expected aggression by hostile forces, preventing or showing the cause of an illness or disease. In this context, preventive measures are measures mapped out by WHO, Ministries, agencies and other organization to prevent the astronomical spread of corona virus and its deadly effect to humanity. Different organization adopted different strategies under direct guidance of World Health Organization (WHO) to curb the pandemic as there is no vaccine for treatment ascertained by WHO. Federal government of Nigeria in collaboration with other federal and state agencies adopted many strategies in line with WHO guidelines to fight the pandemic scourge and to reduce its devastating effect to humanity. These measures will be listed subsequently in this paper as advocated by WHO and other agencies, all to ensure that the scourge is curtailed and contained.

PALLIATIVES:

WHO (2019) define palliative care as an approach that improves the quality of life of patients and their families facing the problem associated with life-threatening illness, through the prevention and relief of suffering by means of early identification and

impeccable assessment and treatment of pains and other problems, physically ,psychological and spiritual. Lexico.com (2019) view palliative as relieving pain without dealing with the cure of the condition, intended to alleviate a problem without addressing the underlying cause. This study adopted this definition as the meaning of palliative in this paper.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONALISM THEORY

This study adopted structural functionalism theory. Wikipedia (2017) “structural functionalism or simple functionalism is a framework for building theory that sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity and stability”. This theory views society through a macro-level adjustment based on social structure and social functions that work in harmony to shape the whole society. Structural functionalism centered on explaining and maintaining order, stability and cohesion based on interdependency, socialization and systemic change.

Modern political philosophers use the structural functionalist theory of ancient anthropologist, psychologist and sociologist like, Spencer,H (1899), Durkheim (1916) , Radcliff-Brown (1935), Malinowski (1922), Parson, T (1939) Merton (1949). Political Scientist introduced structural functionalist theory in political science and public administration by comparing and analyzing political system. From their respective studies it was discovered that social function and organic life must work together through a network of connection into an integrated whole. Offiong (1997) postulated that “structural functionalism has been generally agreed on to be an offshoot from the general system theory. It is simply a means of explaining what political structures perform, what basic functions the political system and under what conditions in any given system”.

Chilcott (1998) posited that structural functionalism conceptualizes society as a system of interacting parts that promote stability or transformation through their interactions”. It is important to look at the structures of the system to

substantiate particular activities and their interrelations. The basic concept of structural functionalism theory includes,

- (i) Society consists of both structures and functions that are interconnected and interdependent, and ultimately focused on maintaining or mediating society equilibrium (Radcliffe-Brown, (1935) and or necessary transformation (Dale,Vella& Potts (2013)
- (ii) Social systems consist of both structures and functions that are necessary for the ongoing health or survival of that system Chilcott (1998).
- (iii) Structures exist to meet the functional needs of a system Merton (1949)
- (iv) Systemic functionality (that is how parts of the system work) across and within structures serves to reinforce and maintain the stability of the system's structures in the context of an ever-changing complex and unpredictable system.

From the above analysis on structural functionalism it is evident that this study can effectively be anchored on structural functionalist theory. There are structures and functions to be performed in any given social system or in a nation. For a nation to function effectively and efficiently all the structures must perform their respective statutory functions harmoniously to achieve optimally. There must be cordial interaction, interconnection and interdependence of all the structures and functions for optimal benefit of the entire society or nation.(Chinnah 2019)

All the parts concerned in achieving optimally in the fight against covid 19, WHO, government agencies, private and public, which are partners in the short or long run must work together for the success to be achieved. The structural functional theory postulates that when public administrators plan, they have no choice but to take consideration of environmental factors, (political, social, economic, technological and ethical) interrelated elements with interaction between the environment external and internal (Ezeani, 2006). The relationship and interrelation among the various structures is very important as it is used to evaluate and analyze the success or otherwise of any phenomenon using the best methodology before recommendation and suggestions is made. The central theme in

structural functionalism theory is that, it views a society as a complex system made up of parts with functions clearly stated to be executed by the various structures to work in unity and to promote solidarity and stability. Coherence and harmony are needed for optimal maximization and achievement of set goals to fight covid 19. Government at all levels with her agencies, ministries, departments and private organizations must work concertedly to achieve the fight against this pandemic.

METHODOLOGY

This study made use of secondary data, as relevant documented literatures like newspapers, journals. Government gazettes, textbooks and few people interviewed.

DATA ANALYSIS

PREVENTIVE MEASURES ON COVID -19

World Health Organization (WHO, 2020) as the highest health body worldwide came up with the following preventive measures on how covid-19 can be combated and reduce the chances of being spread .

1. Regular and thorough washing of the hands with an alcoholic – based hand rub or wash them with soap and water. This kills the virus that might be on your hands.
2. Maintain at least 1 meter (3 feet) distance between yourself and others.
3. Avoid going to crowded places.
4. Government should encourage the general public to wear a fabric mask if there is widespread community transmission.
5. Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.
6. Make sure you and the people around you follow good respiratory hygiene.
7. Stay home and self-isolate even with minor symptoms such as cough, headache, mild fever, until you recover.
8. If you have fever, cough and difficulty in breathing ,seek medical attention , but call by telephone in advance if possible and follow the directions of your local health authority.

9. Keep up to date on the latest information from trusted sources ,such as WHO, or your local health authorities

ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENCIES IN THE FIGHT AGAINST COVID-19.

1. World Health Organization.,Federal and state Governments.
2. Federal and state Ministry of Health,
3. Presidential Task Force, called PTF-COVID-19.
4. Nigeria Center for Disease and Control (NCDC)
5. National Institute for Medical Research (NIMR)
6. National Institute for Pharmaceutical Research and Development (NIPRD)
7. National Agency for Food, Drugs Administration and Control (NAFDAC)
8. National Primary Health Care Development Agency (NPHCDA)
9. National Association of Resident Medical Doctors.
10. Nigeria Private Sector Coalitions.
11. National / State Emergency Management Agency.
12. International Coordinating Group on Vaccine.

Amanda (2020) opined that one of the measures recommended to curb the pandemic following its seeming success in China and other foreign countries is for people to remain at home and avoid person to person contact to reduce the spread . No wonder, Federal government under the leadership of president Buhari announced lockdown in two states and the Federal capital territory on 29th March, 2020, namely, Lagos, Ogun and Abuja. The lockdown of non- essential services, and activities, closure of schools, a ban on international flight, imposition of curfew, restrictions on mass gathering outside workplace for not more than 50 persons in close spaces, (wedding, funerals etc) provided physical distancing measures ,mandatory use of facemasks.

The fight against covid 19 need a concerted unified effort, so state government had their own share of preventive measures as adopted by the governors of the respective states to curb the pandemic. The federal government lockdown Lagos, Ogun and

Federal Capital territory Abuja on 30th March 2020 for an initial period of two weeks as announced by the president.

RIVERS STATE PREVENTIVE MEASURES TO COMBAT COVID 19.

The dynamic and proactive Governor of Rivers state, Barrister Ezeunwo Nyesom Wike was among the first governors that took the fight against Covid 19 seriously as he adopted and deployed many strategies on how to achieve result and better the lives of his people. In March 2020 the governor set up a Task Force on Covid -19, on 4th May the Governor of Rivers state and that of Kaduna state announced their own lockdown in compliance of all the state preventive measures as advocated by WHO and other collaborating agencies in the fight against the spread of the virus. Governor, Wike announced total lockdown in two local government areas namely Obio/Akpor and Port Harcourt city local government, which include compulsory wearing of facemask in public places and vehicles. Closure of all land, sea and air borders and entry routes into the state. Closure of all open markets, slaughters, hotels, guesthouses, cinema, bars, and restaurant, maintenance of social distancing, washing of hands with alcoholic based sanitizer, practice of social distancing.

- Public and private vehicles to limit their passengers based on social distancing.
- Avoid contact with infected person. Avoid touching of eyes, mouth and nose frequently.
- Washing of hands and the use of alcoholic sanitizer.
- No public gathering like wedding, funerals or social events.
- No religious gathering must be more than 50 persons in attendance.
- Closure of all educational institutions.
- Sensitization campaign about the pandemic, advertisement, jingles on television, radio, billboard, town criers at village setting.
- Provision and donation of isolation centers and treatment centers for those infected.

- No operation of public and private motor parks in the two local government areas.
- Donation of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) by government and other items.

RIVERS STATE GOVERNMENT PALLIATIVE MEASURE ON COVID-19

To cushion the effect of the covid -19 in the state, state government set up a task force and budgeted 2 billion for the purchase of food items that will be given to the most vulnerable across the 23 local government areas in the state.

- Distribution of food items to the vulnerable in the 23 local government areas.
- Provision of free buses along major routes in Port Harcourt metropolis.
- Donation of equipment and facilities for covid-19.

Despite all the adverts and sensitization about corona virus the people of the state are not taking the preventive measures seriously. They viewed the pandemic as a sickness for the elites that travelled abroad or sickness for those who had siphoned the nation's wealth, while some are of the opinion that it was punishment from God on those in government. Ebola experience was still fresh in the memory of Rivers people, its politicization that goes with financial benefit turned the whole thing like a child's play despite the sensitization by government agencies on the social media.

The people are not ready to comply because government has failed severally in terms of welfare and social security. People were forced to stay at home because of threat from the government, not that they are afraid of the pandemic. The direct monitoring and patrol team led by the Governor in the streets and routes to the state including the demolition of a hotel in Eleme Local Government area of the state helped to aid compliance not that the people were ready to comply neither do they believe that the pandemic is real.

IMPACT OF PREVENTIVE MEASURES OF COVID-19 TO THE PEOPLE OF PORT HARCOUT AND OBIO/AKPOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS.

UNDP (2020) stated that covid-19 might threaten developing countries like Nigeria. The pandemic may not only be a health crises in the short term but there seems to be a looming and devastating economic crises that may affect social and private lives for months and years to come.....the pandemic will leave deep scars . The scars the pandemic brought to the people will take decades if not century before it can be corrected.

The preventive measures of lockdown that took place in the two local government areas led to increase in prices of goods and services. All the entry routes to the state were closed except for essential services. There was no free vehicular movement of goods and services to and from other states. The few goods available were scrambled for by many persons leading to astronomical increase in prices of goods and services. The inflation during the period was quite astronomical for the masses to deal with.

The closure of markets, companies and factories, motor parks, hotels and cinemas affected so many people and mostly the private sector. It led to unemployment, increase in the level of hunger, poverty, low religious activities ,rise in sexual abuses at homes. Specifically those that have their businesses in Ikokwu, Oil mill Market, Oginigba, mile 1 \$ 3 markets among others.

Oparinde (2020) averred that covid-19 affected the income of most churches significantly because of low giving capacity of some members; he advised churches to go investment and human capacity development. According to him evangelism were reduced, house fellowship stopped. Religious organization suffered both physical and spiritual, churches went online for fellowship and other activities.

The citizens of the area suffered from emotional, psychological trauma as a result of the shortfall to their expectation on the area of government palliatives to ameliorate the excruciating condition of the masses. The state government came up with good palliative measures to cushion the effect of the covid -19 but the distribution of the palliatives met with difficulties Evang (2020). Federal government of

Nigeria rolled out palliative measures for targeted group, however lamentation have trailed the distribution of the palliative measures.

The definition of vulnerable as a construct was not captured as the distribution of palliatives were politicized. There were cases where people waited and waited only to get two packets of indomie only for a family of 7 and three cups of gari. ThisDAY (2020) reported that it is lamentation and bitter wailing in Lagos and part of the country as Nigerians complained that stimulus packages by federal government and Lagos state government to cushion the effect of the lockdown imposed on some states have not been sincerely deployed, the same complain was raised in the local governments as investigated.

The preventive measures affected negatively as it led to increase in crime and other anti-social vices in the area. UNDP (2020) opined that the lockdown was critical for the disease containment; it undermined the economic and social foundations for survival and the resilient structures of Nigeria most vulnerable population. That millions of Nigerians will be pushed into temporary poverty, unemployment which will further expose them to the hunger –virus. Lockdown induced poverty and unemployment, might therefore trigger an increase in other social problem including general insecurity, kidnapping and gender –based violence. This exactly happened and is still happening. Most people did not go back to their businesses. There is increase in robbery and other anti-social vices in the area.

Social distancing sitting system in both private and commercial vehicles led to increase in cost of transportation fair. For example from Choba to mile 3 is now #200 instead of #150. The covid -19 buses were not available in all the routes and are few in number to meet the needs of the teaming population. Transporters had no customers to carry just as business people had no customer.

The closure of schools did not only affect children education it also affected their parents in so many negative ways. Parents spend more on watching and taken care of their children. Many students and pupils spent more of their time in playing than studying. The online virtual teaching and learning had so many disadvantages ranging from poor net work, lack of phones, cost of data, incompetency in handling phones, cost of phones etc. The preventive measure had serious

negative impact on the educational system. As it stands now the academic calendar is distorted, there are two sets of year one student jostling for admission and registration in the university. The National Youth Service Corps (NYSC) was not left out of the ugly side, those in camp were forced to leave camp not completing the orientation course; those yet to go are also worried. People with both minor and serious health challenges were at risk and died because of societal stigma and fear of been tagged covid-19 patient and the phobia of going to isolation center. Medical practitioners were over used and many lost their lives in the course of helping to treat others.

The pandemic coupled with its preventive measures led to gender generated violence as noted by (UN women ,2020) women and children suffer from domestic violence during the lockdown leading to increase in conflict. (Akpan 2020) observed that with the restriction of movements couples were compelled to stay at home together for longer period, creating additional tensions, which subsequently led to frustrations and aggression. Marriages and relationships were wrecked because of the lockdown. Miscreants and hoodlums within the area took advantage of the lockdown to perpetrate more crime knowing that people are within the confine of their houses.

In terms of social inequality it was ostensible to all and sundry, (Makinde,2020, Etang 2020) opined that the pandemic lockdown led to change in the educational system and exposed the high level of social inequality in Nigeria.

The preventive and palliative measures adopted had some positive impact, people were forced to look inward and thinker what better thing to do and eke a living. Families were united as people had time with their families instead of staying on hotels. There was improvement in the use of information communication technology for students, teachers and others. Learning and teaching were done on zoom some other businesses were also done online. Churches went into online worship and praises. People became more conscious of themselves health wise and high level of hygiene maintained by people. The health sector attracted attention of government for improvement and overhauling.

Summary,

The paper critically analyzed Covid-19 impact on the people of Nigeria focusing on the two local government areas that locked down in Rivers State. The study discovered that the nation health sector was not ready and prepared to combat any emergency, as there were no infrastructural facilities, equipment, staff and research center to handle cases as seen in the two local government studied. The study discovered that there was gap between policy formulation and implementation from the government and her citizens. People were not consulted before decisions were taken on covid-19 preventive measures. Government of Rivers state did not critically analyze its preventive measures before it adopted. What worked perfectly in USA cannot work here in Nigeria if not properly managed.

The study unveiled that palliative measures caused more harm than the covid -19 pandemic. That palliative measures were in no way tantamount to cushioning the adverse effect of the pandemic. The palliatives were not only politicized but also seen as conduit for appropriation of state resources by those concerned. It was discovered that the pandemic exist but was over blown to attract financial sympathy and empathy from other higher authorities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That state government should look inward in reorganizing her health sector to world standard, build and invest on research institutes and encourage the use of African traditional medicine.
2. People should be consulted before decisions about them are taken.
3. People are not fully sensitized about the pandemic, more sensitization need to be done.
4. There is need for policy monitoring and evaluation. There should be transparency and accountability in the use of public funds. People should stop playing politics with corona virus.
5. Palliatives should be meaningful enough to be called palliative and to cushion the effect.
6. Government at all level should come up with proactive measures on how to combat the pandemic looking inward in Africa.

7. Government at all levels should build more functional health centers with qualified professionals, building of research centers and institute.

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BUDGET FACILITY AND ECONOMIC SECURITY IN THE FACE OF ECONOMIC SHOCKS (2020 COVID-19)

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ABSTRACT

Economic security is vital for all economies. The true test of development is anchored on the level of economic security which a society provides to its citizens. Studies have shown that an individual who has economic security is more contented, happy with chances of growth and development. Economic security simply implies that regardless of whatever economic shocks that may occur, the economy's longevity and prowess will not be adversely affected and will consequently tackle such shocks whether financial, social, etc. Sectors which guarantee economic security when invested in include the health sector, education sector, agricultural sector, research and development, humanitarian affairs and social disaster relief sector. These sectors possess the multiplier effect of economic growth across other sectors consequently guaranteeing economic security. The main objective of this work is to measure the impact of adequate budgetary facility in guaranteeing Economic Security in the health sector especially with shocks like the COVID19 from 2003 to 2018. This paper employed Trend Analysis as a method of estimation. The normative expectation from this study is that the Public Health Expenditure would be a major contributor to Life Expectancy, however inferences drawn from trend analysis is based on adaptive expectations. This normative expectation is consistent with the

endogenous theories, which argues that an improvement in capital will improve productivity. Other theories which constitute the theoretical framework of this paper include the production theory, and the Grossman model. However, based on the current reality of the Nigerian health sector, it is highly plausible to have the findings hint to a negative relationship which will in turn reiterate the growing need for a reform in the Nigerian budgetary allocation to the health sector.

Keywords: *Economic Security, Budget Facility, Health Sector, COVID-19, Shock*

1. INTRODUCTION

Economic security is vital for any and every economy. The true test of development is anchored on the level of economic security which a society provides to its citizens. Studies have shown that an individual who has economic security is more contented, happy and has higher chances of growth and development. Economic security simply implies that regardless of whatever economic shocks that may occur, the economy's longevity and prowess will not be adversely affected and will consequently tackle such shocks whether financial, social, etc. Sectors which guarantee economic security when invested in include the health sector, education sector, agricultural sector, research and development, humanitarian affairs and social disaster relief sector. These sectors possess the multiplier effect of economic growth across other sectors consequently guaranteeing economic security.

Developing countries ought to have a more substantial spending on the aforementioned sectors than developed countries. This is because in developing countries like Nigeria, with low level of technical progress, health, education, research and development assume an added dimension of importance in terms of implications for economic activities. The budgetary allocation to the health sector in particular is expected to be substantial in both relative and absolute

terms. In both the developed and developing nations, an obvious proportion of a nation's wealth is expected to be devoted to health. For example, the World Health Reports (2006) gave Nigerian government's expenditure on health as a percentage of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for year 2001, 2002, and 2003 as 5.3 percent, 5 percent, and 4.7 percent respectively.

The occurrence of economic shocks (financial, social, technological, demand-side, supply-side) over the years has very much highlighted the prevalent economic insecurity in Nigeria. The Nigerian economy has had shocks which have threatened the health of the populace and often times unable to make provisions for plausible losses. The 1918-1919 influenza was introduced to Nigeria by passengers and crew from ships from overseas. Even though the pandemic ended as soon as it started, the morbidity and panic it had caused adversely affected productivity.

1.1. The Nigerian Situation: An Overview

HIV/AIDS became a reality in Nigeria when two AIDS cases were diagnosed in 1985 and reported in 1986. The prevalence of the HIV/AIDS in Nigeria has consequently lead to the death of millions over the years and while there is a vaccine that manages it, HIV/AIDS patients are still worse off with the stigma and discrimination that comes with it. This in turn affects the productivity of the Nigerian economy. According to UNAIDS, as at 2018, there were over 1.9 million people living with HIV and 53000 deaths were AIDS-related. Bird Flu, Ebola are just a few of other threats the Nigerian health sector has faced in the past.

Currently we are faced with a global pandemic, the COVID19 which has dealt and is still dealing a huge blow to several economies of the world including Nigeria. As it is yet to be history, the ripple effects of this pandemic cannot be fully measured just yet. With the lockdown and shutdown of business activities in major economies of the world, there has been a significant decline in the demand for oil which is the major source of revenue for the Nigerian economy. Consequently the oil price has taken a downturn to the tune of less than a dollar per barrel. The implications on sectors could vary, for

instance, in tourism and aviation, the decline in global travel is expected to reduce the inflow in terms of national revenue.

The Nigerian health sector has also recorded a number of deaths which may not match that of countries like Italy but the likelihood of the death rate to increase is high as we are mainly reliant on foreign aid which is very limited. There are conventional policy measures being taken which includes tax cuts, tax holidays, reduced cost of borrowing through reduction of bank rates. While this may serve demand-side shocks, it is not as effective as shocks from both demand and supply side. The lockdown has consumers indoors, resulting in the decline in consumption. Also, factories and production units are shutting down and in some cases, staff work from home to limit physical contact.

Most developing economies are expected to experience a significant downturn. In the case of Nigeria, which is yet to fully recover from the 2016 economic recession due to global fall in oil price and poor foreign reserve earnings to support imports, it gets worse. The 2020 budget has estimated revenue of 8.4 trillion naira and an estimated expenditure of 10.54 trillion naira. The revenue assumptions are based on increased global oil demand and stable market with oil price benchmark and oil output respectively at \$57 per barrel and 2.18 Million Barrels Per Day. However with the emergence of the COVID19, there is need to review the budget and consider contingency plans.

Adequate funding for sectors such as Health, Education, Research and Development, Agriculture, are required to tackle the challenges posed by shocks such as this. The normative expectation from investing in key sectors like this is a multiplier effect of growth across other sectors. This is required to measure economic security which most economies require to survive any kind of shock. Therefore key questions to ask include; Are the allocations to the sector cost-effective? How will they guarantee economic security in terms of mortality rate, literacy rate, trade, GDP and other indicators of development?

1.2. Salient Issues

There is a significant insufficiency in the resources for the health sector to support humanitarian affairs, disaster management and social development. This relates to prudent measures required by every economy to guarantee that in the face of a threat to human life, there will be quick response in ensuring security. This paper is set out to fill the gap of examining the precautionary measures taken by government to ensure health and longevity. This should provide a clear cut indication of the Nigerian government's preparedness in the face of shocks in the form of epidemics or pandemics such as the COVID19.

Nigeria has the largest population in Africa. This points to the increasing demand of healthcare because of the increasing population. The United Nations project that the overall population of Nigeria will reach about 401.31 million by the end of the year 2050. By 2100, if current figures continue, the population of Nigeria will be over 728 million. However, resources for healthcare provision are very limited. The 2020 budget of N10.59 trillion was approved by the National Assembly on December 5th, 2019. The 2020 allocation for the healthcare sector is N440.73 billion, which is about 4.16% of the total budget, compared to the approved 2019 budget, it increased by 3.94% from N424.03 billion. Capital expenditure increased by 4.95% from N57.085 billion in 2019 to N59.909 billion in 2020. Nigeria in the last 10 years has been unable to meet the April 2001 African Union declaration which states that 15% of a country's budget should be allocated to the healthcare sector (Editor, 2019).

The essence of the recent law was to correct the inadequacy in the funding of the primary health care system in Nigeria and directed at making available the compensating funds needed to create a tough health system. The NMA's argument is based on the fact that with Nigeria's growing population and need for Medicare, there should be adequate funds made available to sustain the Health sector. This funding issue has led to inefficiencies in health care provision. However some practitioners argue that the budgeting process and use of funds allocated may be ineffective due to leadership and corruption on the part of the authorities manning the health sector which is why it

is necessary to determine how there has been maximization of output with so little input.

The federal government following the budget allocation to the healthcare sector, has set a benchmark of N2000 per head to provide the healthcare services of the estimated 200 million Nigerians. The 2019 health indices for Nigeria indicates the deplorable situation of Nigeria. According to the Global Health Observatory and the Demographic Health Survey program of WHO, the health indices include a life expectancy for men/women at 53/56 years respectively.

This paper intends to answer the following questions in order to address the concern of government, Nigerian populace, international organizations and donors on the performances of the Nigerian nation.

- a) How effective is the government's attention score in guaranteeing positive health outcomes?
- b) Is public health expenditure to the Nigerian health sector enough to guarantee security in the face of shocks such as the COVID19?
- c) In what ways can the budgetary allocation to the health sector be ameliorated?

The main aim of this paper is to examine the precautionary measures of the Nigerian Health system against shocks in the form of pandemics and epidemics as it affects health outcomes in terms of Life Expectancy. This study is focused on the efficiency of the funding of the Nigerian Health sector and how its present conditions can be ameliorated as has been considered needful through observation.

The specific objectives include the following:

- a) To assess the impact of government spending on health outcomes in Nigeria.
- b) To assess if the government spending is enough to guarantee security for the health sector in cases of disease outbreak.

The following hypotheses are tested in their null and alternative forms.

H₁₁: There is no significant impact of government spending on health on health outcomes in Nigeria.

H₁₂: There is a significant impact of government spending on health on health outcomes in Nigeria.

H₂₁: There is no significant impact of government spending on health in periods of disease outbreak.

H₂₂: There is a significant impact of government spending on health in periods of disease outbreak.

1.3 Scope Analysis

The issue of budget facility and economic security of health in the face of shocks (disease outbreaks) in Nigeria shall be examined spanning the period 2003 to 2018. This will be secondary data which will have a trend analysis to establish the causal relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable. This is where the variables which serve as a proxy for budget facility and economic security of health are current health expenditure and life expectancy respectively. This study also includes other variables to adequately capture the impact of government's attention score to health on not just the macro economy but also micro economy. This study covers the production of health care services and how the government's attention score to the health sector guarantees economic security.

Hospitals and health facilities are at the very core of executing interferences and policies which are important to the achievement of the nation's health goals. Specifically, these centers if well funded would ensure positive health outcome in the economy.

Additionally, there are proofs of the meager performance of the Nigerian health sector. The nation's health system was rated 187th out of 191 WHO member countries on the indexes of overall health sector performance; and according to Masiye (2007) hospitals are the key elements of nations' health system performance. These institutions make up the dominant sector and prime resource consuming unit in the health care industry (Rosko, Chilingirian, Zin and Aaronson, 1995; Mackee and Henley, 2002). In that case, if these institutions are inefficiently funded and managed, the likely positive impact on the

overall well-being of the population may be reduced. Also, the country is more susceptible to being gravely affected by a threat to health in the form of epidemics or pandemics.

Despite this awareness, there has so far, been little attempt made to measure the impact of public spending on health across nations and analyze factors like health expenditure affecting the efficiency of the Nigerian hospitals. The study therefore, has set out to fill the gap of measuring the adequacy of government's spending on the health sector in Nigeria in curbing deplorable effects of shocks which threaten the health sector. This should provide a clear cut indication of the Nigerian government's performance level and preparedness. This will also provide a policy recommendation path to the Nigerian government.

The data used are sourced from WDI database, and WHO and the research method adopted is the Trend Analysis.

1.4 Outline of the Paper

This paper is arranged into five sections. The first section yields the backdrop details of the study, the research hypotheses, the objectives and significance of the study and ends with a phase committed to definitions of terms employed in our analysis.

Section two reviews relevant literatures on the subject of health, health outcomes, budgeting, trend analysis and models. The last section includes conclusions and recommendations.

2. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

The relationship between public health expenditure and health outcomes in terms of Life Expectancy at birth in Nigeria, especially in the face of shocks in the form of epidemics and pandemics, is a vital area of concern. Despite the level of knowledge brought forward, it has not facilitated significantly the budgeting of the Nigerian health sector. There are glaring and significant loopholes in the amount of attention given to the health sector by the government. This in turn explains the relative slow growth of the Nigerian health sector.

2.1 The Concept of Budget and Budgeting

Budgeting is simply the process of creating a plan on how to spend one's money. The plan in this case is the budget, which is a financial statement which shows the level of revenue in stock and the estimated expenditure. Budgeting forms a huge part of macroeconomic planning as it sets policy makers and implementation agents on the right path in regards to how resources should be utilized. It is important that a budget stays either on balanced or surplus case as it implies some level of economic security. On the other hand, if a budget is on the deficit, it would require certain measures to ameliorate the situation which involves bridging the financial gap. A budget is a tool that managers use to plan and control the use of scarce resources. A budget is a plan showing the company's objectives and how management intends to acquire and use resources to attain those objectives (Education Unlocked).

Different kinds of budgets are used by companies, non-profit organizations and government units. There are responsibility budgets which are used to judge the performance of an individual or manager. There are also capital budgets which are put in place to serve long term capital projects. Then there is the master budget which includes a planning operating budget and a financial budget. This is the kind of budget that concerns this paper.

The budgeting process involves planning for future profitability because earning a reasonable return on resources used is a primary company objective. A company must devise some method to deal with the uncertainty of the future. An institution that does not plan whatsoever is thereby choosing to deal with the future by default and will only react to events as they occur. Most businesses, however, devise a blueprint for the actions they will take given the foreseeable events that may occur (Education Unlocked). This is in line with the prudence principle that guides managerial accounting.

The same applies at the macro level when it comes to national budgeting. It is required to be inclusive, covering every sector and detailing how much allocation should go to each sector, and how it should be used in capital expenditures. The allocated funds to each sector are prioritized based on the relative importance of the sector. Each country has its own subjective preference scale. However normative expectation requires that key specific sectors such as

education, health, agriculture, etc, are to be treated as primary priority to ensure sustainable development. The budget analysis clearly states the national revenue and expected expenditure to ascertain if there is a budget deficit or surplus and how best to manage each situation.

2.2 Concept of Health

The World Health Organization (WHO) in 1948 defined health as “a state of complete physical, social and mental well-being and not merely absence of disease and infirmity”. In this way, health is metabolic efficiency while sickness or ill health is metabolic inefficiency. A state of total physical, mental, and social well-being; not just absence of disease or infirmity is a healthy status- a status in which individuals can be functional and productive members of any society.

There is the popular saying that, “health is wealth”. This refers to the human capital which is guaranteed by good health. Factors of production include capital which also includes human capital. A populace with rich human capital has higher chances of a positive production index. This supports the idea that the government of every economy should generously invest in the nation’s human capital. This is an argument widely supported by many scholars with theoretical frameworks backing it up.

2.3 Concept of Economic Shocks

This is a sudden event or occurrence which threatens the stability of an economy. An economic shock refers to any change to fundamental macroeconomic variables or relationships that has a substantial effect on macroeconomic outcomes and measures of economic performance, such as unemployment, consumption, and inflation. Shocks are often unpredictable and are usually the result of events thought to be beyond the scope of normal economic transactions. Economic shocks have widespread and lasting effects on the economy, and are the root cause of recessions and economic cycles in Real Business Cycle Theory (Chappelow, 2019).

Economic shocks are believed to mainly affect the economy on either the supply side or the demand side. They can also be group based on

the specific sector affected in the economy. As a result of the linkages amongst markets and industries, large shocks on either supply or demand side such as the COVID19 often result to far-reaching macroeconomic impact. Economic shocks can be either positive whereby it helps the growth of an economy or negative whereby it causes harm to the economy.

A supply shock is an occurrence that makes production more difficult, more costly or even impossible for at least some industries. A demand shock is said to occur when there is a sharp shift in the private consumption pattern/spending of consumers. Looking at the COVID19, it can be very much argued that it is both a supply and demand side shock. The threat to the health sector and the institution of the temporary lockdown, where people had to stay indoors, led to the abrupt cut in demand for goods and services. Also, production was also halted by the regulatory environment and workers were asked to temporarily stop working or work remotely. The unemployment rate since the advent of the pandemic has also been on the rise, thereby affecting supply.

2.4 Budget Facility and Economic Security

The relationship existing between budgetary allocation to health and economic security is important especially for developing countries like Nigeria. Gupta *et.al* (2001) observed that budgetary allocations to key sectors such as health and education can enhance equity, growth and development and reduce poverty through its positive effects on human capital formation (Sanjeev, Benedict, & E., 1998).

Bokhari (2007) concluded that while economic growth is an important contributor to health outcomes, government spending on health is just as important a factor (Farasat, Pablo, & Gai, 2007). Bhalotra (2007) in her research argued that there is a significant effect of health expenditure on infant mortality when considering rural households in India (Bhalotra, 2007). Azmat (2008) published a work on health care financing and health outcomes in Pacific Island countries. He argued based on empirical findings that per capita health expenditure is an important factor in determining health outcomes (Azmat, 2009).

Somoye, Olayiwola, Bidmoz, Oke, and Odubunmi (2008) from their findings suggested that increasing budgetary allocations for education and health may not be an effective way of increasing education and health sector output and that more attention needs to be given to increasing efficiency of public expenditure in these two sectors.

Moreover, Anyanwu and Erhijakpor (2009), in their work on health expenditures and health outcomes in Africa, supported this view that total health expenditures are important contributors to health outcomes. Therefore, improvement of the health outcomes of the macro and micro economy reiterates health security which in itself is economic security.

2.5 Endogenous Growth Theory

The basic development of endogenous growth theory over the previous models is that it extensively tries to model technology (that is, considers the factors that influence technology) rather than feigning it to be exogenous. Most times, economic growth is a resultant effect of technological progress, which is simply the ability of an economic organization to use its productive resources more adequately over time. Much of this ability is derived from the process of schooling to handle newly instituted production centers in a more productive way or more generally from learning to cope with quick adjustments in the structure of production which industrial progress must imply (Verbeck, 2000).

In his 1988 paper, Nobel laureate Robert Lucas presented a model in which the ultimate goal is to endogenise economic growth. In that model, the ‘engine’ of growth is human capital, as human capital accumulation raises the productivity of both labor and physical capital. In spite of having been much upgraded by other contributors, the importance of the Lucas model resides in the fact that he provided the first human capital approach to endogenous growth. An individual accumulates human capital by investing on him/herself. His level of human capital upon leaving school and entering the labor force depends: On the length of his investment period, which he chooses. On the effectiveness of the time spent, which is determined by the

social stock of knowledge. An individual's investment period influences his wage in the labor market.

2.6 Grossman Model (1972)

This model seeks to analyze how age, education, health status and income influence the production of health through the demand for health capital. This model suggests that health is wanted by people. The model also indicates that health is not passively purchased from markets and that it is produced in combining time with purchased medical inputs. Another special feature of this model is that health is a capital good which does not depreciate instantly. Also, this model indicates that health can be treated as a consumption good and an investment good. Grossman's idea goes ahead to stress that health being treated as an investment good yields net returns over time. These net returns translate to the health outcomes including those discussed in this literature review.

2.7 Doctrine of Prudence

This is an accounting principle which canvasses for making provision for losses. Under the prudence concept, do not overestimate the amount of revenues recognized or underestimate the amount of expenses. Also, one should be conservative in recording the amount of assets, and not underestimate liabilities. The result should be conservatively-stated financial statements (Accounting Tools, 2020). The budgetary allocations should be done in such a way where resources are safely and concisely kept aside for the plausible occurrence of losses and unforeseen expenditure. Economic shocks, when on the negative side, incurs losses and expenses such as can be seen with the COVID19. The preparedness of an economy in the face of shocks is deeply rooted in the concept of prudence.

2.8 Theory of Production

Microeconomic theory of production makes available the system for our assessment of local competence of health sector. The theory of production considers a firm as a producing system where inputs defined as the resources used in the production process are transformed or converted into desirable outputs. In production theory,

resource inputs and outputs are flows (Pindyck and Rubbinfield, 2005). This derives from the fact that a given amount of inputs are employed overtime to generate varying outputs quantities. Inputs are goods or services that go into the process of production while output represents the goods or services that come out of the process. The technical relationship which exists between inputs combined and the output generated from such inputs is often termed production function or frontiers (Abiodun, 2011). The function or frontiers present the commensurate relationships between inputs and outputs. Besides, the production represents the technical level of a firm, of an industry or of the economy as a whole as the case may be. And, because production function allows inputs to be combined in varying proportion, output could be made in many ways.

Furthermore, production function may take the form of a schedule of table, graphed line or curve, an algebraic equation or a variety of mathematical modeling. In algebraic or mathematical structure, for instance, the interconnection between capital input (K) combined with labor input(L) to produce output Q can be expressed as $Q= f(K, L)$. This mathematical expression describes the technical chances of the firm in reference.

2.9 Budgetary Allocation and Economic Security

This part of this research work provides a review of various empirical models, findings and conclusions that other researchers have made on the subject budgetary allocation and economic security in the health sector.

The study on sectoral budgetary allocation and economic development in Nigeria by Osagie Osifon and A. E. Uwubanmwen produced findings which suggests a positive relationship between budgetary allocations to education, health and agriculture and economic growth in Nigeria. However, public expenditure on defense, which often takes a larger chunk of the allocations, has a negative relationship with the economic growth in Nigeria. The study is concluded with a recommendation that there should be increased, and judicious spending on these sectors of the economy as well as institutional mechanism to properly monitor the resources spent on

them, so that the allocated funds are properly channeled for rapid economic growth and development (Uwubanmwun & Osagie, 2016).

The study by Abada et al examined the effects of budgetary allocations on public sector reform agenda in Nigeria. In particular, allocations to the health sector were analyzed in order to ascertain whether they have positive impact on the life expectancy of the citizenry. The findings showed that the Federal Government budgetary allocations to the health sector have a positive but insignificant impact on life expectancy. Conclusion was drawn and it was recommended based on the findings of the study among others that the Federal Government should go on with the implementation of the public sector reform program but should strengthen the audit institutions to be able to carry out the responsibilities which the reform of public sector demands (Abada, Okelumaka, & David, 2016).

Jimoh and Wahab (2016) in their study on Health Care Financing and Budgetary Allocation in Ondo State employed the use of primary and secondary data as well as descriptive statistics and trend analysis in the data analysis. A multi-stage sampling technique was adopted to select and elicit information from the respondents. This study concluded that health care financing was inadequate in the study area and recommended an increase in government budgetary allocation.

Several papers that have been reviewed while carrying out this study have been found to have some inappropriate method. Some violated the central limit theorem which states that under certain conditions the arithmetic mean of a sufficiently large number frequency of independent random variables, each with a well defined and summarized expected value and well-defined variance, will be approximately normally distributed regardless the underlying distribution.

Yaqub, Ojapinwa, Yussuff (2012) used the ordinary least squares and two-stage least squares to analyze the secondary data gotten from relevant sources from 1980 to 2008. According to the central limit theorem, this result will be spurious due to insufficiency of data to ascertain the appropriate result that is desired. The amount

of data employed should be well above 30 units to fine-tune the result of the analysis.

3. TREND ANALYSIS OF THE NIGERIAN HEALTH SECTOR BUDGETING

3.1. An Overview

Through the 59 years of Nigeria's history, her health sector like other sectors of the country's economy has had its great and worst times with unrewarding national health indices traceable to years of minimal civil order and best practices, a weak private health sector, badly instituted social infrastructure, including policies which are inconsistent. Some of the contributing factors to this include: Bureaucracy at most levels of government; Political instability, policy inconsistency and obvious presence of political apathy to health by most state and local governments in Nigeria; Foundational corruption and infrastructural decay; Undue politicization of the health sector coupled with declining professionalism and non-adherence to best practices; Poor constitutional and legal framework for health in Nigeria, particularly the absence of a National Health Act; Poor co-ordination, integration and implementation of health policies, programs, projects and donor support; Poor funding and budgetary provisions for health, far less than the stipulated 15% of the National budget as prescribed by the World Health Organization and affirmed by the 2001 Abuja declaration of African Heads of State; and so much more.

The Nigerian economy has for decades suffered health insecurity on grounds of ineffectual budgetary allocations. According to the Nigerian 2020 budgetary analysis, the federal government still spends less than 11% of national budget on its education and health sector combined. Looking at the 2020 budgetary allocation analysis, it is important to study the sectoral allocations. The Nigerian 2020 approved budget framework had a trajectory of 8.4trn revenue and 10.59trn expenditure, having a deficit of 2.18trn. The ministry of humanitarian affairs was allocated N453.27bn. Prior to the review, only 13% of the national budget was allocated and this was supposed

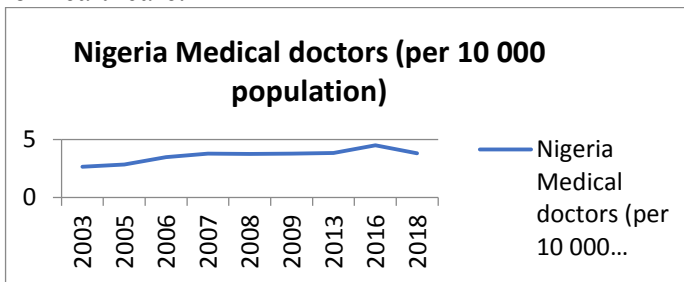
to tend to victims of harsh economic climate such as the current situation. The health sector was allocated N441bn prior to the review which is a 13.3% increase from the previous year (BudgIT, 2020).

Following the emergence of the COVID19 pandemic, there was a review of the 2020 national budget. The senate passed the revised N10.8trn 2020 budget in June, where N500 bn was laid out for the fight against COVID19 and the health sector was allocated a meager N186bn for capital projects. Prior to this review the allocation for capital projects in the health sector was N159 bn. The Director of BudgIT which is a non-governmental organization, Seun Onigbinde has sent an appeal urging the senate to reinstate the initial N159bn for capital projects in the health sector and also arguing that key sectors should be prioritized (Folorunsho-Francis, 2020).

3.2 Trend Analysis

3.2.1 Nigerian Medical Doctors (per 10000 Population)

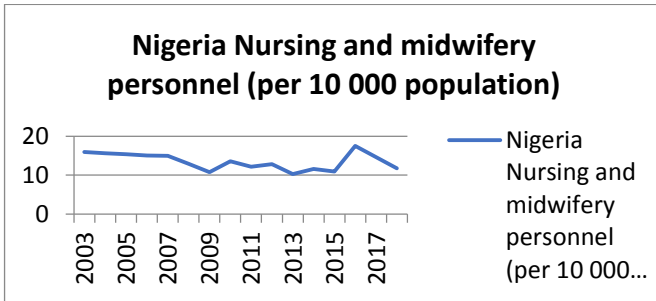
The records for the medical doctors (per 10000 population) for Nigeria has always been flawed in the sense that the figures do not guarantee the sufficient amount of supply healthcare services. As at 2003, it was 2.648 according to WHO and as at 2018, it was 3.806, which indicates a 43% increase in 15 years. While this points to progress, there's still need for improvement with the growing demand for healthcare.



Source: WHO

3.2.2 Nursing and midwifery personnel (per 10000 population)

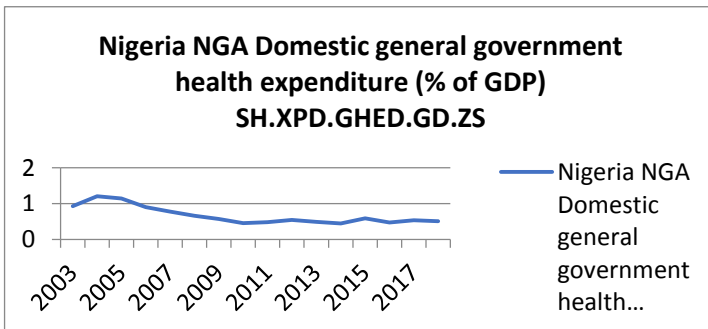
The statistics for the nursing and midwifery personnel (per 10000 population) in Nigeria has always been flawed in the sense that the figures do not guarantee the sufficient amount of supply healthcare services. As at 2003, it was 2.648 according to WHO and as at 2018, it was 3.806 which indicates a 43% increase in 15 years. While this points to progress, there's still need for improvement with the growing demand for healthcare.



Source: WHO

3.2.3 Domestic General Government Health Expenditure (% GDP)

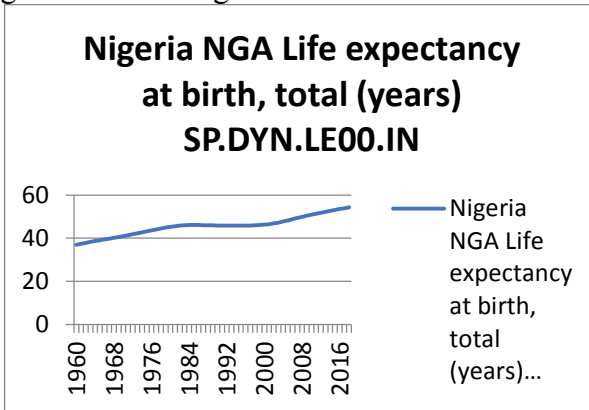
There has been a downward trend in the domestic general government expenditure (%GDP) in Nigeria. This explains the slow and very little growth of the Nigerian health sector. It also highlights the level of health insecurity as the government's attention score to health is very poor.



Source: WDI

3.2.4 Life Expectancy

The life expectancy at birth in Nigeria has had growth and improvement over the years. However, this growth has been at a very slow pace and with very little improvement. According to the World Bank's World Development Index, Nigeria as at 2003 had a life expectancy (at birth) of 47.242 years and in 2018, it was 54.332. The little difference over such a short period of time reiterates the slow growth of the Nigerian health sector.



Source: WDI

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1. Conclusions

Adequate health expenditure in any economy is a vital source of strength for the health sector of any economy hence ensuring economic security. However, the impact of public health expenditure on health outcomes seems to be going the opposite direction in Nigeria. It is expected that the public health expenditure will enhance positive health outcomes whether in developing or in developed countries, and also ensure that it equips the economy against the likelihood of shocks or any threat to health.

This study is a time series study of the health outcome variables and economic security, and the data covered the period of 2003-2018. The study examines two vital aspects of the research questions. They include – the causal relationship, and the impact of government spending on health outcomes within Nigeria and also how it guarantees health/economic security against shocks in the form of

threat to health. The ultimate goal of this research is to establish the causal relationship between government health expenditure and health outcomes in Nigeria. The technique of estimation used is the Trend Analysis of both dependent variable (Life Expectancy) and independent variables.

The theoretical framework used for this study is the Grossman model. A number of studies have been done on human capital and health during the past few years. People invest in themselves to improve their ability and capacity. Expenditure on education and health is widely accepted as investment by economists because it provides productive asset in the form of human capital. Grossman has developed a model on demand for health care services where he emphasized that investment in health care services generates good health which helps in just not improving labor productivity and producer's monetary benefit but also individual utility function.

The deduction from the trend analysis is the slow and little improvement in the health indices of Nigeria and how this is partly as a result of insufficient funding from budgetary allocations. Also, the current state reiterates the unpreparedness of the economy against unforeseen occurrences like the COVID19. There seems to be improvement but the truth based on findings, is that there is need for more improvement and a more prudent approach to budgeting to aid other resources needed for health security.

4.2 Recommendations

Over the years, the government has introduced a number of policy measures to promote the public health expenditure of Nigeria so as to help residents have better chances of access to good health. A major difficulty with the implementation of these policy measures is that there are not enough funds laid out to fully actualize this goal.

From the analysis, the following recommendations are made for implementation:

The government of Nigeria should in the course of budgetary allocation, pay more attention to key sectors like the health and education sector. This would ensure provision of enough resources which would result in efficiency in the health sector, and in turn

ensure economic security. The government should create a stable institution that would ensure proper utilization of funds allocated to health through checks and balances.

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COVID-19 AND FOOD SYSTEM, SECURITY AND SAFETY IN RURAL AREAS OF SOUTH-EAST NIGERIA: IMPACTS AND POSSIBLE COPING STRATEGIES

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ABSTRACT

Farmers in rural areas are the hub of food system in South-East Nigeria. Unfortunately, the phobia of COVID-19 and its abrupt quarantine measures enforced through government agencies to an extent affected routine food system activities such as food production, distribution, consumption among others in rural areas of South-East Nigeria. Consequently, there is a serious threat to food security and safety which are dependent on sustainable food system. Therefore, the study sought to identify specific impacts of COVID-19 on food system, security and safety and possible coping strategies in rural areas of South-East Nigeria. The study was guided by 5 specific objectives. Exploratory sequential mixed method approach was adopted for the study. The sample size of the study was 150 commercial rural farmers purposely selected from each of the 5 states in South-East Nigeria. A semi-structured interview guide and researcher-adapted

structured questionnaire were respectively used to elicit qualitative and quantitative data from respondents by researchers with the help of 3 trained research assistants. The permissions of respondents were sought before data collection; therefore data collection was entirely on voluntary basis. Researchers also ensured that the issues of privacy and confidentiality of respondents were respected. Also, strict adherence to COVID-19 rules during contacts with respondents was maintained. Quantitative data collected using a structured questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviations, and qualitative data from interview meetings were coded and analyzed to support the findings of the questionnaire. SPSS-software version-22 was used for the data analysis by researchers. The study identified 15 specific impacts of COVID-19 on food production, 10 specific impacts of COVID-19 on food distribution, 4 specific impacts of COVID-19 on food security, 3 specific impacts of COVID-19 on food safety and 14 possible coping strategies to the Impacts of COVID-19 on food system, food Security and food Safety in rural areas of South-East Nigeria. Therefore, the study among others recommended that government, international organizations, philanthropists and banks should provide farmers with loans, subsidies, grants (funds, seeds, seedlings, agrochemicals and other relevant inputs) in order to boost food production in South-East Nigeria.

Keywords: *Coping Strategies, COVID-19 Impacts, Food System, Food Production, Food Distribution, Food Security, Food Safety*

Background to the Study

Food system is a complex mix of activities within an area which include food production, harvesting, processing, consumption, marketing among others (Lamuka, 2014). It is the major backbone of

South East Nigerian economy in ensuring people's well being, providing raw materials, food, and employment for over 75% of the rural population. Therefore, effective food system within an area is essential for actualizing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) such as food security, food safety, poverty alleviation, and conservation of natural resources (Ibeawuchi, 2007). According to Capone *et. al.* (2014), food security in an area is evaluated under four basic pillars such as availability, access, utilization and stability of food. Therefore, a sustainable food system supports food security and provides consumers with nutritionally adequate, safe, healthy and affordable food for present and future generations. Notably, farmers in rural areas of South-East Nigeria are critical to food system. They perform various food system activities such as producing crops and animals, harvesting, handling/processing food, storage, marketing among others (Fasoyiro & Taiwo, 2012; Ibeawuchi, 2007). In South-East Nigeria, farmers in rural areas are the hub of the food system. Fawole & Oladele (2007) supported this by stating that about 70% of the rural areas are sustaining Nigerian agricultural production. Unfortunately, food system activities in rural areas of South-East Nigeria were greatly affected by the pandemic which was said to have emanated from China in 2019.

The novel pandemic called Corona Virus Disease-19 (COVID-19) is a contagious disease caused by a newly discovered corona virus which rapidly spreads through contact (WHO, 2020). The first case of this disease in sub-Saharan Africa was recorded in Nigeria in February, 2020 (NCDC, 2020, BBC, 2020). In order to contain the virus, the Federal Government of Nigeria declared a total lockdown of economic activities and enforced serious quarantine policies throughout the nation which restricted the movement of individuals living in rural and urban areas of Nigeria (Daily Trust, 2020). The COVID-19 which quickly gained its access through the borders of Nigeria eventually spread to the South-East Nigerian states (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo) and eventually disrupted many economic activities including the food system, thus posing a serious threat to food security, food safety and actualization of other SDGs (Iwelumo *et al.*, 2020, Terero, 2020). This abrupt disruption of food system by COVID-19 has increased the level of hunger and food

insecurity within South-East Nigeria. According to FAO (2019), hunger is a condition where people are unable to meet their food requirements, consume enough calories to lead a normal, active life over a protracted time. Notably, this condition has long-term implications for people's future, and continues to present a hindrance to global efforts to reach Zero Hunger. The occurrence of hunger within a particular locality is an indication of food insecurity. Food insecurity could be acute or chronic. Acute food insecurity means that individuals have limited access to food in the short-term due to sudden crises that may put their lives and livelihoods at risk. However, if these individuals get the assistance they need during this condition, the situation will not become chronic (FAO (2019)). More so, as a result of the incidence of COVID-19, food safety is not fully guaranteed to individuals living in South-East Nigeria and beyond. According to Australian Institute of Food Safety (2019), food Safety refers to handling, preparing and storing food in a way to best reduce the risk of individuals becoming sick from foodborne illnesses. Researchers observed that many farmers and individuals in South-East Nigeria seem not to be handling, preparing and storing foods in the best way to prevent infection. Food is one of the risk factors to contacting COVID-19 (FAO 2019), thus the disease seem to have impacts on food safely.

Food security and safety of an area depend on the sustainability of the food system, however the social dimension of the sustainability concerns the social conditions of farmers and people affected by the food system (Thomas, 2014). The prevailing social and economic conditions of rural farmers and other individuals being affected by food system in South-East Nigeria, especially during active enforcement of isolation measures, are not convenient for a sustainable food production system. Therefore, to ensure that the food system is not further distorted by COVID-19 in rural areas of South-East Nigeria, Iwulemo *et al.* (2020) recommended that government should provide more palliatives to farmers in the form of improved seedlings, basic farm implements at highly subsidized prices, and free or more affordable farm extension services. More so, the agricultural sector should be accorded more budgetary allocations. FAO (2019)

suggested food system transformation, reinforcement of global humanitarian responses, boosting smallholder resilience for recovery, bolstering trade and food safety standards, economic inclusion and social protection to reduce poverty, improve data for decision making and preventing the next zoonotic pandemic through strengthened one health approach. Shrikrushna *et al.* (2020) recommended the adoption of adaptive strategies and policy responses to food trade, postharvest food processing, food cost, food safety, stabilizing individuals' incomes and access to food, and ensuring continuities of food supply chain.

Researchers observed that the phobia of COVID-19 and its abrupt quarantine measures enforced through government agencies to an extent affected routine food system activities such as food production, distribution, consumption among others in rural areas of South-East Nigeria. This eventually led to a noticeable decrease in general food production, supply, global food exchange, massive decrease in demand for commercial food services, restrictions in farm labour operations, processing capacity and storage. Thus farmers discarded some of their output in large quantities, thus increasing prices of food and related items, rate of hunger and food insecurity (Emma *et al.*, 2020; Iwelumo *et al.*, 2020; Terero, 2020; FAO, 2019). Observably, the governments of South-East Nigerian states have adopted many emergency policies and palliative measures to improving food production, distribution, security and safety, yet many rural farm households are suffering from serious economic hardships which seriously affect the food system. Currently, there is increasing cases of hunger in South-East Nigeria as a result of the impacts of the pandemic. FAO (2019) noted that COVID-19 struck at a time when poverty and hunger keeps rising, especially in developing countries. More so, according to the recent UN statistics, at least, an additional 83 million individuals, and possibly as many as 132 million, may go hungry in 2020 as a result of the economic recession triggered by the pandemic. FAO noted that unless immediate actions are adopted by governments, humanitarian agencies and philanthropists to boosting food production system amidst the pandemic, we risk a global food emergency that could have long-term impacts on hundreds of millions of children and adults (FAO, 2019). Therefore, there is need to adopt

realistic coping strategies to boost the food production system in order to curtail the impacts of COVID-19 (CGIAR, 2020). This issue can be adequately addressed through research. Shrikrushna *et al.* (2020) advised for more research efforts in examining the impact of COVID-19 on foods systems. Hence, this study sought to identify specific impacts of COVID-19 on food production system in rural areas of South-East Nigeria and possible coping strategies. The findings of this study would provide empirical information for governments, local and international humanitarian agencies and philanthropists on specific impacts of COVID-19 on rural food system and the possible coping strategies. Consequently, it would spur them to enacting and implementing realistic policies to curtailing the impacts of COVID-19 on food production, food distribution, food security and food safety in South-East Nigeria.

Specific Objectives

This study specifically sought to identify;

- impacts of COVID-19 on food production;
- impacts of COVID-19 on food distribution;
- impacts of COVID-19 on food security;
- impacts of COVID-19 on food safety, and
- coping strategies to impacts of COVID-19 on food system, security and safety in rural areas of South-East Nigeria

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised in line with specific objectives and answered by the study.

- What are the impacts of COVID-19 on food production?
- What are the impacts of COVID-19 on food distribution?
- What are the impacts of COVID-19 on food security?
- What are the impacts of COVID-19 on food safety? and
- What are the possible coping strategies to the impacts of COVID-19 on food system, food security and food safety?

Methodology

Area of Study and Research Design

The area of the study is rural areas of South-East Nigeria. South-East is one of the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria made up of 5 member states. The 5 states that make up South-East Nigeria include: Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo. The study adopted an exploratory sequential mixed method. This type of mixed method approach has two phases (Morteza & Sirous, 2015). In the first phase, researchers collected qualitative data from a limited number of samples in order to explore a condition. In the next phase, researchers collected quantitative data randomly from a relatively large population in order to explain relationships found in the qualitative data (Creswell 2012).

Sampling/Techniques

The study purposively selected 15 rural commercial farmers from each of the 5 states in South-East Nigeria (Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu and Imo), culminating to a total sample size of 150 rural farmers used for the study.

Ethical Consideration, Instrument and Data Collection

Data were collected from respondents for this study with ethical considerations. The permissions of respondents were sought before data collection; therefore data collection was entirely on voluntary basis. Researchers also ensured that the issues of privacy and confidentiality of respondents were respected. Also, strict adherence to COVID-19 rules during interview meetings was maintained. At the first phase of qualitative data collection, researchers administered a semi-structured interview guide to 5 rural commercial farmers from each of the states in South-East Nigeria (25 rural farmers in South-East Nigeria). The semi-structure interview questions were based on the research questions posed by the study. Data gathered during interview meetings with the 25 respondents were recorded using electronic recorders. Secondly, 125 researcher-developed structured questionnaires validated by 3 experts in the field of Agricultural Education were administered to respondents by researchers with the help of 3 trained research assistants. The questionnaire was structured

on 4-point scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D) and Strongly Disagree (SD) with respective values of 4, 3, 2 and 1.

Method of Data Analysis

Quantitative data collected using a structured questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive statistics such mean and standard deviations, and data from interview meetings were analyzed qualitatively to support the findings of the questionnaire. Decision rules on questionnaire items were based on the following; mean scores ≥ 2.5 average on 4-point scale were described as “Agreed” while mean scores < 2.5 average on 4-point scale were described as “Disagreed”. Researchers used SPSS –software, version 22 for data analysis.

Results

Quantitative and qualitative results of the study on each of the research questions are presented below

Research question 1: What are the impacts of COVID-19 on food production in Rural Areas of South-East Nigeria?

COVID-19 and Food Production

Quantitative and qualitative data for answering research question 1 are presented below

Table 1: *Impacts of COVID-19 on Food Production in Rural Areas of South-East Nigeria*

S/N	Item statements	\bar{X}	S	Decision
1	Decrease in the supply of agricultural inputs	3.29	.787	A
2	Scarcity of farm labour	3.27	.592	A
3	Restriction in mobility of farm labour	3.19	.785	A
4	Increase in the cost of food production	3.41	.700	A
5	Increase in the cost of agricultural inputs	3.26	.777	A

6	Decrease in the level of food production activities	3.13	.727	A
7	Increase in the cost of farm labour	3.33	.744	A
8	Exposure of farm labour to the risk of COVID-19	3.30	.735	A
9	Decrease in farmer's income	3.13	.779	A
10	Liquidation of some food production enterprises	3.34	.679	A
11	Displacement of farm labour	3.14	.687	A
12	Downsizing of farm labour causing unemployment	3.06	.544	A
13	Decrease in food production outputs	2.95	.705	A
14	Hoarding of food by farmers	3.11	.482	A
15	Disruption of food production activities	3.09	.501	A

\bar{x} = mean, S = Standard deviation, A = Agreed, D = Disagreed, n = number of respondents

Quantitative data in Table 1 reveals that the mean scores of respondents for all the 15 items range from 2.95 to 3.41 which are above 2.50 on 4-point scale. This implies that respondents agreed to information represented by the items as impacts of COVID-19 on food production in rural areas of South-East Nigeria. These findings are agreement with qualitative data collected from farmers which reveal that the incidence of COVID-19 thwarted farming processes, restricted farmers' movement and access to farm inputs, reduced farm labour and food outputs in rural areas of South-East Nigeria. One of the respondents stated that:

"...COVID-19 caused our income to reduce because our farming activities reduced, more so we were not getting enough supply of farm inputs because there were restrictions in movement. So we couldn't move to the farm our usual ways..."

This statement implies that the incidence of COVID-19 caused a decrease in the supply of farm inputs to farmers, reduction of farming activities and farmers' income and restriction in farmer's movement. Another farmer reveals that:

“...the quantity of food we produced eventually reduced and some of us were reserving our foods for our families because we were scared of what the incidence of COVID-19 will lead to in the world...”.

This statement clearly reveals that quantity produced by farmers reduced and some farmers hoarded foods for their family consumption because of the fear of unknown.

Research question 2: What are the impacts of COVID-19 on food distribution in rural areas of South-East Nigeria?

Impacts of COVID-19 on food distribution

Quantitative and qualitative data for answering research question 2 are presented below

Table 2: *Impacts of COVID-19 on Food Distribution in rural areas of South-East Nigeria*

S/N	Item statements	\bar{x}	<i>S</i>	Decision
1	Decrease in the quantity of food supplied	3.40	.733	A
2	Increase in the prices of food	3.22	.598	A
3	Increase in the cost of transportation	3.28	.808	A
4	Restrictions in markets /trades	3.49	.670	A
5	Decrease in the demand for commercial food services	3.36	.726	A
6	Farmers discarded perishable produce at low price	3.21	.703	A
7	Displacement of customers	3.34	.733	A
8	Increase in demand for food	3.36	.726	A
9	Reduction in market share	3.15	.790	A
10	Decrease in food processing activities	3.41	.724	A

\bar{x} = mean, *S* = Standard deviation, *A* = Agreed, *D* = Disagreed, *n* = number of respondents

Quantitative data in Table 2 show that the mean responses of respondents for all the 10 items range from 3.15 to 3.49 which are

above 2.50 on 4-point scale. This indicates that respondents agreed to information represented by the items as impacts of COVID-19 on food distribution in rural areas of South-East Nigeria.

Qualitatively, a farmer responded that:

“...the issue of corona virus was a turn in the flesh of farmers because some of us couldn’t go to market to sell our products especially to people who usually come from cities. Though people were hungry of what to eat, they did not have enough money to buy food because food became very costly. Some of our customers were nowhere to be found as some of them stopped businesses and travelled...”

This statement above clearly reveals that the impacts of COVID-19 on food distribution include restriction in markets, increase in the cost of food, increase in demand for food and displacement of customers. Also, other statement by farmers revealed that some perishable foods wasted; there were difficulties in processing foods and decrease in the quantity of food supplied by farmers.

Research question 3: What are the impacts of COVID-19 on food security in rural areas of South-East Nigeria?

Impacts of COVID-19 on food security

Quantitative and qualitative data for answering research question 3 are presented below

Table 3: *Impacts of COVID-19 on Food Security in Rural Areas of South-East Nigeria*

S/N	Item statements	\bar{x}	<i>S</i>	Decision
1	Food shortage or scarcity	3.35	.844	A
2	Unstable food supply	3.50	.509	A
3	Restricted access to food	3.19	.441	A
4	Poor utilization of food	3.30	.720	A

\bar{x} = mean, *S* = Standard deviation, *A* = Agreed, *D* = Disagreed, *n* = number of respondents

Quantitative data in Table 3 indicate that the mean responses of respondents for all the 4 items range from 3.19 to 3.50 which are

above 2.50 on 4-point scale. This shows that respondents agreed to information represented by the items as impacts of COVID-19 on 4 pillars of food security in rural areas of South-East Nigeria.

A farmer in line with the findings above stated that:

“...a lot of the people became hungry; reason being that there was short of enough food supply...and people were caged and couldn’t move out to buy food...in fact most times food supply was not steady even when the government opened the market few times within the week...”

This evidently implied that there was increased level of hunger, inadequate and unsteady food supply and restricted access to food during the COVID-19 incidence. Another statement by one of the respondents revealed that:

“... a lot of perishable food wasted and food were poorly used because processing of food became a bit difficult when the table was tuned by the corona virus outbreak...”

This statement is an indication of poor utilization of food which caused lots of wastage during the pandemic.

Research question 4: What are the impacts of COVID-19 on food safety in rural areas of South-East Nigeria?

Impacts of COVID-19 on food safety

Quantitative and qualitative data for answering research question 4 are presented below

Table 4: *Impacts of COVID-19 on Food Safety in Rural Areas of South-East Nigeria*

S/N	Item statements	\bar{x}	S	Decision
1	Vulnerability of food and food items to corona virus infection	3.20	.720	A
2	Change in dietary patterns of individuals	3.11	.720	A
3	Disruption of people’s nutrition	3.37	.000	A

\bar{x} = mean, S = Standard deviation, A = Agreed, D = Disagreed, n = number of respondents

Quantitative data in Table 4 reveal that the mean scores of respondents for all the 3 items range from 3.11 to 3.37 which are above 2.50 on 4-point scale. This implies that respondents agreed to information represented by the items as impacts of COVID-19 on food safety in rural areas of South-East Nigeria.

Qualitatively, one of the respondents stated that:

“...so many persons became afraid to contract COVID-19, people were also mindful of how they handled items including food because they don’t want to be infected with this disease....so our foods became a risk factor...”

This opinion above suggests that food and food items became risk factors of contracting COVID-19. This also implies that foods were no longer safe for people consume basically as a result of poor handling. Another respondent stated that:

“...our foods became an agent of transmitting COVID-19, more so peoples’ diets changed because they could not get the usually foods they eat on regular basis, so they just manage what they see available...”

The statement above reveals also that food became unsafe because of corona virus and also the short supply of food cause changes in peoples’ diet and hence nutrition.

Research Question 5: What are the possible coping strategies to the impacts of COVID-19 on food system, food security and food safety?

Possible Coping Strategies to the Impacts of COVID-19 on Food system, Food security and Food safety

Quantitative and qualitative data for answering research question 5 are presented below

Table 5: *Possible Coping Strategies to the Impacts of COVID-19 on Food system, Food Security and Food Safety in Rural Areas of South-East Nigeria*

S/N	Item statements	\bar{X}	S	Decision
1	Government, international organizations, philanthropists and banks should provide agricultural	3.41	.700	A

	palliatives for farmers in form of seeds, seedlings, agrochemicals and other inputs			
2	Government, international organizations, philanthropists and banks should provide agricultural loans for farmers with little interest	3.46	1.042	A
3	Government, international organizations, philanthropists and banks should subsidize agricultural inputs for farmers	3.01	.711	A
4	Government, international organizations, philanthropists and banks should provide financial agricultural grants for farmers	3.33	.744	A
5	Adoption of effective e-agricultural marketing measures/support networks	2.82	.770	A
6	Adoption of e-agricultural extension education to provide agricultural information to farmers	3.09	.702	A
7	Promoting of food safety standards in handling, processing and preparation of food	2.88	.880	A
8	Providing farmers and individuals with health protective facilities such as face shields, sanitizers, infrared thermometer, etc.	3.37	.782	A
9	Government should enact agricultural transformation policies/programmes to boost food production	3.61	.996	A
10	Strengthening trade to encourage food distribution	3.34	.625	A
11	Government, international	3.34	.798	A

	organizations and philanthropists should provide palliative food items and individuals			
12	Enacting and adopting policies that will strengthen individuals' access to food	3.26	.823	A
13	Enacting and adopting policies that will strengthen individuals' income	2.92	.812	A
14	Ensuring farm health safety working conditions	3.15	.753	A

\bar{x} = mean, S = Standard deviation, A = Agreed, D = Disagreed, n = number of respondents

Quantitative data in Table 5 reveal that the mean scores of respondents for all the 3 items range from 2.82 to 3.61 which are above 2.50 on 4-point scale. This implies that respondents agreed to information represented by the items as possible coping strategies to the impacts of COVID-19 on food system, food security and food safety. One of the respondents during interview meeting stated that: "Government other bodies should help the farmers in order to boost food production again in our part of the country. They should provide us with money because we lost a lot of money even our businesses during COVID-19 and stop politicizing giving of palliatives...They should provide us with things to protect our laborers from corona virus...They should also make sure that our markets are open so that we can be able to sell what we produce..."

This statement above support the findings from quantitative data collected which reveals that farmers agree that government, international organizations, philanthropists and banks should provide agricultural loans, grants, subsidies and palliatives for farmers . The qualitative statement above also points out farmers should be provided with health protective facilities such as face shields, sanitizers, infrared thermometer, etc. This will keep farmers healthy for production.

Another statement by a respondent is that:

“...government should help to make agricultural programmes and policies that will boost food production in South-East Nigeria because all we have built for years have been disorganized by corona virus. Now we lack resources to produce foods and even take care of our families...Also farmers should be careful and make sure they adequately protect themselves and workers”

This implies that governments of South-East Nigeria should develop agricultural transformative policies that will help to boost food production that has been affected by the incidence of corona virus. More so, farmers should ensure they and workers are well protected against COVID-19.

Discussion of Major Findings

Quantitative and qualitative findings of the study revealed that the incidence of COVID-19 resulted to decrease in the supply of agricultural inputs, liquidation of some food production enterprises, restriction and scarcity of farm labour, exposed farm labour to health risk, decrease and disruption of farm production activities, increase in the cost of agricultural input, decrease in farmer’s income and decrease in farm output among others in rural areas of South-East Nigeria. In line with the findings of this study, Emma et al. (2020), FAO (2019) and Teroro (2020) identified that the incidence of COVID-19 led to a noticeable decrease in general food production. Also, Emma *et al.* (2020) pointed out that some farmers discarded some of their output in large quantities.

Also, the study found that COVID-19 affected food distribution in the following ways; there was reduction in supply of food, increase in the cost of transportation, restriction in markets/trades, increase in the demand for food without a corresponding supply, displacement of customers, decrease in the demand for commercial food services, among others. These findings are in agreement with other studies which reveal that as a result of the prevailing pandemic there was a decrease global food exchange, massive decrease in demand for commercial food services, restrictions in farm labour operations, processing capacity and storage and

increase in prices of food and related items (Emma *et al.*, 2020; Iwelumo *et al.*, 2020; Terero, 2020; FAO, 2019).

The study also examined the specific impacts of COVID-19 on food security and found that there was food shortage or scarcity, unstable food supply, restricted access to food and poor utilization of food in rural areas of South-East Nigeria as a result of the pandemic. FAO (2019) in line with the study predicted that the incidence of COVID-19 will increase the rate of hunger and food insecurity globally. Capone *et al.* (2014) stated that food security in an area is evaluated under four basic pillars such as availability, access, utilization and stability of food. Hence the study investigated the impacts of COVID-19 in these specific areas.

It was found by the study that food and food items became vulnerable to corona virus infection, people's dietary patterns and nutrition changed because they fed on food available as they couldn't most of the foods they eat on regular basis. In agreement with these findings, FAO (2019) predicted that food safety will be comprised as a result of COVID-19. According to Australian Institute of Food Safety (2019), food Safety refers to handling, preparing and storing food in a way to best reduce the risk of individuals becoming sick from foodborne illnesses. . Researchers observed that many farmers and individuals in South-East Nigeria seem not to be handling, preparing and storing foods in the best way to prevent corona infection, hence food safety during the pandemic became an issue.

The study also 14 identified possible coping strategies to the impacts of COVID-19 on food system, food security and food safety. These include enactment of agricultural transformation programmes and policies to boost food system, food security and food safety, provision of loans, grants, subsidies and other palliatives for farmers by government, international organizations, philanthropists and banks, adoption of e-agricultural marketing and education with supporting networks, strengthening trade to encourage food distribution and ensuring farm health safety working conditions among others. In agreement with the findings of the, Shrikrushna *et al.* (2020) suggested the adoption of adaptive strategies and policy responses to food trade, postharvest food processing, food cost, food safety, stabilizing individuals' incomes and access to food, and ensuring

continuities of food supply chain. Also, Iwulemo *et al.* (2020) recommended provision of more palliatives for farmers in the form of improved seedlings, basic farm implements at highly subsidized prices, and free or more affordable farm extension services. Iwulemo *et al.* further stated that the agricultural sector should be given more priority in budgetary allocations. More so, FAO (2019) in line with the findings of the study recommended food system transformation, reinforcement of global humanitarian responses, boosting smallholder resilience for recovery, bolstering trade and food safety standards, economic inclusion and social protection to reduce poverty, improve data for decision making and preventing the next zoonotic pandemic through strengthened one health approach.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, the incidence of COVID-19 poses a serious threat to the food system, food security and food safety in rural areas of South-East Nigeria. It eventually affected food production in that it led to decrease of farm outputs and supply of agricultural inputs, liquidation of some food production enterprises, restriction and scarcity of farm labour, increase in the cost of production, exposed farm labour to health risk, decrease and disruption of farm production activities, increase in the cost of agricultural input and decrease in farmer's income among others. Also, food distribution was affected as there was reduction in the supply of food/food items, increase in the cost of transportation, restriction in markets/trades, increase in the demand for food without a corresponding supply, displacement of customers, and decrease in the demand for commercial food services, among others.

Furthermore, the specific impacts of COVID-19 on food security include food shortage or scarcity, unstable food supply, restricted access of people to food and poor utilization of food. Evidently, food safety was also compromised by COVID-19 in that food and food items became vulnerable to corona virus infection, people's dietary patterns and nutrition changed because they fed on food available as they couldn't most of the foods they eat on regular basis. Hence, the need to adopt certain measures to reducing the

impacts of COVID-19 on food system, food security and food safety in rural areas of South East Nigeria. Some possible coping strategies that could be adopted to curtailing the impacts of COVID-19 on food system, food security and food safety include enactment of agricultural transformation programmes and policies to boost food system, food security and food safety, provision of loans, grants, subsidies and other palliatives for farmers by government, international organizations, philanthropists and banks, adoption of e-agricultural marketing and education with provision of supporting networks, strengthening trade to encourage food distribution and ensuring farm health safety working conditions among others.

Recommendations

Researchers recommended the following based on the findings of the study.

- Government, international organizations, philanthropists and banks should provide farmers with seeds, seedlings, agrochemicals and other inputs, loans, subsidies and grants in order to boost food production in South-East Nigeria
- The governments of South-East Nigeria through the Ministry of Agriculture should develop and implement realistic and transformative agricultural policies and programmes to enhance food system, food security and safety in South-East Nigeria.

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COVID -19 AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS: AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

Sr. Dr. Winifred Mary Eche

Abstract

Violence against women is a global and perennial phenomenon which has claimed many lives and ruined many too. It includes domestic violence, sexual violence etc. The advent of Covid-19 has doubled its increase. This is because, with the stay-at-home order, the perpetrators of these crimes are now sitting down in their houses for several hours, battling with stress, frustration and joblessness. This gives them more opportunity and reason to be more violent than ever. Violence against women and girls is a grave violation of their human rights. Its negative impact ranges from immediate to long-term results, such as health, sexual and mental consequences, including death. It also affects women's general well-being and prevents them from fully participating in society. This paper used the analytical and expository methods and also noted that women do not suffer the effects of violence alone. Its consequences extend to their families, communities and even the country at large. Thus, the paper encouraged everyone to understand that violence against women and girls will not improve the well-being of anybody, including the society at large. Respect for women was highly emphasized.

INTRODUCTION

Since the spread of the coronavirus and the lockdown that was introduced by the Federal Government as a result, violence at different levels has increased. The most common forms of such violence include spousal violence, girl child violence, rape, landlord-tenant violence, neighbour-to-neighbour violence, parent-children abuse,

homeowner-house help violence, boyfriend-girlfriend violence, violence on widows, police-sex worker violence, police-citizen violence, etc. This paper focuses more on domestic violence and rape. According to World Health Organization (WHO), violence is defined as “the intentional use of physical force or actual coercion against a person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation”.¹

Violence against women is prevalent in our society and discussions have been going on, on how to stop it. It is unfortunate that the advent of covid-19 brought increase to this menace. Experts actually warned in the Covid-19 outbreak that there would be an increase of violence against women and children.² It is a global problem, for example “Activists, journalists, and the United Nations (UN) have drawn attention to a so-called shadow pandemic, an allusion to rising global levels of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) against women and girls, as a result of Covid-19 and state responses to it”.³ More so, there are reports by global media highlighting the situations in Europe and different parts of Africa and Asia including Liberia, Nigeria, Kenya, Côte d’Ivoire Uganda, China, France, and Spain. These are among the countries that have reported surges in violence against women and girls (VAWG)⁴ since the pandemic began. But this paper is concerned with African experiences. Just as it is in different parts of the world, women and

1 Abubaker A. L. Ibraheem. *Violence against Women and Harmful Traditional Practices are Divergences from Islamic Teaching*. Academia, 2013. P.56

2 Megan O’Donnel, (2020) “A Gender Lens on COVID-19: Pandemics and Violence against Women and Children” in Center for Global Development. Available at <https://www.cgdev.org/blog/gender-lens-covid-19-pandemics-and-violence-against-women-and-children>. Accessed on 01/08/2020.

3 Titilope Ajayi (2020) “Violence against Women and Girls in the Shadow of Covid-19: Insights from Africa”. Available at <https://kujenga-amani.ssrc.org/2020/05/20/violence-against-women-and-girls-in-the-shadow-of-covid-19-insights-from-africa/>. Accessed on 01/08/2020.

4 Titilope Ajayi (2020) “Violence against Women and Girls in the Shadow of Covid-19: Insights from Africa”. Available at <https://kujenga-amani.ssrc.org/2020/05/20/violence-against-women-and-girls-in-the-shadow-of-covid-19-insights-from-africa/>. Accessed on 01/08/2020.

children are experiencing double pandemic also in different parts of Africa. The double pandemic is that of covid-19 and violence.

Since the Covid-19 lockdown began in March, ActionAid Nigeria has seen an alarming increase in reported cases of rape and killings of women and girls as a result of the pandemic. Between March and June, we've documented 299 cases of violence against women and girls across seven states; 51 of these were sexual violence cases involving minors between the ages of 3 to 16. High profile killings like that of Tina Ezekwe who was shot by a trigger-happy police officer in Lagos, have traumatised the nation and led to country-wide protests and demonstrations.⁵

There are different forms of violence against women and children that are discussed in this paper, such as domestic violence which varies from physical, emotional, sexual, financial, psychological etc. child sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, intimate partner violence/ abuse and rape. As presented by Jacqueline, "violence against women wears many faces, aside from that of wife battery or beating".⁶ We will first, find out why Covid-19 brought an increase to the already existing problem and highlight the factors responsible for such. The paper further discussed the various forms of violence against women and girls and finally, points out the ways on how to stop them in order to have a healthier society.

WAYS THAT COVID-19 HAS CAUSED INCREASE IN VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Before the incidence of Covid-19, which was detected in Wuhan China by the end of 2019 and was declared by World Health Organisation (WHO) as a global pandemic, precisely in March 2020; many women have been frequently experiencing abuse in different ways. It can be at work through sexual harassment where their employers or male co-workers demand sexual favours in return for promotion or fair treatment, or on the street, in their homes, churches,

5 Lola Ayanda (2020) "Women are Fierce but Afraid. Covid-19 has exposed a Silent Pandemic of Violence". ActionAid Nigeria. Available at <https://nigeria.actionaid.org/stories/2020/women-are-fierce-afraid-covid-19-has-exposed-silent-pandemic-violence>. Accessed on 05/08/2020.

6 Jacqueline Dorr, M.M., *Women Seeking justice*. Pauline's Publications Africa, 1991. P.79

schools etc. It can be verbal abuse or physical beating and worst of all rape. “Social scientists tell us that men frequently turn to rape, not so much out of strong and uncontrollable sexual urges, but rather, out of a sense of frustration and anger aimed at society in general and women in particular”.⁷ These increased during the surge of this pandemic. The increase of frustration could be because of the economic strain of lockdowns, social isolation or distancing. People no longer go out. Most times when men are angry or overwhelmed by the troubles at home, they go out to socialize with their friends and by the time they come back to the house, they are relaxed. But during this time of lockdown and (even till now), since coronavirus is rapidly increasing in Nigeria, it is risky mixing up with people. Hence, men are often at home.

Another point is that of “exposure to exploitative relationships. Others include reduced access to sources of support, whether because these are not functioning, because resources have been diverted to resolving the pandemic, or because of restricted movement”.⁸

ELEMENTS THAT FACILITATE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS IN OUR SOCIETY

I had the privilege of participating in an online conference on “Ending Rape and Sexual Violence in Nigeria: The Role of Religious Leaders” and some of the elements discussed in this paper were mentioned by Rev Fr. George Ehusani. These include:

- (a) *The propensity to Abuse Power*: according to Anne Borrowdale, “both rape and battering are acts which men do in order to reassure themselves of their power and potency; both include as a crucial factor in that reassurance, the fear and humiliation of

7 Ibid.

8 Titilope Ajayi (2020). “Violence against Women and Girls in the Shadow of Covid-19: Insights from Africa”. Available at <https://kujenga-amani.ssrc.org/2020/05/20/violence-against-women-and-girls-in-the-shadow-of-covid-19-insights-from-africa/>. Accessed 28/07/2020.

the female victims”⁹. As a nation, we have a long history of the human propensity in general to abuse all forms of power. Perpetrators of violence against women and girls are those who believe or claim that they have some power over those they rape or beat or abuse. So, the propensity to abuse power, (of course any kind of power) is one factor that we need to take into consideration. Whether a husband over the wife, or a religious leader having power over members of his or her congregation or a teacher having power over a student, an employer having power over an employee or potential employee, a father having power over a child, an uncle having power over a small child etc. This is why societies make and have laws and regulations to regulate the use of that power, the exercise of such power in order to protect the weak against the strong and the powerful.

- (b) *Male Chauvinism*: We have a long history of male chauvinism or primitive patriarchy in Nigeria and different places in Africa. Some have come to call or see male chauvinism as male privilege by which the female folk were often seen simply as objects to be possessed and treated as the male folk wishes, as if the female has a lesser dignity and honour than her male folk. And in the best-case scenario, people just think that female children are of less value or dignity and male children are of higher dignity. Men as a result treat their wives as if they possess them probably because they paid their bride price.
- (c) *The confusion between sexual attraction and sexual satisfaction*: Sexual attraction as such can be innocent and natural but between sexual attraction and sexual assault there is a big chasm. As human beings we can experience sexual attraction and it is normal but what we do when we feel such is what matters. We need to train ourselves on how to handle our impulses and desires, to make sure that we do not behave like animals. Sexual desires need to be subjected to rationality or to reasoning. So, when that line between sexual attraction and

⁹ Anne Borrowdale, *Distorted Images: Christian Attitudes to Women, Men and Sex*. SPCK, London, 1991. P.94

sexual satisfaction is blurred or confused then we run into serious problems, as we are experiencing in our society today.

- (d) *The Objectivation of the Female Body*: There is the terrible scourge in our day, that of the objectification of the female body. What this means is using the female body for advertisement. The female body has been turned to an object of entertainment. The female body has been turned to an object for selling products. The female body is used to advertise products ranging from toothpaste to wine, cars, perfume, cream, soap etc. The objectification of the female body violates the sacredness and dignity of the female body.
- (e) *The emptiness in our public square*. This is what we can call moral decadence. What it means is that today, our public square appears empty, meaning naked of values. What we are seeing today with violence against women and girls cannot be taken in isolation. It has to be taken in union with what we see with corruption where somebody is the governor today the next day he is paraded or charged to court for monumental corruption. That is not good for the psyche of young people. Today somebody is a governor tomorrow he is in prison. This is very bad. There is emptiness in our public square. Morals have gone, values have gone and what we have, with our young people particularly is sheep without shepherds.¹⁰
- (f) *Cultural Factors*: Violence against women and girls in different parts of the world and in Nigeria in particular is based upon cultural and historical practices. In some parts of Nigeria, one discovers different forms of violence or deprivation against women in some cultures. I was just reflecting over some areas where many people pay little attention in their culture, which portrays serious marginalization of women. It is not understandable why some part of animal parts is strictly reserved for men in Igbo culture; the gizzard and some parts of goats for example. I have tried to ask the rationale behind this,

10 George Ehusani, (2020). Webinar on “Ending Rape and Sexual Violence in Nigeria: The Role of Religious Leaders.” From Community Life Project.

but nothing reasonable. If one observes closely, you discover that such parts are the most valuable of such animals.

Furthermore, we look at female genital mutilation which is one of the common forms of violence against women. I have tried to investigate why mutilation is carried out in some cultures and was informed that it is done to avoid women promiscuity. The outcome of mutilation is more than that. In my investigation, a woman told me that it makes women not to enjoy sex and causes painful delivery. In the name of culture women are punished for life. Why is it that no one cares about men that are unfaithful in our society? Why always women? Some cultures perform forced arranged marriages and bride kidnappings. There are even sometimes dowry-related deaths and violence. Women are at risk of bride kidnappings or marriage by capture, in which a man abducts the woman he wishes to marry. All these are deeply rooted in some cultures where women are considered the property of the male.

- (g) *Silence on Rape Cases:* since in most cases the perpetrators are not arrested and punished accordingly, they continue playing their game. Many victims refuse to come forward and report to the authorities the incidences of sexual violence. This could be because of a sense of shame or guilt or self-blame. Etc.
- (h) *The Nigerian Constitution:* The Nigerian authorities at both Federal and State levels have failed to address adequately gender-based violence, including rape. The constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria seems to contribute in a way to the growing cases of rape in Nigeria; even though that the House of Representatives approved life imprisonment for any person convicted of rape on March 5, 2013. They equally approved a minimum of 20 years in jail terms without an option of fine for persons convicted. In the same Nigeria, it is common knowledge that the existing Customary and Sharia laws which encourage contrary religious and cultural practices other than the ones stipulated in the Nigerian constitution directly or indirectly affect female folks in no small ways. For

instance, the toleration of Sharia law in Nigeria makes the prosecution of rape cases in Northern Nigeria very difficult.¹¹

BRIEF ANALYSIS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Some of the ways women and girls suffer violence are briefly analysed here. They are: Domestic violence, sexual violence, psychological violence, cultural violence, and social violence.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Domestic violence which is the most invisible of all the crimes because it takes place most often behind closed doors is defined as "any act or omission committed within the framework of the family, by one of its members that undermines the life, the bodily or psychological integrity, or the liberty of another member of the same family, or that seriously harms the development of his or her personality"¹². The origin of domestic violence in most of the African communities is found in the norms of African customary traditions and practices. For them wife-beating is identified as the right of the husband because he paid the bride-price of the woman. Paying of the bride-price includes treating the woman as the man deserves, since there is no difference between her and the other properties in the house. They are all bought and so have the same value. This is one of the reasons why paying of bride-price should be looked into. One of the justifications why a wife deserves to be beaten is to make her to be submissive to the husband.

In the past, violence against women and girls was very silent and hidden because it was identified as evil act, and therefore, people were ashamed to be identified as a perpetrator of such. But today, the

11 Chiazor, I. A., Ozoya, M. I., Udume, M. & Egharevba, M. E. (2006) "Taming the Rape Scourge in Nigeria: Issues and Actions" in *Gender & Behaviour*, 14 (3). P. 7775

12 Jan Cooper & Aflene Vetere, *Domestic Violence and Family Safety: A Systemic Approach to Working with Violence in Families*. Whurr Publishers, London and Philadelphia, 2005. P.1

story is different. “Domestic violence has become a public issue”.¹³ And “a report in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in 1990 called it the most common cause of injury to women. It reported that 22 to 35 percent of women who visit emergency wards have abuse-related symptoms, either physical or stressed-related”.¹⁴

Covid- 19 pandemic has not only exposed the pandemic of violence but also that of inequality. It has truly shown that women and men’s need differ especially in the face of the existing crisis.

One example cited in a recent article relates the experience of a 22-year-old woman known as Halima Bulama in Kasaisa community in Damaturu, Yobe State, in northeast Nigeria, who was attacked by her husband with a machete for attending the wedding of her relative around mid-April 2020. According to the story told by the police, Mr. Abacha who is her husband said that his wife disobeyed him in attending the ceremony, and for her punishment, the man hacked off the woman’s right hand with a machete. Such attacks are very common in Nigeria and other parts of Africa and lockdowns imposed by the federal and state governments across the country to curtail the spread of coronavirus actually caused a spike in incidents that target women and children, activists say. This is because the restrictions have forced vulnerable persons to stay more closely to their attackers.¹⁵ In Uganda “a local magazine of 16th April 2020 reported that police had far recorded 328 cases of domestic violence since the COVID-19 lockdown”¹⁶

¹³Alice P. Tuyizere, *Gender and Development, the Role of Religion and Culture*. Fountain Publishers, Kampala, 2007. P.147.

¹⁴ Paula Kamen, *Feminist Fatale: Voices from the “Twentysomething” Generation Explore the Future of the Women’s Movement*. Donald L. Fine INC. New York, 1991. P.236.

Cf. ¹⁵ Ejiro Umukoro, (2020) “Amidst COVID-19 Lockdown, Nigeria Sees Increased Sexual and Gender Violence”. Pulitzer Center. Available at <https://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/amidst-covid-19-lockdown-nigeria-sees-increased-sexual-gender-violence>. Accessed 28/05/2020.

¹⁶ Consolata Kabonesa & Fredrick Immanuel Kindi, (2020). “Assessing the Relationship between Gender Based Violence & COVID-19 Pandemic in Uganda. Accessed on 14/09/2020. Retrieved from <http://www.kas.de/documents/280229/8800435/Assessing+the+Relationship+between+Gender-based+Violence+and+the+COVID-19+Pandemic+in+Uganda.pdf?8d5a57a0-3b96-9ab1-a476-4bcf2f71199d?version=1.0&t=1588065638600>

SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Sexual violence has become something of a great cause of concern amongst people of integrity in our society especially amongst women themselves. Fear of sexual violence affects both their minds and behaviour. According to Anne Borrowdale, “sexual violence tends to be seen in isolation as the act of a few perverted sex-monsters. But we have to see its connection with more widespread male behaviour towards women”.¹⁷ There are many forms of sexual violence, but this paper concentrates on rape, which is the most common, painful, and dreadful sexual violence against women and girls. According to Catharine, “rape is a crime of violence, not sexuality; sexual harassment is an abuse of power, not sexuality.”¹⁸ When I dialogue with friends sometimes about the bondage that women are experiencing in our society and how they are deprived of one fundamental human right (of freedom) when it comes to their body, they keep denying and I keep wondering why they cannot see things as they are. Where actually does the woman’s freedom lie? When she cannot decide what she can do with her body, when she cannot live without being tortured by fear every day, simply because, she is a woman! She is afraid in her husband’s house, because she is being used whenever the man needs her, the man does not care whether she is mentally disposed for sex or not, after all, that is the reason why she is married, to satisfy the man. This is the impression many men have out there.

Alice Tuyizere affirmed the above concern with the following words: “women cannot demand sex in marriage but have to submit to their husbands’ demands. If women demand for sex, they are regarded as little better than prostitutes. The sexual act only considers a man’s satisfaction”.¹⁹ She is afraid on the road because she can be

17 Anne Borrowdale, *Distorted Images: Christian Attitudes to Women, Men and Sex*. SPCK, London, 1991. P.92

18 Catharine A.Mackinnon, *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law*. Harvard University Press, United States, 1987, P.85.

19 Alice P. Tuyizere, *Gender and Development, the Role of Religion and Culture*. Fountain Publishers, Kampala, 2007. P.159.

kidnapped and raped at any time. She is not safe in her place of work, with some of her friends, she is not safe in school, etc.

During the Webinar conference on “Ending Rape and Social Violence in Nigeria” Fr. Ehuasni severally identified rape as a plague or pestilence. This depicts the seriousness of the matter in question. It is true that human history has always had incidences of rape, but they were few and rape at it were, was considered an abomination. Anybody cut in rape in my village, Oberete -Asa in Abia State then, was severely punished and disgraced. But today, cases of such are handled differently or swept under the carpet. Rape has always belonged to those crimes that are considered abominable, meaning that we should not hear of it and perhaps that is part of the reason why there was a lot of the regime of silence.

Today, education and social media have helped so much that people are now more able to speak out about rape. Victims are able to come out to say that they have been raped, neighbours are able to report. But the long history of rape and perhaps what is behind the regime of silence is that it is such a heinous and abominable crime that families would not want to hear that any of their member was involved in this accursed behaviour. Now what we have seen in the last few years in our country is that there appears to be an upsurge, from high level people to low level people. We are hearing of big executives raping their house girls, raping their staff, of teachers and professors raping their students etc. This is abominable, this is perverse, and this should not be heard²⁰.

According to report in premium Times, the Nigerian police recorded 717 rape cases between January and May 2020. The Inspector-General of Police, Mohammed Adamu, said this to State House Correspondents after meeting with President Muhammadu Buhari at the State House in Abuja. He further said that 799 suspects had so far been arrested while 631 cases had been conclusively

20 George Ehusani, (2020). Webinar on “Ending Rape and Sexual Violence in Nigeria: The Role of Religious Leaders.” From Community Life Project.

investigated and charged to court. He said 52 cases were still being investigated.²¹

It was during the period that the entire world was still pondering on the possible justification for the gruesome killing of the American, George Floyd that the news of the rape and murder of Vera Uwaila Omozuwa filtered in the month of May 2020. Vera was a 22-year old, 100 level student of the University of Benin, Edo State. She gained admission into the higher institution after 5 years of seeking for admission into the university. Despite the indefinite closure of learning institutions as part of the preventive measures against COVID-19, she chose to keep abreast with her studies and resorted to her usual serene and study-enabling environment of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, Benin City. The church was indeed empty and without distractions. She was not only raped but was also murdered in cold blood with a fire extinguisher cylinder. Her mother mournfully cried: when I saw my daughter, I cried. They raped her, the dress she was wearing that morning was white, but it had turned to red; all her body was full of blood. Her mouth and eyes were tied; the hoodlums used a fire extinguisher to hit her head which left a deep cut.... She was unable to say anything till she died; it was just tears that were coming from her eyes.²²

While the country was also in a bid to understand the crime of Vera Uwaila for deserving such a horrible end even in the house of God, another case came up of a 12-year old girl in Jigawa State who was gang-raped by 11 men.²³ Shortly after that, a 15-year old boy in Ekiti State was nabbed for raping a 3-year old baby. As if those were not enough, a 17-year old hawker was reportedly raped by two men who are presently in detention. Furthermore, Barakat Bello, 18-year old female student of the Institute of Agriculture, Research and Training, Ibadan was raped and stabbed to death in her own father's

21David Mutua, (2020). "Nigeria Records 717 Rape Cases in Five Months – Official". Retrieved from <https://allafrica.com/stories/202006150851.html>

22 Ugochukwu Ejinkeonye, (2020). "UWAILA Omozuwa: Rape and Murder So Gruesome". Sahara Reporters. Available at <http://saharareporters.com/2020/06/05uwaila-omozuwa-rape-and-murder-so-gruesome-ugochukwu-ejinkeonye>. Accessed on 15/08/2020.

23 Khaleel Muhammad, (2020). "Court Remands 11 for allegedly Gang-Raping 12-year-old Girl in Jigawa" Daily Post.Ng. Accessed on 15/08/2020.

house in Ibadan. Four masked men reported in Lagos raped a 12-year-old girl while a 25-year-old man allegedly raped an 85-year-old grandma in Niger State. It was learnt also that in Kaduna, four assailants drugged a girl and after gang-raping her, dumped her in a car parked outside her home.²⁴ These developments on sexual violence against women sent shocking waves down the spines of every right-thinking Nigerian. Of course, we know that out of each case reported, there could be more than 10 cases not reported because “women have a tendency to keep quiet and suffer in silence. This is because society has always prescribed silence, reticence, complaisance, patience and gentleness as the greatest virtues of the feminine gender”²⁵

CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

The effects of violence against women and girls are many but the paper highlighted few of them. There is an Igbo proverb which says that ‘if one finger touches oil, it spreads to other fingers.’ This implies that, the impact or consequences of the discussed violence affects not only the victim but the society at large. Beginning with the family and friends. For example, in the case of the intimate partner violence, the children are negatively affected. Most often, they copy what they have learnt from their parents, it affects families and friends. Society is affected due to loss of production or economic loss. Under physical violence (battering) or rape, women suffer trauma, physical injury, sickness and sometimes it can lead to death. A raped woman suffers so much pain during childbirth as many of them have testified. Women psychologically experience intense fear. They are afraid of their husbands, thinking always that violence will happen again. The fear limits their freedom in the house and the society at

Cf. 24 Ibrahim Hassan Wuyo, (2020) Vanguard News “10 Rape Incidents in a Row: Girl, 13, drugged, gang-raped, dumped in car in Kaduna”. Available <https://www.vanguardngr.com/2020/06/10-rape-incidents-in-a-row-girl-13-drugged-gang-raped-dumped-in-car-in-kaduna/> Accessed on 15/08/2020.

25 Mobolanle Sotunsa. *Feminism & Gender Discourse: The African Experience*. Ojoko - Biri-Kale Press, Sagamu, Nigeria, 2008. P. 105

large. It makes many of them to suffer from low self-esteem, guilt, shame and depression. They often feel that society is treating them unjustly. Many of them harbour feelings of hatred and revenge. Obviously, violence undermines the woman's confidence and security, socialisation and development²⁶

PREVENTIVE MEASURES OF VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

The first point of concern is that Africans need to promote respect for human dignity. Our educational systems at all levels should “promote self-respect, mutual respect and cooperation between men and women”.²⁷ Parents should take this as maximum priority to teach their children to respect one another. There is a saying that ‘charity begins at home’. If it is learnt from home, it will become a way of life that will be difficult to terminate. Secondly, in as much as we cannot avoid hawking because of the level of poverty in the land, parents should stop exposing girls to danger in the name of hawking. More so, it is not enough to have laws written down without implementation. To stop violence against women or minimize it, every perpetrator of such must be exposed and made to take full responsibility for his or her actions. Under no circumstance should such a one be shielded or protected by parents, teachers, religious institutions, non-governmental organizations, governments or the media. All Nigerians /Africans must rise up in condemnation of this social epidemic. ²⁸

CONCLUSION

From the above discussion, it is evident that our authorities have not played sufficient role to stop domestic violence at all levels. Partly, because some of those in authority are guilty of the offence in question. What it means too is that our families, educational

²⁶ Alice P. Tuyizere, *Gender and Development, the Role of Religion and Culture*. Fountain Publishers, Kampala, 2007. P.183

²⁷ Alice P. Tuyizere, *Gender and Development, the Role of Religion and Culture*. Fountain Publishers, Kampala, 2007. P.184

²⁸ Chiazor, I. A., Ozoya, M. I., Udume, M. & Egharevba, M. E. (2006) “Taming the Rape Scourge in Nigeria: Issues and Actions” in *Gender & Behaviour*, 14 (3). P. 7779.

institutions, Churches and Mosques have failed in their roles of teaching their members about self-control and self-discipline. The idea that beating a woman is a way to discipline her is in total disrespect of womanhood. Some persons maintain that a man will harm himself if an erection is not followed up by ejaculation. This is a convenient myth that erroneously implies that men cannot control their sexual urge. What about the majority that are not involved in this evil? The onus still lies on government implementing already existing laws. If the perpetrators are punished as the law requires, it will go a long way to stop violence against women and girls in our society.

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CUSHIONING THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 CONSUMER EXPERIENCES FOR OPTIMUM ECONOMIC SURVIVAL IN THE 'NEW NORMAL' IN ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

The challenging impact of covid-19 pandemic on global businesses triggered the need for survivalist strategies in the new normal. The understanding of the prevailing customer needs and the innovative capacity towards their satisfaction occupied the heart of competition at this period. Invariably, discourses pursued the deployment of mitigating hooks and stabilizers that could service symbiotic commercial relationships. This study therefore explores the various dimensions to this phenomenon with the aim of ascertaining the cushioning and coping strategies from companies to individuals and individuals to themselves for optimum economic survival. Data were elicited from 147 respondents from Enugu State through online mixed method of qualitative and quantitative research. Zoom multimedia application, moderated by the

researchers was used to gather responses from two different online focus groups who determined the relevant item statements based on the objectives of the study. The outcome of the focus groups interactions helped in structuring the questionnaire administered to the consumers using survey monkey application with corresponding open spaces to justify their choice of responses. Simple percentage was used, where applicable, for the analysis and vividly illustrated with bar charts. Findings show significant congruence on the studied factors upon which conclusion was drawn. The study recommends, among other things, that advocacy be channelled more towards Return on Empathy (ROE) with less emphasis on Return on Investment (ROI).

Keywords: *Cushion, consumer experiences, Covid-19 pandemic, empathy, adaptability new normal.*

Introduction

The global Covid-19 pandemic has brought about emergency behavioural adaptation and significant changes to our corporate existence. The complex experiences garnered during this crisis has compelled consumer-world citizens and business organizational interests from diverse sectors to devise survivalist strategies aimed at mitigating the hardship occasioned by this scourge. The negative impacts of the pandemic include sudden cancellation of flights and reservations by airline operators in compliance with government safety regulations, or by safety-conscious passengers who just discovered that their close relatives have tested positive to the virus. This situation is further aggravated by the reality of overstretched health care systems which suddenly became ill-positioned and ill-equipped to manage the growing emergencies.

The continued emergence of strict lockdown rules and public restrictions, loss of loved ones, jobs and businesses, physical and emotional vulnerability/dependency, reprioritizing of essentials

resulting to changes in shopping preferences and taste, upsurge in the prices of goods and services, worries about running out of money, distrust in brands that are still profit-conscious rather than people-conscious, pessimism towards government capability to solve the pandemic, and substitution of cherished physical socialization with virtual ones causing nostalgia for normal living (Institute for Global Environment 2020; Leon 2020; Morgan 2020; Thompson, 2020). There is also the perceived insincerity of the Nigerian government in the recorded cases, heightened scepticism around online and offline fake news, embezzlement of the nation's relief funds by cronies of the government to further widen existing socio-economic inequalities in the class structure, and the bogus disbursement of pandemic palliatives to imaginary beneficiaries in the most unaccountable way.

In the midst of these impacts which are mainly negative is the expectation placed on companies not to lose focus on the position of consumers as the most valuable asset in its existence. With the priority shifting from luxury, non-essential products to basic essential ones in the food and health commodities sub-category, and supply-chain safety over cost and convenience, companies has tended to be proactive in engaging and positively connecting with consumers to ensure supportive interactions (Mongalo 2020; Vader, Lin and Martin, 2020). It has become imperative for companies to refocus their mission and vision statements, activities, and procedures to the next new normal as consumers tend to trust businesses more than the government (Morgan, 2020). These efforts give confidence to consumers that the companies' deliveries will truly add more value to their lives and make them feel supported and safer than ever before. This vital factor was captured in Salesforce's State of Service Report (2019), where 80% of consumers preferred the experiences they get from companies to offerings and deliveries they got from the same sources.

Arguably, it is believed that employing pragmatic tools will offer a smooth cushion and positive experiences to panicked customers. Cushion, in this context, has to do with lessening/softening/ameliorating/mitigating or alleviating the negative impacts of covid-19 on consumers' optimal experiences in the new normal. World Economic Forum (2020) described the 'new normal' as a state to which an economy, society, and others, settles following a

crisis, when this differs from the situation that prevailed prior to the start of the crisis. The new normal era is laden with challenges and instabilities necessitating agility, curiosity, risk mitigation, and a refocus with proactive spirit (Buheji & Buheji, 2020). As noted by Morgan (2020), ‘when we return to normal, it won’t really be normal’. Usually, it requires methodic and rapid responses by companies in the display of empathy towards their customers to enhance trust from people, as well as consumers’ self-adaptability instincts toward contingent realities as efficient solutions aimed at achieving smooth transitions. Although empathy and adaptability have been in existence in literature long before now, their relevance and application are more fitted as a response to exigencies as provided during the covid-19 period.

Empathy has been noted as one of the temperamental mindsets that even transcends the pandemic crisis. Empathy entails choosing the appropriate responses to meet the customers’ circumstances (Chidozie and Abioye, 2019). The authors noted that empathy and integrity topped the list of their 6-pillar framework of customer experiences resulting from 10 years of primary research across 3,000 brands in 25 countries. Empathy in the context of this study can be well understood when one creates an imagination of what it would feel like to be in another person’s shoes as a result of the covid-19 crisis. It is little wonder that some researchers have maintained that empathy is non-negotiable as one of the consumers’ support strategies amid covid-19, therefore justifying its primal incorporation into companies’ activities (Thompson, 2020; Mongalo 2020). Thus, there is a vital need to integrate this cardinal element into a responsive user-friendly Empathetic Customer Support Software (ECSS) (Apaynski, 2020).

Through interviews, focus groups discussions, and surveys, companies can factor in the needs of consumers in the concept development stage of production to suit different consumers’ demographics, tastes and preferences. This implies an integration of the target audiences into the product and service trajectory of companies to elicit satisfaction, loyalty and retention. Moreso,

empathetically handling consumers' first calls, queries and feedback helps to address concerns in the overall 'service journey' to ensure 'resting-heart-beat' of consumer satisfaction (Aitchison , 2020). For instance, if it took two or more calls to resolve customers' issues, satisfaction is drastically reduced and becomes worse if the issues are not resolved at all. Thompson (2020), also cited an example of this with the LEGO group, a Danish Toy production company that allows consumers to submit proposed customized designs, whereby a consumer can request for environmentally friendly materials for sustainable consumption at affordable prices. These eco-friendly toys and games can provide eco-security during play for toddlers of nursing mothers without care-givers, so that these mothers can be efficient in their virtual workplaces. Companies also need to learn to respond to the consumers' new shift towards adopting either a frugal and/or simple lifestyle by encouraging the purchase of what consumers really need (responsible buying) instead of unnecessary buying (Mehta, Saxena & Purrhit, 2020).

In the new normal, the consumer has to learn how to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. This scenario best describes the principle of adaptability. The ability of consumers to quickly adjust to a change in abnormal circumstances will help them to navigate the storms posed by a novel pandemic era. Adaptability is the capacity of an individual to rapidly respond to changing trends, innovation, destabilization, industrial shifts among others. There is need for the consumers to quickly change their thought processes by embracing the realities occasioned by the pandemic. Owing to the present situation, several authors have highlighted realistic ways by which an individual can cushion the pandemic effects and also cope subsequently: being optimistic about economic recovery, finding creative ways to kill boredom such as learning new skills or online education, adopting mindful purchases (Standish, 2020). Consumers can also find upcoming opportunities to explore as other streams of income, strictly tailor their expenses to more essential needs, access covid-19 loans and grants to help them bounce back to their disrupted businesses for better purchases, collaborate with other consumers for easy bulk and cheaper purchases and prepare alternative solutions for

future uncertainties as they continuously seek answers to divergent questions of ‘but whys’ (Willkomm, 2020; Orumor, 2020).

Furthermore, in adapting for survival in this crisis, consumers are implored to reappraise their values, not to take serious issues for granted (Morgan, 2020); learn to improvise when there are constraints, discovery and utilizing of new talents and to help close social gaps amidst the social distancing rules by utilizing social/multimedia platforms (Sheth, 2020). To meet with the unending demand of one of the most essential needs –food, Mehta, Saxena and Purohit (2020) strongly advised that consumers should embark on farming at least on a subsistent level and most importantly, revive the spirit of leaving within their means and capacities.

Methodology

For easy and broad accessibility of respondents while adhering to covid-19 rules, the study adopted online mixed method of qualitative and quantitative research method. According to Kotler and Armstrong(2013), online research design is used in collecting primary data through internet surveys, online focus groups, emails, blogs, web-based and links, and tracking consumers’ online behaviours by following consumers’ click streams as they navigate from one website to another. Zoom application was used to gather responses from two online focus groups. The first was organized with 12 selected company executives who supplied information on the pragmatic ways required of businesses to demonstrate empathy to consumers. The second focus group comprised of 10 groups of marketing experts/consultants randomly selected to suggest adaptability means for consumers to cushion the effect of the covid-19 crises so as to cope in the new normal. The results of the focus groups helped in constructing the questionnaires (segmenting it into structured/closed-end and unstructured/open-end) and validation respectively. The instrument was administered to 147 consumers with corresponding open spaces to justify their choice of responses if any. The unstructured part also helped in gaining deeper insights which would be used to extend/replicate the current study subsequently. While

simple percentage was used for the analysis and converted to bar charts for clarity.

Presentation and Analyses of Results

Table 1: Simple percentage of the responses of Consumers on the empathetic ways required of companies to cushion the effects of consumers' covid-19 pandemic experiences

S/no	Item statements	% Yes	% No
1.	Priotize personalization and customization in delivering of products and service	80	20
2.	Understand when consumers request for stoppage of automatic payments due to loss of job	100	0
3.	Partial or total elimination of subscription fees for easy access to materials and services	97	3
4.	Cancel booking and reservation fees without extra charges	100	0
5.	Create tele-health system for with virtual doctors and therapy appointments	100	0
6.	Connect people that lost their jobs through covid-19 to ad-hoc jobs created by the pandemic	79	21
7.	Track consumers' googling with cookies to understand what they actually like	81	34
8.	Minimize customer efforts in accessing information from the company	100	0
9.	Provide immediate feedback for questions and queries raised by customers	100	0
10.	Create online social media networks for instant digital feedback	100	0
Total Percentage		93.7	07.8

Table 1 above showed that Item numbers 2, 4 and 5 received 100% responses while items 7, 1 and 6 got the lowest responses of 81, 80 and 79 respectively. Generally, more than 80% of the consumers accepted that all the 7 items addressing empathy from companies to cushion the effects of consumers' covid-19 pandemic experiences were accepted.

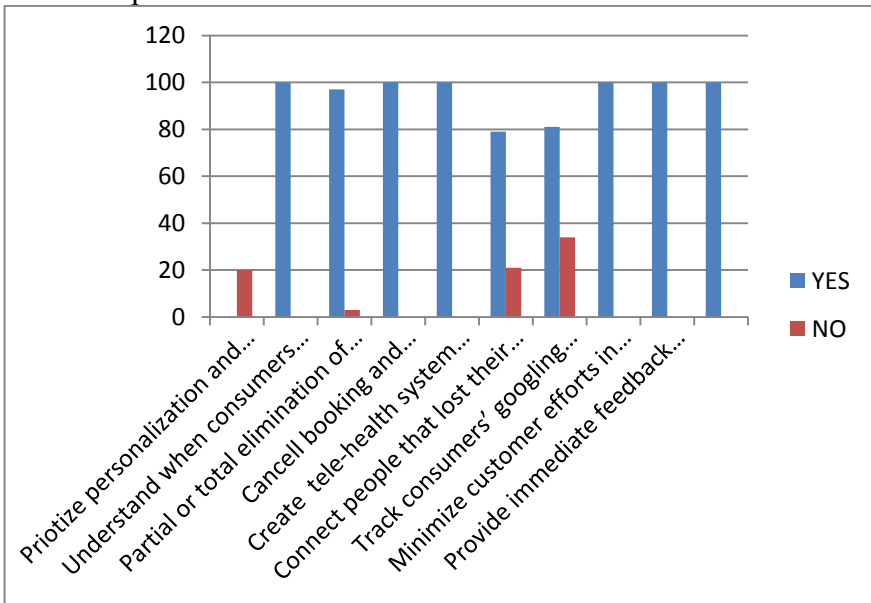


Figure 1: Empathy strategies needed from companies by consumers to cushion the effects of COVID-19 consumer pandemic experiences
Source: Researchers' findings from consumer survey analysis

Table2: Simple Percentage of the Responses of Consumers on the Adaptability Ways Necessary for them to Cushion the effects of consumers' covid-19 pandemic experiences

S/no	Item statements	% Yes	% No
1.	Change thought process by accepting the sudden change caused by the pandemic	77	23
2.	Be optimistic about economic recovery	100	0
3.	Find creative ways to kill boredom like learning of new skills, online education	100	0
4.	Revive the spirit of living within your means and capacity	90	10
5.	Adopt conscious and mindful purchases	95	5
6.	Collaborate with other consumers for bulk and cheap purchases	98	2
7.	Embrace digital technologies to close up social gaps with families and loved ones	. 84	16
8.	Engage in subsistent farming, at least, to cater for one of the basic needs (food)	. 100	0
9.	Access COVID-19 government loans and grants to help bounce back to business	. 82	18
10.	Explore the opportunity of this pandemic for other streams of income	. 100	0
Total Percentage		. 92.6	07.4

The data presented in table 2 showed that all the 10 items on adaptability strategies had their percentages ranging from 77-100 which are above the real limit of 50% indicating that all the respondents agreed with the items as adaptability strategies for cushioning their covid-19 experiences.

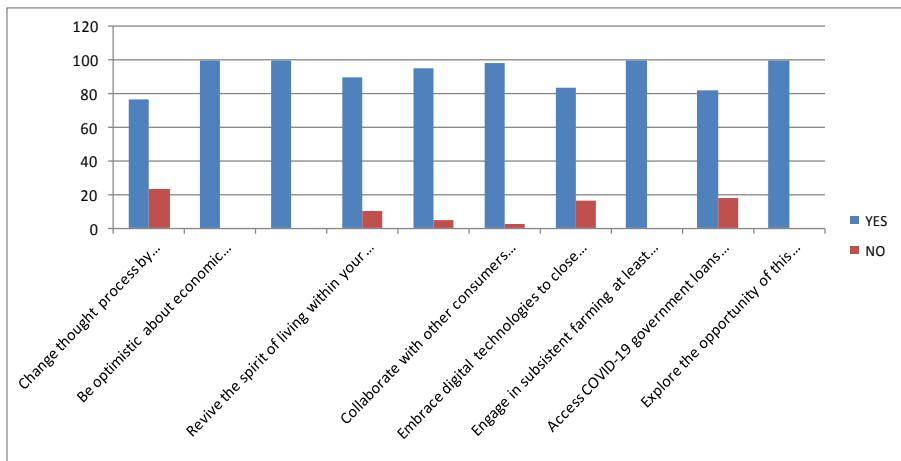


Figure 2: Adaptability strategies necessary for consumers to cushion the effects of their covid-19 pandemic experiences for optimum survival in the new normal

Source: Researchers' result from consumer survey analysis

Discussion of Findings

Empathy strategies needed from companies by consumers to cushion the effects of COVID-19 consumer pandemic experiences

Result in Table 1 revealed that all the items listed on empathy were accepted by the consumers as practical ways for companies to cushion the effects of COVID-19 consumer experiences. Item number 1 on Prioritizing personalization and customization in delivering of products and service tallied with the assertions of Thompson (2020) that individual differences go along with varying preferences which

makes them feel a sense of belonging. For instance, allowing consumers to submit proposed designs for new products/services like making nose masks from the pieces of clothes to match the consumers outfit and also adding their preferred fragrance into hand-washes and sanitizers.

Findings on item number 2: to Understand when consumers request for stoppage of automatic payments due to loss of job, agrees with Kindzierski (2020) who maintained that consumers ask for stoppages of automatic product payments like standing orders are based on genuine reasons of loss of jobs and non-payment of salaries as in the case of recent Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU)'s strike, should not be disputed. The findings of the study on Partial or total elimination of subscription fees for internet data, television channels (DSTV, GOTV, MYTV among others) to enable easy access to materials and services, corroborates with Mongalo (2020) who stated that many consumers find it difficult to renew their subscriptions because of the economic hardship occasioned by the pandemic. 98% of the subscribers whose subscriptions have elapsed observed that they have been enjoying free access to usually encrypted channels which was attributed to system upgrade and wished such could linger for a relatively long period. About 60% of them suggested for a conveniently prepaid Pay-As-You-Go (PAYG) billing system, as adopted by the GSM and Electricity Service providers for flexible consumption, in contrast to the subsisting rigid prepaid format. They also implored EEDC, whose tariff was recently hiked to consider the economic plights of the consumers.

The submission on short-term removal or drastic reduction of tariffs and fees are apt as most consumers have joined the digitalization bandwagon which serve as an entertainment source to cushion the effect of the pandemic. The move was seen as a way for the company to innovate with digital strategies to capture new marketplace opportunities for the growing digital customer segment (Chidozie & Abioye, 2019; Accenture, 2020). This factor was affirmed in the findings by Vader (2020) who remarked that healthcare providers' delivery charges for orders they place should be reduced in order to motivate them for being at the forefront of the pandemic fight.

The result found on Cancellation of booking and reservation fees without extra charges agreed with the assertion by Kindzierski (2020) acknowledging the waving of re-booking fees for issued flight tickets with the advent of the pandemic. The findings on Creating tele-health system with virtual doctors and therapy appointments was in consonance with the views of Morgan (2020), who stated that it will help consumers to obtain quality, easy, and quick access to health care systems. They are disposed to meet with doctor's appointment without disobeying the social distance rules. Findings on connecting people that lost their jobs through covid-19 to ad-hoc jobs created by the pandemic, yielded a result with corroborates the views in the work by Chidozie and Abioye (2019). The authors proposed that customers who lost their jobs should be incorporated in the new opportunities created by the pandemic such as production of safety equipments, sensitization of the public, fumigation of public areas to curb further spread, door-step delivery of essential needs like foodstuffs, among others. In consonance with the assertions of Kindzierski (2020) on tracking consumers' browsing with accepted cookies to understand what they actually like, it also tallies with Morgan (2020)'s view.

The findings on minimizing customers' efforts in accessing information from the company, agreed with Chidozie and Abioye (2020)'s assertions. The results on the provision of immediate feedback for questions and queries raised by customers as well as creation of online social media networks for instant digital feedback, all concurred with the submissions of kotler and Armstrong (2013) who had proposed the utilization of more engaging and interactive online content for quickest feedback. It is also in tandem with Kindzierski (2020) who advocated for the use of video in customer service to deepen relationships, build trust and human feelings. Additionally, Aitchison (2020) maintained that when customers' issues are well resolved at first contacts and calls, the companies will soon win their loyalty and continuous patronage with referrals even beyond the pandemic era.

Adaptability strategies necessary for consumers to cushion the effects of their covid-19 pandemic experiences for optimum survival in the new normal

Table 2 shows that the findings on Change thought process by accepting the sudden change caused by the pandemic tallies with Willkomm (2019) who suggested that the moment of change should be turned into profitable opportunities. It also aligned with the views of David (2019) who advised that consumers should always prepare alternative sources of solution to easily adjust in such unfortunate mishappenings. And to also learn to improvise when there are constraints (Sheth, 2020). Instead of complaint, Economic Forum (2020), maintained that the pandemic discomfort should be utilized to forge a new paradigm shift. Contrarily, 23% of the subject with negative responses expressed that the crisis had already affected their mental status which hinders them from absorbing the rude shock. This implies psychological therapy is pertinent. The findings on being optimistic about economic recovery and finding creative ways to kill boredom like learning of new skills, online education are in line with Standish (2020). The study also corroborates with Mehta, Saxena, and Purohit, (2020), who posited the re-awakening the spirit of living within one's means or capacity that will help in conscious and mindful purchases. This pattern will help to initiate collaborative bulk and cheap buying (Orumor, 2020).

In congruence with the views of Orumor (2020), embracing digital technologies to close up social gaps with families and loved ones, was upheld. On the flip side, 16% of the respondents complained of lack of android phone with internet which creates more social gaps. Their reasons were attributed to low income. The findings also supported the recommendations of Mehta, Saxena, and Purohit, (2020), which supported that consumers should engage in at least subsistent level so as to cater for their basic need food. Orumor (2020)'s findings was affirmed when this study found out that access to COVID-19 loans and grants can help consumers to bounce back to business. The accessed loans and grants will also help them finance more opportunities discovered from this period for multiple streams of income for optimum economic survival.

Conclusion

At this pandemic period, consumers sincerely need smart companies that delight them promising what they can deliver but end up delivering more than promised. Therefore, the empathetic treatment and assurances received by consumers from companies in this Covid-19 period will help them cushion the effects of a protracted downturn in fortunes and ever remain indelible in their minds. It is the surest way of retaining the loyalty of customers perpetually as well as attracting new ones even beyond the crisis period. Most importantly, consumers themselves need to wake up to the realities of the pandemic by accepting that life may no longer be the same again in the new normal hence the need for them to adapt swiftly so that the effects of the pandemic will be ameliorated maximally.

Recommendation

Companies should learn valuable lessons that will help them strategize for suitable customer experiences in the new normal, now and subsequently. Optimizing consumer Covid-19 experiences requires the development of mind-sets on ‘test practices’ rather than on ‘best practices’. Advocacy should be channelled more towards a Return on Empathy (ROE) with less emphasis on a Return on Investment (ROI) where technical and logistic workers with empathy and compassion, will expertly handle consumers’ issues consumer/company and societal optimum survival. This paradigm shift will definitely ensure smooth and positive transitioning experiences for panicked consumers.

Therefore, an innovative focus on a pragmatic dimension of training is imperative for employees to enable them create and deliver positive and memorable consumer experiences to cushion the effects of the pandemic. These trainings should be aligned with the new normal demands which are believed to help set high standards for employees’ expectations that will definitely boost staff performance and consumer satisfactions.

Also, since the pandemic has abruptly pushed consumers out of their normal routines thereby unfolding three major observable

trends – a refocus to health consciousness, a rise in sustainable consumption, and a growing love for local foods - they need to quickly adapt to the new habits and behaviours within their limits and capabilities for sustainable consumption. Consequently, envisaging more scenarios that may emerge/erupt subsequently such as citizens' protests, from the current pandemic, which could lead to an 'abnormal new normal' need not be overemphasized. And intrinsically developing self absorptive/coping/thriving measures by the consumers remains the ultimate means optimum survival.

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EVALUATION OF CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT ON PERFORMANCE OF HOTEL INDUSTRY IN ERA OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC IN ENUGU STATE

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Abstract

The advent of COVID-19 pandemic has brought about restrictions, confinement and devastation, on every industry, especially the hotel industry. The study evaluates the customer relationship management on performance of hotel industry in the era of COVID- 19 pandemic. The study adopted descriptive survey research design. A total of 320 respondents (managers and front desk officers) drawn from 160 registered hotels in Enugu metropolis, represent the sample for the study due to its manageability. Enugu metropolis was used because it is the capital and most of the major hotels are located in the State. The instrument for data collection was a structured questionnaire titled “Customer Relationship Management on Performance of Hotel Industry in COVID-19 Questionnaire” (CRMPHICQ) and was validated by three experts from Department of Business Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was ascertained through Cronbach Alpha technique which yielded a reliability coefficient of 0.81. The questionnaire was administered personally by the researchers through the help of six research assistants. The data collected were analyzed using mean and standard deviation, and the hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance using T-test statistics. The study provided valuable information for hotel managers on how to manage their customers during this period of COVID– 19. The study also revealed how hoteliers should always gear up to counter any crisis and handle future distress.

Due to intensity of the disease, the study recommends that management of hotel industry should develop diplomatic protocols and procedures in handling their customers for better service.

Key Words: *Customer relationship Management, Customer service, Hotel, Performance, COVID-19 pandemic*

Introduction

Organizations in almost every sector have faced restrictions, imposition of partial lock downs, and financial crises which led many businesses lose their customers. The state of affairs on ground which has led to incomparable abnormality is generally a good reason for reduction in business flow, turnover rate and profit margin as well as possible alternatives especially in the hotel industry.

Hotel business is among the world's fastest growing unit in hospitality industry which generates substantial economic benefits, employment and encourages investments and innovation in the host countries especially in Nigeria. Hotel can be defined as a place that offers accommodation, food and beverages at a cost that enable it to make profit (Raghubalan & Raghubalan, 2015). A hotel, according to Tarmoezi and Manurung (2007), is a building that provides rooms with the supporting facilities such as the accommodation, food and beverage, laundry services, swimming pool and event planning among others. Hotel business aims at satisfying their customers and providing specific experiences for them. Hotel business in Nigeria is very lucrative and its revenue base and customer loyalty are not only influenced by the standards of services rendered but also by some geographical factors which include proximity to local and international airports, and other service centres (Okpala, 2015). This implies that, hotel industry is a business organisation that provides product and services to customers. Hotel industry, because of its nature of being service oriented, makes customer relationship management very important and sensitive since proper awareness of customers' needs and etiquette are required in developing stronger relationships with them.

Customer relationship management (CRM) is a broadly recognized, widely-implemented strategy for managing and nurturing company's interactions with customers, clients and sales prospects. It involves using technology to organize, automate and synchronize business processes, principally sales activities, marketing, customer service, and technical support (Zamil, 2011). According to Alshibly and Alokeli (2014), Customer Relationship Management (CRM) is the process of identifying, accepting and building appropriate mutually beneficial relationships with each customer and employee. The major goals of CRM is to locate, attract, and conquer new clients, foster and maintain a positive relationship with those the company already has, lure former clients back into the fold and reduce the costs of marketing and client service. Customer relationship management denotes a companywide business strategy embracing all client-facing departments and even beyond (Zamil, 2011). When an effective customer relationship management plan is developed; people, processes, and technology collaborate to increase profitability and reduce operational costs.

Scholars, practitioners and researchers have all shared various perspectives on what customer relationship management entails. Padmavathy (2012) also defined CRM as a set of customer-oriented activities supported by organizational strategy and technology, and is designed to improve customer interaction in order to build customer loyalty and increase profits over time. CRM as a modern marketing strategy came to the attention of hotel managers' in the early 1990s because of its focus on gathering customers' information and increasing the likelihood of customer satisfaction and retention (Sigala, 2005; Wu and Lu, 2012; Rahimi, 2017). Since then, it has been intensely adopted by different hotels to enhance their relationship with customers and increase the business's profits (Rahimi, 2017; Wu and Chen, 2012).

CRM solutions in hotels aim to seek, gather and store the right guests' information towards identifying and retaining the most profitable customers and improving the profitability of less profitable customers and developing the quality of the services (Rahimi and Gunlu, 2016; Rahimi and Kozak, 2016; Sigala and Connolly, 2004). Customer relationship management (CRM) is a successful marketing

strategy, which has been proven to aid business performance, customer satisfaction and customer retention (Abu Kasim and Minai, 2009; Mohammed and Rashid, 2012). In the same vein, Mohammed (2012) sees “Customer relationship management (CRM) as a business strategy to select and manage the most valuable customer relationships. Successfully implemented CRM strategies in hotels not only increase customer lifetime values but also have significant and positive effects on business performance and customer satisfaction (Wu and Chen, 2012). These views and many others entails making proper customer service plan.

A customer service plan deeply examines customers' perceptions and expectations of a company, and guides the company through the process of bringing its customer service activities in line with customers' needs (Ingram, 2020), which is the major objective of customer relationship management. The service strategy is a distinctive approach employed by a firm to deliver valuable services and to create satisfaction to its customers (Kinoti, 2012 cited in Wanjiku & Mbugua, 2018). Organizations that implement the CRM concept in any of its forms reap its substantial benefits. CRM helps businesses to gain insight into the behaviour of their customers and modify their business operations to ensure that customers are served in the best possible way (Mohammed, 2012). Based on the intrinsic characteristics of the production and consumption of service organizations, it is necessary for organizations to build relationships with customers especially in hotel industry (Gronroos, 2004). Today, many organizations are faced with significant challenges in the area of customer service and service delivery, both internally and externally (Wanjiku & Mbugua, 2018). The intensity of these challenges is higher in this era COVID-19 pandemic.

According to Agusi et.al (2020), COVID-19 is an infectious disease that causes respiratory illness with symptoms of cough, fever, and in more severe cases, difficulty in breathing. COVID-19 patient presents with symptoms of severe pneumonia, including fever, fatigue, dry cough, and respiratory distress with fever and cough being the most common affecting almost 90 and 70% of infected subjects, respectively (World Health Organization, 2020)

In the recent time, this global health pandemic COVID-19, has drastically caused a lot of harm to people and businesses. The management of hotel industry is experiencing an unpredicted trend in its customer relationship management procedures, with new methods, tactics, targeted testing and tracing, health precautions, and an entirely projected different customer behavioural pattern, all geared towards creating a comfortable environment for their customers. COVID-19 also known as corona-virus has affected every industry across the country, and the hotel industry is among the most hit. Generally, it is agreed that the virus is easily transmissible and that the fatality rate is low when compared to previous pandemics such as SARS, Ebola and the bubonic plague (Gopalakrishnan, Peters & Vanzetti, 2020).

The effects of COVID-19 could be felt in every aspect of people's daily life such as: social distancing, restriction of movement, closing of all hospitality sectors, universities and schools, working from home and forcing the cancellation of events. These also have a huge dramatic impact on the hotel industry. In reality, the COVID-19 crisis has practically changed meeting, conferences and workshops etc in hotels into virtual sessions, this new normal across the world, bringing colleagues working distantly together with the use of zoom, video conferences for different business practices. This has led to the inability of hotels to host business meetings and events, resulting to less profit which has brought about low performance in every sector of the hotel industry. Considering hotels key performance indicators like occupancy rates, Average Daily Rate (ADR), and revenue per available room continues to reduce globally due to restriction of movement (Zhang, Cui, Xu, & Wang, 2020). In support of this, Jang and Wen (2020) noted that as events across the globe continue to be cancelled or postponed and hotel occupancy rates plummet, the COVID-19 pandemic has inflicted severe blows on hoteliers worldwide.

According to Waikar and Hegde Desai (2015), fear and fancy, sensation and novelty, lure tourist to move out of home and explore. Moreover, as the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences have led to fears, worries and anxiety among travellers, it is especially important to show empathy and understanding in hotel services and to delight customers (Jiang, 2019) within this period of crises. Those

whose occupation thrives on travelling and those who also have the resources for pleasure desperately want to lodge in hotels, but fear of the COVID-19 remains real. Now, as lockdown bans are being relieved, the shell-shocked are emerging. Meanwhile, hotel industry is resuming its activities, people are beginning to lodge when they travel with caution, hosting business meeting, wedding etc with regards to COVID-19 prevention procedures and guidelines that are being observed across all country. As the demand for service of the hotel industry is gradually picking, consumer behaviour in hotel has also transformed. In the views of Wanjiku and Mbugua (2018), consumer change in behaviour patterns and attitudes highly influences business growth and changes in the performance of the business.

There are lots of challenges and difficulties caused by COVID-19 in the hotel industry in Enugu state with respect to response and delivery towards an effective customer service to guests; such difficulties are aggravated by sanctions, health guidelines and protocols stipulated by the government and contagious nature of the virus. However, for hotels to understand the changing needs and distress of their customers, they need to know the best measures to adopt in order to maintain their customers and partners during this time of COVID-19. Notwithstanding these challenges, the hotel industry are coming up with new technologies to handle most of these health guidelines and protocols in staying safe from the virus such as: observing working guidelines like avoiding door handles, greetings and handshakes, Keeping a distance of at least 1.5 meters from other workers and individuals, use of masks and visors, flushing with the lid closed and washing utensils with dishwasher programmed at 60°C. These and many others are guideline the hotel industry are very keen on implementing, but adhering to all the protocols without inconveniencing customers are the most important duty of sectors in the hotel industry. A technology like electronic check-in is a trending technology welcomed by the industry. In the words of Chan et al. (2020), COVID-19 is highly contagious via person-to-person transmission and people have been urged to decrease personal contact and increase physical distance (WHO, 2020). The COVID-19 outbreak can thus be expected to accelerate the penetration of

Artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics technology into the hotel industry (Jian & Wen, 2020).

However, many businesses in the industry are finding the transformation challenging. Hotel managers have to opt for these strategies to improve on customer services during this period of COVID- 19. They need to redesign their CRM structure to fit in their organizational style and culture (Kotorov, 2002). In a statement made by Jian & Wen, (2020), due to the COVID-19 outbreak, customers will likely patronize hotels that offer reassuring lodging services and accommodation products in terms of hygiene and cleanliness. To this end, the authors suggest that hotels should implement regular hygiene surveillance at facilities via manual (i.e., staff rounds) and automated (e.g., robot-based) practices. Therefore, management of hotel industry that adhere to all these procedures and protocols are likely to improve. Also, in addition to staff training and motivation and establishment of appropriate reward systems should be determinant in staffs' involvement in implementing CRM (Osarenkhoe and Bennani, 2007) in this era to improve on performance.

Statement of the Problem

Like other industries around the world, Nigeria hotel industry has been heavily stormed by the COVID-19 global pandemic. Hotel owners have found themselves with empty hotels, depleted cash reserves, as a result of restrictions in gathering, maintaining social distancing and additional cost of enhanced sanitization and safety protocols. The cancellation of flights, conferences, events and hotel reservations has left the industry services in sharp decline. With these myriad of challenges, the hotel industry still strives to give their customers outstanding services so as to maintain their loyalty and confidence. One useful way the management of hotel industry can achieve this is by recognizing and enhancing relationship with their customers through efficient and effective customer relationship management (CRM). This is because of its inherent ability of not only attracting but sustaining customer's loyalty and patronage. Effective CRM requires practices that ensure safety in line with COVID - 19 protocols.

Maintaining and serving customers during this era of global pandemic has been challenging and exhausting on hotel businesses in Enugu, getting the needed technologies, skilled personnel, and developing an effective and efficient customer relation system seem elusive and problematic. Hence, the need for creative and enhanced customer service that can tackle the challenges of today as well as provide future guidelines. Generally, the study sought to evaluate the customer relationship management on performance of hotel industry in the era of Covid- 19 pandemic in Enugu State, Nigeria. Specifically, the study sought to

1. Examine the level of awareness of hotel industry on measures for controlling COVID-19 in Enugu State
2. Find out CRM strategies of hotel industry towards the control of COVID- 19 spread in Enugu State.
3. Find out the level of adoption of CRM in hotel industry in the era of COVID- 19 in Enugu State.

Research Questions

1. What is the level of awareness of hotel industry on measures for controlling COVID-19 in Enugu State?
2. What are CRM strategies of hotel industry towards the control of COVID- 19 spread in Enugu State?
3. What is the level of adoption of CRM in hotel industry in the era of COVID-19 in Enugu?

Hypothesis

- H₀₁:** There is no significant difference between the mean responses of managers and front desk officers on the level of awareness of hotel industry on measures for controlling COVID-19 in Enugu State
- H₀₂:** There is no significant difference between the mean responses of managers and front desk officers on CRM strategies of hotel industry towards the control of COVID- 19 spread in Enugu State
- H₀₃:** There is no significant difference between the mean responses of managers and front desk officers on the level of adoption of CRM in hotel industry in the era of COVID-19 in Enugu State

Materials and Methods

The study adopted descriptive survey research design and was carried out in Enugu State, Nigeria. Descriptive survey research as described by Nworgu (2015) seeks to collect data and describe them in a systematic manner showing the characteristics features or facts about a given population. Therefore descriptive survey design was found suitable for this study as data collected from the respondents in the hotel industry is described in a systematic manner without manoeuvring. The population for the study comprised managers and front desk officers of 160 hotels within Enugu metropolis as obtained from Enugu State Tourism Board (ESTB). A total of 160 managers and 160 front desk officers from the hotel industry making it a total of 320 respondents represent the sample for the study due to its manageability. The instrument used for data collection was (40) items structured questionnaire titled “Customer Relationship Management on Performance of Hotel Industry in COVID-19 Questionnaire” (CRMPHICQ) developed by the researcher. The instrument was divided into two parts (I and II). Part 1 solicited personal information while part II had three sections (A, B and C) each corresponding to purpose 1, 2 and 3 respectively. Section A which was designed to elicit information on the level of awareness of hotel industry on measures for controlling COVID-19 in Enugu State are structured on a four-point response scales ranges from Very much aware (VMA=4); Much aware (MA=3); Somewhat aware (SA=2); Not aware (NA=1). Section B was designed to find out the CRM strategies of hotel industry towards the control of COVID-19 spread in Enugu State are structured on a four-point response scales ranges from Strongly Agree (SA=4); Agree (A=3); Disagree (D=2); Strongly Disagree (SD=1). Section C was also designed to find out the level of adoption of CRM in hotel industry in the era of COVID-19 in Enugu State are structured on a four-point response scales ranges from Very Often (VO=4); Often (O=3); Sometimes (S=2); Never (N=1). Three experts from Department of Business Education, University of Nigeria, Nsukka, validated the instrument. Their corrections and suggestions were used to produce the final copy of the questionnaire. Cronbach Alpha method was used to determine the internal consistency of the instrument through the administration of the questionnaire to 10

respondents; 8 managers and 2 front desk officers from hotel business in Nsukka; the analyses of the data yield 0.81. The questionnaire was administered personally by the researchers through the help of six research assistants. Out of 320 copies of questionnaire administered, 298 copies were returned representing about 93 percent rate of return. The data collected was analyzed using weighted mean to answer the research questions based on the same values of real limit numbers as follows: 4.00 – 3.50, 3.00 - 2.50, 2.00 -1.50 and 1.49 – 1.00 while standard deviation was used to determine the spread of the responses around the mean. To determine the items that were agreed on the customer relationship management on performance of hotel industry in the era of COVID- 19 pandemic, any item with mean of 2.50 (the real limit of 2.50) and above was accepted while any item with mean rating of less than 2.50 was considered not acceptable on customer relationship management on performance of hotel industry in the era of COVID- 19 pandemic. T-test statistic was used to test the null hypothesis of no significant difference at $P \leq 0.05$ level of significance. Any item with a value of $P \geq 0.05$ is accepted while the reverse is true for any item with a value of $P \leq 0.05$ level of significant is rejected.

Results

Research Question One: What is the level of awareness of hotel industry on measures for controlling COVID-19 in Enugu State?

Table 1: Mean and standard deviation on the responses of managers and front desk officers on the level of awareness of hotel industry on measures for controlling COVID-19 in Enugu State

S/N	Awareness on measures for controlling COVID-19:	\bar{X}	Std. dev	Remark
1.	Introduction of mobile guest services through adverts	2.64	1.16	Accept
2.	Online check-in and check-out to avoid physical interaction with front-desk staff	2.85	0.79	Accept

3.	Encouraging customers to share a post about their experiences on social media platforms	2.70	0.90	Accept
4.	Creating brand awareness through online adverts	2.85	0.79	Accept
5.	Advocate these measures on own website to avoid uncertainties.	3.10	0.83	Accept
6.	Extensive protocols and procedures should be made with signage explaining the needs	3.11	0.89	Accept
7.	Advertising through goggle adverts and booking website	3.15	0.80	Accept
8.	Through the use of social media platforms	3.10	0.77	Accept
9.	Through the use E-mail to existing customers	3.05	0.81	Accept
10.	Covid -19 awareness training for the employees on how to handle crisis	3.40	0.74	Accept
11.	Generation of pamphlets or in room notes that outline the protocols and procedures	3.05	0.74	Accept
12.	Ready to share verified information to customers from trusted source about Covid- 19	2.90	0.89	Accept
13.	Advertising positive signals to the community	3.15	0.85	Accept
Grand Mean and Standard deviation		3.00	0.52	Accept

Key: \bar{X} –Mean, Std. dev. –Standard Deviation

Result in the above Table 1 shows that managers and front desk officers of hotels are much aware on all the presented measures for controlling COVID-19 in Enugu State with a mean range of 2.64 to 3.40. They are very much aware of COVID -19 awareness training for the employees on how to handle crisis and somewhat aware of Introduction of mobile guest services through adverts.

The standard deviation ranged from 0.74 to 1.16 which showed that the respondents, managers and front desk officers of hotels were not far from each other in their response with level of awareness of hotel industry on measures for controlling COVID-19 in Enugu State.

Research question Two: What are the CRM strategies of hotel industry towards the control of COVID- 19 spread in Enugu State?

Table 2: Mean and standard deviation on the responses of managers and front desk officers on the CRM strategies of hotel industry towards the control of COVID- 19 spread in Enugu State

S/N	CRM strategies towards COVID-19 spread :	\bar{X}	Std. dev.	Remark
14.	Curiosity to use technology if any	3.40	0.49	Accept
15.	Immediate feedback from the staff	2.95	0.67	Accept
16.	Online interactive approach	3.00	0.71	Accept
17.	Enthusiasms towards the procedures and protocols	3.15	0.66	Accept
18.	Assuring stability of the protocols and procedures	3.25	0.70	Accept
19.	Preparing a standard unforeseen event plans	2.40	0.67	Reject
20.	Establishing an emergency control	3.05	0.74	Accept
21.	Rearrangement of the food & beverages areas from logistics to preparation, delivery, consumption and payment methods	2.80	0.93	Accept
22.	Provision of special PPE equipmentfor employees, including asks, gloves, Plexiglas screens and hand-sanitizing gel	3.24	1.00	Accept
23.	Receptive offers t meet the	3.05	0.74	Accept

	needs of customer				
24.	Redesigning spaces with signage delineating areas to avoid crowds and ensure a minimum distance as required by local regulations	2.80	0.93		Accept
Grand Mean and Standard deviation		3.00	0.44		Accept

Key: \bar{X} –Mean, Std. dev. –Standard Deviation

Result in the above Table 2 shows that managers and front desk officers of hotels agreed that 10 of the presented strategies with a mean range of 2.80 to 3.40 are the CRM strategies of hotel industry towards the control of COVID- 19 spread in Enugu State. However they disagreed that item 19 (Preparing a standard unforeseen event plans) is a CRM strategies of hotel industry towards the control of COVID- 19 spread in Enugu State.

The standard deviation ranged from 0.44 to 1.00 which showed that the respondents, managers and front desk officers of hotels were not far from each other in their response with the CRM strategies of hotel industry towards the control of COVID- 19 spread in Enugu State.

Research Question Three: What is the level of adoption of CRM in hotel industry in the era of COVID-19 in Enugu?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation on the responses of managers and front desk officers on the level of adoption of CRM in hotel industry in the era of COVID-19 in Enugu

S/N	Adoption of CRM:	\bar{X}	Std. dev.	Remark
25	Offering of free hand sanitizer to guests	3.70	0.64	Accept
26	Building up customer satisfaction related to hygiene and safety standards	3.60	0.49	Accept
27	Provision of face mask if guest is not wearing anyone	2.70	1.19	Accept
28	Cleaning the delivery counter in regular intervals	3.30	0.90	Accept
29	Ensure markings on the floor at reception to maintain social distancing	3.15	0.86	Accept
30	Installation of hand sanitizer dispensers at the entrance of the building	3.45	0.87	Accept
31	Luggage's are to be sanitise using a fogger machine	2.16	0.96	Reject
32	Doormat should be changed regularly and cleaned with authorized disinfectants.	3.30	0.78	Accept
33	Collecting detailed information of the Guest from the time of reservation	3.50	0.74	Accept
34	Upgraded cleaning and sanitising of all key areas with hospitals grade disinfection	3.10	0.89	Accept
35	Supervisions of guest by staff to observe if they are adhering to those protocols	2.94	1.25	Accept
36	Temperature check points on guests before entering the hotel	3.00	1.10	Accept

37	premise Allow guests to order room service, access the hotel's information and services and chat live with a member of the guest services team	2.45	0.86	Reject
38	A dedicated health and safety manager, responsible for introducing the new measures and training staff.	2.85	0.97	Accept
39	Regular review of the entire process of cleaning bedding and linens	3.65	0.48	Accept
40	Increased control of water disinfection and purification systems	3.45	0.67	Accept
Grand Mean and Standard deviation		3.14	0.40	Accept

Key: \bar{X} –Mean, Std. dev. –Standard Deviation

Result in the above Table 3 shows that managers and front desk officers of hotels often adopt 14 out of 16 presented items on CRM in hotel industry in the era of COVID-19 in Enugu. The mean ranged from 2.70 to 3.70. However they sometimes adopt items 31 and 37 with a mean of 2.16 and 2.45 respectively as CRM in hotel industry in the era of COVID-19 in Enugu.

The standard deviation ranged from 0.48 to 1.25 which showed that the respondents, managers and front desk officers of hotels were not far from each other in their response with respect to the level of adoption of CRM in hotel industry in the era of COVID-19 in Enugu.

Hypotheses Testing

Hypotheses One: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of managers and front desk officers on the level of

awareness of hotel industry on measures for controlling COVID-19 in Enugu State.

Table 4: Summary of t-test analysis on the difference between the mean scores of the managers and front desk on the level of awareness of hotel industry on measures for controlling COVID-19 in Enugu State

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	Mean diff.	Calc. t-value	Critical t-value	Sig. Level	Decision
Front Desk Officer	149	2.9164	.55986	296	- .1750 1	0.004	-.2.921	0.05	Reject
Manager	149	3.0914	.47066						

The Table 4 above showed that there was a significant difference in the mean responses of managers and front desk officers on the level of awareness of hotel industry on measures for controlling COVID-19 in Enugu State.

The calculated p-value (0.004) is less than the level of significant (0.05). This leads to the rejection of the null hypotheses which state that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of managers and front desk officers on the level of awareness of hotel industry on measures for controlling COVID-19 in Enugu State.

Hypotheses Two: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of managers and front desk officers on the CRM strategies of hotel industry towards the control of COVID- 19 spread in Enugu State.

Table 5: Summary of t-test analysis on the difference between the mean scores of managers and front desk officers on the CRM strategies of hotel industry towards the control of COVID- 19 spread in Enugu State

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	Mean diff.	Calc. t-value	Critical t-value	Sig. Level	Decision
Front Desk Officer	149	3.0531	.30356	296	0.05491	0.282	1.078	0.05	Accept
Manager	149	2.9982	.54253						

The Table 5 above showed that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of managers and front desk officers on the CRM strategies of hotel industry towards the control of COVID- 19 spread in Enugu State.

The calculated p-value (0.282) is greater than the level of significant (0.05). This leads to the acceptance of the null hypotheses which state that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of managers and front desk officers on the CRM strategies of hotel industry towards the control of COVID- 19 spread in Enugu State.

Hypotheses Three: There is no significant difference in the mean responses of managers and front desk officers the level of adoption of CRM in hotel industry in the era of COVID-19 in Enugu.

Table 6: Summary of t-test analysis on the difference between the mean scores of managers and front desk officers on the level of adoption of CRM in hotel industry in the era of COVID-19 in Enugu

Variable	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Df	Mean diff.	Calc. t-value	Critical t-value	Sig. Level	Decision
Front Desk Officer	149	3.1858	.28204	296	-0.02936	0.528	-0.632	0.05	Accept
Manager	149	3.2152	.49209						

The Table 6 above showed that there was no significant difference in the mean responses of managers and front desk officers on the level of adoption of CRM in hotel industry in the era of COVID-19 in Enugu.

The calculated p-value (0.528) is greater than the level of significant (0.05). This leads to the acceptance of the null hypotheses which state

that there is no significant difference in the mean responses of managers and front desk officers the level of adoption of CRM in hotel industry in the era of COVID-19 in Enugu.

Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that the level of awareness of hotel industry on measures for controlling COVID-19 in Enugu State such as: introduction of mobile guest services through adverts, online check-in and check-out to avoid physical interaction with front-desk staff, encouraging customers to **share a post about their experiences on social media platforms, creating brand awareness through online adverts, advocate** these measures on own website to avoid uncertainties, among others shows that managers and front desk officers of hotels are much aware on all the presented measures for controlling COVID-19 in Enugu State with a mean range of 2.64 to 3.40. They are very much aware of COVID -19 awareness training for the employees on how to handle crisis and somewhat aware of Introduction of mobile guest services through adverts. This study is in line with the view of Chen, (2020) who found that the hotel industry should embrace reforms to facilitate multi-business and multi-channel platforms for their businesses.. It is also in collaboration with Valle, (2020); Tripathi (2020) who found that hotels should endeavor to update channels to contact, attract, and sell to customers and a growing need for the adoption of innovative local strategies to improve awareness in general population related to COVID-19 and its preventive practices.

The findings from research question two revealed that, the CRM strategies of hotel industry towards the control of COVID- I9 spread in Enugu State such as: Curiosity to use technology if any, online interactive approach, rearrangement of the food & beverages areas from logistics to preparation, delivery, consumption and payment methods, Enthusiasms towards the procedures and protocols among others shows that managers and front desk officers of hotels agreed that 10 of the presented strategies with a mean range of 2.80 to 3.40 are the CRM strategies of hotel industry towards the control of COVID- I9 spread in Enugu State. However they disagreed that item

19 (Preparing a standard unforeseen event plans) is a CRM strategies of the hotel industry towards the control of COVID- 19 spread in Enugu State. This is in line with Sharma, Adhkary & Borah (2020), who observed that the innovative and creative approaches undertaken to rethink operations and vulnerabilities in the supply chain alongside harnessing technology to enable delivery of products, highlights the different measures and the complexity in responding to the effects of COVID-19. The findings are also in accordance with Eggers's (2020) suggestions that through proactive and innovative postures, firms can also create market opportunities at times of crises.

The findings from research question three also revealed that the level of adoption of CRM in the hotel industry in the era of COVID-19 in Enugu state such as: Offering of free hand sanitizer to guests, building up customer satisfaction related to hygiene and safety standards, provision of face mask if guest is not wearing anyone, ensure markings on the floor at reception to maintain social distancing, installation of hand sanitizer dispensers at the entrance of the building, among others shows that managers and front desk officers of hotels often adopt 14 out of 16 presented items on CRM in hotel industry in the era of COVID-19 in Enugu. The mean ranged from 2.70 to 3.70. However they sometimes adopt items 31 and 37 with a mean of 2.16 and 2.45 respectively as CRM in hotel industry in the era of COVID-19 in Enugu. Guest expects hoteliers to put into practice more rigorous safety/cleaning procedures; some of them are willing to pay for those supplementary safety measures. The above findings agreed with the views of Gursoy and Chi, (2020), Jiang and Wen (2020), Park et al.(2019) who reported that visible sanitizing efforts (such as hand sanitizers at the entry, staff wearing masks and gloves), implementing social distancing, limiting the number of customers served, more rigorous and frequent cleaning of high-touch surfaces in common areas, and also employee training of health and safety protocols are the most important safety precautions customers expect from a restaurant and a hotel.

Conclusion

COVID-19 has definitely posed challenges to hotel industry with regard to CRM such that the way people live their life changed by the day. Hoteliers needs to discover what their customers want in

terms of product and service, how best they can offer those products and services in this era of COVID-19. Hoteliers urgently need to incorporate all these measures in order to minimize the spread of the outbreak corona virus. Hotel management should be better trained so as to make innovative and effective decisions in any crisis situations or circumstances.

Recommendations

1. The management of hotel industry should continue with the hygiene and preventive measures until life recommence to its business as usual.
2. Hoteliers should also invest on automated transformation initiatives to enable them manage their customers effectively.
3. Hotel managements should conduct sensitization/ awareness programmes for staff on upgraded hygiene standards
4. Hotels should also make effort on how to update channels to contact, attract, and sell their products to customers.

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MEDIATION APPROACHES TO COVID-19 INFLATIONARY PRESSURE BY CONSUMERS OF FAST-MOVING CONSUMER GOODS IN ANAMBRA STATE, NIGERIA

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Abstract

The descriptive survey was conducted to identify mediation approaches by consumers of Fast Moving Consumer Goods to the inflationary pressure caused by Covid-19 pandemic lockdown through the coping strategies adopted by consumers. Two research questions were formulated to guide the study. Purposeful sampling technique was used to select 200 consumers in Anambra State Nigeria, while structured questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents. Using simple percentage, mean and, standard deviation the demographic information, and the research questions were analyzed respectively. The result revealed that while the purchasing power and savings of consumer reduced drastically, consumers in Anambra State forfeit the use of some products, switched over to close substitutes with lower prices in other to cope with price increase of essential products. The study also showed that if manufacturers of fast moving consumer goods should offer price discounts, increase the quantity of packaged goods and can source local raw materials locally that they will be able to reduce production costs and prices of their products which will assist them to gain and maintain their market share and recommended that manufacturers of fast

moving consumer goods should invest in the local production of raw material to reduce cost at long run for their sustainability.

Keywords: *Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMGGs), Inflation, Consumer, Covid-19, Pandemic*

Introduction

It is obvious that the novel Covid-19 health pandemic triggered profound economic challenges to nations, corporate entities and consumers all over the globe. The unprecedented health crises caused boarder closures among and within nations as a containing measure against the spread of corona virus, this brought trading activities of the whole world into a quarantine order. Obi (2020) reported an adverse impact of Covid-19 lockdown on all other sectors of Nigeria's economy except on manufacturers of Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs) who were in operations due to their indispensability in households. According to the author, Covid-19 lockdown reengineered further devaluation of naira and reduction in both private and public capital inflows. Sudden drop in foreign reserve and reduction in revenue was also observed due to downward push in oil prices globally. These experiences seems to be similar in almost all economies of the world just as was experienced in 2008/2009 global financial crises. Presently, the pandemic lockdown containing measure has caused sudden upward movement in the Nigeria inflationary rate which has been in 2-digits since 2016 above the recommendation of the West African Monetary Zone (WAMZ) convergence inflation rate of 5% (Anidiobu, Okolie, and Oleka, 2018). According to National Bureau of Statistics report in June 2020, the Nigerian inflation rate was 12.56% compared to 12.40% as was reported in May 2020 (NBS, 2020)

Inflation is the percentage increase in the prices of goods and services in a nation. It is a recurrent cumulative rise in price of goods and services (Anidiobu et al 2018). According to Kennon (2019), inflation is a when more units of currency is used to purchase a particular quantity of product or service than it used to be. In other words, inflation induces currency devaluation which reduces the

purchasing power of money such that the increase in the prices of consumable goods forces individuals and business to spend more to obtain the same quantity of products as it used to buy in an economy. It is an indication that consumer purchasing power or disposal income has fallen as a result of certain economic factor (Nigerian Economic update, 2020). Inflation is usually measured using consumer price index, which is the annual percentage change in the cost burden of an average consumer. According to the report of National Bureau of Statistic 2020 3rd quarter, consumer price index (CPI) stood at 1.21% in June as against 1.17% recorded in May, being the highest in 26 months (NBS, 2020).

Inflation can be demand pull or cost push, it can also be hyper or crippling. When there is fast growth in aggregate demand of products than supply, a demand-pull inflation is experienced, if the increment in price level is as a result of increase in the cost of production, it is cost-push inflation. Inflation can also be caused by devaluation of currency or by higher wage demand by employees that push firms to increase the price of their products.

Inflation as experienced in Nigeria at present is caused by Covid-19 pandemic lockdown can be described as cost push because, it caused price of oil which is Nigerian major source of income to fall and which also cause increase in cost of production of essential goods. Obi (2020) reported that Nigeria began the year 2020 with a positive budget plan which was projected at the revenue of 8.24 Trillion naira at an assumption revenue of oil price of US \$57 per barrel and at 218 barrels per day, but the emergent of Covid -19 pandemic brought a drastic decline in oil price to below 30% leaving the country to run a deficit budget to be financed through foreign debt distress, thus the inflation as being experience in Nigerian at present.

Consistent inflation in an economy retards the growth of such economy. According to Hossain, Ghosh and Islam (2012) high inflationary level disrupts economic performances while absent or zero inflation redounds an economy. Persistent of inflation continuously reduces the currency value, causes unequal distribution of income among workers, poor standard of living due to hike in prices of commodities as well as low savings and investments (Philip, Christopher and Pius, 2014). According to the authors, when inflation

is in single digit (mild) it is conducive for an economy's growth. Barro (2013) observed severe adverse effects of high inflationary level in the people's standards of living. Price is the major inflationary measure in an economy. Price is the amount paid for a product in exchange for its value. Kotler & Keller (2012) identified price as the one marketing mix that generates revenue; product, place and promotion generates cost to the firm. It also caused manufacturing firms to adjust the prices of their products. This they do either by physically increasing the selling price of their products or by reducing the quantity of packaged goods or by reducing the quality of the products. Inflation is said to be high when the annual rate is over 4%, though studies showed that single digit inflationary rate is a healthy situation since inflation is a general challenge in almost all economies around the globe (Hossain, Ghosh and Islam (2012); Bruno and Easterly (1998). It also increase mortality rate of local industries. In affirmation to the effects of inflation in an economy, Gbadebo and Muhammed (2015) argued that Nigeria's stunted economic growth began since 1970s when her inflationary rate rose to double digits. Philip, Christopher and Pius, (2014) noted that retarded socio-economic growth in developing nations such as Nigeria is as a results of inflation thus the nation always seeks to control volume of money in circulation and to maintain price stability (Adodo, Akindutire and Ogunyemi, 2018).

The current inflationary pressure as experienced in prices of fast moving consumer goods in Nigeria is as a result of covid-19 pandemic boarder closure and business lockdown caused by increase in the cost of raw material importation through the seaports, since most industries in fast moving consumer goods source their raw material beyond Nigerian borders. The world health pandemic which prompted boarder closures among nations, forced FMCGs manufactures to import their raw materials through the seaports, which pushes their production costs to be high and the eventual transfer of the cost to the consumers via prices of their goods purahased. Nwaobi, (2009) as well as Srinivasu, (2014) argued that extra costs incurred in importing raw materials used in production through the seaports increases cost of production. According to the

report on National Bureau of Statistics (NBS, 2019), Nigerian importation of raw material from China is about 70% while those from Asia and Europe accounted for about 86% in the fourth quarter of 2019. Monetary policy is one of the major tools used to control inflation (Fabian and Charles, 2014), though the Nigerian government through the Central Bank of Nigeria has injected 50 billion naira as a supporting loan to households and small and medium scale enterprises so as to influence the level of economic activities in the country, yet there has been and still tremendous increase in the prices of fast moving consumer goods. This causes increase in consumer demands, reduction in productivity, and fall in manufacturing and service outputs which shrinks the economy further at the long run. It also creates difficulties for consumers in trying to afford the basic needs and necessities, causing families to struggle in an attempt to keep up with the rise in price of every product in the market. The application of total lockdown as a containing measure to the spread of the corona virus between States and among nations created an emergent consumer response of panic buying of essential products in Nigeria.

Essential products are also referred to as fast moving consumer goods (FMCGs) or consumer packaged goods (CPG) (Obi, 2020: Srinivasu, 2014)). According to Obi (2020), fast moving consumer goods are low-cost products that are constantly in high demand by consumers. They are short-shelve and non-durable products that are classified mainly as foods and beverages, households and groceries, personal care as well as pharmaceuticals. FMCGs includes: products such as: food and dairy, pharmaceuticals, consumer electronics, packaged food products, drinks among others (Srinivasu, 2014). Some other examples of the products that fall under the category of fast moving consumer goods are: coffee, tea, detergents, tobacco and cigarettes, soaps, toiletries Pepsi, cosmetics, tooth cleaning products, shaving products among others. Srinivasu (2014) also included some non-durables such as glassware, bulbs, batteries, paper products, and plastic goods, consumer electronics and chocolate bars. They are massively produced and quickly consumed products which have low profit margin and close substitutes (Asif and Syed - Zeeshan, 2020). Similarly, Srinivasu (2014) described fast moving

consumer goods as products that can be replaced within a year. Manufactures of these products constitutes larger employability of labour in most economies.

FMCGs are characterized by their organized distribution networks, low penetration price levels, low operating cost and high competition among the sector (Srinivasu 2014). Fast moving consumer goods constitutes the larger part of consumers' budget in Nigeria because of their daily indispensable needs in every household. Consumers are final users of goods and services either as an individual, household or as an industry (Lombardo, 2020). They are targeted markets for goods and services produced for usage other than resale. With respect to FMCGs, and in context of this study, consumers are individuals and households that use essential products for personal upkeep. Nigeria has a very large market for FMCGs with an estimated population of 206,139,589 million people as at January, 2020 with FMCGs firms contributing about 5% of her gross domestic product (NBS, 2019) while the Nigerian Stock Exchange's (NSE) market capitalization report for December 2019 also showed that FMCGs constitutes 17% of the total value of equity in the market and food dominates consumer's spending currently due the pandemic effect on their income as everyone struggles for survival.

FMCGs are also low unit value products which are continuously and frequently purchased by consumers whose behaviors are so dynamic with respect to loyalty and impulse choices (Kotler, 2003). Brand loyalty comes as a result of satisfaction derived by customers from using products irrespective of the price of such product. FMCGs are generally cheap products of close substitutes, purchased regularly by consumers with little or no difference in their prices and have short shelf life span. Vlachy et al., (2020) maintained that consumers tends to exhibit swift change in brand selection due to individual differences in purchasing behaviors and by the nature of advertising campaigns carried out by firms. Kgosana (2014) identified some of the strategies employed by FMCGs producers to attract and maintain market share to include loyalty programme such as maintenance of product quality, enhancement of consumer's shopping experience through improving distributing route such as online

delivery, advertising, promotions, and making products more available and affordable by offering, varieties of product sizes and adaptation to local needs. Brand loyalty creation by producers is as essential survival strategy in FMCGs industry, Kgosana (2014) advised FMCGs manufacturers to maintain high quality brands of products as a consumer loyalty strategy so as to be able to sustain long term market shares irrespective the kind of shifts in consumers spending behaviors.

On the other hand, Aribarg and Schwartz (2020) suggested strategic marketing planning and further maintained that strong consumer retention programs such as high product quality will attracts consumers since brand loyalty give manufacturers strong competitive edge in hard times (Saeed et al., 2013). With the availability of close substitutes among FMCGs, price becomes the basis for competition. Mahmood and Haider (2020) maintained that less cost efficient manufacturers gets pushed off business, and advised manufacturers to always seeks cost reduction strategies so as to be able to offer quality products at cheaper rate at short run to win consumer's loyalty, maintain large market share and be able to increase their price at long run.

Due to severe competition FMCGs sector, manufacturers of these products engages in extensive sales promotional offers such as price-offs, innovative products and gift offers to gain large market share from consumers and increase their profit (Dang and Koshy, 2004). Kgosana (2014) noted that producers of FMCGs use marketing strategies to gain consumer loyalty which allows them to fix higher price for their products at long run. The essentiality of FMCGs to households made Nigerian government to allow for their distribution and sales at the peak of the covid-19 pandemic lockdown so as to sustain health and livelihood of the populace. Bill, Feurer and Klarmann, (2020) noted that the survival of FMCGs industries is a major concern to all nations since they produce indispensable daily household needs that sales well even in economic downturns because consumer forfeits other luxury to obtain them irrespective of their income level which determines to a large extent what they purchase.

As witnessed by the researcher, there has been continuous hike in prices of most if not all FMCGs in Anambra State. There are also

increments in the price of motor spirit, electricity tariff and taxation rates of workers. Some FMCGs brands no longer exist on retail shelves while the prices of those available are tremendously increased. There is increase in the number of Covid-19 related jobs lost, unemployment and poverty rates are also in increase, and there is high mortality rate among firms engaged in the manufacturing of FMCGs. There is hunger and scarcity among the rich and the poor respectively, more manufacturing firms of FMCGs in Anambra States are shouting down and economic recovery in discretionary spending is yet to be envisaged. Consumers especially the vulnerable ones can no longer meet their essential needs. Though the federal government has injected fund into the economy through loan disbursement since strong relationship exists between inflation and money supply in an economy (Chaudhry, Ismail, Farooq & Murtaza, 2015) Thus, manufacturers of FMCGs need alternative cost reduction approaches so as to reduce the prices of their products, and win back their market share through their customer's constant patronage. Inability in obtaining essential household products as a result of increase in the price caused by the pandemic lockdown is the problem this study seeks to solve. It is against this back drop that the researcher seeks to identify coping strategies adopted by consumers of FMCGs to inflationary price increase caused by Covid-19 pandemic lockdown in Anambra State, Nigeria. This study therefore aims at identifying the mediation approaches adopted by household consumers in Anambra State to inflationary pressure caused by Covid-19 Pandemic lockdown and to recommend strategies to be employed by the manufactures of FMCGs for cost and price reductions for their business sustainability. Though there have been studies on fast moving consumer goods in Nigeria, none of the studies to the best of the researchers knowledge was on Covid -19 inflationary pressure mediation approaches by consumers of fast moving consumer goods in Anambra State which this study seeks to fill in literature.

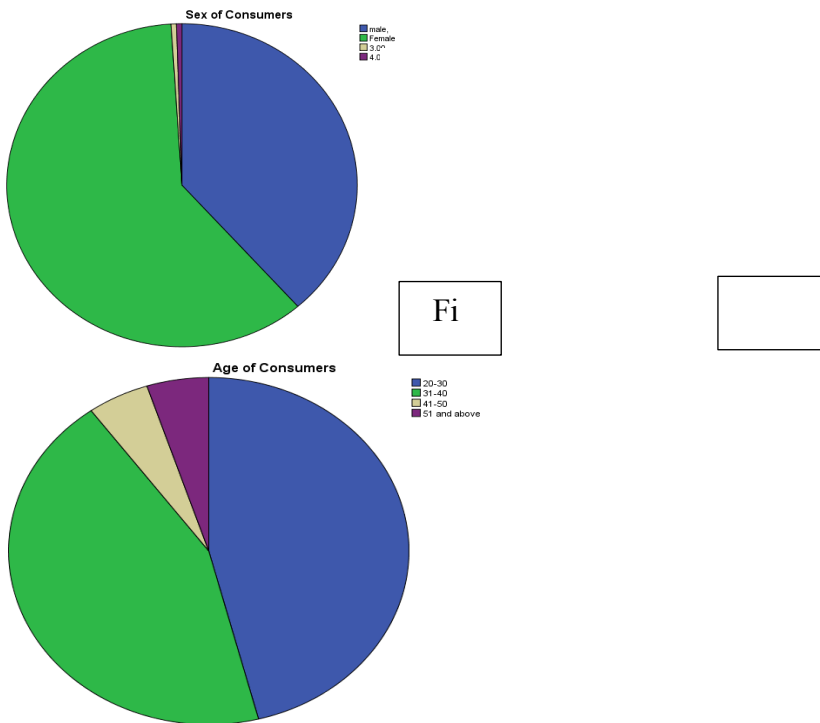
Procedure

The researcher with the help of two research assistants collected the data elicit information from the respondents, using purposeful sampling technique, the population of 200 household consumers of

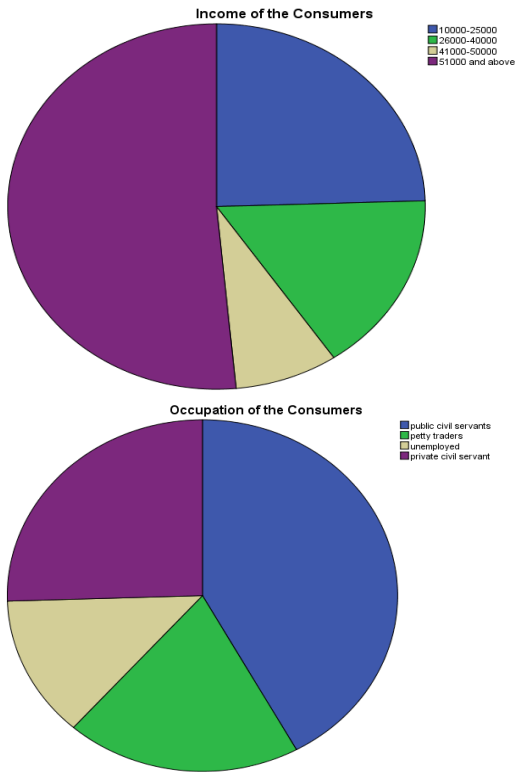
essential commodity in Anambra state was selected. The questionnaire developed for data collection was structured based on the literatures reviewed on four point Likert scale of strongly agreed (SA), agreed (A), dis agree (DA), Strongly Disagree (SDA) of 4, 3, 2, and 1 respectively and was validated by two experts.. The respondent's demographic information will be analyzed using simple percentage displayed with the aid of pie chart statistics while the research questions will be analyzed using mean and standard deviation. Items with mean score of 2.50 is regarded as agree; while those with 3.00 and above will be taken to be strongly agree otherwise it will be regarded as disagree. All the descriptive computations were done using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23.

Result

Pie chart of the demographic information of the participated consumers



Fi



The researcher examined the demographic information of the participated consumers in Anambra State. The pie chart in fig 1 above depicted the gender of the respondents and indicated that (39%) of the consumers were male while (61%) were female. This supports the fact that households and groceries are women's domain as Anu (2014) who asserts that women controls about (80%) of household spending. With respect to age, fig 2 shows that (46%) of the consumers were within the age range of 20 -30 (44%) were within the range of 31 - 40,

(5%) were within 41-50 and (5%) also within the age range of 51 and above. This indicates high consumption rate of FMCGs among younger consumers as was reported by Sarker and Rahman (2017). Similarly, the pie chart in fig 3 shows the income range of the consumers and indicated that (24.5%) of the consumers earns between 10 to 25 thousand naira, (16%) earns between 26 to 40 thousand naira, (8%) earns between 41 to 50 thousand naira while (51.5%) of the consumers earns 51 thousand naira and above monthly. More so, fig 4 above is the pie chart of the occupation of the participated consumers which shows that (42%) of the consumers are public civil servant, (19.5%) are traders, (13%) were unemployed while (25.5%) were private civil servants. It can also be seen that majority of the consumer are civil servants who earns monthly salaries.

Furthermore, the result in table 1 below shows the mean and the standard deviation of the consumers responses on the approaches they adopted to mediate the Covid-19 inflationary pressures on fast moving consumer goods in Anambra State. Majority of the consumers reported that hike in the prices of fast moving consumer goods is very high as indicated in their mean ratings of (3.60). Supporting the high price rates of FMCGs, participants strongly agreed that foods, household products, groceries and pharmaceuticals are mostly affected by the Covid-19 inflationary price increase as indicated by (3.15) mean rating on the items. With respect to the essentiality of FMCGs and the tremendous increase in their prices, participated consumers strongly agreed that they resorts to close substitutes of these products whose prices are lower than their usual brands shown by the mean rating of (3.12) while those that are brand loyalist also agreed to reduction in the quantity of FMCGs they purchases due the hike in price as shown by the mean rating of (3.09). These findings agreed to the findings of Reinaldoi et al (2013) who reported that consumers goes for substitutes with lower price irrespective of the quality of the products.

Majority of the respondents (3.25) strongly reported that they still visit the hospital despite the pandemic and hike in prices of pharmaceuticals while a good number of the participants (2.59) agreed not be observing any of the NCDC and WHO containing measures. The high standard deviation range of 0.6 to 2 shows the close

relationship that exists between the responses of the consumers in all the 6 items.

Table 1

What are the mediation approaches adopted by consumers of fast moving consumer goods in Anambra State to inflationary pressure caused by Covid-19 lockdown?

S/N	Items	Mean	Standard deviation	Remark
1	Hike in prices of essential products is very high	3.60	.68	SA
2	Hike in the prices of essential products is moderate	1.89	.81	DA
3	Some of my product brands are no longer available in the market	2.68	.74	A
4	Food, household products and groceries are mostly affected by the covid-19 inflationary price increase	3.15	.97	SA
5	Pharmaceuticals are also affected by covid-19 increase in price	2.71	1.01	A
6	I saves as usual despite covid-19 price increase on essential products	1.29	1.19	DA
7	I go for substitutes of essential products with lower price, my product brands are too expensive	3.12	2.24	SA
8	I still go for my product brands irrespective of the hike in their prices	1.58	.87	DA
9	I am loyal to my product brands, but I reduces the quantity I purchase due hike in price	3.09	.64	SA
10	I do not care for brands, I purchase	2.57	1.01	A

	products that are cheap and meets my need			
11	I stopped the use of some products until the hike in their prices is reduced	2.55	.90	A
12	I pay cash for my purchases before and during the pick of covid-19 pandemic	3.21	.97	SA
13	I no longer visit the hospital, I purchase drugs from the pharmacies without any body's prescription at the peak of the lockdown	2.13	1.19	A
14	I still visit the hospital if need be despite the pandemic	3.25	1.00	SA
15	I make payments for my purchases through bank transfer even after the pandemic lockdown	1.94	2.86	DA
16	I no longer observe any of the covid-19 contain measures	2.59	.94	A

Table 2 below shows mediation approaches to be adopted by manufacturers of FMCGs in Anambra State to sustain post Covid-29 pressure. The respondents strongly agreed to 6 items out of the 9 items identified by the researcher with the mean between the ratings of (3.13 - 3.49) researcher identified. A good number of the consumers (2.59) agreed to no longer observe any of the Covid-19 containing measures as directed by NDDC and WHO respectively while few consumers with the mean rating of (1.19) agreed to have been saving as usual despite the inflationary pressure.

Discussion

The findings of this study affirmed that household products and groceries are women's domain as 61% of the respondents are feminine. The findings of this study also identified the prices of Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCGs) are very high and that consumers in an attempt to cope with the inflationary pressure resorts to

purchasing close substitutes of fast moving consumer goods that are cheaper, reduces the quantity of these products they purchases and even stop the use of some the products pending when their prices come down. This implies that consumers either improvise for such products or transforms other items to meet with their needs. This finding is in consonance with the findings of Nwaobi (2009) who reported that serious inflationary pressure challenges consumers to lower their standards of living so as to make ends meet. Secondly, the findings on the research question two which aimed at identifying the mediation approaches of manufacturers of FMCGs to Covid-19 inflationary pressure revealed that manufacturers of these products can offer price discounts to their customers or increase the quantity of products packed so as to retain their customers. Although this may seem to reduce their returns at the short run but will sustain them to stay afloat in business and increase their inflows at the long run. More so the findings revealed that manufactures of FMCGs should make use of technological improvements to automate their production processes and intensify efforts towards sourcing their raw materials locally and try sourcing funds through other alternative means other than bank loans. This finding is an affirmation to the reports of Obi (2020) who advised firms to maintain discounting discipline, contribute cash and products in the fight against Covid- 19 so as to retain the confidence of consumers and other investors in the business.

Table 2

What are the mediation approaches to be adopted by manufacturers of fast moving consumer goods in Anambra State for sustainability?

S/N	Items	Mean	Standar d Deviation	Remarks
1	Offering price discount by producers of essential products will make me go back to my product brands	3.49	2.21	SA
2	Increasing the quantity of	3.43	2.95	SA

	packed products will make remain loyal to my brands			
3	Automating production processes by manufacturers will help to reduce prices of essential products	2.90	.85	A
4	Investing in local sources of raw material for essential products will assist in reducing prices of products	3.46	2.24	SA
5	Sourcing raw materials locally will also be of help	3.13	.89	SA
6	Adopting just in time inventory management strategy will help reduce capital tied in stocking raw materials	2.79	.66	A
7	Using other financing strategies other than loan will assist in repositioning essential product manufacturing firms	2.70	.82	A
8	Mega promotional strategies will draw customers back to their brands	2.70	.89	A
9	Packing products in different sizes will make me go back to my products brands.	3.20	2.29	SA

Conclusion

In conclusion, the participated consumers of FMCGs in Anambra State, Nigeria resort to reduction if their standard of living through the purchase of products with lower prices irrespective of the quality. Based on this finding, this study recommends that manufacturers of FMCGs invest in the production and sourcing of their raw materials locally so as to reduce cost of production and prices of their product and also maintain quality of their products at long run.

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MONO-ECONOMY IN A PANDEMIC RAVAGING SOCIETY

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Abstract

Suffice to observe that nations with diversified economy were badly hit by the ravaging nature of the corona virus disease but the magnitude of its effect on a mono-economy such as Nigeria is incomparable. The reality of covid19 on the Nigerian economy is only a tip of the iceberg to many lessons that the Nigerian government should learn. Nigeria no doubt is a mono-economy with heavy reliance on crude oil. I seriously doubt if there were lessons learnt during the below zero dollar price of the American oil coupled with the continuous dwindling price of the London Brent. If there is any time to consider imperatively the issue of diversification of the Nigerian economy, it is now because the worst of the earth phenomenal pandemics are yet to be here. This paper was conceived with a view to highlighting some of the adverse effects a mono-economy is bound to face in situations such as covid19. It is in the optimistic view of this researcher that the outcome of this research will further nourish and reengineer the proactive posture of policy makers in Nigeria to do the needful. The researcher identified that the Nigerian government is docile and yet to learn any lesson from the effect of Covid19 on the economy. Consequent on this reality, the researcher recommends that the government should genuinely swing into action policies that will lead to the diversification of the economy.

Keywords: *economy, mono-economy, pandemic, Nigeria, COVID-19*

Introduction

Nigeria no doubt is heavily dependent on the oil economy to finance her budget and this to a reasonable extent is proving unsustainable following fluctuations of the oil price in the international market. Most nations of the world are rethinking their dependence on crude oil and are shifting emphasis on alternative sources of energy and investing huge resources on research towards its development. There is no doubt that industrialisation is driven by the oil but due to its impact on climate change, attention is seriously shifting away from crude oil.

As was stated in the abstract, the main motivation that actually triggered the writing of this paper was my observations and the news making rounds in the international news media when in April 20th the price of United States of America's oil fell to a zero dollar during the peak of covid19 pandemic. Though the US government was alarmed but was able to survive it because they had diversified robust economy. Drawing from that experience, it became germane that Nigeria wakes up from our slumber and euphoria of oil dollar to do the needful before she is cutup in the wed of the quagmire of world of little or no dependence on crude oil.

Imagine a world where crude oil is of little importance or even a more severe global pandemic strikes that will affect import and export for at least 2 years, what will the picture for Nigerian economy look like? My guess is as good as yours. We were all here and are still feeling the impact of the corona virus on the wellbeing of Nigerians and the economy in general. There are huge lessons to be learnt from this experience that should propel the government to take concrete actions towards the diversification of the economy. I have my doubts that insensitivity, falsehood and lack of political will on the part of the present government will permit their taking positive actions that will gravitate towards diversification.

When an economy is diversified it refers to the process of shifting an economy away from a single income source toward multiple sources from a growing range of sectors and markets. Traditionally, it has been applied as a strategy to encourage positive economic growth and development.

Economic diversification is very relevant for poorer developing countries to create jobs and foster economic development. That need has been recognised in key internationally agreed development goals. The empirical economic literature has identified several stylised facts about the pattern of diversification of economies, but the development of explanations for those patterns in general has been only loosely associated with economic theory on growth, trade, technology change and structural transformation. Making that connection is relevant because it could inform policymakers in developing countries in designing and implementing policies for promoting diversification.

Conceptual Clarifications

Economy

A clear understanding of the word economy would make for a better understanding of the major subject matter of this paper. For Igwe (2005), economy refers to “the system of production and production relations peculiar to a society, characterized in each epoch by identifiable means and modes of production”. The economy thus refers to the chain of economic activities that keep the economic life of man in a particular society,

Mono economy

A mono economy refers to an economic system that is essentially based on the existence of only one major economic source; depended upon for the economic sustenance of that economy.

Pandemic

A Pandemic is large-scale outbreak of infectious disease that can greatly increase morbidity and mortality over a wide geographic area and cause significant economic, social, and political disruption. Evidence suggests that the likelihood of pandemics has increased over

the past century because of increased global travel and integration, urbanization, changes in land use, and greater exploitation of the natural environment (Jones et al, 2008).

Challenges Facing a Mono Economy in Changing globalised Economic System

Apart from the global history of economic depressions and recessions that adversely affected the economy of almost all the countries of the world, the world has also struggled through major global pandemics such as the Spanish flu - the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918, was referred to the deadliest in history, it infected an estimated 500 million people worldwide and about one-third of the planet's population resulting in death of an estimated 20 million to 50 million victims, including some 675,000 Americans (see <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-i/1918-flu-pandemic>).

From 2002-2004 the SARS outbreak struck - an epidemic involving severe acute respiratory syndrome which was caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus. The outbreak was first identified in Foshan, Guangdong, China, on 16 November 2002 and thought to be an animal virus from an as-yet-uncertain animal reservoir, perhaps bats, that spread to other animals (civet cats) and first infected humans in the Guangdong province of southern China in 2002. An epidemic of SARS affected 26 countries and resulted in more than 8000 cases in 2003. Ebola was another major epidemic first identified in 1976, in two simultaneous outbreaks: one in Nzara (a town in South Sudan) and the other in Yambuku (Democratic Republic of the Congo), a village relatively near the Ebola River from which the disease takes its name which became an epidemic in January 2016 but was later declared no longer an emergency on 29 March 2016 by the World Health Organisation.

The current coronavirus also known as Covid19 broke out in Wuhan China in December 2019 and was declared a global pandemic on 11 March 2020 by the WHO. All of these phenomena have severely affected the health infrastructure and threatened the global economy. Most nations of the world were forced into recession as a result of shutdown of almost all of both government and private

sectors resulting in job losses. Although a few essential but skeletal services were permitted but that was aimed at palliatives and to make the matter worse, the oil prices at the international market fell sharply to the degree that the USA crude was priced below zero dollar - sending a red alert signal to weak and mono economies of the world. When I recognised that Nigeria is one among the mono economies of the world, I became more agitated of what the situation would represent if a more acute situation worse than the few already witnessed strikes.

Thus sharp plunge in price of a barrel of U.S. oil below \$0 a barrel on Monday 20th April was for the first time in history. It was a troubling sign of an unprecedented global energy glut as the coronavirus pandemic halted travels and curbed economic activities.

Speculations are that most countries of the world are discovering oil and gas deposits and are seriously exploring and exploiting them. Moreover, advancement in technology is threatening the use of oil hence the developments of alternative sources of energy are the major agendas of most climate change conferences. This has become imperative as a result of the effect of oil exploration on the ecosystem as well as on the environment leading to climate change. The speculation is that concerted efforts of the world's most influential companies to run on 100% renewable power by 2050 are on top gear.

A mono economy as explained above has several implications and challenges. One of such implications as opined by Robert (2012) is that the economic life and existence of that economy revolves around the existence, relevance and currency of that product. That economy remains a potentially buoyant one only if such product does fine in the international market. The reverse no doubt would be the case, if the performance of that product at the international market is poor.

The prolonged disruption in economic activity due to the pandemic combined with the collapse of oil prices and the reduction in demand for Nigeria's oil products are severely impacting Nigeria's fiscal position. The IMF projects that the economy will contract by 3.4% in 2020, a fall from the previously anticipated 2% growth. The

total budget, which was set at N10.59 trillion (~\$27.3 billion) was revised downward by about 15%.

This phenomenal occurrence has made many Nigerians unemployed and has also affected the economy due to lower exports in oil. Oil and gas exports which constitute around 76.1% of Nigeria's total exports and more than half of the total revenue of the country is predicated on oil and gas exports. The challenge here is that without a viable diversified alternative to the oil and gas economy Nigeria may well be heading towards a severe economic downturn should the threats of this pandemic continue. The major concern of this researcher is not just the momentary implications of the corona virus but the future of the economy should the globe experience a more severe than covid-19 pandemic how would a mono economy like Nigeria be able to grapple with the effects of the pandemic-induced disruption in economic activities.

While investors and analysts wade through the technicalities of the oil markets that contributed to the crash in price, others are trying to glean what it might portend to the economy. As much as 30 million barrels per day - what used to be 30% of global demand - has already been pumped into storage worldwide in the past two or three months. Making it relatively difficult for a quick normalization even if demand were to return to pre-virus levels, by implication, it would take a long time to burn off all that stored crude. The picture the energy market is painting is that high demand is not coming back any time soon, because there is a supply glut.

The Covid-19 pandemic is presenting an opportunity to a paradigm shift towards accelerating access to clean energy globally and Nigeria must act expeditiously to take advantage of this opportunity. An offshoot of the COVID-19 outbreak is the sharp drop in the global demand for crude oil, which led to the Saudi Arabia – Russia price war. Global oil demand is expected to fall by a record 9.3mb/d year-on-year in 2020 and the reason for this is not far-fetched. Due to the lockdown of major economies such as China, Germany, France and even the world's largest economy – the US, the world is burning less fuel.

Factories have emptied, flights have been cancelled, freights have slowed down and commuters are off the roads. With falling demand, producers need to cut production to keep prices lucrative. However, the inability of Saudi Arabia and Russia to reach agreements on supply cuts led to a price war in March 2020.

Another major challenge facing Nigeria as a mono-economy is the fact there are possibilities of potential closure of oil fields due to the dramatic fall in global oil prices. According to Michelle Okwusogu and Rilwan Ajibola (2020), it may become prohibitively non-lucrative for owners/operators of Oil Prospecting Licenses (OPL) or Oil Mining Leases (OML) to continue production from some oilfields that have shown indications of not having oil in commercial quantities. In the same vein, profitable oil fields are not immune from the risk of potential closure, due to the current glut in the global markets and the consequent decision of OPEC+ producers to embark on production cuts as earlier highlighted (Businessday, 2020).

The main thrust of this paper is to focus specifically on the Nigerian economy; with a view to understand how the leaders demonstrate leadership in governance, before and during this pandemic. Has the past administration in Nigeria acted proactively in the face of the global pandemic? What dangers do over dependence on crude oil presage for Nigeria? Are there alternative firms or industries that the Nigerian economy can rely on to generate foreign earnings such as the period under review or even more severe periods in future? It has become imperative to think along these lines and expeditiously provide answers to the above questions because the worst of global pandemics or any other phenomenon are yet to occur. Doubts abound if Nigerian leaders have learnt lessons from this covid-19 era.

Overview of the Economic History of Nigeria

Nigeria discovered oil in its commercial quantity in 1956 at a location in Oloibri – a town in today Bayelsa state. Prior to this phenomenal discovery, agriculture was the mainstay of the Nigerian economy. Soon after this discovery and the attendant oil booms that followed, agriculture was abandoned.

Today, Nigeria which became the 11th member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in 1971 is

Africa's largest oil producer. As a result, Nigerian economy is heavily dependent on the crude oil, which accounts for over 95 percent of her export earnings. According to the International Energy Agency, Nigeria produced about 2.53 million barrels per day, well below its oil production capacity of over 3 million barrels per day, in 2011 - invariably showcasing the inconsistent nature of the oil sector. During the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020, Nigeria oil production fell sharply and its price also dropped significantly

Nigeria's economy was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Among others, oil prices experienced a sharp fall and the country lowered the daily crude oil production consistently. In January 2019, the price per barrel amounted to 57 U.S. dollars per barrel, whereas in April 2020 the price dropped by 15 dollars.

Nigeria is an important oil supplier to the United States. For some years now, the United States has imported between 9-11 percent of its crude oil from Nigeria; however, United States import data for the first half of 2012 show that Nigerian crude is down to a 5 percent share of total United States crude imports. According to the International Energy Agency, in 2011, approximately 33 percent of Nigeria's crude exports were sent to the United States, making Nigeria its fourth largest foreign oil supplier.

In recent times, total crude imports into the United States are falling; imports from Nigeria have also declined at a steeper rate, according to the International Energy Agency. The main reasons underlying this trend are that some Gulf Coast refiners have reduced Nigerian imports in favour of domestically-produced crude, and that two refineries in the U.S. East Coast, which were significant buyers of Nigerian crude, were idled lately.

As a result, Nigerian crude as a share of total United States imports has been consistently and significantly falling before and during the period of this pandemic respectively. According to the CIA World Factbook, Nigeria's main export partners are the United States, India, Brazil, Spain, France and the Netherlands. Shell has been working in Nigeria since 1936, and currently dominates gas production in the country, as the Niger Delta, which contains most of

Nigeria's gas resources, also houses most of Shell's hydrocarbon assets.

It is obvious that despite the effects of the current global pandemic on oil production and price, several outbreaks of pipeline vandalism resulting from unresolved agitations in the Niger Delta negatively impact daily production output of oil and gas in Nigeria.

The petroleum industry in Nigeria is the largest on the African continent. As of 2014, Nigeria's petroleum industry contributes about 14% to its economy (CNBC Africa, 2015). Therefore, though the petroleum sector is important, it remains germane that the overall economy is diversified.

As of 2000, oil and gas exports accounted for more than 98% of export earnings and about 83% of federal government revenue, as well as generating more than 14% of its GDP. It also provides 95% of foreign exchange earnings, and about 65% of government budgetary revenues.

Nigeria's proven oil reserves are estimated by the United States Energy Information Administration (EIA) at between 16 and 22 billion barrels ($3.5 \times 10^9 \text{ m}^3$), but other sources claim there could be as much as 35.3 billion barrels ($5.61 \times 10^9 \text{ m}^3$). Its reserves make Nigeria the tenth most petroleum-rich nation, and by the far the most affluent in Africa. In mid-2001 its crude oil production was averaging around 2.2 million barrels (350,000 m^3) per day. It is expected that the industry will continue to be profitable based on an average benchmark oil price of \$85-\$90 per barrel (see http://www.oilandgascouncil.com/expert_insight_articles/review-nigeria-oil-gas-industry).

The reason for Nigeria's relative unproductivity is primarily OPEC regulations on production which regulate prices on the international market. More recently, production has been disrupted intermittently by the protests of the Niger Delta's inhabitants, who feel they are being exploited.

As of 2010, Nigeria provided about 10% of overall U.S. oil imports and ranked as the fifth-largest source for oil imports in the U.S. However, Nigeria ceased exports to the US in July, 2014 because of the impact of shale production in America (ThisDayLive.com).

Alternative Sources for Diversification in Nigeria

Nigeria is blessed with abundant natural resources other than oil and gas. This country has large acres of fertile farm lands lying fallow which can be turned in wealth generating alternative source for Nigeria. In the agricultural sector for instance, diversification could be encouraged through sincere soft loans as well as provision a favourable policy to enable farmers to compete favourably. Besides, there is the urgent need to start processing primary agricultural commodities into intermediate and finished products, with considerable value-added. This process is expected to fetch higher export earnings with such commodities as cocoa, cotton, palm produce, rubber, etc.

Also, export diversification into non-traditional agricultural commodities can become a veritable source of foreign exchange earnings. This may include exportation of cut flowers, fruits, vegetables, herbs and several sea foods. These agricultural commodities have a high dynamic potential because of their high unit value and high elasticity demand. Therefore, successful diversification into such products generally requires introduction of new technologies. If these are put in place, positive linkages may be created with domestic industry in food, beverages and tobacco sector which are likely to spur export orientation, as well as the emergence of domestic firms processing agricultural commodities that may eventually become large enough to compete in international markets (UNCTAD, 1998).

Despite agriculture's crucial position in the national economy, it has remained below its production potential, particularly in the past three decades. This negative trend is reflected in the under-capitalization, which accounts for its lack of competitiveness in the global markets. However, this unenviable position can be reversed by injecting additional resources into the agricultural sector from the windfall earnings that accrue to the petroleum industry from time to time. More resources from the oil industry should be used to boost agricultural development, targeting small-scale farmers, who are responsible for the bulk of the nation's staple foods and export crops. New resources for the nation's agricultural sector can be tailored to

assist small-scale farmers and their organisations. Waiting until being overtaken by the realities steering on our face will be disastrous.

Beyond the agricultural sector is the solid mineral sector which can also contribute significantly to the economy. It is rather unfortunate that the national cake accruable from the oil and gas sector have blinded the vista of the nation's economy drivers to the extent that the potential lucrative markets hidden underground many of our states across the federation are yet to be exploited. Such solid mineral deposits in Nigeria include:

Talc

Over 40 million tonnes deposits of talc have been identified in Niger, Osun, Kogi, Ogun and Kaduna states. The Raw Materials Research and Development Council (RMRDC)'s 3,000 tonnes per annum catalytic plant is the only talc plant in the country. The talc industry represents one of the most versatile sectors of the industrial minerals of the world. The exploitation of the vast deposits would therefore satisfy local demand and that for export.

Gypsum

Gypsum is an important input for the production of cement. It is also used for the production of Plaster of Paris (P.O.P) and classroom chinks. A strategy for large-scale mining of gypsum used in the cement industries is urgently required to sustain the existing plants and meet the future expansion. Currently, cement production is put at 8 million tonnes per annum while the national requirement is 9.6 million tonnes. About one billion tonnes of gypsum deposits are spread over many states in Nigeria.

Iron Ore

There are over 3 billion metric tonnes of iron ore in deposits found in Kogi, Enugu and Niger States as well as the Federal Capital Territory. Iron Ore is being mined at Itakpe in Kogi State and is already being beneficiated, up to 67 per cent of iron. The Aladja and Ajaokuta Steel complexes are ready for consumers of billets and other iron products for down-stream industries.

Lead/Zinc

An estimated 10 million tonnes of lead/zinc veins are spread over eight states of Nigeria. Proven reserves in three prospects in the east-central area are 5 million tonnes. Joint venture partners are encouraged to develop and exploit the various lead/zinc deposits all over the country.

Bentonite and Baryte

These are the main constituents of the mud used in the drilling of all types of oil wells. The Nigerian baryte has specific gravity of about 4.3. Over 7.5 million tonnes of baryte have been identified in Taraba and Bauchi States. Large bentonite reserves of 700 million tonnes are available in many states of the federation ready for massive development and exploitation.

Gold

There are proven reserves of both alluvial and primary gold in the schist belt of Nigeria located in the south-western part of the country. The deposits are mainly alluvial and are currently being exploited on a small scale. Private investors are invited to stake concessions on these primary deposits.

Bitumen

The occurrence of bitumen deposits in Nigeria is indicated at about 42 billion tonnes; almost twice the amount of existing reserves of crude petroleum. Analytical results suggest that this potential resource can be used directly as an asphalt binder. Most bitumen used for road construction in Nigeria is currently imported.

Coal

Nigerian coal is one of the most bituminous in the world owing to its low sulphur and ash content and therefore the most environment-friendly. There are nearly 3 billion tonnes of indicated reserves in 17 identified coal fields and over 600 million tonnes of proven reserves.

Rock Salt

The national annual demand for table salt, caustic soda, chlorine, sodium bicarbonate, sodium hydrochloric acid and hydrogen peroxide exceeds one million tonnes. A colossal amount of money is expended annually to import these chemicals by chemical and processing companies including tanneries and those in food and beverages, paper and pulp, bottling and oil sector. There are salt springs at Awe (Plateau State), Abakaliki and Uburu (Ebonyi State), while rock salt is available in Benue State. A total reserve of 1.5 million tonnes has been indicated, and further investigations are now being carried out by Government.

Gemstones

Gemstones mining has boomed in various parts of Plateau, Kaduna and Bauchi states for years. Some of these gemstones include sapphire, ruby, aquamarine, emerald, tourmaline, topaz, garnet, amethyst, zircon, and flourspar which are among the world's best. Good prospects exist in this area for viable investments.

Kaolin

An estimated reserve of 3 billion tonnes of good kaolinitic clay has been identified in many localities in Nigeria (see <https://nigeriahcottawa.ca/other-services/nigeria-solid-minerals>).

Conclusion

During Nigeria's independence in 1960, agriculture as was stated earlier was the mainstay of the nation's economy, this sector provided food to feed the population and fetching the bulk of the nation's foreign exchange earnings. However, the emergence of crude oil has since changed the nation's economic contour by neglecting agriculture in favour of the crude oil. In order to enhance the nation's economic growth, it is necessary to diversify the economy into non-traditional exports. Thereby reducing vulnerability to price instability associated with the crude oil market fragilities.

With dark clouds of an imminent economic downturn gathering and not many visible silver linings, the Nigerian economy seems to be faced with looming dire times ahead than is currently

facing. Worse still, there seems to be no end in sight to the COVID-19 pandemic, with rising cases globally and no proven vaccine yet. Even if there is one tomorrow, what of another outbreak that may be more severe than what we are experiencing in the now. This was one of the questions that gave rise to this paper and it is believed that opinion leaders and policy drivers of this amiable country will heed to this clarion call to diversify the economy now in order to save our generation and much importantly the future generation who may be here when oil may makes little or no sense.

This researcher set out to among others identify the challenges posed to a mono economic nation, especially, where the economy is heavily dependent on oil and gas that its future is shaky. A number of questions were raised and addressed in the body of the paper. The paper observed that for too long, Nigeria has depended on the export of oil for more than 95% of her foreign exchange earnings. The researcher is of the view that for the country to soar beyond this daunting challenge, there is a need to aggressively pursue policies aimed at achieving diversification, in order to shift her heavy reliance on oil. The Nigerian policy makers and policy drivers have for too long ignored this need and the researcher is of the view that the realities of not just the Covid-19 but of the fact that emphasis are drifting from oil to alternative cleaner sources of energy would propel the leadership of the country to actions necessary for economic diversification.

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