



CORONAVIRUS AND DEVELOPMENT CRISES IN NIGERIA: ISSUES AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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ABSTRACT: *Recent research interest to review post COVID -19 pandemic in Nigeria, Africa's largest economy is informed by existing development crises exacerbated by the pandemic and the policy implications. While development is the desire and pursuit of every responsible and responsive government, Nigeria is still grappling with development crises, which became pervasive following the outbreak of the pandemic, that emanated from Wuhan in China towards the end of 2019 and eventually spread to many other countries across the globe leading to the emergence of what can be termed a 'new normal'. How the pandemic has deepened the development crises of Nigeria has not been given adequate research attention. In the light of existing realities, this study sets to fill this gap by exploring the linkages between post COVID -19 pandemic and the development crises of Nigeria. The study adopts a qualitative methodology that builds on the political economy approach as it relied largely on secondary sources of data. Findings suggest that the pandemic aggravated Nigeria's development crises. Based on our findings, a post-COVID-19 recovery strategy was recommended to re-establish the conditions for a quick return to a path of economic growth as well as overall human development. In particular, to enable the country build a concrete structure and working system that can easily respond to future emergencies in a globalizing world.*

KEYWORDS: Development, Development Crises, Coronavirus, Pandemic, Nigeria

INTRODUCTION

Nigeria's development since the attainment of independence in 1960 shows that, despite abundant human and natural resources, the country is yet to achieve the desired development that will translate in the improvement of the living standard of the generality of the citizens. Lots of development challenges are evident in the country ranging from unemployment, lack of basic infrastructure, poverty, hunger, poor healthcare system, poor education to mention a few. Put differently, Nigeria is yet to fully achieve development which entails the satisfaction of the genuine needs of the citizens of a country by the appropriate and sustainable use of its natural resources to better the lives of the citizens (UNDP,1995). These existing development crises were heightened by the outbreak of the corona virus also known as COVID-19, which broke out in Wuhan in the late 2019 and later spread to most parts of the world. The COVID -19 pandemic has had and still has a substantial impact on all aspects of human life.

The speed and extent at which the virus spread from Wuhan to other parts of the world and still spreading, reflects how the advent of globalization has really reduced the world to a global village. It also shows that in a global world, what affects one, (good or bad), has the



tendency to affect others as the virus virtually affects the entire globe and is being suffered in a number of ways.

Consequently, due to the COVID-19 pandemic that plagued most countries of the world, some of these countries including the developed and less developed like Nigeria. In the case of Nigeria, all international and domestic commercial air flights into and within the country was suspended, the healthcare facilities were overstretched as a result of high rate of infections, schools were shut down, markets closed, strict restrictions were placed on social activities, churches and mosques were also closed or forced to operate with limited number of persons and with specific directives for them to comply with the COVID -19 safety policies. Also, most offices shut down and workers were forced to work from home while some others were laid off due to the economic crunch resulting from the negative effects of the pandemic with an increased level of poverty, heightened cases of insecurity, high mortality rate to mention a few.

Nigeria's strive to overcome the development crises inherent in the country has been more of a herculean task as these development challenges have been egregious despite efforts by successive governments since independence to tackle the development challenges. Consequently, given the outbreak of the corona virus with Nigeria recording its first case in February 2020, there was panic, tension and heightened development crises as there was an exposure of the systemic failure of the country. In other words, the pandemic exposed the development deficiency of Nigeria in so many sectors.

Against this background, this study examined the linkages between Nigeria's development crises and COVID-19 pandemic. It specifically examined the health sector and deplorable health infrastructure including absence of suitable medical labs for tests, the education sector and the indefinite closure of schools, economic downturn evidenced in high cost of living, overdependence on crude oil and failure of refineries to successfully refine the crude produced in the country (even with a sharp decline in the global price of crude and lack of patronage due to lockdown), high rate of poverty and poor welfare of citizens, resulting in the inability of government to efficiently and effectively distribute palliatives to the most vulnerable persons in a transparent and credible manner, increased unemployment and loss of jobs and heightened insecurity concerns. The study demonstrates that these development crises point to the need for the government of Nigeria to look inwards and adopt necessary measures that will decisively tackle the prolonged development crises especially in this era of post pandemic and quest for economic recovery-A major gap which previous studies have not examined.

The rest of the paper is organized as follows; research hypotheses, statement of the problem, conceptual clarification/literature review, methodology, Nigeria's development before the COVID -19 era, COVID-19 and Nigeria's development Crises, discussions, conclusions and recommendations.

Research Hypotheses

- H₁** There is a relationship between COVID -19 pandemic and the deplorable health sector in Nigeria
- H₂** There is a relationship between COVID -19 and the disruption of education in Nigeria



- H₃** There is a relationship between pandemic induced lockdown and economic downturn in Nigeria
- H₄** There is a relationship between COVID -19 and high rate of poverty and poor welfare of citizens
- H₅** There is a relationship between COVID -19 and increased unemployment and loss of jobs
- H₆** There is a relationship between COVID -19 and heightened security concerns

Statement of the Problem

In the late 2000s, Nigeria experienced increasing development challenges; the World Bank declared Nigeria the world poverty capital, the Global Terrorism Index of 2019 rated Nigeria the third most terrorized nation of the world.

With globalization and increasing cross border interactions among countries of the world and also increased opportunities as well as exposure to risks as the world is reduced to a global village, the outbreak of the novel coronavirus in late 2019 and its rapid spread across the globe became fast though uneven across developed and developing nations.

Development concerns associated with the spread of the pandemic have not only spelled out the differences in underdevelopment and poverty within different individuals, organizations, groups, sectors of the economy, countries and regions, rather the crises have also brought into open the problems low income countries like Nigeria faces in dealing with the pandemic.

Recently, NCDC reported that the rate of death has increased urging for more effective post pandemic plans (NCDC,2020). Increasing local concerns have heightened as there is evidence of poor rural health infrastructure. These problems have brought out the apprehensions that many groups and individuals have, regarding mitigating the pandemic. They also point out how poor health facilities undermine effective health care system including the impact they have on achieving –sustainable health a global 2030 development agenda. The fact that the development crises associated with the pandemic has expanded around the globe shows that development concerns are real and requires policy and research attention. The solutions to them, however, may vary between countries and cultures. The question remains whether the mitigation of the pandemic can provide a sustainable development agenda both in the developed and developing countries.

The virus has adversely affected the economy of Nigeria which has suffered series of development crises. This includes include loss of lives, poor healthcare, lack of coordinated welfare scheme for citizens, lack of modern educational system. lockdown and economic downturn, high rate of poverty and poor welfare of citizens, increased unemployment and loss of jobs, heightened security concerns and increasing low standard of living etc.

Despite all these problems, it is worrisome that development crises of Nigeria, which comes in various forms, have rarely been transformed, the aggravation of these development crises by COVID-19 pandemic have not been given adequate policy attention. More worrisome is that in Nigeria, unlike some other countries, there is apparently no empirical proof or data-based evidence documented on post pandemic development crises, the neglect of this area of



research agenda has complex implications, which are enormous and persistent. This threatens the social realities and very existence of Nigeria and calls for urgent policy attention.

Based on the foregoing discourse, the problem of this study is to review corona virus and development crises in Nigeria in post pandemic contexts, to create some understanding of how the pandemic has worsened development crises of Nigeria and how such problems could be solved.

Conceptual Clarification

Development

Development as a concept has been subjected to definitional pluralism as it lacks a generally acceptable definition. Suffice to state that development is a multi-faceted concept differently conceived by various scholars across the world. It is not static rather a continuous process. Gboyega (2003) captures it as an idea that embodies all attempts to improve the conditions of human existence in all ramifications. This involves the improvement in material well-being of every citizen, in a sustainable manner.

Dudley Seers captured the explanation of what development implies as he submits that, to know what development is, three significant questions are to be asked. In his opinion, basic questions to ask are:

What is happening to poverty? What is happening to unemployment? What is happening to inequality? If all three of these have declined over the period under consideration, then it has been a period of development for such a country. But if one or two of them have been growing worse, especially if all three, the situation cannot be one of development even if capital income has doubled over the period (Seers, 1969).

The adoption of these three key indices reflects how unemployment, inequality and poverty constitute some of the major development crises that a reasonable, responsible and responsive government needs to address. Consequently, development does not just involve economic growth, but must be seen to encourage equitable distribution of State's resources, education, provision of health care, good power supply, good roads, housing etc all with a view to improving the people's quality of living.

Development Crises

Nigeria has embarked on various development policies, programmes and initiatives directed at socio-economic development since attainment of independence but have not been able to successfully eradicate some of the crises the country is ridden with. One major responsibility of government anywhere around the world is to put in place policies and programmes that will improve and better the living conditions of the citizens particularly healthcare. The various development efforts put in place since independence by both military and civilian administration made achievements to some extent but were also faced with significant challenges, especially in implementing the reforms to improve the welfare of the citizens. This accounts for the continuous development crises experienced in Nigeria. According to



Ayokai and Naankie (2016), the policies have unfortunately not yielded their desired results and the development crisis has continued to be aggravated.

It is no longer a debate that despite all the development plans by the Nigerian government overtime; the country's economy is still backward and underdeveloped. Cases of unemployment, poverty, and inequality which were major indices pointed out in Dudley Seers definition of development still bites so hard among so many Nigerians. Ayokai and Naankie (2016), buttressed this point by stating that Nigeria has fallen from being the bastion of hope for the African race into a theatre of despondency, anxiety, poverty, disease, illiteracy, crime, insecurity, instability and conflict. Rather than progressive development, Nigeria suffers a perennial development crisis.

Consequently, different political scholars have given various submissions or reasons for the underdevelopment of countries like Nigeria. For instance, the dependency theorists attribute the poor state of Nigerian development to continuous economic exploitation from the industrialized nations of the West. On the other hand, the modernization theorists submit that for a society to transform into modernity, its traditional structures and values which are obstacles to development must be totally altered and replaced by modern values. According to them, Nigeria and other African nations need to adopt western values and systems that will transform the nation and help them overcome development crises confronting them.

Despite the submissions of various schools of thought concerning Africa's underdevelopment, it is an indisputable fact that Nigeria has continued to experience development crises which was heightened with the outbreak of coronavirus.

Corona Virus

A virus is a causative agent of an infection. According to Lodish, Berk and Zipursky et al (2000), a virus is a small parasite that cannot reproduce by itself but can direct the cell machinery to produce more viruses once it infects a susceptible cell. In other words, when infected, a host cell is forced to rapidly produce thousands of identical copies of the original virus.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO) a novel coronavirus (COVID-19) was identified in 2009 in Wuhan, China. It is an infectious disease and also a respiratory virus that constitutes a global threat to human health (WHO,2020). Before the outbreak of COVID-19, some other corona viruses had been discovered in the past. SARS coronavirus which broke out in 2002 and the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) are examples of corona viruses that had emerged in the past. The world health organization declared the COVID-19 as a global pandemic in march 2020 (WHO,2020). Given the nature of its spread (which is by droplets of saliva or touching contaminated surfaces), the WHO gave certain guidelines or precautionary measures to be taken in order to minimize the spread of the virus. Some of these measures include regular and thorough hand washing with soap and water or use of an alcohol based hand sanitizer; maintain social distancing to keep off liquid droplets from mouth and nose of infected persons who may sneeze or cough around an individual avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth; use of face shield or nose mask; good respiratory hygiene; stay at home and self -isolation whenever an individual feel s unwell; and also seek medical attention if an individual has cough, sore throat, fever, difficulty in breathing or other symptoms like loss of taste or appetite etc (WHO,2020).



In Nigeria, the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) is in charge of managing and controlling the spread of the disease. The virus has an incubation period of between two (2) to fourteen (14) days according to the NCDC guideline (NCDC,2020) after which it begins to manifest, though some people are said to be asymptomatic and may not show signs of the virus even when it is present in them. Scientists all over the world are still researching the ideal medicine and vaccine to overcome the virus. Fortunately, however, some drugs are being used to treat patients and it seems to be yielding positive results.

In addition to consistently advising everyone to take precautionary measures seriously, the NCDC equally carries out contact tracing to test and ascertain those who may be infected so as to isolate them in the isolation centers across the nation for treatment. People who are 60years+ and those with underlying health conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, high blood pressure, asthma etc are encouraged to take the safety measures very seriously as they are at a higher risk of getting infected with COVID-19 (NCDC,2020). Also, a weak immune system is more or less a catalyst for easy infection of the corona virus whereas boosting one's immune system is necessary to minimize the possibilities of getting infected (NCDC,2020).

The first case which was recorded in Nigeria in February 2020 was said to be an Italian man who flew into Lagos and it was later discovered that he had contracted the virus as reported by the NCDC. Consequently, some other people who flew into the country were confirmed to be positive (NCDC,2020). However, with the ban placed on foreign travel, Nigeria moved from cases traced to travelers to community transmission due to the fact that the country was under testing.

Apart from the fact that the NCDC was under testing which was partly due to inadequate or shortage of testing kits, some people doubted the existence of COVID-19 in Nigeria and held the belief that government officials were politicizing the whole situation and using it as an avenue to enrich themselves. Furthermore, others evaded and avoided the testing even when they had symptoms similar to that of covid-19 for fear of testing positive and being stigmatized and kept away in isolation centers.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopted a qualitative research design. Secondary sources related to the discourse regarding COVID -19 and Nigeria's development crises were reviewed. The aim is to establish a relationship between the pandemic and development crises of Nigeria. Six hypotheses guided the study. Most recent information were sourced from the World Health Organization (WHO) and Nigeria's National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC), relevant data sourced particularly included those discussing the health sector and deplorable health infrastructure including absence of suitable medical labs for tests, the education sector and the indefinite closure of schools, economic downturn evidenced in high cost of living, high rate of poverty and poor welfare of citizens, increased unemployment, loss of jobs and heightened insecurity ,which contributed to the understanding of the ongoing debate regarding the pandemic and Nigeria's development crises .



Theoretical Framework

This study adopted the political economy approach in explaining how the coronavirus pandemic has further exposed and widened the already existing development crises in Nigeria.

The central premise of the political economy approach is that the mode of production in material life determines the general character of other aspects such as the social, political, spiritual processes of life and so on (Ake, 1981). Reduced to the fundamental, the political economy theory as used in this study sheds light on how the nature of the Nigerian economy affected other sectors such as the educational, health, social etc especially with the outbreak of the corona virus which triggered global change in an unprecedented manner. The point being made here is that since the economy is a major determinant of other sectors, the nature of the Nigerian economy (which even before the outbreak of coronavirus emphasizes distribution at the expense of production) contributes to the development crises bedeviling the nation which is further heightened during the coronavirus pandemic ravaging not just Nigeria but the entire globe.

Karl Marx argued that the structure of society and the forces of historical change was predicated on the concept of Base and Superstructure. In other words, political economy entails the understanding of the interactions of the Base and Superstructure of a society as an all-encompassing theory of society (Edara, 2016). The base simply put, refers to how a society produces what they need for survival. According to Cohen (1979), the superstructure is a set of non-economic institutions, notably the legal system and the state. The superstructure consists of legal, political, religious and other non-economic institutions or social realms.

On his part, Jayalakshmi (2012), asserts that the relationship between the Base and Superstructure is quite inseparable. According to him, the base consists of the forces and relations of production while the superstructure is more or less the amalgamation of the ideological institutions such as the state, religion, ethics, laws, politics, family etc.

It is imperative to note that one major responsibility of government anywhere around the world is to put in place policies and programmes that will improve and better the living conditions of the citizens and this primarily has to do with reshaping and reforming the economy of the state which in turn affects the social, political, and structural conditions in the country concerned. It is on this basis that the political economy approach was adopted for this study to create linkages between Nigeria's development challenges and the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic.

Nigeria's Development Before the COVID -19 Era

Nigeria is a highly populated country in Africa with a population of over 180 million people. The Federal Republic of Nigeria also has an area of 923,769 square kilometers (made up of 909,890 square kilometers of land area and 13,879 square kilometers of water area) (NBS, 2016). As mentioned earlier, despite relentless effort by successive governments as seen in the introduction of various development plans and strategies with the aim of moving the nation forward, Nigeria is still grappling with a series of development crises since attainment of independence. The setbacks are often attributed to certain factors which include inadequate capital to implement development plans and policies, corruption and misappropriation of



public funds, lack of credible and visionary leadership among others. Some of the development programmes or strategies introduced by various governments since independence but which unfortunately have not really yielded their aims and objectives include the first development plan which was introduced in 1962, the second development plan which was put in place after the civil war from 1970-1974, the third development plan established between 1975 to 1980, the fourth development plan introduced between 1981-1985. Other development plans include the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), National Economic Empowerment Development Strategy (NEEDS), Seven Point Agenda (SPN), Transformation Agenda (TA), and Vision 2020, Economic Recovery and Growth Plan (ERGP) etc. These development plans and programmes were designed by both military and civilian administrations to respond to the various development challenges of Nigeria but cannot totally be said to be commendable efforts due to the lingering crises of development in virtually every facet of the country.

A statement contained in the USAID Nigeria document (2015-2020) shows that weak governance capacity and practice (a weakness that is evident in nearly every sector and at all levels of government) as well as poor management of public resources and institutions all manifest in several interrelated ways accounting for the reason why Nigeria constantly lags in so many development measures (USAID, 2020). In fact, corruption has been one of Nigeria's banes of development. Mismanagement and misappropriation as well as over bloated or overinflated contract figures with projects either left abandoned or shabbily executed all contribute to the development crisis bedeviling the country.

In addition to corruption, which is a major cankerworm plaguing almost every facet of Nigeria, the high cost of governance has been a major concern as funds meant for capital development is often smaller than funds earmarked for recurrent expenditure.

In the health sector, before the outbreak of coronavirus, Nigeria has often experienced poor healthcare services despite the budgetary allocation to the health sector. According to a BBC news report of 22nd April 2020, the 2020 government budget allocates only about 4.5% of spending for health, which is less than the 15% target the African Union had set for governments in 2001 (BBC, 2020). The National and most of the States teaching/ general hospitals as well as other primary healthcare facilities always had (and still have) challenges in the area of modern health facilities that will aid the conduct of their activities. This challenge of limited or absence of healthcare facilities, poor salaries and allowances coupled with the high risk that health workers are exposed to due to negligence usually force some of the health workers to jettison the opportunity to work in Nigeria and seek for greener pasture in other countries where they are guaranteed better and more attractive conditions of service.

Equally worrisome is the fact that the lack of tangible investment and attention to the health sector prompts the political elites to often take advantage of the opportunity they have to embark on medical tourism to other countries with reckless abandon at the slightest health challenge thereby ignoring the Nigerian health sector. The repercussion of this neglect is being played out especially during the period of the ban on foreign travel.

Looking at the educational sector, Nigeria's education has been more of a vegetative rather than a regenerative education, placing emphasis on certification with little consideration on merit and possession of transformative abilities. This has not really been helpful. One of the greatest challenges however is in the area of poor investment in the educational sector. This



has made public or government owned schools to be less attractive due to the continued negligence on the part of government. Those who can afford private schools rather prefer to have their children or wards attend such schools as they believe that qualitative education is better attained in these private owned schools and not in the public schools. There are equally cases of dilapidated structures of some of these government owned schools, overcrowded classes, lack of adequate teaching aids as well as occasional delay in the payment of teachers' salary all of which contribute in discouraging the teachers from giving their best and also denying pupils or students conducive learning environment. School teachers and Lecturers often go on strike because of poor remuneration. When this happens, students and parents are at the receiving end with students sometimes forced to indulge in all sorts of irresponsible and nefarious behaviors.

Suffice to state that education is the bedrock of development in any society. Ambe (2003) opines that "education is the anchor that holds good leadership at bay and lack of which produces poor leadership". The need for a sound and qualitative education cannot be overemphasized as it has the tendency of shaping and reforming the citizens especially when they successfully possess good education both in character and in learning.

Nigeria's adoption of a mono-economy is a practice that has obviously done more harm than good to the nation's economy and drive for development. Before the oil boom in the 1970s, Nigeria depended on agriculture for the nation's revenue. Consequently, with the discovery of oil came a drastic shift of focus from the agricultural sector with the country placing more emphasis on the oil and gas sector. However, when oil was discovered, food production depreciated, hence, the need for food importation which consequently led to huge spending of the country's foreign exchange (Odunze, 2019).

Unfortunately, despite the attention given to the oil sector, Nigeria failed to establish functioning refineries that will refine the crude produced in the country. Nigeria rather exports her crude and imports the refined products for consumption with government's huge commitment of fuel subsidy. This negatively affects the economy of the nation. Furthermore, despite the call for diversification, Nigeria is yet to fully heed to it and make an impressive move to diversify her economy and some of these flaws on the part of government compounds the development challenges being suffered even before coronavirus broke out. Again, Nigeria's over-dependence on other countries for a lot of goods and services has reduced the country to a consuming and not so much of a producing one.

The high rate of insecurity in Nigeria is equally a huge challenge to achieving development. Cases of insecurity ranging from kidnapping, banditry, herdsmen and farmers clash, insurgency, armed robbery etc pose a serious threat to the peace, stability and overall development of the country. These security challenges can be a major clog in the wheel of progress of any society. The attacks and activities of these criminal elements scare local and foreign investors and equally affect productivity as farmers are sometimes scared of going to the farm for fear of being attacked thereby leading to low output in agriculture and other sectors of the economy.

Until recently that the government is making an effort to create an environment that will ensure ease of doing business, there has not been so much of a conducive business environment that will attract local and foreign investors. Suffice to state that, an unfriendly business climate makes private sector-led economic growth difficult in Nigeria and this can



hinder a country from fully maximizing its local production capacity. For instance, power supply has always been a challenge as the government has not been able to effectively invigorate power production and distribution in the country despite the huge investment in the power sector by successive governments. The poor power supply escalates costs of production, and significantly diminishes productivity.

Furthermore, high transportation costs, multiple taxation, and even security challenges mentioned above negatively affects productivity, contributes to economic setback and equally hinders development. Again, Nigeria has a high rate of unemployed citizens some of whom are willing and able to work but lack the opportunity to be gainfully employed. McConnell and Brue (1999) opine that when a country fails in employment creation and jobs created are not enough for those who are able and willing to work, potential production of goods and services are irretrievably lost. Unfortunately, the decline in employment opportunity has led to the increase in criminal activities for survival.

RESULTS

COVID-19 and Nigeria's Development Crises

H₁ There is a relationship between COVID -19 pandemic and the deplorable health sector in Nigeria

Nigeria suffered and is still suffering serious development challenges with the outbreak of the corona virus pandemic as earlier mentioned. Some of the consequences being experienced as a result of the outbreak of coronavirus will be discussed at this point.

The outbreak of coronavirus led to the exposure of the health sector as a sector lacking government's attention. It became obvious that the health sector is in shambles as it was poorly funded and lacked adequate equipment. It became imperative that the government needed to give immediate attention to the health sector to be able to combat the virus. The elites had always embarked on medical tourism and enjoyed the luxury of traveling abroad for all manner of health challenges. Nigeria was under testing due to insufficient testing kits. Nearly four months into the discovery of the first case in Nigeria, the country, with a population of over two hundred million citizens was only able to test less than two hundred thousand people with a possibility of rapid community transmission. The health workers accused the government for not providing enough personal protective equipment (PPE), unpaid hazard allowances which led to the resident doctors embarking on a one-week warning strike in June 2020 (Clottey and Dauda,2020)

In fact, the doctors of Kaduna threatened to down tools due to the plan by the governor (El-Rufai) to cut the salaries of the state workers including doctors and other health workers, with the claim to use the cut down salaries to provide palliatives for the people of the state despite the fact that the health workers are at high risk of contracting the virus and needed maximum support and motivation in every aspect (Clottey and Dauda,2020).

Furthermore, because of the lockdown which included the closure of borders to prevent international and local flight, some of the elites including government officials found it impossible to travel out of the country for 'professional' medical attention. The high and low,



rich and poor, young and old, male and female had no choice than to stay back in the country to receive medical attention from Nigerian doctors and in Nigerian hospitals. Some people were tested and found to be positive as the virus is not a respecter of anyone irrespective of their status. With the daily testing being carried out by the NCDC, those found to be positive were kept in isolation centers to be treated. While some recovered, others lost their lives (including some notable government officials) with many more still losing their lives. Some key government officials who were alleged to have lost their lives to the virus include Abba Kyari (former chief of staff to the president of Nigeria), Mr Ibanga Bassey Etang (The NDDC acting Director of Finance and Administration), Mr Suleiman Ibrahim Adamu (Nasarawa State house of Assembly member who represented Nasarawa central), Sen. Sikiru Adebayo Osinowo (Lagos East senatorial district representative), Mr Odiari Princewill (Chairman of Asari-Toru LGA of Rivers State), Senator Abiola Ajimobi (former Governor of Oyo State) and so many other Nigerians including health workers.

Equally worrisome is the fact that most hospitals at some point refused to treat some patients who were in some cases neglected and allowed to die of other ailments that had similar symptoms with COVID-19 as attention was concentrated on COVID-19 with little or no consideration on other ailments like malaria, typhoid etc. Some of these ill-equipped hospitals lacked basic medical equipment such as personal protective equipment (PPE) to keep them well protected in case a patient with the virus visits their healthcare facility.

H₂ There is a relationship between COVID -19 and the disruption of education in Nigeria

The outbreak of coronavirus has equally caused a great setback in the educational sector thereby affecting the school curriculum. The disruption in the academic calendar is as a result of a delayed date of resumptions to minimize spread of the virus. While some schools especially in advanced countries adopted online studies to ensure continuity despite the lockdown, the educational system in Nigeria could not adopt such style of learning because of so many factors such as lack of personal computers or android phones by students in the city and especially the rural areas, poor supply of electricity to power computers or phones (for those who have), poor or fluctuating internet services by network providers who still end up making the cost of buying data high etc. As a result of these challenges, there is bound to be a decline in the academic performance of students at the primary, secondary and tertiary institutions of learning arising from the long absence from school due to the prolonged closure of schools. There was equally suspension of basic examinations like common entrance for primary school pupils preparing to proceed to secondary school, West African Examination Council (WAEC) and National Examination Council (NECO) for secondary school students preparing to take their final secondary school examinations as well as final year students of tertiary institutions preparing to graduate from universities, polytechnics and colleges of education. One major challenge with school reopening at a time like this is that some schools are so populated that social distancing can hardly be achieved especially some government schools that are usually overcrowded and lack basic infrastructure like supply of water and other basic sanitary provisions for a proper hygiene practice.

Also, some religious leaders who are expected to work in synergy with government in the fight against coronavirus have not played their role of sensitizing their members enough on the dangers of being infected, instead, because of the 'faith' some of them claim to have, they often give their members the impression that even if by chance they get infected at all, they can be healed and this move by some religious institutions which can be seen as a sabotage



of government's effort does not encourage compliance of safety or precautionary guidelines thereby exposing them to being infected and equally increasing the risk of community transmission.

H₃ There is a relationship between pandemic induced lockdown and economic downturn in Nigeria

The Nigerian economy has equally been greatly affected by the outbreak of coronavirus arising from grounding of economic activities as businesses and economic activities were suspended. Markets were shut down, events and viewing centers shut down, local and international sporting centers were suspended, airports were closed thereby leading to the suspension of domestic and international flights, economic activities generally came to a halt as almost every part of the country was locked down with only those on essential duties being granted permit to carry on with their work but with directives to strictly adhere to safety guidelines. As a matter of fact, COVID-19 pandemic led to a sharp decline in the price of oil at the global market as the price of crude fell far lower than Nigeria's benchmark of \$57 per barrel (Olurounbi,2020). This equally affected the government's ability to fund the 2020 budget hence the need for a downward review of the budget as well as government seeking for external loans to fund the year's budget. Rabiou, Kabiru, Ahmad and Samaila (2020) concurring submits that,

The oil price shock due to the corona virus came as a great surprise to the Nigerian government and the impact has put significant strain on the budget and the currency and the government may have to adjust its 2020 budget, which was based on a crude price of \$57 a barrel according to the finance minister. Already, oil prices which are the mainstay of the country are trading below the Federal Government's benchmark for the 2020 budget

A statement contained in the USAID Nigeria document (2015-2020) submits that, falling oil and gas prices are also putting pressure on Nigeria's fiscal and external accounts (USAID,2020).

With economic activities almost at a standstill, Nigeria's revenue was cut short. Put differently, in addition to the global crash in the price of oil, Nigeria was unable to effectively generate internal revenue due to the lockdown as a result of the grounding of business activities.

Furthermore, it was predicted that the pandemic could lead to economic depression or recession for many countries including Nigeria. Consequently, it became evident that diversification of Nigeria's economy should be a paramount concern and government needs to become more strategic and aggressively invest in other areas so as to minimize the over dependence on the oil sector and consequently explore the viability and productivity of other sectors. It is however necessary to state that President Buhari's ban on the importation of rice long before the outbreak of coronavirus is quite commendable as it largely increased local production of rice (a staple food in Nigeria) which was of great advantage even with the lockdown of most countries.



H₄ There is a relationship between COVID -19 and high rate of poverty and poor welfare of citizens

As much as Nigeria has often been rated as one of the poverty-stricken nations of the world, the rate of poverty increased more with the outbreak of coronavirus. The Nigerian government-imposed lockdown without putting adequate measures in place to cushion the devastating effects of the coronavirus. As a matter of fact, some of the measures put in place by the government to check the spread of coronavirus seemed to be more concerned with protecting lives to the detriment of the peoples' livelihood as some people's sources of income were not taken into consideration. Those who were involved in petty trading or carried out some sort of business that generated income for their daily living no longer enjoyed the freedom of freely buying and selling (trading) as there were inter-state lockdown curfews (partial or total lockdown) of the States at one point or the other. Due to the fact that a good number of the low-income earners were incapacitated, standard of living of most families dropped as people struggled to survive. The increase in hunger and lack could be attributed to the fact that most citizens lacked and still lack the economic or purchasing power to get basic needs like food which is necessary for human survival. Unfortunately, also, there was a hike in prices of food commodities in the market as traders took advantage of the panic buying to skyrocket the prices of various foodstuff and other household items. So many people were infected or affected with the negative effect of covid-19 though for some others, it was an opportunity to make more money especially those involved in the sale of foodstuff, supermarket owners, producers of facemasks/shields, hand sanitizers etc.

Some citizens doubted the existence of coronavirus because of the belief that the government was only using the guise of coronavirus to enrich themselves. For such people, compliance was almost not adhered to as they were only interested in the re-opening of the economy so as to have everything return to normalcy.

Furthermore, the government at both the national, State and local levels could not successfully distribute the palliatives both in cash or kind to the most vulnerable citizens. For instance, the federal government had a cash transfer programme which billions of naira was earmarked to be disbursed to the needy. However, the criteria for this disbursement was questioned by many as the government claimed to have reached out to many families which a lot of people disputed or refuted such claims as false. Despite the huge contributions and donations from individuals and other corporate bodies as well as international organizations, there was no transparency and accountability in the way the donations were used. In fact, when the accountant general's (AGF) office got burnt in April 2020, some persons alleged that it was a gimmick to cover up the track for whatever fraudulent processes were involved in the COVID-19 funds (Okwe, Jimoh, Olaniyi and Olumide, 2020).

The inability of the Nigerian government to effectively and efficiently distribute the palliatives can be attributed to the lack of a concrete and accurate data base. Ogunlade (2000) argued that among such things which population censuses are used for include the determination of the handicapped for the provision of basic social amenities and also for ascertaining the actual figure of the unemployed so as to make for adequate planning.

Nigeria has always had a problem of not having a comprehensive database to carry out proper planning and this flaw constituted a huge challenge as palliatives were improperly handled with public outcry. Despite the huge contributions by wealthy Nigerans like Aliko Dangote,



Chris Uba, Mike Adenuga which ran in billions of naira during the beginning of the pandemic there were allegations that the poorest of the poor were not benefitting from the stimulus packages provided by the government. In fact, despite the fatality rate of covid-19 and its infection rate nationally and globally, so many believed that the scourge of hunger which some called 'hunger virus' has a greater tendency of affecting and possibly killing more people in Africa and especially Nigeria than the COVID-19 itself. The World Bank in a recent report predicted that COVID-19 will make 96 million Nigerians extremely poor by 2022 (Soniya,2020). This means therefore that after we survive the coronavirus (which we don't know how soon that will be), we will have to do much more as a nation to survive the poverty virus.

H₅ There is a relationship between COVID -19 and increased unemployment and loss of jobs

The lockdown which was imposed by the Federal government in some parts of the country with the various States' governments doing the same at some point led to some sort of lack of productivity. Public and private organizations no longer effectively carried out the normal routine of work as most organizations were either forced to shut down or work from home. In fact, the 'new normal' of having to work from home led to the adoption of the internet to carry on with work, as a way of adjusting to the new realities of our time.

Due to the pandemic, many people especially in the corporate organizations have either been relieved of their jobs or are being threatened to be laid off if the harsh economy persists. For some, salaries were not being paid while others experienced a salary cut. In fact, so many are still uncertain of the security of their jobs due to the economic crunch hitting hard on private and public organizations

Nigeria, which before now has had the challenge of high rate of unemployment now has to battle with an increase in the number of unemployed citizens who are willing and able to work but have lost their jobs due to the ravaging effects of COVID-19. The current reality has however motivated some other persons to embark on skill acquisition programmes though a lot more need to embrace this idea so as to minimize the dependence on employments that sometimes do not guarantee job security.

H₆ There is a relationship between COVID -19 and heightened security concerns

The imposition of lockdown in most parts of the country by both the federal and states government was to control and minimize the spread of the coronavirus. The scarcity and deprivation of essential needs experienced by many as a result of the prolonged lockdown led to insecurity as hoodlums invaded and robbed residents in some areas. For instance, in some parts of Lagos, some residents were forced to organize themselves into vigilante groups to complement the effort of security operatives by staying awake at night to ensure the security of lives and properties within their vicinity. This was because of the increase in crime within and around some of such areas. The crime was not just in the area of theft of properties but there was equally an increase in cases of rape across the country.

Some security operatives and law enforcement agents who were mandated to man the borders and prevent entry and exit of people indiscriminately during the inter-state borders failed in carrying out their assigned responsibility as it was alleged that some of them were saboteurs who were sabotaging government's effort by allowing people to bribe their way in and out of



the borders of some of the locked down states thereby increasing the tendency for the spread of the virus. Some of the members of the COVID-19 task force were equally accused of excesses such as unnecessary and excessive use of force to ensure compliance which includes flogging and destruction of goods of some defaulters who flouted government's directives as well as using the power vested on them to extort money in the name of fines without giving an account of such funds.

DISCUSSIONS

Post COVID-19 Plans in Nigeria

Based on the findings from our tested hypotheses and qualitative data, this study has re-established heightened development crises in Nigeria at post COVID -19 pandemic. Going by the development crises, the critical question is how Nigeria will recover from the COVID-19 crisis in a sustainable manner. It is imperative for the Nigerian government to take bold steps to change the narratives by looking inward and increasing the desire and pursuit for development. Government is yet to make impressive post COVID-19 plans although there are promises and gradual moves in that direction. With the common saying that 'whoever fails to plan is only planning to fail', there is therefore an urgent need for the Nigerian government to draw out a post COVID-19 plan or blueprint for Nigeria. To this end, the federal government has started rolling out some plans in terms of introducing interventions in various sectors that will cushion the effects of the pandemic. The Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) recently introduced the Anchor Borrowers mitigation strategy in the agricultural sector earmarking about #432 billion to assist farmers during the planting season (CBN, 2016). Government has promised to give soft loans to farmers to aid them in their farm work. This is however not enough as the government ought to ensure the provision of machines for increased mechanized farming and equally ensure that this plan is not politicized but that the actual farmers who deserve the loans get these loans so as to boost local production and guarantee food security for the nation. As the government further rolls out more post COVID-19 strategies to mitigate the effect of the pandemic, effort must be made towards ensuring improved productivity that will guarantee availability, accessibility and affordability of food in both good quantity and quality not just for local consumption but also to export excess produce to other countries.

There has been a lot of predictions and forecasts that Nigeria, just like many other countries, may likely drift or slide into recession.

Disruptions could occur to supply chain distributions, value addition and services in the event of restrictions to movement of people. In such an event, the Nigerian economy could fall back into a recession with a negative growth rate of 1.58% for 2020 (UNDP, 2020).

However, as the government continues to unfold more post covid-19 plans, giant strides can still be made in the nations drive towards development despite these pessimistic projections if only Nigerians (both the leaders and the led) see the COVID-19 pandemic as an opportunity in disguise.



CONCLUSION

The outbreak of Coronavirus has introduced a 'new normal' and so far, proven to be a pandemic that exposed the weak system of most countries especially developing nations like Nigeria that had before the emergence of the virus witnessed a series of unending development crises which was felt even more with the outbreak of the virus.

From the findings of this study, Nigeria will further deepen in recession after the pandemic. The health and food crisis will be the worst for it. Many individuals and organizations have faced and are still facing undaunted challenges due to the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic currently ravaging the economy of nations and the entire globe. Consequently, despite the economic shocks caused by the pandemic, many countries are attempting to adapt and cope with the current realities. It can however be seen as a pandemic that has come with lots of challenges and opportunities, depending on the lens used to view it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The outbreak of corona virus has unveiled the need to look inward and adopt interventionist approaches that reflect the uniqueness and peculiarities of the country. Nigeria has overtime operated an import driven economy where we import even the very things, we have the capacity to produce and no economy can thrive well in such circumstances. As a nation, Nigeria must therefore become more of a producer than just a consumer and the country should equally resolve to produce what they consume and also consume what they produce, thereby minimizing exportation and unnecessary dependence on foreign products.

Considering the fact that the economy is the base upon which lies the superstructure, the government should understand the importance of a well stimulated and sustainable economy that is highly necessary to overcome the development crises Nigeria is ridden with. This, the government needs to do by setting up a credible, competent and qualified economic advisory board that will come up with post COVID-19 plans on how to maximally boost or rejuvenate the economy despite the challenges experienced with the covid-19 pandemic. Recovery will require investment in innovative approaches. The much talked about diversification should go beyond investment in just the agricultural sector to other key areas like solid minerals, science and technology, industrialization to mention a few. Ayokai and Naankie (2016) opines that,

programmes for the promotion of agriculture, education and training, health and nutrition, community development and the like must be planned and executed in a coordinated fashion, with account being taken of the effect that development programmes in one area are likely to have on other areas.

A new Nigeria can be birthed when the government becomes committed and deliberate enough to take advantage of the coronavirus pandemic and ensure that they introduce a clearer development blueprint that will see to it that formulated development policies, programmes and initiatives are not only transformative, sustainable and people oriented but that they are implemented to the letter. Put differently, there is no better time for Nigerian



leaders to become politically willed and adopt pragmatic and proactive steps to addressing the development crises bedeviling the nation than now because if you don't manage crises, crises will manage you. In other words, with the lessons so far learnt from COVID-19 pandemic, it behooves on the drivers and operators of the Nigerian system to re-strategize and evolve realistic and holistic development ideas and to equally galvanize and deploy every available resource for achievement of the development dreams of Nigeria. The quest and drive for tangible development of Nigeria can become a reality and not a mirage when the citizens and especially the leaders take it upon themselves to become patriotic and collectively play the role expected of everyone, placing public interest over private interest. This, if done, will fortify and reposition Nigeria and Nigerians as a whole to easily adjust to consequent changes that may arise in a globalizing world.

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