MPRI-JHLAR | INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES, LITERATURE AND ART RESEARCH
VOL. 02 NO. 1 OCT-2023 ISSN: 1116 - 2619

STRATEGIES APPLIED BY THE GOVERNMENT TO MITIGATE THE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON NIGERIA'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

AMMIE UCHE EGBUFOAMA; EUGENE T. ALIEGBA, Ph.D; & LUKA RUTH CALEB, Ph.D
Department of Political Science, Nasarawa State University, Keffi

Abstract

The unprecedented pandemic and the jostle to curtail its spread created major disruptions in the nation's economy. One major challenge was starvation because the Federal and states Government ordered a compulsory lockdown of most economic and social activities in order to mitigate the spread of the dreaded virus. In the light of that, people were restricted assessing their normal means of livelihood, which posed enormous challenge to the satisfaction of their basic needs. The study examines the strategies applied by the government to mitigate effects of Covid-19 pandemic on Nigeria's economic development. System theory was employed as theoretical framework. Both primary and secondary data were used. Primary data involved obtaining information by means of interview and questionnaire. On the other hand, secondary data involves the collection and examination of available data of relevance via textbooks, journals and periodicals, reports and internet. The study revealed that Nigeria government implements specific safety measures such as lockdowns, self-isolation or quarantine and social distancing. Evidence shows that these measures, especially the lockdown order, exacerbate crises that hurt household food security. Evidence indicates that lockdowns reduced not only the purchasing power of some households, but also led to loss of income sources and all other economic activities. This by implication lead to hunger, skipping of food and food shortage at the household level and the economy of the country in general. The study also revealed that the challenges confronted by Nigeria government in combating Covid-19 pandemic hamper the development of Nigeria's economic development. The study recommended that there is a need for policy makers to begin to recognize that health is wealth and thus give the health sector the attention that it deserves through adequate budgetary allocation and monitoring to ensure that adequate facilities and equipment are provided to ensure that the health system is up and doing.

Keywords: Strategies, Government, Effects, Covid-19, Pandemic, Economic and Development.

Introduction

COVID-19 is a disease that assumed a pandemic status on 11 March 2020 (WHO, 2020). The pandemic since its outbreak in Wuhan, China, had severely threatened human existence. It is a virus that knows no border or person, nor does it discriminate based on nationality. It affects all humans, countries and economies – a confirmation of globalization and its discontents. Since the outbreak of COVID-19 life has not been the same, it has affected all spheres of life, including the feeding life of people. It has effects on economy, health, society, politics and humanity in the public domain, but how it affects people's feeding (eating) habits and household food security is sparsely.

Shereen, Khan, Kazmi, Bashir, Siddique (2020) asserted that in Nigeria, the Corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic initially witnessed skepticism, disbelief and panic among the populace but now, it is more of pandemic fatigue

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

as many people have since relaxed on the precautionary measures of containing the spread of the virus. For some, especially, those in the informal sector, the conspiracy theories circulated on social media and other unauthorized platforms are the reasons for the doubt in the existence of the virus. On daily basis, the NCDC publishes figures for COVID-19 confirmed cases, as well as the number of patients discharged. Initially, a closer look at the comments under the daily tweet during the early days of the pandemic showed many Twitter users made fun of the information and described the figures generated by the NCDC as estimates.

While the whole world fought to mitigate the crucial stress of COVID-19, Nigerians are not an exception because they equally are facing drowning condition at every sector of their life. In the initial stage of lockdown after the first Corona case identification on 8 March 2020 by IEDCR (2020) industrial factories, offices and healthcare facilities in both public and private sectors got shut down and eventually their functionality got disrupted. The livelihood of workers in the formal economy was greatly impacted, so there can be no question if the informal sector with about 50 million workers were hit even harder.

Between meetings, working groups met regularly to advance three work areas: epidemiological modelling and projections, health systems issues, and social and economic aspects of the response. A range of epidemiological and health systems data were provided from NCDC and other Nigerian government agencies; geospatial data and data on population mobility, food security and wages were also made available to the group. First, the modelling working group, used the data to parametrise a range of deterministic, agent-based and stochastic models to provide short- term projections on the course of the epidemic at national and state level (including expected incidence, illnesses requiring hospitalisation, and intensive care unit requirements and deaths), beginning when states hit the threshold of 100 cases (Shereen, Khan, Kazmi, Bashir, Siddique, 2020).

The models were used to compare different scenarios with respect to extending national and community lockdowns, testing and isolation strategies, imposing or lifting travel restrictions, opening borders and a variety of other non- pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs). Second, on a parallel track, the health systems working group studied the same questions from the perspective of the impact on health systems, with the goal of maintaining health services to the greatest extent possible. Finally, the socioeconomic working group looked at the wider societal impact of the disease, and particularly of response measures such as lockdowns and bans on mass gatherings, using survey data on how these measures affected living standards, small businesses and entrepreneurs, and learnings from other countries around the world. It is against this background that this study attempted to examine the strategies applied by the government to mitigate effects of Covid-19 pandemic on Nigeria's economic development.

Statement of the Problem

The unprecedented pandemic and the jostle to curtail its spread created major disruptions in the nation's economy. One major challenge was starvation because the Federal and states Government ordered a compulsory lockdown of most economic and social activities in order to mitigate the spread of the dreaded virus. In the light of that, people were restricted assessing their normal means of livelihood, which posed enormous challenge to the satisfaction of their basic needs. For instance, the outbreak of COVID-19 resulted in the shutdown of the major airlines in Nigeria with an estimated loss of US $434million and job loss of about 22,200 (Olarinde and Amzat, 2021). As of the last quarter of 2019, the year-on-year headline inflation rose to 12.20% in February 2020 from 12.13% in the previous month (Olarinde and Amzat, 2021). The increase could be attributed to COVID-19-related shocks to food prices and the increasing rate of insurgency in the majority of food-producing areas.

Efforts to alleviate various multiplier effects of the containment measures, firms both in the formal and informal sectors, institutions and customer decisions, the government introduced different economic stimulus to cushion the effect of COVID-19 on both the household and firms. The palliative measure has affected government fiscal and monetary policies. Concerning fiscal policies, the sum of ₦20,000 (US $50) has been distributed to several vulnerable individuals in the country as social security. In contrast, taxes and customs duties have to be waived for some firms. The provision of palliatives further increases government

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

financial burden, thereby seeking the parliament's approval of ₦500billion (US $1.25billion) intervention funds to be sourced from expected grants and loans from multilateral institutions (including International Monetary Funds, African Development Bank among others). For instance, the African Development Bank launched COVID-19 Social Bond aimed at reducing the severe economic and social impact of the pandemic on its regional members. The bond is worth US $3billion is to be accessed at an interest of 0.75%. It is worthy to note that this huge fund could have been used to develop much-needed infrastructures that could help in reducing the cost of doing business, encourages investment and promotes the growth of the real sector. Therefore, the problem this study attempted to address is the impact of the strategies applied by the government to mitigate effects of Covid-19 pandemic on Nigeria's economic development. The indices of economic development this study focused on is the level of unemployment and poverty.

Research Questions

This research is guided by the following research questions:

i. What is the impact of the strategies applied by the government to mitigate effects of Covid-19 pandemic on Nigeria's economic development?
ii. What are the challenges facing Nigeria's government in overcoming Covid-19 pandemic for the development of Nigeria's economy?

Objectives of the Study

i. To examine the impact of the strategies applied by the government to mitigate effects of Covid-19 pandemic on Nigeria's economic development;
ii. To analyze the challenges facing Nigeria's government in overcoming Covid-19 pandemic for the development of Nigeria's economy.

Conceptual Framework

Concept of Covid-19 Pandemic

Nadeem (2020) identifies COVID-19 pandemic as devastative fast spreading hazard and to human existence. The writer concurred with the submission of other scholars who have argued that Wuhan in China was where coronavirus originated. The author argues that with rapidity by which the epidemic was going transversely around the globe, the human existence is threatened. Ozili (2020) asserts that corona virus is a group of virus belonging to the family of Corona viridae, which infect both animals and humans. Human corona virus can cause mild disease similar to a common cold, while others cause more severe disease (such as MERS - Middle East Respiratory Syndrome and SARS – Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome). A new corona virus that previously has not been identified in humans emerged in Wuhan, China in December 2019.

Ozili (2020) further argues that signs and symptoms include respiratory symptoms and include fever, cough and shortness of breath. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute respiratory syndrome and sometimes death. Standard recommendations to prevent the spread of COVID-19 include frequent cleaning of hands using alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water; covering the nose and mouth with a flexed elbow or disposable tissue when coughing and sneezing; and avoiding close contact with anyone that has a fever and cough.

Economic Development

Economic Development can be referred to as efforts that seek to improve the economic well-being and quality of life for a community by creating and/or retaining jobs and supporting or growing incomes and the tax base (Salmon, 2011). The scope of economic development includes the process and policies by which a nation improves the economic, political and social well-being of its people (O'Sullivan and Sheffrin, 2003). The goals of economic development policies are to seek economic growth through higher productivity, establishing political systems that represent the preferences of its citizens as accurately as possible, extension of rights to all social groups, creating opportunities for institutions/organizations to function properly, such

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

that they will be capable of handling complex technical and logistic tasks. These tasks involve raising revenues through taxes and utilizing it to provide public service (Daron & James, 2012).

Economic development differs from social development in that it involves the improvement of the capacities of economic actors in a state (Feldman, Hadjimichael, Kemeny and Lanahan, 2014). Therefore, economic development can be defined as the improvement of the economic capacities of individuals, firms and industries which ultimately contributes to the overall development of a state. In the opinion of Deaton (2010) economic development is signified by an upward numerical increase in the saving and investing capacity of a state. Jointly, the term socio-economic development means that events of social significance within a state are not without economic implications.

Empirical Review of Related Literature

Yunusa, Esomchi, Ezeogueri-Oyewole, Samuel, Egwemi and Isiaka (2020) examined the socio-economic effects of the lockdown policy on business, transport and service/hospitality industries in three selected metropolis from three states within the period of relaxation. Using the multistage sampling method, 300 respondents were selected across the three sector examined. Data obtained via structured questionnaires was analyzed using inferential statistics. This includes Multiple Regression Analysis, Coefficient for correlations of independent sample and analysis of variance (ANOVA) for significant impact samples. The findings revealed that the increasing number of lockdown days, interstate travel ban, social distancing, and restriction to essentials services severely affected the level of economic activities within the period under review. In contrast, CPL PSL RSM had negative relationship but significant impact in the model, while BSK and ITR negative non-significant impact in the models due to imposed restriction on internal movement, while the rest variables had positive significant effect on the level of economic activities. However, the conclusion of the study was not specific of the impact of the strategies applied by the government to mitigate effects of Covid-19 pandemic on Nigeria's economic development, hence this study.

Hayatuddin, Ahmed, Muhammad, Umar and Bashir (2020) gave an empirical analysis on COVID-19: lockdown impact on Nigerian economy. The study considered four regions in Nigeria (Northwest, North-Central, South-South and Southeast) and adopted a quantitative research approach which entails systematic evaluation of individuals' behavior towards an unprecedented economic shock and their response to the manner in which the situation might unfolds by lifting the lockdown measure in Nigeria. This was achievable with a systematic random sample and a well-structured survey questionnaire. All these regions experienced the imposition of lockdown measure by their respective state authorities.

The results indicated that most socio-economic challenges including job loss, increase social vices, rise in poverty level, fall in economic activities, as well as fall in the level of GDP faced by individuals was not a resultant of the lockdown. Consequently, authority's inefficiency was also challenged in spite of their efforts to mitigate and control the emerging economic consequences faced by households during the lockdown periods. The study recommended that lifting of lockdown would be the best action for the government to take for socio-economic resilience. The study also revealed that both public and individuals need to establish democratic preferences, and trust on health professionals or experts. Further to this, government should decide on effective measures needed to contain the continuous spread of the virus especially through development of research based and healthcare institutions. However, the study did not identify the impact of the strategies applied by the government to mitigate effects of Covid-19 pandemic on Nigeria's economic development.

Eneji, Ajor, Eneyo and Acha (2021) assessed the socioeconomic effects of COVID-19 pandemic on small and medium scale business enterprises' sustainability, with focus on Nigerian youths. Three research questions were raised and a null hypothesis was formulated to guide the study. The survey inferential research design was adopted, the study population are the Nigerian youths engaged in small and medium scale business enterprises across the 36 states of Nigeria. Using the multistage random sampling and accidental/purposeful techniques, a sample of 6000 respondents were selected for the study. Data was analyzed using simple percentage and Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis to test the null hypothesis. The result shows

that 25 small and medium scale business enterprises were categorized and used for the study, out of the 6000 respondents used for the study, 3791 respondents (63.2%) were males, while 2209 (36.8%) were female entrepreneurs.

The result further identified 14 ways the COVID-19 pandemic affected the socioeconomic activities of small and medium scale business enterprises among the youths. The result of the correlation analysis yielded a calculated r-value of 0.688 and a table value of 0.176 at 0.05 significance level and a degree of freedom of 5998, indicating that COVID-19 pandemic has significant effects on SMEs' sustainability in Nigeria. Based on this, it was concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic has caused very severe significant effects on small and medium scale business enterprises, the major players in this sector are the youths, hence COVID-19 pandemic has dealt a devastating effect on SMEs. It was therefore recommended among others that there should be the strict observation of all preventive control protocols as prescribed by the agencies concerned in Nigeria and world over. It was further recommended that government and other agencies can make palliative capitals as soft loans for those whose businesses were badly affected to start all over again or continue from where they stopped. The impact of the strategies applied by the government to mitigate effects of Covid-19 pandemic on Nigeria's economic development was not discussed.

Theoretical Framework

The study utilized system theory propounded by Easton (1953). The political system is conceived by Easton as a system of behaviour, or a set of interrelated activities, whereby values are authoritatively allocated for a society. The term 'allocation' covers both the distribution of scarce (tangible) values and the choice between mutually incompatible (intangible) values. It is when such allocations are made *authoritatively* (as opposed to *freely or voluntarily,* as in the case of economic exchange) that the process of allocation acquires a political character; allocations are 'authoritative' whenever the persons in relation to whom they are made consider themselves to be bound to accept them. In the process of the allocating the societal values, Easton opine that there is environment, feedback, input, output and the political system itself.

The fight against COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria is better explained with the input-output system theory espoused by Easton (1965). This theory holds the view that the political system, which is the basic unit of analysis, is a system of interactions in any society through which binding and authoritative allocations of values are implemented (Oke 2020). For instance, a Nigerian system is a political system that takes or makes binding decisions including orders that are implemented and obeyed within the Nigerian society. The political system, which literally means the Nigerian system, through the input segment receives or takes demand and support from the environment (Okaisabor, 2021).

It is imperative to note that every environment, including the Nigerians, makes demand on the political system (Yagboyaju & Akinola, 2019). For instance, for the case at hand, people within the Nigerian environment continually face COVID-19 threats (death, fear, spread of infections, sickness, etc.). Subsequently, this threat makes them (Nigerians) place a demand on the government seeking for an end to the spread of the virus within the environment (Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), 2020). The government, a key actor of the political system, receives and normally treats the demand fed into the system as a problem requiring an action or response, which is usually in the form of policy or order at the output segment – a problem requiring action or response.

The Nigerian people have continually made demand on the political system by reporting it as a problem affecting them in their environment (Akinola, 2011). For instance, through the National Centre for Diseases and Control (NCDC) many Nigerians have reported cases of suspected COVID-19 as a problem, while others have willingly presented themselves for a test and self-isolate or quarantine (NCDC, 2020). The Nigerian government having received the problem through different channels (such as phone calls, self-reporting, state government, NCDC officials, etc.) engages all stakeholders (members of COVID-19 Presidential Task Force, Director of NCDC, Minister of Health, Finance, Humanitarian services, Information and others). The essence is to review, discuss and harmonise views, experiences and interventions to address the threats posed by the virus. This is in a bid that more lives will be saved and the spread of the virus will be curtailed

(Ozili, 2020). The foregoing stage represents the 'conversion box'. This is the stage where problems are worked on to arrive at possible outcomes or decisions or policy that would largely help to address the problem fed into the system through the input stage. For instance, at the conversion box, the COVID-19 problem is being discussed on a daily basis by the Nigerian political system through the Presidential Task Force, which provides updates on the pandemic in Nigeria (Presidential Task Force (PTF), 2020).

The third segment, which is the output, is the response or action taken to control coronavirus in Nigeria. These include lockdown, social distancing and distribution of palliatives. The feedback segment is the segment mainly used by the people to establish how successful is the action and/or response taken to address the problem. Available evidence from observations showed mixed reactions or feedbacks. For instance, while, on one hand, the lockdown has slowed down the spread of the virus and this has made many Nigerians to support government's lockdown order, report cases of suspected carriers of the virus raise alarm against activities of thugs in the neighbourhood (Okaisabor, 2021). On the other hand, it has pushed more Nigerians into hunger, violence and psychological disorder. This has been the bane for protests and armed robbery in some parts of the country, especially in Lagos State.

Methodology

The research design adopted in this study is descriptive research design, because of the type of data required in the study. The use of descriptive research design in this study involved data collection and data analysis on the strategies applied by the government to mitigate effects of Covid-19 pandemic on Nigeria's economic development. The study population for this study comprises the staff of Nigerian Center for Disease Control (NCDC), Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) Abuja, Federal Ministry of Trade and Investments, Abuja, Nigeria Export Promotion Council, Abuja, Abuja Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS). The foregoing organisations are selected because the population units are directly involved in issue relating to the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on unemployment in Nigeria. Therefore, the target population of this study stand at one thousand, five hundred and thirty - eight (1,538) persons. The sample size was determined using Rakesh (1970) statistical formula to arrive at 400.

This study adopted purposive sampling technique for interview. The technique allowed the researcher to choose the sample on the basis of some predetermined characteristics such as deep knowledge of the issue under study, while for the distribution of questionnaire, simple random technique was employed. The research explores data from both primary and secondary sources, and these include the use of questionnaire, interview, daily news paper and Journals to elicit information relevant to the study. The study used 5-point Likert scale questionnaire for its investigation making provisions to tick options that are relevant to their opinion. These options are Strongly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree, Disagree and Undecided. This open-ended questionnaire technique allowed respondents to express his/her opinion on issues in relation to the research problem. Interview method of data collection has many variants, but the study adopted in-depth interview method because it permits the researcher in generating data from only those with expert knowledge on issues relating to impact of Covid-19 pandemic on unemployment in Nigeria.

Data from copies of questionnaire was analyzed using the statistical package for social science (SPSS) version 23.0. As a descriptive statistical tool, it was used to analyze the socio-demographic factors of respondents and responses on the research questions. Data from in-depth interview was analyzed base on content analysis. Four hundred (400) copies of questionnaire were distributed to the respondents of which three hundred and eighty-one (381) copies of questionnaire were duly completed and returned.

Data Analysis and Interpretation of Results

Table 1: Strategies Applied by the Government to Mitigate Effects of Covid-19 Pandemic on Nigeria's Economy

Options	Frequency	Percentage
Lockdowns & wearing of face masks	72	19
Quarantine & social distancing measures	61	16
Distribution of palliatives	44	11

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

Testing, Isolation Centre Set Up and Support	55	14
Border and travel restrictions	48	13
Using monetary and fiscal policy measures	41	11
All of the above	60	16
Total	**381**	**100**

Source: Field Survey (January, 2023).

Table 1 shows responses on the strategies applied by the government to mitigate effects of Covid-19 pandemic on Nigeria's economy. Data supplied by the respondents reveals that 72 respondents representing 19% indicated lockdowns & wearing of face masks, 61 respondents representing 16% indicated quarantine & social distancing measures, 55 respondents representing 14% ticked Testing, Isolation Centre Set Up and Support, 48 respondents representing 13% indicated Border and travel restrictions, while 41 respondents representing 11% indicated Using monetary and fiscal policy measures. However, 60 respondents representing 16% indicated all of the above.

A senior staff of the Nigerian Center for Disease Control (NCDC) noted in an interview that National responses to the COVID-19 pandemic have varied considerably. In Nigeria as elsewhere, policymakers made consequential decisions in a rapidly evolving and imperfect informational environment. Nigeria was at risk for an early epidemic given its air links with Europe and China, which raised the likelihood of multiple introductions. Furthermore, Nigeria faced a potentially catastrophic outbreak due the confluence of its high population density in major cities, particularly in urban slums and often poorly ventilated offices, as well as the high prevalence of infectious diseases and poor health infrastructure, conditions that hold in a number of other sub- Saharan African countries.

Going further, he revealed that on 26 January, Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) established a national emergency response system with multiple work streams and close liaison with state- level centres. The first case of COVID-19 in Nigeria was declared on 27 February 2020 in Ogun State. A Presidential Taskforce (PTF) on COVID-19 was inaugurated on 17 March to lead high- level policy decisions based on a Multi-sectoral Response Plan, with membership from a variety of ministries and agencies including health, finance, disaster management, aviation and foreign affairs. These policymakers initiated a process to gather, evaluate and synthesize evidence from the medical and social sciences by bringing together a group of stakeholders with academic, health policy and service expertise including epidemiologists, modellers, public health experts, social scientists and implementation partners. This group, called the PTF Advisory Group or 'Tuesday Evening Group' for its weekly virtual meetings, operated with the participation and leadership of government agencies including NCDC (which led the public health response), the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), the National Institute for Medical Research and the Federal Ministry of Health, and collaborated to provide briefing papers responding to specific policy questions raised by the PTF.

A respondent from Nigeria Export Promotion Council, Abuja explained the weakness of the measures adopted by the government in curbing the spread and effects of the virus:

> The coronavirus disease 2019 lockdown limits the daily earnings of some households, especially those who are on daily income business, job or trade. Limitation in income is a potential source of inability to access food. Accessibility is a key component of food security, and a reduction in the purchasing power of households is a big threat to household food security. The coronavirus disease 2019 lockdowns had been observed and found to be a contributory factor to low disposable household income, especially by households on self-employed jobs, and the poor in government offices (low-rank officials).

The foregoing scientific observation is consistent with the prediction of Onyekwena and Ekeruche (2020) that COVID-19 will lead to low household consumption caused by low-income earnings of households on contract

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

or short-term jobs. Available evidence shows that with the absence of government palliatives, the majority of households find it very difficult to purchase food within the first 2 weeks of lockdown.

Another participant who is an official of the Federal Ministry of Trade discussed that: The COVID-19 lockdown limits the ability of households to consume nutritious food. It limits consumption expenditure. Many households have to settle down for the purchase of very cheap and low-nutrient foods because the lockdown had severely affected their income earnings; it has led to disruption in nutrition, food aid, school feeding, safety net or social protection and Early Childhood Development services, with high impacts on the vulnerable group. Movement restrictions have not only reduced the consumption of non-essential commodities in general, but also affected the income-generating capacity of these groups, thus reducing their consumption and restrict people's access to sufficient or diverse nutritious sources of food.

The respondent from the Ministry of Trade and Finance further posited that:

> The negative coping strategies such as skipping of food, eating very late, engaging in debt and transactional sex are known crises associated with COVID-19 lockdown. Skipping of food and eating very late are popular strategies adopted by most vulnerable households who do not have enough money to buy food. The poor vulnerable households are the worse hit by COVID-19 pandemic. It is an established and proven fact that most vulnerable households engage in transactional sex and debt to buy food, which is ongoing in many African states and will continue as long as lockdowns are there. Unless meaningful palliative measures are in place, both girls and housewives who have turned to be breadwinners will exchange sex for financial reward so as to put food on tables. The long-term effects of this are unwanted children and further spread of HIV and AIDS in the country that is economically battling for its soul in the world of drastic drop in the global price of crude oil, which is the main source of foreign exchange in Nigeria.

The above is in consistent with the report of Adedayo (2020), in cable lifestyle, who reveals how a popular musician in Nigeria, Don Jazzy, gave the sum of N100 0001 to an elderly woman who openly begged to offer her body to anyone for sex at a cost of five hundred naira (N500) in a bid to buy food to eat and feed her kids.

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, the monetary authority, the Central bank, said it would provide support to affected households, businesses, regulated financial institutions and other stakeholders to reduce the adverse economic impact of the COVID-19 outbreak. The central bank provided support in six ways. One, it granted extension of loan moratorium on principal repayments from March 1, 2020. This meant that any intervention loan currently under moratorium would be extended by one year.

Two, it offered interest rate reduction on all intervention loan facilities from 9% to 5% beginning from March 1, 2020. Three, it offered a NGN50bn (US$131.6m) targeted credit facility to hotels, airline service providers, health care merchants, among others. Four, it provided credit support to the healthcare industry to meet the increasing demand for healthcare services during the outbreak. The loan was available only to pharmaceutical companies and hospitals. Five, it provided regulatory forbearance to banks which allowed banks to temporarily restructure the tenor of existing loan within a specific time period particularly loans to the oil and gas, agricultural and manufacturing sectors. Six, it strengthened the loan to deposit ratio (LDR) policy which allowed banks to extend more credit to the economy. On the other hand, the fiscal authorities had to review and revise the 2020 national budget of N10.59 trillion (US$28 billion). The government announced that the budget was reduced by NGN1.5 trillion ($4.90 billion) as part of the measures to respond to the impact of corona-virus on the economy and in response to the oil price crash. The new budget was benchmarked at US$30 per barrel from US$57 per barrel in the previous budget (Ozili, 2020).

A participant from Nigeria Bureau of Statistics (NBS) noted that concerning the health sector, the federal government released contingency funds of N984million ($2.7million) to Nigeria's Centre of Disease Control, and an additional N6.5billion ($18million) was distributed for purchasing more testing kits, opening isolation centres and training medical personnel. A Grant of N10billion ($28million) was also released to the Lagos

state. The federal government also urged state governments to set up isolation facilities to have at least 300 beds space in their localities. Preferably, these facilities should be linked to existing infections disease centres or medical centres. Also, the federal government adopted a revised budget for 2020 in response to the COVID-19 shock. About N500billion COVID-19 intervention fund was included in the revised budget to channel resources to additional health-related current and capital spending (test, supplies, and facilities) and public works programs to support the incomes of the vulnerable. The government also activated Ambulance service to move patients to treatment centres (Okwumbu, 2020).

However, as a way of cushioning the effect of the lockdown, the Nigerian government introduced and rolled out several palliative measures to combat both an economic crisis and health emergency occasioned by the COVID-19 pandemic. This included granting a three month repayment moratorium for all government-funded loans. The moratorium covered the Government Enterprise and Empowerment Program (GEEP) initiatives and schemes of the federal government, such as Tradermoni, Marketmoni, Farmermoni, and all loans issued through the Bank of Industry, Bank of Agriculture, and the Nigeria Export-Import Bank (Okwumbu, 2020).

Estimates indicate that around 20 percent of COVID-19 cases require hospitalization. In total there are 330 ICU facilities in the country, including 30 in Lagos. Nigeria Center for Disease Control (NCDC) had five testing centers and treatment centers designated for COVID-19. An isolation facility in Lagos was equipped with 100 beds but the capacity outside Lagos was very limited. Based on the assessment of eight treatment centers by WHO, a majority are not well equipped and the capacity to respond is particularly weak in the North.

Table 2: Challenges facing Nigeria's Government in Overcoming Covid-19 Pandemic for the Development of Nigeria's Economic Development

Challenges	Frequency	Percentage
Poor public health infrastructure	78	20
Lack of genuine social welfare program	52	14
Corruption	81	21
Lack of support from the citizens	39	10
Poor control measures	85	22
A weak and underdeveloped digital economy	46	13
Total	**381**	**100**

Source: Field Survey (January, 2023).

Table 2 reveals the challenges facing Nigeria's government in overcoming Covid-19 pandemic for the development of Nigeria's economy. Data shows that 85 respondents representing 22% pointed to poor control measures, 81 respondents representing 21% indicated corruption, 78 respondents representing 20% ticked poor public health infrastructure, 52 respondents representing 14% indicated lack of genuine social welfare program, 46 respondents representing 13% indicated a weak and underdeveloped digital economy, while 39 respondents representing 10% pointed to lack of support from the citizens. This confirmed that the challenges facing Nigeria's government in overcoming Covid-19 pandemic for the development of Nigeria's economy are multifaceted.

In an interview with an official of Nigeria Export Promotion Council, Abuja on the challenges facing Nigeria's government in overcoming Covid-19 pandemic for the development of Nigeria's economy, she explained that the challenges are being faced by everyone in society, from the government to the private sector to small and medium businesses. No one is exempted. What this tells us is that there needs to be a multifaceted approach in combating the virus. This approach must, however, go beyond health interventions. We need to consider the economic and social disruptions this virus has created and how best to deal with it. Like many other governments, a considerable amount of financial resources has been put towards responding to the pandemic. However, to make an impact, these funds must be streamlined to policies that would yield visible results and make Nigerians better. One of the most significant challenges is trying to get the public to accept

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL – AIMR
VOL. 02 NO. 1 OCT-2023 ISSN: 1116 - 2619

the guidelines and follow them strictly. While it is understandable that they need to make a living, they should also be informed about the health ramifications of defying stipulated rules. An official of the Nigerian Center for Disease Control (NCDC) revealed in an interview that:

> At the end of the day, there is always an opportunity to be tapped, even amid chaos. COVID 19 represents a chance for us to reset and revive our public health systems. This pandemic has exposed several weaknesses and dysfunctional systems that need to be remedied. Also, there is a need to improve the engagement between the public and private sector and foster collaboration in tackling important issues like this. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, most of the healthcare infrastructure in African countries had deteriorated. Currently, in Africa, 65% of health care expenses are made from out-of-pocket expenditure compared to Europe where the national and regional authorities are responsible for the health policies and expenditure of citizens. During the COVID-19 pandemic, despite the quarantine and other measures adopted to stop the spread of COVID-19 in African countries, the number of infected cases continued to increase significantly. This situation mounted unprecedented pressure on the public health systems in many African countries. Some private hospitals refused to admit infected patients while public hospitals exceeded their capacity. This pressured the government of some countries to build isolation centers in large open fields around the country; notably, football stadiums were converted to isolation centers in countries like Cameroon and Nigeria. In African countries where good health care systems exist, the government had to scale-up intensive care units and provide more resources for hospitals and healthcare systems to control the spread of coronavirus.

Abideen (2020) argued that underfunding and limited infrastructure have been a significant concern for Nigeria's healthcare system. In 2001, as per the Abuja Declaration, 13 GoN committed to dedicate to the healthcare system at least 15 per cent of its budget. However, from 2018 to 2020, the budget portion allocated to the healthcare system slightly increased from 3.9 per cent to 4.5 per cent. The COVID-19 response also faces several other challenges. The country has only about 40, 00014 doctors to provide health care for an estimated population of about 200 million. The physician-to-patient ratio15 is one doctor for 2,500 patients, compared to WHO recommended ratio of one doctor per 1,000 patients in a non-health crisis. Furthermore, there are five hospital beds available for every 10,000 people in Nigeria.

Discussion of Findings

i. The study revealed that Nigeria government implements specific safety measures such as lockdowns, self-isolation or quarantine and social distancing. Evidence shows that these measures, especially the lockdown order, exacerbate crises that hurt household food security. The corona-virus disease 2019 lockdown is a threat to all the core segments of food security (availability, accessibility, affordability, stability and utility). Finding also showed that lockdown and restriction of movement obstruct internal supply of food and domestic production (food availability). Thus, a break in the chain of internal food supply and low domestic crop production affect food availability. Similarly, the study found that COVID-19 lockdowns affect accessibility of food. Evidence discussed above indicates that lockdowns reduced not only the purchasing power of some households, but also led to loss of income source and all other economic activities. This by implication leads to hunger, skipping of food and food shortage at the household level. Therefore, research proposition one which states that lockdowns, self-isolation or quarantine and social distancing are strategies applied by the government to mitigate effects of Covid-19 pandemic on Nigeria's economic development, thereby remain valid.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

Questionnaire responses on the strategies applied by the government to mitigate effects of Covid-19 pandemic on Nigeria's economy reveals that 72 respondents representing 19% indicated lockdowns & wearing of face masks, 61 respondents representing 16% indicated quarantine & social distancing measures, 55 respondents representing 14% ticked Testing, Isolation Centre Set Up and Support, 48 respondents representing 13% indicated Border and travel restrictions, while 41 respondents representing 11% indicated Using monetary and fiscal policy measures. However, 60 respondents representing 16% indicated all of the above.

Consequently, Peterman, Potts, Megan, Thompson, Shah, Oertelt-Prigione (2020) submitted that negative coping strategies triggered by low purchasing power to get adequate food as a result of an outbreak of a pandemic can lead to acute and chronic stress, which in turn provoke conflict, arguments and violence at the household level.

This explains the rationale behind quarrels, abuses and domestic conflicts or violence between husband and wife in some households. The community is also not free of violence, triggered by households' food insecurity during the COVID-19 lockdown. Hitav, Prachi, Swara, Priya, Janvi, Priti (2020) also argued that available evidence shows that lockdown has led to psychological disturbances, ranging from suicides to depression, which has led to broken marriages and homes and stress disorders.

ii. The study also revealed that the challenges confronted by Nigeria government in combating Covid-19 pandemic hamper the development of Nigeria's economic development. Some of these challenges include limited transparency, fractured governance, with lack of coordination between multiple tiers with responsibility for implementation, political dynamics and interests hampering response in some states, bureaucratic obstacles and an overly epidemiological focus on numbers of cases and deaths, arguably to the detriment of addressing social and economic effects of response measures. Larger systemic obstacles included a complex multi-tiered health system, fragmented decision- making structures and limited funding for implementation.

Finding also shows that the failings in Nigeria's public health sector made it difficult for Nigeria to cope with the fast spread of COVID-19 disease during the outbreak. This is supported by data from questionnaire which reveals the challenges facing Nigeria's government in overcoming Covid-19 pandemic for the development of Nigeria's economy with 85 respondents representing 22% pointing to poor control measures, 81 respondents representing 21% indicated corruption, 78 respondents representing 20% ticked poor public health infrastructure, 52 respondents representing 14% indicated lack of genuine social welfare program, 46 respondents representing 13% indicated a weak and underdeveloped digital economy, while 39 respondents representing 10% pointed to lack of support from the citizens. This confirmed that poor public health infrastructure and poor control measures are challenges confronted by Nigeria government in combating Covid-19 pandemic for the development of Nigeria's economy. Ezeibe, IloEzeibe, Oguonu, Nwankwo, Ajaero (2020) specifically noted that the distrust of government policies and actions contributes to the spread of the virus.

Conclusion

Governments across the world including Nigeria took strict measures to curtail infection rates, to protect the functioning of healthcare systems and the most vulnerable members of society. These measures, consisting of quarantines and closure of physical shops and businesses, were essential for abating the spread of the corona-virus. However, they had a pronounced immediate impact on the level of economic activity in certain sectors, as they lock down large parts of the economy.

The economic consequences reach far beyond the immediate impact, for example: higher unemployment and reduction in wages lower economy-wide demand, increased uncertainty defers investments from households and businesses and otherwise healthy companies go bankrupt, reducing production capacity. These effects

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Prof. S. T. Addo [GHANA]

become more pronounced over time. In addition, a prolonged lockdown period increases the risk of a massive scale-up of governmental and corporate debt, building up fundamental financial imbalances that could prolong the recovery period. However, COVID -19 presents an opportunity for us to reset our health systems and also improve the engagement between the public and private sector in a lot of our critical areas and infrastructure.

Recommendations

i. There is a need for policy makers to begin to recognize that health is wealth and thus give the health sector the attention that it deserves through adequate budgetary allocation and monitoring to ensure that adequate facilities and equipment are provided to ensure that the health system is up and doing.

ii. Nigeria should strengthen the integration of the national response within existing health decision bodies and implement strategies to mitigate the social and economic impact, particularly on the poorest Nigerians.

References

Abideen, S.O. (2020). Coronavirus (COVID-19) and the Survival of Small and Medium Enterprises in Abeokuta, Ogun State Nigeria: *Scholars Journal of Economics, Bus Management*, 07(06), 209-214.

Adedayo, A.R. (2020). Don Jazzy gifts N100k to Elderly Woman who Offered Sex for N500, 11 April, viewed 24 June 2020, from https://lifestyle.thecable.ng/donjazzy-gifts-n100k-to-elderly-woman-who-offered-sex-for-n500/.

Buja, A., Paganini, M., Cocchio, S., Scioni, M., Rebba, V., & Baldo, V. (2020). 'Demographic and Socio-Economic Factors, and Healthcare Resource Indicators Associated with the Rapid Spread of Covid-19 in Northern Italy: *An Ecological Study', PLoS ONE* 15(12), e0244535. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0244535

Daron, A., and James, R. (2012). *Why Nations fail,* New York: Crown Business.

Deaton, A. (2010). Understanding the Mechanisms of Economic Development. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 24(3), pp. 3–16.

Easton, D. (1965). A Systems Analysis of Political Life, *John Wiley & Sons Inc*., New York, NY.

Eneji, C.O., Ajor J.O., Eneyo, E., and Acha, J.O. (2021). Assessment of the Socioeconomic Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Small and Medium Scale Business Enterprises: Nigerian Youths in Perspective. *Journal of World Economic Research*. Vol. 10, No. 1, 2021, pp. 18-27.

Ezeibe, C.C., Ilo, C., Ezeibe, E.N., Oguonu, C.N., Nwankwo, N.A., Ajaero, C.K. (2020).

Political Distrust and the Spread of Covid-19 in Nigeria, *Global Public Health* 15(12), 1753–1766. https://doi.org/10.1080/17441692.2020.1828987

Feldman, M., Hadjimichael, T., Kemeny, T., and Lanahan, L. (2014). *Economic Development*: A

Definition and Model for Investment. https://www.eda.gov/files/tools/research-reports/investmentdefinition-model.pdf

Hayatuddin, H.S., Ahmed, A.I., and Muhammad, B.J., Umar, M.K., and Bashir, U.S. (2020). An Empirical Analysis on COVID-19: Lockdown Impact on Nigerian Economy. *Journal of Accounting Research, Organization and Economics,* Vol. 3 (3), 2020: 206-214.

Hitav, S., Prachi, S., Swara, D., Priya, G., Janvi, S., Priti, M. (2020). 'Does Social Distancing During the Lockdown due to Covid-19 Outbreak affect Quality of Life?', *International Journal of Clinical and Biomedical Research* 6(2), 1–4. https://doi. org/10.31878/ijcbr.2020.62.01

Krejcie, R.V., & Morgan, D.W. (1970). Determining Sample Size for Research Activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30(3), 607-610.

Nadeem, S. (2020). Corona-virus COVID19: Available Free Literature Provided by Various Companies. *Journal of Ongoing Chemical Research*, 5(1), 7-13.

NCDC (2020). 1st Case of Coronavirus Disease was Confirmed in Nigeria.Nigeria Center for

Disease Control. An UMerciesf COVID-19 outbreak in Nigeria. May 11, 2020. NCDC COVID-19 Update.

Okaisabor, J.O. (2021). 'Public Policies against Covid-19 Pandemic in Nigeria: Challenges, Effects, and Perceptions', *Journal of Public Administration and Social Welfare Research* 6(1), 16–28.

Oke, O. (2020). The Impact on Nigeria of the Coronavirus Pandemic: Socioeconomic Pandemonium, *The Marxism*, viewed 01 June 2020, from https://www.marxist.com/the-impact-on-nigeria-of-the-coronavirus-pandemic-socioeconomicpandemonium.html.

Okwumbu, R. (2020). "COVID-19: FG Grants 3 Months Moratorium Repayment of all Govt. Funded Loans". *Nairametric,* March 19.

O'Sullivan, A., and Sheffrin, S.M. (2003). Economics: *Principles in Action.* Pearson Prentice

Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

Onyekwena, C., & Ekeruche, A.M. (2020). Understanding the Impact of the Covid-19 Outbreak on the Nigerian Economy, *Brookings Institute.*

Ozili, P.K. (2020). COVID-19 Pandemic and Economic Crisis: The Nigerian Experience and Structural Causes. *Electronic Journal*. 10.2139/ssrn.3567419. April, 2020.

Peterman, A., Potts, A., Megan, O., Thompson, K., Shah, N., Oertelt-Prigione, S. (2020). 'Pandemics and Violence against Women and Children', *CGD working paper 528, Center for Global Development,* Washington, DC, viewed 01 June 2020, from https://www.cgdev.org/publication/pandemics-and-violence-against-womenand-children.

Presidential Task Force (PTF), (2020). Daily Updates on Covid-19 Virus in Nigeria, viewed n.d., from http://statehouse.gov.ng/covid19/.

Salmon, I. (2011). What is Economic Development? *Salmon Valley Business & Innovation Centre.* www.svbic.com/node/24.

Shereen, M. A., Khan, S., Kazmi, A., Bashir, N., and Siddique, R. (2020). COVID-19 Infection: Origin, Transmission, and Characteristic of Human Coronaviruses. *Journal of Advanced Research*, 24, 91-98.

World Health Organisation (2020). Virtual press conference on COVID-19–11March 2020. World Health Organisation.

Yagboyaju, D.A., & Akinola, A.O. (2019). 'Nigerian State and the Crisis of Governance: A

Critical Exposition', *Sage Open* 9(3), 1–10.

Yunusa, Y., Esomchi, O.S., Ezeogueri-Oyewole, A.N., Samuel, S.S., Egwemi, E., and Isiaka,

A.S. (2020). The Socio-Economic Impact of Covid-19 on the Economic Activities of Selected States in Nigeria. *Indonesean Journal of Social and Environmental Issues (IJSEI)*, Volume 1 Issue 2 August (2020) Page: 39 – 47.